

Love Abides

1 Corinthians 13:1-6, 13



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FOCAL Read Responsively 1 Corinthians 13:1-6, 13
Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. **(2) 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, and have not charity, I am nothing.** (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. **(4) Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,** (5) Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (6) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, **but rejoiceth in the truth; ... (13) And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.**

Imagine yourself to be a doctor, a specialist, and a patient comes to you complaining of itchy skin. You order tests, run the tests, and on completion you discover that the patient has a type of cancer that – though deadly – it can be arrested. One symptom of this type of cancer is itchy skin, but the itchiness of the skin is in itself harmless. The cancer is dangerous and must be treated – the itchiness matters little. Your patient comes in and asks you the results of the test. With a straight face you look at him and say, “You have a little psoriasis, a little skin rash. Don't worry about it. You can treat it yourself with some skin cream. Have a nice day”.

Would this be right? If you did this, you would be guilty of more than medical malpractice. You would actually be guilty of murder. I know of no person who – knowing

the solution for a deadly disease – would withhold the information that would cure that disease. A doctor who did this would be a monster. He would be a shame to his profession, and considered less than human if he were caught. Where is the compassion? Where is the *love*?

Love is a thing that all people talk about and want to experience, and yet few in today's world really know what it is. The doctor who purposely and callously misdiagnoses his patient's condition has a lack of love. The mother (and I'm sure you have heard of a similar case) who mistreats her children is deficient in love. Those two young people who “fell in love” - one of whom now carries a baby soon to be aborted – they are deficient in love. To love one another, but to hate the product of that union is not love, it is a travesty! Love is not getting your own way, not satisfying yourself. Love transcends all of that which is me. Love stretches, and to whom love attaches it makes life better. Love never tears down, but always builds up.

In our world today we are all desperately seeking love – and we need love. We need love rightly applied, love from its Source, pure love, joyous love, healing love. We need the love that is only found in the bosom of God and in the gift of Christ. We need to rediscover the truth that God became Man in the Person of Christ so that we could receive His love by faith. God became incarnate in Christ so that – if we would believe on Him – He could live through us.

Love abides because God abides, and our lives will only have eternal meaning and purpose when we learn this by faith. Trust in Jesus, give yourselves unto Him, allow

Him to work through your life. Love abides.

Without Love, No Action Is Godly

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (2) 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, and have not charity, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**

It is not enough to do a thing for God. If you will do a thing for God, you must do it in the way that God decrees. The ancient Israelite was given detailed directions on how His Tabernacle was to be built. Each piece of furniture had to be made just so, each curtain and peg so long, each element in its proper place. Skilled artisans were to make every part, and every part was to be made and handled with the utmost care. God was coming to be with His children. If God was to be in the Temple it must be erected according to His specifications, else it would be of no value. The gold overlaying the gopher wood had no value unless it was placed as God decreed. The precious jewels were worthless unless placed where the Lord asked them to be.

So it is with love.

Love decrees that God's creation *do*, but before you can

do you must first be created. Jesus tells His children:

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Go ye – go do what I told you to do. Go, but only if you are in the family. Go, do, but only if you have been made by God. The unbeliever can go into the world and share the teachings of Christ to no avail.

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (2) 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, and have not charity, I am nothing.

The Message of God cannot be carried by a loveless messenger. **God is love (1 John 4:8). God so loved that He gave (John 3:16).** He gave Himself for you and for me. God had to love, because love is central to His character. God created man in the Garden because He loves, and God sought to redeem fallen man because He loves.

Love is the center of all Godliness, because love is central to God. You can speak in any language you can imagine, even **prophecy** – speak words from God – but without love your actions are ungodly. You can

understand all **mysteries**, all of the secret things of God, but if you do not have the love of God in you you cannot work for God. You cannot make a cake without sugar and eggs, you cannot do the work of God without love. The Apostle emphasizes this by the use of **all**. I can understand **all mysteries, all knowledge, all faith** – and to God **you would be nothing**. You can **give all your goods** to the poor but, without love, to God this is nothing.

The Pharisees never understood this great truth. They were keepers of the Law of God. They followed the theology of the fathers to the tiniest degree. They tithed. They served. They taught. And they continually *missed the mark of godliness*. They were loveless and mechanical in their faith. God has not called automatons or robots to be His servants, but He calls *children of love to His side*.

Christianity is not only doing for God, it is *doing through love for God*. We are told in another place:

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, **let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**

A person may profess to know Christ as Savior, but if he does not love his brothers and sisters in Christ then this profession is but a sham. **God is love**, and created you, if you are one of His children. I can know that I am a child of God if I have God's capacity to love. **Love is of God**. God is the Source of true Love. If you are born of God, you will have your Father's capacity to love.

Christianity is a love relationship between God and the believer. Love requires that there be a lover, and that there be the Beloved. God loves you, and through the operation of His mighty love He has saved you. Look at Love working. Love is not procedures, directions, jots and tittles. See Love as He walks through the streets of the city. Love turns away from no man, no woman, no child. Love sees the leper and – with the lightest of touches – heals the sufferer. Love sees the woman in adultery cast into the dust. The jot and tittle of the Law requires her blood, but Love looks with compassion on her accusers. “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone”. Love looks at critical Simon and gently chides. “The one you call a prostitute, she has loved Me. She washed My feet in her tears. You did not even provide water to a tired guest.” Love sacrifices tears and alabaster, self sacrifices little. Love carries His Cross down the dusty street while others lovelessly mock and scorn Him. Love bears the nails tearing into His flesh, as an undeserving creation spits and laughs. Love hangs patiently while bearing the sins of the world at a place called Calvary. Love cries “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”. Love is of God. Unless you are born of God you cannot know true love. But if you are born of God you are capable of great Love as He is Love.

But you, as Jesus said,

John 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Unless you are born again by faith in Jesus, you cannot

love as God would have you love. But if you have been born again then God is in you. You can love, love in the way that will bless God, bless others, and *bless you*.

Death and Love Rightly Defined

If you are born again, you are designed by God to love. You were created by Love if you have been saved by faith in Jesus. God the Holy Spirit indwells you. You are said to **have the Spirit of Christ**.

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The Christian is someone in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. You are now alive, now able to love. The unbeliever can not love according to God's standard because he or she is **dead in trespasses and in sins (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13)**.

When people define “death” and “love” they define it according to what they have seen, and not according to the Word of God. When the physical body ceases to be animated we say “he has died” or “she has died”. Yet death – Biblically defined - is not the end of physical life. Death is separation from God. The life without God is “dead”, and can not produce “love”. Humans strive to and attain to a certain type of what they call “love”, but when you see “love” properly defined according to the Scripture you see that what man calls “love” is not love at all. **God is love (1 John 4:8)**. He alone is the Source of true love. Dead things, things separated from God

because of sin, cannot attain true love. The Christian *can and should* be able to love. Look at how the Scripture defines “love”.

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind¹; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth² not itself, is not puffed up,

When we look at “love” the Bible never defines it as one thing, but as *one thing with many facets*. Love is like a diamond. Just as the diamond mined from the ground has little value until cut, love is without Divine value unless it has each of these characteristics. **Love is long suffering** – it bites its tongue at offenses. We all offend, all err, all that is, but Jesus Christ. Consider how patient He is with us. The Bible says:

Hebrews 10:23-24 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

He is faithful, dependable, and trustworthy. Jesus is patient with us, therefore we who are His are to be patient with others. **Love is kind, benevolent, always useful**. Love never tears down but always tries to build up. **Love does not envy**, does not look at what another person has and crave it. **King David looked at Uriah's**

1 5541 chresteuomai khraste-yoo'-om-ahee, middle voice from 5543; to show oneself useful, i.e. act benevolently:--be kind. see GREEK for 5543 Morphology: V-PNI-3S Tense: Present Voice: middle or passive depoNent Mood: Indicative Person: third Number: Singular

2 4068 perperuomai per-per-yoo'-om-ahee middle voice from perperos (braggart; perhaps by reduplication of the base of 4008); to boast:--vaunt itself. see GREEK for 4008 Morphology: V-PNI-3S Tense: Present Voice: middle or passive depoNent Mood: Indicative Person: third Number: Singular

wife Bathsheba and, rejecting divine love, took her. His actions were disconnected from God, and ultimately brought death to Uriah as well as his own life.

Love does not brag on itself. The Apostle had a wonderful attitude when it came to bragging – he bragged on Christ alone. **Love is not puffed up**. It does not raise or elevate itself. The King of Glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, deserved all glory and honor when He came to this earth. Yet Jesus lowered Himself to become a servant – thus showing us what Love expects of us. He said:

John 13:13-15 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for [so] I am. (14) If I then, [your] Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

I think what we need in the Church more than ever is old time foot washings. Nothing is more humbling than that – and frankly, too many who go by the name of CHRISTian are far too arrogant – myself included – for our own good.

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:5-6 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh³ no evil; (6) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Love does not behave itself unseemly. **Albert Barnes** notes in his *Commentary on the Bible*:

3 Holman Christian Standard Bible

“(οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ οὐκ aschēmonei). This word occurs in 1 Corinthians 7:36. See the note on that verse. It means to conduct improperly, or disgracefully, or in a manner to deserve reproach. Love seeks that which is proper or becoming in the circumstances and relations of life in which we are placed. It prompts to the due respect for superiors, producing veneration and respect for their opinions; and it prompts to a proper regard for inferiors, not despising their rank, their poverty, their dress, their dwellings, their pleasures, their views of happiness; it prompts to the due observance of all the “relations” of life, as those of a husband, wife, parent, child, brother, sister, son, daughter, and produces a proper conduct and deportment in all these relations. The proper idea of the phrase is, that it prompts to all that is fit and becoming in life; and would save from all that is unfit and unbecoming.”

Love always seeks *upward*, not downward, *Godward* not manward, *spiritually* not to the flesh. **Love seeketh not her own**, that is, Godly love is **not selfish**. The best example we have of the selflessness of love is again seen in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us:

Philippians 2:5-8 **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**

Love does not seek itself, it is not selfish but is willing to give up all in order to better its object. Jesus is very God of very God, yet He humbled Himself and took up the Cross of shame. In so doing He purchased salvation for each and every one of us who believe.

Love is not easily provoked. Love strains to do the right thing, the Godly thing – even for those who deserve it least. Jesus prayed **Father forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)** even as the crowd laughed and scoffed at Him. Love *can be provoked* – we all remember Jesus and how He rebuked the Pharisees. But even as He rebuked them He sought to draw them closer to a right relationship with God. *Nicodemus* is a good example of that.

Love thinketh no evil. Literally, **love does not keep an inventory of wrong things**³. We have all been offended in this life by others. Offenses come – though not always deliberately – and if they are not forgiven they become barriers to love. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:14-15 **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

We offend God daily, and He forgives our offenses as we ask forgiveness. If God kept a “tally” of our failures I am sure that there would be a very long list for each one of us. God forgives our intentional or unintentional offenses – and we should do the same with those who offend us.

When we see others “get their just deserts” we have a

tendency to feel justified – yet we are always to remember that **love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth**. Love always seeks to save, and seeks to provoke others to proper displays of love. As the Scripture says:

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

How Can I Attain This “Love”

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:13 **And now abideth⁴ faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.**

By now you are probably saying to yourselves, “I understand what you're saying Pastor, but *how* do I do this? How can I love this way?”

1. First ask yourself, **am I saved by faith in Jesus Christ?** Have you professed the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? Have you given your life to Him? Dead things cannot love as the Lord expects us to do. You must first be attached to God before you can love like God. You must be God saved and God indwelt or you will never achieve God's level of love.
2. If you are saved, **reckon yourselves to be dead to the world but alive to God through Christ Jesus.** You are no longer a worldling, but you are a child of God. The Scripture says **“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but**

alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11) You are saved to love, not to live according to the way of the world.

3. As you are created to love, and now recognize this, begin *practicing* love as the Scripture has commanded. Do this without deviation, without equivocation. If you are enabled, if you are equipped, you can do it. Start biting your tongue when offended. Stop bragging on yourselves. Put Christ first in all things. Practice makes perfect, and you must *exercise* love or else you will never do it.
4. Pray that God increase the clarity of your love as you read the Word of God and meditate on what Jesus Christ has done for you. Read the Word and pray, pray and read the Word.

Love abides.

While in Belize we visited the Mayan ruins at San Antonio. The Mayans were a vast people who at one time ruled most of Belize – yet today they are the poorest people in the land. Where did the Mayans go wrong? Why did this highly organized group of people fall into disarray? Ask the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the other cultures who used force and false gods to drive the people. In time the might of the nation fell apart as it was destroyed from within. Evil in time will destroy itself. **Only love abides, for only love is of God.**

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

⁴ Strong's: G3306, 3306 meno men'-o, a primary verb; to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy):--abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own. Morphology: V-PAI-3S Tense: Present Voice: Active Mood: Indicative Person: third Number: Singular