

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **1Corinthians 13:1-13**. From Roy Enoch.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. [3] And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. [4] Love is patient, love is kind, *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, [5] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, [6] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; [7] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are* tongues, they will cease; if *there is* knowledge, it will be done away. [9] For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; [10] but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. [11] When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. [12] For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. [13] But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

B. Love--how can we define it? Webster's Dictionary defines it:

1. Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties--maternal love.
2. Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers.
3. Affection based on admiration or common interests--love for old schoolmates.
4. An assurance of love; "give her my love."
5. Warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion; "love of the sea."
6. A person's adoration of God.
7. God as a personification of love.
8. An amorous episode: a love affair.
9. The sexual embrace: or sex act.
10. The score of zero, as in tennis.

II. WITH THESE DEFINITIONS, HOW CAN WE BE COMMANDED TO LOVE?

A. The Greeks had four different words for "love:"

1. EROS is the word for erotic or sexual love. The Bible does not use this word. The meaning is included in words like lust, homosexuality, etc.
2. STORGE is the word that refers to family affection of parents, for children and children for parents, and/or children for each other. It is not found in the Bible except in compound words.
3. PHILEO is the 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; commanded once in Rom. 12:10 (be nice to each other).
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
4. AGAPE is the word for love that is commanded and it is used 361 times in the 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. 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) A 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 X.

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).

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

2. Hosea was told that he was to be a living object lesson on love:
 - a. God had him marry a woman whom He knew would be unfaithful and go into prostitution. This represented how Israel, who was married to God, had prostituted themselves to idols.
 - b. When Gomer, lost her beauty and was no longer attractive to her suitors, she was sold as a slave. God told Hosea to buy her back and take her home and treat her kindly.
 - c. 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.

III. 1COR. 13 DESCRIBES "AGAPE" LOVE.

- 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 informed of their problems (1Cor. 1:11).

For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.
 3. It seems that the first six chapters dealt with these matters.
 4. Beginning in chapter seven, he deals with things that the church had written him (see 7:1).
 5. Chapter 12 names and describes the nature of 9 miraculous gifts.
 6. Chapter 13 describes "agape" love as a better way than these miraculous gifts.
- B. Verses 13:1-3 show that love is necessary for the use of spiritual gifts to be accepted by God.
- C. Verses 13:4-8 describes "agape" love:
 1. Eight things "agape" love does:

a. It is longsuffering--	it endures (13:4).
b. It is kind--	it is always considerate/courteous (13:4).
c. It rejoices in the truth--	it wants to hear good things (13:6).
d. It bears all things--	it puts up with adversity (13:7).
e. It believes all things--	it isn't suspicious (13:7).
f. It hopes all things--	it is optimistic (13:7).
g. It endures all things--	it is faithful (13:7).
h. It never fails--	it never, ever gives up (13:8).
 2. Eight things "agape" love does NOT do:

a. It does not envy--	it isn't jealous (13:4).
b. It does not exalt itself--	it doesn't brag (13:4).
c. It is not puffed up--	it is not arrogant (13:4).
d. It does not behave unseemly--	it is never rude (13:5).
e. It does not seek its own--	it isn't selfish (13:5).
f. It is not easily provoked--	not hot tempered (13:5).
g. It does not think evil of others--	it does not assume the worst (13:5).
h. It does not rejoice in iniquity--	it does not like to hear about sin (13:6).
- D. There are 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 X.
 4. Therefore, it is always beneficial to the one who has it and to those who receive it.
- E. This kind of love is eternal (13:13).

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

IV. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- 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, do the right things, and be grateful for the blessings that we receive--that's "agape."
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.