

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

The Characteristics of Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-4

1. **Love is** _____ (vs.1-3)
Love is to be a defining characteristic of Christians (John 13:35). One of the causes for Paul to write this letter was the absence of abiding love in the fellowship of the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-11). Love is a fruit of the same Holy Spirit who gives various gifts to the body of Christ (Gal. 5:22; cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 11). And while Paul has not explained the theological depths of love that is grounded in the person and work of Christ (cf. Rom. 5:8), he appeals to the Corinthians as if they have already been taught of it at length (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). The gifts of languages, of prophecy, of knowledge, and of faith (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8-10) are of absolutely no benefit, to the local church or to the individual when they are not exercised by one who has love. Without love, these gifts are detrimental to the local church and not edifying (cf. 1 Cor 8:1).
2. **Love is** _____ (v.4)
Patience is not merely waiting quietly; patience is the activity of maintaining a peaceful spirit while bearing up under provocation or persecution without complaint and without losing heart. The life of Abraham is an example of faithful patience as he waited for God to fulfill His promise (cf. Heb. 6:15). God's own patience in bringing about judgment and His tolerance of provocation is repeatedly held up as a reason to praise Him (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15). The life of a Christian is to be characterized by patience for everyone around you, and especially for those in the fellowship (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).
3. **Love is** _____ (v.4)
Kindness is the activity of usefulness and willing assistance that is expressed toward others. The salvation of God that we experience is an expression of His kindness toward us; the Lord didn't just tolerate and endure our offenses against Him, He sent Christ to save us (Eph. 2:7; Ti. 3:4). Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and is integral to faithful Christian fellowship (cf. Col. 3:12).