

# **“A More Excellent Way”**

## **Christian Love**

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

Verse thirty-one of chapter twelve needs to be considered as the lead-in to this chapter. In fact, there are some scholars that think it should actually be part of chapter thirteen rather than chapter twelve. A.T. Robertson (called “The premier New Testament scholar of his generation” by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) simply states, “Poor division of chapters here. This verse belongs with chapter [thirteen].”

A few notes need to be made on the term “charity,” as found in the King James Version of the Bible (which is what I use).

1. In each case that the Greek word (in English form) “agape” is translated “charity” in the KJV, it is used to express Christian love for other Christians. “The word charity is never used in the King James Bible to express the love relationship between God and man, a husband and his wife, between parents and their children, or between the believer and the nonbeliever. It is always used in reference to the love Christians should have for other Christians” (by Will Kinney as found on [www.truthfortruth.co.uk](http://www.truthfortruth.co.uk)). This makes it unique in that sense.
2. The Greek word is common in the Bible – the noun form used 114 times – 87 translated as “love” and 26 as “charity.”
3. It’s defined as “love, affectionate regard, goodwill, benevolence” (Zodhiates). It is a

rare word outside Scripture: “The rarity of agapē made it easier for Christians to use this word for Christian love as opposed to eros (sexual love)” (Robertson). Eros is the most common Greek word used outside the Bible for “love” at the time of the writing of Scripture, but it seems to have intentionally been left out so as not to make the reading of sacred Scripture to be as course as the common language on the subject.

4. The translation as “charity” is unique to the KJV, and even the older Bishop’s Bible and Geneva Bible translate it as “love.”
5. Some KJV-only followers say that to translate it as “love” is wrong and corrupts the truth. Let me say, without hesitation, it does not. It does help us spot the issue of Christian love easier than if “love” is used, but it is in no way a wrong translation to use “love.” Just as the personal pronoun σοί is translated as “thou” to designate it as singular in the KJV makes it easier to spot its use as singular rather than plural doesn’t make the versions that translate it as “you” are wrong in their translations. “You” is singular and personal today, and it is an accurate translation.
6. That said, I personally like the use of “charity” where it is used because it stands out in its clarity and description of the sacrificial giving of ourselves to others – especially to other believers, and FOR other believers.
7. There are (at least) three other Greek words translated “love” in the New Testament (ἀγαπάω, from the same root as “agape” – unconditional love – used 142 times; φιλέω – have affection for someone – 25 times;

φιλαδελφία, root word being the same as previous one – brotherly love, or kindness – used 6 times). This is not the time to delve deeply into these words – we will leave that for another message.

8. All that said, what is important to remember is what is spoken of in this chapter is that sacrificial Christian love that is to be demonstrated by our works and compassion for others. Whether it's translated as "love" or "charity" is of little consequence if we remember what it means and act out what it is.

As we found in chapter twelve, the issue of spiritual gifts is a very important one to the church – the church in Corinth and others in the first century church, as well as to the church today. Within the teaching on the gifts and how they relate to the church, and how the church is to make use of those gifts and those gifted with them, the topic of concern now focuses on what is most important. How to effectively use what we have been given so that others can see Christ in us. That focus, then, becomes singular – without Christian love there is no benefit to any other gift or grace.

One thing that needs to be kept in mind as we approach chapter thirteen is that not all the spiritual gifts are dealt with – not even all the "sign gifts," so called. The Apostle is only giving a sampling to the church dealing with the ones they seemed to use either the most disproportionately or for their own selfish intents. He paints with broad strokes, for the most part, but he does clarify things as he progresses through this great lesson on Christian love. When it is all said and done, the graces most important to every believer – the "gifts," if you would, that we all have – are "faith, hope, and

charity." We all have other "spiritual gifts," but these three are to be seen above all else, and, more specifically, IN all else. We cannot be as effective as God would want us to be unless we are exercising these in our lives as we serve the Lord with the spiritual gifts we have – and without Christian love being shown in all we do then we are limiting the power of God in our lives and efforts. Dr. Alford makes the following point in relation to this truth:

"[T]he opening verses of ch. 13 shewing, that he [the Apostle Paul] does not draw a comparison between love and gifts, but only shews that it is the only WAY, in which gifts can be made effectual in the highest sense."

The title of this series is from the last verse of chapter twelve – specifically, the last clause of that verse – "and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."

1. The word for "excellent" (ὑπερβολή) is where the English word "hyperbole" comes from. Although the English word is one that is used to illustrate a thing by exaggeration, the Greek root is not one of exaggeration but of extreme emphasis.
2. It is only used eight times in the Greek New Testament and is translated in a variety of ways, all of which point to something superior ("a far more exceeding," "exceeding," "more excellent," "measure," "abundance," "excellency," and "beyond measure"). In the use in this text, it points to a far better way.
3. Some see this "more excellent way" as Christ (John Gill writes much on this), and although Christ is clearly presented in the Bible as Love personified, and an analogy or application can be made here for that, that is not the true

understanding of this text. It isn't Christ's love for us, nor even our love for Him, that is in view, but our love for one another – Christian love, charity (that sacrificial giving of ourselves for others). A few examples will suffice:

#### John 13:34–35

**34** 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 shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

#### John 15:12

**12** This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

#### John 15:17

**17** These things I command you, that ye love one another.

#### Romans 13:8

**8** Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:9

**9** But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

#### 1 John 4:11–12

**11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

**12** No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

In perhaps the most eloquent text found in the New Testament written by the Apostle Paul, this chapter

on Christian love shows that absolute importance of the subject for the church in particular, and for the world in general.

## **I. THE ABSENCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE – VS. 1-3**

***A. Pointing back to the previous chapter, this text continues with the issue of the church and how each part is to work as part of the whole. The church at Corinth had seemed to be using the spiritual gifts in a manner not intended by the Lord, and of little edifying value to the church, so the Apostle corrects them here by demonstrating, first, what using those gifts was like without the underlying principle of Christian love as the motivation.***

### ***B. What we speak is of little importance – vs. 1***

1. It's just noise – it's what other believers, and the world, for that matter, hears from us when we speak to them about spiritual things without Christian love. Doesn't mean our speech won't have an impact, especially if it's the gospel itself, but what we say especially to other believers, or in the church, even with the use of spiritual gifts, will be of little importance.
2. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels" – even if I speak with all the languages in the world, and even if I could speak those that only the angels speak, without Christian love, it's just noise.
  - a) "Tongues of men" – referenced in chapter

twelve as one of the spiritual gifts, and as the gift for which the believers in Corinth seemed to strive, especially the leadership in the church. The word for “tongues” (γλῶσσα) is one most often used for languages, which is how it is used here.

- b) “Tongues of angels” – this one is more peculiar. Even though we may not know what “tongue,” what “language” angels speak, it is clear in Scripture that they do, in fact, communicate. Not only with man, but with each other, with God, and just communicate in general terms. The Apostle is saying even if he could communicate in the language of the angels themselves, without Christian love, it is just noise to be discarded.

#### Revelation 5:11–12

**11** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

**12** Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

#### 2 Corinthians 12:4

**4** How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said of angels: “The angels are so enamored of the language that is spoken in heaven that they will not distort their lips with the hissing and unmusical dialects of men, but speak their

own, whether there be any who understand it or not." (Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The Selected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson", p.104, Graphic Arts Books)

Some think of this as "the ecstatic utterances of those who spoke with tongues" (Vincent), but that seems unlikely in this context. If "tongues of men" means the languages of mankind, then it follows that the "tongues of angels" would be the language of the angels. It is proposed that we, speaking in the Spirit, can speak in that unintelligible sound or language that is called "of angels," but, again, that does not fit the text. This is what many call "speaking in tongues" today.

c) "I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

(1) *"I am become" – γέγονα – verb tense used is that of the perfect tense, showing action that has been completed in the past but has results occurring in the present. If a believer uses their spiritual gifts without Christian love, then what they say has already become of little importance. It's not that it might or that it will sometime in the future – it already has.*

(2) *"Sounding brass"*

(a) *"Sounding" – ηχέω – the English word "echo" is transliterated from this word. Only used one other time in the New Testament – Luke 21:25 – where it references the roaring of the sea, which gives us an idea of the use in our text: that of a loud, roaring noise.*

- (b) "Brass" – some consider this to be a trumpet of brass but that doesn't fit with neither the word for "sounding" nor the context. A trumpet is used throughout Scripture to make a useful, important sound, not the useless noise as referenced here.

"The word here does not mean a brazen instrument, but a piece of unwrought metal, which emitted a sound on being struck. In the streets of Seville one may see pedlers [*sic*] striking, together two pieces of brass instead of blowing a horn or ringing a bell."

(3) "*Tinkling cymbal*"

- (a) The word for "tinkling" - ἀλαλάζω – is also only used twice in the New Testament: here and in Mark 5:38 where it's meaning seems clearer.

[Mark 5:38](#)

<sup>38</sup> And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and **wailed** greatly.

[T]he military shout of the Greeks before a battle. To shout, to utter a loud sound. It was originally an invocation of the Greeks to their gods to assist them. Even today the Muslims when entering upon action still cry out, "Allah! Allah!" which is the Arabic name for God. It was also the acclamation of the chorus in the hymns of Apollo, alalái, from which we have the Eng. exclamation of grief, "alas!" To raise the cry of

battle (Sept.: Joshua 6:20; Judges 15:14). (Zodhiates)

### Joshua 6:20

<sup>20</sup> So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people **shouted** with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

### Judges 15:14

<sup>14</sup> And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines **shouted** against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

As it relates to this verse, "to make a disagreeable, inarticulate noise..." (Zodhiates)

(b) "Cymbal" – κύμβαλον – only time in the New Testament this word is used. "A cymbal which was a convex plate of brass or other metal that, when struck against another of the same kind, produced a clanging unharmonious sound" (Zodhiates).

*(4) Without Christian love, what we say, no matter how eloquent, no matter how gifted, is of far lesser importance, will have far fewer godly results, than God intends.*

### **C. What we do is of little value – vs. 2**

1. Dr. Wuest interprets this verse with the verbs given in a way an English reader can understand their use: “And if I have the gift of uttering divine revelations and know all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and if I have all the faith so that I am able to keep on removing mountain after mountain, but am not possessing love, I am nothing.”
2. “Though I have the gift of prophecy”
  - a) The words “the gift of” are not found in the Greek – they were added for clarity by the translators.
  - b) This gift goes back to chapter twelve, verse ten, and comes up again, in more detail in chapter fourteen. By way of a refresher, here is what we learned when we studied that portion (from message entitled, “The Manifestation of the Spirit” – 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
    - (1) *There is some debate on the use of this word in the New Testament, but it has a primary meaning that relates back to the Old Testament and the use of the prophet from that age.*
    - (2) *The word used here for “prophecy” – προφητεία – comes from the word for “prophet” (προφήτης), which is a compound word. Although many words in Greek (and English, for that matter) are compound words, there are times, as is the case here, where the words that make up the compound are very relative to understanding the base, or*

*primary, definition, of the word.*

- (a) The first part of the word – the word “pro” (πρό), meaning “fore,” is a primary preposition and means in front of, or prior to. “In compounds it retains the same significations” (Strong).
- (b) The second part of the word is φημί, meaning “to show or make known one’s thoughts, that is, speak or say” (Strong). “Particularly to bring to light by speech; generally to say, speak, utter” (Zodhiates).
- (c) So, literally, the word means to “foretell” future events.

*(3) The inclusion of this as a spiritual gift would indicate that this is more than just a preacher or teacher but is a supernatural ability that goes above and beyond the normal. This would be why it is seen in chapter thirteen as one that will “fail” (literally, they will be caused to cease).*

Here, probably, not in the wider sense of public teaching by the Spirit (1 Cor. 11:4, 5; 1 Cor. 14:1-5, 22-39); but, as its position between “miracles” and a “discerning of spirits” implies, the inspired disclosure of the future (Acts 11:27, 28; 21:11; 1 Tim. 1:18), [Henderson]. It depends on “faith” (1 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 12:6). The prophets ranked next to the apostles (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 3:5; 4:11). As prophecy is part of the whole scheme of redemption, an inspired insight into the obscurer parts of the existing

Scriptures, was the necessary preparation for the miraculous foresight of the future. (J-F-B)

*(4) This gift is seen at times to have moved beyond that of foretelling future events to be more in line with a preacher – one who “forth tells” future events. This would explain its use in Romans 12:6. Although the word is the same, and its connection with “faith” points to this passage, to some degree, it is fairly clear that this particular aspect of the gift of prophecy – foretelling future events as the Old Testament prophet did – ended with the conclusion of the Scripture, and the prophecies of the Apostle John in the book of Revelation.*

*(5) We will discuss the teaching aspects of this gift, and how they are closer to the preacher today, when we get to chapter fourteen.*

- c) Even as the connection is made to that of a pastor/teacher today (in chapter fourteen), if a believer was gifted with the greatest ability ever seen of prophesying (both foretelling and forthtelling) but did so without love, it would have very little eternal value.

### 3. “And understand all mysteries”

- a) The word order is important here – εἶδω τὰ μυστήρια πάντα – “to understand the mysteries, all of them...The article indicates the well-known spiritual problems which exercise men’s minds.”
- b) “The meaning of all the types and figures in the Old Testament, and all the

unexplored secrets of nature" (Clarke).

- c) This is closely connected with "the gift of prophecy," and the mysteries of both unrevealed truths of the Old Testament, the as yet to be revealed truths of the New, as well as the understanding of the future prophecies.
  - d) Even if the Apostle, or a believer, knew all there was to know that is hidden in Scripture, and that is hidden in the world today, especially in science, all the mysteries yet to be revealed, and didn't have Christian love, it would be of little value to anyone.
4. "And all knowledge" – that is, to understand all knowledge along with "all mysteries."
- a) "Knowledge" - τὰ γνῶσις – "the knowledge" – common word in the New Testament with a variety of meanings, depending on context.
  - b) This is not the "word of knowledge" as found in 12:10 as applied to spiritual gifts. This is speaking, within the context here, of "every human art and science" (Clarke).

As described within the context of chapter twelve and spiritual gifts, "the word of knowledge" was related to the previous ("word of wisdom") in that the first deals with the doctrines of the gospel and its truths, while this one deals with the deeper things of God – those things that most likely would be expounded to, in a powerful and meaningful way, to the believer in Christ.

- c) Even if the Apostle, or the believer, knows all that is knowable for a human being, without Christian love he is of little value to the Lord and His work.
5. "And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains"
- a) "All faith" – πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν – "all the faith" – there is a clear connection here to the spiritual gift of faith as we studied from 12:9 (the supernatural ability to get things from God). The reference to removing mountains clearly connects it with Jesus' teaching, as well as the spiritual gift of "faith."

#### Matthew 17:19–21

**19** Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

**20** And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

**21** **Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**

#### Matthew 21:20–22

**20** And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

**21** Jesus answered and said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea;**

it shall be done.

**22** And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

b) Even if the Apostle, or a believer, had this kind of faith – “all the special faith which works miracles” (Vincent) – and didn’t exercise it with Christian love, it was of little value to the cause of Christ.

6. “I am nothing” - ουδεν ειμι

“[N]ot nothing as a man, nor nothing as a gifted man, still he would be a man, and a man of gifts; nor does the apostle say, that his gifts were nothing, that the gift of prophecy was nothing, or the gift of understanding mysteries nothing, or the gift of knowledge nothing, or the gift of doing miracles nothing, for these are all something, and very great things too, and yet a man in whom the grace of love is wanting, is nothing himself with all these; he is nothing in the account of God, of no esteem with him; he is nothing as a believer in Christ, nor nothing as a Christian.” (Gill)

### ***D. What we give is of little profit – vs. 3***

1. As with the first two verses, this isn’t saying that giving to feed the poor, or even sacrificing one’s life as a martyr for the sake of others isn’t good – it is saying to do so without Christian love is of little profit, particularly to the one doing the giving.
2. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the

poor” – even if done without Christian love, there is profit in this, just not the profit that God intends. Imagine if we would give all we have to feed the poor and not have compassion on them enough to give them the gospel – where is the profit?

- a) Oddly enough, this is a good definition of our understanding of the word “charity” today – giving to feed the poor (or help the needy), and this shows the limits of this word as we know it today (hence the term, “Christian love”). Even being charitable without Christian love is of limited benefit.
- b) “Even what passed for charity, self-sacrifice for less fortunate individuals, is not the same as real love (Gr. agape). It is inferior to it. It might profit the receiver, but it did not profit the giver.” (Constable)

### 3. “And though I give my body to be burned”

Matthew Henry makes a great point on this:

Should we sacrifice our lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burnt to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead without charity, unless we be animated to these sufferings by a principle of true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward carriage may be plausible, when the invisible principle is very bad. Some men have thrown themselves into the fire to procure a name and reputation among men. It is possible that the very same

principle may have worked up some to resolution enough to die for their religion who never heartily believed and embraced it. But vindicating religion at the cost of our lives will profit nothing if we feel not the power of it; and true charity is the very heart and spirit of religion. If we feel none of its sacred heat in our hearts, it will profit nothing, though we be burnt to ashes for the truth. Note, The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burnt, it would not profit us.

#### 4. "It profiteth me nothing"

- a) As pointed out earlier – there may be profit to the beneficiary of the action, but not to the one doing the action.
- b) Conversely, if we give out of Christian love, there will be profit – not just for others, but for us.

Luke 6:38

**38** Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

James 2:14-17

**14** What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

**15** If a brother or sister be naked, and

destitute of daily food,

<sup>16</sup> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

<sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Conclusion to this point: Without Christian love much of what we do as a believer, and as a church will be of no profit, of no value to anyone.

## **II. THE ATTRIBUTES OF CHRISTIAN LOVE – VS. 4-8A**

Sixteen different attributes are used here to describe Christian love. This is the most extensive description of what Christian love is found in the Bible, and considering it was written to perhaps the most worldly of the churches mentioned in the New Testament, makes it even that much more significant.

I am going to use more cross-references in this portion of the series than I normally use. The goal is to demonstrate that these truths are found so often in the Bible as to make us without excuse when it comes to our inability (whether willfully or not) to put these attributes into action in our lives as believers in demonstrating Christian love.

### **A. "Suffereth long" – vs. 4a**

1. Most of the more accurate, formal translations (NIV, ESV, NASB, NET, etc.) translate this as "patient." Even though that is accurate, it doesn't necessarily

demonstrate the force of the word. "Suffers long" may sound strange (as opposed to "long-suffering" which is a different Greek word - similar but different) but it is simply descriptive of the word used. This word is translated "patient" and "patience" in the KJV in several other places, but its use here as "suffereth long" is designed to emphasize the issue in relation to Christian love - not just used in a more general sense, as it is elsewhere.

2. The word (verb form) used - μακροθυμῆι - is a compound word with the first part meaning "long" and the second meaning "passion (as if breathing hard): - fierceness, indignation, wrath" (Strong). Put together they mean "long (time) to becoming angry." The adverb of this word, which is more descriptive in definition, means "with long (enduring) temper, that is, leniently: - patiently" (Strong). The Geneva Bible notes reads: "defers wrath."
3. Christian love, in the first attribute given, seems to be a foundation for all the others. If we are simply slow to have our feelings hurt, slow to get angry with fellow believers, slow to put ourselves before them, then the world will see in us what a true believer ought to be. Dr. Wuest translates it this way: "Love meekly and patiently bears ill treatment of others."

Matthew 18:26

<sup>26</sup> The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have **patience** with me, and I will pay thee all.

Luke 18:7

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he **bear long** with them?

1 Thessalonians 5:14

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be **patient** toward all men.

James 5:7-8

7 Be **patient** therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and **hath long patience** for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also **patient**; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering** to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

## ***B. "Is kind" – vs. 4b***

1. This is closely connected to the previous one – if one "suffers long" then one must be kind. It would be hard to be one without the other. Henry Alford says of the Greek word for "suffereth long" is "the negative side...of a loving temper," while the word for "kind" is "the positive side...the former, the withholding of anger; the latter, the exercise of kindness."
2. Only time in the Greek New Testament this

word - χρηστεύομαι - is used. Dr. Robertson (quoting Findlay) suggests this is a word unique to the Apostle Paul and was coined by him for this particular text. The word comes from one that means to be gracious or kind, and its form here would be that of gentleness in behavior.

3. Albert Barnes says this:

The word used here denotes to be good-natured, gentle, tender, affectionate. Love is [benign]. It wishes well. It is not harsh, sour, morose, ill-natured. Tyndale renders it, "is courteous." The idea is, that under all provocations and ill-usage it is gentle and mild. "Hatred" prompts to harshness, severity, unkindness of expression, anger, and a desire of revenge. But love is the reverse of all these. A man who truly loves another will be kind to him, desirous of doing him good; will be "gentle," not severe and harsh; will be "courteous" because he desires his happiness, and would not pain his feelings.

Luke 6:35-36

**35** But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

**36** Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Ephesians 4:32

**32** And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

## Colossians 3:12

<sup>12</sup> Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

### C. "Envieth not" – vs. 4c

1. Thayer defines this word (ζηλόω), in its use here, as "to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger."

#### Acts 7:9

<sup>9</sup> And the patriarchs, **moved with envy**, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

#### Acts 17:5

<sup>5</sup> But the Jews which believed not, **moved with envy**, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

#### James 4:2

<sup>2</sup> Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and **desire to have**, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

2. Lipscomb, combining Webster's definition of "envy" with his own remarks, says this:

Envy is chagrin, mortification, discontent, or uneasiness at the sight of another's excellence or good fortune, accompanied with some degree of hatred and a desire to possess equal advantages; malicious grudging. Love does not envy the happiness and

prosperity others enjoy; but delights in their welfare, and as their happiness is increased by their endowments, their reputation, their health, their domestic comforts, and their learning, it rejoices in it all and would not diminish it, and would not detract from that happiness.

3. Christian love rejoices when others are blessed – they don't resent them. This is a challenging thing to demonstrate in our lives, especially in a culture that is so overwhelmingly distorted against this very truth. This one may be one of the more difficult ones to emulate in everyday living.

G. Campbell Morgan: "That is to say, the ear is never undervaluing itself because it is not the eye. The ear is rejoicing in the brilliance of the eye. It is not envying anything that someone else possesses."

#### ***D. "Vaunteth not itself" – vs. 4d***

1. As with the word for "kind," this is the only occurrence in the Greek New Testament for this word – περπερεύομαι.
2. The word for "vaunteth," at its root, means to brag, or to boast one's self. Is found in one other use (compounded with a prefix) in other Greek writings of the day and is described by Thayer in that use as: employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling another excessively."
3. Christian love, by its very action, doesn't need to brag on itself. "Love that talks of loving is not love. If anyone is constantly

protesting to me they love me I begin to have doubts in my own mind” (Morgan).

#### Proverbs 27:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

<sup>2</sup> Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

#### James 4:13-16

<sup>13</sup> Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

<sup>14</sup> Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

<sup>15</sup> For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

<sup>16</sup> But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

### ***E. “Is not puffed up” – vs. 4e***

1. The word for “puffeth up” – φυσιῶ – means to blow or to inflate and is always used to demonstrate pride. The word is used 7 times in the New Testament (five of which we have already studied previously in this book) and all but one (Col. 2:18) are found in First Corinthians.
2. Lipscomb says this of this truth:

It does not indulge in inflated opinions of itself; the words imply an instinctive aversion from all false glitter, pompous

bluster, strutting in borrowed plumes, from extravagant words, looks, tones, styles, in short, a deep hatred of seeming to be more than one is.

3. Christian love has no need for self-inflation or pride. It stands in stark contrast with the world around us, and how everything that our senses are confronted with is to make us concentrate on self – “What can this, or what can you, or what can they, do for me?”

#### 1 Corinthians 4:6

<sup>6</sup> And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you **be puffed up** for one against another.

#### 1 Corinthians 4:18

<sup>18</sup> Now some **are puffed up**, as though I would not come to you.

#### 1 Corinthians 5:2

<sup>2</sup> And ye **are puffed up**, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

#### 1 Corinthians 8:1

<sup>1</sup> Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge **puffeth up**, but charity edifieth.

#### Colossians 2:18

<sup>18</sup> Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly **puffed up** by his fleshly mind,

**F. "Doth not behave itself unseemly" – vs. 5a**

1. Very similar word to that of "uncomely" in 1 Cor. 12:23, where it is mentioned in relation to the parts of our body that are indecent or immodest without clothing.
2. In its use here it speaks to behaving "in an ugly, indecent, unseemly or unbecoming manner" (Zodhiates). Christian love should never be exercised with any type of ugly or illicit purpose in mind. If it is, then, as seen here, is not truly Christian love, not truly biblical charity.
3. The word - ἀσχημονέω – is only used one other time in the Greek New Testament – 1 Cor. 7:36 – where it is translated "behaveth himself uncomely." In its use there, it means "to be disgraced, suffer reproach" (Zodhiates).
4. I found a great quote from Adam Clarke, the eminent British Methodist theologian and biblical scholar from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, which gives illustration to this phrase. Let me say before I read this that this is not going to sound politically correct in our society today – some might even consider it sexist – but it needs to be considered within the context of the historical period in which it was given. What he says is still very relevant today – whether politically correct or not.

[L]ove never acts out of its place or character; observes due decorum and good manners; is never rude, bearish, or

brutish; and is ever willing to become all things to all men, that it may please them for their good to edification. No ill-bred man, or what is termed rude or unmannerly, is a Christian. A man may have a natural bluntness, or be a clown, and yet there be nothing boorish or hoggish in his manner. I must apologize for using such words; they best express the evil against which I wish both powerfully and successfully to declaim. I never wish to meet with those who affect to be called "blunt, honest men;" who feel themselves above all the forms of respect and civility, and care not how many they put to pain, or how many they displease. But let me not be misunderstood; I do not contend for ridiculous ceremonies, and hollow compliments; there is surely a medium: and a sensible Christian man will not be long at a loss to find it out. Even that people who profess to be above all worldly forms, and are generally stiff enough, yet are rarely found to be rude, uncivil, or ill-bred.

**G. "Seeketh not her own" – vs. 5b**

1. This is a common principle throughout the Bible and a principle we've seen twice already in First Corinthians – 10:24, 33. In its simplest form, it means simply to be unselfish.
2. The ESV translates this as, "It does not insist on its own way." The NLT is similar: "It does not demand its own way." Neither

one of these seem to be accurately translating the word. They may be true statements as to commentary, but they do not represent the basic understanding of the word. The point of the word "seek" in this context is to urgently look for the benefit of others, not simply "not insisting" on our own way. To "not insist on" our "own way" leaves the idea open that one could still have their own way even without insisting on it. There is the principle of the Law of Opposites in this phrase. If we are not seeking our own profit, then we must actively be seeking that of another. To use words like "not insist," or "not demand" does not carry the same weight as "seeketh not."

3. Christian love, as demonstrated in the life of the believer, as well as through the church as a whole, will have more desire for the benefit of others than for self. Even in relation to the lost, this type of love has the benefit of others always in mind.

[1 Corinthians 10:24](#)

<sup>24</sup> Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

[1 Corinthians 10:33](#)

<sup>33</sup> Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

[Romans 15:1-2](#)

<sup>1</sup> We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

<sup>2</sup> Let every one of us please his neighbour for

his good to edification.

### Galatians 5:13

<sup>13</sup> For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

### Philippians 2:3-5

<sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

<sup>4</sup> Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

4. Albert Barnes makes a very valid point on this subject:

There is, perhaps, not a more striking or important expression in the New Testament than this; or one that more beautifully sets forth the nature and power of that love which is produced by true religion. Its evident meaning is, that it is not selfish; it does not seek its own happiness exclusively or mainly; it does not seek its own happiness to the injury of others. This expression is not, however, to be pressed as if Paul meant to teach that a man should not regard his own welfare at all; or have no respect to his health, his property, his happiness...

### ***H. "Is not easily provoked" – vs. 5c***

1. Both the Geneva Bible (first appeared in 1560 but wasn't completed until 1576 – this was the primary Bible of 16<sup>th</sup>-century

English Protestantism) and the Bishops Bible (first done in 1568, commissioned by the Church of England, and was the base text for the KJV) translate this, "is not provoked to anger" (modern spelling), without the word "easily." This word seems to have been added by the KJV translators for clarity, although it is not in italics. Several commentators say the word shouldn't be there, and one went so far as to indicate it is misleading ("a wrong coloring to the statement" – Vincent). I disagree with that assumption, and believe the word belongs (see below).

2. The word for "easily provoked" –  $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\upsilon\acute{\nu}\omega$  – is a compound word, with the two parts literally defined as "to sharpen alongside, that is, (figuratively) to exasperate: - easily provoke, stir" (Strong). "Exasperate" is defined as "To anger; to irritate to a high degree; to provoke to rage; to enrage; to excite anger, or to inflame it to an extreme degree. We say, to exasperate a person, or to exasperate the passion of anger or resentment." (Webster 1812)
3. The idea for "easily" to be included is that there may be cases for a believer to become "exasperated," or angry, especially when it comes to sin and its consequences. A believer may become angry at the sin in the life of another believer but with Christian love at rule, they won't be so apt to become angry with the person themselves.

[Matthew 5:22](#)

**22** But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Mark 3:5

**5** And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, **Stretch forth thine hand.** And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

James 1:19

**19** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Ephesians 4:25–26

**25** Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

**26** Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

4. The only other time this Greek word is used in the New Testament, it is translated “stirred” in Acts 17:16, where Paul sees the entire city of Athens given over to idolatry. That “stirring” motivated him to preach the gospel to those that would listen – so the outcome of this type of exasperation was a good one.

Acts 17:16

**16** Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

5. True Christian love is going to be patient in the face of conflict, and not prone to provocation of anger or exasperation. The illustration of Moses when the people of Israel complained that there was no water and Moses acted out of anger and struck the rock twice, an action that cost him the privilege of entering into the Promised Land, is a demonstration of what happens when we are too easily provoked.

Numbers 20:10–12

<sup>10</sup> And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

<sup>11</sup> And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

<sup>12</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Psalms 106:32–33

<sup>32</sup> They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

<sup>33</sup> Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Proverbs 14:17

<sup>17</sup> He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

***I. "Thinketh no evil" – vs. 5d***

1. True Christian love will neither think to do evil nor will it keep track of evil, or wrongs, done – both ideas are in view but only one of the two is seen translated in the various English translations. In fact, some translations (ESV, NET, for instance) simply translate the whole phrase as “resentful” – which doesn’t seem to carry the idea of what is meant as well as it could.
2. The Greek reads: οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν – literally, “reckoneth, or imputeth not the evil.” Thomas Charles Edwards has it, “taketh not account of evil.”
  - a) The word translated “thinketh” - λογίζεται – has the word λόγος (logos – Intelligence, word as the expression of that intelligence, discourse, saying, thing) at its root. This might be why it is translated the way it is by the KJV translators.
  - b) The form used in this verse is the verb form of the word “logos,” and “means to put together with one’s mind, to count, to occupy oneself with reckonings and calculations” (Zodhiates). This is why both the term “thinketh” and “imputeth” should be used in tandem.

### 2 Corinthians 5:19

**19** To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not **imputing** their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

G. Campbell Morgan puts it: “Love does not keep a ledger in which to enter up wrongs to be dealt with some day later on...Love

does not enter them up, does not book them, 'taketh no account of evil.'

- c) The definite article is found in the Greek with the word for "evil," so it would be "the evil," "which seems here to have the force of implying that the evil actually exists, 'the evil' which is, - but Love does not impute it" (Alford).
- d) The word for "evil" is one that simply means "bad," and has a varied meaning, although it is almost always translated "evil" in the KJV (45 of the 51 times). In its use in this verse, it carries the idea of actively causing evil or harm or injury to another. "Evil i.e., what is contrary to law, either divine or human, wrong, crime" (Thayer).

#### Zechariah 8:16-17

<sup>16</sup> These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

<sup>17</sup> And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

- 3. Matthew Henry has a great quote on this subject:

It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge: so some understand it. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never mischievous, nor inclined to revenge; it does not suspect evil of others, ou logizetai to kakon - it does not reason out evil, charge guilt upon them by inference

and innuendo, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious; it will hide faults that appear, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed: it will never indulge suspicion without proofs, but will rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will hardly give into an ill opinion of another, and it will do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted; hence it will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, nor give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance.

***J. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity" – vs. 6a***

1. True Christian love is not glad, is not happy, does not rejoice, in the sin in the life of fellow believers, nor in their wrongdoing. This is to be seen as applied across a wide spectrum in life. We can't justify the sin, or the wrong done, in the actions of others simply because it fits our thinking, or it is less offensive than the actions of others. This is one that seems to either be forgotten or simply ignored in our modern Christianity today. We should never rejoice in the wrong, or evil, done by those that claim to be Christians, nor in the evil done by the lost, for that matter.

2. The word for “iniquity” - ἀδικία – is used 25 times in the Greek New Testament and 16 times it’s translated “unrighteousness,” which gives us a definition of the word “iniquity,” as it turns out. To do iniquity, as it is here, is to do something that is against the laws of God – whether it be His natural laws, His moral laws, or His biblical laws (or a combination thereof).

Psalm 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3. Christian love will not allow for sin. It will love the sinner, and it will be compassionate with them as they seek to recover from their sin, but it cannot, in any capacity, accept the sin – it can never take pleasure in the sin simply because one does not want to offend another.

Psalm 119:136

<sup>136</sup> Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Proverbs 14:9

<sup>9</sup> Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

Jeremiah 9:1

<sup>1</sup> Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Hosea 4:8

<sup>8</sup> They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

Hosea 7:3

<sup>3</sup> They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

Romans 1:18

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Romans 1:32

<sup>32</sup> Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

### ***K. "Rejoiceth in the truth" – vs. 6b***

1. True Christian love does, however, rejoice in those things that are true, and those things that lead to the truth (especially in the life of those without Christ).
2. This goes, in part, to a point just made with "rejoiceth not in iniquity" – true Christian love will want to see truth done, and in one where iniquity was, there needs to be compassion in helping them recover by simply loving them in the truth of the Word of God and His love for them.

Ephesians 4:14-16

<sup>14</sup> That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in

wait to deceive;

<sup>15</sup> But **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

<sup>16</sup> From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

3. "Rejoiceth in – or with – the Truth" – truth here seems to be personified as "wisdom" is in the book of Proverbs. It is the Person of Truth that we are to emulate, that we are to follow as an example, and it is He that is to be the One that others (especially other believers, as the context deals) see in us as we seek to rejoice with them in knowing Him.
4. The world around us needs to see us taking joy in the good that others do, that we rejoice with them, that we joy in their successes as they serve the Lord, and that we do all we can to encourage them as they "walk in truth."

#### 2 John 4

<sup>4</sup> I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

#### 3 John 3

<sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

## Conclusion to this part:

Love Is Action

By Sermon Central

### LOVE IS ACTION

In his book, *Dad, The Family Coach*, Dave Simmons tells of an act of sacrificial love that occurred in a shopping mall. One day he took his eight year old Helen and five year old Brandon to the Cloverdale Mall. He needed to buy some tools in Sears.

When they pulled into the mall parking lot, there was a big sign that said, "Petting Zoo." Immediately the kids jumped up and asked, "Can we go, Daddy? Can we go? Please." Seeing that it would be not trouble at all, and concluding that it might even make his trip quicker, Dave said, "Sure," and handed both his kids a quarter. They bolted away as he headed for Sears.

A few minutes later he was making his way down the aisle when he spotted Helen slowly walking up behind him. She looked up at him and said, "Well, Daddy, it cost fifty cents. So, I gave Brandon my quarter." then she said the most beautiful thing of all. She repeated their family motto, "Love is action!"

What do you think he did? Not what you might think. Dave finished his shopping and then took Helen back to the petting zoo. They stood by the fence watching Brandon go crazy petting and feeding the animals. Helen stood with her hands and her chin resting on the fence just watching. Dave felt fifty cents in his pocket, almost burning a hole, but he never offered it, and she never asked for it. Helen was following through with

the lesson.

Love is not just action. Love is sacrificial action. Love always pays a price. Love always costs something. Love is expensive. When you love, benefits accrue to another's account. Love is for you, not for me. Love gives; it doesn't grab.

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### **L. "Beareth all things" – vs. 7a**

1. A point to be made before we look at the word for "beareth" is that concerning the words "all things."
  - a) This word – πάντα – is one of the most common words in the New Testament so not much needs to be said except that there is some significance in it being repeated for each of these four things.
  - b) Even though, as the saying goes, "all means all and that's all all means," is true as a general rule, there are going to be times when the word needs to be understood within the greater context of Scripture. This is one of those occasions. We are to understand the "all things" as referenced here to be "all things which can be borne with a good conscience" (Alford). The same is true of "believeth" – obviously, all things untrue are not to be believed; etc.
2. The word for "beareth" – στέγω – is only used four times in the Greek New Testament – two times in First Corinthians, and two times in First Thessalonians. These usages will help us

understand the word a little better.

### 1 Corinthians 9:12

<sup>12</sup> If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but **suffer** all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

### 1 Thessalonians 3:1

<sup>1</sup> Wherefore when we could no longer **forbear**, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

### 1 Thessalonians 3:5

<sup>5</sup> For this cause, when I could no longer **forbear**, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

- a) The word is unique in its original definition – “to roof over, that is, (figuratively) to cover with silence (endure patiently)” (Strong). “It keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out the water, or the roof the rain” (Vincent).
- b) To bear all things in Christian love is to bear with others in their uniqueness and allow that there will be differences. We won’t always agree with one another but when those disagreements are divisive and cause the work of Christ to be affected then we are no longer bearing those things, suffering those things, in Christian love. As stated earlier, we don’t accept the sin in someone’s life just to get along, but we are to love them and help them gain victory. So, we bear with them – we protect them, we cover them with prayer and compassion to allow them to grow, and to keep us from developing a bitter spirit.

### Proverbs 10:12

<sup>12</sup> Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

### Song of Solomon 8:6-7

<sup>6</sup> Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

<sup>7</sup> Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

### Romans 15:1

<sup>1</sup> We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

### 1 Peter 4:8

<sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

## ***M. "Believeth all things" – vs. 7b***

1. "It believes all the good which it can of any one as long as it is possible to do so without betraying the truth of God." (Lipscomb)
2. This one's straightforward – we are to take people at their word unless it is clear they are not being truthful. We will be lied to, yes, and some people will demonstrate they cannot be trusted, but for the general rule, true Christian love accepts people as they are, in Christ, and trusts in them to work alongside of in the work of the Lord.

3. We must first, however, have complete faith and trust in God and His word before we will be able to understand this aspect of Christian love in trusting in them and their help in our mutual service (particularly, in service as a church).

“[B]elieveth all things; that are to be believed, all that God says in his word, all his truths, and all his promises; and even sometimes in hope against hope, as Abraham did, relying upon the power, faithfulness, and other perfections of God; though such a man will not believe every spirit, every preacher and teacher, nor any but such as agree with the Scriptures of truth, the standard of faith and practice; nor will he believe every word of man, which is the character of a weak and foolish man; indeed, a man of charity or love is willing to believe all the good things reported of men; he is very credulous of such things, and is unwilling to believe ill reports of persons, or any ill of men; unless it is open and glaring, and is well supported, and there is full evidence of it; he is very incredulous in this respect...” (Gill)

#### ***N. "Hopeth all things" – vs. 7c***

1. Christian love in action gives us a desire to hope for the good, or the best, for other believers. This is the opposite of wishing them harm, or bad, or wanting them to fail in some way. We simply want, expect, the best for them. To hope for “what is good for another, even when others have

ceased to hope" (J-F-B).

2. There is another aspect of this as it relates to those that have fallen in their Christian faith (which is partially what's in view in this context) – we should hope, even expect, that they will repent of their sin and then we can work with them toward recovery and restitution. Without true Christian love, this is not likely, in most instances.

“When there is no place left for believing good of a person, then love comes in with its hope, where it could not work by its faith; and begins immediately to make allowances and excuses, as far as a good conscience can permit; and farther, anticipates the repentance of the transgressor, and his restoration to the good opinion of society and his place in the Church of God, from which he had fallen.” (Clarke)

### ***O. "Endureth all things" – vs. 7d***

1. The word for "endureth" - ὑπομένω – is a compound word. The first part is a preposition that means "under," and the second is a word that means "to remain." To remain under, or to bear up under the strain of a burden or weight, to persevere in a matter, to bear the burden of adversities.
2. True Christian love does all those things – it is able to handle any of the weight that others put upon us and do so without

complaint or controversy. "It can handle it," so to speak.

3. This may be the hardest one to do, considering this is to be done in "all things" – in all circumstances, good or bad, we are to endure them, bear-up under them and carry on with the cause of Christ, in spite of what others say or do.

"Bears up under, sustains, and does not complain. Bears up under all persecutions at the hand of man; all efforts to injure the person, property, or reputation; and hears all that may be laid upon us in the providence and by the direct agency of God; compare Job\_13:15. The connection requires us to understand it principally of our treatment at the hands of our fellow-men." (Barnes)

#### 2 Timothy 3:3

<sup>3</sup> Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

#### 2 Timothy 3:9–10

<sup>9</sup> But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

<sup>10</sup> But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

#### 2 Timothy 2:24

<sup>24</sup> And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

## 2 Timothy 4:5

<sup>5</sup> But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

### **P. "Never faileth" – vs. 8a**

1. True Christian love will never fail in its intent and will always accomplish what God intends. What fails is our usage of it – how we, as believers, treat other believers. We can fail the usage of love, but it will never fail.
2. Christian love will also never cease to be an invaluable Christian grace. Love is the eminent of all the graces, as will be seen in the end of the chapter.
3. "Never" - οὐδέποτε – compound word that uses redundant language to emphasize the point: οὐδέ – not even – and ποτέ – ever. "Not even at any time, that is, never at all" (Strong).
4. "Faileth" - ἐκπίπτω – to fall away from, to drop away from – "specifically be driven out of one's course; figuratively to lose, become inefficient" (Strong).
  - a) Christian love, that love demonstrated in the likeness of Christ's sacrificial giving of Himself for our sins, will never, ever cease to be effective, cease to be necessary.
  - b) Not only will it never fail to be, when exercised as God intends, it will always remain in the place of prominence as the greatest of the Christian graces.

## Conclusion:

You Promised Me

By Ken Pell

"YOU PROMISED ME"

Love always perseveres. Love never Fails.

In 1989, an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. Surprisingly, such tragedies often bring out the best in people. Let me show you the loving heart of a father.

In the midst of chaos and destruction, he rushed to his son's school. But instead of a school, he found a shapeless heap of rubble. Imagine what went through his mind. In the case of this father, the sight of rubble and ruin made him spring into action. He ran to the back corner of the building where his son's class used to be and began to dig. Why? What real hope did he have? What were the chances that his son could have survived such destruction? All he knew was that he had made a promise to always be there for his boy. It was this promise that animated his hands and motivated his heart.

As he began to dig, well-meaning parents tried to pull him out of the rubble saying: "It's too late!" "They're dead!" "You can't help!" "Go home!" "There's nothing you can do!" Then the fire chief tried to pull him off the rubble by saying, "Fires and explosions are happening everywhere. You're in danger. Go home!" Finally, the police came and said, "It's over. You're endangering others. Go home. We'll handle it!"

ut this father continued to dig for eight ... 12 ... 24 ... 36 hours. Then, in the 38th hour, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son's voice. Immediately, he screamed, "ARMAND!" Back came the words, "Dad!? I told them! I told the other kids that if you were still alive, you'd save me! You promised me, you'd always be here for me! You did it, Dad!" (Taken from Max Lucado's book, "He Still Moves Stones")

The story of Armand's dad is a wonderful image for God's love. You find so many of the traits of love from 1 Corinthians 13 in that story. And you get the picture of a living and loving Heavenly Father that:

- Steps in when everything else is stepping out.
- Seeks solution when everything else says the situation it's hopeless.
- Remains steady when everything else has shaken loose.

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### **III. THE ANTICIPATION FOR CHRISTIAN LOVE – VS. 8B-12**

NOTE: Although there is only one proper and correct interpretation of any passage of Scripture, within its historical/contextual understanding, there are times when there is a near, as well as a future type of fulfillment (seen most often in the Old Testament prophetic books) – this is one of those passages. I personally believe that the immediate correct interpretation deals with the true New Testament church, the Word of God and its completion, and the spiritual gifts as they were then and as they are now. There is a clear correlation, however, to

the future state of the redeemed when we arrive in heaven and all that is knowable by finite, created man, is fully known. I find no difficulty in connecting the two – the here and now to the then and there – in this text.

**A. The word "anticipation" means, primarily, "The act of taking up, placing, or considering something before the proper time, in natural order; prevention." Secondly, "foretaste; previous view or impression of what is to happen afterward; as, the anticipation of the joys of heaven." (Webster 1828)**

**The view in these verses is the anticipation of the completed Scripture to give us the finished "light" that is needed to be what God intends for us to be – a believer who acts out of Christian love in all they do; as well as the future anticipation of what we will enjoy in heaven. The one, logically, leads to the next. We will not have that "foretaste of glory divine," as Fanny Crosby wrote in the song "Blessed Assurance," without the life of "charity" in the here and now.**

**B. Things lost anticipate things found – vs. 8-10**

1. Verse eight is a colorful, almost poetic, way of reiterating the same truth – those miraculous gifts, represented by "prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge" will no longer be needed as the further light of the finished Scripture took hold in the church.

2. "But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail"

a) As we've already studied, this spiritual gift was primarily that of foretelling future events – the last of which was John and the book of Revelation. There may be the application, as seen in Ephesians 4:11 that "prophets" can be seen as modern-day preachers, but this particular usage is more specifically connected with the biblical prophet.

"That is, the 'gift' of prophecy, or the power of speaking as a prophet; that is, of delivering the truth of God in an intelligible manner under the influence of inspiration..." (Barnes)

As stated earlier from verse two: The inclusion of this as a spiritual gift would indicate that this is more than just a preacher or teacher but is a supernatural ability that goes above and beyond the normal.

b) "They shall fail" – καταργηθήσονται, future tense of καταργέω – caused to be ceased.

*(1) This is the same Greek word as "vanish away" – said of "knowledge." It is a different Greek word than that for "faileth" said of "charity" - ἐκπίπτω – to fall away from, to drop away from – "specifically be driven out of one's course; figuratively to lose, become inefficient" (Strong).*

*(2) The word means to render inactive, idle, useless, ineffective (Zodhiates).*

(3) *This is not saying that the prophecies themselves will "fail," as we know the word. They will not stop being fulfilled or fail to be fulfilled – that would violate other Scripture. This is saying that the giving of the prophecies, or revelations of God's Word and will, will cease to be needed once the Bible was completed. Hence, the ministry of the Old Testament style prophet will have come to an end – its purpose would have been finished.*

3. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease"

a) Again, this is the spiritual gift that the Corinthian church seemed to emphasize more than it should have – much has already been said on this gift in chapter twelve and earlier in our study of this chapter (and more will be said in our study of chapter fourteen) so I will just quote Dr. Alford here:

"I believe, therefore, the event related in our text to have been a sudden and powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which the disciples uttered, not of their own minds, but as mouth-pieces of the Spirit, the praises of God in various languages, hitherto, and possibly at the time itself, unknown to them." – Alford

b) "They shall cease"

(1) *παύσονται*, future tense of *παύω* – in this case, it means, "To stop, pause, make an end...used in an absolute sense, to cease, come to an end" (Zodhiates).

- c) As with “prophecies,” the need for “tongues” to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit had come to indwell the believer had come to an end by the close of the canon of Scripture.

“Some interpreters believe this passage teaches the passing away or cessation of the miraculous gifts. Those of the Pentecostal or Charismatic persuasion believe these gifts continue to the present, are valid for today, and have been in greater evidence in all sectors of the church in recent times. In view of the fact that tongues was a sign gift to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 14:21-22), its purpose may have been served by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, This gift is not mentioned in Paul’s later writings. When the book of Revelation was written (no later than A.D. 95), the New Testament was complete. The gift of tongues could no longer serve as a revelational gift (Rev. 22:18).” (The Ultimate Cross-reference Treasury)

### 1 Corinthians 14:21–22

**21** In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

**22** Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

### Revelation 22:18

**18** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this

book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

(Note: Although this verse in Revelation is primarily dealing with the actual prophecies in the book of Revelation, since that is the last of the prophetic writings God has given, the verse applies relatively to the quote given above.)

4. "Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away"

- a) "Knowledge" – this seems to be the special gift that allowed those equipped with it to know more about the truths of both revealed Scripture as well as that which had yet to be revealed. This points back to "the word of knowledge" of chapter twelve more than it does "all knowledge" of this chapter. This is closely connected with "prophecies" in this verse. It seems like it would follow that, if "knowledge" is referenced earlier in this chapter then this must be the same point. The word "all" with "knowledge" earlier and not here makes the change back to the spiritual gift of "knowledge" rather than the broader knowledge of "every human art and science" (Clarke).

As stated earlier in our study of chapter twelve (and repeated earlier in the study of this chapter), relating to the spiritual gift of "the word of knowledge":

As described within the context of chapter twelve and spiritual gifts, "the word of knowledge" was related to the previous ("word of wisdom") in that the first deals with the doctrines of the gospel

and its truths, while this one deals with the deeper things of God – those things that most likely would be expounded to, in a powerful and meaningful way, to the believer in Christ.

- b) “Knowledge” (γνῶσις) was the premiere cultural theme of the day in the city of Corinth (as we found in our study of chapter one), and it was something that was still very important to the believers that made up the church in Corinth as they struggled with their past lives in relation to their new life in Christ. The emphasis on knowledge would have been important to them, so its inclusion in this verse, along with the gifts of prophecy and tongues, both of which were equally important to the believers in Corinth, is to serve as an illustration, or sample, of the supernatural spiritual gifts that ceased to be in use by the time of the close of the canon of Scripture. The others would be those we studied in chapter twelve – i.e., gifts of healing, working of miracles, etc.
- c) “It shall vanish away” – same Greek word as seen earlier in the verse for “shall fail.”

This isn't saying that knowledge itself would “vanish away” – cease to be needed. That would simply be a foolish understanding of this text. Nor is it saying, as some commentators teach, that all the knowledge we now possess will “be obscured and lost” (Barnes).

The idea in the passage here, I think, is, All the knowledge which we now possess, valuable as it is, will be obscured and lost, and rendered comparatively valueless, in the fuller splendors of the eternal world;

as the feeble light of the stars, beautiful and valuable as it is, "vanishes," or is lost in the splendors of the rising sun. The knowledge which we now have is valuable, as the gift of prophecy and the power of speaking foreign languages is valuable, but it will be lost in the brighter visions of the world above. (Barnes)

The only "knowledge" to which this can be logically referring is that of the spiritual gift of "knowledge," as already explained.

5. Vs. 9 – "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part."

a) That is to say, as these two gifts represent the other gifts of chapter twelve, they are only known by the church (the Apostle Paul including himself here with the other believers, especially the leadership of the church) "in part" – until the need no longer was there for them to be used.

b) "In part" - ἐκ μέρους – same Greek words as translated "in particular" in 1 Cor. 12:27.

*(1) As used here, there is a direct correlation to the word "perfect" in verse ten – the Law of Opposites at work, if you would.*

*(2) Even with the gift of knowledge or the gift of prophecy – both of which dealt with the understanding of the Word and will of God for the believer and the church – there was an imperfect understanding because the work of the Word of God was not yet finished. All that could be known (or was prophesied to be known) of the will of God was not*

*yet understood until the greater light of the finished Scripture was in full view.*

6. Vs. 10 – coming back to the main point of this section (“things lost anticipate things found”), we find that, upon the completion of the writing of the Bible (the canon of Scripture), those things that would eventually be “lost” (the need for them coming to an end) would lead to the anticipated “things found” (the finished revelation of the will of God for mankind) in the finished Bible. One, by default, leads to the other.

a) “But when that which is perfect is come”

*(1) Let me say at this point that it is my belief and understanding of this text as it relates to the entirety of the book of First Corinthians that the “perfect” spoken of here is the finished Scripture (which is what was meant at the beginning of this main point under the “NOTE”).*

*(2) “But” – what follows is in contrast to the “in part” of verse nine.*

*(3) “When” – although the time was uncertain, the fact of the action is not. The “perfect” was going to come, exactly when was unknown at that point.*

*(4) “That which is perfect” – το τελειον – literally, “the perfect.”*

(a) The word for “perfect” is in the neuter, and although that isn’t always significant of gender identity

in the Greek (especially as it relates to male or female) it does point to more of a time than it does an event or a person.

(b) The root word (τέλος) means “an end, term, termination, completion. Particularly only in respect to time” (Zodhiates). As used here, Dr. Zodhiates explains it as, “Finished, that which as reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.”

(c) The word is used in some familiar verses that will help us see a fuller picture of its use and application.

Matthew 5:48

<sup>48</sup> Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect**.

Romans 12:2

<sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and **perfect**, will of God.

James 1:4

<sup>4</sup> But let patience have her **perfect** work, that ye may be **perfect** and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:25

<sup>25</sup> But whoso looketh into the **perfect** law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the

work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

#### Hebrews 5:14

<sup>14</sup> But strong meat belongeth to them that are of **full age**, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

b) "Then that which is in part shall be done away"

(1) "Then" – upon the completion of the "when" – the time for which the "in part" was completed.

(2) "Shall be done away" – same Greek word as for "fail" and "vanish away" in verse eight - καταργηθήσονται, future tense of καταργέω – caused to be ceased.

*David Lipscomb gives the following (I don't agree with everything he says on the subject of spiritual gifts – he believes they all ceased to be needed by the close of the canon of Scripture, whereas I do not – but I do agree with what he says here):*

*These gifts were to continue in the church to guide and instruct it until the completed will of God was made known. They were to serve a temporary purpose; then when their office was fulfilled, they were to pass away and give place to it.*

*That perfection was completed, so far as God's work of the revealing work of the Spirit is concerned, when the full*

*will of God should be revealed, or made known, and his provisions for saving men should be set in operation, as is set forth in the following: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect** man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: (Eph. 4:11-15). In this passage Paul explains the whole matter: showing that these miraculous gifts were to serve till the full knowledge was received to make them one in faith and to bring them to the fullness of men and women in Christ. That knowledge is given in the New Testament.*

**C. Things left behind anticipate things that lay ahead – vs. 11**

1. This verse is closely related to the previous, and helps explain what is meant, which is most likely why the Apostle Paul (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) used first person singular pronouns to illustrate – “When I...”
2. The “in part” is “as a child,” and the

“perfect” is “when I became a man.”

3. Some see the childhood part here as representing our life here on earth, and that becoming a man is equivalent to us in heaven.

The Geneva Bible notes, among others references this: “He sets forth that which he said by an excellent similitude, comparing this life to our infancy, or childhood, in which we mutter and stammer rather than speak, and think and understand childish things, and therefore have need of such things as may form and frame our tongue and mind. But when we become men, to what purpose should we desire that stammering, those childish toys, and such like things, by which we are formed in our childhood by little and little?”

This not only makes little logical sense; it doesn't stay with the context of the passage. In verses we've already read relating to other portions here (on the word “perfect,” for instance), the principle of becoming the “perfect man,” is not only indicated, but it is assumed. And that happens in this life – not in heaven (Matt. 5:48 shows this).

4. As the Word of God was being written, and when it was finished (“perfect”), it provided a path from “childhood” imperfection in the things of the Spirit, to that of “manhood” as the work continues to produce. The childish things were left

behind as the anticipated adulthood lay ahead. One naturally leads to the other.

***D. Things longed for lead to those things anticipated – vs. 12***

1. This verse further illustrates verse eleven, and the analogy of the child becoming a man.
2. “For” – “a causative particle always after one or more words in a clause and expressing the reason for what has been before, affirmed or implied” (Zodhiates).
3. “Now” – in our present condition, at this present time.
4. “We see through a glass, darkly.”
  - a) Present tense – in our present, “in part” condition, in our “childish” condition, we see things imperfectly because they are not available for us to see completely, in the form God intended. They are simply incomplete.

This is where the future and the present are seen. This can not only be said of the finishing of the writing of Scripture, but it can also be said of what awaits us in heaven. When we are face to face with our Savior, all of the Word of God will then become clear, without any ambiguity or vagueness, without any misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

[1 John 3:2](#)

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall

appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

b) "Through a glass" – or, through a mirror

(1) *The word "through" here (very common word in the Greek New Testament) carries the idea of "by means of," rather than how we think of the word in its primary sense of looking through something to see what's on the other side.*

(2) *"Glass" - ἑσόπτρον – compound word from εἰς (to or into), and ὀπτομαι ("I look" – from where we get our word "optometry," the root of which is "optics," the branch of physics that studies the behavior and properties of light...). Literally, it means to look into. It is speaking of a mirror or reflector, and the "word here may signify any thing by which the image of a person is reflected...The word is not used for a glass to look through; nor would such an image have suited with the apostle's design" (Clarke).*

*"We must think, not of our mirrors of glass, but of the imperfectly-reflecting metallic mirrors of the ancients." (Aflord)*

*"The thought of imperfect seeing is emphasized by the character of the ancient mirror, which was of polished metal, and required constant polishing, so that a sponge with pounded pumice-stone was generally attached to it. Corinth was famous for the manufacture of these." (Vincent)*

(3) *This word for "glass" is only used one other time in the New Testament (James 1:23). It is used in other classical Greek writings from the time period and is always considered to be a mirror in those writings. There is a similar word used in 2 Cor. 3:18 (κατοπτρίζομαι) where it is fairly clearly used for a mirror. There is another Greek word (ύαλος) used in the New Testament translated "glass" in the book of Revelation, where it references glass as we would think, rather than a mirror.*

#### James 1:23

**23** For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

#### 2 Corinthians 3:18

**18** But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

#### Revelation 21:18

**18** And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

#### Revelation 21:21

**21** And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

c) "Darkly" - εν αινιγματι

- (1) *The words translate literally "in an enigma" – the Greek word αινιγματι is transliterated in the English word enigma (a person or thing that is mysterious, puzzling, or difficult to understand).*
- (2) *This is the only time in the New Testament this Greek word is used. In Greek it carries the idea of an obscure saying. In its unfinished form ("in part"), the Word of God was still a mystery, still a riddle, of sorts, still puzzling because parts were missing.*
- (3) *As children view things without complete knowledge and they seem strange to them, so did the Word of God seem strange, at times, to those in the early church until it was finished.*
- d) "But then face to face" – the Apostle Paul is pointing out to the believers in Corinth with this analogy that they won't see everything they need to as clearly as intended, but there would come a time when the church would be able to see things as clearly and plainly as God intended, and he uses the analogy of seeing a person face to face that removes any obscurity that might otherwise be there.
- (1) *"But then" – when the "perfect" was come, when it was completed.*
- (2) *"Face to face" – "Nothing is said here about seeing God face to face (what most commentators read into the passage). When the complete revelation of the will of God is achieved - compared to the spiritual gifts that*

*gave revelation in parts, the completed NT will be like seeing someone face to face, instead of looking in a mirror. Access to a complete NT, had the spiritual gifts beaten any day of the week.” (Mark Dunagan as found on studylight.org)*

e) “Now I know in part” – goes back to verse nine and what was said about “in part” there. Even the Apostle Paul, in all his wisdom and understanding of the Person and will of God, only knew in an imperfect, incomplete way at that point.

f) “But then shall I know even as also I am known”

*(1) Goes to the “perfect” of verse ten, and to the “face to face” in the previous clause of this verse.*

*(2) “But then” – when the “perfect” is come.*

*(3) “Shall I know” - ἐπιγνώσομαι - translated “well known” in 2 Cor. 6:9; or, it can be seen as to know fully, to gain full knowledge of a thing.*

### **2 Corinthians 6:9**

**<sup>9</sup> As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;**

*Have all the information available to be fully enabled to know what God wants known.*

(a) Some see the ability to “fully know” as only available in heaven, and that any and all knowledge we can

garner here is like looking "in a glass, darkly." Although there may be some truth to that, that is not found to be true in Scripture.

- (b) This word, at its root - ἐπιγινώσκω (P-A-I) – is used in other verses that show we can "know" a subject as completely as God allows to be known, and He considers it "fully known."

#### Matthew 7:16

**16** Ye shall **know** them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

#### 1 Timothy 4:3

**3** Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and **know** the truth.

#### 2 Peter 2:21

**21** For it had been better for them not to **have known** the way of righteousness, than, after they **have known** it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

- (4) "As also I am known" - ἐπεγνώσθην - (aorist, indicative, passive) – I have been fully known. This goes back to "face to face," and just as we can see another person for who they really are when we see them with our own eyes, so is the Word of God able to be fully known, as God intends, when it was finally completed.

*David Lipscomb: "While in the state of childhood, with only the partial knowledge made known through the spiritually gifted, they saw as in a mirror darkly; but when the perfect revelation should be made known, they would know the things revealed through all. So that the knowledge we possess through the completed will of God is greatly more than any one of the gifted or inspired ones possessed, since the revelations made to and through all are given in the Scriptures."*

#### **IV. THE ABIDING OF CHRISTIAN LOVE – VS. 13**

- A. "Abiding" is defined as simply lasting a long time or enduring. True Christian love will do just that – as seen in verse eight, "Charity never faileth."***
- B. The recognition of the three graces mentioned here, the greatest of which is Christian love, clearly shows what we are to be within the body of Christ.***
- C. Remember, the love mentioned in this text is our love for other believers, and particularly those within our local body of believers. It also includes a very clear illustration of the love God had for us in sending His Son to pay our sin debt, and the love Christ has for us on a continual basis – both now and for eternity.***
- D. Abiding "faith"***
- E. Abiding "hope"***
- F. Abiding (and eternal) "love"***

1. The truth that love is eternal is one thing that makes "charity" – Christian love – the greatest of these graces.