

Open your Bibles to 1 Cor. 13 and we're going to expound this chapter. We, obviously, cannot go into great detail. The most important thing about 1 Cor. 13 is it's location in the Scrip. That it's located after Chap. 12, the great chapter on the gifts and before Chap. 14, the great chapter on tongues. It's amazing how it's almost always taken out of context. It's often called 'The great Hymn on Love'. It's often used as a basis for sentimental sermon on brotherhood. But the best way to understand it is to realize that Paul is addressing himself to a specific problems that have developed in the Corinthian church.

When you get down to V. 4, if you'll notice each one of those phrases - you can generally, isolate a problem in the Corinthian church which that will answer. I find this, by far, the most satisfying way to study this chapter. So I want us to look at it in this light.

The first three verses-I would call this: 'Love Is Enriching' and then v. 4 through 7: 'Love Is Edifying' and the last verses: 'Love Is Enduring. This gives you a little ^{alliterative} ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ outline around which you can build with it. Let me say that so often in life that we're asked to share. You might be asked to share, for instance, at a banquet. Maybe a Valentine banquet. I remember this is where I met my sweet wife, Doris. I met her at a Valentine banquet. She was the Minister of Education and invited me to come over and speak and I spoke on 'Devoted Hearts' (would you believe it?) and my text was 1 Cor. 13.

There was a snow so great on the ground until I didn't think I could make it and I tried to get out of it, but I called her up and she said 'the house is full; they're waiting on you'. I didn't even have a car and one of my deacons said 'listen, you can have my car' and I had no excuse and that's where I ran into this girl from Knoxville, Tennessee. God had sent her over to Durham. O.K.? So this is a great chapter and you can build it around several outlines, if you wanted to use P's you could say the first three verses would be the Priority of Love; the middle verses would be the Personality of Love and the concluding verses the Permanence of Love.

There are many ways to outline it. But I'm gonna use the E's.

FIRST: LOVE IS ENRICHING. Paul puts it in the first person and he says there in

V. 1 (read) 'tongues of men and of angels' means any kind of tongue you want to mention. I think the tongues of men would mean the Pentecostal tongue, which indeed, was a known language. I think the tongues of angels would be the Corinthian tongue. The tongue that's spoken unto God, which God alone knows, if we understand it - there has to be an interpretation. We'll see this when we come to Chap. 14. 'And have not'... the KJV says 'charity' but the word really is Agape. I think it's good in the church and I think we have this understanding that just to use the word Agape rather than love.

Because love is such a corrupted word in our day. I read of a man who said he was in love with this woman and he asked her to marry him and she would not and he said he loved her so much until he threw acid in her face and blinded her for life. Well, I doubt that that's love! What is charity? What IS charity? How would you define charity? Somebody? Well, it's giving but giving of what? It's giving of substance. Giving of our means. But what is agape? It's giving of self. Agape is the giving of ourselves to another - unconditionally - for their highest good and highest welfare. Jes. had Agape. He didn't love us to get us to love Him back because His love was just unconditional.

Agape is an unconditional outgoing of ourselves - giving of ourselves, our means - and everything, for another's highest welfare'. Whereas Charity is just a giving of our substance. It doesn't cost much to give of our substance, compared to giving of ourselves and the giving of Agape. Latter part of this verse means: just a meaningless noise.

V. 2 (read) gift of prophecy - and which Paul indicates is the supreme gift in the church, 'and understand all mysteries and knowledge' (now there's the word of wisdom and the Word of knowledge) though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and I have not agape, I am nothing!!'

V. 3 (read) 'to feed the poor' and here would be the great gift of giving. 'Though I give my body to be burned' and here is the gift of martyrdom. The list that I gave you last Wednesday, I did not have martyrdom but I think it could rightfully be placed as a gift. Many Xtns in the early church, felt an inclination to give their body in death. 'Though I give my body to be burned and I have not love, it profits me nothing'. Notice back there in V. 1, 'though I speak with any kind of tongues and have not love, I am become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.'

In ancient Corinth, if you were standing, say in your kitchen, or in your home and you were to hear the sound of brass and of a cymbal - that would announce a funeral. That was the announcement of a funeral, in ancient Corinth. Paul is saying that we might speak all kinds of tongues or that we might have all these wonderful gifts, but it's nothing but death unless it is mastered; unless it is motivated and controlled by Agape love. Now the Bible doesn't play the Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit against each other. The Bible teaches that the church is to have the fruits AND the gifts. The tragedy is that when the two do not co-exist or co-dwell together.

Somebody was telling me today of a man who could not be a deacon in a certain church because he did not speak in tongues. There are some who would say 'well, if you had the gift of tongue that would be the ultimate. Some have said if you didn't have the gift of tongues, you would be ~~XX~~second-rate Xtns. Now I'm not putting down tongues and I'm not denying that it is a legitimate gift. If you speak in tongues, fine! But what I am saying is that that is not the supreme gift of Spirituality. Paul was or is saying here that if you don't have Agape, you indeed are second class. Or it seems to me he's saying 'you're no Xtn at all'.

Agape is supreme evidence - not tongues nor preaching nor teaching nor any other of the gifts. The supreme evidence of God being in our life is the gift of agape love, dwelling in our hearts and controlling our motivation. Paul is dealing with this here because the Corinthian church, you see, was long on gifts, especially the gift of tongues but short on Agape. And so in the

next section he is going to give us the character of Agape Love. So the first section is that Love or Agape is Enriching. The gifts must be enriched by love, or they are of no value. Teaching can be brilliant. Preaching can be profound and all of these gifts - but unless they are under the control of Agape Love, they do not save people; they do not sanctify people; they do not bless people; they do not build people up! So having shown this, he's gonna go on and I call this section

SECOND: LOVE IS EDIFYING. Now in the 8th chap. of Cor. he has said that knowledge puffs up, but Agape builds up. Remember in 1 Cor. 12: 7? He said the gifts of the Spirit is for the common good or for the building up of the Body. When we get to the 14th chap., V. 12, he says 'forasmuch as ye are zealous of Spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church (or the building up of the church).' Now love builds up and if the gifts are going to build up the church, they must be exercised in love, in agape love. So, in V. 4 through 7, he shows how love builds up or how love edifies.

V. 4 (read) this word 'suffereth long' is one word in Greek. It's generally translated 'patient'. Love, he says, is patient. Now you study the Corinthian congregation and you find that that was not the trait of the Corinthians. They were critical, were judgmental, they were very impatient. It takes a lot of love to be patient. Patient with what? With people. Not talking about with things, but with people.

You and I are called on to be patient with one another. You have different levels of Spirituality in the congregation. Have all kinds of ideas. We're to be patient with one another. Then he says 'love is kind' but there was not much kindness in the church at Corinth. They had all this knowledge and they put great emphasis on speaking in tongues but there was unkindness in the congregation.

A little girl prayed this prayer: 'Lord, make the bad people good and make the good people nice'. You get it? Make the bad people good but make the good people nice'. Love is nice.

You know one of the most unbecoming things in the world is for Xtns not to be nice to one another. Not to say nice things and show nice attitudes. We have a lot of nice people in our church and I praise God for it. But it's so easy for us not to be nice. Not to be nice to one another. But it's an indictment of the Gospel and it's an indictment of what the Gospel teaches. I need to be nice to you. You need to be nice to me. This is a sign of agape. The Corinthians didn't have that. Then he goes on to say in V. 4 'love envieth not' or it doesn't covet the other mans possessions or his gift.

Now the ~~C~~orinthians were guilty of this. They were jealous of one anothers gifts. How unbecoming that is and so unchristian that is - when we would want somebody elses gift or Spiritual blessing. God's given us a gift and it's wonderful. Maybe here's somebody who is a great Bible teacher and maybe we sing in the choir and ~~XXXXX~~ maybe we'd say 'oh, I'd love to have that Bible knowledge. Don't EVER covet that gift. God has given you the gift that you can wear and use. We should never covet anybody elses gift. Agape does not covet another persons gift.

Then he goes on to say 'agape vaunteth not itself and agape is not puffed up'. These two Greek verbs means 'not stuck up on the outside and not conceited on the inside'. The Corinthians were EXACTLY this! They were filled with pride. They were walking around saying 'oh, look at our gifts. Look at our knowlege. Look at our oratory. Look at what we can do.' But not agape! True agape does not brag outwardly; it does not feel conceited on the inside. You see, all of our lives need to be brought under the control of this all the time.

This is the answer to the ego. This is the answer to this awful selfishness and self-centered-^{of}ness/which all of us are victims. But the way this is removed in our lives is through agape love. It's not through knowledge; it's not even through in knowing the Bible. It's not just through prayer. It's through the love of God. The Love of God ruling our lives. Then he says in

V. 5 (read) 'unseemly' or rudely. You remember the Lords Supper, when we studied about how

had celebrated the Lords Supper? The rich folks who could have a lot of food, they got over here and they ate their food and there were poor people over here who didn't have any food? There was great mistreatment of people right at the Lords Table or in the Agape Feast. You see, that was not agape. I believe that Paul is pointing them back to this. Love does not behave itself rudely or treat one another rude or impolite. Jes. Ch., when He saves us, does not only save us from sin, but He makes a gentleman out of a man and he makes a lady out of a woman. And He gives us manners.

Xtnity civilizes the world. Wherever Xtnity has gone, it's civilized the Barbarians. It came down into Europe. Xtnity is a civilizing force. Where people really know Christ, they're civil. They have manners. They have feeling for one another. Stnity is the most wonderful thing in the world. We may not have been to Harvard or Ratcliff, but there's something in us of a Spirit of civility, when we actually are controlled by Agape. Then it says

'Seeketh not her own'. What, in the Corinthian experience, does this probably point to. What would you say? Any of you? Seeketh not her own. You remember something they were doing. I could be wrong but I just believe this points to something specific in their life, that Paul deals with prior to this. What would you say? Anybody? Well, it could be. This matter of seeking their party. I hadn't thought about that, but it's a possibility. Good. Well, that's what Iris mentioned. I think there's a possibility there. I hadn't thought about it.

Well, I hadn't thought of that --- what? No, I think that's later on when it is rejoicing in iniquity. What? YES, that's what I thought of! Seeketh not her own - they went to court. They took each other into courts of law! YOU see? That's what I thought of. But it may have been more than this, of course and could have been what Iris has said and what the others mentioned. But 'seeketh not her own'.

'Is not provoked' and you can take your pencil and mark out the adverb. That's not in the original. 'Is not provoked' does not fly off the handle. Now that is an amazing thing. You

say 'well, why is 'easily' in there?' A Scribe was copying from an ancient manuscript and when he read it, he said 'this cannot be'. Paul certainly would not have said 'is not provoked'. But that's what Paul DID say. There's not a scholar that would put 'easily' in there. And then

'Thinketh no Evil'. The word 'thinketh' here means 'does not hold grudges' or 'does not keep a record of the wrongs done against him'. The most miserable man I ever knew was a man who kept a notebook on the wrongs that had been done against him. That's the picture we have here. Have you ever seen anyone that way? They just wouldn't hush; they talked day and night, on the telephone, at the coffee breaks, about what so and so had done. Isn't that sad? Agape does not keep a record of grudges. Agape removes that from our minds and actually from our memory. Agape will actually remove these things even from your memory. Things that people have done against you, if you walk in love, it won't be any problem.

If God lets you remember, it's something you need to remember. But most of it, you will actually lose and you will forget and people will mention to you, years later. 'Well, do you remember when I did so and so to you?' and you don't even know what it is. I remember a sweet little lady came to me one night at prayer meeting in Greensboro - Margaret Medley - I never will forget - and she said 'pastor, forgive me'. She was as sweet a lady as I've ever known. I said 'Margaret, what on earth are you asking me to forgive you for?' She said 'one night in Prayer Meeting, you asked me a question and I spoke back sharply to you. I just knew you'd held that against me through the years'. I didn't even remember it.

Well, this thing of agape is the most powerful thing in all of life. 'Thinketh no evil'. But look at

V. 6 (read) 'rejoiceth not in iniquity' and what would that be referring to? Janey. But specifically in the Corinthian church, what is it referring to? Do you realize in the 5th Chapter of Corinthians, that Paul says not only is there incest and outrageous immorality. A man's taken his own mother or stepmother as a wife, but you are rejoicing in it. You're proud

of it! He says here 'agape does not rejoice in its iniquity but 'rejoices in the Truth'. You know what the 'Truth' is in the Scrip.? When you see the word 'Truth'? Ninety percent of the time, it's the Bible. It's the Word of God. That's the thing to rejoice in. You can tell whether a person is maturing in the Lord or growing spiritually, by what he talks about. A little person will talk about other people. Classify yourself tonight:

A little person will talk about others.

An average mind (or person) will talk about events.

A great mind will talk about concepts and ideas and Biblical Truths.

Sometimes a congregation gets carried away in talking about people. That's one thing I've admired about this ~~XXXX~~ congregation. This congregation is not too given to that but many local churches, they just are torn to pieces by little talk about one another. Listen, if you have this tendency; this is a problem you need to deal with. This is an awful thing - to just talk about people.

Then there are those who talk about events. It's alright to talk about the state of the union address that the President is going to give tonight at 8 o'clock and to hear it. But there's something greater than that and that's to talk about the great Truth of Divine Revelation. Let that fill your mind and your life will be sanctified. All right. Then in

V. 7 (read) 'beareth all things' and that's the Greek verb 'stergei' (cover). What do you think that means? That agape covers all things. What would you say it means? Anybody? Yeah and agape doesn't spill everything. It doesn't burden others with its problems and neither does it advertise to others. Really the word is 'roof' - it keeps a roof over it. 'Love (Agape) covereth a multitude of sins'. Where there's real love, there's not a desire to parade other people's sins and not even a desire really to spill our own problems out on others. It's this great restraint of love.

Then 'believeth all things' well, it's not crazy. ~~XXXX~~ ^{Gullible} Or ~~XXXX~~ but it does put the highest

(tape fades) optomist. Zigler is exactly right in saying that a negative Xtn is a contradiction and he says in his book 'Confessions of a Happy Xtn' and if you haven't read it, you ought to. Everyone ought to read it. He said 'someone said 'Zig, why in the world are you so happy?' He said 'why shouldn't I be happy? I'm saved; I have a wonderful wife; I have a good job; I have many wonderful friends and I'm on my way to Heaven'.

Simple but wonderful. You see? That's the Confessions of an optomist in 'The Confessions of A Happy Xtn'. 'Hopeth all things, endureth all things (verb 'endureth' means 'ability to get under the burden' of things and turn them into triumphs. NOT to give in to our burdens but to use them as triumphs. The latter part is Love is enduring. Love - look at

V. 8 (read) 'love never faileth' it'll always stand the test. Rest of the verse doesn't need any comment.

V. 9 (read) this is certainly true. You say 'but we've got the N. T.' But our understanding of it is indeed limited. You say -you mean Paul just knew in part? Didn't he write everything in Romans? NO, Romans doesn't include everything. The apostle John says 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be'. While what John had was complete within itself; even his knowledge was partial. Our knowledge is very partial indeed and when I preach, I certainly cannot preach ALL the Truth - we prophesy in part, we teach in part.

V. 10 (read) this is a verse that is used by some to say that certain gifts ceased~~with~~ the apostolic age. I meant to bring a quoting from Dr. McGorman, Southwestern Seminary, a great Greek scholar, who certainly repudates this. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ But when that which is perfect - the word 'perfect' there is 'telion'. What is that? It's the word 'goal'. When the goal is reached. What is our goal? The Second Coming of Christ. And the full experience of Agape! But those who would say that the gift of tongues have ceased completely and the gift of healing and exercism - and there ARE those who say this in Evangelical circles - they say that which is perfect is the N. T. That when it was completed; Bro. Guy Lamb came out of a denomination

he's told me many times, who taught this. Right, Bro. Guy? They took this verse and said 'the perfect is the Scriptures!' That's just plain dishonest. That is taking the Script. to cover a prejudice. That is no Scrip. to say that any gift has ceased.

Latter part of V. 10: when the 'telion' when the goal is come, that which is in part shall be done away with.

V. 11 (read) Paul is comparing the Xtn life to childhood and adulthood. I believe that he is saying that maturity comes through our experience of love. And that there is a stage in our life that we're childish. When a person comes to Christ often, there's great immaturity in his life. That's the reason he needs the church, he needs our patience and he needs our tenderness, he needs a pastor who loves and understands and a S. S. teacher. He needs to be in the University of Christ; a University of love and of learning. If he'll stay there, he will become that adult and he will begin to talk like an adult and think like an adult. But he begins as a child. But that maturity is really through his experience of love.

V. 12 (read) the Greek says 'we see in a riddle. But then (and that's the telion - that's the goal, the final goal stage) face to face. You know the greatest word on Heaven? Read Rev. and you have a description of the city. The foundations, the gate, the walls - it's a marvelous detail. But you know the climatic ultimate statement about Heaven is Rev. 22: 4 'they shall see His face'. That's THE statement of all statements! Which means a complete knowledge. It doesn't mean just a phusical confrontation with the Lord, but it means knowledge. They shall see His face.

Last part of V. 12 - but then face to face (that's the telion-that's the goal). Now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known. My, what a statement. I shall know like God knows, even as also I am known.

V. 13 (read). Now in closing, let's look back at V. 4 (re-read). To what extent tonight by the grace of God and by the work of the H. S. in ~~our~~ lives, could we put this in the first person

'I suffer long" that I'm patient toward my brothers, (say our wife here, our children, those we work with) quite a test, isn't it? Patient or long suffering. I am kind, I do not covet, other peoples gifts or possessions, I am not puffed up or stuck up either on the outside or the inside, I do not behave rudely, I do not look out for my own interests, I do not fly off the handle, I do not hold grudges in my heart a record of them, I do not rejoice in that which is wrong but I refuoice in the Word of God, I do not engage in little talk about people but my mind is filled with the great Truths of theHoly Scrip. and when I'm on the telephone; when I'm having a coffee break; when I'm meeting with my friends, I am not engaging in little talk tearing people down, but I'm talking about 1 Cor. 15 - the resurrection from the dead!

That's what he's talking about. Then, I cover all things and I'm an eternal optomist; I'm not a pessimist and my life is filled with hope and I'm in the battle, not giving up, no matter what my problems are, I'm enduring (hoopomona which means to be under) the confusion, the problems we have as stepping stones! PTL! The successful, victorious person is not the person who has no problems but it's the preson who's taken those problems and turns them into stepping stones. That's the secret to success.

Norman Vincent Peale said 'the man who doesn't have problems is in trouble'. How about it? The person who doesn't have problems is in trouble. Well, let me tell you: if we've got the problems but we don't have the love of God to transform them into a blessing, we ARE in trouble, but through love, we overcome. Hallelujah! Isn't this wonderful? PTL! PTL!

Let's sing a song here before we go home.