

## Discovering True Love

What True Love Means and Its Importance

### Discovering the Supernatural (1st Corinthians) Series [B] - part 3

Nov 5/6

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-13

#### Introduction

- 1 Jn 4:7–21 - *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God<sup>1</sup>.<sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love<sup>2</sup>.<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us...<sup>16</sup> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him...<sup>20</sup> If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.<sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”*
- Love in the World vs. Love in a Christian – Whenever I study or teach on love, I feel like everyone thinks the way that I do and the question pops up: Why does the Bible talk about love as if it’s only utilized by Christians? Clearly there are seemingly more loving non-Christians than some Christians we know. If we are to match their lifestyles up to Jesus compared to some of the folks we know at church, they would win the award (most-like) every time. So, why is that? Clearly all people can love, not just Christians. So, what’s the difference? I would suggest considering 2 things: 1.) Every human being is made in the

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<sup>1</sup> “he is making two parallel statements: (all) love comes from God; therefore all lovers have been born of God. John is here concerned with definition, not with exhortation. To be sure, the statement is open to misunderstanding. One might conclude that anybody who shows love is a child of God, regardless of whether he actually believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This misunderstanding can only arise, however, if we take this statement and wrench it out of its context in the letter. John makes it plain enough elsewhere that the true child of God both believes and loves (3:23). Nevertheless, we might still want to ask how it is possible for people who do not believe in Jesus Christ to love one another—as they manifestly do. There is love outside the Christian church, and sometimes non-Christians seem to love one another better than Christians do. How is the existence of such love to be explained, and what does its presence indicate regarding the status before God of those who show it? Has John been shutting his eyes to the facts of life? A theological answer to the question would be phrased in terms of the doctrines of creation and common grace. It is because men are created in the image of God, an image which has been defaced but not destroyed by the Fall, that they still have the capacity to love. Moreover, through the preaching of the gospel men are well aware of the obligation to love one another, and they may be influenced by this preaching even though they fail to respond to the call to believe in Jesus Christ. Yet ultimately it is belief in Jesus Christ and love for God which matters. Human love, however noble and however highly motivated, falls short if it refuses to include the Father and Son as the supreme objects of its affection. It falls short of the divine pattern, and by itself it cannot save a man; it cannot be put into the balance to compensate for the sin of rejecting God. Love alone, therefore, is not a sign of being born of God.” Howard Marshall, NICNT: 1 John

<sup>2</sup> ““God is love” is rightly recognized as one of the high peaks of divine revelation in this Epistle. Logically the statement stands parallel with “God is light” (1:5) and “God is spirit” (Jn. 4:24) as one of the three great Johannine expressions of the nature of God. Some theologians give the impression that the present statement is superior to the other two, but there is no justification for doing this. We do wrong to exalt the love of God as his supreme feature just because it is more congenial to our thinking. Nevertheless, it is true that “God is spirit” describes his metaphysical nature, while “God is light” and “God is love” deal with his character, especially as he has revealed himself to men. It has been noted that to speak of God as love is not to reduce God to the status of an abstract quality. The statement refers to his action. Yet it signifies more than “God loves,” for its effect is to claim that all God’s action is loving. Since love is a personal activity, the statement stresses the personality of God to the fullest extent. At the same time, the immense gulf between God and men is expressed; of no man could it possibly be said that he is love. Only God is completely loving.” Howard Marshall, NICNT: 1 John

image of God (Marred Image of God) and therefore we have a similar capacity to reason as we can to love. We reflect God's nature and yes, we can all love. 2.) The deeper distinction for a non-Christian versus a Christian is that Christians should have a greater motivation for being loving for 2 reasons: A.) they are getting more direct love poured into their souls from God to overflow. B.) We are called to follow in Christ's footsteps and love regardless of self-benefit. The world doesn't have the same expectations or demands.

- **A Test of Christianity** – C. S. Lewis said that we must never examine whether Christianity works by matching the results from one person to another. We all don't start at the same place or the same level. For example some people were born into moral, healthy, and good backgrounds, so they appear and are more loving and seem more like God than others. Others are born into dysfunction, toxicity and unhealthy backgrounds which means that we are starting behind in both morality and skills of love. The real way to examine Christianity is to examine it in the same person with and without Christ.
- **Personal Christian Love Assessment** – therefore the best way to see what I'm about to teach you is not to compare the level of your love to another person to fully determine the level of your Christian transformation, as much as recognizing that as you are shaped into the image of Jesus, you are becoming more and more loving individually. In other words, our individual responsibilities is to grow in love ourselves ever-increasingly, regardless of if we appear more or less loving than someone around us. If you started out ahead of others, your expressions of love should be much further down the road to looking like Jesus than someone else. If you started behind, then just coming up to the level of the general church group may be a huge victory.
- **Loveless Christianity isn't a Thing<sup>3</sup>** - **Trying to live the Christian life without love makes no sense** and ends up ruining what we were trying to do.
- **God-Type Love<sup>4</sup>** - Agape. Real God-type love is radical and demands a lot of us. It's **always others centered**.
- **Not Enough** - Our view of love is weak. **To make a difference the love of a Christian must be radical**.
- **Love Training** - God's type of love is extreme and we need to use both the **Holy Spirit's power and learn some skills** (spiritual disciplines/spiritual muscles) to do it well.
- **Not Selfless<sup>5</sup> Enough to Transform** - **The Church is not having enough impact in America because our love isn't selfless enough**. As long as there's a mutual benefit, it's going to be limited in influence and can be read as damaging.

### **TRUE Love Can CHANGE the world**

- **Context**

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<sup>3</sup> "without love one quite misses the point of being Christian in the first place." Gordon Fee, NICNT

<sup>4</sup> "ἀγάπη agápē; gen. agápēs, fem. noun from agapōō (25), to love. Love, affectionate regard, goodwill, benevolence. With reference to God's love, it is God's willful direction toward man. It involves God doing what He knows is best for man and not necessarily what man desires. For example, John 3:16 states, "For God so loved [ēgápēsen] the world, that he gave." What did He give? Not what man wanted, but what God knew man needed, i.e., His Son to bring forgiveness to man." WSNTDICT – The complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament

<sup>5</sup> "...to act lovingly means, as in the case of Christ, actively to seek the benefit of someone else." Gordon Fee, NICNT

- **The More Excellent Way** – pastor Brian Kiley shared last week about so many different spiritual gifts and the massive blessing they can be. He concluded the passage with the phrase from Paul the Apostle, *“And I will show you still the more excellent way.”*
- **Seek & Use the Gifts, but Don’t Be Selfish** - Paul has argued extensively for people to use their supernatural gifts. His point was that we have been gifted by the Holy Spirit what we need for victory. God spread out the gifts so that we all would be interdependent and need one another and be unified. But he also has realized that **even the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be an opportunity for selfishness to prevail**. Therefore, he calls them out specifically.
  - **Supernaturally Powerful Jerks** - Even if we are super-powered supernaturally but aren’t loving, it doesn’t matter. Spiritual power doesn’t cover up bad hearts
  - **Brilliant Jerks** - Brilliance and intellectual insight doesn’t cover up bad hearts
  - **Religious Jerks** – Amazing church people at the top of the ladder, without love are useless.
  - **Zealous Jerks** – even those who appear so passionate, even to martyrdom, can still be self-centered.
- **God is Love, that means no love = No God<sup>6</sup>** -
  - *1 Jn 3:10 – “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”*

## Lesson

- **Tongue-Tied Love**
  - **Supernatural Revelation without Love = Irritant**
    - *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1 – “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels<sup>7</sup>, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.<sup>8</sup>”*

<sup>6</sup> “To “have love,” therefore, means to be toward others the way God in Christ has been toward us.” NICNT

<sup>7</sup> “On its own this could mean nothing more than “speak eloquently,” as some have argued and as it is popularly understood. But since it is not on its own, but follows directly from 12:28–30 and anticipates 14:1–25, most likely this is either Paul’s or their understanding (or both) of “speaking in tongues.” “Tongues of men” would then refer to human speech, inspired by the Spirit but unknown to the speaker; “tongues of angels” would reflect an understanding that the tongues-speaker was communicating in the dialect(s) of heaven. That the Corinthians at least, and probably Paul, thought of tongues as the language(s) of angels seems highly likely—for two reasons: (1) There is some evidence from Jewish sources that the angels were believed to have their own heavenly language (or dialects) and that by means of the “Spirit” one could speak these dialects. Thus in the Testament of Job 48–50 Job’s three daughters are given “charismatic sashes”; when these were put on they allowed Hemera, for example, to speak “ecstatically in the angelic dialect, sending up a hymn to God with the hymnic style of the angels. And as she spoke ecstatically, she allowed ‘The Spirit’ to be inscribed on her garment.”<sup>23</sup> Such an understanding of heavenly speech may also lie behind the language of 1 Cor 14:2 (“speak mysteries by the Spirit”). (2) As has been argued elsewhere, one can make a good deal of sense of the Corinthian view of “spirituality” if they believed that they had already entered into some expression of angelic existence. This would explain their rejection of sexual life and sexual roles (cf. 7:1–7; 11:2–16) and would also partly explain their denial of a future bodily existence (15:12, 35). It might also lie behind their special interest in “wisdom” and “knowledge.” For them the evidence of having “arrived” at such a “spiritual” state would be their speaking the “tongues of angels.” Hence the high value placed on this gift.” Gordon Fee, NICNT Commentary

<sup>8</sup> “The final coup in this sentence is the language “resounding gong” and “clanging cymbal.” Although what the former designates is uncertain, at least it is a metaphor for an empty, hollow sound. The latter in fact was an “instrument” expressly associated with the pagan cults.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps, then, this is an allusion to 12:2 and their former associations with such cults. To speak in tongues as they were doing, thinking that they were “spiritual” but with no concern for building up the community, is not merely to speak unintelligible words; it makes one sound like the empty, hollow noises of pagan worship.” NICNT

- **Tongues (supernatural language)** – we are going to do a deep dive into the gift of tongues next week so I'm not going to do it here. The simple way of explaining what Paul is saying is that the Corinthians, through the power of the Holy Spirit, were speaking supernatural language. Some of it seems to be literal languages on earth that they didn't know prior. Some of them seem to be heavenly languages. Why there would be two types, we'll get into next week.
  - **The Cool Factor of Tongues** – Paul starts with Tongues because it happened to be one of the spiritual gifts that the Corinthian church exercised a lot and took great pride in. Why? Because they were doing something rather consistently that was clearly spiritual, supernatural, and flat out weird. It was evidence of the power of God being among them and they loved that. Unfortunately, they tended to love it for the wrong reasons.
- **Supernatural Revelation (Tongues) without Love** – what would this look like? What would it look like for selfish people to speak in tongues? Sadly, it's easy to imagine because I've seen it play out in front of my eyes on more than one occasion. I grew up in a very charismatic tradition and that allowed some beautiful and power experiences and also some challenging situations as human beings muddied the waters. Here's an example of how tongues can be done without love:
  - **Pride-Filled Elitism (haves and have nots)** – one of the significant problems with the gift of tongues is that it's an outward gifting that is rather stunning. The ability to speak a language that you do not know and talk with God or for God in that language is mind-blowing. Unfortunately, it quickly can lead to, 'I have the gift and you don't.' It's ripe for pride. That's true of all the gifts, but when they are miracle-based in a way that's less understandable (unlike teaching, administration, helps, etc.), it tends to create a wow factor and people think that it's instantly a bigger deal and God likes you better or trusts you with more. It quickly can escalate into haves and have-nots. People can take pride in the gift and make other people feel inferior. That is an immediate sign that they are not using their gift in a loving way and the love of their heart is weak.
- **Noisy Gong or Clanging Cymbal** – both of those descriptions mean irritating. Some scholars believe that the second description was the way that some instruments were used in pagan worship so Paul was using something they may have known prior to explain that it is not only irritating but not honoring to God.
  - **Gonging/Clanging Tongues** – how would that look with the gift of tongues. Easy. Imagine someone who has the gift and they are constantly saying, 'they have a word from God' and looking around and no one else does. They use it to puff themselves up in the eyes of others. Immediately no one likes that person. The gift that was given to lift up others is being used as tearing down. Instead of being amazed at the presence of the Holy Spirit or eager for what God might be saying, everyone just wants the person to shut up and go away.

- **Missing Heaven in Front of You**
  - **Supernatural Insight without Love = Nothing**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:2** – *“And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge<sup>9</sup>, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains<sup>10</sup>, but have not love, I am nothing.”*
      - **Prophetic Powers** – this means supernatural gifts to either speak unknown things in the moment or to talk about the future through revelation by God. In other words, it’s talking for God with authority but many times it’s accompanied by direct revelation by the Holy Spirit (stuff you didn’t know). That’s a powerful and miraculous gift. Paul called it one of the higher gifts that we could get. Why? Because it shares God’s heart with His people. It’s direct blessing. It’s supposed to be wonderful.
      - **Unloving Prophecy** – how could prophecy be used in an unloving way? One example is that someone can use it to increase their influence and their fame. Another is that they can use it to unnecessarily and unlovingly expose things that God wasn’t wanting to go public. Sometimes the Holy Spirit provides secret words about people not for the purpose of sharing it aloud, but direction for prayer. If you don’t use the right discernment or you are callous to the feelings of others you can damage people with this gift (just like preaching/teaching).
      - **Understanding all Mysteries and Knowledge** – this means, in context, that God is giving someone knowledge through supernatural means. It’s not talking about people who are just academically smart. They are getting secret information.
        - **Unloving Revelations** – just like Prophecy this gift can be used for a personal platform and also unnecessary exposure of people with the knowledge they receive. Any gift in the hands of a selfish person can be devastating. But the saddest part is that God is revealing for blessing and building up and the wrong heart can use it to destroy.
      - **Faith that Moves Mountains** – again, the spiritual gift of faith is different than the faith that we all get (in varying degrees). Paul is using the extreme analogy that Jesus did about moving mountains. The point was that someone with this gift has the ability to not only believe EVERYTHING God says, but to live into that trust in a powerful way and God can flow unhindered through them and do mighty things.
        - **Unloving Faith?** – Is it possible to use this type of powerful faith in an unloving manner? Of course. It can look like someone who is putting others down in their doubts and fears. It could be someone who uses the gift only for personal benefit and not for the church at large.

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<sup>9</sup> *“But what did Paul intend by the second item, “fathom all mysteries and all knowledge”? These terms appear together as a regular feature of Jewish apocalyptic, especially with regard to the unfolding of God’s final eschatological drama. Paul now uses this language to refer to God’s present revelation of his ways,<sup>36</sup> especially in the form of special revelations by means of the eschatological Spirit whom Christians have received (cf. 14:6). This is most likely how we are also to understand both the “utterance of knowledge” in 12:8 and the “knowledge” that accompanies tongues and prophecy in vv. 8–13 that follow.”* NICNT

<sup>10</sup> *“together with its qualifier, “that can move mountains,” means the gift of special faith for mighty works.”* NICNT

- **These Gifts without Love = I am NOTHING** – you are not a benefit to the kingdom nor to the church around you. It’s just as if you weren’t there, or even worse. The love is what keeps the gift a blessing. Love is what keeps the gift healthy and effective. Love is what builds the kingdom of God.
- **The Atheistic Martyr**
  - **Supernatural Sacrifice without Love = A Waste**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:3** – “If I give away all I have<sup>11</sup> [to feed the poor], and if I deliver up my body to be burned<sup>12</sup>, but have not love, I gain nothing.”
      - **Radical Sacrifice of Money** – Paul is talking about radical, sacrificial giving of all possessions so that the poor can be provided for. This is indeed a radical thing and it’s rare that God would ask someone to do that. But, if it’s from the Lord and for the right reason it can be transforming.
      - **Give up my body** – interestingly the Greek for this phrase doesn’t really indicate burning at the stake at all. It does say give of my body and burning, so people assume that. It looks like it’s martyrdom, which is how I always took it, but upon further study it seems to be Paul referring to all the ways that he gave up his body for the Kingdom of God. It’s the stress, it’s the sacrifice. It’s the strain for the Lord.
      - **Sacrifice from the Unloving = I gain nothing** – why are we giving everything away? Why are we giving up our bodies for the Lord? Usually it should be FOR the Lord and with the hope that it will matter. We want to receive a heavenly reward as we partner with Christ, or at least get a ‘well done good and faithful servant.’ But if we doing all of this with a hard, unloving heart, it really gets us nothing. In the end, the Lord will say, that stuff didn’t count because you didn’t do it, ‘in my name.’ You didn’t really do it for love. You didn’t do it for me. You didn’t do it for them. You did it for you. So, you get no credit for it.
- **Love Sees Others First**

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<sup>11</sup> “The first item literally says, “If I parcel out all my property<sup>40</sup> for food,” to feed “the poor” being implied.” NICNT

<sup>12</sup> “The final item, which is undoubtedly intended to climax the series, also presents us with the greatest difficulties in understanding. Some form of self-sacrifice seems to be in view, but because of the difficult textual variation (see n. 13 above), one cannot be sure which. The majority of interpreters prefer the reading “to burn,” and view it either as martyrdom or an extreme example of giving oneself up to the most painful of deaths for some great cause. But there are several difficulties with this option: (1) Even though martyrdom by fire was not unknown among the Jews, this had not yet become a Christian phenomenon; the fiery persecutions of Nero are still at least a decade away. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Paul had martyrdom in mind. (2) This is made even less likely by the language itself. One does not “give over one’s body” to martyrdom; rather, such is taken from one. Moreover, the language “if I give over my body, so that I might be burned” is highly unusual under any circumstances. One would expect rather “that it might be burned.” (3) The basic reason for adopting this reading is not its own intrinsic merit; rather, it tends to win by default, in light of what is perceived to be the still greater difficulty of making good sense of “that I might boast.” It is regularly assumed that this latter is pejorative language and, therefore, that such an action is already so unloving that Paul’s apodosis becomes redundant. (4) Given the difficulty with this alternative and the frequency of Christian martyrdom in the early church after Paul, one can well understand why a scribe would have changed “boast” to “burn”<sup>46</sup>; whereas under the same circumstances it is nearly impossible to account for the opposite change. What that means, therefore, is that Paul most likely wrote, “if I hand over my body that I might boast.” The question is, What could that mean?... For him this usage had eschatological overtones; he expected to have a legitimate “boast on the day of the Lord” (2 Cor. 1:14; cf. Rom. 5:2–3). If that is the meaning here, then this final item is most likely a genuine reflection on his own ministry, in which he is referring to the kinds of bodily sufferings of which he “boasts” in 2 Cor. 11:23–29 and 12:10, which also help to bring about his greater “boast,” their salvation. But if he does not also have love, even these reasons for boasting, he says, “profit me nothing.” NICNT

- **Love is Patient and Kind**
  - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4a** – “Love is patient and kind<sup>13</sup>;...”
    - **The Gifts of the Spirit Need the Fruit of the Spirit to be Whole** – the Spiritual gifts without the fruit of the Spirit can be dangerous and damaging. We need to let the character of the Holy Spirit flow first BEFORE we do things in His name (exercise our gifts). Here we see Paul introducing that concept with patience and kindness.
    - **Patient & Kind Combo Pack** – These two words demonstrate quickly the two ways that God loves us and the ways that we ought to love one another. **1.) patience: long-suffering with people.** It means that we don’t give people what they may deserve. We are holding back our response to be loving. We are giving them mercy and room to fail toward us without retaliation. It’s the way that God gives us mercy and doesn’t hold us accountable for all of our sins. **2.) Kindness: active grace** – kindness means that we go out of our way to give people things and behaviors that they don’t deserve. It’s the way that God keeps loving on us and providing for us, and protecting us, even though we are sinners in progress.
- **The Sweetness of Love**
  - **Love isn’t Selfish**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4b-5** – “...love does not envy<sup>14</sup> or boast<sup>15</sup>; it is not arrogant<sup>16</sup> or rude<sup>17</sup>. It does not insist on its own way<sup>18</sup>; it is not irritable<sup>19</sup> or resentful<sup>20</sup> [count up wrongdoing];...”

<sup>13</sup> “These first two clauses, “Love is patient, love is kind<sup>6</sup>,” represent respectively love’s necessary passive and active responses toward others... In Pauline theology they represent the two sides of the divine attitude toward humankind (cf. Rom. 2:4). On the one hand, God’s loving forbearance is demonstrated by his holding back his wrath toward human rebellion; on the other hand, his kindness is found in the thousandfold expressions of his mercy.” NICNT

<sup>14</sup> “Love does not allow fellow believers to be in rivalry or competition, either for “vaunted positions” or to curry people’s favor in order to gain adherents. Indeed, it seeks quite the opposite: How best do I serve these for whom Christ died, whatever my own desires?” NICNT

<sup>15</sup> “Does not boast. This rare word means literally to “behave as a braggart,” or “be a windbag.” It suggests self-centered actions in which there is an inordinate desire to call attention to oneself.” NICNT

<sup>16</sup> “Is not proud. This verb literally means to be “puffed up,” carrying with it overtones of arrogance.” NICNT

<sup>17</sup> “The verb means to “behave shamefully or disgracefully.” In this letter it recalls (i) the activities of the women in 11:2–16, who are bringing shame on their “heads” by attiring themselves so as to disregard the distinctions between the sexes, or (ii) the actions of the “haves” at the Lord’s Table, who are humiliating (shaming) “those who have nothing.” Christian love cares too much for the rest of the community to behave in such “unseemly” ways.” NICNT

<sup>18</sup> “Is not self-seeking... the prior consideration is not what’s right, or even all right, but rather that they should not seek their own good but that of others. In some ways this is the fullest expression of what Christian love is all about. It does not seek its own; it does not believe that “finding oneself” is the highest good; it is not enamored with self-gain, self-justification, self-worth. To the contrary, it seeks the good of one’s neighbor—or enemy (cf. Phil. 2:4).” NICNT

<sup>19</sup> “In the active the verb means to arouse someone to anger, to provoke. In the passive, as here, it suggests that the one who loves is not easily provoked to anger by those around him or her. This is a further expression of the forbearance with which the list began.” NICNT

<sup>20</sup> “Keeps no record of wrongs. Literally this says that love “does not reckon the evil.” Since the language is very close to the LXX of Zech. 8:17, it is possible, as the KJV does (“thinketh no evil”), to understand this to mean “love does not devise evil against someone else.” More likely, however, the object, “the evil,” refers to that done to one by another person. The verb then could mean, “does not think on it (i.e., take notice of it).” Since in Paul this verb very often means to “put to one’s account,” it seems probable that the nuance suggested by the NIV moves in the right direction. Just as God in Christ does not “reckon our sins against us” (2 Cor. 5:19), so the one who loves does not take notice of the evil done against him/her in the sense that no records are kept, waiting for God or man to settle the score. Here Paul reflects the tradition of Jesus’ word on the cross as found in Luke’s Gospel (23:34), where the Savior extends forgiveness to those crucifying him.” NICNT

- **Gifts on selfish display** – Paul’s main concern for the Corinthians in their usage of the spiritual gifts is how selfishness had crept in and they were being mean while using God’s blessings. People were using their spiritual gifts for selfish display and not for what they were intended for.
- **Love does not Envy** – Envy means that we view other believers through a lens of rivalry or competition, or as a means of being more famous (trying to gather a group to be better than someone else). It’s either using people or seeing them as in our way. Envy is a form of jealousy. It means that you can’t celebrate with them, you want them to have less and you have more. You don’t like that they have something you don’t have. It stinks of competitive spirit.
- **Love does not Boast = call attention to oneself.** One of the biggest problems with the exercise of spiritual gifts is doing things for attention. Yes, some gifts necessitate public attention. Yes, some are more loud than others. Yes, sometimes it’s important to use in a group setting from a mic. But once self-glorification comes into play we are in trouble. People do things for flash, for attention, for ‘look at me.’ We crave attention and will use the Holy Spirit’s stuff to get it. This is wrong.
- **Love is not Arrogant** – a loving person does not dwell on all the ways that we are better than someone else. In fact, it’s others-focused and others-centered. **Arrogance pushes people away and down. Love draws people closer and lifts them up.** Wherever there is arrogance, love is missing.
- **Love is not Rude = using the church for your platform** and outwardly defying the way God set things up for their own perceived rights. For example, if someone wants to be loud about their sin or loud about their perceived rights, damaging others around them, it’s not loving. Too often we are looking through selfish lenses about us wanting to be ourselves and not change for anyone else. But sometimes that’s just a way of wanting to be selfish.
- **Love does not Insist on its own way – considering ourselves first** and doing what’s best for us before considering how it impacts others. Too often in church we see people pushing their agendas without full consideration of how it’s going to affect other people. That’s not loving. It’s not just whether something is right or wrong, but the impact that may have. It may be right to pool resources for the poor, but forcing everyone to give up what they have by peer pressure would be unloving.
- **Love is not Irritable = easily provoked by people around you.** It means that you have a wall of cushion around you. You don’t react off what other people do easily. You have a constant grace about you. Irritability means that you are constantly agitated. That’s not loving. If it keeps happening and you don’t know why, then there’s something deep down you need to take care of.
- **Love is not Resentful = keep record of wrongs or take notice of how others are evil toward us.** This word means that you are writing stuff down in your head that people have done wrong. Love doesn’t do that. Love isn’t Jonah waiting for people to be burned alive in judgment. Love isn’t hoping for someone’s downfall because they were mean to you.

- **Love & Truth**
  - **Love Loves Truth**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:6** – “...it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth<sup>21</sup>.”
      - **Love does not Rejoice in Wrongdoing – Love is never happy when lying works.** Love is never happy when someone whom you don’t like has injustice. Love never celebrates when the bad guys win. Love is more focused on good being victorious and the good guys, or innocent guys being helped.
      - **Love Rejoices with the Truth – Love is happy when the truth comes out.** Not so that they can hold it over the bad guys head, but because now health can enter the situation. True Truth leads to freedom. Bad truth or badly timed truth, or wrongly implemented truth can tear down lives. Love doesn’t get happy about that. Love wants people better off than they were for all the right reasons.
- **Love Conquers All**
  - **Love Stays For Full Impact**
    - **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:7** – “Love<sup>22</sup> bears all things, believes all things<sup>23</sup>, hopes all things, endures all things.<sup>24</sup>”
      - **Love is Unstoppable** – the point here is that love can put up with anything, push through any resistance, hang in there when it’s hard and be consistent despite their circumstances. It means that it’s not reactive, it’s purposeful. It’s intentional. It’s unshakeable. It doesn’t mean love is stupid and naïve. It means that love will press through evil and selfish opposition.
      - **Paul’s challenge with Corinthian leaders** – we cannot see this passage apart from the context that this letter is correcting the bad leaders of Corinth who were not only making factions of teams, dividing the church, but they were actively opposing Paul personally.
- **Love is Eternal**
  - **Prophecies, Tongues and Knowledge will Pass but Love Remains**

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<sup>21</sup> “The first clause in this verse is actually the final item in the preceding list, “does not delight in evil”; however, since it is balanced by its opposite, “but rejoices with the truth,” it is probable that they are to be understood together, as two sides of the same reality. Evil and truth, therefore, are probably thought of here in their larger sense of the gospel and all that is opposed to it... Such a person refuses to take delight in evil, either in its more global forms—war, the suppression of the poor—or in those close to home—the fall of a brother or sister, a child’s misdeed. Love absolutely rejects that most pernicious form of rejoicing over evil, gossiping about the misdeeds of others; it is not gladdened when someone else falls. Love stands on the side of the gospel and looks for mercy and justice for all, including those with whom one disagrees.” NICNT

<sup>22</sup> “Here again by his use of agapē Paul is especially reflecting the character of God, which is now to be displayed by his people.” NICNT

<sup>23</sup> “In saying “love always believes” and “hopes,” Paul does not mean that love always believes the best about everything and everyone, but that love never ceases to have faith; it never loses hope. This is why it can endure. The life that is so touched by the never-ceasing love of God in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:39) is in turn enabled by the Spirit to love others in the same way. It trusts God in behalf of the one loved, hopes to the end that God will show mercy in that person’s behalf.” NICNT

<sup>24</sup> “it is the character of love to “put up with everything,” the sense perhaps best captured by the NEB: “there is nothing love cannot face.” So too the final verb, “love always perseveres.” Love has a tenacity in the present, buoyed by its absolute confidence in the future, that enables it to live in every kind of circumstance and continually to pour itself out in behalf of others. Paul’s own ministry was a perfect example of such love.” NICNT

- **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:8-12** – “Love never ends<sup>2526</sup>. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge<sup>27</sup>, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away<sup>28</sup>. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways<sup>29</sup>. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly<sup>30</sup>, but then face to face<sup>31</sup>. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”
  - **Love will never end – why? Because it’s God’s nature, flowing from Himself. He is eternal, therefore love is eternal.**

<sup>25</sup> “Love is the “way that is beyond comparison” because, in contrast to the charismata, which function within the framework of our present eschatological existence only, *agapē* characterizes our existence both now and forever. Thus its primacy, not because what is only for now (charismata) is lesser, but because what is both for now and forever (*agapē*) must dictate how the gifts function in the present life of the church.” NICNT

<sup>26</sup> “This paragraph begins with the famous line, “Love never fails,” but it is not immediately clear what Paul intends. On the one hand, the combination of the adverb “never” and the present tense of the verb suggests that it stands in continuity with the preceding list, bringing the whole to its conclusion. In this case it would mean something like “Love is never defeated, is never brought to the ground; it persists even when rebuffed.” On the other hand, several items indicate that it serves as the beginning of the present paragraph<sup>13</sup> and is intended to be set in contrast both to the verb “remain” in v. 13 and the verbs “pass away” and “cease” in v. 8. If so, then it would mean something like “never comes to an end, becomes invalid,” and thus extends the sense of the final verb in v. 7, “always endures.” Perhaps Paul’s intent is to be found in the very ambiguity of such figurative language, so that both are in view.” NICNT

<sup>27</sup> “It needs only be noted further that “knowledge” in this passage does not mean ordinary human knowing or learning, but refers rather to that special manifestation of the Spirit, the “utterance of knowledge” (12:8), which understands revealed “mysteries” (13:2).” NICNT

<sup>28</sup> The use of the substantive “the perfect/complete,” which sometimes can mean “mature,” plus the ambiguity of the first analogy (childhood and adulthood), has led some to think that the contrast is between “immaturity” and “maturity.” But that will hardly do since the contrast has to do with the gifts’ being “partial,” not the believers themselves. Furthermore, that is to give the analogy, which is ambiguous at best, precedence over the argument as a whole and the plain statement of v. 12b, where Paul repeats verbatim<sup>26</sup> the first clause of v. 9, “we know in part,” in a context that can only be eschatological. Convolved as the argument may appear, Paul’s distinctions are between “now” and “then,” between what is incomplete (though perfectly appropriate to the church’s present existence) and what is complete (when its final destiny in Christ has been reached and “we see face to face” and “know as we are known”).<sup>28</sup> That means that the phrase “in part” refers to what is not complete, or at least not complete in itself. The phrase by itself does not carry the connotation of “temporary” or “relative”; that comes from the context and the language “now ... then” in v. 12. But the implication is there. It is “partial” because it belongs only to this age, which is but the beginning, not the completion, of the End. These gifts have to do with the edification of the church as it “eagerly awaits our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed” (1:7). The nature of the eschatological language in v. 12 further implies that the term “the perfect” has to do with the Eschaton itself, not some form of “perfection” in the present age. It is not so much that the End itself is “the perfect,” language that does not make tolerably good sense; rather, it is what happens at the End, when the goal has been reached (see n. 22). At the coming of Christ the final purpose of God’s saving work in Christ will have been reached; at that point those gifts now necessary for the building up of the church in the present age will disappear, because “the complete” will have come.”

<sup>29</sup> “The behavior of the child is in fact appropriate to childhood. The gifts, by analogy, are appropriate to the present life of the church, especially so since from Paul’s point of view they are the active work of the Spirit in the church’s corporate life. On the other hand, the gifts are equally inappropriate to the church’s final existence because then, as he will go on to argue in v. 12, “I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” Hence the implicit contrast with love, which will never come to an end. Love does not eliminate the gifts in the present; rather, it is absolutely essential to Christian life both now and forever. The gifts, on the other hand, are not forever; they are to help build up the body—but only in the present, when such edification is needed.” NICNT

<sup>30</sup> “This Greek word, which appears only here in the NT, literally means “in a riddle, or figurative way.” Very likely this is an echo of Num. 12:8 (LXX), where God spoke with Moses directly (“mouth to mouth”), not as to the prophets, to whom he spoke through visions or dreams (v. 6), “in figures,” implying that they received “pictures” of the truth that were not as clear as the direct words to Moses. The problem here is whether it means “indistinctly” (thus, “obscurely,” “dimly,” etc.) or “indirectly” (thus “in riddle” as over against “direct speech”), referring to the form rather than the content. The majority of interpreters have taken the former position, but cf. the critique by S. E. Bassett, “1 Cor 13:12, βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἑσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι,” JBL 47 (1928), 232–36; and esp. N. Hugedé, *La métaphore du miroir dans les Epîtres de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Neuchâtel, 1957); there is an English synopsis by F. W. Danker, “The Mirror Metaphor in 1 Cor 13:12 and 2 Cor. 3:18,” CTM 31 (1960), 428–29.” NICNT

<sup>31</sup> “A biblical idiom for direct personal communication. See Gen. 32:30; cf. Num. 12:8, “speak ‘mouth to mouth.’” NICNT

- **Prophecies will pass away – why?** Because they are speaking about what God will do in a supernatural way that leaves other people out. Once we are in the reality of heaven, and Jesus is here directly telling us things, prophecy doesn't make any sense. No one needs to talk for God if He's right here.
- **Tongues will Cease** – tongues as a gift and manifestation of the Spirit will stop at some point in the future (which I'll cover in a second), because once we are in the full presence of the Holy Spirit there is no need for anyone to speak for Him, He can talk directly for Himself. It becomes unnecessary.
- **Supernatural Knowledge will pass away** – this is not normal knowledge like academic smarts or reason & logic, it's supernatural revelation from the Holy Spirit about things we didn't know for the purpose of developing a personal relationship with God. But once God is fully with us we don't need pathways like this. He is fully there and engaging with us so a supernatural miraculous download doesn't make sense.
- **When the charismata will end** – The verse says, 'when the perfect comes' the gifts of the Spirit that Paul was referring to, those that build up the church and are utilized by faith (not fully knowing but being certain to hang on regardless), will stop. Why? Because faith is no longer necessary once Jesus shows back up. And this is the key here, the perfect coming is Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> visit, His return. Nothing less will fit the context of the passage.
  - **Cessationist Argument** – unfortunately cessationist try to use this passage as a biblical teaching that the gifts would stop at the end of the Apostolic age and the close of the canon of Scripture. But that's not the 'perfect coming'. Only Jesus is the perfect. They argue that it means when the 'maturity has come', but that doesn't fit the context and it's too far of a stretch. Bottom line, there is no biblical evidence of the gifts ceasing in our lifetime UNTIL Jesus comes.
  - **Children to Adulthood: A Hint of Heaven** – the gifts are glimpses of Heaven. Yet snippets of the Kingdom are eclipsed once we are there in the fullness. They are no longer individual or temporary gifts, but our new reality. Just like certain things are good for children, but no longer helpful for adults, so too are the gifts for this age and not for the next.
  - **Mirror vs. Face**<sup>32</sup> - This means that although what we have is awesome, the gifts are awesome, and they connect us to God, they pale in comparison to his full revelation and presence when Jesus comes back.
- **Eternal Love**
  - **Love Outlives Hope and Faith**

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<sup>32</sup> "It is not a distorted image that we have in Christ through the Spirit; but it is as yet indirect, not complete. To put all this in another way, but keeping the imagery, "Our present 'vision' of God, as great as it is, is as nothing when compared to the real thing that is yet to be; it is like the difference between seeing a reflected image in a mirror and seeing a person face to face." In our own culture the comparable metaphor would be the difference between seeing a photograph and seeing someone in person. As good as a picture is, it is simply not the real thing." NICNT

- **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:13** – “So now<sup>33</sup> faith, hope, and love abide<sup>34</sup>, these three; but the greatest of these is love<sup>35</sup>.”
  - **Love is Greatest: Why?** - Faith and hope are great but ultimately, we don't need them in heaven, but love is always. Right now we need all three, but God doesn't need faith or hope. He is the embodiment of fullness and fulfillment. But He will continue in love. It's His nature.

## Conclusion

- **Love truly can change the world.** The reason it's not right now is that **we aren't doing it right**. There is not enough sacrifice, not enough selflessness, not enough Jesus in what we are doing as Christians in America.
- **The World cannot deny the power of true love.** They may not submit but they **can't ignore it. Mediocre love can be ignored all day.**
- **What do we do with this information?** – **I want you to write down 1 radical act of love that you are going to do this next week.** Something truly unselfish and sacrificial.

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<sup>33</sup> “This sentence, which is related to v. 8 through its use of the verb “remain,” is at once both the best known and most difficult text in the paragraph. There can be little question that it is intended to bring the argument of the present paragraph to a conclusion, and probably the entire chapter as well. But how? There are five interrelated problems: (1) Whether the words “and now” carry a temporal or logical force; (2) in conjunction with that, whether “remain” has to do with the present or the future; (3) the sudden appearance of “faith and hope” in an argument that heretofore has had to nothing to do with these virtues, but with love and spiritual gifts; (4) how love is “greater than” these other two; and (5) how, then, this sentence concludes the paragraph.” NICNT

<sup>34</sup> “The real issue, then, has to do with the sudden appearance of “faith and hope” with love, and in what sense these three “abide.” First, there is good evidence to suggest that this was a familiar triad in early Christian preaching, and therefore that it would have been well known to the Corinthians. Together these words embrace the whole of Christian existence, as believers live out the life of the Spirit in the present age, awaiting the consummation. They have “faith” toward God, that is, they trust him to forgive and accept them through Christ. Even though now they do not see him (or see, as it were, “a reflection in a mirror”), they trust in his goodness and mercies. They also have “hope” for the future, which has been guaranteed for them through Christ. Through his resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, they have become a thoroughly future-oriented people; the present age is on its way out, therefore they live in the present “as if not” (cf. 7:29–31), not conditioned by the present with its hardships or suffering. They are on their way “home,” destined for an existence in the presence of God that is “face to face.” And they have “love” for one another as they live this life of faith and hope in the context of a community of brothers and sisters of similar faith and hope. In the present life of the church “these three remain (or continue): faith, hope, and love.” NICNT

<sup>35</sup> “That also, then, explains why he adds at the end, “But the greatest of these is love.” Even though love “continues” in the present, along with its companions faith and hope, love is the greatest of these three because it “continues” on into the final glory, which the other two by their very nature do not.” NICNT