**Love**

Now there is a word that is thrown around a lot. It can be used to describe a person’s affinity for pizza or their physical attraction to another person. It can refer to the feelings for a close friend or a romantic relationship. The kind of love most often described in the New Testament is a humble, sacrificial love that puts the needs of others first. There are a lot of loving folks in the world, but you might not know it if you watch the nightly news or read exchanges in social media. There are self-professed Christians and atheists alike who have allowed themselves to deteriorate into vile and hate-filled creatures.

One of the most beautiful passages in Scripture paints a masterpiece of the humble and selfless heart of love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says, “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

An arrogant and self-centered person is incapable of experiencing this kind of love. Paul offered a consistent message to the Christians in Philippi: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

In some circles, people feel justified in spewing venom on others for committing no crime other than disagreeing with them. People who humbly and lovingly point out the teaching of inspired Scripture regarding morality are accused of hate speech and, themselves, become the victims of the most hateful treatment imaginable.

There are those who maintain that New Testament writings do not really restrict human sexual relationships. The gist of their argument is that love is the overarching principle that must be applied and that any other statements in the text must be tempered accordingly. There is only one problem with this attempt at nearly universal justification. Jesus was not so benevolent.

Jesus is the one who said that you could not be His disciple unless you subjugated every other human relationship and put Him first (Luke 14:26). It was Jesus who said, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The notion of ignoring any of His teachings that you don’t like under the guise of promoting loving relationships is pure nonsense.

Jesus is the one who will judge each of us one day and the standard will be His word (John 12:48). If I arrogantly condemn another based on my personal preferences, I have overstepped my bounds and demonstrated a lack of love. On the other hand, humbly and kindly pointing others to His teachings while they still have the opportunity to conform to His will is an act of the purest form of love. Radical charges of hate speech matter little to me. God’s definition of love is the only one of any consequence.

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**