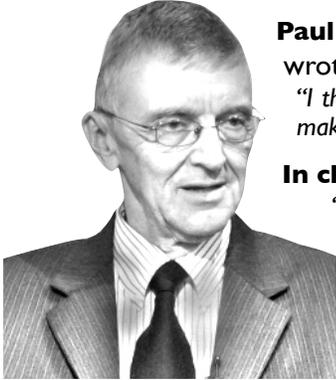


Learning How To Love

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment"
(Philippians 1:9).



Paul had a very special love for the Christians at Philippi. In verses 3-5 he wrote,

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

In chapter 4:1-3 Paul referred to them as...

"My brethren, Dearly beloved," Longed for, My joy and crown, True yokefellow," fellowlabourers."

Yet, in spite of their great love for each other, Paul prayed that their love would *"abound more and more in knowledge (precise and correct knowledge) and in all judgment"* (discernment).

Love Must Be Cultivated.

B. Kirkland Loving one another will not happen automatically. That is why the commandment to *"love one another"* is repeated so many times in the Word of God.

- **John 13:34**, *"love one another."*
- **John 15:12**, *"love one another."*
- **John 15:17**, *"love one another."*
- **Romans 13:8**, *"love one another."*
- **First Peter 1:22**, *"love one another."*
- **First John 3:11**, *"love one another."*
- **First John 3:23**, *"love one another."*
- **First John 4:7**, *"love one another."*
- **First John 4:11**, *"love one another."*
- **First John 4:12**, *"love one another."*
- **Second John 1:5**, *"love one another."*
- **First Thessalonians 4:9**, *"love one another."*

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

(First Peter 1:22)

Paul Focused On The Importance of Christians Learning To Love.

- **Romans 12:9**, *"Let love be without dissimulation."*
- **Romans 12:10**, *"with brotherly love."*
- **Romans 13:8**, *"love one another."*
- **Galatians 5:22**, *"the fruit of the Spirit is love..."*
- **Ephesians 3:19** - *"know the love of Christ."*
- **Ephesians 4:2**, *"forbearing one another in love..."*
- **Ephesians 5:25**, *"Husbands, love your wives."*
- **Hebrews 10:24** - *"provoke one another unto love."*
- **Hebrews 13:1**, *"Let brotherly love continue."*
- **Titus 2:4**, *"teach the young women...to love their children."*

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

(First John 3:11)

Our Lord's Final Message Was About Understanding Love

In John 15:17 Jesus said,

"These things I command you, that ye love one another." **Christ did not say, I command us to love one another.** It is not possible to love on command. Love is much deeper than that. Jesus said, *"These things I command you that (in order that) ye love one another."*

The "things" that Jesus was talking about in John begin in chapter thirteen. He said, *"If ye know (cherish, pay attention to) these things, happy are ye if ye do them"* (John 13:17). The little word **"if"** is used in various ways in the Scriptures. Here it is used in the same sense as John 7:17 where Jesus said,

"If any man will do his will, he shall know (come to learn) of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." God opens the understanding of those who do His will.

A careful study of the “things” Jesus spoke about, with a purpose in making those “things” the most important part of our being, will result in us loving one another. Jesus said,

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (John 15:10). John 13:1 tells us that Jesus “having loved his own...he loved them unto the end.” (**The end** - “the point upon which something cannot extend.”)

As a result of that love,

“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded” (Verses 4,5).

We read,

“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, **Know ye what I have done to you?** Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (Vs. 12-17).

“In Knowledge And In Judgment”

The word “love” in this verse is *agapē*. It refers to an *undeserved* love. Jesus said,

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” (Matthew 5:46).

First Corinthians 13:1,

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

“Though I speak...”

As pastors, we “speak.” With our speaking, we can move people *emotionally* and sometimes even make them cry. We can move people *mentally* to get them to change their *wills* and do things we want them to do; however, only *agapē* love will change a persons' *spirit* and Christians are to be “renewed in the *spirit of your mind*” (Ephesians 4:23).

Preaching is not the key; love is the key that leads Christians to be renewed in their *spirit*. Paul said we are to be “rooted and grounded in love.” (Ephesians 3:17). Following that, we read of being “renewed in the *spirit of your mind*,” (Verse 23). To change a persons' will is not the answer. People are to be “renewed in the *spirit*.” The Bible way is to do it through love.

- **Ephesians 1:15**, “love unto all the saints.”
- **Ephesians 4:2**, “forbearing one another in love.”
- **Ephesians 4:15**, “speaking the truth in love.”
- **Ephesians 4:16**, “edifying of itself in love.”
- **Ephesians 5:2**, “walk in love.”
- **Ephesians 5:25**, “love your wives.”
- **Ephesians 6:23**, “love with faith.”

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”
(First John 4:11)

Agapē was in the Greek language, yet no unsaved writer used it. Perhaps it was for this reason the Holy Spirit chose this word for a genuine Christian love. It is free of the sensual overtones common to other Greek words. “*Agapē*” is one of the greatest words used in the New Testament.

Why The Word “Charity”

A “*charity*,” such as the Red Cross Society, does something with the money they collect and they do it for people who do not earn it or have done something to deserve it. They do it expecting nothing in return. That is called *charity*. *Charity* (*agapē* love) is not just a feeling for people or just telling people you love them.

The Bible says,

“Though I speak...and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” The Word of God says, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (First John 3:18).

Speaking without “*proving the sincerity*” of our love (Second Corinthians 8:8) is as useless as an annoying noise! It is like someone playing a solo on cymbals.

Christ said in Matthew 15:8,

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

It is a sad commentary that many church members could say the same thing. *“My pastor draweth nigh unto me with his lips but his heart is far from me.”*

To the pastor - not to the people - Christ said,

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4).

Notice it does not say the pastor lost his first love; it says he “left” it. To lose something might be excusable; however, to leave something is to make a conscious decision. The word “left” here means to “depart from one place or position to go to another.” The Ephesian church failed because the pastor purposely “left” his first love. He made a conscious decision. The problem was not the *people*, nor was it the *program*; it was the *pastor*.

The pastor was **serv**ing. Christ knew all about the pastors’ service concerning the ministry (“works”). He knew about the pastors’ efforts in the ministry (“labour”). The pastor was **separated**. He could not “bear them which are evil.” He faithfully “tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” The pastor at Ephesus, unlike many fundamentalists of our day, was faithful in keeping the church pure. The pastor was **stable**. He was not the kind of pastor who would cooperate with those who promote the heresy of Calvinism or the damnable heresy that promotes salvation without repentance. Verse three says the pastor had “borne (not abandoned truth), and hast patience (Tribulation worketh patience - Any pastor who dares to be faithful concerning ecclesiastical separation will know some persecution), and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted” (not grown weary and shut down).

The Pastor’s Shortcoming.

Christ rebuked His pastor saying, “**Nevertheless** I have somewhat against thee, (pastor) because thou hast left thy first love.” **Love is a relationship.** As previously mentioned, there are several words in the original Scriptures that refer to different kinds of love. There is a “low-level” type of love that says, “I will love you if you do things my way.” It is a conditional love based upon our expectations. It is a love that says, “You must earn my love.”

The love mentioned in our text is an unconditional love. Love is a relationship, but with whom did the pastors’ relationship change?

We all have specific relationships, such as *husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children*, etc. As Christians, our first love should be our love for Christ. First John 4:19 says we should, “...love him, because he first loved us.”

In our God-given position as a husband, our main responsibility concerning our wives is to love them. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

In their God-given position as a wife, their main responsibility concerning their family is to love them. Titus 2:4,5 says wives are to “...love their husbands, to love their children...that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

As Pastors Our First Responsibility Is To Love The Church Family.

The pastors’ main responsibility is not to be a great public speaker. His main God-given responsibility as a pastor is to love his people with an unconditional love.

The Good Shepherd

- **John 10:3**, “the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”
- **Verse 4**, “he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”
- **Verse 11**, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

The pastor at Ephesus was serving; he was separated; he was stable; however, Jesus said, “**Nevertheless** I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” He was rebuked because as a pastor, he had made a

choice to focus on a *program* at the expense of loving the *people*. Notice again, he did not lose his first love. He “left” it. It was not by accident; it was by choice.

When I was first starting out in the ministry, I met with a very well-known pastor who travelled every week to preach in conferences. I asked him if he was just starting out, as I was, what would he do differently. He immediately answered, “*I would stay home and take care of the sheep God has given me.*” He continued, “*The wolves are devouring the sheep while I fly around the country every week, preaching to others.*”

More Than The Spectacular

First Corinthians 13:2 speaks of having some fantastic abilities!

- “*The gift of prophecy.*”
- “*Understand all mysteries.*”
- “*All knowledge,*”
- “*Have all faith,*”
- “*Could remove mountains,*”
- “*I have not love,*” (*agape*)
- “***I am nothing.***”

These attention-getting abilities would make a pastor very popular. Everyone would want to be his friend. He would be famous and he would be rich. He would be able to tell the future, understand all mysteries, have all the knowledge in the world, have the faith to move mountains and yet Christ said if he had all those attention-getting abilities and did not have *Agapē* love, he would be “**NOTHING!**”

More Than A Sacrifice

The Word of God says even if “*I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, (agapē) It profiteth me nothing.*” It would be a great sacrifice if we gave “*all our goods*” to feed the poor or even gave up our life in the process of helping the cause; however, God says without *agapē* love it profits “*nothing.*”

All love begins somewhere. As previously mentioned there are three Greek words translated “*love*” in our King James Bible.

Eros refers to an erotic love or a sexual lust that begins in *the mind*.

Phileo is an affection ranging from infatuation to a deeper love that also begins in *the mind*.

Agapē is a very different love that originates not in our mind, but in our *spirit* and the *Holy Spirit* is the Author of this love.

Romans 8:16 tells us that the Holy Spirit “*...beareth witness with our spirit.*” The Holy Spirit always works using the Word of God. As we determine to let the Holy Spirit have His way as we study, “*these things,*” the Holy Spirit will do His work in our lives and we will find that “*...the fruit of the Spirit is love...*” (Galatians 5:22).

John 13:17,

“*If ye know **these things,** happy are ye if ye do them.*”

John 15:17,

“***These things** I command you, that (the byproduct) ye love one another*” (John 15:17).