

# **The Love of God**

## **1 Corinthians 13**

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Reflect on how 1 Corinthians 13 reveals to us the nature, depth, and character of God's love.

### **Verse 1:**

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

An eloquent speaker with a wrong motive, not love, will affect us as a noisy gong. Some use eloquent speech just to get our attention, just to manipulate people. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. When God spoke He created the universe and all of its parts. But if God did not do this with love as His motive, He would sound like a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. As it is, we speak of the music of the spheres. As we read the Bible it is filled with such love that it does not have the effect on our minds or hearts as a noisy gong. Think of how you feel mentally and spiritually when you read the Bible. Doesn't the word of God sometimes warm your heart and minister to your spirit. God's word is no noisy gong.

### **Verse 2:**

*And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

God possesses infinite intelligence and knows everything from beginning to end. God understands everything. God can create anything, and God knows that He can do whatever He wants. But if God does not have love, He is nothing. God uses all of His infinite intelligence, wisdom and power from a motive of love, of wanting to promote the highest well-being and happiness of all creation. If God did not have love, God would be nothing. Think about how God has used His wisdom and power to meet your needs. God's helping you is nothing short of an expression of His love for you.

### **Verse 3:**

*If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

God gave us His most precious possession, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. God has given us all things that we need for our well-being and happiness. God did not do any of these things so He could boast. God did not do any of these things out of pride, or arrogance, or selfish motive. God has given us every good and perfect gift, and even His own Son, because He loves us. If He did not do this from love, He would have gained nothing. As it is, God has gained our love, our respect, our worship, and our praise. We reverence God and worship Him because He loves us so much; so much that He did not to spare His own Son, but sent him to die for us.

**Verse 4:**

*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant*

***Love is patient.***

Think about God's patience. God is patient toward us because He does not desire that any should perish, but that all should come to salvation. Think of how patient God was with the Israelites. He led them out of Egypt and did not destroy them when they sinned. Those who rebelled could not enter the Promised Land, but God was patient so those who would come to faith in Him and His promises over 40 years of wandering might be saved for eternity. Moses was saved, though he could not enter the Promised Land. We do not know how many others came to faith and were saved. Think of the kings and the prophets. God sent prophets to warn the people, and God delayed His punishments as long as He could for those who would repent. God was patient with the people when He sent them into exile, and wanted them to repent in exile. Think of the patience of Jesus. Think of the patience of God with those who crucified Jesus. Most of those who were saved escaped Jerusalem before the Romans destroyed the nation in 70 AD. God's is patient because God is love. When God's patience ceased to be a virtue, God had to send the punishment that He promised, but punishment was always a last resort, and punishment was always an expression of love for those who needed to see God's justice and who needed to be relieved from the injustice of those who had turned their back on God. Think of Jesus' patience toward you.

***Love is kind.***

Think about God's kindness. God did not need to feed the Jews in the wilderness with manna, but God did. God did not need to send Jesus to save us from our sins, but He did. Think of Jesus kindness toward sinners, toward children, toward His slow to learn disciples. Think of Jesus' kind answers to Pilate. Think of Jesus' kindness toward those who crucified Him. Think of His kindness to Peter who denied Him. Think of Jesus' kindness to you.

***Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant.***

Who would God envy? Does God envy the devil, because the devil can sin and tempt people to sin? Does God envy any human being, because he might be the President, a Rock Star, a Movie Actress, a General in the Army, the CEO of a corporation, or someone with a lot of buildings named after him?

God does not envy anyone, because God is love and there is no one greater than God. God does not want to sin or enjoy sin, because God is love. God does not envy the sinner or anyone, no matter how great they are, because God always wants to do the most loving and wise things possible.

Do you think God is boastful? Does God boast? No. God tells us the truth about himself. God has revealed truths about himself in and through His creation. But, God has not done any of this boastfully. When you read the Bible, do you see God boasting? Sometimes God does defend His honor or the truth of His word when He is falsely accused, but God does not boast.

One who boasts makes certain that everyone around him knows what he thinks of himself or what he has done so people will more highly esteem him. Albert Einstein said "God is subtle." That is the opposite of boasting. If God were to boast, there would be no atheists! God is love; therefore, He does not boast. Because God does not boast, some pay no attention to Him.

Do you think God is arrogant? As you read the Scriptures, do you see God doing anything because He is arrogant? Was Jesus ever arrogant? Did Jesus ever "lord it over" people or look down on people? Would arrogance move God to have His only Son born in a stable and laid in a manger? Wouldn't arrogance "have no time" for someone. Yet, God invites everyone, even the worst of sinners to come to Him, repent of their sins, and place their trust in Him. If God were arrogant, God would not be loving. Arrogance pushes those people away that the arrogant person feels is a nuisance or beneath them. All of God's creatures are truly beneath Him, but God does not treat them with arrogance because God is love.

**Verse 5:**

*Or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;*

***Love is not rude.***

Do you think God is ever rude? Did Jesus ever show rudeness? Was Jesus rude to His interrogators? Was Jesus ever rude to the scribes, the Pharisees, or sinners? No. Jesus was never impolite, discourteous, bad-mannered, uncouth, foul, vulgar, disrespectful, offensive. Love is not any of these things, and Jesus never manifested any of these characteristics and neither has God. Has Jesus ever been rude to you?

***Love does not insist on its own way.***

Does God insist on His way? If God did, God would not be love. God has shown us the way of life, the way of love, the way to eternal life through Jesus. But God does not insist on His own way. Though God has infinite power, wisdom, and love, God does not force anyone to walk in the way of life. God does not force anyone to love Him or love anyone else. God allows sinners to sin and haters to hate. God allows people to believe any lie or any religion they want to believe, but when people choose to believe a lie or follow a religion that contradicts the scriptures, God allows people to suffer the consequences of not going God's way. If God insisted that everyone go to heaven whether they wanted to or not, that everyone believe in Him and love Him whether they wanted to or not, that would be God insisting on His own way. And that would be inconsistent with God being a loving God. God is love; therefore, God does not insist on His own way. Did you ever see Jesus insisting on His own way. Jesus said He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He told of the manifold blessings of following Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, but Jesus did not insist that everyone follow Him. Jesus gave people a choice to believe or not believe, to follow or not follow, to love or not love. But, there are consequences of not believing, not following, and not loving.

You might insist:

God DOES insist on His own way.

God makes the rules.

God sets the punishments.

God sets the conditions of salvation.

God says that to be saved we must:

repent of our sins, and

place our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Yes, God has done all of this, but not in the sense of "It's my football, so we'll play by my rules." That is someone insisting on their own way.

Rather, God created the universe and human beings with intelligence, desire, feelings, and the ability to make choices. But God did not set up arbitrary rules and regulations to insist on His own way. God knows how everything and everyone can work together in harmony, because God designed and created everything and everyone to live and work together in harmony.

Physical Laws describe how physical forces and objects can work together in harmony. Moral Laws describe how God and people can behave so they can work and live together in harmony.

Example: When a builder designs and builds a car, he knows the rules or Physical Laws to follow so all the car's parts will function in harmony and bring satisfaction to the buyer.

When a dealer sells a new car, he gives an Owner's Manual to the buyer so he can follow maintenance rules and keep all the car's parts working in harmony. In some sense, an Automobile Owner's Manual is a book of Moral Laws. The Manual tells the buyer what he should do to make the car operate at peak efficiency. The Owner's Manual does not force the buyer to follow its guidelines.

When buyers maintain their cars, they last longer, since all the right parts are lubricated and replaced as needed.

When drivers follow all the rules of the road, everyone has a more harmonious driving experience. Drivers and their cars last longer and driving can be enjoyable. A Driver's Manual that we read to take and pass a Driver's Test is a manual of Moral Laws. Passing the test gives some evidence we know the laws, but the Driver's Manual and our Driver's License does not force us to obey the Laws. Rules of the Road are Moral Laws that the government gives us to promote our safe and happy driving.

A good engineer will insist that the right Physical Laws are followed when a car is built, but that is not insisting on his own way. A good police officer will insist that the Moral Laws in the Driver's Manual are obeyed, but that is not insisting on his own way.

Likewise, because God loves us, He has given us the Bible as an Owner's Manual so we will get the most out of our minds, bodies, and souls. God has given us the Holy Spirit, churches, teachers, Christian families, and friends so we can understand the Scriptures and live together in harmony with God and one another. The Bible is suited to our human nature and relations as created by God. The Bible shows that God is both a Good Engineer and a Good Police Officer. And we might add that the Bible shows Jesus is a Good Lawyer or Advocate.

God does not insist on His own way selfishly, just to make life happy for Him. God insists people follow the Rules of Life so they can live happy, harmonious, loving, enjoyable, unselfish lives suited to their nature as created by God. God insists people follow the User's Manual He has given us, the Bible, because God is love and wants the very best for us and everyone He created. God wants to promote the highest well-being and happiness of everyone.

Because God loves us, He sent a solution into the world to help everyone who has ever violated the Rules of Life. God's solution was not a set of shiny new tools and a tech manual so we could fix ourselves up.

God's solution was sending His only begotten Son, who demonstrated personally by His words and actions the Law of Love and the Rules of Life, so we would know how to live in harmony.

But we needed more than Jesus' example and efforts to live His way of life to fix us up. We needed the Son of God to die a sacrificial death on the cross for our sins. We needed Jesus to rise again from the dead and conquer death for us.

Jesus Christ, His Life and Death, is the solution for our morally and spiritually broken down lives. Jesus' life and death for us are an expression of God's deep love for us, sinners and rebels. We take our broken lives into Christ's fellowship, the Church. We ask Jesus to fix us up morally and spiritually, and sometimes physically (though we need moral and spiritual fixing up more than physical fixing up). We turn our lives over to Jesus totally, and we trust Him totally to meet our needs. We tell Him that we need His help to be made spiritually well. We tell Him that we need His help to understand and apply the Rules of Life. And Jesus will help us because Jesus loves us.

If your car totally breaks down, and I insist that you take your car to a auto mechanic; instead of a tailor, a jeweler, a carpenter, or a painter, am I insisting on my own way? Would you say to me: "You don't love me, you are insisting on your own way"? Probably not.

When Christian parents set rules to help their children live consistently with the Bible's teachings and to protect them from temptation and harm, do their children ever say: "You don't love me, you are just insisting on having things your way"? Maybe.

Likewise, after our lives have broken down morally and spiritually, is God unloving and insisting on His own way, just because God tells us where to go to get fixed? God the Father tells us, "Go to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and He will save you from your sins." So, we go to the Father's House, a House of Prayer, to meet Jesus. Because God loves us, God tells us the only place to go to get help. That is NOT insisting on His own way.

In this study and always, I will tell you to go to the One Person who can solve your moral and spiritual problems for all eternity. I will tell you to go to Jesus Christ, not because I am insisting on my own way, but because it is true that only Jesus can save you from your sins and make you fit for heaven.

***Love is not irritable or resentful.***

In the Bible, neither God, nor Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit ever manifested irritability or resentfulness. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, even after He had fasted 40 days, Jesus did not show any irritability toward Satan. Jesus never showed any resentfulness toward Satan. Jesus answered Scripture with Scripture, and then finally respectfully commanded Satan to depart. Jesus was exhausted on many occasions, but Jesus never showed any resentfulness toward the crowds when they pressed upon Him for one more healing or one more sermon. Love is not irritable or resentful. And even when Jesus was mentally and physically exhausted and pushed to the limit, Jesus never uttered an irritable or resentful word. Love is not irritable or resentful.

**Verse 6:**

*it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.*

***Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing.***

If God and Jesus did not consistently oppose wrongdoing, it might appear that they approved sin or wrongdoing. They always opposed wrongdoing, but always in love (as we have seen in the above 5 verses). In the Scriptures, God and Jesus never expressed any rejoicing over wrongdoing. When you do wrong, do you think God rejoices? No, God does not rejoice, because God is love. God must show His anger, displeasure, and unhappiness with wrongdoing, but He does so with patience, that people might repent and cease from wrongdoing.

Love rejoices in the truth. Has God ever told a lie and snickered? Did Jesus ever commend anyone for telling a lie? No, love rejoices in the truth, and Jesus is the truth. When you and I tell the truth or come to an understanding of the truth, God rejoices, because Love rejoices in the truth. When we study the Bible or hear a sermon and learn new truths, God rejoices. When we preach and teach the truth of God's word, God rejoices. When we believe the truth and try to live consistently with the truth, God rejoices. God rejoices in the truth, because God is love.

**Verse 7:**

*It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

***Love bears all things.***

Think about how much God bears with respect to this sinful world? Think about how much God bears with us as the church, when we are not all that we can be. God bears all things, because God is love. Think about how much God bore with the Jews in the Old Testament. When we read about how much God bears with sinners, we see something of the depth of God's love. God is not quick to condemn or destroy, because God bears all things. Think about how much God bears with you. He bears with you because He loves you.

***Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

This statement is in the context of “love bears all things.” Included in the “all things” is not falsehood, deception, and hatred. These things are contrary to love, as we saw in the previous verses. Love bears all things, because love believes, hopes, and endures in the face of falsehood, deception, and hatred. Love believes that love can make a difference in the face of those trapped in falsehood, deception, and hatred. God bears with us in spite of our sin, knowing that the truth of His word and the work of His Spirit will help us to change and live consistently with His loving purposes.

Strictly speaking, God does not believe, God knows. But when we read the Scriptures, we see God doing some things because He “believes” they will make a positive difference in the world and in people’s lives. Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame, because Jesus believed and hoped that through His loving death and resurrection many might be saved. Jesus was born and came into the world because He knew that his death and resurrection would save many from sin and death. Jesus endured sinners and torture, because He loved sinners and wanted them to repent and place their faith in Him.

At Stonegate Church, it can properly be said that because we love, we “bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things” knowing that we will make a difference in the lives of others through the grace of Jesus Christ working in us.

**Verse 8:**

*Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.*

Love never ends. God’s love will never end. God’s love for us will never end. Many things that we experience today that Paul lists as “prophecies, tongues, and knowledge,” will come to an end, but God’s love for us will never end.

**Verse 9, 10:**

*For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.*

Because God is love, He will fulfill all that He has promised in prophecy. God will answer the questions that we have in this life that we cannot answer now, but God can answer. God will bring to completion what is only partial now, because God is love.

**Verse 11:**

*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.*

God has never been childish, but God has put up with our childish ways. Jesus knows what it was like to be a child. Jesus knows what it is like to be an adult. God loves us and helps us grow to adulthood, either in this life or in the next.

**Verse 12:**

*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

God intends for us to know and understand fully. God wants us to know Him and understand Him “face to face,” something we cannot understand right now. God is love, and throughout eternity, God want to reveal more and more of His love to us.

**Verse 13:**

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

God is love. The greatest thing in the world is the love of God. When you read the Scriptures, and see God in the context of true love, I do not know who you cannot help but love God. Think about how the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible over hundreds of years. Everything they wrote about God and Jesus and their holy and loving character is 100 percent consist with the qualities of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13. I don't know how any reasonable mind can read 1 Corinthians 13, and look at how God is revealed in the Bible and not believe that God exists and God is love. No one or group could have made this up over hundred of years. No religion even comes close to creating a god that is similar to the loving, all-powerful, infinite, personal, God of the Bible. And when you read about God in the Old Testament, you can look at what God says and does through the lens of 1 Corinthians 13 and you will better understand the Old Testament and why God does what He does in the Old and New Testaments.

Because God is love, there will come a time when our faith, hope, and love will abide without wavering, with 100 percent consistency. In heaven, in the new heaven and new earth, because God is love, God will increase our faith in Him, God will increase our hope in an eternal and glorious future, God will fill us with love beyond what a mere human body could absorb and still live with it's material limitations. In eternity, we will have resurrected, glorified, human bodies that will enable us to experience and enjoy all the fullness of God's love and presence.

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