

“LOVE”
by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13 The Message

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. ² If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. ³ If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

⁴ Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, ⁵ Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, ⁶ Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, ⁷ Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

⁸ Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. ⁹ We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. ¹⁰ But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled. ¹¹ When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

¹² We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

¹³ But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

Discussion Questions:

1. Comments or questions about the Scripture?
2. What is one of your all-time favorite love songs?
3. What do you think of Eugene Peterson's translation of this famous chapter?
4. Paul describes love as the more excellent way. How would you define love? What does Paul say love is not?
5. In verses 1-3, what activities are useless without love? Why is love such a crucial ingredient of life that we can't do without?
6. How does love help the problems we face?
7. In what sense does "love never fail"?
8. Are there times when love says, "no"? When?
9. How can verses 8-10 help us with the disappointments of life?
10. Paul concludes saying that the three remaining things are: faith, hope, and love. Or as Peterson translates it: trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, and love extravagantly. Why do you think these three virtues are often mentioned together in Scripture?