

1 Corinthians 13

Remember that Paul is dealing with a congregation that placed speaking in tongues above everything else, but now he is going to show them a better way, the way that supersedes all the spiritual gifts, including tongues.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

V1 – Did Paul have the ability to speak in tongues? Yes – Read 1 Cor. 14.18

-Had Paul ever heard the language of angels? Yes – Read 2 Cor. 12.1-4

-What about groups today who say that they are speaking in a language of angels, instead of known human languages? - 2 Cor. 12.4 refutes that – they are seriously mistaken

What did Paul emphasize over the ability to speak in tongues? The quality of love (agape) Note: to pronounce this word: ä – gäp – pay [ä is as in the word father]

-Agape = putting the best interests of the other person first (not necessarily doing what the person wants to have done)

-How did Paul describe the gift of tongues without love? Like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal

-What kind of tunes can you play on a gong or a cymbal? No tunes at all – they just make noise

-Many times when we are growing up, we are in the band and go to music camps and participate in competition with other musicians and bands

-Have you ever heard someone play a musical piece on the cymbals?

Message of Paul: Without love, the gift of tongues is just noise and a waste of time

V2 – See 1 Cor. 14.3 – The gift of prophecy seems to have included preaching, as well as seeing into the future

-It was a magnificent gift – **Wouldn't it be great for preachers to have that kind of ability to preach (given by the Holy Spirit)?**

-What is the next gift that he mentions? The gift of knowledge to know the answer to all mysteries

-What mysteries would we like to have the answers to? More knowledge about heaven and hell, various questions about the Holy Spirit (how he operates, how the providence of God works in our lives today, etc.)

-Why hasn't God revealed to us all the mysteries of life? Read Deut. 29.29 – We have been told enough to be saved, and we should be satisfied with that

-Was strong faith a gift of the Holy Spirit? Yes – See 1 Cor. 12.9

-What is this a reference to? Read Matt. 17.20 – If we just had the faith of a grain of mustard seed...

Review: If we had the gift of tongues (both of men and angels), the gift of prophecy, the gift of knowledge, and the gift of faith (so as to move mountains): **Can you imagine how great a person would be considered if he had all these spiritual gifts?**

-We would say that he or she was the greatest person in the church

-But what was Paul's conclusion? Without love, such a person would be nothing

V3 – What is this a reference to? Two things:

1. The rich young ruler (*Mark 10.21*) – He was told to sell all he had and give it to the poor
-Were the Corinthian Christians known as great givers? No, they had to be admonished and corrected in *2 Cor. 8-9*

-Which Christians had been martyred at this point? Stephen (stoned) and the apostle James (killed with the sword)

-so no Christians had yet been burned to death for the faith

2. So who might this be a reference to? *Daniel 3.8-30* – Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego

-Paul: Even if someone as brave as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego....

-Even after selling all possessions and give the money to the poor and after being burned to death for the faith, what good is it without love? Paul: It profits me nothing

1 Corinthians 13.4-7

V4 – At this point, Paul begins a list of 15 characteristics of love

1. What is the first characteristic of love? It is patient

-Have any of you ever tried to teach a kid how to ride a bicycle? Whistle? Tie his or her shoes? We learn fast the meaning of patience

2. Next characteristic of love? It is kind

Old saying in our culture:

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Optional:

This statement is attributed to **Stephen Grellet** (2 November 1773 – 16 November 1855) a prominent Quaker missionary. Born **Etienne de Grellet du Mabilier**, son to a counselor to King Louis XVI, at 17 he entered the King's body-guard; during the French Revolution of 1792 he was sentenced to be executed, but escaped and eventually fled Europe to the United States in 1795, where in 1796, he joined the Religious Society of Friends.

-Do we show kindness to all the people that we meet in this life? The clerk at the grocery store? The mailman? Those from a lower class than we are from?

3. Next characteristic of love? It is not jealous

-Do we praise someone who can do a job better than we can? Are we jealous when someone else gets a new car?

-It is hard not to be jealous, but true agape means that we rejoice in the successes of others

-Was the church at Corinth guilty of being jealous? Yes – concerning the spiritual gifts

4. Next characteristic? It does not brag – the church at Corinth was guilty of this concerning the gift of tongues

-At one congregation a member said that another member had worn out the back of his shirt by patting himself there too often. **Are we guilty of that also?**

5. Next characteristic of love? It is not arrogant

-Was the church at Corinth guilty of violating this characteristic of love? Absolutely

V5

6. It does not act unbecomingly – It displays courtesy, good etiquette, due respect to others

-Was the church at Corinth guilty of violating this characteristic? Again: absolutely

7. It does not seek its own – It is not selfish; they were guilty of that also
8. It is not provoked – It does not get upset at minor insults, no sudden rages
-In other words, can we take slight offenses and just say, "We're all human," and get on with life?
9. It does not take into account a wrong suffered – Even if we are offended, there is no attitude of revenge. We don't take things into our own hands. We don't keep records on other people
-What did Jesus say about going to worship with a charge in our hearts against someone else? Read Matt. 5.23-24 – We should try to resolve it before worship begins

V 6 – 10. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness – **For example, do we laugh at dirty jokes?**

11. It rejoices in the truth – **Do we get upset that he worship is going a little longer than it was scheduled to go because there is a baptism?**
-Do we get upset when the truth is preached, even though it may apply to us?

V 7

12. It bears all things – It does not hold grudges
 -Greek language here: to cover in silence, to suppress
 -In other words, we do not expose the weaknesses of the church to the world
13. It believes all things – We give the person the benefit of the doubt (until there is evidence to the contrary)
14. It hopes all things – We hope for the best and hope that people will repent
15. It endures all things (without getting discouraged)
 Notice that the church at Corinth had violated just about all of these characteristics of Christian love (all over the gift of tongues)

1 Corinthians 13.8-13

- V 8 – Why will love never fail?** It will never fail because true love means doing what is best for the other person, and that always works
-What was going to come to an end? Prophecy
-Why would the church no longer need a special measure of the Holy Spirit to see into the future? Because the full gospel would be with us (as of 95 AD and the completion of the book of *Revelation*)
-What else would fail? Tongues (would cease) – the time was coming when the gift of tongues would no longer exist
-What else would fail? The gift of special knowledge (because the entire Old Testament and New Testament would be completed)

V 9 – Why did Paul say that at that point in the history of the church, they knew in part and prophesied in part? Because the entire word of God had not been revealed and written down yet

V 10 – What does the partial refer to? The time of spiritual gifts

-What the "perfect"? 3 theories:

1. Love (agape) – but the word for "perfect" is neuter, not feminine (see: Jimmy Jividen, *Glossolalia: From God or Man*, p. 123)

2. Christ – but the word would have been masculine

3. The completed Bible - **Read Jimmy Jividen, p. 124 and 127**

Read 2 Timothy 3.16-17 – The Word of God equips us for every good work

-Also remember *Mark 16.16-20* – The gifts were given only to confirm the word in the first century

-Note: It was like cranking the early automobiles to get them started; once the engine started, the driver would stop cranking the engine

-It is also like putting up scaffolding to construct a building – once the building is completed, the scaffolding is taken down – there is no longer a purpose for it

V 11 – What was Paul comparing to his years as a child? Speaking in tongues (and having the other spiritual gifts)

-Why were they childish? They were not based on the completed gospel

-How did Paul speak as a child? As a child

-But what happened when he became a man? He put away childish things

-Notice: child = spiritual gifts, man = the completed Word of God

V 12 – What was he comparing to looking in a mirror? Having spiritual gifts

-Mirrors in the first century were poor, usually just polished metal (very inferior to mirrors today)

-What would it be like when spiritual gifts would be replaced with the completed gospel? Like seeing people face to face

-Then Paul would fully know, just as he was known in the first century

V 13 – What are the three greatest qualities of the Christian life? Faith, hope, love

-Which is the greatest? Love (the only one that will survive in heaven)

Note on this chapter: The gifts only came through the laying on of the apostles' hands, and we do not have apostles today

Books recommended for this chapter:

Jividen, Jimmy, *Glossolalia: From God or Man*, Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Publications, 1971.

Jividen, Jimmy, *Alive in the Spirit: A Study of the Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit*, Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1990.

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