

Make Love Your Aim

Sunday, October 25th, 1992

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I'll be speaking to you this morning, from the Book of First Corinthians Chapter 13. If you would like to follow along with me in your Bible, I'm going to be going (I hope), verse-by-verse, and not only verse by verse, but also almost word-by-word through this 13th Chapter of First Corinthians.

I want you to look first at First Corinthians 14. I want you to look at the first verse. It starts this way: "*Follow after charity.*" The word "*charity*" means love; follow after love. The amplified version or the Berkley says this, "*Make love your aim.*" Make love your goal and aim. That is what he is saying in First Corinthians 14:1, "Make love your aim and goal." The title of this message will be: "Make Love Your Aim."

A preacher friend of mine wrote an article and sent it to me recently. He asked this very thought-provoking question. I want you to listen very carefully to it. He said, "What is the area of my life, (he didn't say yours or somebody else's, he's talking about himself) what is the area of my life (if it applies to me it applies to you and every believer) to which I should give the most attention, if I would serve and walk with Christ in the way that He would have me walk?" Do you understand the question? "What is the area of my life to which I ought to give the most attention if I am going to serve Christ and walk with Christ and glorify Christ in the way that He would have me serve Him?"

The preacher continued, thinking out loud. He said, “Well, many thoughts ran through my mind and then I discovered the answer, the area of my life to which I should give the most attention if I am to glorify Christ.” Peter expressed it this way, he said, “*Above all things have sincere love among yourselves,*” (above everything).

Our Lord declared this, He said, “*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another.*” That is the way that folks are going to know that you belong to Me and that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

In the last verse of First Corinthians Chapter 13 (which is before the apostle Paul said, “Make love your aim, or follow after charity”), he said, “*And now abideth faith, hope and love.*”

Somebody might say, “Preacher, you’re coming at this thing backwards.”

Are you familiar with it? “*And now abideth faith,*” by which we look to Christ. It is faith, by which we find in Christ all we need. It is a faith that looks to Jesus, (which I talked about last week). That is the faith He is talking about. Also, “*Now abideth hope*” that blessed hope, that good hope and that “*good hope through grace.*” It is a sure hope. It is a hope in which we wait for the fulfillment of what He promised. “*Now abideth faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.*” Isn’t that what He says there? “*The greatest of these is love.*”

Why is love the greatest of these? Is love greater than faith? Is love greater than hope? Love is the greatest. Oh yes, that is what He said! I tell you this; it is the moving cause of God’s grace to you and me. Love is the moving cause; “*For God so loved that He gave. Herein is love, not that we love God, He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin.*”

So, love is the greatest because love goes clear back to eternity past. Love is what motivated God to give us grace in Christ and to choose us in Christ. “*He chose us in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children.*” We didn’t love Him; He loved us. He said, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.*” That is why it is the greatest.

Love preceded faith. Love preceded hope. Love was before faith. Love is the greatest evidence that we have faith. By this, shall everybody know that you have true faith, if you love Me; you’re My disciples if you love.

Love is what motivates all true obedience. *“It is the love of Christ that constraineth me.”* If we don’t do what we do out of the love for Christ, if that is not the motive, forget it! God will not accept anything that is not motivated out of love for Him. He will not recognize it.

Love is the only one that will endure of the three, (faith, hope and love). Faith, one day, will not be needed. When I see Him face to face, what will I need with faith? When I see Christ, faith will be a thing of the past.

Hope is going to vanish some day. Hope is going to give way to reality. That which we see, we don’t hope for. I hope to be like Christ and one day I’m going to be like Christ. There will be no more hope because I’m going to be just like Him.

Love is the same. It’s the character of the kingdom of God. It is the character of those who live in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is love. *“He that loveth not, knoweth not God.”*

Paul writes in First Corinthians 14, *“Follow after love.”* Make love your aim. If you don’t you are going to miss faith and you will certainly miss hope. The reason is, *“The greatest of these is love.”*

All the reasons are given in First Corinthians 13. Would you look at First Corinthians 13 with me?

Look at verse 1: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels; and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”* I may speak with the words and eloquence of an angel. Wouldn’t that be something? I may preach in other languages and tongues but if I don’t have love for Christ and love for His people, then I am no more effective than a (loud-sounding gong).

You know, an old-sounding gong, an old-ringing gong will make your ears rattle. The tinkling cymbal may worry your nerves. That is how important love is. I may speak with the words and eloquence of an angel. The tongues and languages of many people will be of no avail and will be ineffective if I don’t love Christ and His people.

Look at verse 2: *“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”*

I'd like to be able to preach. I write to people who write to me and I say, "Pray for me that God will give me wisdom and power and grace to preach the gospel of Christ." I want the gift of prophecy and preaching, that I might understand the mysteries of scripture. I may have great knowledge of hidden truth; I may even work miracles and have faith to move mountains; (do you see that in verse 2)? If I have not love, I am nothing.

What is that great preacher? Without love he is nothing. What is that great mind that can delve into the great mysteries of the Word of God and take us into those hidden truths and treasures? Without love he is nothing. Who is this man that has the knowledge of the hidden truths and can bring about great miracles? If he has not love; he is nothing. That is what it says, doesn't it?

Look at verse 3: "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*" I may even be generous and give my goods to feed the poor. I may pay tithes to the church and help with so many worthwhile projects. Did not they say at the judgment, "*We preached in your name? We cast out devils and did so many wonderful works.* He said, "*I never knew you; depart from Me; you are workers of iniquity.*" Well, I may be generous and give my goods to feed the poor. Why would a person do that if he didn't love the poor?

Oh, there are a lot of reasons. Because a man is generous doesn't mean that he loves. That's right! There are a lot of reasons. Do you remember Ananias and Sapphira? They gave and they gave generously. They sold their house and land and gave generously. They kept back part of it. Why did they do that? They did it for recognition. Their hearts were not right with God. They did it for recognition.

What about the Pharisee in the temple who said, "*I give alms to feed the poor? I give alms to the poor; I tithe; I give alms to the poor.*" Why did he do it? He did it for righteousness. That is why he was doing it. He wanted to be accepted of God because of his good deeds.

What about the people in Matthew 7? Why did they do many wonderful works and preach in His name and cast out devils? Why were they doing it? They were trying to gain acceptance into heaven for reward. That's why they were doing it. They wanted a reward.

Love is so essential; do you see what I am saying? Do you see what Paul is saying? Love is so essential and so indispensable that a man may have outstanding gifts and speak with the tongues of men and of angels. A man may have outstanding, talents, the

gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and have faith to move mountains. A man may have great qualities of generosity and give his goods to feed the poor but without love; he is nothing. He has nothing and he does nothing. *“He’s like a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal;”* he’s nothing.

You see, my friends; make sure and take note of this; this love that we are talking about, the love which is the character of His kingdom, the love of Christ for us; *“We love Christ because He first loved us.”* None of this originates with us. *“Love is the gift of God.”* Listen to this; love is the commandment of Christ. He said, *“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I loved you.”* Love is the evidence of life. Christ said, *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”* It is a special family. It is a special unit. His people love each other, they love God and they love one another.

Love is the fruit of the Spirit. Love is the first word mentioned when He describes the fruit of the Spirit. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace and longsuffering.”* But love is the first word mentioned. Love is the gift of God; *“It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of God.”*

Love is not a prerogative. A Christian ought to love a Christian. No, he will! It’s not a prerogative it is what I ought to do. It’s not a prerogative and it is not a priority. No, it’s not our priority. It’s not the privilege of the few; it is the principle of the kingdom of God. It is a possession of everybody who is born of God. *“He that loveth is born of God.”* Do you see what I am saying? Christ’s love for us and our love for Him and our love for one another is not a prerogative; it’s not a priority; it’s not a privilege of the few; it is the principle of the very kingdom of God. It is the principle of the nature of faith. It is the principle of that new heart.

Christ said, *“I will put a new heart in you and I will take out the stony heart of hate and malice and give you a new heart, and that new heart is a heart of love.”* It is the very principle and possession of that heart. *“He that loveth not, knoweth not God.”* That is what First John 4:8 says. It is not what a fellow ought to do; it is what he will do. It is what he can’t do of himself.

That is the reason salvation is of the Lord. That is why I am preaching to you that salvation is a miracle. I know I’m talking about a miracle; I am talking about something that no man can do. *“With men it is impossible to please God. With God, all things are possible.”*

Our Lord said, *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”* The disciples said, *“Well, who can be saved?”* Christ said, *“With men it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.”*

God can turn a blasphemer into a preacher of the gospel. Look at Saul of Tarsus. God can turn an idolater into His friend, as He did Abraham, who talks with Him face to face. It is a miracle!

“If a man says that I love God and hates his brother; he is a liar. How can we love God whom we have not seen if we don’t love our brother who we have seen?” Do you see what I am saying? This is the very nature and principle of the kingdom of God.

Paul reveals the character of that love, beginning at verse 4: *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”*

What is it like? What is this love of God and the love of His people and the love for one another? Well, listen, in verse 4 it says, *“Love suffers long.”* What He is saying is that love is patient with others. Love doesn’t give up so easily.

One might say, *“Well, I’m through with you.”* No, love is not through with you; it suffers long and is patient. Love is kind. *“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, and forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake forgave you.”* That is the basis; love is kind.

Love does not envy or envieth not. Love does not envy the one it loves. Isn’t that right? True love rejoices in the gifts and the blessings and the happiness of that person whom he loves. He rejoices; he doesn’t envy that person. *“Love envieth not.”*

“Love is not puffed up.” Puffed up means to be proud or arrogant. Pride is arrogant but love is not. What do we have to be proud of? What do we have in which to boast? *“Who maketh thee to differ? What do you have that you didn’t receive? I am what I am by the grace of God.”* Paul said, *“I labor more abundantly than all of you, yet not I; it wasn’t Paul it was Christ that dwelleth in me.”* Love is not proud and puffed up.

In verse 5, it says, *“Love does not behave itself unseemly.”* What does that mean; love doesn’t behave itself unseemly? It means that love is not rude. When you meet rude people and unmannerly people, they don’t know anything about love. Love is not rude and unmannerly. Love produces humility, graciousness, and courtesy.

Watch this, in verse 5, *“Love seeketh not her own.”* Boy, we know something about this in this day don’t we? It is always “my rights!” There was a really popular song: “I’m Going To Do It My Way.” It’s always my way and my pleasure. Whatever it costs everybody else, it is still my way. This is selfish! This is self-centered. This is not love. *“Love seeketh not her own. Love looks on the things of others, not on their own things.”*

That is where we talk about Mothers loving their children. A mother cannot love her child and seek her own. She doesn’t even seek her own rest or her own desires and happiness. She seeks the happiness of her child and finds her happiness in that child’s happiness, progress, growth and blessing. That is love!

“Love is not easily provoked.” What does the word provoked mean in verse 5? It means (touchy). It is people that are easily offended. They are always feeling slighted. The least little thing and they feel offended and slighted and so touchy. You feel like you have to walk on eggshells around those folks. They don’t love. *“Love is not easily provoked.”*

Look at the next line *“Love thinketh no evil.”* Love does not look for faults in other people. It doesn’t carry a suspicious nature around all the time. You may see two people talking and wonder if they are talking about you. You may see a man and a woman together and you wonder what they are doing. This is a very suspicious nature. It thinks evil. Love doesn’t do that; love thinks the best.

In verse 6, it says: *“Love doesn’t rejoice in iniquity.”* Love is never glad when somebody does something wrong. Love is not glad when somebody falls. Are you glad when your children fall? Of course not, I love my children. That same principle ought to reach out to my children and other people’s children. Love does not rejoice when somebody falls or fails.

I will tell you this; I found this out a long time ago. What a man is, (what he really is), he wants other people to be. That’s right! He would like for people to be like him. Now, listen, hear what I’m about to tell you. If a person is evil, they delight in the gossip and they delight to point out the evil in somebody else. If a person is weak, he likes to point out the weakness in somebody else. Someone said, “Misery loves company.” What he is in himself is what he likes to discover in somebody else. It justifies him. Peter said, *“Lord you know all things; you know I love you.”* Nothing delights him more than to find someone who does love God and who honors God and finds delight in God.

“Love does not rejoice in iniquity; it rejoices in the truth.” Do you see that in verse 6? Love does not rejoice when somebody falls, when somebody goes wrong. Evil rejoices

in that. They like to see people fall. They like to find the weakness. They like to find something wrong. It justifies them and makes them feel like they are a little more righteous than that person who fell.

“Love rejoices in truth.” Love rejoices when people do well in truth. What do people talk about? Listen to people talk. Whatever they rejoice in, they talk about it. It may be bad or good. If they are talking bad, that is what they are rejoicing in. Paul talks about this in book of Romans, about people who not only do these things but also delight in other people doing them. Whether it is error, they are sitting around and rejoicing in error.

Look at verse 6; *“Love doesn’t rejoice in iniquity”* (error). It doesn’t rejoice in evil; it rejoices in truth. It likes to talk about good things and pleasant things and delightful things. It rejoices in the things of God. It doesn’t like to talk about evil things.

I tell our folks quite often, especially the men in the prayer room; don’t talk about error and about what people are doing wrong; talk about Christ and His Word. Talk about those who are rejoicing in truth and in God and the gospel. Don’t forget the lovely things and whatsoever things are pure and of good report. Think on these things. Talk about these things. Rejoice in these things. Don’t talk about whatsoever is ugly, no! Talk about the beautiful things in the gospel.

Verse 7; Love, *“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”* Love bears all things. Love covers a multitude of sins. Solomon said, *“Hatred stirreth up strife; love covers all sins. A talebearer reveals secrets; He that is of a faithful spirit will conceal the matter.”* Love beareth all things and covers it. Love believes all things. It is much better to believe the best. Love believes the best.

“Love hopeth all things.” What love can’t see, it hopes for. See what I am saying? *“Love beareth all things, believeth all things and hopeth all things.”* What it doesn’t see, it hopes for. It’s going to get better. *“Love endures all things.”* It will endure trial; it will endure sorrow; it will endure offence; it will endure hurt feelings; it will endure neglect and it will endure disappointment.

Christ did! *“Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he was reproached; he reproached not again.”* Peter said, *“How many times shall I forgive this fellow, seven times?”* The Lord says, *“Seventy times seven.”* Keep on forgiving because in verse 8 it says, *“Love never fails,”* (love never changes, and love never goes away).

Now, that is what I've been saying, "*Now abideth faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love.*" The reason is that faith will give way to sight and hope to reality. Love never goes away. It is the same in the kingdom of heaven as it is here in the kingdom of His dear Son. I know that this is His love for us and it is also our love for Him. Love never fails, never goes away, and never falls. His love will never fail and my love for Him will never cease; it is the gift of God.

Now verse 8, "*Whether there be prophecies; they will fail.*" Whether there be preaching and teaching and prophecies it is going to end. I'm preaching the best I can but I am preaching in part. I know in part whether there be prophesy; it will fail. Whether there be tongues; they will cease; whether there will be ability to speak; it will cease. Someday, the so-called knowledge will fade away. Our knowledge is so limited.

What does He say here in verse 9? "*We know in part, we prophesy in part*" and we haven't touched the outer garment, have we? "*Can you by searching, find out God? Can you know the Almighty to perfection? It is higher than heaven. What can you know? It is deeper than hell. What can you do? It is broader than the sea.*"

All of that is going away. "*When that which is perfect is come, (when the heaven and the new earth is come), that which is in part will be done away.*" My preaching is just in part; my knowledge is just in part; my faith is just in part; my gifts and talents are just in part; but love never fails and never ceases or ends. Make love your aim. Follow after love

"When I was a child; I spake as a child, I understood as a child, and I thought as a child." That is the way I am now, I'm just a child spiritually and I speak and I understand and I think as a child. "*When that which is perfect is come, Christ Jesus, that which is in part shall be done away. Now abideth faith, hope and love but one-day just love.*"

So, make love your aim!