



What It Means to Be The Church: Knowing and Showing Love

Dr. Keith Walker's Notes

Minister-at-Large C & MA, Mid West District

Keith.Walker@Usask.ca

April 27th, 2014

Prince Albert Alliance Church

A. Context (Hallmark Card Chapter bookends)

- 1 Corinthians 12:31: Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.
- 1 Corinthians 14:1a: Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit . . .

1 Corinthians 13:1-13: **If** I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, **but do not have love**, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²**If** I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and **if** I have a faith that can move mountains, **but do not have love**, *I am nothing*. ³**If** I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, **but do not have love**, *I gain nothing*.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but **when completeness comes**, what is in part disappears. ¹¹**When I was a child**, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. **When I became a man**, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. **But the greatest of these is love.**

B. What the World [and the Church] Needs Now . . . [Is Love, Sweet Love . . . It's the only thing that there's just too little of]

Prov. 3:1 (NIV) My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. **Let love and faithfulness never leave you**; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Matt. 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matt 19:19; Lev 19:17, 18).

C. Biblical Status of Love

- The Old Testament law is summed up by “**love**” (see Leviticus 19:17-18; Matthew 19:19).
- The Christian’s responsibilities are summed up by “**love**” (Romans 13:9).
- **Love** is the crowning cardinal virtue and the consummation of all other virtues (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Colossians 3:12-14).
- **Love** is the goal of Paul’s instruction (1 Timothy 1:5).
- **Love** is the distinguishing mark of the authentic Christian (John 13:35).
- **Love** endures suffering and persecution (Matthew 24:10; 2 Timothy 3:12).
- **Love** is easily lost, without one’s even being aware of it (Revelation 2:1-7).
- **Love** is often misunderstood and distorted by the unbelieving world.
- **Love** is vital. It should govern our relationships with others, especially those with whom we strongly disagree.
- **Love** is unconquerable: Many waters cannot quench love, rivers cannot wash it away (Song of Songs 8:7)
- **Love** is “a God thing” - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).
- **God IS LOVE** (1 Jn 4:8; 4:16b; 4:7-21)

D. Subtle Processes of Diminishing and Distorting True Love

... You have forsaken **the love you had at first**.⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. (To Church at Ephesus, Revelation 2:4b, 5):

E. The Best Thing: The Preeminence of Love, in Relation to Spiritual Gifts (13:1-3)

- If not then . . .
- Have or have not . . .

F. The Excellency of Love: 15 Elements (13:4-7)

1. **Love is patient** (passive): Not demanding, longsuffering, in face of adversity
2. **Love is kind** (active): “sweet to all” – facing those who might take advantage of us
3. **Love knows no envy/jealousy**: doesn’t begrudge nor covet what others have. *Love seeks the benefit and well-being (edification) of another, so much so that it is willing to make a personal sacrifice to facilitate it.* Jealousy is my sinful response to the prosperity of others
4. **Love is not boastful/arrogance**: Wonderously humbled by being loved. Arrogance and boasting are my sinful response to my own prosperity
5. **Love is not proud**: Not impressed by one’s own importance
6. **Love is not rude**: Courteous, polite, and even charming (same word as gracious)
7. **Love is not self-seeking**: Not entitlement-focused
8. **Love is not easily angered** or negatively provoked: Keep a cool head and check on temper/rage
9. **Love keeps no record of wrongs**: Forgives and forgets; doesn’t keep a black book
10. **Love does not delight in evil**: Grieves when others fail, get hurt or mess up
11. **Love rejoices with the truth**: Nothing to hide (transparency)
12. **Love always protects**: Has it covered, will bear with and mend

- 13. **Love always trusts:** takes God at His Word and thinks the best of others
- 14. **Love always hopes.** Expects and rests in God (Psalms 25)
- 15. **Love always perseveres.** (Philippians 4:13)

G. Permanence of Love and Consistency of Love (13:7)

There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance (The New English Bible). Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything (Phillips). It covers up everything, has unquenchable faith, hopes under all circumstances, endures without limit (Berkeley Version).

H. Love Never Fails (13:8-13)

Love perfects us. Love makes us complete (I John 4:12-18). Love matures us, it allows us to see ourselves as we truly are and God for who He truly is. Love grows us: it keeps us from acting like children only concerned for our own desires. It is a process that will not be complete until Christ’s return. Love is supreme: Great as faith and hope are, love is still greater. Faith without love is cold, and hope without love is grim. Love is the fire which kindles faith and it is the light which turns hope into certainty.

There will come a time for each of us when we will be translated into a different sphere. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, to those who believe. This is called the time of completeness and it marks the passage from this life into the next.

When, at death, we pass away into eternal life and we meet Jesus Christ, face to face. It all comes together – we understand the mysteries and what was just fragments of understanding becomes fully realized and known to us. All along God has had complete knowledge of us (Psalm 139). He knows us completely.

- **Faith** – Prayerful dependence on Triune God
- **Hope** – Experience of His presence in the Dark
- **Love** – Being unconditionally held by Him

Romans 8: 35-39: Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and **Christ's love for us**? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one. None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing - nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable - absolutely nothing can get between us and **God's love** because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But **the greatest of these is love.**

I. Essence and Application of Message: As the Church of Jesus Christ, *love is to be our priority and love is to be our pursuit.* Love is essential, excellent, efficacious, enduring and eternal.