

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 "The Big Virtue: Love"

In the last verse of chapter 12, Paul said "And I show you a still more excellent way." That excellent way turns out to be the greatest command, LOVE.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

- It is not by chance that Paul would use this lesson for the Corinthians, for their patron deity was Aphrodite (the Roman goddess Venus), the goddess of love. Their primary claim to fame was this theme.
- The word that Paul uses for love is *agape*, the sacrificial love of God. This was most greatly demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Because of this, *agape* is often described as "a lay down your life" love.
- Paul uses four of the nine miraculous gifts discussed in the previous chapter and show the worthlessness of them if they are not carried out on the backdrop of love. One of the Corinthians could speak all the tongues that their mouth could speak, predict all the future, know all the knowledge and have all the miraculous faith their soul could hold, without demonstrating *agape* to their fellow man, these are worthless miracles. They could even be passionate enough to give all their possessions to the poor and be burned at the stake like a martyr, but without love it results in worthlessness.
- Brothers and sisters, we must listen closely to the words of Jesus when He said in *John 13:34-35* "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." <sup>35</sup> "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." This is truly the greatest command to have rolled off the tongue of Jesus, for all faith in Christianity hangs upon this one word.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

### The Fifteen Promises that Define Love

#### 1) "Love is patient"

- I promise to be patient with you when feeling anxious.
- 1 Peter 2:21-23 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;
- Colossians 3:12-13 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;
- The promise of patience would serve all well as we seek together to love the Lord.

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 2) “Love is kind”

- I promise to treat you kind when feeling angry.
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
- 1 Peter 3:8-9 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

### 3) “Love is not jealous”

- I promised not to feel threatened by any of your successes.
- Acts 7:9 “The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt.”
- Proverbs 6:34 For jealousy enrages a man, And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
- 1 Corinthians 3:3”...For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?
- We must never allow this negative quality to pollute our relationships.

### 4) “Love does not brag”

- I promise to not exalt myself over you.
- Galatians 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
- Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- What would happen if we were willing to take the route of humility first and foremost? Would it not turn out better?

### 5) “Love is not arrogant”

- I promise not to compete against you.
- Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.
- Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.
- In a love relationship there is not room for competition, for we are on the same team. We tend to forget that and allow arrogance and pride to stand in the way.

### 6) “Love does not act unbecomingly”

- I promise to treat you with respect.
- 1 Peter 3:1-2 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.
- 1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
- Without the elementary principle of respect, our relationships will never reach the level that God would want.

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 7) “Love does not seek its own”

- I promise to put your needs above my own.
- 1 Corinthians 10:24 Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.
- James 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
- What better way to communicate the principle of LOVE than to put others ahead of yourselves?

### 8) “Love is not provoked”

- I promise to extend to you the benefit of the doubt.
- James 1:19-20 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.
- Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,
- We must be willing to others the benefit of the doubt.

### 9) “Love does not take into account a wrong suffered”

- I promise to leave your past mistakes in the past.
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
- Romans 15:7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
- True love does not keep bringing up the past for it is unproductive to the present.

### 10) “Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness”

- I promise to be understanding when you mess up.
- Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.
- When someone you love messes up, it is not a gotcha moment, but a time of reflection and understanding.

### 11) “Love rejoices in the truth”

- I promise to always be honest with you.
- Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—
- Honesty is always the best policy in a functional relationship. Without it the level of trust can never be attained. It does not mean that you always say what you feel or break the confidence of another, but does mean that what you say is true and can be trusted.

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 12) “Love bears all things”

- I promise to share your struggles of life.
- Philippians 4:3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of the gospel*, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
- Galatians 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
- Nobody likes to face the struggles of this life alone. You are there to help them when they are down and to lift the burden off their shoulders.

### 13) “Love believes all things”

- I promise to trust you.
- James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.
- This is an incredible leap of faith for the one that is used to doing for himself. There comes a time in every relationship that we will have to trust another.

### 14) “Love hopes all things”

- I promise to share my dreams with you.
- Titus 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,
- Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,
- Without a common hope in something higher than us, the relationship cannot be what God intends. It begins with the shared hope of eternal life, a good family, a good circle of friends, a common mission and many other steps.

### 15) “Love endures all things”

- I promise to stick it out with you for better and for worse.
- Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.<sup>17</sup> “Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if *anything but* death parts you and me.”
- When we demonstrate this commitment to each other, then that is truly love.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part;<sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

- As mentioned in the previous chapter, the miraculous gifts of the first century were there to confirm the words of the New Testament (Mark 16:20). They were passed to others through the laying on the apostle's hands (Acts 8:18). When the apostle's all died out by the end of the first century and took the transfer powers to the grave. When the transferees died out, so did the gifts. Every single word that we have in our New

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

Testament today was already written down for us. The perfect "το τελειον" is the New Testament words by which we are saved (John 17:20).

1 Corinthians 13:11-13 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- "Paul is perhaps alluding to the classical form of education that placed an emphasis on clear thinking processes and public oratory. Children were expected to learn how to develop arguments and to present sophisticated cases." Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 3: Romans to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Mirrors during the ancient time were not made of glass, but brass, silver or some other shiny metal. The brazen laver that held the water in the tabernacle were actually made from melting the women's mirrors (Ex 38:8). As you could imagine, the typical ancient mirror was not of the quality we would have today (see picture to the right).
- What possibly was Paul saying? I am persuaded that Paul is saying that the era of the miraculous was piecing together different portions of the knowledge found in the New Testament. The Corinthians did not have the benefit of having all the writings, but only two of the letters that we have today. Their perception of the miraculous gifts did not yet yield to the reality of temporal in nature. When the miracles as they know it cease, then they will see what was always important...Faith, Hope and Love, with the greatest being LOVE.

