

Thus far we've been reading of love's temporary aspects. Now Paul turns his attention to the eternal atmosphere.

1 Cor 13:8

8 Love never fails. (eternity is where love started and that's where it is destined to live forever.)

Jesus said, I will never leave you nor forsake you!

We know that God has a lot of attributes but most of them are adjectives.

The gifts the Corinthians prized most will one day cease, but love will continue on.

1 John 4:4

4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (God loves us so much that He's willing to reside in you.)

1 John 4:11-12

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

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

1 John 4:18

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Child is "an infant or a baby."

Paul was telling the Corinthians that they needed to grow up.

Jesus once set a child before the disciples

- and told them that they were to become as little children
- He meant for them to be childlike.

We need to depend on the Lord in all situations.

But we are not to remain as babies.

- We need to mature, grow up!

When Paul says he put away childish things when he became a man,

- he's speaking of the things he did as a child

Unfortunately, some Christians never mature,

- They want to be spoon fed their entire life.

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

The only way to truly love is to love God first!

Chapter 14:

There were a lot of selfish motives in the church of Corinth.

We know the NT anticipates the gift prophecy as foretold in the O.T.

The book of acts 2 quotes from the O.T. book of Joel

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,  
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your young men shall see visions,  
Your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;  
And they shall prophesy.

1 Cor 14:1-5

1 Pursue love (Agape), and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

Paul is going to explain how these gifts work when exercised in an assembly.

First he says to pursue love.

- The Greek word means to “to chase, to hunt or to run after”

He also says to desire spiritual gifts.

That means to be zealous or to profess affection in order to gain someone as a follower as in Rev 3:19.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Paul says to especially desire the gift of prophecy.

One of the most notable prophets in the NT is Agabus.

In Acts 11 where we first read of Agabus

- he stood up and showed
- that there would be a famine
- throughout the whole world.

In Acts 21 while Paul was in Caesarea, Agabus took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

The contrast between tongues and prophecy:

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

The gift of tongues when used properly, in the proper setting, is not used for speaking to man but to God.

There is a difference between tongues and prophecy,

- praying in tongues and the interpretation does not equal prophecy.

Notice the contrast between the gifts.

When someone speaks in tongues

- it's directed towards God, not to men.

Paul says verse 3, he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

Prophecy is from God to man.

If you have the gift of prophecy,

- you edify those around you.

If you have the gift of tongues,

- you edify one person, yourself.

Paul says if you prophesy you will also exhort. The Word Study dictionary defines exhortation as encouragement for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer in the faith.

Paul says that prophecy should bring comfort to men.

- It should encourage others.

In verse 4 Paul makes it perfectly clear who is edified when tongues or prophecy is exercised!

4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

The church in Corinth didn't seem to be too concerned with others,

- they lacked in love.

Next Paul begins to look at practical problems that would arise when using the gifts out of order.

1 Cor 14:6-12

6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?

In other words, if you cannot understand what I'm saying when I'm speaking in tongues, what good is it to you!

In order to illustrate this to them he uses the illustration of musical instruments.

7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?

8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?

People were well acquainted with musical instruments and they knew the call of battle.

- So Paul appeals to what they know, music and the military.

9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

It was as if the Corinthians were speaking into the wind.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. 11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.

When you visit a foreign country most everything is different from what you're used to. Example:

- Culture,
- Attire,
- currency etc.

12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

1 Cor 14:13-19

13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Four different times Paul says, "I will." This tells me that we can have control over our actions.

16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Why would I say amen to your prayers if I don't know what you prayed.

Now Paul begins to tell the Corinthians how the gifts are to operate properly.

18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; (We never read of Paul standing in front of an assembly and speaking in tongues because it was private to him) 19 yet in the church (in a corporate setting) I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

He wasn't trying to impress anyone nor was he trying to discourage them from using the gift of tongues.

As we're read thru this chapter,

- we're learning that the best use of tongues is in private, not in public worship.

1 Cor 14:20-25

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes ("in regard to evil be infants), but in understanding be mature.

21 In the law it is written:

"With men of other tongues and other lips  
I will speak to this people;  
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,"

says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

Some would think he's contradicting himself.

He's is referring to an OT passage here in verse 21 from Isaiah 28:11-12.

During that time in Israel's history, the prophet Isaiah had been sent to warn God's people to turn and repent from their sin.

At the time,

- both the Southern and Northern kingdoms
- were committing sins that
- would destroy their nations and its people.

Not only that, they had a strong military which they trusted instead of the Lord.

God warned He was going to raise an army, the Assyrians, who would destroy them.

The purpose for God doing this was so that some would repent and turn back to Him.

We're told in verse 8 of Isaiah 28 that the tables were full of vomit and filth; No place is clean.

So the Lord now had a special message for the Northern kingdom.

They had rejected God's prophet and they rejected God.

Isa 28:11-12

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue  
He will speak to this people,  
12 To whom He said, "This is the rest with which  
You may cause the weary to rest,"  
And, "This is the refreshing";  
Yet they would not hear.

Because they refused to repent

- they would face the terrifying judgement of invasion and war.

Isaiah prophesied to them in a language they understood, but the people didn't listen, in fact, they made fun of Isaiah and rejected the message.

He'd spoken to them in a language they understood,

- but they did not believe it.

They were in that context unbelievers of the message.

And due to their rejection of the words of Isaiah, the Lord sent a sign thru the Assyrians who would come speaking a foreign language.

God would rather speak to His people could understand, but their repeated sins made this impossible.

He *had* spoken to them thru Isaiah in a language they'd understand and they refused to repent.

Now He had to speak in a foreign tongue,

- and this meant judgment.

The Assyrians came in speaking a foreign language and led them away captive.

Now, the Southern Kingdom of Judah didn't get away easy. They were guilty as well.

Instead of turning to the Lord,

- they turned to Egypt
- to form an alliance for protection against the Assyrians.

Isaiah called it a "covenant with death."

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. This is a very difficult passage to understand.

The context of Isaiah 28 is that the Lord is going to speak to His people, not to the pagan people.

Isa 28:11-12

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