

# How Do I Love Thee?

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*1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

## **INTRODUCTION**

- A. Illustration about Ole and Olga “Communicating Love,” Illustrations Unlimited, p. 323.
- B. There was no love in the Corinthian church.
  - 1. Those who could speak in tongues thought they were superior to those who could not.
  - 2. Yet, Paul here shows that love, not tongue-speaking, is the real measure of Christianity.

## **THE CALL FOR LOVE, vv. 1-3**

- A. Christians need to love.
  - 1. In these three verses, Paul shows that Christian works without love are meaningless.
  - 2. Tongue-speaking without love is meaningless, v. 1.
    - a. One might could speak in the language of men and angels--This one would have the ability to speak in any known or unknown language.
    - b. If one can speak in these languages but does not have love, he is as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
      - 1) These instruments were used in pagan worship.
      - 2) Paul declares that if one can speak in tongues but doesn't have love, the sound he makes is just like the sound of pagan worship—meaningless.
  - 3. Other supernatural gifts without love are meaningless, v. 1.
    - a. He might could have the gift of prophecy so that he could understand all mysteries and knowledge.
    - b. He might have all faith so that he could move mountains.
      - 1) Jesus told the apostles that if they had faith they could move mountains (Mt. 17:20).
      - 2) Judas had supernatural power (Mt. 10:8), yet he did not have love.
    - c. Yet, if he performed these powers without love, he would have nothing.
  - 4. Great Christian deeds without love are meaningless, v. 3.
    - a. He could bestow all his goods to feed the poor.
    - b. He could allow himself to be martyred for the faith.
    - c. Yet, if he did not have love, these deeds would profit him nothing.
- B. Christians must have love.
  - 1. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).
    - a. The commands God has give us dealing with our fellow men can be summed up with “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
    - b. Love is really the essence of Christianity.
    - c. If we do not have love, we can't be Christians.
  - 2. Above everything Christians are to put on love (Col. 3:13).
  - 3. Are you fulfilling the law? Are you loving?

## **THE CONDUCT OF LOVE, vv. 4-7**

- A. Many have the idea that love is some warm, fuzzy feeling.
  - 1. Individuals file for divorce simply because “I don't love him anymore.”
  - 2. Love is more than emotion—it is action.
    - a. We need to show love in deed and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18).
    - b. Paul is going to show us how to love in deed and in truth.
- B. Love suffers long.
  - 1. The term “long-suffering” originally comes from two terms: “long” and “anger.”
  - 2. The idea is that our anger has a long fuse.
- C. Love is kind—Love is gentle in behavior, willing to help.
- D. Love does not envy--Envy refers to being filled with jealousy.
- E. Love does not parade itself.--In other words, love does not play the braggart.
- F. Love is not puffed up--The idea here is being inflated, thinking we are worth more than we really are.
- G. Love does not behave rudely--This refers to behaving in a disgraceful, indecent manner, embarrassing those we love.
- H. Love does not seek it own--Love doesn't watch out for its own interest; it watches out for the interest of others.

- I. Love is not provoked—"Provoke" means to urge on or stimulate; this refers to one who is easily angered.
- J. Love thinks no evil.
  - 1. This phrase is literally "takes no account of evil."
    - a. This pictures one keeping a ledger or notebook of all wrongs committed against him.
    - b. Love does not keep account of wrong.
  - 2. Do you keep account of wrong?
- K. Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.
  - 1. Love does not rejoice when individuals do wrong, love rejoices when people do right.
  - 2. Do you rejoice in iniquity or in the truth?
- L. Love bears all things.
  - 1. "Bear" comes from the word for roof, covering.
    - a. The idea is that love covers the wrongs of others.
    - b. Although love doesn't cover up wrongs, love doesn't go around telling everyone about the wrongs committed against him.
  - 2. Really, this means that love doesn't break confidentiality.
- M. Love believes all things--Love isn't gullible, but it does believe in people.
- N. Love hopes all things--Love looks on the bright side; it does not despair.
- O. Love endures all things; Love perseveres--Love never quits.
- P. Love is a verb.
  - 1. Because God loved the world, he gave his Son (Jn. 3:16).
  - 2. We show our love to God by keeping his commands (Jn. 14:15).
  - 3. When we love, we need to show love through the lives we live.
    - a. Illustration about young boy, "Love That Must Express Itself," Illustrations Unlimited, p. 329.
    - b. That's what love is all about--expressing it through our actions.

## **THE CONTINUATION OF LOVE, vv. 8-13**

- A. Paul is making the point here that love is far superior to the spiritual gifts exercised in the early church.
- B. Love never fails, v. 8.
  - 1. Love never quits
    - a. Love is always around.
    - b. Illustration about Civil War bride, Illustrations Unlimited, "Love Never Gives Up," p. 325.
  - 2. The spiritual gifts would (and have) ceased.
    - a. These gifts weren't meant to last.
    - b. They served their purpose, and now they're gone.
- C. The perfect is coming, vv. 9-10.
  - 1. We only prophesy and know in part--we don't have complete knowledge of the spiritual world.
  - 2. When the perfect comes, the imperfect will be done away.
    - a. The perfect here actually refers to Jesus--Paul says we shall see face to face (v. 12).
    - b. When Jesus is revealed, our imperfect knowledge of the spiritual world will vanish.
    - c. But, our love will not vanish when Jesus returns; we will love God and one another in heaven.
- D. Are you practicing a superior quality? Are you loving?

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. Unless we love one another, our spiritual lives are empty.
- B. Unless we love Jesus, we have no spiritual life.
  - 1. Those who love him keep his commands (Jn. 14:15).
  - 2. Do you love Jesus? Are you keeping his commands?