

## How Church Members Love One Another

### *1 Corinthians 13 – the “Love Chapter” of the Bible*

- Today, 1 Cor 13, often called love chap of Bible. These some of most treasured, quoted, famous words in all Scripture. Poetic words, carefully crafted, beautiful! Can find on artwork, greeting cards, home décor. In my kitchen, wooden plaques: “faith, hope, love.” Many people decorate their homes with these lyrics, “**Patient, kind, etc.**”
- These words often read at weds. I’ve officiated many weds; this often sermon text that couples choose. Rightfully so! This chap by far clearest, most comp descr of Xian love in Bible.
- But today, as turn to this love chap, a major point I want emphasize: Paul wrote these words for Xians in a Xian cong. This chap re how ch mems love oa, not necessarily re how spouses love oa. This great for a wed, but wasn’t really written for a wed. 1 Cor 13 is for Xians (like us) in Xian cong (like ours), to teach ch mems how to love oa. And I’m convinced that here at SJ, we need this lesson; we need Lord teach us, remind us how love oa. That’s whole point of 1 Cor 13 – to show Xians in cong how ch mems love oa.

### *Congregational Lovelessness*

- So how do ch mems sometimes love oa? All seen cartoon in funny pages: “Excuse, sorry, need you move, sitting in my pew.” Fact is: sometimes ch mems really aren’t very loving to each other. That’s bec ch like fam. You know from your own fam: closer you are to someone, worse you can hurt them, and worse can be hurt by them. Sometimes in ch, lot of hurt.
- Lot of hurt in Corinthian church. They had cong, like ours. Had problems, too: lawsuits, sex scandals, favoritism, disorderly worship – and it was unloving, and people got hurt.
- That’s where 1 Cor 13 comes in. To unloving ch mems, Paul: **vs. 1-3**. See pattern? If I do wonderful Xian things, but don’t love, all worthless. Put this into our context. If I come church faithfully every week, give good % income, but don’t love, all worthless. If study Bible like crazy, become expert in all things Scripture, but don’t love, all worthless. If I’m up here at ch all time, volunteer for evthing, help with every event, on multiple committees, usher, play for services, but don’t love, all worthless. Actions good, but attitude isn’t. God wants both: loving actions and loving attitude.
- Now, is that what we have here at our ch? I think we’d like to think so. But way too often we are guilty of being unloving ch mems? We’ve got problems with our love. We’ve got a problem with grudges; long memories – someone ticks us off once, we never get over it, move on. Unloving! We’ve got a problem with apathy: we’ve got so many imp things to get done in church, school, yet so little interest in doing them. We’ve got: gospel to share in community, delinquents mems to invite back, property issues to fix, ministry programs to staff with leaders, stewardship to encourage, positions to fill & work to be done. And easy to say: love my church, these services; pastors/people great – but if don’t do anything to help, when able to help, where church needs help: unloving! Finally, we’ve got problem with ingratitude: we take what we have for granted. Lot Luths love worship in this sanctuary, magnificent; take for granted. Lot parents love have LES like ours, with teachers like ours, in building like ours, with resources/ex-curclrs like ours, and Scriptural curclm like ours, where J taught every day. But take it for granted: unloving!
- Kind of love 1 Cor 13 is all about: love among ch mems, love for cong, for people in cong, for work being done in cong. Is that kind of love we have here, in our cong? Do we love oa? J: “**By this all...**” (**Jn 13**). Do we love oa? Check your heart; find: lovelessness, grudges, apathy, ingratitude. This is not how ch mems love oa!

### *How Jesus Loves Church Members*

- But here’s how J loves ch mems. **Eph 5**, “**Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**” – by giving up life on cross, for us, for unloving people, to fully/freely forgive our lovelessness.

**“Cleansing her by the washing with water through the word”** – J washed away your sins in your baptism; he baptized you into his family. And even though fam mems hurt oa, and even though our sins hurt J, J is still our brother thru baptism – which makes God our Father, us his children, this cong the fam of God.

- Again, here’s how God love ch mems. **1 Jn 4** (another love ch Bible): **“God is love. <sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** So we repent of our lovelessness, and trust in love of God for us, love that sacrificed Xp on cross to atone for our sins, incl our loveless grudges, apathy, ingratitude.
- And finally, when you read 1 Cor 13, re how ch mems love oa (or should), you always have in background: that this is really how J loves ch mems. Listen again to this love chap Bible; listen for how J perfectly fulfills these words, in his perfect love for us. **Vs. 4-8a.** That’s how J loves you, me, this ch.

### *How Church Members Love One Another*

- And bec this how J loves ch mems, this also therefore how ch mems love oa. Here’s how ch mems love oa. **“Patient.” “Not easily angered.”** Patience. In ch, there’s no room for yelling, loosing temper, spouting off angry words in conv or ch mtg, even when we disagree. **“Patient”** with called workers, elected leaders; **“not easily angered”** by fellow ch mems.
- **“Kind.”** So simple. But think of terrible irony of having kind/caring/wonderful people (unbelievers) next to Xians at ch who are unkind, unfriendly, unpleasant. If anyone in this world should be kind, should be those who know kindness of Xp. Just be kind to one another! So simple. **“Kind.”**
- **“Does not envy...self-seeking.”** All these phrases can be summarized with word “respect.” If love someone, respect them. You respect: their unique gifts by not envying them; their feelings by not being boastful, prideful around them; their character, reputation by not dishonoring them; whole 2<sup>nd</sup> table of law (love neighbor as self) by not being self-seeking. J opp of self-seeking; self-sacrificing; loved others more than self. Following J means life not all re you, or even all re your fam. Following J means loving others, serving others, putting others first, just like J did for us.
- **“Keeps no record of wrongs.”** Doesn’t nurse grudge. Forgives. Xian who doesn’t forgive isn’t Xian. “Forgive us...as we forgive those.”
- **Vs. 6.** So love, truth go hand in hand. Xian love speaks truth in love, even if means pointing out sin, false doctrine. Many people think speaking God’s truth is unloving. As pastor, I’ve been called unloving for telling people what doing is sinful. As cong, we’ve been called unloving for being too “strict,” too concerned re God’s pure doctrine. But if you really love someone, really care re their faith, then you want them know truth. Anything less is unloving.
- **Vs. 7-8a,** bec it’s permanent, perfect. That’s how God loves us. Our love for oa, not perm/perf. And for that, we repent. But as Xians, we live in light of God’s perm/perf love for us, shown to us in Xp. **1 Jn 4:10,** even sin of lovelessness. That’s why we love J! Therefore, my dear fellow ch mems, let us love oa: people around us in pews, teachers/children in school, leaders in cong, fam mems in our homes – everyone around us. Let us love oa, like 1 Cor 13 teaches us to love oa. This how ch mems love oa. **“By this all...” (Jn 13).**

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-8a**

<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.