

The More Excellent Way

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the more excellent way, highlighting its characteristics and benefits in the life of a believer.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:30, Romans 12:12, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Philippians 2:3, 1 Peter 4:8

Topics: "Christian Love", "Humility"

Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, emphasizing the 'notes' that love embodies. Envy is highlighted as a destructive force that eats away at the purity of the heart, leading to criticism and bitterness. Love is portrayed as humble, polite, and selfless, seeking the good of others above oneself. It is patient, kind, and enduring, believing and hoping in all things, and ultimately never failing even in the face of challenges and changes.

Transcript

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." -- 1 Cor. 12:31

Someone has said, "The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians consists mostly of 'notes.'" Let us notice some of the "notes" contained in this chapter.

LOVE "envieth not."

Envy! That unpleasant something shut up in the heart like a secret fire that feels greatly grieved at the sight of its superior's happiness and prosperity! The peculiar thing about envy is that it is found in the heart of the unsanctified. It dwells on the faults and failures of others rather than their gifts and virtues. This kind of a spirit, like a burning acid, eats the very sweetness of the Christ-life out. There is something that belongs to a sanctified life that is a thousand-fold beyond orthodox theology; a tenderness and a sweetness and holy fragrance like the breath of Heaven and the perfume of the Rose of Sharon. But the envious spirit strikes through this inward purity and Divine sweetness like the touch of gall, until all one has left is the hull of the outward form of a religious profession. An envious preacher finds great pleasure in criticizing the successful preacher whom the Holy Ghost is using and Heaven is honoring. If he fails to find anything in his past life, then his pulpit manners and methods are criticized.

Envy was at the root of some of the darkest crimes mentioned in the Bible. Joseph was envied by his brethren because of his spotless life, his loving disposition and winning ways. Alas for the Josephs of

today that fall among envious souls! The Scripture says Saul eyed David. The eye is an index to the soul. David could see from the dry, cutting look in the eye the volcano of hatred and jealousy raging in his breast, therefore he fled for his life. There is no disposition of the soul which will more quickly destroy the spirit of love than envy. Oh, this scorpion-headed, green-eyed monster; this ulcer of hell! If you find this in your heart, do not stop short of a complete cure. The baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire destroys carnality and gives us a love that "envieth not."

LOVE "vaunteth not itself."

One has translated this, "Divine love paradeth not itself." Love never tries to show off its gifts and learning, but shines just as brightly at home as it does at the camp or big gathering.

Another rendering of the word, "Love acteth not rashly." It never passeth judgment on anyone in any unkind, harsh way. It can be contradicted, misunderstood, misrepresented, and still keep calm and sweet under the pressure.

LOVE "is not puffed up."

All puff and strut leaves the heart in which perfect love dwells. One of the worst dangers of the human family is that of pride. It is dangerous for one to have too many gifts; they are likely to become puffed up over success. Many a young Christian worker started out humble and little in his own eyes. Finally he got where he could preach and was in demand, and, instead of staying little and humble, became so self-conceited that the Spirit failed to use him. If there is any grace that must impress Heaven, it is the beautiful grace of humility. Such a person can be overlooked and not feel sore. He is thinking so little of himself that he hardly knows when he is slighted.

LOVE "does not behave itself unseemly."

Perfect love in the heart makes a perfect lady or gentleman out of any one. Love is so refining that one filled with pure, humble love could mingle in the highest society and not behave himself unseemly. It gives one good manners, sweet politeness and winning ways. It has been defined as love in trifles. Some workers may wonder why they are not in demand when, if the truth were known, their coarse, harsh, rough manners have closed many a door against them. We do not have to tone down nor compromise to be nice, gentle and polite. Jesus never did anything in a rough, rude way.

LOVE "seeketh not her own."

The heart in which perfect love reigns is not only saved from selfishness, but self-seeking and wire-pulling in every form. It, in honor, prefers others. The Holy Ghost strikes a death-blow at the taproot of carnality, which is concrete selfishness, until one can rejoice with a sincere, heartfelt joy at the prosperity and success of others.

LOVE "is not provoked."

All the gun-powdery nature and that hot flash of temper has been burned out, and there is nothing in a truly sanctified heart to get stirred. Anger is looked upon by many as a harmless something that is permissible with a Christian life. According to the Bible, it springs from the same root as does murder and adultery. The same thing that makes one commit murder makes another give way to anger. Sanctification burns out all anger and evil tempers and fills the heart with a love that is kind and gentle.

Reader, do you ever feel the stirring of anger when some one has said something unkind about you or your work? When some one ignores and sets aside your ideas and cuts your tender heart to pieces with unkind words, do you keep sweet on the inside?

LOVE "thinketh no evil."

Not only will love save us from evil speaking, but mistrusting and implying wrong motives to our brethren. We will put the best construction on things, and refuse to believe an evil report until it is known to be a positive truth.

A clean heart will manifest itself with an open face and honest look in the eye. Did you ever notice, when thrown in an atmosphere of suspicion, you unconsciously close all the shutters of the soul and seem to shrivel up; but when in the warm atmosphere of love all the powers of the soul seem to expand like the rose does in the summer sun. Love's fire is too hot for uncharitable suspicion and evil surmising to live in.

LOVE "rejoices not in iniquity."

Love rejoices not in the downfall of an enemy, not even a bitter enemy, but is like David, who wept at the news of Saul's death. No wonder he was called a man after God's own heart. There is nothing that will test our piety like our attitude toward our foes and those that oppose us.

Let us notice the positive side of this beautiful experience:

LOVE "suffereth long, and is kind."

It suffers all that men or devils may inflict upon it. A spider will get poison out of a flower and turn all it eats into poison, while a honey bee will get sweetness out of the same flower and turn all it eats into honey. "The same trials, bereavements, losses and sorrows which make one kind of life grow in melancholy or bitter and open rebellion, will make another kind of life grow in meekness and patience, perseverance, and an inexpressible charity and sweetness of spirit. Everything depends on whether or not the self-life or the Christ-life has possession of us.

Some people can suffer, but they are not very kind. God's plan can so clean the heart of evil tempers and fill it with meekness, gentleness and patient love, until, out of our sorrow and suffering, we can grow some of the sweetest flowers of paradise.

LOVE "beareth all things."

The trouble with an unsanctified heart is that it can bear only so much, but after so long its patience gives out. Boundless love is the true condition of bearing all things in the spirit of Jesus and taking the advantage of our crosses and making them a means of grace and enlargement of all our soul faculties.

LOVE "believeth all things."

A heart filled with perfect love knows not what it is to doubt. It knows that Jesus is Divine. Such a heart not only believes all the written promises of God, but all the secret ones whispered to the inner spirit by the Holy Ghost. It believes in the providence of God, and knows and feels with a certainty that all things in earth and Heaven are working together for its good.

LOVE "hopeth all things."

Hope has to do with the future world. A soul full of hope refuses to live on the dark, bitter past, but ever looks on the bright, sunny side of life. Hopeful persons are cheerful and filled with inward, Divine gladness. They are as bright as the spring morning with budding trees and singing birds. There is no room for blues and despondency, but they have caught a vision of coming glory and the resurrection morning.

LOVE "endureth all things."

What a beautiful spirit! It never runs from the battlefield or complains amid hardships and pressure. It endures with "unwearying patience anything God can permit, or men or devils inflict.

Finally, it "never faileth."

Thank God for something that abides in a world of changes, where death robs us of our loved ones. Friends may grow cold and cease to love us; riches take to themselves wings and flee away, but that sweet-featured, soft-voiced, gentle-spirited, long-suffering love that is kind, "never faileth."

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