

## Love Conquers All...Or Does It?

I can't think about Christ without being baffled by His love for us, which makes me think of love in general which is how we arrived at this particular writing to begin with. Now when I say love I don't really mean the kissy-kissy, frou-frou, "oh my gosh I miss you so much and you've only been gone 10 minutes" kind of love we see so much. Im talking about something much deeper than that, something that is so powerful, it really doesn't even have to have any actions to go along with it, but they usually do follow.

I always seem to think of the clichés that seem to follow love, I'll get to the one in the title eventually, but the first one that pops in my head is usually something along the lines of "I love so and so, Id die for them", or something similar to that. It of course reminds me of something Jesus said:

John 15:13- Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

I really don't like to just pluck that verse out, and in fact the verse before it is one I could totally go into preach mode about. But I will try my best to refrain, and stay with the thought I have in mind. Most would say that Jesus is referring to the physical suffering He was about to endure, and I would be the last to disagree. In fact we see that "Id die for them" cliché carried out most often in a physical manner, with people jumping in front of bullets for someone they love, or pushing them out of the way of that train, etc etc. Most of those things are spur of the moment, and require little thought action whatsoever. With that said, I think its also vitally important to remember that Jesus' suffering on the cross was not only physical, but emotional and even spiritual as well. Kind of puts a different twist on that verse eh? "Laying down your life" on an emotional and spiritual realm is a much more challenging thing. Being willing to give up the desires of your flesh, disagree with your own emotions, and listen only to the Spirit of God concerning things is definitely much more difficult than throwing yourself in front of a train. That's a pretty strong statement, but I think if you ponder it long enough, you might just find it to be true. I think this attitude applies with one-on-one relationships as well as how we deal with people in general.

So really, I think love is a lot of things, but I think in its purest form, it is ultimately that agape love that Christ displayed, and still does display on a recurring basis. For a description of that, I think the only place to go is the familiar and ever popular I Corinthians 13.

### 1 Corinthians 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling 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, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake 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 through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

That's easily one of my favorite pieces of scripture, because there are so many absolutely profound things in there if you take the time to read it, and think about it, and allow the Holy Spirit to teach you concerning it. I guess this is where my "Love Conquers All" comes into play. I do believe that love truly does conquer all, but only if it's the pure agape love of Christ, any other, diluted form of love can, and usually will eventually fall prey to one or more of love's foes, many of which are some pretty bad hombres.

Verses 1-3 really show me that a love for people should be the strongest influence in our lives. I could go into preach mode very easily, but again, Ill refrain...sort of. It just says to me that love should be the springboard for the things that we do. The "launch pad of love" if you will. Because even if you have a tremendous understanding of the truth of the Word of God, if you dont have the love of Christ within you, more often then not you'll end up hurting someone who comes to you for advice or counsel. Thats why Paul

said to speak the truth in love. So often we speak the truth, but it comes out in anger, hatefulness, spite, vengeance or some other avenue. Ill stop there, I could go on for hours.

In verse 4 the thing that jumps out at me is the long suffering of the love of Christ. A love that endures such terrible things and never weakens, falters, or stops. Its a humbling thing to realize that Christ loved Hitler just as much as He loves me. Or the men on death row for heinous crimes. That's something that most folks, including myself don't understand. I for one have a hard time always operating in that kind of love. But we should do it. So parents, when your kids hurt you, keep loving them, dont stop, chances are they love you too, and when the both of you can finally put aside all the things that stand in love's way, it will conquer. Same thing goes for husbands and wives, friends, family, and the human race in general.

Despite the fact I posted those verses from the KJV, I absolutely hate what it does to the end of verse 5. Most newer translations show "keeps no account of evil" or something along those lines instead of "thinketh no evil" which Im inclined to agree with. To keep no account of evil is a tremendous thing, and something that most all of us struggle with. To think that if Hitler would have accepted Christ before he died he would've ended up in Heaven just the same as me is again, something that makes my brain hurt. But, its also the truth. To keep no account of evil is to deal with people like they've never hurt you, like they've never breached your trust, like those hurtful things never came out of their mouth. Can you do that? I know I cant, not yet anyway. Right now I can think of someone that even though they are stil very much part of my life, I still remember the hurt they brought too it. I still remember all the anger they brought me, all the lives that were affected, so on and so forth. Do I love them? Of course, but is it the purest love of Christ.....no, sadly, the answer is no. Theres someone else I can think of that I dont even talk too anymore, just because the hurt was so great, that I cant overlook it, cant forget it, etc. Is that the pure love of Christ? No. No its not. So really, I think verse 5 introduces some of the biggest opponents of love. To love someone is a battle. Some battles are pushovers, some are intense, brutal struggles. One of love's strongest opponents is unforgiveness. Meaning so and so hurt you, and you cant let it go,you have vengeful or hateful feelings toward them, and you don't even want them around anymore. Maybe you still love them, but not in the capacity you should. I think another huge opponent of love is pride. I say that because so often I see this attitude of "Well, Im right and theyre wrong, and if they cant begin to see things my way, then I just dont want anything to do with them". Sounds a lot like pride to me. But you say "no no, its a righteous anger!!" nah, because even if it were, youd still be bound to speaking the truth in love, dont you hate it when the Word of God has to agree with itself? So pride is something that stands in the way a lot, two people may say they love each other and that they want the other person back, but only on these certain terms, only if they agree that youre right, only if they stop doing this or that. Well...so much of that depends on the situation. Maybe you are right, and maybe they are wrong, are you willing to still love them? Are you willing to "lay down your life" on a spiritual battlefield in prayer until they see their error? Or are you too convinced that its your way or the highway, and that youd rather leave them hurt and broken alongside highway than make any sort of modifications to your way....Im not

speaking to anyone in general, its just an attitude I see sometimes and therefore I personalized it with pronouns and such haha.

You might say look at verse 6 it says "rejoice not in iniquity, rejoice only in the truth!" and use that to justify that youre right and theyre wrong, so its the highway for them. Hmm. To that Id say that despite the fact love doesnt rejoice in iniquity, it still continues to be love, and does not falter, stray, or weaken. So yeah, youre sort of right, you dont have to rejoice at the things your loved ones do, but make sure your love stays love, and that it remains victorious on the battlefield of your life and doesnt get beaten down by pride, unforgiveness, and jealousy.

7 and 8 are another testament to the resilience of love. I see the term "all things" used over and over again, and its again, very humbling. This true Christ-like love has the capability to endure all things. It endures rebellious children who curse your existence as a parent. It endures parents that dont act the way they should towards the children God has blessed them with. It endures cheating spouses, and words that cut deep. But how often do we let it? Most of the time we just throw up our hands and say that if things arent met on our terms that we quit! Some of the most precious ties a person can have get cut. Parents cut ties with children, children with parents, husbands with wives, friends turn to enemies, and for what? Most of the time I think if we look deep enough these ties get cut for the wrong reasons, most of the time it boils down to love being defeated by an onslaught from its harshest enemies of unforgiveness, resentment, pride, selfishness, anger, bitterness, jealousy, and a whole lot of others that I cant think of right now. I think what hurts me the most is seeing people use God and His Word as justification for tearing people apart. They turn half-truths into whole pain. They say "this person does such and such, thats not of God" and you know what, sometimes they might even be right. But instead of doing this:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you

–Matthew 5:44

They cause hurt and pain to come upon the ones they should love the most, and all of it with this big "God tested, God approved" stamp on it. What's interesting is that in the 11th and 12th centuries men, women, and even children went on campaigns to slaughter and eradicate their fellow man, why? It was because they were told thats what God wanted them to do. They did not have God's Word available in a form they could understand at that time. It was out of their innocence and ignorance that thousands at least, died. You and I are blessed with the availability of the inspired Word of God at our very fingertips, yet we only pull out and use what we want too, when we want too. We dont often enough allow the Word of God to judge us, and use it to judge ourselves, we just use it to point out the mistakes, shortcomings, and sins of others. We fulfill certain parts of it, while forgetting others. We gladly do the things talked about in Matthew 18, where we tell our brothers' trespass to increasing numbers of people, but never stop to consider what was said 11 chapters before that regarding removing the beam in our own eye. Am I guilty of these things? Absolutely, and its caused me pain to see myself fall.

But I digress.

But ultimately the most tremendous verse of this whole chapter is the last one. Verse 13. Hope and Faith are tremendous things. I believe hope is what gives way to faith, sort of the spark that produces the power of faith I guess. Faith brings healings, miracles, deliverance, provision and as a matter of fact Jesus went so far to say that with faith nothing shall be impossible to us. Not one single thing. Thats some pretty powerful stuff, and yet, there it says, right on the paper, love is even stronger than faith. That thought alone is enough to keep you awake at night.

So to end, I think love has the potential to indeed conquer all, but only if we let it. Only if we use the light of the Word to see the things that are standing between us and operating in that love that Christ commanded us to walk in. If love isnt defeated by one of its many, and quite powerful, enemies then yes I do believe it will conquer all. Christ said this:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

-John 13:34

"As I have loved you" is exactly the kind of love Ive been squawking about for the last however many pages this thing is. Thats the kind of love Christ commands us to walk in. Christ didnt wait for things to be a certain way before He loved us. He didnt blame the other person for all the trouble. He didnt wait for us to act like this, or do that, or treat Him in a certain way. He just loved. I encourage all of you to think about it, even as I am thinking about it. Dont wait for the stars to align before you love those God has given you, just do it. Dont wait for that person or those people to start acting a certain way, or doing certain things before you are free to love them, just do it. Most importantly, dont let your love be defeated. Someone thought to say "Love Conquers All" for a reason, and thats because its the truth. But only if we dont allow our love to be defeated, and beaten down along the way.

Most of you I do love without having to think about. Some require a little more work, but if by nothing else than faith alone I say this:

I love you:)

Zach