

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸ And God has appointed these in the Church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. ^{13:1} Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging 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, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ 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. ⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away 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 just as I also am known. ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13 A 2/3/19 Jeremiah 1:4-10 Luke 4:21-32 Ps. 25 Resp. Ps.: 86
Hymns: 42, 351, 361, 50

LOVE AS GOD LOVES

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Our theme today is: **LOVE AS GOD LOVES.** How can we sinful human beings love as God loves? As we'll see, God not only teaches us what love really is, God enables us to love.

The Apostle Paul tells us, "*You are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the Church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.*" The New Testament "*apostles*" like Paul, the Old Testament "*prophets,*" and our "*teachers*" all teach us God's Word. Paul speaks of "*varieties of tongues,*" which refers to the ability God gave some back then to speak in a unique language. God also gave others the ability to interpret what was spoken in tongues (1 Cor. 12:10, 30.). With someone to interpret, speaking in tongues was a way to communicate God's Word to others. Paul speaks of the ability to work "*miracles*" and "*healings;*" again, gifts God gave to some back then. Paul speaks of "*helps*" and "*administrations*" – the different gifts God gives each of us in the things we do as a congregation.

Our Lord wants you and me to use our gifts to serve Him and one another in love. Paul tells us, "*I show you a more excellent way. 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.” God wants everything we do to be done in love. Someone may know a lot about what the Bible says, and be a gifted speaker. But if God’s love for us sinners in Christ is not in his heart and in his message, his words are empty. Someone may do what look like great things for the Lord and for others. But if God’s love is not in his heart and the motivation for what he’s doing, Paul says that it means “*nothing*” to God.

The word “*love*” in our text is the Greek word “*agape*.” Greater than romantic love or friendship love, it’s the highest form of love the Greek language can express. This love is not selfish or self-centered, but selfless and self-sacrificing. This is the same word for love used in John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world that*” (in this kind of love) “*He gave His only begotten Son....*” In this love, God was willing to sacrifice His only dear Son for us, and Jesus was willing to be sacrificed.

“*Love suffers long*” (that is, love is patient, ‘suffering long’ with others) “*and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*” Love is not quick to get angry, but instead, Paul says, “*suffers long*” in bearing with others. Love does not seek revenge. Love does not always insist on its own rights, or having its own way. Love treats others fairly and well. Love seeks to avoid hurting others. When love must confront or oppose wrong, it keeps righteous anger from turning into rage. The me-centered attitude that’s so prevalent today is the very opposite of love. Love does not entangle us in moral indecency, nor does love enjoy wallowing in tales of the moral indecency of others. Love is noble. Love is respectful toward others. Love tries to protect others. Love is able to trust and hope and persevere without becoming bitter or cynical.

Who of us can love like this?! Paul says, “*Love never fails.*” Who of us has a love that never fails? Human love fails, but God’s love never fails. We’re told in the fourth chapter of 1st John, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was clearly shown to us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ... And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ... We love, because He first loved us*” (7-11, 16, 18). God’s love for us in Jesus and working in us changes our sinful, self-centered hearts, teaching us and enabling us to love God and one another.

“*Love*” (God’s love for us, and our source of love from God) “*never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*” In heaven we won’t need anyone to teach about God any more because we’ll all be with God. “*For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*” In this life what we know about God and can tell others about Him is incomplete. “*But when that which is perfect has come*” (when God takes us to heaven) “*then that which is in part will be done away.*” In

heaven we'll know God fully. *"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly."* Again, in this life what we know and understand about God is incomplete. *"But then face to face."* In heaven we'll see God face to face. *"Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."* In heaven God will make us perfect, and we will know Him perfectly. All this is ours because God loves us, and He has given us faith to know Him and love Him as our God and Savior!

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." We won't need to *"hope"* that we're going to go to heaven once we're in heaven. In heaven we won't need *"faith"* in God – we won't need to believe that God is real – because we'll see God with our own eyes. *"Love"* is greater than faith and hope because love – God's love for us and our love for God – is for this life and for heaven!

Where do we find real love, and where do we find the ability to truly love? *"Love is from God"* (1 Jn. 4:7). The greatest demonstration of love was on the cross of Calvary when God offered up His Son for us sinners. In God's love for us in Jesus, we learn to **LOVE AS GOD LOVES**. Amen.