

The Greater Way To Live

Teaching given by Peter Warren at FGPC, March-May 2014

1 Corinthians 12.31 – 14.1

1. Love: The Greatest Force

1 Corinthians 12.28-31

I've been in ministry for 29 years and during that time I've seen Christians chase after spiritual things, pursuing blessings, dreams and chasing them down like some hunter stalking his prey.

- Many Christians pursue spiritual gifts, physical healing, or the answer to some need they have.
- A lot of people desire and aspire to ministry and seek after it.
- Men have pursued some emotional lift or spiritual high to the extent that it becomes the be all and end all of a service. If that service doesn't lift them up or satisfy them then, in their opinion, 'the power' was not there.
- Some have travelled across the globe chasing some blessing.
- Others flit from church to church trying to track down some teaching that will tickle their itching ears. (2 Timothy 4.3)
- Then there are those who are so busy pursuing their ministry that they forget and neglect the very reason God raised them up.
- While others hunt down ministers and church leaders to try and discredit them or attack them.

Some of these are not wrong in themselves –

- God wants to bless us with gifts, healing, financial blessings.
- He wants to minister and provide for that which we need.
- He wants us to be lifted up and encouraged.
- He knows we need to be in a sound church where we can grow up spiritually and become mature.

In this chapter Paul talks about spiritual gifts. Many of us desire or aspire to one or more of these gifts and ministries – that's how it should be, we are told to earnestly desire the best gifts. The Bible tells us to seek after His kingdom and the things of the Spirit.

Even though we might desire the best gifts, aspire to ministry or leadership within the framework of the church, there is a greater way. There is something more excellent and far greater than any of the gifts and ministries.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul writes giving instructions on how they ought to conduct themselves in private and in their church gatherings.

He talks about:

- church order
- apparel
- conduct at Lord's Supper
- Spiritual gifts

Issues that some were having:

- members taking each other to court
- problems of immorality
- idolatory
- sectarianism (I'm of Paul, Peter, Apollos, Jesus)
- marital issues

There was something in this church that was lacking, which carried far more weight and was more excellent, the greater way of LOVE. (v31)

"But always seek to excel in the greater gifts. And now I will point out to you a way of life which transcends all others" (Weymouth)

Nothing is more important in the life of a Christian than developing in the love of God. It is the only means by which faith works (Galatians 5.6), and the only way to be assured that you have passed from death to life (1 John 3.14). Without love, you block the answers to your prayers and the manifestations of God's promises in your life. (1 John 3.20-24)

A. The Pre-Eminent Force of Love.

The Bible is not a revelation of God's power; instead, it is a revelation of His love. Love is more than an emotion (worldly view of love) – it is a force. When it is in operation it will rearrange things, change people and circumstances. It's like dynamite - powerful and explosive in its working – it's the greatest force there is and has the Pre-eminence (means 'to rise, stand or show itself above other things; to have excellence or distinction in something; undoubted superiority')

Love is the superior force in the universe; there is nothing or no one greater. Why, because God **IS** LOVE (1 John 4. 8,16)

God's love must be developed in your life - We must make it our goal to love others as God loves them.

This is the only thing that draws the lost to Christ and sustains their relationship with Him – not harsh words or self-righteous attitudes.

The world will know we are Christians by our love, not necessarily by the things we say or do.

- Love is not a hug in church, handshake or holy kiss – when people say that a church or group 'has no love' what they generally mean is that no one gave them a hug, or spoke to them afterwards. These things may be practical demonstrations of God's love but they in themselves are not love.
- Some get upset because the pastor didn't let them speak, or do something in a service.

The reason why many Christians get all upset and uptight over these little things is because they themselves are not rooted and grounded in love. (Ephesians 3. 17-19)

B. Everything Is Connected to the Pre-Eminent Force of Love.

Until love is cultivated, nothing else in your life will operate at it's fullest potential

1 Corinthians 13.1-3

- We can speak in tongues, prophesy, sing the loudest, pray long prayers but **without love** we will sound nothing more than a noisy gong or clanging cymbal.
- We can have enough faith to move the biggest mountain and have great revelations and visions but **without love** we are nothing.
- We can give all our goods to the poor and do other charitable deeds and good works, but **without love** it profits us nothing.

Faith works by love, giving works by love, ministering works by love. Everything functions and operates by love.

1 Corinthians 13.13 – love is the greatest.

C. Loving God – Loving Others.

1 John 4. 7-12, 20-21

You can't say that you love God while refusing to love others.

- There are some people who every time they open their mouths and speak you know they're blowing hot air – but you must still love them.
- Some people make you cringe every time they walk in the room – but you must still love them.
- Some people aren't just a thorn in your side, they are a complete thorn-bush – but still you must love them

Loving people means you don't gossip about them, or make derogatory remarks about their race, background, culture, gender or beliefs.

- Racism would be eradicated if people only walked in love.
- Wars would cease. Strife and conflict would end.
- Poverty would be wiped out.

The love you have for others shows the love you have for God.

Our horizontal relationship with one another is based on our vertical relationship with God. It's a bit like a radio mast – the stronger the reception output, the more people can tune in to the signal.

Love triangle (used to illustrate marriage) – the more our love for God grows and the closer we get to Him, the more our love grows for others (our spouse). We become closer to them.

Satan will try and cause trouble in your relationships in order to disrupt your love walk because he knows that everything is connected to love. He does that to get you off track so that your faith doesn't work and your prayers don't get answered, so that everything else falls to pieces.

D. Where Do We Begin?

- Loving God – Deuteronomy 6.5; John 15.10-14
- Keeping His commandments – John 14.15
- Allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you – Romans 5.5

2. Love Requires Action

Nothing is more important in the life of a Christian than developing in the love of God. Love is the pre-eminent force, the most excellent way. Everything is connected to it - It is the only means by which faith works, and the only way to be assured that you have passed from death to life. Without love, you block the answers to your prayers and the manifestations of God's promises in your life.

1 Corinthians 13.4-6

A. Loving Others is a Direct Commandment.

We finished last week with the thought that we cannot say that we love God while refusing to love others. We read the verses in 1 John 4.20-21
*"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this **commandment** we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."*

John 13.34

Jesus gave us a commandment to love others

- it is not something that we try to do
- consider to be a good idea (theory),

– It is a commandment, it must be kept.

Matthew 22.36-40 – Everything hangs on this commandment to Love.

- Love God
- Love Others

We are to love others as Jesus loved us – unconditionally and sacrificially.

B. Love Requires Action

Have you noticed that love requires some corresponding action:

- I love coffee (drinking)
- I love that book (reading)
- I love that shirt/dress (wearing)
- I love movies (watching).
- I love that song (singing/listening)

Warning: We must be careful how we use the word love – we should not love things (1 John 2.15), only God and people. When our love is directed at things we get over into idolatry and covetousness. We should rather use the term 'like' to refer to things.

Love requires corresponding action:

- “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3.16)
- “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14.15)
- “Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends” (John 15.13)
- “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter towards them” (Colossians 3.19)
- “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you... But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return..” (Luke 6.27-28,35)

Love moves us to do something for others.

- “And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was ***moved with compassion*** for them, and healed their sick” Matthew 14.14
- “Then Jesus, ***moved with compassion***, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."” Mark 1.41

1 John 3.16-18

- Love is not in the one who 'shuts up his heart' to others – *to close the heart of compassion* [Amp]
- Love is not in word only (theory) but in deed (practice) and truth

While Jesus was teaching the principle of loving others, He told a parable to explain it – Good Samaritan. It is a story of love in action, a man moved by love towards his enemy.

C. How you relate to others determines how God relates to you

Ephesians 3.16-20

God is able to do for you according to the power that works in you – LOVE

You cannot be rooted in selfishness and expect God's Word to work for you.

The degree to which you are rooted and grounded in love, determines the degree to which God's goodness (glory, vs16) is manifested and released in your life.

How you act determines how God acts towards you – the measure you use, the same is measured back to you. Luke 6.38. The whole context of Luke 6.27-38 is LOVE, these things are acts of love (praying for, blessing, mercy, forgiveness, giving).

When we become rooted and grounded in God's love, His power is released in our lives.

Love is the root – A tree that has bad roots does not bear any fruit. Love is the root to all the manifestations of God's goodness in our lives. Only God's love can give us everything we need for victorious Christian living. It's the power of love that puts us in the place where we receive the 'exceedingly abundantly above supply'.

Faith cannot be our root; the anointing cannot be our root, for love is the greatest – it is the Greater Way to Live.

D. Love must be developed

Love must be perfected or developed in us. To live the Greater Way you must stop indulging in things that do not fall into the category of love:

Unforgiveness; Envy; Jealousy; Acts of carnality (flesh) – (see Galatians 5.19-21)

1 Corinthians 13.4-6 – Love does not:

- Act impatiently
- Envy
- Parade itself (boastful)
- Puff up (proud, haughty)
- Act rudely
- Seek its own (selfish)
- Easily provoked (touchy, short tempered)
- Think any evil (pays no attention to a suffered wrong [Amp], keeps no record of when it has been wronged [NLT])
- Rejoice in iniquity (injustice and wrongs to others)
(We will cover these in more detail later)

Jesus wants you to be conformed to His image – love.

As you develop and grow in love, you will begin to look, think and act like Jesus.
(Romans 8.29; 1 Corinthians 15.49; 2 Corinthians 3.18; Colossians 3.10)

3. Love Covers: The Nature & Behaviour of Love

Nothing is more important in the life of a Christian than developing in the love of God. Love is the pre-eminent force, the greater way to live. In this lesson we are going to look at how love operates – its nature and behaviour.

1 Corinthians 13.4-7

A. Love Suffers Long (vs4) – It is patient

- Love is for the long haul, it lasts and stands the test of time, it doesn't lose heart or quit.
- God's love towards us is the perfect example – His love for us outlasts all our sin and iniquity.
- People may change but love never changes.
- Patience isn't 'putting up with something' instead it means constant and consistent. This means that we are to love and remain constant in it, even if people change we keep on loving through thick and thin.

B. Love Is Kind (vs4)

- Love is obliging and willing to help or assist.

- Kindness carries with it the idea of being employed or working for the benefit of others – to be useful and benevolent.
- This kind of love is active – it sees the need and gets involved. Consider Jesus, He was moved with love for those He met (compassion – with love).

C. Love Does Not Envy (vs4)

Envy and its twin Jealousy are most harmful to us – they are at the root of every wicked thing.

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” - James 3.16 (AV)

Envy and Jealousy:

- Are at the root of grumbling and complaining
- Lead to covetousness
- Prevent us moving on in God
- Hinder the anointing of God in our lives
- Shut the door on the blessing

Envy & Jealousy are motivated by lack and insufficiency – we may see others with things that we don't have or being used by God to a different level than we are.

Rather:

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” – Romans 12.15

D. Love Does Not Parade Itself, Is Not Puffed Up (vs4)

Love does not act boastfully or in a spirit of pride. It is not self-inflating, arrogant or conceited.

Pride is one thing that God hates more than anything else.

- God resists pride (James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5).
- It comes first in this list from Proverbs 6.16-17 -
“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood....”
- God wants us to give Him glory when we get blessed. Giving Him praise keeps us from being arrogant, conceited or puffed up with pride.
- We should brag on God – tell others that God did it / God blessed me / God met the need.
- Pride is destructive (Proverbs 16.18)
- The spirit of 'I' is the spirit of satan - Isaiah 14.13-15
- Pride receives the same condemnation as satan (1 Timothy 3.6)

E. Love Does Not Behave Rudely (vs5)

- There is never an excuse to behave rudely. Even worldly people know the value of good manners.
- Being brash is not the same as being bold – you can be bold without resorting to rudeness.
- Love is respectful and courteous. It is not unbecoming (*not fitting*) in word or deed.

- Love does not go out of its way to deliberately offend or rub people up the wrong way.

F. Love Does Not Seek Its Own (vs5)

Love is not selfish in any way. We have just seen that the spirit of 'I' is the spirit of satan.

Love is not self-seeking – what can I get out of it, what's in it for me.

- Love gives
- Love serves
- Love sacrifices

G. Love Is Not Provoked (vs5)

- Love is not easily provoked – it is not touchy, fretful or short-tempered.
- Love doesn't fly off the handle at the slightest thing; it isn't offended easily.
- When we are rooted and grounded in love we prevent ourselves from being provoked. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5.5). The Holy Spirit is gentle and love gives us that same quality of spirit.

H. Love Thinks No Evil (vs5)

Love doesn't hold any grudges – it forgives.

“.. *pays no attention to a suffered wrong*” – Amp

“.. *keeps no record of when it has been wronged*” – NLT

- God, who is love, forgives and does not remember our sins against Him
- An unforgiving spirit keeps people bound by satan and keeps the blessing from being manifested in their lives.
- An unforgiving spirit will prevent you from being forgiven and hinder your prayers from being answered.

I. Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity, But Rejoices in the Truth (vs6)

There are two words both translated rejoice in this verse. The first one means '*to be glad, full of cheer*' the second ones means '*to congratulate and share in joy*'

Love does not rejoice or gloat at injustice, misfortune or wrongs done to others.

- It does not seek retaliation or revenge.
- It does not see to deceive, defraud – act hypocritically
- It does not treat unjustly

But Love does share in and celebrates when truth and righteousness prevail.

- Love embraces the truth – honour, integrity, virtue and righteousness
- Love celebrates when others are blessed.

J. Love Covers (vs7)

“Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]” [Amp]

This verse summarises the Behaviour of Love – we can summarise it as ‘**love covers**’.

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”
- 1 Peter 4.8

- Love bears all things by covering with silence
 - Love does not cause or perpetuate a scandal – it does not gossip about another’s mistakes, sins or failures. It will not talk behind their backs
 - Be careful – gossip often comes disguised as concern and we often try to justify it by saying ‘*I’m only saying this so you can pray*’.
Just because a brother/sister asks you to pray it doesn’t necessarily mean it is for public broadcasting.
- Love believes all things by covering with forgiveness
 - Love is quick to believe the best about a person
 - It forgives and forgets past wrongs and trusts them
- Love hopes all things by covering with prayer
 - Love does not speak/gossip about people but rather prays for them

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much... Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” – James 5.16,19-20

- Love endures all things by covering with patience
 - Love suffers long; it endures and perseveres
 - It remains constant – it doesn’t blow hot and cold

4. Love Covers: The Nature & Behaviour of Love [part 2]

A. Love Never Fails (vs 8-9)

NEB – ‘Love will never come to an end’

NLT – ‘Love will last forever’

NCV – ‘Love never ends’

MSG – ‘Love never dies’

AMP – ‘Love never fades out or becomes obsolete’

GNB – ‘Love is eternal’

MOF – ‘Love never disappears’

JBP – ‘Love is the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen’

BERK – ‘Love’s flower petals never fall’

Love never comes to an end, it never dies – it lasts forever

Prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, knowledge will vanish away – these things will come to an end, but love will outlast them all.

Love never fails [never ends, never ceases, never fades, never becomes inefficient]

B. Steadfast Love

- Jeremiah 31.3 – love is everlasting, eternal
- Lamentation 3.22 – love does not fail

Love never changes. God is Love – He never changes, He's the same yesterday, today and forever

Romans 5.5 - Love is not a feeling – feelings end, feelings cease, feelings change constantly. Notice it says that 'the Love of God is poured out in our hearts' (not our mind or emotions) by the Holy Ghost. We walk by faith in God, not by what we see or feel, things that are seen and felt are temporal (2 Corinthians 5.7; 2 Corinthians 4.18)

If your 'love' for someone fluctuates with how you feel – then it's not love. It is a desire and desires however strong can soon change. See **2 Samuel 13.1-15**

- Amnon loved his sister Tamar so much that it became an obsession for him.
- He conspired with a friend to be ill and have Tamar come to his house and cook for him.
- He brought her into his bedroom and then raped her.
- Afterwards he hated her exceedingly - his hatred was greater than the love that he first had.

We do not live according to our desires – desires can lead to covetousness

C. The Best Way to Exemplify God is by Loving Others

God is Love and the Scripture teaches that we should imitate God. We are to be transformed into His likeness. The best way for us to exemplify (be like) Him is to love others.

- John 13.34-35 – this is the new commandment that we love one another with the same type of love that Christ has for us.
- 1 Thessalonians 3.12-13 – God wants us to increase in our love for one another. He wants to establish our hearts blameless in holiness and love is the key.

D. Keep Yourselves in Love.

- Matthew 24.12 – yielding to sin and lawlessness will prevent us from developing in love; and that causes our love to grow cold.
- Revelation 2.4 – the Ephesians had left their first love. They had allowed that love to grow cold and were urged to repent and stir up that love.

When we fail to develop in love, it grows cold and this makes us carnal, unhappy and immature – we can find ourselves acting in a childish way.

Jude 1.20-21 – Developing in faith, in the anointing and in the principles of the Word of God is a good thing to do, but not without the love of God as your motivator. Keep yourselves in love, nothing works without it.

E. Love Conquers All.

You will always be a winner when you choose to go the way of love.

Love reaches beyond human capabilities – it transcends human understanding. When we live in love things happen – family members get saved etc. (See Ephesians 3.19)

Romans 8.35-39 – Love conquers all. Nothing can overcome love or separate us from love.

Nothing can stop us from developing and growing in love.

Love Never Fails – It is the Greater Way to Live.

5. Growing Up in Love - [part 1]

In the last lesson we were looking at the unfailing aspect of love. Things come and go, they change; our feelings are transient but love remains – it never fails. In the verses we were looking at we saw that we only have the gifts to a degree – in part. The context of why Paul wrote these words was because of the strong desires for the spiritual gifts that the church in Corinth had – he was showing in this chapter that it was good and right to desire these gifts and ministries but there is something better, something far greater and more excellent - love

“Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”
(vs8-9)

We only have these gifts and ministries in part, they are only a snapshot or glimpse of the Divine purpose and they too will fade and vanish away. As will all the knowledge we have gained and acquired

“But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (v10)

Use of the term '**perfect**' doesn't necessarily mean the same as what we would often understand it in English - without mistakes or flaws. It means 'to be complete, mature; to grow up and come to fullness of age; to reach the target or goal'. Becoming perfected may require many mistakes and flaws, because we use these to learn from and develop.

When we have matured in a thing or have reached our target or goal, we no longer struggle and get by with parts – these are done away with. Example: learning a language, you begin with parts or fragments, a phrase here and there which are put together with much thought, but as you mature and develop in the language you become fluent in it, you become practised and skilled in it and it requires lot less working out – fluency replaces the fragments.

Ephesians 4.11-16

Paul gave some teaching in these verses about the ministry gifts to the church and their function and responsibility.

The five-fold ministry gifts are given by Jesus to -

1. Equip and train the saints for the work of ministry [to serve God]
2. Edify [build up] the Body of Christ

3. Bring us to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God
4. Perfect us [make us complete and mature, come to fullness of age] – grow up in God. Reach our Goal – the stature of the fullness of Christ. This is the mark of our maturity
5. Teach us and ground us in the Word of God – so that we are not deceived and tossed about by every wind of doctrine.

Verses 15-16 – Love is the theme of these verses. Every member of the Body works together, doing their part to cause growth of the Body [perfection] – this is all done in a spirit of love.

“For from Him the whole Body, closely joined and knit together by the contact of every part with the source of its life, derives its power to grow, in proportion to the vigour of each individual part; and so is being built up in a spirit of love” (vs 16 *Twentieth Century NT*)

Ephesians 3.14-21

In order for a plant to grow it has to be rooted and grounded in earth. For you and me to grow we need to be rooted and grounded in love.

It is only when you are rooted and grounded in love that you can:

- Comprehend [seize, possess, lay hold of] the width, length, depth and height [the fullness] of love
- Know the love of Christ which passes knowledge
- Be filled with all the fullness of God

Now God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we can ask or even think, but that’s only according to the power that works in us - or in proportion to the degree of the love that we have been perfected in.

Love is the avenue to being filled with everything God has to offer – His grace, power, wisdom and anointing. The only way to receive these things is to be rooted and grounded in love.

Your knowledge - faith, joy, peace, healing, harvest and prosperity will be incomplete until you get a firm grasp of [lay hold of, comprehend] the superior force of love.

Perfect love propels you to experience the fullness of God’s promises.

1 John 2.3-6

One way to ensure that love is perfected [to mature and grow, reach its fullness] is to keep the commandment to love.

Whoever keeps His Word in him love of God is perfected (v5)

1 John 4.12-19

Loving one another perfects love in us (v12). Allowing God, who is love, dwelling in us to live through us perfects love.

Perfect love gives us the boldness and confidence (v17) in knowing that we are as Jesus is in this world (that confidence comes from our abiding in Him). We have come to the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4.13).

There is no fear in love only boldness and confidence. Fear involves torment and guilt – love is confidence in God

Perfected love casts out all fear (v18)

Fear is unbelief – it is the opposite of faith.
Fear is believing the lie; Faith is believing the truth.
Fear is believing the truth will fail – Love never fails.

6. Growing Up in Love - [part 2]

Nothing is more important in the life of a Christian than developing in the love of God. Love is the greatest way to live and we are to nurture love, grow up and develop in love. The best way to begin to grow up and develop in love is to put away childish or carnal ways.

1 Corinthians 13.10-12

We have seen in a previous study that the image of Jesus is love - Jesus is love personified.

The priority and prime objective of every Christian should be to become like Jesus – we need to grow into His image.

“Part-time Christianity does not work, we have been called to a higher level of existence”
Creflo Dollar; ‘Lord Teach Me How to Love’; Harrison House, 2000; ISBN 1-57794-295-7; chapter 10, pg 143.

Growing into His image means that you develop His character.

Babies do not become men overnight. Every baby goes through stages of development – newborn, toddler, junior, teenager, adulthood.

When the devil tests you, use those tests as opportunities to build your spiritual muscles by walking in love. Muscles only develop and grow strong with use – as you walk in love it will grow strong and come to maturity. Faith grows by using it, love grows by walking in it.

Matthew 22.40

The whole of the Law and Prophets hang on God’s two-fold commandment of love. We grow in love by:

- Developing our love for the Father
- Developing our love for others

A. Flee Youthful Lusts – 2 Timothy 2.22

Your spiritual maturity is determined by how you deal with childish things. As children develop they ‘grow out’ of childish acts and put away their childish ways. For the Christian these childish things are – carnal thoughts and fleshly acts.

When you find yourself yielding to carnal or fleshly acts it is an indication that you are not walking in love.

In Paul's letter to Timothy he writes that he should 'flee youthful lusts' - these youthful lusts are childish ways. In the Scriptures, childish things are synonymous with immature things or carnal things.

Those who do not show the characteristics of love are behaving in a childish way.

A Christian cannot continue to think, speak and act the same way they did before being born again. To be born again means to be born into God, who is love – we are born again into love and there has to be a change in us (2 Corinthians 5.17)

Childish, immature ways include

- Refusing to grow
- Fornication
- Using profanity and foul language
- Murmuring and complaining.
- Works of the flesh (Galatians 5.19-21)

Children are motivated by selfishness – '*it's mine*', '*give me*' and '*I want*' are phrases often used by children.

- Sin, fear and unbelief are based in selfishness.
- When we put away these childish things we are growing up out of selfishness.
- If we don't make it our aim to grow in love, then we are purposed to remain selfish.

B. Becoming Proficient in Love - Ephesians 4.11-16

When you grow up in love, you grow out of the flesh and carnality and into the image of Christ.

Once you have matured in love, you are no longer a child that is easily deceived. But maturing in love costs something – you have to become proficient in it.

Christians must speak the truth in love, this helps others receive the truth and also builds you up in love.

1. There Is A Difference Between Growth And Development.

God is responsible for your growth – you are responsible for your development.

a) Growth requires no effort on your part –

Babies will grow into adults just by eating and living. But they don't develop unless they learn and do things for themselves.

b) Development requires effort and diligence – what you do is what you become proficient in.

- You can develop your love for God by 'practising' your love for others
- Make it your aim not to develop in the wrong areas

You must train yourself in godliness to be spiritually fit – (1 Timothy 4.7-8)

- We don't come to church for an emotional high or a 'good feeling'
- The ministry gifts are not intended to entertain us but to bring understanding of the Word of God – to equip and train us for the work of ministry
- The diligent pursuit of love will develop you, train you and make you spiritually fit as exercise does for the body.

7. Growing Up in Love - [part 3]

A. Now We See In Part, But Then...

1 Corinthians 13.12

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known"

Now we see in part – a hazy image, not the full picture. Like looking through a dirty window. But there is coming a time when we see in full.

1 Corinthians 2.9-10

"But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God"

- We have a revelation of what God has for us. The Spirit reveals the things of Jesus and makes them known to us.
- We may not fully understand what God is showing us now but God will make it clear, by His Spirit.
- Many questions we have now will be answered when we get to heaven – they will be revealed to us by Jesus - and the apostles and patriarchs.

1 John 4.12-13

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit"

- John has a great revelation on the subject of Love
- We have not seen God yet if we walk in love we have LOVE Himself living in and through us.
- There is coming a day when we stand before Him face to face.

1 Peter 1.8-9

"whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls"

- Although we have not seen Him we still love Him
- Those who have believed and yet have not seen are blessed (John 20.29)
- This causes us to rejoice exceedingly
- There is coming a day when we shall receive the end of our faith – the salvation of our souls

Jude 1.21

“keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

- Keep yourselves in the Love of God
- Look forward to that day when we stand face to face with Him.

8. The Greatest Is Love

1 Corinthians 13.1-13

A. Without Love Nothing Works.

Love is the greatest of the three virtues (vs13) – love stands out far above faith and hope.

Everything is connected to love; until love is cultivated, nothing else in your life will operate at it's fullest potential.

Things fail when you do not walk in love (v8) – they fade out and become obsolete.

- Love conquers all, but when you do not have love you are defeated (Romans 8.35-39).

You are not easily provoked when you walk by love (vs5)

Sowing financial seeds, doing charitable deeds and good works profit us nothing without love (vs3) – God is looking at your motives.

Although we may operate the Gifts of Holy Spirit; speaking in tongues and prophesying or make long prayers – without love they are just empty words.

We can have mountain-moving faith or great revelations; but we are nothing without love. (vs2)

1. Faith Works by Love. - Galatians 5.6

Everything in the Kingdom of God operates by faith.

- Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14.23)

Faith without love will not produce the desired results:

- Love is like the battery cell that enables our faith to work properly. *When a battery becomes low or weak the appliance becomes slower until it stops.*
- Faith is expressed by and works through love.
- Just as the Word of God is the carrier of faith (faith comes by hearing the Word – Romans 10.17), so the Love of God is the carrier of the anointing and power.

Love is a Fruit of the Spirit and against such there is no law (vs22-23) - when you walk in the love of God, the law of sin and death cannot overpower you.

Fear has no power over you when love is truly perfected in you (1 John 4.18).

B. Love: The Greatest Way To Live

1 Corinthians 13.13 – 14.1

The greatest of the three virtues is love. Paul writes that we should actively seek and pursue love (14.1)

“Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire [*this*] love [*make it your aim, your great quest*]...”
(Amplified)

We should strive to live this most excellent way

When you hear a message like this on walking and living in the love of God and do not do so, it is an issue of unbelief and disobedience -- Your obedience to the Word is the proof of your belief.

When we know what to do and put off doing it, we operate in disobedience. The same is true when we choose to do only part of what God says.

- Partial obedience is disobedience
- Delayed obedience is disobedience.

If we love Him we keep His commandments. If we keep His commandments we remain in His love.

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