

013022 **Faith, Hope, and Love** 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Hear these words from 1 Corinthians, written by the Apostle Paul: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Paul wrote these words 2,000 years ago, but I hope they will come alive for us today. 1 Corinthians 13 is the so-called "love chapter". Especially, the last verse is an anthem of Christian weddings: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Still faith, hope, and love are the three essential Christian virtues, no matter how busy we are on this earth.

One of the funniest stories I read as a child is the book *The Blind Men and the Elephant*. One day, after hearing that the prince had received an elephant as a gift from a neighboring country, six blind men from a village wondered what an elephant was, and their opinions were divided. Then a blind man says: "Let's go see for ourselves," But how? They can touch it! In that way, six blind people touch the elephant, and after each of the six people touch the elephant, they tell each other their experiences about the elephant, but why do they not agree with each other? They each touch only a part of the elephant and speak as if they know the whole thing!

"It's like a wall." "It's like a snake." "It's like a spear." "It's like a tree trunk."
"It's like a big fan." "It's like a rope."

And at the end of the book, it says: "Put all of your ideas together and strengthen your future!"

The apostle Paul did not originally write today's epistle to officiate a wedding. If we look at the circumstances in which the Bible was written today, the members of the Corinthian church boasted of their spiritual gifts and spoke as

if only their own experiences were correct and perfect. There was a lack of love. Thus, the Apostle Paul emphasized the need to respect and love one another because human experience is partial.

In today's Bible verse, the word "in part" appears 4 times and the word "complete" appears 2 times. However, knowing the contents and re-reading the text, you will find that the phrase 'like a child' is repeated 4 times in verse 11, and the meaning is used in the same context as the word 'partial'. Also, in verse 12, it can be seen that the expression 'dimly' is also used in the same context as 'partial'. Then it is partial, partial and repeated 9 times in total. It is repeatedly emphasized that knowing, speaking, realizing, thinking, seeing, that is, the human experience is partial.

It is very important that we experience God. Experiencing God is very important, and if there is one thing to be aware of, that experience is only partial. The members of the Corinthian church spoke in tongues and prophesied. But they were only showing off and boasting about their spiritual gifts, and they lacked love for each other.

Even if we say that it is a spiritual thing that God has given them. This is not to say that the gifts God has given are imperfect, but rather a problem arises because those who receive them are imperfect. As mentioned earlier, human experience is partial. So, Paul said, stating that there is a need for love before all the spiritual gifts, exhorting the Corinthians to become one through love. I thought about it. Although our situation and reality today are difficult, we must be more zealous in loving God and loving one another.

What was the first thing Paul said when he defined love today? "Love is patient."
"Pastor, I am so sick of Corona virus. Masks are stuffy, and online worship is

boring." I understand. We're all going through a really tough time. But, listen to the words of the Bible today. And try to listen to the voice of God. "Love is patient."

In Hebrews 10:36, it is written, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

How precious and holy is it to do God's will? Nevertheless, it says that even after doing God's will, we will not receive what God promised if we do not persevere.

If you read the book of Ephesians, you are told to put on the full armor of God. The reason we must put on full armor is, of course, to win the spiritual battle. But it says that the purpose of putting on the full armor of God is to stand up to the end. In other words, wait and be patient. It's not just about winning. To keep standing even after winning. Ephesians 6:13 says, "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Again, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul the Apostle said: "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. 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. 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."

Some people will ask. Isn't it enough to just do God's work? Isn't it enough to be at the place of worship or sanctuary! No. You can't just go to church. To walk in faith requires patience. In this case, patience is called "Hippomone" in Greek, but it does not mean "long" but "invariant." It's less important how

long you have attended church, but in a world where the world's trends are changing day by day, it is more important that you look at the unchanging love of God and ensure that your own faith does not change!

Usually, our individual beliefs don't seem to change. But when difficulties arise, the story is different. When things don't work out the way you want, when things don't work out for you because of your faith in Jesus, when you face financial difficulties, do you still stand with your unchanging faith? Today's Bible is asking that.

After Job was in the midst of extreme suffering, he eventually met God. After meeting God, Job made this confession. Job 42:5 says, “I have heard of you with my ears, but now my eyes see you.” Until then, he had experienced God vaguely or in part, but when he stood before God, he confessed that he had fully seen and came to know God.

Because what we know and what we have experienced is a part, not a whole, we must always be humble. Jesus Christ gave us a new commandment to love one another just as he loved us. What the Bible is trying to tell us today, as we know and experience in part, is that the road to perfection is to love one another, as the Lord has loved us.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, even if our reality is difficult today, let's still hold on to faith, hope, and love. Love endures all things. That is, none of this will be easy. And you know that from the start. There will be changes, there will be insecurity, there will be times of loneliness and times of fear, there will be times of need and times of sickness. There will be death. No one is promised an easy ride in Christian life. But the reason people have struggled to hold onto the faith for thousands of years anyway is that love

does endure. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.