

# A City In Need of Love

Imagine one of the most corrupt, heartless cities on earth. Think of a city where love is given a bad name, where relationships are intentionally self-centered, and where lives are routinely destroyed. That was the quality of life in the first-century city of Corinth – home of the first Christians to read the lofty and inspired words of 1 Corinthians 13.

It might seem paradoxical that one of the most beautiful descriptions of love the world has ever known would be associated with Corinth. On a closer look, however, nothing could be more appropriate. If ever there were a people that needed the principles of real love to change their lives, it was the people of the church in Corinth.

## People in Difficult Circumstances

Even by today's standards, the Christians of Corinth had a lot to overcome. Their culture was morally decadent. The primary religion of their city was the worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love whose temple employed 1,000 prostitute priestesses.

Wealth posed another challenge. Corinth's prime location on the Isthmus of Corinth, which connected northern and southern Greece, provided a commercial prosperity that contributed to moral decline. Materialism, along with a sexually oriented religion, produced a culture and a climate based on personal pleasure.

Corinth became so well-known for its moral corruption that people in the Greek world who were guilty of gross immorality and drunken debauchery were said to behave like Corinthians. This was the environment of the church that received Paul's classic description of love.

## People with Failing Spiritual Health

Tragically, as often happens in our day, the church in Corinth began to reflect the condition of its environment. Consider the variety of problems that Paul had to deal with in his first letter to them:

- division in the family of God (chs. 1-3)
- pride and spiritual arrogance (ch.4)
- sexual promiscuity (ch.5)
- lawsuits between believers (ch.6)
- troubled marriages (ch.7)
- abuse of spiritual liberty (chs.8-10)
- confusion of gender roles (ch.11)
- abuse of the Lord's Table (ch.11)
- misuse of spiritual gifts (chs.12,14)
- neglect of doctrinal basics (ch.15)

If love could change lives in Corinth  
Love can change lives anywhere

## People In Need Of Spiritual Insight

What was the solution? According to Paul, his readers in Corinth needed to understand that there was more to following Christ than the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and supernatural power. He wanted them to know that all of their eloquent arguments and speeches and right doctrine and expressions of faith and sacrificial giving would actually drive others away if they didn't rediscover the real meaning of love. With a series of contrasts in 13:1-3, Paul showed what really happens when we attempt to do good things without love.

## **People In Need Of Spiritual Renewal**

If the truths of 1 Corinthians 13 shows us our spiritual poverty, it is so that we can be rich in concern for those around us. If Paul's words show us how full we are of ourselves, it is so that the Lord can empty us of that which is ruining us. If this passage shines a light on us, it is so that we will examine our lives and follow Christ more closely.

What we need to keep in mind, however, is that God is not merely calling us to higher ground. He is offering to change us from the inside out. He is not merely offering a higher standard of living He is offering to lift us above our own natural way and to do a work in us that we could never do for ourselves.

The challenge before us now is to submit ourselves to the Lord and to His truth so that He can produce in us the real love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

Temple Baptist Church  
Prepared by Pastor Joseph Hovsepian  
Men's Fellowship