

## The Supremacy Of Love.

Text: 1 Cor 13:1-13

Suggested Hymns:

344, 151, 354, 337, 164

- 1) Over Other Gifts
- 2) Is Revealed When Love Is In Action
- 3) In The Fact That It Abides/Lasts
- 4) Over Faith And Hope

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, *<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

*<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.*

*<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

*<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Christian religion was born out of love. We read in John 3:16 that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* And in Ephesians 5:25, *“Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.”*

Christ’s Gospel is a Gospel of love as we read in John 15:13, <sup>13</sup> *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”* Christ laid down His life for an apostate and sinful race.

We Christians are admonished to love one another and to love our enemies, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind.

We know that love is the fulfilling of the Law and today our text speaks of *The Supremacy of Love.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Supremacy Of Love Over Other Gifts**

Our text begins with these three verses, <sup>1</sup> *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *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.*

There are five gifts, or virtues, listed in these three verses. They are important in themselves, but without love they are nothing, like a dead tree or an empty, deserted house.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.* Paul said if a person had the gift of tongues, yes, if you could speak like an angel, but if you lacked love, you would be like cold, metallic brass or a noisy, tinny cymbal. That is the way eloquent speaking may be, even if it deals in great spiritual issues, if love is absent.

Even if a person can prophesy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and even if you have a deep insight into the hidden mysteries of God, if love is lacking, you are nothing — a nonentity.

Scripture tell us that on the Last Day some people will come to the Lord and say, as written in Matthew 7:22-23, ***‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’*** <sup>23</sup> ***“And then [Jesus] will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*** This clearly shows that faith and knowledge without love is dead.

***And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*** A man or woman with faith that accomplishes certain things is nothing if love is lacking. In order to be emphatic, Paul here assumes an impossible state of affairs.

***And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, ... but have not love, it profits me nothing.*** Some people give to the poor from ulterior motives, some out of compulsion, some out of compassion; but if I am only touched by the abject poverty of men, but do not have love for my fellow-men in general, and for my God and Saviour, it profits me nothing.

***And though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*** Even if I make a sacrificial display, although I work my heart out, but have not love, it avails nothing.

Love is the fruit of the Spirit as we read in Galatians 5:22-23, <sup>22</sup> ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*** <sup>23</sup> ***gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*** And in Romans 13:10, <sup>10</sup> ***Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.***

But let no one think that love saves the soul or that love atones for sin. Christ’s blood alone cleanses from all sin, and faith in Him as our Saviour alone saves. But such faith will work by love, as we learn from Galatians 5:6, <sup>6</sup> ***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.***

## **2. The Supremacy Of Love Is Revealed When Love Is In Action**

Love shows its supremacy when it is in action. <sup>4</sup> *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;* <sup>5</sup> *does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;* <sup>6</sup> *does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;* <sup>7</sup> *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Love is long-suffering and patient. The loving soul is capable of long, protracted restraint, and endures evil without returning it.

Love is kind — kind in thoughts and in the judgment of others. Kind when it speaks of others, and kind in dealing with others. The man or woman who loves his neighbour as himself, is never unkind or unfair, does not speak behind his back, is not given to gossip, and is no scandalmonger.

Love “*does not envy.*” It is not jealous, it can see a relative, a friend, a neighbour, or a fellow-church-member succeed, attain prominence, without envying him or her. It may not be easy, but we must cultivate such a love.

Love “*is not puffed up.*” It does not think more highly of itself than it ought to think. It is not wise in its own opinion. The proud person, those with a Pharisaical or hypocritical spirit, do not know love.

Love “*does not behave rudely.*” Love is decorous, honest, pure and decent. Love is not vulgar, it is not indecent.

Love “*does not seek its own.*” It is not selfish. Scripture says in Romans 12:10, <sup>10</sup> *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.* Love thinks of others before thinking of self.

Love “*is not easily provoked.*” It is not sensitive or touchy, its feelings are not easily hurt, it does not fly off at the least provocation.

Love “*thinks no evil.*” Love’s thoughts are pure. Love plans no wrongdoing; it harbours no wicked thoughts.

Love “*does not rejoice in iniquity.*” It does not revel in sin, is not pleased with evil, does not gloat over the fall of other people. There are people who glory in the failings and iniquities of others. Love never does that.

Rather Love “*rejoices in the truth.*” It is not dishonest in word or in life. It does not rejoice when lies are spoken about others and does not pass slander on, but is sincere and honest.

Love “*bears all things.*” It does not murmur against God or man. It stands up when misunderstood or misjudged. It endures uncomplainingly life’s crosses and trials, and it bears up under divine chastisements.

Love “*believes all things.*” It does not doubt or question a person’s motives. It is not suspicious of people’s utterances and deeds. It does not look for ulterior purposes.

Love “*hopes all things.*” It hopes for the best, is not easily discouraged, hopes for good in others, that they will improve and be different. It does not give up hope.

Love “*endures all things.*” It not only bears all things, but endures in the bearing. It does not just stand up for a time, but continues in the standing up. Love endures and in its enduring keeps displaying or exercising its virtues. Love has stamina. We read in Romans 12:21, <sup>21</sup> *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Thus we see love at work and how love in action overcomes and dispels evil and wrong and wickedness and brings forth the fruit of faith, holiness and righteousness.

A tailor will place a piece of absorbent paper over a grease spot and press on it with a hot iron; the heat will melt the grease, and the paper will absorb it. This is the way love defeats bad situations. It absorbs them.

### **3. The Supremacy Of Love Is Revealed In The Fact That It Abides/Lasts**

The supremacy of love is revealed in the fact that it abides. If it abides it lasts. *Love never fails.*

Our text says, <sup>8</sup> *Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.* <sup>9</sup> *For we know in part and we prophesy in part.* <sup>10</sup> *But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

*<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Love, like faith and hope, outwears other gifts. It even outlasts faith and hope, because it lasts forever. The gift of prophecy, of divine inspiration, the gift of foretelling future events, of explaining God's Word, will come to an end and be made useless and void, and will be abolished.

When the Perfect One comes, then all the imperfections of this present knowledge will pass away. Paul illustrates the difference between the present and the future state by speaking of the difference between a child and a man.

At present our ideas of heavenly things do not measure up to a full comprehension of their glory and greatness. Paul uses another picture, *<sup>12</sup> 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.* Our imperfect knowing will be left behind, and we shall know everything, just as God knows all about us.

#### **4. The Supremacy Of Love Over Faith And Hope.**

Love, together with faith and hope, abides, *<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three.* Yes, even in eternity, when faith has changed to sight, when hope has given way to realisation and enjoyment, love continues, and then in perfection.

The fact that love is called the greatest virtue does not in any way disagree with the fact that faith is the only means of obtaining salvation. We are not saved because of our greatest virtue, but because of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

The greatest virtue does not necessarily justify. We are justified by faith, not love. Love, you remember, is the fulfilling of the Law as we read in Romans 13:10, *<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Likewise we read in Matthew 22:37-40, *<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all*

*your mind.’* <sup>38</sup> *“This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* <sup>40</sup> *“On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

If we loved as we should, if our heart were brimful of love to God and man, we would never sin; but sin has corrupted our human nature, and we fail to love as we should.

The greatest of all virtues is love. However, our love has failed, and we needed a Saviour, and faith in Him saves. But love is still the highest and greatest virtue, even though our love has been weakened and stained by sin. We believe and hope in order that we may love and finally love perfectly and forever.

Now, the vital, personal thing about this whole thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is this: Do we have love? Do we possess that love which transcends all other gifts and gives life and meaning and sincerity to whatever other gifts we may possess?

A loveless life is an empty, shallow, selfish, and sinful life. Without love I am nothing. Do we have that love to God and man which must influence our whole living and which lifts us up above the low and vile and mean and base and contemptible, and places us on the heights of true Christian living?

Your life and mine, your Christianity and mine, your faith and mine, has been a failure to the extent and degree and in the measure that we lack love in all our dealings and doings, in the exercise of our gifts, in our relationships with our fellow-men.

Let us repent, turn to Christ, and pray that He may increase in us this love. We read in Luke 11:13, <sup>13</sup> *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*

A man brought back from a trip a little phosphorescent match-box, and one evening, in a company of friends, he took it out to show them. All the lights were turned off, but the match-box had no shine to it. The man thought he had been swindled.

The next day he examined the little box more closely, and on the inside he read *“If you wish me to shine, keep me in the sunlight.”* He did that and found

that it absorbed the sun's rays and had a brilliant glow in the dark. We read in 1 John 4:10-11, <sup>10</sup> *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.* <sup>11</sup> *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

May God grant that through intimate fellowship with Christ we receive this love, and live our lives in love. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.