

Chapter Thirteen Notes

Verses one to thirteen

- In this chapter, Paul discusses the more excellent way to which he pointed them in 12:31. The way of love is superior to the way of spiritual gifts. To prove this, Paul made these three arguments: (1) without love, the gifts are worthless (13:1-3); (2) the characteristics of love are evidence of love's superiority (13:4-7); and (3) the permanence of love shows the superiority of love over the gifts (13:8-13). The Corinthians apparently exalted flamboyant gifts, such as tongue-speaking, above the other gifts. Hence, those with less flamboyant gifts tended to feel useless and those with gifts improperly evaluated as greater gifts tended toward arrogance and haughtiness.
- Although the exercise of the gift may benefit the recipient (healing, revelation), in the absence of love, the one exercising the gift is not benefited by it. To show this, Paul began with tongue-speaking -- the gift of least value according to God's evaluation but most highly esteemed by the Corinthians.
- The tongues of men were languages of men. The tongues of angels was a hyperbole meaning "to have the highest degree of tongue-speaking ability." The love of which Paul speaks is agape. This is a love that is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it; it springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is an act of will rather than the emotion. Man has as much control over it as he does faith. Without love, he is nothing but a loud noise; he has no real essence. He might draw attention to himself, but he is, nevertheless, nothing.
- Having mentioned the gift of tongue-speaking, Paul now turns to prophecy. Even though they may prophecy, know all the revealed will of God, or have the supreme example of faith, if they have no love, it is nothing. Even though his gift might benefit large numbers of people, without love, he himself is nothing (Philippians 1:15-18).
- If Paul were to act with one great act of benevolence, in which he sells everything he owns to assist the ones in need, and acts without love, it is useless. Paul even stated that if he were to give his body over to be persecuted, but did it without love, he would be nothing. Some people have done all these things from wrong motives such as to win the praise and esteem of men. However, in the absence of love, not even these acts are of any benefit.
- In vss. 4-7, Paul lists several verbs which describe Christian love. Using the verb means that Christian love is active. First of all, love

is long-tempered. It is the opposite of being short-tempered. The word also describes the man who has the power to avenge himself, but refrains from the exercise of this power. It endures injuries and evil deeds without being provoked to anger or revenge. Love is also kind. It is not caustic or sharp-tongued; it is mellow and kind. Roughness and bitterness are banished by love.

- Love also does not envy. It does not manifest a jealous, bitter, and envious resentment of the good that appears in another. The Corinthians were undoubtedly envious of those who had certain spiritual gifts. Love does not brag. Apparently, some in Corinth were bragging about the particular spiritual gift that they had and considered themselves better than others because they had it. Love is also not arrogant. It does not have a higher esteem of itself than it should.
- Love is mannerly. It does not behave in a way that is contrary to the accepted standards of decency. The arrogant person forgets to respect, consider, or honor others. Love will also consider the needs and wants of others. Love looks on the things of others instead of upon itself. Love does not go around with a chip on its shoulder. The injuries that come to it are borne without bitterness or resentment; it does not fly into a fit of rage. Love does not keep a running account of offenses against itself with a view toward revenge. Love does not allow its mind to dwell on the offenses that it has incurred. To do this would be to allow bitterness and resentment to fill one's life.
- Love does not find pleasure in sin. Anything that is wrong in God's sight should grieve the loving heart because it realizes that someone suffered because of the sin and because God's word was violated by the transgressor. Knowing that God was grieved by the act of sin causes those who love God to be grieved. Love and truth act together. When truth is rejoicing, love is right there rejoicing with it.
- Love is able to bear whatever afflictions or persecutions that come upon it. Love also, when it has no evidence to the contrary, will believe the best about its fellowman. It refuses to yield itself to unfounded suspicious and doubts; it grants the brother the benefit of every doubt. Love will hope for the best in its fellowman even when the evidence leads one to believe otherwise. Hope knows no pessimism. When love has no evidence, it believes the best, and when the evidence is adverse, it hopes for the best. Love finally has a steadfast endurance under the difficulties and tests of the present evil age.
- The superiority of love is shown by the fact that it shall never cease

to exist whereas the spiritual gifts will cease. Love will last through the Christian dispensation. However, the spiritual gift of prophecy shall cease to exist. Tongue-speaking shall also cease to exist. The gift of knowledge shall also cease. These three gifts are representative of all the spiritual gifts. Love will never cease to exist, but all of the miraculous spiritual gifts will.

- Knowing and prophesying in part again refer to spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts were what God used to give his divine revelation to man. Yet, these gifts only gave a part of God's divine revelation when they were exercised. Hence, the early church existed for a number of years before God revealed to Peter that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for Jews. Miraculous gifts communicated God's revelation in a piece-meal fashion. No one person had all of God's revelation or could communicate all of it; each had only a part of it.
- The word for perfect is "teleios." It refers to that which is whole or complete, that beyond which no further advance in excellence can be made; it lacks nothing. It must refer to perfection or completeness in the same realm as that realm which was denoted by "that which is in part." We know that the "part" is used to describe the manner in which God revealed himself to man through spiritual gifts. Hence, the "perfect" is the completed or perfected revelation of God's will to man. When all the apostles had died, there remained no way of transferring the gifts. hence, after those who had received gifts at the hands of the apostles had died, the gifts ceased to exist.
- Paul illustrates what he said regarding spiritual gifts in this verse. The age of spiritual gifts was the infancy or childhood of the church; the period of the completed revelation of God's will is understood as the manhood of the church. The verb "put away" refers to that which was set aside forever. Spiritual gifts were designed by God to be used during the infancy of the church. When that period of the church's history was over, then the spiritual gifts ceased to be exercised.
- In vs 12, "now" refers to the age of spiritual gifts and "then" refers to the time when God's revelation was completed. During the era of spiritual gifts, one could not see clearly. The "mirror" was a reflective surface made of polished metal. One could see very clearly in ancient mirrors. During this age, Christians could not clearly distinguish all of God's will; when the completed revelation was given, they were able to see clearly. To "know in part" refers to the limited knowledge that was available during the era of spiritual gifts whereas to "know even as I am known" refers to the

knowledge that characterizes the era when God's revelation was completed.

- In contrast to spiritual gifts which were to pass away so very soon, faith, hope, and love would abide. Faith and hope spring from love, therefore love is the greatest. The superiority of love is seen in its permanence as well as by its characteristics and the fact that the gifts are worthless without love. Love, therefore, is the most excellent way which the Corinthians should be seeking.