

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

The Power of Love

I Corinthians 13:1-6

¹ Love has much more power than you think it has.

God's love for you is the most powerful. ² The golden verse of the Bible, John, chapter 3, verse 16, states **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

What kind of love is that? It's a love that gives regardless of the cost!

Do you love that way, or is your love qualified? Does someone have to be worthy of your love before you give it? ³

If you actually expressed God's type of love, what kind of power would you have in your life? ⁴

Our scripture today describes what kind of power you might have. First Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 1 through 6 says, **If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all**

knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ¹ 5

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ²

This passage talks about two areas in your life love gives power to. ⁶ The first three verses talk about how ...

¹ I Corinthians 13:1-3.

² I Corinthians 13:4-6.

I. Love Gives Power to the Spiritual Gifts -

v1-3

Love gives power to the spiritual gifts.

In modern times the argument has been, “Do the supernatural spiritual gifts still exist today?” This message will not deal with that issue because we can still learn valuable lessons from these verses regardless of whether they do or not. ⁷

In verse 1 **loves gives power to the gift of tongues.** ³

This gift gave some Christians the ability to speak so others could understand in their own languages.

This gift was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles began to present the gospel message. ⁸ Everyone, Jews from all over the civilized world, could understand them in their own native languages. ^{4 9}

³ v1 - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

⁴ Acts 2:1-13.

Some today also explain that this is a language that can't be understood (the language of angels possibly) but enhances their prayer life. ¹⁰

The point here is that in the absence of love, it becomes only a source of pride and boastfulness.

This may be referring to the heathen practices of Dionysus and Cybele. They blared away on brass instruments. It wasn't music, just noise. They also banged away on cymbals.

I can remember when I was in the 5th grade I joined the beginner's band. The band sounded awful including my trombone. We eventually sounded better but our ears got a terrible beating.

What happens when little kids come into the presence of a drum set? They immediately start pounding on the drums and the cymbals, right? There's lots of noise but that's what kids almost always do. ¹¹

In verse 2 **love gives power to the gift of prophecy.** ⁵

¹² This gift was used to foretell the future and to speak for God supernaturally. ¹³

It was promised in Matthew, chapter 10, verses 19 and 20, **But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.** ¹⁴ In the Book of Acts Phillip's daughters and Agabus were prophets. ⁶ ¹⁵ Today some associate this gift with powerful preaching. ¹⁶

But, miraculous prophesy or powerful preaching, no matter how eloquent or true, without love doesn't profit God! I knew of a very eloquent and forceful preacher who was so obnoxious his life counter balanced his positive witness. I also knew, however, a

⁵ v2 - If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

⁶ Acts 21:8-10.

minister who loved people so much they listened to him because they respected him so much. ¹⁷

Also in verse 2 **love gives power to the gift of intellectual knowledge.** ¹⁸ This gift can be very important in helping us understand God's word and His way. Whether it is given through direct inspiration from God or learned through advanced academic degrees, that truth and understanding can be recalled and passed on to the rest of us. ¹⁹

But intellectual knowledge without love can be very cold, snobbish and prideful. Remember, when you are sharing your faith or when some of you teach or preach, people are more impressed by your love for them than they are with your knowledge. ²⁰

Again, in verse 2, **love gives power to the gift of faith.** ²¹ The Lord said, **Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here**

to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. ⁷

I heard the story once of an elderly woman in Okinawa who lived by the sea. But a large sand dune stood in front of her little cottage. She prayed very fervently that the Lord might give her a beautiful view of the ocean. A bull dozer came by one day and pushed her sand dune to a construction site not far up the beach. She praised the Lord for answered prayer; she received her beautiful view! ²²

But, even if you have enough faith to open your own mountain moving company, without love it would be useless to God. ²³

Then, in verse 3, it states that **even if you give your life as a total sacrifice, if it doesn't have love, it does little good!** ⁸

⁷ Matthew 17:20.

⁸ v3 - If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

When I was stationed in South Korea some years ago, some Buddhist monks demonstrated in the streets of the capitol city of Seoul. To everyone's horror they doused themselves with kerosene and torched themselves to death. They literally "surrendered their **body to the flames**". How about the terrorists who strap bombs to themselves? Without **love**, they **gain nothing**. ²⁴

In the second half of our scripture passage we learn that . . .

II. Love Gives Power to Practical Living - v4-6

Love gives power to practical living. This kind of love is defined in verses 4 through 6. ²⁵

In verse 4 **love means patience**. The word "patience" ⁹ in the original language means "slow to express your temper". ²⁶

There's such a high rate of family abuse today. Dads, do you fly off the handle when the kids get out of

⁹ μακροθυμέω.

hand? ²⁷ When one trial after another hurls it's flaming arrow, do you complain and fuss? Raise your shield of faith and attack with your sword of the Spirit! ¹⁰ ²⁸ Remember verse 7 here; ¹¹ real love, God's love, **always perseveres!** ²⁹

In verse 4 **love means kindness**. King Philip of Spain was the most religiously devout monarch of his day. He started the Spanish Inquisition!

Are you zealous for your faith? Good. So was King Philip! ³⁰ When that woman was caught in the very act of adultery, would you have executed her as the Law demanded or said with Lord Jesus, **Neither do I condemn you . . . Go now and leave your life of sin.** ¹²

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Also in verse 4, **love means not being jealous**. Preachers like me tend to compare themselves with the big influential ones in large churches. I caught

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:16-17 - In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹¹ v7 - It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

¹² John 8:1-11.

myself once when I was attending a national convention of being jealous. A classmate of mine in college years prior was the keynote speaker.

Are you jealous of the successes of other people because they are better than you are? I was! My prayer became, “Lord, please help me mature in my faith that I might become like them”! ³²

Again, in verse 4, **love means not bragging** or being inflated with your own importance. ³³ Romans, chapter 12, verse 3, tells us, **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.**

How humble are you, really? ³⁴ What do you think about your own abilities and achievements? ³⁵ Your prayer not only needs to be, “Lord, build me up and encourage me when I need it”, but also, “Lord, help me to look at myself realistically!” ³⁶

In verse 5, **love means acting with grace** and not insisting on your own rights. ³⁷ The word “grace” ¹³ means, “showing unmerited favor, kindness and good will”. ³⁸ When you make decisions is your primary concern what advances your own interests or what pleases God and helps others? ³⁹

Where does your freedom in Christ and your responsibility to others begin?

The first century church consisted of Jews and Gentiles (non-ethnic Jews). They came from two separate backgrounds but became Christians and worshipped together. Often, they would eat meals together. ⁴⁰

The Jews were raised observing very strict kosher laws. Gentiles had no such restrictions in their culture. Eating meals together which contained meat became a real problem. Even though the cross made the legal demands of the Old Testament Law obsolete,

¹³ χάρις.

¹⁴ including the kosher laws, it was still a very important part of Jewish culture.

Here was the Apostle Paul's advice. ⁴¹

Romans, chapter 14, verse 15, **If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.** ⁴²

Romans, chapter 15, verse 1, **We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.** ⁴³

Romans, chapter 14, verse 21, **It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.**

The bottom line: I am responsible for what others think of me and my Christian faith! ⁴⁴ Sacrificing your own desires, even though you are within your rights, becomes an expression of sacrificial love; God's love!

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¹⁴ Colossians 2:13-14 - He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Let's do something besides just talk about love. Start doing something about it!

Love will put power in your life!

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