

## 1 CORINTHIANS, Chapter 13 – THE GREATEST GIFT!

### OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com) Click on “Latest Studies” on the right side. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### 1 CORINTHIANS, Chapter 13 –

1Co 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way (beyond all comparison (superlative idea in this adjunct, not comparative) ).

Paul did not want to put the flame for the exercise of Spiritual gifts out of their lives, But we are told there is something even better or a more excellent (*Heb. 1:4* Jesus, better than angels; *8:6* Jesus better than Moses; *11:4* Abel better sacrifice than Cain) way than the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. So the thirteenth chapter opens by showing the supremacy of love even over these exotic manifestations of the Spirit. He will explain the more excellent way in chapter 13, with a focus on love (*Agape is a commitment of the will to cherish and uphold another person*), not the gifts themselves. The gifts are merely ways we can express and receive love from God and love to one another. Love is central to the exercise of spiritual gifts for what God intends them to be for His people. Love us the way. It's not a gift. Love is the glue that holds it all together. If you don't have love, you're not reflecting the very heart of God. Many, including unbelievers, often refer to 1 Cor. 13 as a nice chapter, wonderful chapter, saying “Isn't it comforting”? It is wonderful, but for the believer this chapter exhorts us from one end to the other! It's one of the most searching passages in the Bible It takes us to task! It challenges us in every way! The content of this chapter is on the motive behind the exercise of spiritual gifts. Love is more important than the gift of tongues, in fact, love is more important than all of the spiritual gifts. It indeed is wonderful that we have such a thorough and complete definition of love as is used in the Bible, right here in this chapter!

Taking inventory of my Christ likeness: 1Co 13:4-7  
Various aspects, rate myself, 1(worst) -10(best):

\_\_\_\_ Love suffers long and (patient with people)  
\_\_\_\_ is kind (active kindnesses);  
\_\_\_\_ love does not envy (stronger than jealousy, hostile);  
\_\_\_\_ love does not parade itself, (showing itself off)  
\_\_\_\_ is not puffed up; (not proud, arrogant)  
\_\_\_\_ does not behave rudely, (well mannered, not rude)  
\_\_\_\_ does not seek its own, (not interrupting others)  
\_\_\_\_ is not provoked, (living for others' good)  
\_\_\_\_ thinks no evil; (not thinking the worst of another)  
\_\_\_\_ does not rejoice in iniquity, (not rejoicing in sin)  
\_\_\_\_ but rejoices in the truth; (rejoices in right walk)  
\_\_\_\_ bears all things, (always bears up/holds up)  
\_\_\_\_ believes all things, (not naïve, but hopes best)  
\_\_\_\_ hopes all things, (nothing regards all hopeless)  
\_\_\_\_ endures all things. (bears up because from God)

THE LOVE OF GOD - Frederick Lehman – Phelps, Penrod & Gardner

*The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell; The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, And pardoned from his sin.*

*Refrain: Oh, love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure— The saints' and angels' song.*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made, Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade; To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry; Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky. (Refrain)*

More Love to Thee, O Christ - Elizabeth P. Prentiss, William H. Doane, 1832-1915

*1. More love to thee, O Christ, more love to thee! Hear thou the prayer I make on bended knee. This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to thee; more love to thee, more love to thee!*

*2. Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest; now thee alone I seek, give what is best. This all my prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to thee; more love to thee, more love to thee!*

*3. Then shall my latest breath whisper thy praise; this be the parting cry my heart shall raise; this still its prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to thee; more love to thee, more love to thee!*

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### 1 CORINTHIANS, Chapter 13 – The Way of Love -

**1Co 13:1** *Though (without the motivation of love) I speak with the tongues of men and of angels (2 Co 12:4 inexpressible words in 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven) , but have not love (agape, the totally given over to, kind of love), I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

**1Co 13:2** *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

**1Co 13:3** *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

**1Co 13:4** *Love suffers long and is kind (an active kindness; not just thinking or feeling kind thoughts, but doing deeds of kindness); love does not envy (stronger than jealousy, more hostile!); love does not parade itself (showing itself off, more interested in other people!), is not puffed up (not proud);*

**v. 1** Midway through the discussion on the proper exercising of spiritual gifts, we are given here, not another gift, **but a more excellent way!** He talks about it here **as love is central.** Love and the motivation of love is so important! It needs to be emphasized not apart from the spiritual gifts but right in the middle or in the center. Paul doesn't want to put the flame of desire out for the spiritual gifts, but he wants them to receive the proper motivation for the exercise of the spiritual gifts. The Corinthian church apparently loved and desired the spiritual gift of tongues more than any other. Here they will be taught that without the way of love, the gift of speaking in tongues, even in a non understandable languages of men or angels, **if the motivation for the exercise of the gift is anything other than for love**, it is nothing more than sounding brass or a clanging cymbal **a noisy gong!**

**2** Just think of **the concentration of capabilities and power that are described in the gifts of prophecy, understanding all mysteries, understanding all knowledge and having all faith.** But **even in such an unusual and phenomenal situation, but not having love, I am nothing!**

**v. 3** Notice the **supremacy of love over all** the things that we own or even self-sacrifice of our own bodies! If you do even all of these things, and have not the motivation of love, it profits you nothing! **2Co 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat (Bema) of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

**v. 4** So if love is so important, what is love? This is not a love that we're going to work up in our own strength! Here we have the beginning of an extended definition of love! How do we get our arms around it? First, love suffers! **Mat 18:22** Peter - forgive 70x7! **Notice the kindness that it to follow suffering long.** “488....489...wait until I unload on them the very next time!!” No! Active kindness is then to be in play, even after every time of forgiveness.

**v. 1** Are you fully aware that without the motivation of love, the exercise of the gifts of the holy spirit is nothing but a noise? If the motivation is not out of love for others, the motive then must point back to me. I'm using the spiritual gifts for only my own edification, and not of that for the good of others, the good of the body! Our motive must be for our love for God and our love for others! The spiritual gifts all depend on the motive behind them! Love (*agape*) is more important than the spiritual gifts.

**2** Being “*nothing*” is very heavy! Can you visualize yourself as being nothing? We're told here that is what we amount to, if we have not love! That is, if the motive is **anything else than love for God or love for our fellow man, such as selfishness, to be seen, then we are nothing!** If I am selfish in my motivation of exercising spiritual gifts, I may think I'm great myself, **but in the eyes of God, I am nothing.**

**v. 3** If you gave every single thing that you own, what would you think of the reward that you will receive? Or even completely sacrifice your own body, what reward would you expect? If whatever you do is out of selfish motivation only for yourself, it will count as nothing to God! Wow, **am I doing anything out of selfish motivation?**

**v. 4** If we have the love of God in our hearts, then we can be long suffering (patient); we can be peaceful; we can be good, loving, faithful, gentle, kind, and all these other qualities. **But without love all we can do is imitate these qualities, and that is what produces a phony love.** How would you rate your performance of responding in acts of kindness after every time you “suffer long”? How well have we learned to overlook and forgive others when the disappoint us as we disappoint them? How is our **present level of envy; of doing things to show off; of being proud?**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**1Co 13:5 does not behave rudely** (well mannered, not rude), **does not seek its own** (not interrupting others), **is not provoked** (living for others’ good), **thinks no evil** (not thinking the worst about another);

**1Co 13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity** (not rejoicing when other sin or are going into sin), **but rejoices in the truth** (rejoices in the Word of God, of those walking in the truth);

**1Co 13:7 bears all things** (holds up under all the circumstances of life), **believes all things** (not naïve, but hopes the best), **hopes all things**, **endures all things** (holds up under all thing because it comes from God).

**1Co 13:8 Love never fails** (Love will never fail!). **But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.**

**vs. 5-8** If we insert the name of Jesus wherever the word love occurs, it’s a perfect match! -- **1Co 13:4-8 JESUS suffers long and is kind; JESUS does not envy; JESUS does not parade itself, is not puffed up; [5] does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; [6] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; [7] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] JESUS never fails.** – It’s a perfect definition of Jesus.

**Jesus is a definition of love. If we want to know the level of Christ likeness in our lives, we need to plug our names into the place of love!** It doesn’t fit does it?

But **this is a great thing the Lord has given us.** It’s a good thing to put our name in the place of love and **see what things we seem to be doing well in and what areas we seem to be slipping in or are in need of the most improvement.** One month it may be one area and in another month another area.

Here is **a great definition of what agape is.** Love will never fail! It will never pass away. Prophecies, tongues and knowledge will pass away, but not love! Love is going to outlive all the spiritual gifts - never to go by the wayside!

Now we are being told that the spiritual gifts and their exercise will pass away, but that love will never pass away!

**v. 5** Not behaving rudely – Do you ever find yourself **interrupting someone else when they’re talking** and you start talking about yourself? Agape doesn’t do that! Why do we do that? Is it not an indication that **you think that your thoughts at that moment are more important** than what anybody else has to say?

**v. 6** Do you **ever rejoice in iniquity?** In someone else’s sin or their going into sin? Do you **rejoice in others that are walking in the truth?**

**v. 7 Bears all things, believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things!** Look at each one individually. How are we doing in all things in “bearing”? “believing”? “hoping”; enduring? It’s only through the enablement of God through His Holy Spirit that we can do any of these things.

**v. 8** Why is it **that love will never fail**, whereas **prophecies will fail; tongues will cease and the word of knowledge will vanish away?**

**vs. 5-8** This passage is a great thing! It’s a wonderful description of “Christ likeness”. It’s a great place to have as a spiritual thermometer. As I grow in these, I can see I’m getting closer to Jesus. This is **one of the most self-searching passages in the Bible!** It searches us right down in the marrow of my life. *Cf. Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

**What things in verses 4-7 am I lagging behind a bit. What areas are in need of improvement? Lord, help!**

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### INTERPRETATION

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<p><b><u>Examine Yourselves</u></b> <i>1Co 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part</i> (There is so much that we don’t know. We know what we need to know. <i>1Co 13:10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.</i></p> <p><i>1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.</i></p>	<p><b>v. 9</b> <b>There is so much we do not know.</b> Although we know what we need to know and we know enough from the Word of God, but there is so much that <b>we only know in part.</b></p> <p><b>v. 10.</b> But all of that is going to <b>change when that which is perfect</b> (or complete) <b>has come.</b> <b>Who or what</b> is that <i>which is perfect</i>? We will be <u>told</u> in verse 12, <u>two things</u> or characteristics.</p> <p>1) <b><u>I’ll see Him face to face!</u></b> 2) <b><u>I shall know just as I also am known!</u></b></p> <p>These gifts of tongues, prophecy, will be done away with when that which is perfect has come. Then that which we have been speaking of, the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be done away. It seems obvious <b>this is a reference to the coming again of Jesus Christ.</b> As you will find in the context. But you will also find in the promise of the Holy Spirit. For in the Book of Joel (<b><u>Joel 2:28-32 &amp; Acts</u></b>). We need these supernatural gifts while we are journeying through our pilgrimage now, but there will come a day when we come to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. We’ll enter into the presence and the glory of the Lord. Then we won’t need any of these gifts any longer. So the prophecies will fail, the tongues will cease, that is the supernatural giftings. And the knowledge will vanish away because these things, at best, we only know in part, we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect or complete has come, (Jesus Christ when He comes), these things which are in part will be done away.</p> <p><b>v. 11</b> We still are in that spiritual infancy state. There is so much about the Spirit, so much about God, so much about the things of God, that we don’t know. We have a partial knowledge. We’re like children in Spiritual things. One day I’ll have a complete understanding when I am with the Lord, but not until then! But when He comes, then we’ll have that complete and full understanding.</p>	<p><b>v. 9</b> There is <b>so much</b> we do not know. <b>Although we know what we need to know and we know enough</b> from the Word of God, but <b>there is so much that we only know</b> in part.</p> <p><b>v. 10.</b> But all of that is going to change when <b>that which is perfect has come.</b> Then that which we have been speaking of, the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be done away. We need to be much aware of the two characteristics, given to us in <b>verse 12</b>, that will occur when “<i>that which is perfect has come</i>”!</p> <p><b><u>I’ll see Him face to face!</u></b> <b><u>I shall know just as I also am known!</u></b></p> <p>So what future event can cause those two things? <b>When the Kingdom comes! - The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Rapture of the church</b> would appear to be the only thing that perfectly fits!</p> <p><b>v. 11.</b> Now we are in more or less a spiritual infancy state. Much about the Spirit and about God that we don’t fully understand – just like when we were children. But one day when He comes, we’ll have that complete and full understanding!</p>
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### INTERPRETATION

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**1Co 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.**

**1Co 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

**1Co 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**

**v. 12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, (Corinth was known for their highly polished brass or bronze metal mirrors). Presently it's obscure, the truths of God are obscure. We don't see them fully, completely, perfectly. *but then face to face.* But one day it will be face to face, no more obscurity! The face to face, Peter speaking of Jesus – “*whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*”, 1 Peter 1:8).

*Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.* Then we'll know it all. Now you see to say that, which is perfect is the complete canon of Scripture, would then be to declare that I know everything now. But we don't. There is much we don't know. But looking forward, we will know *just as I am known.* Now those are the things that are in part. They are going to pass away when that which is perfect has come. These aids that God has given us. These helps by the Holy Spirit that God has given us to enable us to go through this earthly pilgrimage. These things, when we get to the end of the road will be done away with. We won't need them anymore. We will be with our Lord face to face!

**v. 13** But there are three things that will abide even through eternity. The three planks of the Christian experience. These which in part will be done away, *And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* Our faith in God, that abides. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Our faith in the Word of God, our faith in the promises of God, our faith in the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, that abides. The hope that we have in our hearts, the hope of the heavenly kingdom, the hope of eternal life with our Lord, that abides. The agape, this love of God shed abroad in our hearts through Jesus Christ. This love, it abides. It's eternal. Faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.

**1 Cor. 14:1a** The thirteenth chapter really doesn't end here. You have to go the next verse, *Chapter 14:1a*, where we read, *pursue* (or follow after) *love*. That's the command. This is what love is all about, but now follow after or pursue love. God help us! Paul will go forward in discussing the proper exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, considering all the worshippers, including the unbelievers. Everything to be done decently and in good order.

**v. 12** One day it will be face to face, no more obscurity! Peter said, speaking of Jesus – “*whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*”, 1 Peter 1:8). The exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given be to help us to go through this earthly pilgrimage. These things, when we when we get to heaven, we won't need them anymore. We will be with our Lord face to face!

### **Corinthian Brass (also called Bronze) Mirrors:**



**v. 13** How comforting it is to know that **faith, hope and love will abide forever**, but that the heart of God, which is love, is the greatest of these and will endure forever! As we study this chapter, **may we be more aware of just how important agape is and continue to take inventory of where we are with regard to this love!!**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**1 Corinthians 13** - We are looking at the most beautiful chapter in the whole New Testament, First Corinthians 13. This chapter is well known, not only for its majestic language, but for the lofty idealism of its subject matter and the very practical behavior it describes.

Analyzing those words is almost like taking a beautiful flower and tearing it apart. But some analysis is necessary in order that we might fully grasp what the Apostle Paul is saying here. There are three aspects of love which he considers in this chapter: First, the **preeminence of love** over everything else; Then the **practice (in a very forthright and helpful way)**; and then the **permanence of love, the enduring quality of it.**

Beginning with Chapter 12 he introduced the subject of the spiritualities, the matters pertaining to the Spirit of God. The first part of that chapter was the focus of the Spirit on the Lordship of Christ. Jesus is Lord; this is always the emphasis of the Holy Spirit. He makes Christ real to us. If we have any sense at all of the reality and living presence of Christ it is because of the work of the Holy Spirit within. Then Paul talked about the gifts of the Spirit. We have been looking at how every believer is equipped with certain spiritual gifts that put him into the ministry. If you are not learning to use those gifts, you are going to sabotage the program of God as far as you are concerned. He has given them that you might have a ministry within the Body of Christ.

Now, here, in Chapter 13, we come to the fruit of the Spirit. The apostle has introduced it with a hint already that the fruit of the Spirit is far more important than the gifts of the Spirit. That **we become loving people is far more important than whether we are active, busy people.** Both are necessary, but one is greater than the other. Paul has said so: "I will show you a more excellent way." That is the way of love. We call this the "fruit of the Spirit" because in the letter to the Galatians, Chapter 5:22-23, the apostle details for us what the fruit of the Spirit is. It is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. All of those qualities really are manifestations of the first one, love -- that, after all, **joy is love enjoying itself; peace is love resting; patience is love waiting; kindness is love reacting; goodness is love choosing; faithfulness is love keeping its word; gentleness is love empathizing; and self-control is love resisting temptation.**

Love is the key; love is the main thing. This chapter, therefore, is setting forth that quality of love which is the work of the Spirit of God within us reproducing the character of Christ. Now once you have love all these other qualities that are part of the fruit of the Spirit are possible to you. If we have the love of God in our hearts, then we can be patient; we can be peaceful; we can be good, loving, faithful, gentle, kind, and all these other qualities. But without love all we can do is imitate these qualities, and that is what produces a phony love, one of the most deadly enemies of the Christian cause. In the church, especially among the people of God, love must be genuine, and not, hypocrisy. If it is put on just for the moment, if it is an attempt to put on a facade, that spreads death within the whole community. Genuine love, however, will produce all these qualities.

The word "love," I will point out before we look at this, is not the Greek word *eros*, erotic love, sensual love, what you feel when you "fall in love," a passionate attraction to another person. That kind of love is not even mentioned in the Word of God, strangely enough, though it is a common form of love today. And the word here is not *phileo*, which means affection, friendship, a feeling of warmth toward someone else. This too is a universally distributed love, but this is not what is mentioned here.

Paul is talking about **agape**, which is a commitment of the will to cherish and uphold another person. This is the word that is used about the love of God always. It is the only word ever used to describe His love. It is a word, therefore, addressed to the will. It is a decision that you make and a commitment that you have launched upon to treat another person with concern, with care, with thoughtfulness, and to work for his or her best interests. That is what love is, and this is what Paul is talking about.

Now **this kind of love is possible only to those who first love God.** The Scripture tells us there are two great commandments. The first is, "*Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.*" The second one, Jesus said is, "*Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself,*" (Matthew 22:37-9, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27). We try to turn that around. Many of us are trying to love our neighbor, whoever he may be, in our family or anywhere else, without having loved God, and it is impossible to do that. It is "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," as Romans puts it Romans 5:5, that fulfills the definition that is given in this chapter, and only that love. Therefore, you cannot love other people until you first love God. Number one, of course, is this preeminent value of love. What makes life worth living? Love does. Paul contrasts love here with certain things that were highly regarded in Corinth and are still highly regarded in the world today. The first is the ability to communicate. These Corinthians valued communication. They enjoyed eloquence; they admired oratory. They were especially entranced by the gift of tongues, the ability to speak in languages that had never been learned, which had been given among them, but which by the power of the Spirit enabled person to pray and praise God. They were making much of this gift, as many are today, so Paul begins **on that note.** He says,