

KNOWING OUR GOD IS LOVE (1 CORINTHIANS 13)

Last week we read through 1 Corinthians 12, so now today we will be reading and looking into **1 Corinthians 13**, affectionately referred to by God's people, as "The Love Chapter". Before we can go to **1 Corinthians 13**, for context, beyond what we read last Sunday, but how it relates to the whole of the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, and as it is in agreement with the gospel of Christ Jesus, and His teachings, and then also to the teachings of the Apostles, which are in agreement of course to what Jesus taught, and then also to the whole of God's Word, which essentially boils down to who God IS and what is His plan and purpose for His creation, and then of what He expects of us, as His creation. It is critical for us to have it established in our heart and mind that God's Word IS God's Word, God is Who He says HE IS, and that God's Word always complements God's word. Complements, "Something that completes, makes up a whole, or brings to perfection."

First of all, that then speaks to God's Word being unchanging and eternal. As **Isaiah 40:8** says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." That is therefore why it is so incredibly important to know as best as we can, what His Word is truly saying, to us, and for us. The Word of God has now been revealed to us that Jesus IS the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, that was spoken of by the prophets in the Old Testament, and He is the only begotten Son of God (**John 3:16**), and as John the Baptist declared to his disciples when He saw Jesus coming toward him, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**) Praise God! As God's Word has been spoken and written down for us and the many generations before us, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, and is also telling us, that "the Holy Scriptures, [which] are able to make you **wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" (**2 Timothy 3:15-17**) Why would one need to be "wise for salvation" if all we are doing is "believing on Jesus"?

To repeat what what we looked at recently, there is the Greek word "Agonizomai" [to strive, struggle, fight, labor fervently], and it is the word used in what Jesus said in **Luke 13:23-27**. Jesus was asked, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "**Strive** [agonizomai (agonize): strive, struggle, fight, labor fervently] **to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught**

in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you **I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'**" Iniquity: Greek "adikia" (ad-ee-kee-ah), meaning: a-(not) dikia (justice): not justice. Matthew recorded Jesus as using the term "lawlessness" anomia, a-(not) nomia (law): not law. The Apostle John further helps us in that by saying, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (**1 John 3:4**) As we know "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were **previously committed**, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (**Romans 3:23-26**)

So then, what Jesus is saying is those who practice lawlessness/iniquity, sinning against God vs. the practicing of righteousness. "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother." (**1 John 3:10**) Jesus continued in **Luke 13:28-29**, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God [ah! The Marriage Supper of the Lamb]." Now Matthew recorded Jesus as saying it like this, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and **difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**" (**Matthew 7:13-14**) Once again, we're not trying to earn our salvation, we're doing everything possible (as we are told to), to make sure we are on the right path.

That word "difficult" is actually the Greek word "tethlimmene". The root of that is "thlibó", same with thlipsis (tribulation) and "it primarily conveys the idea of pressing or compressing, often used metaphorically to describe situations of affliction, distress, or trouble. In the New Testament, it is frequently used to depict the trials and tribulations faced by believers, emphasizing the pressure and challenges encountered in the Christian life."¹ Jesus reassures us, yet also warns us, saying, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation [pressure-thlipsis, the root being thlibo]; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (**John 16:33**) Jesus also used that same word thlipsis (tribulation) in the parable of the sower, saying, "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when **tribulation** or persecution

1 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2346.htm>

arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles." (Matthew 13:20-21) If we are on the right path, we are assured that trials and tribulations will come at us. Yet, we know when we are on the right path, because Jesus is on that path! And He is our peace and consolation. We are told, that is, those who do know Christ and have received Him, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16) As Jesus promises though, "in Me you may have peace" and "in the world you will have tribulation".

The Apostle Peter elaborates on that, to give us a better understanding, in his 1st epistle he says, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled [To assail with scornful or abusive language²], did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness [bearing fruit of the Spirit]—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray [wide path], but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.[narrow path]" (1 Peter 2:21-25) The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Romans 8, saying that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Also as the Apostle Paul told Timothy (and us) "if we endure [in Christ], we shall also reign with Him". (2 Timothy 2:12)

Yet in all that, God is immutable, meaning He does not change, and is incapable of change. God can and does make things change, based on His love, and justice, grace, mercy, and goodness. We though can change and should be changing, if we are willing. But God cannot change who HE IS. As God said to Moses "I AM WHO I AM" (Hah-Yah asher Hah-Yah [Yahweh/Yehovah]). Immutable comes from the Latin verb "mutare", of which we get the English word, mutate, which of course means "to change". Yet as God has testified of Himself, He said to His people of Israel and Judah, through one of His last prophets, Malachi, in the Old Testament, "For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed [collectively], O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances [authoritative command or order] and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3:7-8) That word "return" is the Hebrew word "shub" (shoob), of which the Greek equivalent many times, is "metanoeo", which means to "repent", recognizing a need for change, and then heeding to that need, turning from our way back to God and His ways. As God's Word says, He is

2 <https://www.wordnik.com/words/revile>

perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). If anything needs to change for the better, it is not God.

As was the case with the Israelites, it is with us. We are called by God to turn to Him for the forgiveness of our sins against Him, and then to obey Him. Now for a New Testament example that speaks of the immutability of God, we can read **James 1**. After James addresses the fact that one succumbs to temptation due to one's own desires, he continues by saying, "Do not be deceived, **my beloved brethren**. Every **good gift** and every **perfect gift** is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom **there is no variation or shadow of turning**. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures [in Christ]. So then, **my beloved brethren**, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and **overflow of wickedness**, and receive with meekness the **implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (**James 1:16-22**)

Knowing and being a doer of the "Word" has a two-fold meaning for us. The Word is the inspired by God and written Word of what God our Creator wants us to know about Himself and His plan and purpose for His creation. And then, in the words of the Apostle John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the **light of men**." (**John 1:1-4**) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:14**). We are called by God, through His Word, to be followers of Christ Jesus as He said that He is "**the Way, the Truth, and the Life**. **No man comes to the Father except through Me**." (**John 14:6**) The Apostle John, in his first epistle, tells those who have believed on Christ and have received Him (**John 1:12-13**), "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [the spirits of the Antichrist], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who **knows God** hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. **Beloved** [same thing James said], let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, **that we might live through Him**. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so

loved us, we also ought to love one another. ["for God is Love"] (1 **John 4:4-11**)

Now Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. [Great Commandment and the second-LOVE] And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever– the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:15-18) "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14:22-24)

When you're looking for the love of God in the Word, it pops up all over the place, especially with the Apostles letters, as they continually refer to their readers as "beloved". We read of the Apostle John and James referring to their readers as such, here's the Apostle Paul, in speaking to the folks at Philippi, "Therefore, my **beloved**, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." My words, "Beloved, agonizomai [strive, struggle, fight, labor fervently] to be on the right path with Christ Jesus." As the Apostle Peter said, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent [spoudazo: be diligent, to make every effort, to hasten, to be eager] to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so **an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly** into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10-11)

As 1 Corinthians 13 is subtitled "The Greatest Gift", it made me think of what is the greatest gift. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. **Beloved**, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when **He is revealed**, we shall be like Him, for **we shall see Him as He is**. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3) The greatest gift from God to us is as God told Abram (Abraham), who was later called the father of our faith (Romans 4:16), in a vision God said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your **exceedingly great REWARD**." (Genesis 15:1) The Apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to

those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 3:13-14**) While it can be understood that the prize IS "the upward call", yet what was Paul and what are we really reaching for and focused on? Paul also said just prior to that, "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of **the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, **that I may gain Christ.**" (**Philippians 3:8**)

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1 Corinthians 13 (The Greatest Gift)

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

[When you read through the apostles letters, as we read of James, John, and Peter and also Paul addressed their readers as "beloved", you clearly see that they were not trying to dominate and control people for their own vested interests but were always sharing and showing the love AND the gospel of Christ.]

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

[Earlier Paul had said in this letter, "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies [oikodome-builds up]. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is **known by Him.**" As the saying goes, "the more one knows, the more one knows how much they don't know". That pertains to our relationship then with God as HE is All-Knowing (Omniscient) and the best we can do is to know Him and His Word. (**1 Corinthians 8:1-2**) Earlier Paul said in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are **in Christ Jesus**, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (**1 Corinthians 1:26-31**) Let us glory that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world!" and "we are more than conquerors through Him who love[s] us-(**Romans 8:37**)]

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

[This really speaks of the condition of the heart and of the motive for doing such things. Is one motivated by recognition of one's benevolence or by the love of God. As Paul said to the Romans, "Therefore, having been justified by faith [we're not earning our salvation, as Christ Jesus is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption], we have peace with God **through our Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom also **we have access** by faith into this **grace** [favor of God] in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God [to be in His glory!]. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because [here it is] **the love of God has been poured out in our hearts** by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:1-5)]

Love suffers long and is **kind**; love does not envy [does not covet what someone else has]; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, **believes all things, hopes all things**, endures all things.

["Endures all things." The Apostle James tells us that the "testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Jesus, promising that God would take care of you and your essential needs of food and clothing, then said, in **Matthew 6:33**, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" Not everything is going to make sense for us. But ultimately we have to get to the place of trusting God, no matter what. **Proverbs 3:5-6**, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."]

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail [catargeo: come to an end]; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is **perfect** has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as **I also am known**. [Do you know Him? Does He know you? Are you on the right path?]

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

[Love never fails, for God IS Love!]