

This summer we have spent quite a bit of time looking at the Acts 1 Church building expectation in our hearts for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we read about in Acts 2 and which led us into our Holy Spirit Conference. We had several baptized in the Holy Spirit and over that week we had many used in new ways in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Last Sunday, Pastor asked and answered the question what's next - once we've received the power Jesus promised would come with the Holy Spirit. This morning I want to look at an often times overlooked piece of evidence of having received a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is at the same time a fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, and also an ongoing attitude, emotion, language, and action in a Spirit-filled life. What fits this description?

Love, and it's most excellent (Hippo 1).

The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth a letter we know as 1 Corinthians. We're told in the first chapter there had been some division and a few arguments among the believers in the church so Chloe (the answer to the Bible quiz question I missed from Tim Enloe 2 weeks ago) had sent some folks from her household to inform Paul and get him to weigh in on a few issues they were clearly having in their church. His letter is a response to those issues - not all of which he clearly spells out for us, but we can surmise what was going on based on his answers - and all of his answers center around unity within the church. He addresses a few things regarding his own ministry and that of Apollos, who was also a teacher that Paul's coworker Priscilla had disciplined, he confronts some crazy stuff that's been going on in the church including some sexual immorality, and then in chapter 7 he transitions to say, Now for the matters you wrote about, and then proceeds to launch into a whole teaching on marriage and singleness. In chapter 8, he says, Now about food sacrificed to idols, and proceeds to answer their questions on this topic and gives some

examples about freedom and what that means in light of their questions. Then in 11:3 he switches topics again to say, now I want you to realize – and then discusses worship and instructions for observing the Lord’s Supper finishing with, “And when I come I will give further directions. Now about spiritual gifts...” Once more he switches topics in chapter 12 to talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and he’ll stay on this topic until chapter 15 when he says, Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you – and introduces a new topic – resurrection. He finishes the letter in chapter 16 with Now about the collection for God’s people, and some final requests and some personal greetings and closes the letter. Here’s the point – Paul changes topics a few times in his letter to address all that was written to him, but each time he transitions he makes it clear that he’s addressing something new. And, it’s always important to keep in mind that when Paul was writing he was putting in the chapter numbers and verses! He was starting a new paragraph with the introduction of a new topic – not writing chapter 12 to let us know. The topic of the gifts of the Holy Spirit fully occupies chapters 12, 13, and 14, but we in Pentecostal circles like to pull out 1 Corinthians 13 and focus on speaking in tongues at the end of 12 and the start of 14 as if there was nothing in the middle. We leave out the chapter we know as the love chapter as if it has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit or Spiritual gifts. We’re like – that’s so weird how Paul put a whole long thing you can use at weddings right in the middle of talking about the Holy Spirit. As if Paul were writing, got distracted, and thought, oh I’d better put this down now while I’m thinking about it and then I’ll get back to the stuff about speaking in tongues. But, throughout the whole letter that’s not been the case. When he introduced a new topic, he let us know. **(Hippo 2)** But here when he introduces the subject of love he links it before and after to what he is still talking about. He isn’t changing topics; he’s expanding on the

same subject. 1 Corinthians 13 isn't a new topic – Love, is in fact, a spiritual gift, the evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, the fruit of His work, and the directive for how a Spirit filled Christian will think, speak, act, and relate to others.

What's Love Got to Do with It? Everything!

Let's read what that chapter says, but we'll begin in 12:27

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And yet I will show you the most excellent way. 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.” 1 Corinthians 12:27 – 13:3

Paul, has just told the church to desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but then says love is the most excellent of all of the gifts. Now, to be clear, in chapter 14, Paul will say he thanks God that he speaks in tongues more than anyone – so his point here in chapter 13 is not “don't speak in tongues just speak words of love,” but rather that if we speak in tongues but don't have love, show love, speak in love then it really amounts to nothing.

This is the dangerous ground that we Pentecostals can sometimes find ourselves on if we're not careful. We turn the baptism in the Holy Spirit into a contest on how spiritual I can be or how much better I can be than someone else and that was never the point. The point of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was everything Pastor talked about last week – it was so that we would have the power to be Jesus' witness to a lost world by embodying the message, representing Jesus, and proclaiming Jesus. So, what does love have to do with being a witness? Everything. It's really hard to witness to the goodness of Jesus when people can't get past the rude way you speak to them. I have incredible faith that can move mountains, but I can't be bothered to walk across the kitchen and help set the table. I'd really like my family to know Jesus but, like we talked about last week, what they know of Jesus is what they've seen in your life – as a living letter from God – and Jesus seems lazy and unkind. If we're presenting Jesus, and proclaiming thus saith the Lord, but not showing love in our everyday lives, then we're doing a poor job that ultimately means nothing to those around us.

If we have the gift of prophecy and understand things about God that are so mysterious but no one can stand being around us then did it really matter? The evidence of the Holy Spirit is not the gift we operate in but the love that we walk in. As Pentecostals we trace our more recent roots to the Azusa Street Revival in the early years of the 1900's. In 1908, William J. Seymour, who led that great revival, where they saw droves of people filled with the Spirit for nearly a decade, wrote in his *Apostolic Faith* newsletter the "real evidence" of the baptism in the Spirit was "divine love, which is charity." Here are some quotes from those were present at Azusa or were part of the early days of Pentecost:

“All I seemed to sense was a deep craving for the overflowing of His love in my heart. . . This is what the baptism of the Holy Spirit should be — the opening of the door to vital and continuous communion with God for effectual worship, prayer and service to Him.” – Alice Reynolds Flower (wife of the first superintendent of the Assemblies of God)

“...Divine love was wonderfully manifest in the meetings. . . The message was the love of God. It was a sort of ‘first love’ of the early church returned. The ‘baptism’ as we received it in the beginning, did not allow us to think, speak, or hear evil of any man.” – Frank Bartleman, of his experience at the Azusa Street Revival

G.B. Cashwell, who brought the Azusa revival message to the southern states described his experience being baptized in the Holy Spirit as, **First, light flowing in and then love flowing out.** – G. B. Cashwell

These early folks understood that the evidence of the Holy Spirit was seen in their love and desire for God and their love for others. The gifts of the Spirit were operational, the power of God was so strong – but the evidence that something incredible and supernatural was taking place was love.

Paul said if we don’t have love we are nothing – we’re all noise and no substance, we think we’ve gained something worth boasting about but without love we’ve actually lost. Love has everything to do with the Holy Spirit.

To Make You Feel My Love...I’ll need to bear fruit

So, Paul writes what exactly that Spiritual gift of love should look like in us: **“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not**

dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Years ago I had taken a team of college students to the Canary Islands. There was one particular girl who was a bit different and a little awkward and I struggled to connect with her. Months of prep work and a long week on the trip and I was a little worn out and frazzled by this student. I had called my sister at some point on the trip who said – Sarah I cannot diagnose something I’ve never met over the phone. I was certain something was off. Towards the end of the week she gave a devotion from this same passage. She said – I like to read this passage substituting my own name everywhere Paul says love. In that way I can see if I measure up and how I’m doing showing love. Well, that was just pure conviction and I was called on the carpet by the Holy Spirit to repent. Because when I put my own name in the verse I knew right away that Sarah was not patient – specifically with that girl. I had not been as kind as I could have. I was definitely keeping a record of all the things she was doing that I found annoying. During the prayer time that morning me and Jesus had us a talk because we both knew my heart was in the wrong. A decade has past and I’ve never forgotten that devotion she shared.

The truth is it’s a good exercise. Ask yourself – are the statements true if I read my name in them? How are you doing letting others see that kind of love in you?

Here’s the thing – Paul, writing to a different church, said they should live by the Spirit. He told the Galatians the acts of the sinful nature were obvious – hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions – all things that are the opposite of love. But, then Paul said **The Fruit of the Spirit** looked like

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control The fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives is love but the fruit also all look like the love Paul describes here. Love and patience are fruit of the Spirit at work in our lives but also love is patient. Love is kind. And, then Paul said, **“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25**

We look at that list and think but if I do still get angry or lose my patience – what does that say about me? When you plant a peach seed you’re looking at 3-4 years before you get fruit, an apple seed can sometimes take 8 years to bear fruit. But, something is growing, something is changing. When we ask Jesus to take charge in our life and the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in our lives and the seed of His presence begins to grow and change and produce something in us. We may not immediately bear the fruit Paul is talking about but we also will over time look less and less like the person who lives and is controlled by their sinful nature. Some fruit might take a second. But since we live by the Spirit we keep in step with Him – we walk with the Spirit, we let the Holy Spirit lead us into truth, we let Him place a guard over our mouth to keep us from saying rude and unkind things, we let the Holy Spirit guard us from anger and pride, we let the Holy Spirit develop

love for people we couldn't stand and for people who are different than us. When we allow the Holy Spirit to live in us then we walk with Him and learn from Him and what we learn is how to be patient and kind, how to be gentle instead of boastful, humble instead of proud. We learn from walking with Jesus and His Holy Spirit how to let things go and turn the other cheek instead of keeping a record in order to get revenge. When we walk with Jesus we find that we delight in different things than we used to – huh, I don't even worry about that, I don't even follow that person on social media anymore cause everything they said turned out to be a lie and I just wanted to know truth. Things begin to change, our interests change, our hearts change as we walk in step with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always point us to Jesus and Jesus is The Truth. When we walk in step with the Holy Spirit we find protection, truth about ourselves and our identity, we find hope, and the strength to keep going.

The Holy Spirit inside of us produces the kind of love that looks like this. **“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

So, when I put my name in the passage and I'm convicted I can say – oh, Jesus, we have some work to do, help me in this area. And Jesus, the great gardener, cuts off the branches in me that no longer bear fruit and He prunes the other branches so that they'll produce even more fruit. We need the Holy Spirit inside of us so that we can live the way He desires us to live.

When Paul says if you speak in tongues, have the gift of prophecy, the gift of faith, or even live sacrificially – but you don't have all this fruit in your life – then you're nothing. None of it matters. None of those gifts matter if you aren't walking in step with the giver of the gift. You're not impressing anyone if your life isn't attracting others to Jesus through love that looks like this. To make others feel the love of Jesus through you – learn to love like this – and you'll learn it by walking in step with the Holy Spirit.

I Will Always Love You! For love is the language of heaven for all eternity

Here's why it's important to learn to love – because we'll be doing it for all eternity. **“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:8-12**

Paul is talking here about what's permanent and what's temporary, what's eternal and what's for here and now. Prophetic words are given to encourage, convict, instruct, equip the saints – but that's temporary and for right now, but prophetic words won't be given in heaven where everything is already fulfilled and God dwells among us. Tongues and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are empowerment to witness, a way of communing and talking with God, and Paul will say a few verses later that messages in tongues and interpretation are a sign to unbelievers – what part of that will be needed in heaven? None of it so tongues

will be stilled – they’ll stop. Words of knowledge are for here not for when Wisdom in the flesh is walking the same streets we are. So it will pass away. Here, now, in this age, we only get glimpses of what’s to come. When someone speaks out and gives an interpretation or a prophetic word we get a glimpse into what the Holy Spirit communicates to us from God – but it’s just part of what God is saying. It’s just a snippet. We have a word for someone and we say things like – I feel like God wants me to tell you ---- and then we say – does that make sense to you? Because we only know in part not fully. Here we’re still learning and growing – like children, but in heaven we’ll be transformed and we’ll mature fully into the people we were always created to be – with new, resurrected bodies that will never wear out, won’t get tired or sick. Paul compares it to a child verses a grown up. We don’t see everything there is to see because we’re here and not there. Why is there so much pain and evil in our world? Because we’re here and not there – yet. Why do people get sick and die? Because we’re here and not there – yet. Why do bad things happen? Because we’re here and not there – yet. We only see part of the picture, but when someone is healed we get this glimpse into what will be when we get to heaven and everyone is healed and whole. When someone gives a message in tongues and we all pause and wait in expectation of what God is about to say to His people we get this glimpse into heaven where God will speak to us freely and fully. When we feel God’s presence in times of worship or in a holy moment it’s a glimpse of what we’ll feel forever in heaven.

But, for now it’s only partially the picture. So all those things are temporary and just for now. Except, one thing doesn’t stop. One thing is both here and there – both temporary and permanent, both for now and for all eternity – and that’s love. It’s the one thing that doesn’t fail. N. T. Wright said, **“Love is the language they speak in God’s world, and we are**

summoned to learn it against the day when God's world and ours will be brought together forever. It is the music they make in God's courts, and we are invited to learn it and practice it in advance. Love is not a 'duty,' even our highest duty. It is our destiny." N. T. Wright

Love is the language of heaven so we are invited to learn it here, practice it here, use it here because it is the thing that remains.

Paul finishes his thoughts on love like this: **"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts." 1 Corinthians 13:13 – 14:1**

We won't need faith for it will have been made sight. We won't need hope because all of our hopes will have been realized. But, love, it will remain. It stays. So we follow the way of love, we walk in love, we learn to love, we show love, speak love. We desire all that God has for us but we recognize that without love the rest of it won't matter.

My challenge to us – myself included – is to love God with everything we've got and to love one another with a love that looks like what Paul described. And to desire God to pour out His love on our church so that we can carry that love to the world, to our community, our school, our job, our family, our homes.

Here's how this service ends – the altars are open. I'm going to pray a final prayer but if you want to come and pray – to ask God to pour out His love, to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, to help you to walk in love, to repent because the Holy Spirit has convicted you in some way, or maybe because you've not yet asked Jesus to come and change your life with His love – you didn't know that God so loved the world – and you – so much that He sent His Son Jesus into the world to die for you so that you could be forgiven and be brought into relationship

with Him to know a love unlike any you've ever known before – but now you do and you want to come invite Jesus into your heart – the altar is open for that too.

Will you stand with me and let's pray and if you need to spend time at the altar come ahead.

Let's pray.