

The Persistence of Love, Part 2

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

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We're going to bring to finish our brief look at 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Take your Bible and open to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, well known as the love chapter. And in a sense, we're just going to kind of wrap up the finish and perhaps this will be a little bit more like a lesson on how to interpret the Bible than a sermon, and you'll find out what I mean by that when we get to the point we're going to be making. But maybe I could teach you not only what the text is saying, but teach you the process that one goes through to discern that when you're dealing with something that isn't necessarily apparently clear immediately on the surface. So we'll get to that in just a moment. But let me read the chapter for you because I want it to be in your mind, this great chapter on love.

"If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor and if I surrender my body to be burned but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly. It does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered. Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are languages, or tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away for we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face-to-face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love abide these three, but the greatest of these is love."

Clearly the theme of the chapter is love. What kind of love are we talking about? Well while it encompasses the divine aspect of love between a believer and God, it is really about love in the church. It is about believers loving one another. In John chapter 13 and verses 34 and 35, Jesus said, "By this will all men know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." He did not say they will know it by your theology. He did not say they will know it by your services, or your ministries. He said they will know it by your love. And in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 9, there is a statement which indicates that God undergirds that because it says, "You have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." You have been taught as a believer to love one another. That then becomes the distinguishing mark of true Christians...love for each other.

And that, of course, is the theme here in this chapter. Now we could wish that it was just that simple, that because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, as Romans 5 says, because we are taught by God to love one another, because this is our testimony by which men know that we belong

to God, that it would just be a very easy thing for all of us to unceasingly and abundantly and persistently love each other. But the fact of the matter is, we're fighting against the flesh, aren't we?

That was true in the Corinthian situation. They were cantankerous argumentative. They were split into all kinds of factions which demonstrated their fleshliness, their carnality as Paul indicates back in chapter 3 when he says, "Are you not carnal, fleshy, operating on sinful impulses because of the divisiveness?" You take advantage of each other, even in the sexual way. You sue each other. And so love was not manifest in that Corinthian situation, the way it should have been.

In particular, they were attracted to things that appear to be supernatural, and somewhat mystical and somewhat transcendental, like the spiritual gifts. In this chapter you have three of them mentioned: prophecy, tongues and knowledge. There was given to the early church by the ministry of the Holy Spirit abilities to reveal the supernatural Word of God to a congregation. It might come through a prophecy. It might come through a Word of knowledge. It might come through speaking in language one did not know which was then interpreted, as it did on the Day of Pentecost when the wonderful works of God were being pronounced in languages that the speakers didn't know. This was a supernatural sign that God was acting and God was speaking.

Well, the Corinthians were drawn to that. Let's face it, they lived in a world that was fascinated by the supernatural. If you've ever been to Corinth, you will probably have the opportunity to visit some of the religious sites that have been uncovered in that amazing place and the history of their religion is fascinating, both in the lowlands and up on the acropolis, the mountain above the city of Corinth, there are artifacts and remnants of their preoccupation with mystical religions.

They drag that into the church and they took these gifts of the Spirit by which God was revealing Himself at a time when the Scripture wasn't complete and they made much out of them. In fact, there were people who pursued these things, pursuing the extraordinary, pursuing the esoteric, the transcendental, that which was clearly or apparently beyond the human norm. They were fascinated with these things.

In particular they were fascinated with this gift of tongues to the degree that they falsified it along with other gifts. They were even allowing themselves to be taken over by demons and purporting to speak for God, cursing Jesus Christ. They needed to understand that all of these kinds of activities were meaningless if there was not love. The church must be marked by love. If there's anything that I would rejoice in about this church, it is not that people know us for our theology, but that we have become known for our love. We have become known for our affection for one another and our affection for others in the body of Christ, with whom we associate and fellowship. That is the greatest testimony to the work of the Spirit in a church. It is the greatest testimony of the work of the Scripture in the church. It's the greatest testimony really to the devotion of the congregation in the church that you be known by your love. Of all the things that I would want our church to be known for, it would be that we are a church that loves each other because behind that love has to be sound doctrine, right? In fact, we love each other so much that we don't tolerate false doctrine, we love each other so much that we seek to pursue one another back from sin, confronting sin, calling sinners to repentance.

Now we've gone through the opening seven verses and looked at the perfections of love, those 15 statements that are made, verbal statements that describe love with verbs because love can only be known in action by what it does, not by what it feels, or even what it says. We know the priority of love because if you don't have love, it doesn't matter what else you have whether you speak human

languages, angelic languages, whether you can be the source of prophetic utterance or mysteries and knowledge and have all faith so that you could literally move mountains, if you don't have love, all of that is absolutely meaningless. So we learn the priority of love and the perfections of love. And now we come to the permanence of love..the permanence of love. And it's right there in verse 8, "Love never fails."

It is the eternal thing. That's what I want you to grasp. Love is the eternal thing. And when you come down to verse 13, the back bracket on this section, "Now faith, hope, love abide these three but the greatest of these is love," and the reason the greatest of these is love is because love is eternal...love is eternal. We should be known by our love. You also will notice there that prophecy is not eternal. Tongues are not eternal and knowledge, that is gifts that reveal the revelation of God through prophecy, through tongues, or through a word of knowledge, are only temporary. The eternal thing is love.

So when you ask: what will be the dominating attitude and the dominating impulse, and the dominating motivation, and the dominating experience of eternal heaven, it will be love and running alongside that love will be joy. Love never fails. That's the thesis in verses 8 to 13, that's the thesis. The rest of it explains the thesis. The rest of it is commentary on that one great truth that love never fails or love never falls. The word used here in the Greek has two technical meanings which I think are very interesting. The word for fail or fall, classic Greek presents a picture of a bad actor being hissed off the stage as an utter failure. Love is not like that. It lives on, on in the stage of eternity. Love is never hissed off the stage.

The other picture where that word is used that is vivid and memorable is that of a fading flower with falling petals. Love never withers, never falls to the ground, never corrupts, never fades. Not everything that fades is bad. Not everything that disappears is bad. There will be no marriage in heaven, and that's not bad. Marriage is good, it's the grace of life. But there won't be any marriage in heaven. Family is a wonderful thing but there won't be any separate families in heaven. There are a lot of wonderful things in this life that have no place in eternity, including these spiritual gifts which were so elevated by the Corinthians because they were public, open kinds of expressions. And so he says in verse 8, "Spiritual gifts are temporary...spiritual gifts are temporary." Does that mean they were unimportant? Not at all. They were absolutely essential for the foundation of the church. There had to be prophecy and there had to be tongues because God had purposed them to fit into what He was communicating, and there had to be the revelation of divine knowledge. Those are essential to the establishing of the truth and the establishing of the church.

However, they are not forever. In fact, last time we looked at the one in the middle, tongues. They will cease. And we pointed out to you that they did cease. That prophecy came to pass. The purpose of speaking languages one did not know was completed in the apostolic age. Tongues ceased by themselves. *Pauo* is the verb, it's a middle voice, it ceased by itself when its purpose was finished. History corroborates that and I pointed that out to you by taking you through history to show you that once it ceased, it stayed ceased. There is no scripture to speak of its return. Once it disappears from the pages of the New Testament, it never appears again. It only appears in the book of Acts and in 1 Corinthians, one of the earliest of all the New Testament letters, and you won't find it anywhere else, all the way up to the end of the New Testament writing at the end of the first century. But it also tells us that prophecy and knowledge will be done away. They will not cease by themselves. Something will act on them to bring them to an end. The question is, when does that happen? When does that happen?

Well let's talk a little bit about what we mean about prophecy and knowledge. These appear to be revelatory gifts. They're identified as speaking gifts, as words, communication. And so we assume that this is a way in which God communicated. There are speaking gifts and there are serving gifts according to 1 Peter 4:10 and 11, but notice this is a speaking gift because in verse 8 of chapter 12, it is called the word of knowledge...the word of knowledge. You could also refer to the word of wisdom. No scripture exists, remember that now, we're very early in the life of the church. The gospels haven't yet been written, all of them. The New Testament books haven't been written. There are a few, this is very early. They don't have a Bible. How do they know what God wants them to know? How do they have the revelation of God before it's written down? It comes to the church through prophets who give prophecy, speaking for God. Sometimes they are initial revelations. And sometimes they are just a reiteration of previous revelation.

So when we talk about somebody who has the gift of prophecy, it might be...it simply means to speak before, that would be somebody who stood up and spoke, maybe receiving a revelation on the spot, maybe reiterating a revelation. In any case, I believe today that anybody who stands up such as I do and many others do, to proclaim the Word of God is exercising a gift of prophecy. Not predicting the future, that's only one aspect of it reserved for divine revelation in Scripture. None of us can predict the future but we *prophemi*, we stand to speak the Word of God previously revealed. I don't get new revelation. There is no new revelation. You can't add to the Scripture as you can't take away from it. But I speak to you the Word of God.

And there are some who speak to the church even today, wisdom and there are some who speak knowledge. There are scholars. And then there are those who speak to the church by way of exhortation and consolation and comfort and instruction, thus wisdom. Now, prophecy, this ability to speak the Word of God, to speak the revelation of God, to stand before the people and speak this is a preaching gift, I think. This ability will be done away.

Is it important? You bet it's important. We're here doing it, aren't we Sunday after Sunday, day after day, week after week across the face of the earth. Since the New Testament era there have been preachers of the faithful gospel and they have proclaimed it to the ends of the earth and will continue to do that. It is a critical thing. "How will they hear without a preacher," Romans 10 says, "And how will they preach if they're not sent?" So we don't want to diminish the importance of the gift of preaching, nor do we want to diminish the importance of the gift of knowledge. We're very grateful, aren't we? All of us who preach for those who have exercised that gift and have become scholars and have the ability and have made the life-long effort to gain the kind of expertise which allows them to fill in the historical gaps, linguistic gaps and geographical gaps and all the knowledge that comes to bear upon the Word of God to get an accurate and true interpretation. These are important gifts. We have a seminary over here where we're endeavoring to teach the knowledge of God and the wisdom of God so that we can produce people who can preach the truth of God. Critical things.

But they're not forever...they're not forever. They have their time. Tongues had its brief moment and it was gone. And anything that purports to be that gift today is false, is a deception, is not the real thing because Scripture says it will cease, and it did. Now these gifts also are not only temporary, they are partial...partial. Verse 9, "We know in part, we prophesy in part." Verse 12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."

By the way, the rest of the discussion once you leave verse 8 eliminates tongues. It's fascinating, isn't it, to notice that the rest of this discussion omits tongues and speaks only of prophecy and knowledge because only that is relative going forward since tongues was for such a very, very brief time. That supports the fact that it had stopped, the end of the discussion, and it's never referred to again, beyond this section of 1 Corinthians in the New Testament. Prophecy and knowledge, they will go on.

However, they're only partial. Go back to verse 9, "We know in part, we prophesy in part. We have knowledge. People teach us knowledge. We hear preaching. The revelation of God is brought to bear on us. But no matter how much prophecy we hear and how much knowledge we are given, it is only in part. The Greek is *meros*, it means a portion of the whole. There is so much more.

Do you know what that's saying? You think you know a lot now compared to what you will know when you get to heaven? You know nothing now. It's all partial. I'm glad for what we've got. And we hold this treasure, don't we?, with a certain amount of humility. We struggle to get it right, to interpret it right, to bring to bear our gifts of knowledge and our gifts of proclamation to the text of divine revelation, so thankful am I that I don't live in the first century, but I have the full text, aren't you? But even in having the full text, I only know in part. And preaching all these decades and many years, I only preach in part. There is so much more. As rich as our revelation from God is, it is not the whole story. Verse 12, "We see in a mirror dimly. I know in part."

There's really no room for a know-it-all, is there, in this? That's a far cry from reality. We know so little. I love what it says in chapter 8 verse 2, this is the verse that you want to give know-it-alls. "If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he is not yet known as he ought to know." If you really think you know something, then you don't know what you ought to know and what you ought to know is you don't know anything at all, really. You go back in to the Old Testament and this was part of the confession of faithful people. Listen to the words of Job. Job 11 and Zophar is rebuking Job, these are his words, "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They're as high as the heavens. What can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?" It's all partial, isn't it? I mean, we can only go so far out into the contemplation of God until we really finally have to shut down because it's so far beyond us.

In the twenty-sixth chapter of Job, verse 14, "Behold," well he's been giving all these things about God, stretches out the north, verse 7, over empty space, hangs the Earth on nothing, wraps up the waters in His clouds. He understood that the Earth was hanging on nothing. He understood the science of hydrology, that He wraps up waters in the cloud and the cloud doesn't burst under them. He talks about how the clouds obscure the face of the full moon and the sun as well spreads his cloud over it. He talks about the circle on the surface of the waters, that's the horizon, the Earth is a sphere, the pillars of heaven tremble. He quiets the sea with His power. He goes on talking about His breath clearing the heavens. Then He says in verse 14, "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways." Just the edges. And how faint a word we hear of Him. But His mighty thunder, who can understand? All that we know is a faint whisper, a faint word when compared to the reality of who God really is. We have so little knowledge.

In Psalm 40 and verse 5, the psalmist says, "Many, O Lord, my God, are the wonders which You have done and Your thoughts toward us. There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, Your wonders, they would be too numerous to count. I can't even process Your wonders. I can't even come close. Psalm 139, "O Lord, You have searched me and know me. You

know when I sit down and when I rise up. You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down. You're intimately acquainted with all my ways even before there is a word on my tongue. Behold, O Lord, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before and laid Your hand on me and then there's such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is too high, I cannot attain to it." The psalmist is saying, "When I start to think about You, O God, I am very quickly at my capacity limit long before I even get close to grasping Your reality.

At the end of the eleventh of Romans. "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who became His counselor? How unsearchable are His judgments? How unfathomable are His ways? O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Galatians tells us that all the...all the wisdom of God, all the knowledge of God is bound up in the person of Jesus Christ, and yet we can't even perceive all that there is that is true about Him. So, compared to the full knowledge of God, compared to the full reality of what can be known even with the gifts of prophecy and knowledge that the Apostles received and wrote down and even with the whole of revealed Scripture, we only know a part, just a small part. So, these things, as important as they are, are temporary and they are partial.

Now this does not mean, and I want to make this importantly clear to you, this does not mean that the knowledge is wrong or unreliable. It simply means it's partial, okay? If you say to me, "Please explain mathematics to me." Huh, there are lots of ways to explain mathematics. I could say to you, "One plus one is two. Two plus two is four, that is mathematics." And then there's Albert Einstein, that's a completely different approach to mathematics. And that's how it is with us. Spiritually speaking, and in terms of divine revelation, we do pretty well on two plus two is four. But there is a vast realm of infinite divine knowledge which Deuteronomy 29:29 calls the secret things that belong to God that we do not know...we do not know.

Do we know enough? We know enough, enough to be saved, right? Enough to come to the true God, enough to come to the true Christ, enough to believe the Bible and to know that the Bible is true. In fact, it is so clear that a child can understand it, "Except you become as a little child, you can't enter the Kingdom of God." "A wayfaring man though he be a fool need not error," Isaiah 35:8 says. Well why do we have such limited revelation? Answer, because we have limited minds. And whatever Adam's mind was like, ours is significantly diminished from his, right? That's what the Fall did. The Fall corrupted our minds. Our corrupt minds, even aided by the Holy Spirit and exposed to the revelation of God, can only come so far. So as essential as preaching, or prophecy is, as essential as knowledge is, it's just partial. And some day we're going to have full knowledge.

Go back to the text. Verse 12, "Then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." Can you comprehend that? Wow! Some day you will have full knowledge. Guess what, I'll be out of a job, you won't need a preacher, you won't need a teacher, you won't need any books, there will be no reading in heaven there will be no necessary path to follow to gain more knowledge. You will be known even...you will know, rather, even as you are known. That's why he says in verse 10, "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away."

Now what are we talking about here? Well, it should be obvious on the surface, although it's been a...this particular statement has been a battle ground, verse 10. When the perfect is come, then all the partial will be done away. Tongues is already gone, but prophecy and knowledge vital to the life of the church, vital to man. That is going to stop when the perfect is come.

The Greek word is *teleos...teleos*, many, many uses. But I think “perfect” is a good translation. It’s used in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” The word means the final, complete state. There will come a perfection that will preclude the need for prophecy and knowledge. You won’t need to be taught. You won’t need to hear preachers. We don’t have that now. Verse 12, “Now we see in a mirror dimly.” And by the way, the only mirrors that we know of in the ancient world were rather dim because they were made out of metal...made out of metal. And so they had rather dim impressions, vague shadowy reflections. So we look in a kind of a mirror that is not clear to us. We see in part. We see darkly. Or literally the word is the word for a riddle, we look in this mirror and there’s an indistinct vision, so we say that the best we can do in this life is to see a kind of representation that is not crystal clear. But one day, and I love this, we will see face to face. We won’t look in a mirror, we won’t be looking at a reflection, we’ll be looking at a face and it won’t be distorted.

The revelation that comes to us from God is a reflection of God. Is it not? Where do we see the glory of Christ? Here, don’t we? As you gaze into the glory of Christ, you’re changed into His image, but even as we look into Scripture, it is not like seeing Him face to face. The ancient city, by the way, in Corinth was famous for its mirrors, made of polished metal. Even at their best they were dim and they were clouded because metal deteriorated and they had certain flaws. So our present knowledge is dim. It’s true knowledge. It’s a true representation. But some day, face to face, some day we will know as we are known, perfect vision, perfect sight, we won’t be singing, “Be Thou my vision,” because He will be.

Now what is this perfect thing? What is this? People have really battled over this. I’ll just give you a little exercise here. Some people say it’s the completion of the New Testament. Some people say the perfect thing that ends the need of prophecy and knowledge is the New Testament. That just doesn’t make sense because would the Corinthians have assumed that? I mean, you have to interpret the Bible in the way you would assume the people who heard it would have interpreted it, or the people who read it would have interpreted it. They would have no reason to assume that Scripture would be the perfect thing. To them to be perfect was to be like God. And when the Scripture came, was there then no need for knowledge? Was there then no need for prophecy? Well if you want to limit those gifts only to the revelational aspect of them, that it had to be only a divine revelation to qualify as gift of prophecy or gift of the word of knowledge, those gifts would have ceased in the apostolic era when revelation was ended. But how can you limit those that way? That seems arbitrary.

The Apostles went on preaching. They received Scripture. They wrote it down and they went on preaching and teaching and the next generation did the same and every generation since down to modern times. Furthermore, in the future according to Joel 2 and even the prophecy that is repeated from Joel in the Pentecost sermon of Peter, says, “In the last days I’ll pour out My Spirit on all mankind and your sons and daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and dream dreams.” So there’s going to be prophecy in the last days, prophecy in the future. Prophecy doesn’t end with the finishing of the canon of the Scripture at the end of the first century. There will be prophecy in the Kingdom, in the Millennial Kingdom.

It literally says, going back to verse 8, “Prophecy will be abolished, done away.” Very, very strong verb. It will be banished. So if it was banished by the arrival of Scripture, then there is no continuing ministry of knowledge or wisdom or prophecy. And that doesn’t explain the statement in verse 12. “Now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face.” What do you mean we see in a mirror dimly and Scripture then becomes the face-to-face revelation? Moses might be unconvinced, Genesis 32:30 “I

have seen God face to face.” That was a very different experience than any other experience. And do we now know because we have Scripture the way we are known? Do we have the same knowledge about God that God has about us? Do we have knowledge that equals the knowledge of those in heaven? We just read that we only know in part.

Other people think that the perfect thing is the Rapture of the church. But there’s really no evidence for that here, and there’s no discussion of the Rapture. Others think it’s the maturing of the church. And once the church is matured, all these gifts cease. Once the church is Raptured, all these gifts cease. The problem is, after the Rapture you have the Tribulation and there’s all kinds of preaching going on and all kinds of revelation comes from God and is reiterated and then you have the Millennial Kingdom following that for a thousand years where there is more preaching and more knowledge and the Bible tells us through the Old Testament prophets, “The whole earth is filled with knowledge.”

So it doesn’t fit in to the Rapture of the church, or the maturing of the church, or even the return of Christ to set up His Kingdom. That’s not going to end prophecy, that’s going to unleash a great explosion of preaching across the face of the earth during the thousand-year-millennial reign of Christ and also knowledge will fill the earth. It will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. In fact, during the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, if you read Isaiah 11, Isaiah 41, Isaiah 54, there will be a knowledge explosion on the planet, the likes of which the world has never seen. This planet will be so inundated in unparallel teaching and preaching under the power of the Spirit of God and through Christ Himself and all His living representatives in the Kingdom, and even the glorified church that comes back and proclaims the truth. The greatest, in fact, explosion of knowledge and preaching in all of the history of the world will occur during the time of the Kingdom.

Isaiah describes it this way, “It will come about that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, be raised above the hills and all nations will stream into it.” That’s the Kingdom. They’re all streaming in. “Many people will come and say, ‘Come, let’s go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us concerning His ways and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem will go forth. The Law from Zion.’” Knowledge will spread. Preaching will spread. Teaching and preaching, that’s...that’s dominating the Kingdom. Isaiah 12; Isaiah 29; Isaiah 30; Isaiah 32; Jeremiah, a number of places.

So clearly there’s teaching and preaching in the Kingdom. If that’s the case, then it hasn’t been abolished, right? It’s not always revelatory at that point, it may be the reiteration of a previous revelation. When I preach, I’m not getting revelation from God in the immediate sense, I’m getting it here in the intermediate sense. It was placed in the Scripture and I draw it from the Scripture. So what is the perfect thing? It can only be one thing and that is, probably if you have a MacArthur Study Bible, you’ve read this already, it’s there...I think...the eternal state, the final new heaven and new earth. That’s the perfect thing. That’s the final end.

After the Millennial Kingdom when the eternal heaven becomes the abode of God’s people, then you have perfection...then you have the end. There will be until that time the spread of preaching, knowledge. But when that time comes, and this planet implodes in a holocaust, in atomic implosion and the elements melt with fervent heat and the universe, as we know, goes out of existence in a reverse of the big bang. I know scientists love the big bang, they’re big on that. And you know what? They’re right. It exploded into existence only it exploded into existence the way it is now in six days,

not six hundred billion years. It was a big bang, it was everything in six days out of nothing.

Scientists talk a lot about the end. They understand the expanding universe. You hear them talk about expanding universe, gravity can only hold it for so long and it keeps expanding and expanding and expanding and expanding and it's tearing at the fabric of gravity that holds it together. And eventually it will just completely fly apart and it won't take billions of more years to undo it anymore than it took billions of years to make it. And when that happens, then the eternal state, the new heaven and the new earth, and we won't need to be preaching and teaching, we won't go to school because we will know as we are known and with full knowledge will come full joy, full peace, full usefulness and most important, a love the likes of which we can't even comprehend.

Face-to-face, what does that mean? When we see the Lord face to face, like Moses did with the veil off and he only saw a portion. There's no direct vision of God here, is there? Even Christ was an indirect vision. You remember Moses when he saw the glory of God, saw only God's back parts hidden behind a rock because if he had seen it all, it would have incinerated him. So, there will be a time when we will be sinless and we will not be incinerated when we see Him face to face. People in the Kingdom will not see God face to face. We don't see Him now face to face. We will when the perfect comes. Gifts are temporary, they're partial. Thirdly, they're elementary. They're elementary. This is really a parenthesis, verse 11, "When I was a child I used to speak as a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things." This is a personal word from Paul to illustrate his point. I spoke like a child, tongues maybe? I understood like a child, prophecy maybe. I thought like a child, knowledge maybe. Certainly they're all there whether in specificity or not. These gifts are both temporary, partial and as well they're elementary, they're the ABCs. They're for our infancy. This is our childhood, folks. As old as we may be, as knowledgeable in the Word of God as we may be, we're in our childhood, we're in our childhood.

Paul and all other boys understood that. You know, they had to go through what was called a bar mitzvah. They became a son of the Law at the age of twelve. In Greece you became a cadet at the age of 18 and you had your head shaved and offered all your hair to the gods and this was a definite demarcation between boyhood and manhood. And the Romans, for them it was between 14 and 16, at a given moment, a boy turned in his what they called a toga pre-texta and he was given a liberalia because he became a man. Well as long as we live in this life, we're in our childhood. This is our infancy. We struggle to understand but we aren't even close to being mature enough to take it all in. But some day in the way that prophecy is done away, in the way that knowledge is done away, using the same verb, I put away my childish things. The day will come when all that childishness is gone and I will be face to face with Christ and I will know as I am known, full knowledge, full, perfect communion with the Lord.

And here's the point. At that day only one thing will be left, what will it be? Love...love. I think love is the most exalted human emotion, is it not? More songs written about love than any other emotion. Humanity is in love with the idea of love, even on a superficial level. We will enter in to the glory of heaven and forever live in perfect supernatural love. And so the crescendo comes in verse 13, "And now faith," you need that for salvation, right? And to trust, and hope, you need that for security. But faith and hope are temporary. There will come a time when you don't need faith because you will have everything in your hand that you believed for. You don't need hope because you will have all your hope realized. The greatest of these is love because love is the only thing that is forever. Faith will be replaced by sight. Hope will be replaced by reality. And love will never be replaced by anything.

Since this is true, all of that is set up, folks, all that is set up for the first two words in verse 1 of chapter 14, what are they? “Do...what?...pursue love...pursue love...pursue love.” It’s the only eternal thing. Your gifts, temporary. Your abilities, temporary. Your talents, temporary. Your relationships, temporary. Your ministries, your possessions, even your faith, even your hope, temporary. Love links you to eternity, so follow after love. Let’s pray.

To be known as those who love, to be identified as Your children because we love is what You ask of us, what You require of us and what You enable us to do. Fill our hearts with love. Humble us because only humble people love, proud people don’t love, they love only themselves. So humble us that we might love cause love alone links us to eternity. We look forward to that day when we will live in the unbounded, indescribable, unimaginable joy of everlasting, perfect love. We have a taste of love here, Your love for us, human love, family love, marital love, love of friendship, even love of beauty and the love of the delights of life, these kinds of things are just the nibblings of that kind of love that grasps our souls in the gospel and causes our hearts to be devoted to Christ totally. We know that love and we know what it is to love each other. But this is just a very, very small taste of the eternal joy of perfect love that awaits us. Heaven is not for us to be everlasting duty, it is not to be for us simply everlasting obedience, it is to be everlasting love. And out of that perfect love, out of the exhilarating, joyous, unbounded love will come an eagerness and happiness and satisfaction and fulfillment that knows no limits as we do that duty that You assigned to us and as we obey You in perfection. Fill us with love and may we be known for our love that others may know that we belong to You. We love You, Lord, because You first loved us. Amen.

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