

Snapshots of a Disciple

A look at love in action - 1st Corinthians 13 (vs1)

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

So, I've heard 1st Corinthians 13 taught on by many people and from a variety of viewpoints. I don't intend to cover it extensively, but would like to look at it for myself and you're welcome to join me :) ~ My main interest is not so much of what is a good definition of love, but what love looks like in action. And, that's just the reason I see 1st Corinthians 13 so fascinating to me, right now, because it's not a definition - as we'll see along the way. What 1st Corinthians 13 is, in reality, is more like a working model - and a spiritual mirror for those who follow Christ to check themselves. At any rate, I plan on this being a pretty brief study. And with that said, let's dive into it :)

I'm looking at 1st Corinthians 13 in the NKJV from www.blueletterBible.org.

Okay, first verse: **“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 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. 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.”** (1st Corinthians 13:1-3)

I think we all know that we can do a lot of things that serve and care for others without actually caring about them personally - a person and a soul. We need to remember Romans 12 - **“Let love be without hypocrisy.”** (Romans 12:9) And we see this again in 1st Peter 1 - **“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart...”** (1st Peter 1:22) We need to notice 3 phrases there - **“sincere love of the brethren”**, **“love one another fervently”**, and **“with a pure heart”**. What stands out to me is that all of those phrases emphasize genuinely loving others, like He loves us, and learning to love with sincerity, rather than loving them for what we get back (conditional love). The word love here in 1st Corinthians 13 is the word for unconditional love - **‘agape’**, and it describes the unconditional love that God has for us - not because we are somehow lovely and ‘deserve it’, but despite the fact that we observe it. In 1st John, God through the apostle John notes: **“We love Him because He first loved us.”** (1st John 4:19) And again in Romans 5, we see this at a deeper level. **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (Romans 5:8) - The word ‘sinners’ there could (and likely should) be more translated **‘rebel’**, since that is what the word speaks of. So, while we were ‘rebels’, Christ died for us, though only some heed His call to repent, turn from their sin and grow in obedient faith, digging deeper in His Word, daily.

And again in Isaiah 53, a passage that's dear to my heart (and I'm sure many of your hearts), God describes love in action, displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. **“He is**

despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. And they made His grave with the wicked -- but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.” (Isaiah 53:3-9)

That is what the Creator (incarnated - in human flesh) went through. His own creation (us) beat Him beyond recognition, tore out His beard, beat the crown of long thorns deep into His head, called Him all sort of names, cast at Him all sorts of insults, then stripped Him of most of His clothing and and shamed Him even more by crucifying Him as a criminal, between two criminals. Yet, what does verse 7 say? “... **yet He opened not His mouth**” ~ what a statement! How did He endure all of that? He endured the more than any of us could ever endure - how did He do all of that, for our sin? Hebrews 12 reminds us why: “... **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**” (Hebrews 12:2) - that is genuine, undiluted, uncompromising, unconditional love - in action. May we always remind ourselves of this most beautiful picture - so picturesque that it's hard to even describe, much less to find words to give His character the honor He deserves.

So, love - that kind of love, is what the first verse in 1st Corinthians 13 is talking about. And, it also hits on some of the chaos among the charismatics and people around the globe - for when many of them (and us) do all of sorts of religious and caring things, yet they (and/or we) don't have genuine love for those around us (in the body of Christ and of the world), then all that they/we do - though it looks cheerful, loving and right - all of it is noise, to God, those in the body of Christ, and to the world. We need to really get grasp on that, so that we can grow in it (me included!) :). Okay, now to verse 2...

more to come, in God's timing. ~ ttfn, your growing brother and friend, SH :)