

The Corinthian Letters, Lesson 48, 1st Corinthians 13, Love is the Answer, Part 1

✍ I would like to welcome you to the Pastor's cooking corner, today we are baking a cake. Flour, sugar, eggs, baking powder, vanilla extract. Basic ingredients for most baking recipes. Which would you say is the most important ingredient?? Am I now ready to put this in oven as it is? Unmixed? Never think of the spoon or mixer being an ingredient, but it is absolutely essential!! As long as we mix these together, we can still have a cake even though we may leave out some ingredient. But without the spoon, we have no cake.

1. I actually want to speak to you about a different recipe': ingredients for a good church.

- ✓ The ingredients are sound bible study, deep faith, faithful use of gifts, focus on outreach, continuance in prayer, and sacrificial giving. Would you go to a church like that? I wouldn't, not if that's all they had. Surely you have seen a church with all those ingredients go sour and split and harm the cause of Christ. There has to be something that stirs and blends these things together, **LOVE!!** Without love that church even with all the right ingredients is nothing. In 1st Corinthians 13:1-3 notice, the scope of the ingredients Paul states here is enormous. Love is the most important ingredient such that you can lag in some of the other's ingredients and still have a church, but you cannot have a church without love. See also, John 13:35. A "Church" without love is like a body without a spirit, **clinically dead**.

2. Another angle is in Galatians 5:22. You know a tree by its fruit not it's leaves or trunk, similarly, Christians are also known by their fruit.

- ✓ It is interesting what's not on this list, faith, prayer, sound doctrine, gifts, outreach, etc. We do a regular emphasis on these different ingredients: outreach, missions, doctrine, giving, using gifts, faith, prayer. Where is the emphasis on love?

3. Let's hear the argument for love.

- ✓ Paul's argument is stated very clearly here in 1st Corinthians, John also states it very clearly in 1st John 4:7-12. How's that for a statement!! John mentions love in some form 45 times in this little letter. Peter mentions it in 1st Peter 4:8 and Jesus mentions it in Matthew 22:37-40. The law and prophets hang on what? Love! The New Testament hangs on the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) and the church hangs on the New Testament so the church hangs on LOVE!!

4. Consider what will not work without love.

- ✓ Tongues or gifts, a problem in the Corinthian church was that they didn't lack gifts, they lacked love. Gifts are of no value without love, when someone exercises a gift we need to ask the question, "Is this from God or the Devil?", because the devil can counterfeit the gifts. When someone exercises love there is no question about the source.
- ✓ Knowledge, this answers the question of whether or not knowledge can cure our society's problems, a resounding NO! Without love, it really doesn't matter what you know!
- ✓ Extreme faith, this is an unmistakable affront to any of us who thinks that God is impressed by our spiritual prowess. Unbounded generosity and the ultimate sacrifice, true love is self-sacrificing, but self-sacrifice doesn't always come from true love! The stark truth is, we are nothing without love, an absolute zero. Without love we're all fakes and phonies. Not at all the people we think we are in our minds. It all comes to naught if we can't act in love!!

Love is one of only 3 great pronouncements about God in the Scriptures, "God is Spirit, God is Light, God is LOVE!!!"
