

I Corinthians Lesson 13

I Cor. Chapter 13

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 4:6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 12, Paul used the different parts of the human anatomy to explain how that each member of the church has special purpose, and how that each of us should seek out those special spiritual gifts and use them for the honor of God. This week, our lesson centers on the importance of showing love as a Christian. The Church at Corinth needed a great deal of correction concerning spiritual gifts. In chapters 12, 13, and 14, Paul makes it quite clear that they had gone to seed on tongues and other spiritual gifts. We find in the latter part of chapter 12, that tongues is at the bottom of the list, as far as spiritual gifts are concerned. These three chapters present a devastating broadside to the modern tongues movement and the healing racketeers.

I. The Supreme Importance of Love

1 Cor 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Chapter thirteen is one of the great chapters in the Bible on the subject of love. We need to understand the Bible teaching on love, in contrast to the modern usage of the word love. Four important Greek words translate into the English word love. (a) "Philanthropia," meaning love for mankind. (b) "Philadelphia," meaning love for brethren. (c) "Phileo," meaning love for a friend. (d) "Agape," and "agapao" mean God's love for us and our love for God. This is the Greek word found in 1 Cor. 13, and also in John 3:16. Here we see the intensification of love, first for mankind, then for brethren, then for the friend, and now for God. "Agape," and "agapao" are translated "love" 221 times. The ungodly Greeks used the word "EROS," for love. It is the name of the god of love, the son of Aphrodite. This word is found in classical Greek and speaks of the love between the sexes such as the love of sweethearts and husbands and wives.

The word "EROS," however is not found in the Bible. The reason is that its contemporary mythological use was degrading and corrupting. It was voluptuous and sensual, hence the Holy Spirit forbade its use in the Scripture where it would have been out of place and greatly misunderstood. In its place is found the word "agape," translated "charity," in 1 Cor. 13, and "love," in many other places. Agape was not used in classical Greek. God chose a new word to describe the

highest type of love known to man. In the unsaved world love is used as eros today, which of course is wrong.

Christ, in His personal ministry, taught the great importance of love. Of all the attributes that we should forth in our daily walk, none are greater than the need of love. God so expects us to show forth this love, that He warns us to show forth love for even our enemies and those that spitefully use us.

Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?
Mark 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:
Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.
Mark 12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.
Mark 12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:
Mark 12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
Mark 12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Luke 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
Luke 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you.
Luke 6:29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.
Luke 6:30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.
Luke 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

If we have any hope of reaching the lost as a church, we must be able to overcome our failures and dislikes of the lost, and show forth love that is pure and sincere. Unless we can show those who are without the Lord as Savior that we truly care for them, it will be very difficult to reach them with the Gospel. The one overwhelming thing that Jesus was known for was His love for each and every person who came in contact with Him. He was criticized for sitting with the publicans and sinners, but they saw their need more for a Savior many times than did the self-righteous spiritual leaders of the day. The greatest commandment we have in the bible is to love God first. And the second is to love our neighbor as our self.

Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

1 Cor 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, and have not charity, I am nothing.

If we don't have love in our hearts, we can have great traits like eloquent speaking, but in God's sight we are nothing. Verse one mentioned how that if we have the ability to speak in tongues and don't have love (which is called charity all through this chapter), we are really nothing at all. Tongues in the bible are always speaking of other languages. Paul mentions in the next chapter that he could speak in other languages more than all of those at Corinth.

1 Cor 14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

1 Cor 14:19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

In verse 2, Paul teaches that if a person had the gift of prophecy, and thought he understood the deep things of God, and possessed even a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, and still had not love, he was nothing. I'm afraid we have many in churches today that listen well and understand well, but they never put the learning to use. We are not to be hearers only, but doers of God's Word.

1 Cor 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Even if we are sacrificial in our giving to the point that we give away everything to

feed the poor and sacrifice ourselves to the point of death, if it is not done with love from the heart, Paul tells us we have profited nothing. Many labor in the flesh and go to great ends to do works in God's name, but many never consider whether they are done according to God's way. We have to have more than a good attitude and willingness to give, we must love like God desires us to love, and do things in accordance with the rules laid down in scripture. We have a record over in Daniel where three young men willingly put up their bodies to be burned in their stand for God. But these did it not wrongly, but out of a pure love for the Heavenly Father.

Dan 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

Dan 3:17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

Dan 3:18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Those of you who are familiar with the Old Testament know that not only did these men say they would die in the furnace for their faith, they were thrown into the furnace which was so hot it killed the men who threw them in. But the fourth man (apparently Jesus Christ, the Son of God) in the fire protected them and they did not get their clothes burned or even the smell of smoke upon them.

II. The Characteristics of Love

1 Cor 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

1 Cor 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

One of God's attributes is His longsuffering towards us. We should strive our best to be longsuffering one to another. It is easy to expect others to give that extra inch or two, but when it is up to us, are we willing to sacrifice for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Sometimes it may mean not being the first one to be chosen for some task, or it may be just controlling our ego and not having to have things "our way." It says here that love suffers long, does not envy, and does not vaunt itself up.

If you get into a church where there is strife and bickering, you find people who don't show love towards one another, but want all things done their way or they get upset. We are not to be puffed up nor behave unseemly the Word of God says. Our thoughts should be on pure and perfect things, not the evil things of the world about us.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,

whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Phil 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

1 Cor 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

1 Cor 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

There are 14 characteristics of love in verses. 4-7.

- (1) Love "suffereth long" = patience.
- (2) Love "is kind" = kindness.
- (3) Love "envieth not" = generosity.
- (4) Love "vaunteth not...not puffed up" = humility.
- (5) Love "doth not behave itself unseemly" = courtesy. True love behaves itself.
- (6) Love "seeketh not her own" = unselfishness.
- (7) Love "is not easily provoked" = good natured.
- (8) Love "thinketh" no evil" = charitableness.
- (9) Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity" = sincerity.
- (10) Love "rejoiceth in the truth" = goodness and not gossip.
- (11) Love "beareth all things" = graciousness.
- (12) Love "believeth all things" = confidence.
- (13) Love hopeth all things" = assurance.
- (14) Love "endureth all things" = endurance.

Love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

See how all the characteristics of love show up in the fruit of the Spirit.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Love does not rejoice in wickedness. We have had so many debates recently over Gay rights, and many churches are opening doors of service to homosexuals. How can we say we truly love someone and not tell them the truth concerning sin? I don't believe there is homosexual or lesbian alive that God can not save and give new purpose and hope. But salvation is about forsaking sin and turning to God in repentance. Baptism is the picture of dying to the old man and rising up to walk in newness of life in the spiritual man which is born again into us when we are saved. Until we are saved and born again, we are spiritually dead without hope in this world. Verse six says we are to rejoice not in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth. The truth is contained here in God's Word. We are to continue to show forth love to all men and women, and love them all

not matter how stained with sin they may be. But we are to rejoice in the truth, bearing all things, believing all things of God, and show forth hope. We simply can not survive when we have no hope. But by the blood of Jesus, we can have hope which allows us to endure. Oh that we might learn to love like Jesus who loved us while we were yet His enemy.

Isa 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Isa 5:21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Matthew Henry had these comments on these verses about love and charity.

“Some of the effects of charity are stated, that we may know whether we have this grace; and that if we have not, we may not rest till we have it. This love is a clear proof of regeneration, and is a touchstone of our professed faith in Christ. In this beautiful description of the nature and effects of love, it is meant to show the Corinthians that their conduct had, in many respects, been a contrast to it. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness; it does not desire or seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Not that charity destroys all regard to ourselves, or that the charitable man should neglect himself and all his interests.

But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or to neglect others. It ever prefers the welfare of others to its private advantage. How good-natured and amiable is Christian charity! How excellent would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more under this Divine principle, and paid due regard to the command on which its blessed Author laid the chief stress! Let us ask whether this Divine love dwells in our hearts. Has this principle guided us into becoming behavior to all men? Are we willing to lay aside selfish objects and aims? Here is a call to watchfulness, diligence, and prayer.”

III. The Abiding Nature of Love

1 Cor 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Many things in this life fail. But love never fails we are told. Love is what caused God to send His only begotten son to die on Calvary for you and me.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The love that Jesus had for the lost is what caused Him to weep over Jerusalem.

Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Mat 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Mat 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

When we walk according the guidance of the Holy Spirit, love will be what proves to others that we are disciples of Christ.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1 Cor 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

The closing of the canon of the New Testament (whether there be prophecies they shall cease)... no longer can man tell the future. We can see what God has said about future events through the Word only. All "new" prophecy has come to an end. The next person coming in an audible voice from God will be the shout of the archangel as Jesus breaks that Eastern sky. (One day very soon I believe.) Tongues are another special ability which we believe has ceased. No one can suddenly understand another language without human tutoring. Until the building of the tower of Babel, it appears that all men in the world spoke the same language.

Gen 11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

Gen 11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the

LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

The first record of men being able to speak supernaturally with tongues came on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

There was a miracle of the ear that day also as each man could understand what was being said in their own language.

Acts 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

Acts 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

There is no longer the ability to have God-given knowledge without study. We all must study the Word of God to become able to effectively use the Bible to both live and preach the gospel.

Gal 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Gal 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Gal 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

Gal 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Paul explained to the church at Galatia that he was not taught by man, but given a special revelation from the Lord. We can not do this anymore with human tutors. We are commanded to study.

2 Tim 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1 Cor 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Paul considered the "Apostolic" miracles done in the early days of the church to be something "in part" when compared to the finished product of the New Testament. Apostolic miracles ended after a short time in the early days of the church. The Word of God was completed, and they were no longer needed.

Three important things are pointed out in the verses from 8 through 10.

1. PROPHECIES, "they shall fail." The Greek word for "they shall fail," means "to render idle, inactive, inoperative, no further efficiency, to cause to cease." He means that the gift of prophecy would pass away, because there would be no need for it after the Bible was finished. There are no true prophets today, but we have many false prophets.

2. TONGUES, "they shall cease." The Greek word for "they shall cease," means "to cease, to leave off." The modern tongues movement is as false as a three dollar bill. Tongues were given for a sign, and that sign is not needed since the Bible has been completed (about 96 A.D.).

3. KNOWLEDGE, "it shall vanish away." The Greek word for "it shall vanish away," is the same word as "they shall fail," in regard to prophecy above. This knowledge refers to the revelatory knowledge necessary for the completing of the Word of God.

"That which is perfect is come," refers to the Bible, the completed Word of God for man during this dispensation. "That which is perfect," comes from a Greek word which means, "brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness. "Perfect," does not refer to Christ, as some would have you to believe. (Of course Christ is perfect, but this verse is not referring to Him.) The completed Bible is the only perfect thing that we have in the world today.

1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

1 Cor 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Many Christians are still like children when it comes to the things of God. If we want to be fruitful and successful in our walk for the Lord, we must learn to show forth the Love of Christ and to do those things which God would have us to do. When we grow in the Lord, we will take on the traits of Jesus, and become steady and dependable. Today, we view the things of God as if looking through tinted windows. But one day, when we pass from this life to Heaven, we will then see things clearly when we see our Saviour face to face.

Childish things should be put away, (prophecy, tongues, etc.) when the complete Bible was finished. We have a more sure word of prophecy, than we can find in

visions, dreams, experiences, etc.

2Pet 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2Pe 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

2Pe 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

2Pe 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Corinthians made burnished brass mirrors. They were imperfect and they could only see themselves darkly with those mirrors. Prophecy, and tongues only allowed them to see through a glass darkly. When the perfect Word of God was completed, then all Christians would have the opportunity to see clearly.

1 Cor 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

These three are all good... faith hope and charity. But the most important we are taught is love. Oh that we might show love and reach others for the Kingdom of Christ.

Examples of love: John 10:1,17-28

Exhortation to love: John 13:34 and I John 2:7-8

Expression of love: John 14:23-34 and John 15:9-10

There are three things that will abide, in contrast to the three things in v. 8 that would cease.

1. FAITH abides because, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)*

2. HOPE abides because it anticipates the fulfillment of what faith expects. As long as there is true faith, there will be real hope.

3. LOVE abides because it is the very nature of the new life (the life which is from God Himself). It is the last and greatest of the three things that survive time, death, and disaster.

* comments from E.L. Bynum added in July 2013.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.