

7. A Portrait of Love (3Q 2026 1 and 2 Corinthians)

Biblical material: 1 Corinthians 13; Matt. 24:12; Gal. 5:22, 23; 1 Tim. 1:14; 1 John 4:8.

Quotes

- To love someone means to see him as God intended him. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*
- Real love, the Bible says, instinctively desires permanence. *Timothy Keller*
- Though our feelings come and go, God's love for us does not. *C.S. Lewis*
- When one has once fully entered the realm of love, the world — no matter how imperfect — becomes rich and beautiful, it consists solely of opportunities for love. *Søren Kierkegaard*
- The word 'God' defines a personal relation, not an objective concept. Like the name of the beloved in every love. It does not imply separation and distance. Hearing the beloved name is an immediate awareness, a dimensionless proximity of presence. It is our life wholly transformed into relation. *Christos Yannaras*
- Of all powers, love is the most powerful and the most powerless. It is the most powerful because it alone can conquer that final and most impregnable stronghold which is the human heart. It is the most powerless because it can do nothing except by consent. To say that love is God is romantic idealism. To say that God is love is either the last straw or the ultimate truth. *Frederick Buechner*

Questions

What's love got to do with it? How do we make sure talking about love doesn't end up in sentimentalism or emotionalism or a very wishy-washy concept? Why did Paul need to speak very clearly about the true nature of love to the Corinthians? How can we relate to these concepts today? How does God's demonstration of love answer Satan's charges in the great controversy?

Bible summary

Paul defines what true love is in 1 Corinthians 13. Increasing evil means that the love of many will grow cold (see Matthew 24:12). Galatians 5:22, 23 describes love as the first fruit of the Spirit. In 1 Timothy 1:14 Paul says Jesus filled him with trust and love. "Those who don't love don't know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:8).

Comment

In dealing with the key concepts of the Christian faith Paul rightly focuses on love. The trouble is in the definition of such an overused word. For many it is synonymous with feelings and emotion; yet where the God of love is concerned, it's very different. Not that there is no emotion in our love relationship with God, just that emotional feelings is not the base. Love is a principle, and it guides the way we live.

Many people today are desperate, wanting someone to love and to be loved. "I just want somebody to love. Just want to share my love," a church member told me once. So much of the world is hurting for lack of love! This is echoed in popular culture—it might even be argued it is the basis for most pop songs, novels, and movies:

- "I could tell you about my life/ And keep you amused, I'm sure/ About all the times I've cried/ And how I don't want to be sad anymore.../ And how I wish I was in love." *Peter Green/ Fleetwood Mac*.
- "Can anybody find me somebody to love?" *Freddie Mercury/Queen*

In one survey asking people what they most wanted in life, the most frequent answer was that they "wanted to love and be loved." In a world that is faced with so many shortages, the worst is a shortage of love. A lack of love. A love famine. Love lost. And in Lucifer's self-centered desire to

place himself above the Most High, we see what happens when self-love annihilates love for others.

In his life-work, Jesus demonstrated God's love in healing and teaching, in sharing the truth and saving. He bows down to wash his disciples' dirty feet, and the record says that he was showing them the full extent of his love, as he went on from there to Gethsemane and the Cross. Here is "love that will not let me go," and we love because he first loved us (see 1 John 4:9). Nothing can separate us from the love of God (see Romans 8:39).

If we truly believe then there will be results in our lives. We cannot keep this good news of God to ourselves! In the same way when we fall in love we want to talk about the one we love, so too with Jesus. He is not only our Savior and Redeemer, he is our dearest and closest Friend. He told us that he calls us friends.

As a result we want to introduce our wonderful God and Friend to others. This is what witness and service is all about—demonstrating in our own lives the nature and character of the God we believe in, the Friend in whom we trust.

We are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). If this is so, what are we to do, and what are we to say? While we are very much in this world, how are we not "of" it? Does this mean some kind of proud disengagement? Then what of the practical application—for the theory may seem clear, but in practice...

Some criticize our involvement in human organizations. But are we not called to witness for God and the truth wherever? Most importantly, how will those outside our community come to know the God we love and admire? It is not just a question of traditional evangelism—it is how we live our lives before the on-looking universe.

"God was in Christ bringing the world back from hostility to friendship with him, not counting anyone's sins against them, and giving us this message to change his enemies into his friends. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God is pleading through us: "Please, won't you come back and be God's friend?" 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20. We are ambassadors for Christ because he has given us his message of reconciliation. So how do we explain what this message is, and how do we demonstrate it unless we become involved? This does not mean adopting the value system and practices of this world. But it does mean meeting people where they are, sharing the good news, and helping others understand the wonderful truth of God as he truly is.

It is my sincere conviction that we have not so much a duty but an amazing opportunity to share with all people at all levels the wonderful good news of God as he truly is, to reveal he is not as the Enemy has described him, and that he will save and heal—not just us—but the whole universe as his character is understood and admired by all his admiring children

Ellen White Comments

Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind. {AH 50}

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another --this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. {AA 551}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within-- when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384}

Jesus says, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a well-spring that never fails.

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