

THE WAY OF LOVE

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13 · AUGUST 4, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

*"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."
(1 Corinthians 13:13)*

Spirit-Gifts and the Greater Way of Love (13:1-3)

- The value of Spirit-gifts: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, service
- The value of Spirit-gifts becomes valueless without love
- The Corinthian confusion about what it means to be 'spiritual' and Paul's Jesus-centered spirituality

What Love Is and How Love Acts (14:4-7)

- The characteristics of love
- The verbal/active aspect of love here
- A reflection on the love of God revealed in Jesus
- A reflection on our love being transformed through God to become more like Jesus

The Enduring Nature of Love (13:8-13)

- The Spirit-gifts that will pass away
- The present experience of limitation and partial knowledge
- The future experience of wholeness and completion
- The trinity of faith, hope, and love with love as the greatest

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced being loved well by someone? What happened?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by

- studying 1 Corinthians 13. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. It's important to keep this portion of Paul's letter within the context of the rest of 1 Corinthians. How would you say verses 1-3 put perspective on the relative value of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12) in relation to true love from God?
 4. Why do you think it might be important for the believers in Corinth to consider this given Paul's discussions with them throughout the letter (you may want to re-read 8:1).
 5. With verses 4-7, Paul writes one of the most famous descriptions of love. What do you notice about the characteristics of love Paul mentions?
 6. What characteristics of love mentioned here do you most struggle with?
 7. How do you think this description of love ties back to Paul's emphasis within this letter on the selfless love of God displayed in Jesus the crucified Messiah?
 8. With verses 8-13, Paul puts both love and spiritual gifts within the context of the future "when completeness comes" with the new heaven and the new earth. How does Paul describe our current situation in these verses?
 9. How does Paul describe our future situation "when completeness comes," in these same verses?
 10. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone this week.

DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 or 13:4-7
- This week set aside time to meditate on 1 Corinthians 13. On your first pass of reading it, ask God to highlight how these words speak about God's love for you and others. Pray about that, asking God to help you grow in your understanding of God's love for you. On your second pass of reading it, ask God to highlight how these words speak to you about your love for others. Pray about that, asking God to help you grow in love.
- Explore some of the following resources:
 - Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*
 - C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*
 - Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*
 - James Bryan Smith, *Embracing the Love of God*