

THE LOVE THAT NEVER FAILS

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Corinthians 13**. From Roy H. Enoch (07-24-94).
- B. Love--how can we define it?
 1. *Webster's Collegiate*, 10th ed. defines it:
 - a. Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties--maternal love.
 - b. Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers.
 - c. Affection based on admiration, benevolence or common interests--love for old schoolmates.
 - d. An assurance of love--give her my love.
 - e. Warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion--love of the sea.
 - f. The object of attachment, devotion, or admiration--baseball was his first love.
 - g. A beloved person: Darling--often used as a term of endearment.
 - h. British usage: "love" used as an informal address.
 - i. Unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another, as:
 - 1) The fatherly concern of God for mankind.
 - 2) The brotherly concern for others.
 - j. A person's adoration of God.
 - k. God as a personification of love.
 - l. An amorous episode: a love affair.
 - m. The sexual embrace: or sex act.
 - n. The score of zero, as in tennis.
 - o. "At love": holding one's opponent scoreless in tennis.
 - p. "In love": inspired by affection.
 2. Other definitions I have seen:
 - a. "Two hearts beating as one amid stardust."
 - b. "The inward inexpressibility of an outward all-overiness."
 - c. "The feeling you feel when you feel you are going to feel a feeling you never felt before."

I. WHEN WE LOOK AT THESE DEFINITIONS, HOW CAN WE BE COMMANDED TO LOVE?

- A. The Greeks had four different words for "love."
 1. EROS is the Greek word for erotic or sexual love.
 - a. The Bible does not use this word.
 - b. Some of the meanings are included in words like lust, homosexuality, etc.
 2. STORGE is the Greek word that refers to family affection of parents for children and children for parents; children for each other. It is not found in the Bible except in compound words.
 3. PHILEO is the Greek word which refers to emotional feeling and tender affection.
 - a. It often refers to people "loving" things or honor.
 - b. It is found 22 times in the NT.
 - c. It is commanded once (Rom. 12:10).
 4. AGAPE is the Greek word for love that is commanded and it is used 361 times in NT.
 - a. It was extremely rare in Greek literature.
 - b. It does not focus on feeling or emotion, but on behavior.
 - c. God doesn't tell us how to feel, but how to act.
 - d. Paul Faulkner quotes O. H. Mowrer, an outstanding psychologist, "**It is easier to act yourself into a better way of feeling than to feel yourself into a better way of acting**" (*Making Things Right When Things Go Wrong*, p. 54).
 - e. It is always described by the way it acts rather than how one feels:
 - 1) God loved us and gave His Son.
 - 2) Jesus loved us and died for us.

- 3) The husband is to love his wife as X loved the church and gave Himself for it.
- B. The Bible has excellent examples of "agape" love besides God and Christ.
1. The love that Ruth had for her mother-in-law, Naomi is one of the most beautiful expressions of commitment ever written (Ruth 1:16).
 2. Hosea, a prophet of God was told that he was to be a living object lesson for the Northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, from about 760-710 B.C.
 - a. God had him marry a woman whom He knew would be unfaithful and go into prostitution, having children in her prostitution.
 - b. This represented how Israel, who was married to God, had prostituted themselves to idols.
 - c. The three children born in prostitution were given names that indicated God's punishment.
 - 1) The first-born's name was "scattered by God".
 - 2) The second was named, "without mercy".
 - 3) The third, "not my people".
 - d. When Hosea's wife, Gomer, lost her beauty and was no longer attractive to her suitors, she was sold as a slave.
 - e. God told Hosea to buy her back and take her home and treat her kindly.
 - f. This also is a vivid picture of God's love for us all since we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus bought us back from the slavery of sin that we might be His bride, not because we are attractive, or because we deserve it, but because He has "agape" love for us.

II. 1CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13 DESCRIBES THIS KIND OF LOVE THAT WE ARE TO HAVE FOR GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.

- A. Let us briefly look at the context of this beautiful chapter on love.
1. Paul is writing to this church that he established in worldly Corinth.
 2. He had been told about some of their problems by those of the household of Chloe (1:11).
 3. It seems that the first six chapters dealt with these matters.
 4. Beginning with chapter seven, he deals with things that the church had written him about (7:1).
 5. Chapters 12-14 deals with questions that they had about the gifts of the HS and their use.
 - a. Chapter 12 names and describes the nature of those 9 miraculous gifts.
 - b. Chapter 13 describes "agape" love as a better way than these miraculous gifts.
 - c. Chapter 14 describes how to use these gifts in their assemblies while they were available.
- B. Verses 1-3 show that love is necessary for even the use of spiritual gifts to be accepted by God.
1. (13:1) If Paul could speak in every foreign language and even speak the language of angels, without love it was only a clanging noise.
 2. (13:2) Four miraculous gifts are mentioned in this verse: prophecy, understanding mysteries, knowledge and faith to move mountains. Using them without love was nothing.
 3. (13:3) Giving everything he had to the poor and giving his body to be burned without love was worthless.
 4. This is in harmony with what Jesus told the church in Ephesus in Rev. 2:1-7: losing their love was losing everything.
 5. "Agape" love is greater than these eight things.
- C. Verses 4-8 describes "agape" love.
1. Eight things are given that "agape" love does.
 - a. It is longsuffering--it endures (v4).
 - b. It is kind--it is always considerate and courteous (v4).
 - c. It rejoices in the truth--it wants to hear good (v6).

- d. It bears or puts up with all things (v7).
 - e. It believes all things, or isn't suspicious (v7).
 - f. It hopes all things, it is optimistic (v7).
 - g. It endures all things--it is faithful (v7).
 - h. It never fails--it never, never gives up (v8).
2. There are eight things Love does not do.
- a. It does not envy, it isn't jealous (v4).
 - b. It does not exalt itself--doesn't brag (v4).
 - c. It is not puffed up or arrogant (v4).
 - d. It does not behave unseemly--it is never rude (v5).
 - e. It does not seek its own--it isn't selfish (v5).
 - f. It is not easily provoked--not hot tempered (v5).
 - g. It does not think evil of others--it does not assume the worst (v5).
 - h. It does not rejoice in iniquity--it does not like to hear about sin (v6).
- D. There are probably several reasons why "agape" love has this kind of influence on our behavior.
- 1. It wants the best for others.
 - 2. It focuses on the needs of others, rather than selfish wants.
 - 3. It follows the example of Christ.
 - 4. Therefore, it is always beneficial to the one who has it and to those who receive it.
- E. This is the kind of love that is eternal.
- 1. 1 Cor. 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (NKJ)

CONCLUSION

- A. Happiness does not come from having things or having things done for us.
- B. It comes from being thankful for what we have and to those who are a blessing in our lives.
- C. Learn to focus on the needs of others, and be grateful for the blessings that we receive--"that's agape".