

Love: The Central Theme of Christianity

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Today is a special holiday for millions around the world celebrating the highest ethic and virtue of mankind, otherwise what is known to the world as Love. Candy sales, flower sales, and hotel rentals seem to sky rocket around this “day of celebration.” Poems, movies, and songs have been written about this subject that fuels the curiosity and imagination, to the very heartbreak of relationships regarding all that is gained and all that is lost.

One of the Beatles more popular songs went like this:

All you need is love, All you need is love
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need

I agree with The Beatles love is all you need, but we must first understand what love is. This morning I would like to look deeper into the topic of love from a Biblical worldview. Too many of us, as I have said many times in the past, including myself, have been influenced by Hollywood’s definition of love which is basically humanistic (centered on the self), dramatic in feelings, and intense in nature. It makes a great movie but poor personal experience.

It is cotton candy to the soul in that it looks good, feels good, but doesn’t stay with you very long.

When this self-pleasure is no more then people quickly move on, change scenarios, until they find that “hit” again in a new relationship where everything is new, and fresh, and uplifting. Hollywood’s definition of love is more about heat than holiness.

In light of this phony understanding of love, it makes complete sense why people who say they have a “love for God” at some point often abandon that love for God, or at least lessen their fervor in their commitments, when everything gets to a place where the excitement is gone, or pleasurable, and then the people often move on. It explains why commitment levels are what they are for many in our churches. Its why so many “Christian marriages” fall apart at the same rate as those who don’t claim Christian faith. So truthfully what many of us have in the church is a Hollywood level of understanding of what love is and not one of a Biblical foundation.

The first primary understanding of love from a Biblical Worldview is that love is not a feeling but rather a Person. Love may produce feelings, but again itself is not a feeling, but the Person of God. Love is in fact the highest ethic a human can involve themselves in because this ethic is, not merely an ethic, but rather God Himself.

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.**

R.C. Sproul

In the New Testament, love is more of a verb than a noun. It has more to do with acting than with feeling. The call to love is not so much a call to a certain state of feeling as it is to a quality of action.

Basilea Schlink

Everything God does is love -- even when we do not understand Him.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues ¹ 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, ⁴ but do not have love, I gain nothing.

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

⁸ Love 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. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but 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. ¹² For 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.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. ¹

The Centerpiece of Christianity is Love (1-3)

“if I can speak in the tongues (languages) of men and of angels,
(without love I'm a noisy gong or clanging cymbal)
gift of prophecy where I can understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
faith that can move mountains,
(Without love I am nothing)
giving to the poor and
give over my body to hardship that I may boast,” but have not love I have gained nothing.
(I gain nothing)

John 13:34-35

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Augustine

Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul.

Henry Drummond

Where Love is, God is.

¹ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (1 Co 13:1–13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.