

Never Failing Love – 1Corinthians 13:1-8a

Bible Study ~ 5/3/17

Grace Church of Lockeford

This is a chapter that is often ripped out of context or misunderstood. Contrary to the application that is most often taught from this passage, this is not about marital love. This passage appears right in the middle of an explanation of the proper use of Spiritual gifts to a New Testament church that was rife with division, disagreement, and pride. Paul is emphasizing that the most essential aspect of spiritual giftedness is the attitude in which the gifts are exercised. Using your gift correctly is impossible if the attitude in which it is used is one of pride or self-promotion. To exercise a spiritual gift appropriately, there must be love. The examination of these verses reveal three truths about love within the church. **First...**

1. Actions Without Love Are Empty Gestures vv. 1-3

If we were capable of the most exalted speech ever heard. If we could communicate with the eloquence, learning, and grace of an angel, if we could put words together like Spurgeon or Churchill, these abilities would be worthless without love. In fact, what Paul presents here is that they are worse than useless, they are an irritant. A cymbal that is not played correctly, that is off time and out of tune is irritating and discordant. A sounding brass was an empty vase placed at the back of a theatre to amplify the sound. The point is that they were empty. To speak eloquently but without love is to be an empty irritating noise. The opposite of this would be *Ephesians 4:14-15*.

V. 2 speaks of the greatest spiritual insight, an ability to handle the Word that is unparalleled, and the most incredible faith in existence. Even these gifts would be nothing without love! As impressive as it would be to move a mountain by faith, or to fully grasp everything that God has revealed, these are empty without love. They are nothing. They are a puff of breath! V. 3 explains that giving all that we own to feed those who cannot eat is foolishness if there is no love. Giving your body to be burned, the ultimate sacrifice, is empty and worthless if it is not done in love. People do these things in our society without love. The church must not be guilty of this. Going through the motions without the heart is actually damaging to ourselves and others.

What a blessing to know that when we do these things in love, there is great value and joy! **Secondly...**

2. Love Without Actions Are Empty Words vv. 4-7

These verses describe what love is. It does so through both negative and positive statements. Love does this, it does not do that. What is born out here is that we can say we love someone all day long, but if our actions and attitudes do not back up our words, it will be evident that we do not truly love. “Suffers long” is the Greek word μακροθυμέω makrothymeō and is often translated “patient”. I really like the definition given in my Bible software. *To be even-tempered while enduring trying circumstances.* Love is patient no matter how difficult things may get. It is also kind meaning *gentle or sympathetic*. These are both positive statements. Paul then begins with negative ones. “Does not envy”. Love doesn’t want what others have. It is not jealous. “Parade itself” is the idea of boast. Boastful people are obnoxious to be around. That is not to characterize the body of Christ! “Puffed up” is translated elsewhere as proud. Love is not proud. It is not full of itself. It is instead, full of others.

In v. 5 Paul continues with negative statements. Love knows what behavior is appropriate and what is not. Love is not trying to “look out for #1”. Instead, love looks for ways to bless others. Loves’ buttons are hard to push. Someone who is easily angered is not walking in love. Love should also affect our thinking. Evil, what is corrupt and ungodly, has no place in the life of the believer. V. 6 gives us a negative and a positive. Love doesn’t rejoice in iniquity. Love rejoices in truth. We live in the midst of a culture and society that is rejoicing in iniquity. How much more should we rejoice in truth that we might have the opportunity to declare it!

v. 7 closes with four positive statements. Love bears all things. This is the Greek word *στέγω* *stegō* meaning *endure; bear; stand. To endure something unpleasant or difficult whether on one's own behalf or on behalf of someone else. Love is willing to go through unpleasant things for the sake of others!* Someone said something unkind, so what? Love says to let it go. Love also believes all things. This is not speaking of gullibility, but of giving the benefit of the doubt. Not assuming the worst. Hopes all things. The word hope in the NT speaks of a confident expectation. Love recognizes that the expectation of the believer is good! No matter what happens our hope is secure, our eternity is with Christ! Lastly, hope endures. This word speaks of facing things with courage. Love can be courageous because of our hope and because of our God!

The love demonstrated by the body of Christ is to be evidently different from anything seen in the world. The blessing is that when we function in this way, the body of Christ is attractive to others. That is as it should be. Believers living and working together in love should make people long to be a part of the body! **Lastly...**

3. Never Failing Love Is The Only Real Love v. 8a

Just three words, but they are so powerful! Real love, never fails. Anything else is not real love! This love our culture speaks of, a love that you can fall in and out of, that is not love! That is an emotion. True love is never failing because true love is centered on Christ! The love we are to display in the exercising of Spiritual gifts, never fails. Not sometimes fails, never.

What a blessing to know that God's love never fails! We are called to demonstrate that same love to others. That is a tall order, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is doable.

CHALLENGE: Love with a Christ focused, never-failing, love!

v. 1
Love – *ἀγάπη* *agapē* love. Love (Christian) – a strong, non-sexual affection and regard for a person and their good as understood by God's moral character; especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges in another person's behalf. Noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

Clanging – *ἀλαλάζω* *alalazō* wail; clash. To clang – to make a loud, resonant, repeating noise. Verb, present, active, participle, singular, nominative, neuter.

v. 2
Prophecy – *προφητεία* *prophēteia* prophecy. Prophecy (ability) – the ability to deliver representative declarations of the mind, will, or knowledge of God. Noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

Mysteries – *μυστήριον* *mystērion* mystery. Divine secret – a secret whose concerned party is a deity alone and those to whom he chooses to share the information; especially concerning the method and history of God's redemption or other supernatural information. Noun, accusative, plural, neuter.

Knowledge – *γνώσις* *gnōsis* knowledge. Cognitive content – the sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned. Noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

Remove – *μεθίστημι* *methistēmi* remove; turn away; mislead. To remove – to remove something concrete, as by lifting, pushing, or taking off; also to remove something abstract. Verb, present, active, infinitive.

Nothing – *οὐδείς* *oudeis* nothing. Nothing – a quantity of no importance. Adjective, nominative, singular, neuter.

v. 3
Bestow – *ψομίζω* *psōmizō* feed; give away bit by bit. To dole out (feed) – to dole out, conceived of as continually providing bites of food. Verb, aorist, active, subjunctive, first person singular.

v. 4

Suffers long – μακροθυμέω makrothymeō *be patient. To be patient (enduring) – to be even-tempered while enduring trying circumstances.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person singular.

Kind – χρηστεύομαι chrēsteuomai *be kind. to be kind (gentle) – to be or become warmhearted, considerate, humane, gentle, and sympathetic.* Verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, third person, singular.

Envy – ζηλώω zēloō *be jealous; strive for. To be envious – to be or become painfully desirous of another's advantages.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person singular.

Parade itself – περπερεύομαι perperēuomai *boast. to be boastful – to be or become boastful and exhibiting self-importance.* Verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, third person singular.

Puffed up – φυσιώω physioō *make proud; puff up. To be proud (be puffed up) – to be or become proud, conceived of as being puffed up with air.* Verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular.

v. 5

Behave rudely – ἀσχημονέω aschēmoneō *behave dishonorably. To behave unbecomingly – to not behave in keeping with accepted standards of what is right or proper in certain social groups.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.

Provoked – παροξύνομαι paroxynomai *provoke; urge on. To be provoked – to be or become incited or stirred up (in one's emotions, feelings, or reactions); can be positive or negative.* Verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular.

v. 6

Iniquity – ἀδικία adikia *injustice; unrighteousness. Unrighteousness – failure to adhere to moral principles, commands, or laws.* Noun, dative, singular, feminine.

v. 7

Bears – στέγω stegō *endure; bear; stand. To bear (endure) – to endure something unpleasant or difficult whether on one's own behalf or on behalf of someone else.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.

Hopes – ἐλπίζω elpizō *hope; put one's hope. To hope (expectant) – to be confidently and reasonably expectant of a future event.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.

Endures – ὑπομένω hypomenō *endure. To endure (withstand) – to face and withstand with courage.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.

v. 8

Fails – ἐκπίπτω ekpiptō *fall; fall off.* Verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular.