

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Long Beach Alliance Church • November 22nd, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

If I speak with the tongues of men
and of angels, but do not have
love, I have become a noisy gong
or a clanging cymbal...

~1st Corinthians 13:1 (NASB)

1) The Essential Nature Of Love

- A) After detailing how “Christ’s body” (the church) can function through various gifts, ministries, and effects (1st Corinthians 12:4-30), Paul delves deeper to show “a still more excellent way” (12:31) of Spirit-filled living.
- B) Tongues (always listed last in the ministries/giftings of the church) now leads Paul’s first-person apostolic example of Spirit-filled living (13:1). This is further indication that the Corinthians over emphasized the ministry/gift of tongues (see also chapters 12 & 14, especially 14:18-19).
- C) Note that vss. 1-3 all begin with “conditional clauses” (“if I speak...,” “if I have...,” “if I give”), and 13:2-3 has further conditional clauses (“if I have...” & “if I surrender”).
- D) Each of the “if...” clauses is contrasted against “but do not have love...” (13:1-3). The type of “love” to which Paul is referring is a self-sacrificing love, patterned after Jesus.

- E) The description of conditions are so fantastic they become hyperbole (know all mysteries, have all faith...) in order to illustrate the importance of love. Without self-sacrificing love in our gifts/ministries we are left as “nothing” (13:2-3).

- F) Saying that one “is” nothing without love, in spite of phenomenal and extraordinary giftedness, should...
 - i) Cause each of us to consider our gifts more humbly.
 - ii) Develop a deeper desire to personally experience more of Jesus Christ.

2) The Love Of Jesus Is The Excellent Way!

- A) Paul (who was spectacularly gifted, cf. 14:18), calls each of us to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through a genuine experience of Christ’s love (13:4-7).

- B) Following Christ is a response to the love of Jesus Christ. The point is not to “do” love. The point is to experience love (the more excellent way). From this experience of unconditional love, we are able to authentically love others.

- C) Paul is describing God’s love for His people through Jesus Christ. The description of love in 13:4-7 is not meant to reveal an ideal (for wedding ceremonies and such...), as much as it is to highlight the gracious, saving love of Jesus.

- D) It is further notable that Paul does not describe love as a feeling or with descriptive words (adjectives), but in a series of verbs (15 verbs in 13:4-7). Love is active, it does. Love is not conveyed through sweet words, but in authentic action!

- E) Without love, our service/giftedness lacks value. With an authentic love relationship with Jesus, we can show love to the whole world by living in “a still more excellent way.”