

PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

LEARNING HOW TO BE A HEAVENLY CHURCH IN A GODLESS WORLD

1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13:8B-13

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THE TITLE OF THE MESSAGE:

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD

DISCOVERING THE NATURE OF GOD IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

SUBJECT TOPICALLY REFERENCED UNDER:

Love, Church, Gifts, Unity, Growth, Witness, God

:8 Love never fails. But whether there are **prophecies**, they will **fail**; whether there are **tongues**, they will **cease**; whether there is **knowledge**, it will vanish away. **:9** For we know **in part** and we prophesy **in part**. **:10** But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is **in part** will be done away. **: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. **: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**. **:13** And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but **the greatest of these is love**.

Like Twin Bookends, the Love of God is both:

(1) never ending (*inexhaustible*) and **(2) the greatest** (*having no equal*)

This Small but Powerful portion of chapter 13 is extremely important and essential to the functioning of a healthy and practical church in any era.

Greater than anything else. Greater than any ministry.

Greater than any work. greater than any achievement, greater than any missionary venture, greater than any sermon preached... Greater and Eternal is the Love of God!

Deuteronomy 6:5

You shall **love the LORD your God** with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.

John 15:12-14

This is **My commandment**, that you **love one another** as I have loved you. :13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. :14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

John 13:34-35 KJV

A **new commandment** I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. :35 By **this** (*display of authentic love*) shall all men **know** that ye are my disciples, **if** (*qualifier*) ye have love one to another.

< The Profound Practicality of Authentic Christianity >

Biblical Christians have no equals in this life – as seen by the way we love, by the way we care, by the way we pray, by the way we live...

Because Jesus Christ is Our Reason-Purpose-Vision-Meaning

So Then as Christians

Whatever Work we Do. Whatever Ministry We Do, Whatever Life we lead.
The overriding evidence that confirms our Christianity is whether or not our lives exhibit the Love of God.

Speaking Now to You – Assuming That We're Christians
(*those having forsaken sin to decide to follow Jesus*)

We Move On and Into What God Would Have Us to Know and to Do until we Meet Him in Heaven.

Church, any church ordained by Jesus Himself – will be a church that (1) makes disciples. (2) It will invade the darkness. (3) It will advance the Gospel and (4) it will challenge its culture.

There is a Battle that every real church and real Christian is engaged in but Jesus has given us what's needed to win the battle - -

Luke 14:28-32

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it - :29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, :30 saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." :31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? :32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

In that same vein of thought, Jesus does not send you and I out as a Christian, as a church, without the things needed to be victorious in the cause of Christ. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the tools, not the toys.

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD

WHAT MAKES YOU A TRUE BELIEVER!

1.) In contrast to our ministry

v.8-10

1a.) Our gifts are limited

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

The Gifts (*spirit-driven works*) of the Holy Spirit are given to believers to make a church a biblical church.

Paul Lays The Ground Work for Their Use:

But whether there are **prophecies**, they will **fail**;
whether there are **tongues**, they will **cease**;
whether there is **knowledge**, it will **vanish** away.

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD IN CONTRAST TO OUR MINISTRY

William Barclay says that;

“Love is the most powerful evidence for the existence of eternity. Love is timeless, indestructible, unconquerable, and unlimited. It is undefeated against anything this world can throw at it which indicates to us that its source is not of this world but from His world beyond, from eternity.”

As long as the church is on earth and in use – the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be in operation. In fact, in the last of the last days – those who become believers during the tribulation period will see the ultimate fulfillment of the gifts among both Jew and Gentile Christians then.

In Time: **prophecies**, they will **fail**;
In Time: **tongues**, they will **cease**;
In Time: **knowledge**, it will **vanish** away.

At Present – we’re to be growing up in Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

grow rgk: αυξανω **auzano**, *owx-an'-o*;
to be expanding and increasing in the weight of a matter. Expanding, more like, filled up, full of...

IN CONTRAST TO OUR MINISTRY

1b.) Our efforts are imperfect

:9 For we know **in part** and we prophesy **in part**.

Ministry is what God has called everyone of us into being a part of. Whether we are praying or on the foreign mission field, the Lord has His people engaged in an epic work.

IT IS THE MINISTRY THAT HUMBLER US

We are painfully imperfect giving out the greatest news ever. The gospel is so powerful to transform that there is literally no power on earth that can compete with it.

2 Corinthians 2:16c

who is sufficient – adequate for these things?

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, **for it is the power of God to salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to **preach the gospel**, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. **:18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved **it is the power of God**.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2,5,7 NLT

And so, since God in his mercy has given us this wonderful ministry, we never give up. **:2** We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that... **:5** We don't go around preaching about ourselves; we preach Christ Jesus, the Lord. All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants because of what Jesus has done for us... **:7** But this precious treasure—this light and power that now shine within us—is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own.

Our Efforts May be Imperfect But the Message ***is*** Perfect
The Lord Takes These Efforts and Will Someday Make Them Glorious.

IN CONTRAST TO OUR MINISTRY

1c.) Our offerings are finite

:10 But when that which is **perfect** has come,
then that which is **in part** will be done away.

**Even though our offerings to Him are finite;
The work that we are laboring in to do is infinite, eternal.**

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, :20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, **even to the end of the age.”**

We can count the Holy Spirit's gifting all the way out to the end of the church's earthly ministry.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power **when** the Holy Spirit has come upon you; (*beginning on the day of Pentecost*) and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and **to the end of the earth.”**

Bible Students, it should be noted

that this “Perfect” has 2 applications depending upon what graduation class you're in. **(1)** If you're a Christian today then the “**that which is perfect has come**” will happen at the rapture. For those who **(2)** become Christians after the rapture, the “**that which is perfect has come**” will take place at their death.

For The Christian Today – *we wait with an energetic expectation!*

An energetic expectation

1 John 3:2-3

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that **when He is revealed**, we shall be like Him, **for we shall see Him as He is.** :3 And everyone who **has this hope** in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

An energetic expectation

1 John 2:28-29

And now, little children, abide in Him, that **when He appears**, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him **at His coming**. :29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who **practices righteousness** is born of Him.

Once He Comes for Us - Our Ministry in This World Ends.

Acts 2 says there is going to be an increasing of the manifestations of the gifts all the way out and through the tribulation period

Acts 2:39

For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD

WHAT MAKES YOU A TRUE BELIEVER!

2.) In contrast to our lives

v.11-12

2a.) We have our new beginnings

: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

Have You Ever Been To a Nursery @ a Hospital?

There's proud daddy and grandma and grandpa and aunts and uncles, all looking through the window gawking and doting over baby boo.

Listen to What They're Saying...

"He looks like his daddy. I bet he's going to be a lawyer when he grows up. She looks just like her mommy, I bet she's going to be athletic..."

Immediately Their Future is Imagined

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, :9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. :10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

The spiritual development of the Christian.

How long have you been a Christian? – How much experience do you have?

Notice here the “putting away” of childish things

We’re having a blast right now with our granddaughter as she is learning how to say words and form words – it’s really awesome.

But if she is still doing that at 20 years of age – something is terribly wrong!

It’s a sad day when you meet a grown up man in years but he’s still a child within.

After the early years have passed, physical maturity becomes of little importance. But the increase in maturity continues on till the day we see God.

IN CONTRAST TO OUR LIVES

2b.) We have our new development

:12a For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then **face to face**.
Now I know in part,

Dimly grk: **ainigma ainigma**, *ah'-ee-nig-ma*; an obscurity. To strain through the shadows, a visual riddle.

Corinthian Brass

Was the best mirror of its day but even still, it was very imperfect.

There is no substitute for looking at someone straight in the face.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that **when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding **as in a mirror** the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the **same image** from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

BTW - Regarding prophecies, tongues, or knowledge,
If the canon of scripture is “when that which is perfect comes” then why do we not
have the fulfillment of prophecy, perfect language and knowledge?
Because it’s regarding the day that we see Jesus!

The Bible is Perfect – *meaning without error.*

But I am flawed and imperfect and I struggle with understanding it and obeying it.
(I need to grow more in these things)

As Awesome as the Word of God is, there is
something that’s Better and that is Seeing The
LORD Himself in Person.

As it is for now - we kiss the picture of Jesus when we look at the Bible.
But it would be pretty weird if you kept reading your Bible in heaven.

Why read about it when you’re in it.

Can you imagine going to **Disneyland** and sitting down in the middle of main street
USA all day long just reading about it – no way. You go and experience it all.

We will see Him Face to face.

Numbers 12:8

I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;

BTW – by faith, reading the Word, in an attitude of prayer
is how you are able to see the LORD most clearly for now.

Application:

That’s why the LORD most often reveals himself to us in our pain and sorrow. Because we tend to
seek him harder and with a greater intensity when we’re in distress. He’s fixed, never moving. It’s me
drawing closer to Him that removes the fog and shadows so that I see Him more accurately.

IN CONTRAST TO OUR LIVES

2c.) We have our new aim

:12b but then I shall know **just** as I also am **known**.

Right now, I know the Lord in my imperfections.

And because of that I have a hard time with things I do not understand. I can't understand why a sweet innocent family going to the park is suddenly killed by a drunk driver. I can't understand that.

– I must trust God that He has a plan.

Why do evil, mean, and wicked people seem to do so well in this world and I have good, godly friends dying of cancer? – *I must trust God that He has a plan.*

I shall **know** just as I also am **known**

The words here “know” and “known” are the same in Greek.

It means to possess the **most accurate, personal and intimate knowledge** about a person – perfect personal intercourse between personalities.

(to recognize, identify, reflection)

Colossians 1:27

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

God literally knows more about you than what you know about you. Only the LORD knows me. I don't know me.

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD

WHAT MAKES YOU A TRUE BELIEVER!

3.) In contrast to our everything

v.13

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

This “Tri-Shield” of the Christian

Is invincible, unstoppable and all powerful in all our endeavors and encounters.

3a.) Like the actions of our faith

:13 And now abide faith,

Alan Redpath

“True saving faith, that is to say, the type of faith that is evidenced among those who are saved is an engaging, active and aggressive faith.”

Hebrews 11:6

But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Faith Shouts

Jesus Christ came to save me **that-day**

Hope Shouts:

Jesus Christ is Coming again **some-day**.

Love Shouts:

Jesus Christ lives in my heart **to-day**

John 1:12-13

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the **right** (*power*) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: **:13** who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

But Now That You're a Christian – What Now?

(What do I do for now?)

“Pastor Jack - tell people to help us feed the homeless.
Make people step up and visit the elderly.”

Here's Where We Must Focus – On The Actual Christian.

A real Christian will (1) be convicted that something needs to be done, (2) be personally burdened with the need, and (3) step out in faith to meet the need.

IN CONTRAST TO OUR EVERYTHING

3b.) Like the patience of our hope

:13 And now abide hope,

THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD

Is worthy of our love being returned.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, **which is your reasonable service.** :2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3c.) Like the growth of our love

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



greatest *mei÷zwn meizon, mide´-zone*; larger than any other. Beyond what has been. The root from which it is connected is *me÷gaß megas, meg´-as*; meaning big to the point of being the biggest. Wide to the point of being the widest. Deep as to the point of being the deepest.

Romans 8:35,38-39

Who shall **separate** us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?..... :38 For I am **persuaded** that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, :39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And once He places His love upon you –
There is no substitute or filler.

John 4:13-14

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, :14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

NOW – WHAT DO WE DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?

The Stabilizing Effect of Being Used by God

Ephesians 4:14-15

that we should **no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, :15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is **the head**, even Christ

**It is a “must” for you to know your gift(s)
and placement in the local church.**

What’s Your Ministry-Role in This Church?

Will You Agree with God That

Rom. 3:23 you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,

Rom. 6:23a That you understand that the wages of sin *is* death,

Rom. 6:23b but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom. 5:8 Believing today that God demonstrates His own love toward you, in that while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you.

Rom. 10:13 But He now says to you that *“if you would call on the name of the LORD you shall be saved.”*

Rom. 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. :10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

End of Study

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