

THE GREATEST CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE-16

1CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 13

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **1Corinthians 13:1-13**. From Roy Enoch.

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] And 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 deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. [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. [11] When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as 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 shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. [13] But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

B. Let us briefly look at the context of this beautiful chapter on love.

1. Paul is writing to this church that he established in worldly Corinth.
2. He had been informed of their problems (1Cor. 1:11).
For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.
3. It seems that the first six chapters dealt with these matters.
4. Beginning in chapter seven, he deals with things that the church had written him (see 7:1).
5. Chapter 12 names and describes the nature of 9 miraculous gifts.
6. Chapter 13 describes "agape" love as a better way than these miraculous gifts.

II. FOUR GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE.

A. Love--how can we define it? Webster's Dictionary defines it:

1. Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties--maternal love.
2. Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers.
3. Affection based on admiration or common interests--love for old schoolmates.
4. An assurance of love; "give her my love."
5. Warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion; "love of the sea."
6. A person's adoration of God.
7. God as a personification of love.
8. An amorous episode: a love affair.
9. The sexual embrace: or sex act.
10. The score of zero, as in tennis.

B. The Greeks had four different words for "love:"

1. EROS is the word for erotic or sexual love. The Bible does not use this word. The meaning is included in words like lust, homosexuality, etc.
2. STORGE is the word that refers to family affection of parents, for children and children for parents, and/or children for each other. It is not found in the Bible except in compound words.
3. PHILEO is the word which refers to emotional feeling and tender affection.
 - a. It often refers to people "loving" things or honor.
 - b. It is found 22 times in the NT; commanded once in Rom. 12:10 (be nice to each other).
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

C. AGAPE is the word for love that is commanded and it is used 361 times in the NT.

1. It was extremely rare in Greek literature.
2. It does not focus on feeling or emotion, but on behavior.

3. God doesn't tell us how to feel, but how to act.
4. It is always described by the way it acts rather than how one feels:
 - a. God loved us and gave His Son.
 - b. Jesus loved us and died for us.
 - c. A husband is to love his wife as X loved the church and gave Himself for it.

III. THE NECESSITY OF AGAPE LOVE (13:1-3).

- A. Verses 13:1-3 show that love is necessary for the use of spiritual gifts to be accepted by God.
- B. This begins the discussion of the more excellent way, mentioned in the preceding verse. To fully understand the nature of God and His church, the church will need to learn to practice love, first and foremost. Paul will use himself as an example to teach these lessons as he did with himself and Apollos in 4:6.
- C. We understand the tongues of men to be known languages, but in this text Paul uses the phrase the tongues of angels. Yes, angels do have their own language in which they praise God (Rev. 4), but Paul mentions it here as to show an illustration by which the greatest mention of a spiritual gift can be made known. Even if Paul could speak in this way, if he did it without love it would spiritually profit him nothing.

IV. AGAPE LOVED DESCRIBED (13:4-8a).

- C. Verses 13:4-8 describes "agape" love:
 1. Eight things "agape" love does:

a. It is longsuffering--	it endures (13:4).
b. It is kind--	it is always considerate/courteous (13:4).
c. It rejoices in the truth--	it wants to hear good things (13:6).
d. It bears all things--	it puts up with adversity (13:7).
e. It believes all things--	it isn't suspicious (13:7).
f. It hopes all things--	it is optimistic (13:7).
g. It endures all things--	it is faithful (13:7).
h. It never fails--	it never, ever gives up (13:8).
 2. Eight things "agape" love does NOT do:

a. It does not envy--	it isn't jealous (13:4).
b. It does not exalt itself--	it doesn't brag (13:4).
c. It is not puffed up--	it is not arrogant (13:4).
d. It does not behave unseemly--	it is never rude (13:5).
e. It does not seek its own--	it isn't selfish (13:5).
f. It is not easily provoked--	not hot tempered (13:5).
g. It does not think evil of others--	it does not assume the worst (13:5).
h. It does not rejoice in iniquity--	it does not like to hear about sin (13:6).
- D. There are several reasons why "agape" love has this kind of influence on our behavior.
 1. It wants the best for others.
 2. It focuses on the needs of others, rather than selfish wants.
 3. It follows the example of X.
 4. Therefore, it is always beneficial to the one who has it and to those who receive it.

V. AGAPE LOVE AND MIRACULOUS GIFTS (13:8b-12).

- A. The Perfection of Love.

[13:8] 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.

Love never fails no matter the situation. It is the ultimate answer to growth or problems.

- B. Without love everything else done is of no spiritual profit. The miraculous works of the HS given to the brethren are of temporary duration. The question then that usually arises is when will they be done away? Are the gifts still possible to be used by Christians? In an attempt to answer the “when” questions many have used this chapter, verses 9-13.

[\[13:9,10\] For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; \[10\] but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.](#)

- C. There is nothing partial about the gift itself, but rather it gives only partial knowledge or partial prophecy to the one who had it. Those who possessed whatever gift had but only a partial measure of what they needed to be spiritually right with God. The missing ingredient is love. The “when” of the ceasing of the miraculous gifts may not even be under discussion here. Rather, Paul is making the point that as long as the Corinthians rely on the miraculous spiritual gifts (without practicing love) they will remain incomplete (imperfect or immature) in their spirituality.

Verse 10 has its various interpretations for the word “perfect.” There are four main ones:

1. It refers to Christ and His coming to show this is the time when the partial will be done away.
2. It refers to the events of the second coming, yet nothing is said in chapter 15 about the spiritual gifts being done away when Christ comes (15:50-59).
3. Completed written revelation is a popular view but one must remember that all truth had been given to the apostles on Pentecost and even if they had all knowledge (13:2) this would not have solved the problem.
4. A mature knowledge combining their spiritual gifts and using them in love is the view that best fits the context. Paul is not discussing when the miraculous gifts will pass away, he simply affirms that they will, and to use them properly (with love) in the present time.

- D. Notice how some of the great scholars have defined the word that is translated “perfect;”

1. Arndt and Gingrich say -- having attained the end or purpose.
2. Thayer says -- wanting nothing necessary to completion.
3. Vine says -- signifies having reached its end; finished, complete or perfect.
4. Beet says -- that which has reached its full development or goal.
5. Lenski says -- it refers to the goal in comparison with what is still on the way or the perfecting of something that is yet unfinished.

- E. Paul says that when the mature living through love comes then there will be no need for the partial things like miraculous gifts.

[\[13:11,12\] When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as 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 shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.](#)

- F. These two verses become a contrast between the immature and the mature. In continuing with the example of himself that began in 13:1, Paul says that when he grew up he put away the immature things that he no longer needed. As long as the Corinthians relied on their spiritual gifts they saw in a mirror dimly and did not know fully as they ought. But by practicing love they could see God most clearly, as if face to face and would fully know of how to live for God acceptably. That which the spiritual gifts provided can also be provided by the word of God (Jas. 1:25), so they need to be able to take that knowledge (either by gifts or by the word) and mix it with love to make it complete.

VI. AGAPE LOVE IS ETERNAL (13:13).

- A. This kind of love is eternal.

[But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.](#)

- B. Notice that the apostle says that now abide these three, meaning that they should focus on what is available in the things of faith, hope and love and get their focus away from the spiritual gifts. Some have suggested that the reason that love is greater than faith and hope is because in heaven there will

be no need for faith we shall see clearly, and no need for hope for it shall have been realized. All that will be left is love.

VII. **CONCLUSION.**

- A. Happiness does not come from having things or having things done for us.
- B. It comes from being thankful for what we have and to those who are a blessing in our lives.
- C. Learn to focus on the needs of others, do the right things, and be grateful for the blessings that we receive--that's "agape."
- D. Next week: 1Corinthians, Chapter 15:
 - 1. The Gospel of the Risen Christ.
 - 2. Consequences of Denying the Resurrection.
 - 3. Consequences of Christ's Resurrection.
 - 4. Answers to Problems of the Resurrection.
 - 5. Events of the Resurrection Day.

I. OBJECTIVES IN LESSON THIRTEEN (Chapter 13).

- A. The Importance of Love (13:1-3).
Understand the importance of love as the motivation behind what we do.
- B. The Picture of Love (13:4-7).
Learn the characteristics of love.
- C. The Perfection of Love (13:8-13).
Understand that the Corinthian brethren's knowledge conjoined with love will enable them to mature in their knowledge of God and one another.

II. COMMENTS.

A. **The Importance of Love (13:1-3).**

[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.

This begins the discussion of the more excellent way, mentioned in the preceding verse. To fully understand the nature of God and His church, the church will need to learn to practice love, first and foremost. Paul will use himself as an example to teach these lessons as he did with himself and Apollos in 4:6.

We understand the tongues of men to be known languages, but in this text Paul uses the phrase the tongues of angels. Yes, angels do have their own language in which they praise God (Rev. 4), but Paul mentions it here as to show an illustration by which the greatest mention of a spiritual gift can be made known. Even if Paul could speak in this way, if he did it without love it would spiritually profit him nothing.

[13:2,3] And 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 deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Notice the use of the word "all" in these verses showing that if they could do all things in the greatest of ways, they would still be lacking in what is needed to be spiritually mature. It would seem that even those who had the gifts of knowledge and of prophecy could not do so it this way (all knowledge, all prophecy) according to v. 9. The point is that one cannot reach spiritual maturity through the use of spiritual (miraculous gifts).

Just going through the motions is not good enough. If our Christian works of service are done only out of a sense of duty, then they are not acceptable. The motivation must be a love for God and a love for others.

B. **The Picture of Love (13:4-7).**

[13:4] Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, Four things mentioned about love in this verse. First, love is patient, better translated in the KJV as long-suffering. It means to hold anger, or hold the mind. Second, love is kind. Third, love is generosity because it is not jealous. Fourth, love is humility because it does not brag, it is not puffed up.

[13:5] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

Four more things that love is; Fifth, love is courtesy due to love not behaving in an unbecoming or unseemly manner. Sixth, love is unselfish, that is, it seeks not its own. Seventh, love is good-natured meaning it is not easily provoked to do things that are not right. Eighth, love is charitable in that it thinks not evil things or necessarily evil of others.

[13:6] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

Paul continues his list with two more things. Ninth, love is sincere. Love does not rejoice in

unrighteousness. Tenth, love is goodness because it rejoices with the truth.

[13:7] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

And four more things makes fourteen characteristics of love. Eleventh, love is gracious due to bearing all things. Twelfth, love is confidence because it believes all things. Thirteen, love is assurance because it hopes in all things. And fourteenth, love is endurance as seen in the fact that love endures all things.

C. **The Perfection of Love (13:8-13).**

[13:8] 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.*

Love never fails no matter the situation. It is the ultimate answer to growth or problems. Without love everything else done is of no spiritual profit. The miraculous works of the HS given to the brethren are of temporary duration. The question then that usually arises is when will they be done away? Are the gifts still possible to be used by Christians? In an attempt to answer the “when” questions many have used this chapter, verses 9-13.

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