

MENS MEETING MARCH 2017

Keeping in mind the diversity of the local body (Babes in Christ/Mature in Christ, Background and bad doctrinal luggage, that we still struggle with sin/selfishness, there is an enemy (satan) seeking to rob God of glory & bring division)

Remembering, that we are all still growing in truth and understanding (some of should be further ahead than they are, some of the doctrinal differences you may have not thought of until now, our understanding changes as we grow (Good thing)) –We should all be studying, sharpening/reforming and growing in understanding of truth/doctrine

Knowing that we are called to maintain (Eph 4) the unity of faith that we have in Christ (Be of one mind, be of the same mind)

We must agree on salvific doctrines (Doctrines that if you do not believe, you perish)

Our attempt to maintain unity is NOT a call to minimize the significance of doctrine/truth in our unity (If we are not growing in truth we are in trouble).

The question is, “how do we remain united in Jesus Christ, while we continue to grow in truth, and not divide.”

-Once we begin dividing on non-salvific doctrines, it is a never-ending cycle

-Personal **Danger Sign**-Anything that eclipses the gospel/Jesus Christ (sum of all Scripture) Luke 24-DANGER

-Example-I leave this local church bc we disagree in this or that, and look for a church who affirms me in that area of doctrine, but then inevitably after a few months I realize, “We have differences over here as well.” Then what? Leave again?

-This is NOT the pattern put before us in Scripture. We see a call to “agree”, “be of the same mind”, “maintain unity”. How?

- Do we “Just get everyone to agree to my areas of doctrine?” No, but rather as we continue to grow in truth/doctrine (personally) we must be walking in love with one another. We must vigilantly/consistently study doctrine. We should be studying with one another in our local body. We need to be discussing our differences, but we cannot be divisive and we must have love.

Why? BC Paul says, If we do NOT have love we have nothing! (1 Cor 13:1-3)

Read 1 Cor 13:1-3 The necessity of love (Remember this is written to a local church, it is in the context of disagreement (Spiritual gifts ch 12 and importance in the local church)

This is a testimony of our maturity overall (**a vigilant pursuit of truth, and a recognition to claim to have it without love is empty.**) Collectively among us that there would be a relentless aspiration for the fullness of Christian truth, with the fullness of Christian love.

- Example: Our gifts are like 000000 (gifts, knowledge) no value alone, but if we put a 1 (love) in front of them, they have value.

Read 1 Cor 13:1-3

V2 “if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge..but have not love, I am nothing”

I have to take from that, that if we get our doctrine all right but have not love, we are nothing.

- 1 Cor 13-The necessity for love. Now if you hear “love”, and you have allowed that word to be hijacked by the seeker friendly nominal professing Christian group, and you think we are heading that direction you’re wrong.
- Remember God’s saved us from sin, unto conformity to Jesus Christ (bearing fruit John 15) and He is sovereignly working all things to this end. Diversity in a local body, striving for unity as we all grow and conform to truth is a brewing pot to mold and fashion us all into the image of Jesus Christ.

How to categorize doctrine (triage): (Does Bible categorize? Gal 1:6, 1 Cor 15:3-4, Romans 14)

- Salvific
- Clearly revealed in Scripture
- Wisdom
- Preferences
- Church History (If you are on an island by yourself in your understanding be concerned)

v1-3 Importance of Love (Essential)-Without love nothing else matters

v4-7 Demonstration of love (What it looks like in action) –In case we begin to think (like the professing church, that love is just sentiment and warm feelings, Paul shows us what it looks like in action and you know as well as I do, it is anything but mere emotions. In fact, it is impossible apart from the grace of God. This is a call to die to self.

- if you believe this is a call to shallow emotional sentimentalism, then you don’t understand what we are being called to here. It is nothing less than a call to die to self, and laying down our lives for others.

V8-13 the Eternality of love

Not a call to unite with each other apart from truth/doctrine (that's not true unity)

This must be an overflow of the gospel (vertical) and lived out horizontal (one another). In other words, gospel centered relationships

- Often we think we are “being loving” but we must test ourselves in Scripture to see if we are being loving. What does love do? What does love look like?

V4 Love is patient: Notice first, that love is these things. If you say “I am loving but you are not patient, you are not loving”

Patient: suffers long (slow to anger, long-tempered)

This is a patience with people (not with circumstances)

In doctrinal differences (when we become convinced of something) we often forget how long we were saved before we came to understand this or that.

How long should we suffer long with people before we say “That’s it, I’m done with them?”

- What if God did that to you?
- How far off doctrinally are we all compared to where Jesus is at? What if Jesus said “These people aren’t getting this stuff fast enough, or they are off in this area, so I am done with them.” Who would be left with Jesus in the church? NO ONE

Differences in doctrine, rather than being despised should be viewed as an opportunity for us to demonstrate love (grow personally in love) and glorify God.

It’s amazing to me how many people come to a place where they can’t even fellowship with people who are genuinely saved, but differ on non-salvific doctrines. Remember they are blood bought saints. Be careful how you treat the body of Christ (even those you don’t agree with in doctrine.)

-Can I remind us all that Jesus Christ identifies with all the church, and as we treat the body, Jesus takes it personal. (Acts 9, Matt 25)

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the problem in the church isn’t “Them (out there)”, but it is also “me.”

- One evidence you have lost sight of the fact that you are part of the problem is you are critical of others

Love is patient, suffers long, (self-restraint in the face of provocation), patience restrains

Patience says “you can injure me and I won’t retaliate”

Now notice, love is also kind: Love just doesn't restrain in the face of provocation, it responds to provocation with kindness (serving).

Where patience says, "You can injure me and I won't retaliate"; kindness says, "You can injure me, and I will serve you and promote your good. I will help you, support, and pray for you."

Kindness is actions of good will.

- Example-Let's say a brother is wrong in his doctrine, we have opened Bibles discussed it, but he still isn't seeing it (for any number of reasons). Love isn't just not getting upset with him, but love serves him (**Love doesn't treat him like a second-class Christian**). Love makes him feel welcome.
- Even though we disagree, he is my brother in Christ, purchased with the blood of the Lamb, so I serve him and treat him with kindness even when we disagree (Much different from separating from him, or talking bad about him).

Kindness is reflected in my words, my tone, my actions, and my serving. Can this be said about you in times of disagreement?

- Example-"Well I don't yell at my disagreeing brother." That's not love fulfilled. Do you look to serve him?

Love does not envy or boast:

Now we switch from positives to negatives:

Envy: burn with jealousy (spirit of dissatisfaction with and opposition to the prosperity and happiness of others as compared with our own).

- Have you ever wished God gave you different people in the fellowship? Different pastors? "I wish my pastor was pastor so and so"

-Do we really believe God (in His perfect and infinite wisdom knew what He was doing when He put you with these men/women, and these pastors? The very things you may despise about your brother/sister and/or pastor, God has brought into your life to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ. Yes they have weaknesses/sin, and we are not condoning those weaknesses/sins, but trying to help us all see God is working through them and those things to make you more like Jesus. He knows just what you need to be matured. It may be the very thing you keep asking to change is what He is working through to make you more like Jesus (more loving).

Love does not envy, it isn't jealous (why? It is focused on others, not self)

Envy is desiring what I do not have, where boasting is speaking about what I do have (above others).

Boasting and arrogance are similar: arrogance is in the inward attitude of superiority, where boasting is the outward manifestation of that inward attitude.

- Boast-Call attention to self (Love is humble, empty of pride in self, knowledge)

V4 (Love) is not arrogant or rude

Arrogant-Proud/haughty, inward attitude (that manifest in boasting) (About who I am vs what I have (boasting))

Rude-Shamefully, indecently, profane speaking, behavior and speech that fails to regard the dignity of other people: it is the result of arrogance (It is seeing self as higher, and treating others in light of this high view of self and low view of them.)

V5 It does not insist on it's own way

My way, my time, my doctrinal focus. There are so many doctrines that need to be studied and discussed.

Often we focus on one and it becomes the center of the universe for us, and we can't see why others are focused on it like we are. Love does not insist on focusing on the doctrine that I am currently focused on. Rather it recognizes all doctrine is important, so love has patience.

V5 It is not irritable or resentful,

Irritable-Aroused to anger, quickly provoked, not touchy (Sharpness of spirit, thin skinned, easily offended.

- This is the person who you always need to walk on egg-shells around. You may have said or heard it said about such ones "That's just the way they are." Beloved that is sin.
- Does this describe you/me?
- How do we respond when our agenda is not given top priority?

What drives this? Self-centeredness (Isn't this the opposite of our calling? Isn't this the opposite of our Lord Jesus Phil 2?)

Resentful-(Accounting term/Book-keeping). Keeps not record of wrongs (ledger) Makes a permanent record so it can be consulted when needed. Love does not do this!

- Like the gracious Lord, we keep no record of wrong

- This is the lens that those who do not know how to forgive, look through and create chasms that without God intervening always bring division (great division).

The fact that Paul has to spell these things out for us in the context of the local church clearly imply we will be facing things in our differences that will tempt us to respond in unloving ways. In other words, these things are anticipated by Paul. What do all these things imply?

- You will be mistreated, you will be ignored, you will be resented, and how are we to respond? By not keeping a record of the wrong, bc Jesus doesn't keep a record of our wrong.
- Again if you viewed the call to love as "light and fluffy" you don't understand love. This is impossible, but by the grace of God.

V6 It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with truth

Love grieves over sin and rejoices with truth.

This is a great verse as we are considering it in the context of differences in doctrine/truth bc it reminds us to that love apart from truth isn't true love! We must be striving for truth and love.

Either one without the other is so damaging.

V7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Bears all-covers all, patiently accepts all things, always supports, never gives up, endures (1 Peter 4:8)

Believes all things: this is not calling us to lose discernment, believes the best in fellow believers and trusts the Lord is in control

Hopes all things: what hope do we have of glorifying God (discouraged at times) our hope is not in other people but in the Lord and His sovereignty

Endures all things: perseveres (in times of pain, suffering, differences)

V8 Love never ends.

In our necessary and essential growing in truth and revelation (individually and corporately), if we strive by the grace of the Holy Spirit to grow together while loving each other (gospel driven), God will be glorified.

If we have love without truth, it isn't pleasing to the Lord

And if we have truth without love it isn't pleasing to the Lord.

It is truth in love that glorifies God. Let's encourage each other, let's help each other.

If we are in a doctrinal study or discussion together, and we see in us or the other person, a shift from love guiding, let's stop and say, "Brother I want to keep studying and discussing these things, but we have to do it in an loving way."

Let's not forget that we/I am part of the problem, so we don't approach this as a "their" issue and become critical of the church.

Let's maintain unity in Christ and strive to grow daily in truth in love.