

"TO THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH IS AT CORINTH"

PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH



1 CORINTHIANS 13

¹ If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

² If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge;

and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

³ And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor,

and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY...THE ESSENTIALITY OF LOVE

- Quick review:
 - What is the context of 1 Cor. 13?
 - What was the theme of 1 Cor. 12?
 - What was Paul teaching?
 - What did his last sentence in 1 Cor. 12 say?
- Hyperbole — **exaggerated** or **extreme** statements or claims **not** meant to be taken **literally**, but to make a **point**
 - Examples of hyperbole in the first 3 verses
 - tongues of **angels** — why is this an exaggeration?
 - know all **mysteries** and all **knowledge** — why is this an exaggeration?
 - faith to remove **mountains** — why is this an exaggeration?
 - give all my **possessions** — why is this an exaggeration?
 - surrender my **body** to be **burned** — why is this an exaggeration?
 - Why draw attention to the hyperbole in these verses?
 - Pentecostal and various charismatic religious groups who claim to speak in tongues never seem to speak in any known human language like the tongues of Acts 2, so they claim that they are speaking in the tongues of angels.
 - What were tongues for? (see 1 Cor. 14:22)
 - Why would men need to speak angelic tongues then or now?

- What good will it do without being done in love?
 - speaking in tongues without love — **noisy** gong or **clanging** cymbal
 - prophesying or exercising the gift of faith without love — I **am** nothing
 - giving away everything I have to feed the poor or sacrificing my body without love — **profits** me nothing
- What seems to have been the lesser and inferior (even sinful) motives for exercising these gifts among the Corinthians
 - **pride**
 - **earning salvation**
- What lesser motives could Christians have today as they exercise their gifts?
 - **pride**
 - **earn salvation**
 - **no one else is doing it**
 - **What good will it do us?**
- So, it should be done in love — love for...?
 - **Jesus**
 - **the church**
 - **brethren**
 - **the lost**

A CORINTHIAN DEFINITION OF LOVE

- This definition of love is great, but not comprehensive; rather it is tailored specifically to the situation in Corinth.
 - Define these especially as they applied to the Corinthian situation:
 - Patient — **macrothumia, longsuffering**
 - Kind
 - Not jealous
 - Does not brag
 - Not arrogant
 - Does not act unbecomingly
 - Does not seek its own
 - Is not provoked
 - Does not take into account a wrong suffered

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness,
but rejoices with the truth;

⁷ bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails; but if there are
gifts of prophecy, they will be done
away; if there are tongues, they will
cease; if there is knowledge, it will be
done away.

⁹ For we know in part and we
prophesy in part;

¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the
partial will be done away.

- Does not rejoice in unrighteousness
- But rejoices with the truth
- Bears all things
- Believes all things
- Hopes all things
- Endures all things

THE FATE OF THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS

- What does Paul mean — especially in this context — that love never fails?
 - What will happen to the gift of prophecy?
 - What will happen to the gift of tongues?
 - What will happen to the gift of knowledge?
- The special, spiritual, miraculous gifts of the first century were **partial**.
 - What does “partial” mean?
 - In what ways were the gifts of prophecy etc. only partial gifts?
 - revealed only a part of the **truth**
 - once the that truth had been spoken, it could only be committed to **human memory** (flawed and temporary).
 - performed signs would create **faith** only for those who **saw** it
- What is “the perfect”?
 - τέλειος (*telios*) means **complete** and therefore “perfect”
 - “The perfect” is the opposite of **partial**
 - What would be a perfect spiritual gift to replace the partial spiritual gift?
- Pentecostal and charismatic objections...
 - The perfect is referring to **Jesus’ return**.
 - The perfect must be referring to **love** (it’s in the context)
- Response to Pentecostal and charismatic objections...
 - The perfect (τέλειος (*telios*)) is in the **neuter** gender.
 - Jesus is always referred to in the **masculine** gender

¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

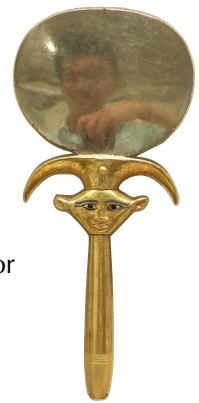
¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

¹³ But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- Love is always in the **feminine** gender
- The only neuter noun (antecedent) in the whole context, to which the neuter “perfect” can refer, is the word **χαρίσματα** (*charismata*), which means “spiritual gift” (found in 1 Cor. 12:31).
- Thus the fuller translation of v. 10 would be...” but when the perfect spiritual gift comes, the partial spiritual gifts will be done away.”
- So once again, what would be a perfect spiritual gift to replace the partial spiritual gift?

• The advantage of the perfect spiritual gift

- What is Paul’s reference to childish things referring to?
- What is Paul’s reference to adult things referring to?
- What did Paul mean by seeing in a mirror dimly?
- How much clearer would it be so see something face to face?
- How much better would knowing God’s word fully (in the NT) than depending on partial prophecy?



Try putting makeup on with this!

THE WRAP UP

- “Faith, hope, and love” were considered to be the 3 pillars of Christianity in the early centuries.
- Why would faith and hope be considered less than love?