

Hello again everyone. Happy Vacation! At least it is for me. I am on vacation from the church this week as Patty and I celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary Oct. 15.

We went to the Richmond Civic Theater for their Sunday afternoon matinee and ate supper at Red Lobster. It has been a great 30 years; we are looking forward to 30 more. God is Good!!!

God bless you and keep you and yours!

Pastor Don

“What Love Is” 1Cor. 13 Oct. 13, 2013

A young man was contemplating marriage, so he went to his father for some advice. He asked his dad what it was that convinced him to marry his mother. His father answered that he was feeling incomplete. Marrying his wife made him feel like a complete person with a complete life. The son asked do you feel complete now? The father answered and said yes, but sometimes I feel more like I am finished. Tuesday, I will celebrate the 30th year since Patty and I said I do. I love you Patty, you make my life complete. Some one asked Henry Ford his secret for a long happy marriage; he answered my philosophy is the same as my cars, pick 1 model and stick with it.

Marriage is the mysterious decision of a woman to give up the attention of many men for the inattention of one man. A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.

Love is an important part of everyone's life. Without it, we feel incomplete. Everyone is looking for love; some are just looking in the wrong places. Everyone needs Jesus; some just don't know it yet. As a Christian, filled with Christ's love, it is our duty to point them to him. Are we doing that? No one is truly happy until they find Christ. Inside they know that something is missing, that they are incomplete, they just don't know why. Finding Christ completes a person's life. Then when our life is finished, we get a home in heaven that he built just for us. Is our life complete? Do we have Jesus and his love living in our heart? Are we helping others find that love? As we contemplate these questions, let us look to our Lord in prayer. Would you pray with me as we begin this morning's message? [Pray]

Today's text is one of the most famous chapters in the bible. 1Cor. 13 is known as the love chapter. Paul is telling us about the love of God. God's love is selfless and all encompassing. It is called agape love. 1John 4:16 *“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.”* Jesus said in John13:35 *“By this all will know that you are my disciple, if you have love for one another.”* God's love for us is selfless. He loved us so much he willingly gave His only

begotten Son. Jesus has agape love for us; He was willing to die for us. The question is do we have agape love for them? Are we willing to die for them? Or harder yet, are we willing to live for them?

There are 3 Greek words for love. The 1st is Eros, which is lust, not love. The 2nd is Philos, which is brotherly love, the love we have for friends and acquaintances. The 3rd word, the one Paul choose, agape, is a love based upon the givers choice to give and not the worthiness of the receiver. Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Gods love goes against human nature. It is giving, self-less, and expects nothing in return. Can we give like God gives? Can people tell we are Christians by our love? Do we have & demonstrate this agape love

In chapter 12, Paul told the Corinthians& us, about spiritual gifts and unity of the church. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Instead of being glad and rejoicing for each others gifts, the Corinthians were jealous of one another. So after explaining that the church needs each gift and all are equally important for the success of the church, Paul ends chapter 12 with this sentence, *“And yet I show you a more excellent way.”* This more excellent way is the way of love. We should not be jealous of anyone, especially our fellow Christians. Commandment 10 says that we shall not covet. Covet means to be jealous of someone. Agape love means that we don't get jealous, but that we celebrate with them. God passes out the spiritual gifts as He sees fit. He made us; he knows our strengths and weaknesses. He knows what is best for us. He knows what is best for the church. Our spiritual gifts are not for us to use for selfish gain; God gave them to us to equip us for His work and His glory. We are to glorify His name and further His work in this world. That is why it is very important that we all just be ourselves and not try to be just like someone else. The only person we are supposed to imitate is Jesus Christ.

Are we Christ like? Are we using our gifts for God's work and God's glory?

Love is more important than any spiritual gift. Without love, great acts of faith and dedication have little effect on a lost world. Love makes our gifts and actions attractive to the lost. Love is what sets the Christian apart from the world. Love is what draws the lost to Christ. Are we a picture of Christ's love? People do indeed receive different gifts, but God's love is available to everyone. He loves us all the same. Are we willing to use the gifts God gives us for His glory? Are we willing to support others as they use their gifts without being jealous of them? Do we realize that all gifts are important? Christians must watch out for 2 very common pit-falls where our gifts are concerned; 1st we must remain humble. God has given us these gifts; they are His and are to be used for His glory. The 2nd is the opposite; we must not be too humble and think that there is nothing we can do for God. Remember what Paul told us in Philippians 4:13 *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* Where do we get our strength from? No one should discount the contributions of another. No one should be dissatisfied with their gifts or envious of someone else's gift; all of our gifts are equal and valuable to God.

Paul is telling us in chapter 13 that everything we do for God must be done in love. Many of the Corinthians wanted the gift of speaking in tongues. They were especially jealous of the ones with

that gift. People like to argue about what speaking in tongues means. Speaking in tongues is not some gibberish someone makes up. It is speaking in a real language that you have never studied. The Apostils showed us this in Acts 2 when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to preach to the huge crowd in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was filled with travelers from all over the world, yet each heard the word in his native tongue. Acts 2:7 *“Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, look are not all these who speak Galileans? How is it that we hear each in our own language in which we were born?”* Paul says if we could speak a langue we have never studied but have not love, we are sounding brass and clanging cymbals. These noises are references to pagan worship. Unless we love those we tell about Jesus, our speech is nothing but a lot of useless noise.

Prophesying does not necessarily mean predicting the future. It means expanding upon what God has given us. Christians are to speak forth and proclaim publicly the good news of Jesus Christ. We are to do this in love and with love. Without love, the words of God do the hearer no good. Paul tells us that even if we have all knowledge and possess faith that moves mountains, if we do not have the love of God in our hearts we are nothing. Knowledge, faith and prophesying are useless if we who have these gifts are not filled with selfless love for God.

Paul says even if we donate everything we own, including our very lives, to help the less fortunate; if we don't have love, it is all in vane. Do we help others out of love or because we feel obligated too?

Next Paul describes some characteristics of love. He says love is longsuffering; that means it is patient. Today we live in a throw-away society. Society encourages us to rid ourselves of people who are difficult to get along with. No mater who they are, family, friends, business associates. God's agape love tells us just the opposite; don't give up on them, pray for them, there is still hope for them. Aren't we glad God never gave up on us

Love is kind. Not only is it patient, it is gracious. It gives generously. Are we generous?

Love does not envy; it is not jealous. When we truly love others, we will rejoice with them and not want their blessings for our own. God's agape love that we are striving to achieve does not involve pride; it does not puff itself up or blow its own horn. God's love gives God the glory and honor. True love does not seek its own, it puts others first; their agendas, plans and wishes. Who is 1st in our lives?

True love is not rude or selfish. Are we courteous? Do we let others have their own way?

True love is not provoked. It takes a lot to make true love mad. Are we easily offended by the words and deeds of others? True love thinks no evil. That is hard to do these days isn't it? True love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in truth. Christians need to shun evil and rejoice in the truth. True love finds no joy in sin, even the sin of its enemies. It is devoted to the truth. Jesus is the truth. Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life nobody comes to the Father but by Me. Are we spreading the truth?

True love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.

Love is not blind. We know our loved ones faults; we choose to not lose faith in the power of God. We pray for our loved ones and hope that they will ask God to help them change. No one can change another person; all we can do is pray for them and support them as they make the change. Love never quits! It endures! It perseveres!

Love endures all things. It accepts hardships, rejection, discouragement, troubles and problems that come in life. It knows that love conquers all.

Prophecies on the other hand will fail; tongues will cease; knowledge will vanish. Paul is now contrasting eternal love to temporary gifts. Gifts will one day no longer be needed, but we will always need God's love for us. When Christ comes back the 2nd time, these things will all be completed. Or if we should be called home before His return, then we will see God face to face. All things will be made clear to us, not as they are now, dimly as if in a mirror. The bible is a mirror of God. We see only slightly, we do not have perfect knowledge as God does. But when eternity begins we will see Him clearly, face to face. Since God did not give us our spiritual gifts for our own self interests; are we using them for His glory and the furtherance of His church? Do we use them in His love?

Paul ends chapter 13 with these words; now abide faith, hope, and love, these 3, but the greatest of these is love. Faith is the foundation of God's message. Hope must be our attitude and focus. Love is the action that makes them all come together. Does our faith fully express itself in love for others? Faith enables us to come to God, but love enables us to live with him for ever in heaven and imitate Him here in this life. Are we filled with His love? Do we imitate Him? Does the agape love of God flow thru us and into the lives of others? Amen, let's pray.

