

Transforming Daily
“... but the greatest of these is love ...”
1 Corinthians 13:13

There is always a need for the unconditional love of the Father to be expressed through His children. For the believer it isn't just a suggestion, it is a command that we love one another as well as our neighbor as ourselves (1 John 3:23, 4:7-11). However, in the soon coming days I believe that the love of many will grow cold, and the love of the few that remains is going to have to intensify. As always, it will be easier said than done. Paul gives us the insight as to how it is to be practiced.

For all practical purposes, the church at Corinth did everything contrary to what God would have them do. Paul spent more time correcting them than any other church. I always say to other believers, “If you want to know how to do church right, read Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth and do just the opposite of what they were doing (of course that means following what Paul told them to do). In this text, Paul addresses the issue of brotherly and sisterly love. Love was probably the biggest issue that the church at Corinth faced. It was evidently lacking based on the correction Paul offers in his letter. Does the love of God go lacking in you? How about in your church?

Verses 4-8 in this chapter carry the weight of Paul’s message. Regarding love Paul uses phrases like, “suffers long,” “is kind,” “does not envy,” “does not parade itself,” “not puffed up,” “does not behave rudely,” “does not seek its own,” “is not provoked,” “thinks no evil,” “does not rejoice in iniquity,” “rejoices in the truth,” “bears all things,” “hopes all things,” “endures all things,” and “never fails.” Too often these characteristics are lacking in the church. I think the reason is fear. The reason I think this is because real love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Therefore, if fear exists, love must be lacking.

Our world is experiencing a great deal of change. Most of it is not for the better. Jesus said that this was not His kingdom. His kingdom is yet to come. Our responsibility and privilege in this kingdom is to share the love of God. As I said, it is easier to speak than to follow. This text in 1 Corinthians is not a magic formula. It is a spiritual discipline. The believer is to practice the spiritual discipline of unconditional love 24/7/365. Most of the verbs in this text are in the present tense. That means continuous or continuing action. The believer is to love without ceasing.

I don't know about you, but this is a difficult proposition especially when called upon to love the unlovely. But you know what, when Christ loved me I was unlovely and unlovable (and some days I still am; did I hear someone say amen?). At times it is easier to exercise faith and hope in private prayer and pulpit preaching rather than taking love to the streets face to face with those who seem to be unlovely and unlovable. Maybe that's why comparatively speaking, regarding faith, hope and love, all are necessary, but the greatest of these is love.