

Love – The Evidence of Faith

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

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Recognizing, as I told a congregation a few nights ago, that life is so short the remaining days that we have on this earth and death is so certain, so certain. It is appointed unto men once to die and judgment is so sure; after that, judgment and eternity, eternity. Oh, eternity.

Somebody tried to describe eternity one time. He said that if a little bird would pick up a grain of sand off one of the beaches in Florida and take it to the moon and drop it and turn around and fly all the way back and get another grain of sand and take it to the moon and drop it and fly all the way back and get another grain of sand, when he had taken all the sand off all the beaches in all the world and transferred it to the moon, eternity will have just begun.

You think about that.

We sing, “When we have been there 10,000 years,” 10 million, million, millions years, eternity is ever and always and eternity is a long time.

And when I think about eternity, when I think about death and judgment and eternity I want to be sure of my relationship with Christ Jesus. I just do not want to take for granted that which is all important. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?

I can’t think of anything more horrible. It just frightens me to even consider it, of going through this life with a religious profession, orthodoxy, activities, Bible studies and then to stand before the master and hear him say, “I never knew you. I never knew you.”

And I know we read that in the Bible and we say, “Well, that means somebody else.” Well, somebody else said it means somebody else, too. And that somebody else says it means somebody else. But Christ said it means many, many. And I just cannot...I just cannot take for granted that somewhere there is a place of rest between presumption and despair.

Brother Terry Woerden said the other night, he said, when I look within I get depressed. When I look at others I get distressed. When I look at him I find rest. If I could just look to him.

Bonar once said, “Beloved...beloved, let us love for love is of God. In God alone love has its true abode. Beloved, let us love for those who love, they only are his sons, born from above. Beloved, let us love for love is rest and he who loveth not remains unblest. Beloved, let us love. In God’s love is light and he that loveth not, whatever his profession, dwells in the night. Beloved, let us love for only thus shall we ever behold that Lord who loveth us.”

You know, religion without love for Christ—Bill mentioned this in his prayer—loving Christ, loving Christ, loving Christ. Religion without love for Christ and others is like a human body without life. Everything is there but the one important thing. Life.

It is offensive. And it needs to be buried from sight as quickly as possible. And religion without love is offensive and it needs to be taken out of sight. Religion without love is like a contaminated well. The water is there, but it is poison. And a sign should be warned, “Do not drink this water. Do not drink this water. It will kill.”

Religion without love is like the kiss of Judas which hides the fatal sword.

Religion without love is a form of godliness which denies the power. It is a cloak of hypocrisy covering an unregenerate heart. It is a house built on the sand which shall fall. It is a branch which bears no fruit and must be cast into the fire. It is a religion without Christ, having no hope and without God in this world.

“But, brother Mahan, don’t you believe in God?”

Oh, I do believe in God. I believe in God very strongly. I believe in God. I believe there is one God, don’t you? I don’t think I have ever had a conflict with that article of faith of faith. I believe in God. But yet David said, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘No God.’” Only a fool would say there is no God. Is that right? Only a fool.

And then James comes along and says, “Thou believest there is one God. Thou doest well. The devil believes there is one God and trembles.”

Well, I need to believe God. But yet in this matter of salvation there is something else that happens besides just believing there is one God. Is that right? Evidently.

All right. I believe man is a sinner, but yet Esau believed he was a sinner and Judas came back and cast the money on the temple floor and said, “I betrayed innocent blood” and went out and hanged himself. He was a despairing sinner .

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and yet I want to show you two Scriptures. Turn to Matthew 8:29. Now, listen to this, Matthew 8:29, Matthew 8:29. And I am not trying to discourage anyone. I am certainly not trying to discourage myself, but I am trying to examine my heart. I am trying to find the presence of Christ there, not just the doctrine of Christ. Do you understand what I am saying?

Paul said, “I travail until Christ be formed in you.” He said, “Christ in you, that is the hope of glory.” And I want to find Christ in me. I want to find him, his presence, his power, his grace and his love. That is what I want to find, not just the doctrines of Christ or the theology of Christ or the correct orthodoxy. I want to find him. I want to find a devotion to him, an affection for him, separation to him. I want to find such love for him that the love for this world is losing its glitter.

All right. Listen to Matthew eight, Matthew 8:29. Now watch this. Well, I start with verse 28, Matthew 8:28. “And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes there met him two possessed with devils coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out.” Who cried out? The devils cried out. “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God.” Here are the devils, Mike, confessing that he is the Son of God. They knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and confessed it.

They said, “Are you come hither to torment us before the time?” These demons believed in Christ’s sovereignty and purpose. That’s right. They knew that he had earmarked a time for their destruction and they said, “Have you come to get us before the time?” Well, that’s belief in sovereignty, isn’t it? And you are the Son of God. Right?

Let’s try Luke four. Look at this. Luke chapter four. Luke chapter four. I had an interesting time looking at this message for tonight. Luke four, verse 34. Let’s start with 33. Luke 4:33. Now, what I am saying is I believe in one God and I believe man is a sinner. I am a sinner. I can’t justify any of my actions or thoughts that have been against God. I believe Jesus Christ the Son of God. But listen to this, Luke 4:33. “And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil and cried out with a loud voice saying, “Let us alone. Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the holy one of God.” Isn’t that something? The holy one of God.

We say people say, well, if they confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God he is saved. Is he? Now, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Is he, now? That’s not what took place there in those two Scriptures. These demons out of hell knew who he was and confessed. Thou art the holy one of Israel. Thou art the Son of God.

And then I believe he was crucified and rose again. In other words, I say this, that through study and through searching the Scriptures and through preparing messages and studying other writers and listening to other preachers and through the years of theological preparation and so forth, I can systematically take this Bible—systematically and logically—and I can arrive at truthful consequences and conclusions. Can I not? That is absolutely true. I can arrive at those conclusions regarding the purpose of God, regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ just as the Pharisees read the Old Testament Scriptures and walked in them. They walked in the law. They adhered to the facts. They walked in the ceremonies. They walked in the rituals. They did all of these things. But yet they had a dead religion, a dead religion.

Now, here is...here is what I am faced with. I am faced with four things .I am going to give you four things here tonight. I see the importance of this thing called love, love for Christ, love for Christ, love for one another, the importance of this thing called love. I have got to have an experience of grace. I have got to have the regenerating work of the Spirit of God that makes me not only a theologian, but a son of God, a believer; the importance of love.

Secondly, I am going to look at the superiority of love, the superiority of this thing called love. Then, thirdly, I am going to look at the nature of love and then last of all, the permanence of love.

Now, let's look at the importance of love. Let me just quote some Scripture. I won't have you look at all of these. But it says in John 13:35, our Lord is speaking to his disciples and he said, "By this shall men know you are my disciples . You are children of God. You are my disciples," by what? "If you love one another, if you honestly, sincerely love one another. That is how they are going to know you are my disciples."

And then in 1 John 3:14 John wrote this, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." How do we know that? "Because we genuinely honestly love the brethren." In other words, the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. It is not just a head doctrine and a mental acceptance of facts, we sincerely and genuinely have the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of love in here. We are here to really love one another. "For he that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

And then in 1 John 4:7-8 listen to this Scripture. "Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. Love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knows God." Now, think about that. "Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. God is love. And everyone that loveth, genuinely loveth, sincerely, loveth, is born of God and actually knows almighty God." It is not a feigned love. It is not a hypocritical love. It is not a love in word only, it is a love in truth.

Listen to 1 John 4:12. "If we love one another God dwells in us."

1 John 4:16. "God is love and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God dwells in him."

And then 1 John 4:20. "If a man say, "I love God and hates his brother, hates his brother, he is a liar. He is a liar." That is hard language isn't it? But if a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother he is a liar. He who loves God loves his brother also. So love, true God given love in the spirit of grace and love is the literal commandment of Christ. He said, "This is my commandment that you love one another." It is the evidence of work of grace. It is the fruit of the Holy Ghost.

Turn to Galatians five, verse 22, Galatians 5:22. And Paul writes here in this verse, Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit..." This is the fruit of the Spirit. This is that

which the Holy Spirit produces if he dwells within us. And that fruit of the Spirit is love. That is the first thing mentioned. “Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law.”

Actually, true love is the fulfilling of the law.

Let me show you three passages. Look at Galatians five while you are over there, verse 14. Love is actually...we keep talking about the law, the law this, the law that. Actually, love, true love, God given love shed abroad in the Holy Ghost in the heart by the Holy Ghost is the fulfillment of the law. Read verse 14. “But for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill towards his neighbor.”

Let me show you two other verses. Turn to Romans 13, Romans chapter 13, verse eight through 10, Romans 13:8-10. Listen to this. Romans 13:8-10. “Owe no man anything but to love one another.” Fulfill this duty, this Christian responsibility, this commandment of Christ and actually love one another. “For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet. If there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. For love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Is that not what it says? Love is actually the fulfilling of the law.

One other verse over in Matthew 22, Matthew chapter 22. I am reading verse 37 through 40. Let’s start with verse 36, Matthew 22:36...verse 35. Let’s go back one more. “Then one of them which was a lawyer asked him a question, tempting him and saying, ‘Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’”

All right, my second point and for this I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 13 again. Now, we... it is clear from the Scripture the importance of love, the importance of love, the love of God in our hearts, the love of God expressed in our lives. Now the superiority of love.

At the close of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul has exhorted believers to covet the best gifts. Now, I am not going to speak on these gifts of tongues and so forth. That’s not my subject tonight. I have preached on that before. I am not even going into it. But there were apostles and prophets and teachers and miracle workers and those who spoke in other languages and those who had special gifts of healing in the early church. You know that and I know that. And Paul says here, look at verse 31. “Covet these best gifts. Covet earnestly the best gifts. Covet to preach. Covet to pray. Covet to honor God in whatever field of service.” But, listen to verse 31, “Yet I show you a more excellent way. I’ll show you something better than speaking in another language. I will show you something better. I might be a master at Greek and Hebrew and Spanish and French and

German and whatever. But I will show you something better than that. I will show you something,” he said, “better than knowledge. I may have the greatest library in the churches today.”

I had a friend that had a library that would cover all four walls of this building right here without a doubt, these four walls from ceiling to floor. He had a lot of money and he just spent a lot of...everything he had buying all the old puritans and all the writings of all the great church fathers. He had them all. And he knew what was in many of them. But I show you something better than knowledge and doctrine, credentials. I will show you something better than talent, offices and deeds. And that is a true, a true heart love for Christ and his people, his gospel, his word, his children.

And that is what he is saying in verse one. Now, you watch the chapter 13. “Thou I speak with the tongues of men.” Suppose I could...when I go to Mexico or other places I speak through an interpreter and a lot of times I think, “Boy, I wish I could preach in this language. I wish I could preach in Spanish and French and...” But suppose I could. Suppose I could. Suppose I could even...I have had the ability of an orator, like an angel, like an angel’s voice. And yet it says, look at verse one, “If I have that ability to speak in tongues and languages and have the ability to orate like an angel and I have not love, if I have not love I only make an irritating noise with my mouth. I am irritating to people.” Isn’t that something? I am a sounding brass. A sounding brass is irritating. It is an irritating sound. A tinkling cymbal is irritating. Suppose you had to hear that all night, just tinkle, tinkle and the brass... But yet that’s what religious wrangling and...it really is. It is just a sounding brass. It’s irritating to the ear.

There has got to be the affection and compassion of Christ or it is...preaching is irritating and arguing is irritating and indoctrinating is irritating and standing for our what we believe is irritating if there is not the love of Christ in it. That is what I am saying.

Look at the next verse. “And though I have the gift of prophecy, I have the gift of preaching and I understand the mysteries. I can take you through all the mysteries and all knowledge. And though I have great faith, I display great faith so that I can remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing.”

Now, I am something in the eyes of men. People are well acquainted with me and they know about me and I am somebody in the eyes of men. But before God I am nothing if I don’t have that love.

And then the third thing, verse three, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor.”

You say, “Why would a man do that?”

Why did Ananias do it? Why did the people in Matthew seven do it? They did it to attract attention. They did it to earn a way to heaven. They did it to establish a

righteousness. There are several reasons why men would do that, why they would give their goods to feed the poor other than for the glory of Christ.

“And though I give my body to be burned. I so believe my doctrine that I will fight for it, bleed for it and die for it. And I have not love? Well, it won’t profit me anything.”

So love is so essential that what Paul is saying here, a man may have every thing that is admired and coveted and yet if he has not love he has nothing.

All right, thirdly, quickly. The nature of love. All right. Let’s look at this starting with verse four. The nature of love. We have all kind of definitions of love. One of the best I have ever heard was someone gave it to me, a brief definition. It said, “Love is a principle in the heart that wishes to bestow the best that it can in every area on the object of its affection.” That’s a pretty good definition. “Love is a principle in the heart that really wishes to bestow the very best that it can in every area upon the object of its affection.” That’s real love.

But here is a definition from the Word of God. This love, this love that we desire, this love that I pant after, this love that I want desperately, this love, this evidence of faith, first of all he says in verse four, “Love suffereth long.”

“What does that mean, preacher?”

It means love, true love, true God given love, is patient. It is patient. It is long suffering. It is patient with the faults of others, with the failures of others. Patient. And many of you know that. You have demonstrated that. You have demonstrated that especially in those that are nearest to you. But this love of Christ has got to reach out to those that are not in your inner circle.

We are awful patient with ourselves. If we could be as patient with others as we are with ourselves that would be something, wouldn’t it? But that is love. It is patient. It is not easily offended and given to wrath. Love restrains itself. It suffereth long. It is patient.

Look at this. And love is kind. It is tender. Love is not harsh. Love is gentle. Love is compassionate. Love is tender.

“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ’s sake forgave you.” Love is kind. It’s just gentle, gentle and compassionate and affectionate.

And then love envieth not. Someone said, “nothing is so adverse to love as envy.” Love envieth not. Nothing is so adverse to love as jealousy and envy. They just don’t go together.

For love is made happy by the happiness of another. Love is made happy by the prosperity of another. Love does not envy another’s blessing. It rejoices in another’s blessing.

I can give you an illustration of that. If my son or my daughter or my son-in-law or my daughter-in-law or my children or my grandchildren, you know, that's that inner circle, if one of them got a promotion I would rejoice. If one of them got some accolades or recognition, I'd rejoice. I wouldn't be envious, would I? Not at all. Because it is happening to me. They are mine.

Well, love does not envy. If you really love someone you rejoice in their happiness, their prosperity and their blessing. You do not envy that person if you really love him. And I showed you that, how we react towards our own, don't we? Well, we need that same regard for the whole family of God.

And watch this. "Love vaunteth not itself." What does vaunteth itself? It makes no parade, a parade of our intelligence and a parade of our guilts and a parade of our prosperity. Love does not make a parade or a pride and conceit and superiority.

It says, "Love is not puffed up." Love looketh on the needs of others. Love does not make a parade. It does not vaunt itself. It is not puffed up. It is not filled with conceit and pride.

And verse five, "Love doth not behave itself unseemly." That is, rude. Love is not rude. Love is not unmannerly. Sometimes I watch people who say they are Christians in restaurants and in airports and other places. And they can get pretty rude with people, especially with waitresses and clerks. That's unmannerly. That's rude.

True love produces courtesy. It does, now; humility, kindness. True love reaches out. It is not rude and unmannerly.

And "Love seeketh not her own," my rights.

I am so tired of hearing, "my rights." I'm just tired of hearing of everybody's rights. Do you know something? We don't have any rights. Our Lord has the crown rights. We lost our rights. We forfeited our rights, didn't we, when we rebelled against God. We don't have any rights. I don't have any rights whatsoever except what God gives me. I don't deserve anything. Do you deserve anything? Who made you to differ? What do you have that you didn't receive. And if you received it why do you glory?

Love does not demand my way, my rights, my will.

Are we like those folks that we can get along fine as long as things are going our way, as long as people are doing what we want them to do, go where we want them to go, eat where we want them to eat, do what we want them to do? We want our rights and our will and our way. Are we that way? That is not love.

And then he says, "Love..." This is God's definition, not Henry T's, now. "Love is not..." And this is what I want. This is what Henry T. wants. It is what I want

above...well, I say above all things, above all things. I want a love for Christ and a love for you above all things because I tell you, he that loveth is born of God. That's what it says. Isn't that what it says? He that loveth is born of God. And he that loveth not knoweth not God.

And that's why I am so interested in this subject. That is why I am so interested.

“And by this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

You blame me for being interested?

All right. “Love is not easily provoked.” Sensitive. Oh, I tell you. We are so sensitive, touchy. We are so touchy. Be careful. We are so easily offended. We are so resentful, just a word, you know, we are touchy. Folks want you to walk around eggshells around d us, keep making us mad.

I remember when I was a boy at home my mother stayed in a dither trying to keep my dad from losing his temper. She stayed in a dither around the house trying to keep him...don't upset your daddy. Don't upset your daddy.

That's awful, isn't it? Are we that way? Somebody has to run interference to keep folks from upsetting us.

“Love thinketh no evil.” What does that mean? It means it doesn't carry a suspicious nature around, looking for something, looking for faults in others. Look. Love thinketh no evil. Love doesn't look for a weak spot. Love doesn't look for something wrong with a fellow. Love looks for something good about a fellow. Isn't that right? It thinketh no evil. It thinketh no evil. It does not carry a suspicious nature which always reads between the lines.

And then watch this. “Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.” It doesn't rejoice in the fall of someone else. Love is never glad when others go wrong. Love is never glad when others fail. Love rejoices in good and in truth. See that? Love rejoices not in iniquity, rejoices not.

“I told you he would fall. I told you.”

I'm talking about believers, now. Love rejoiceth in the truth. Now watch this verse seven. “Loveth beareth all things.”

I want you to turn to the book of Proverbs a minute. I looked that over here in the Proverbs and I found several Scriptures that fit this love beareth all things, beareth all things. All right, Proverbs, let's look at Proverbs 10, verse 12, Proverbs 10:12. “Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covers all sins.” Love beareth all things, covers.

Look at Proverbs 11:13, right across the page. “A talebearer revealeth secrets, but he that is a faithful spirit, he will conceal the matter.” He is not going to tell it. He is going to conceal it.

And then Proverbs 17:9. Listen to this. Proverbs 17:9, Proverbs 17:9, “He that covereth a transgression, covereth a fall, covereth a failure seeketh love. But he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.” Oh, that is powerful, isn’t it? Love beareth all things.

And love believeth all things. Look back at our text. “Love believeth all things.” And love believes the best, Moffet said. “And love hopeth all things.” What love can’t see it hopes for. And “Love endureth all things.”

What does that mean? That means that love will endure years, trials, sorrows, disappointments, hurt feelings. Love will endure all of those things.

I think we have the evidence of that here in many circumstances and situations. People who love each other and have loved each other a long time, a long time.

And our Lord, it says of our Lord, “Having loved his own he loved them to the end.”

Now, here is the last, the permanence of love, point number four. Verse eight, “Love never faileth.”

Someone said this. “Love never ceases in this life nor in the life to come because love is of God. Love is the gift of God and the life of God so love can’t quit.” It is impossible.

Now look at verse eight. “Whether there be prophecies they shall fail and whether there be tongues...” You just think. These tongues here are going to give way to heavenly language, Charlie. They are going to cease some day. All the tongues speaking and languages people are...going to give way to a heavenly language.

And then “whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away.” And that means this. That means some day our knowledge, which is so limited, look at the next verse, “We know in part, we prophesy in part.” Our knowledge...you know, I said a while ago I have been studying the Bible all these years. Compared to what I will know in glory I don’t know anything, nothing, absolutely nothing, just that much. I may know more than the fellow over there, but both of us put together still don’t know much. Some day we will. And that is all going to vanish. Our tongues and our gifts and our prophecies and our knowledge, verse 10, “But when that which is perfect,” the presence of our Lord, the glory of our Lord, the... “I shall know as I am known. That which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” All these things that we are playing with, that seem so big, so important, so colossal, so vast, so time consuming. For he said, in verse 11, “When I was a child I spake like a child.” And that is what I am speaking like right now is a child, just a child compared with how I will speak then, what I will know then.

That's right, Richard. I am just a little boy. "I spake like a child. I understood like a child. I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man I put away these childish things. I put away my stilts I walked on and my top I used to spin and my little wheel. I ran down the road with that piece of wire, you know, to make it turn. I don't play with those things anymore.

But I'll tell you. The very things that I am wrapped up in now, I am going to put them away, too. I am going to put them away, too, because they are just like...I have to stay with the toys because that's all I got. I have got to stay with my limited understanding because that's all I can understand and my knowledge and my preaching. And it is so juvenile.

But I will tell you, verse 12, "We see through a glass dimly and darkly, but then face to face." Think of it, face to face with my redeemer, face to face. How can it be? When in rapture I shall behold him, Jesus Christ who died for me. Think about it. Now I know in part, what a puny part. But then I will know as he knows me. I will know him.

"So now abideth faith."

I preached on that this morning. Faith, the evidence of grace. I believe. God help my unbelief. "Now abideth hope." I believe...I believe we have a good hope, a good hope in Christ, a living hope, a good hope, a good hope through grace and love. These three. That's what we better be concerned about, taken up with.

But do you know the greatest of the three? It is love. It is love. Faith, someday will give way to sight, a full revelation. I won't need any faith in glory. I am going to see him as he is, right? And hope is going to give way to reality. I am not going to have any hope in heaven. I am going to have reality.

But now wait a minute. Love is going to be the same. It is not going to change. That is what he is implying here, is that love does not change. It is the same. The same love that I will have for him there I have for him now if I have it, the same love.

And that is the reason in the next chapter, verse one of chapter 14, Paul says, "Make love your aim. Follow after love." Love for Christ and that love for Christ will give us love for others.

Well, I hope this is a blessing. Mike, you come lead us in a song.