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## I. Context —

- A. As we get started this morning, I wanted to make sure that we place our text in its current context as we prepare to navigate through it. Our text this morning will be 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, not the last 13 verses of chapter 12, those I am going to leave for Dan when he comes back, which I will talk about here shortly. The general context that we have been in has been on better understanding Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:1 — **Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.**
- B. Of the questions and concerns Paul had received about the Church in Corinth, one those issues was on Spiritual Gifts, mainly because of an over emphasis on the gift of Tongues, Paul's main diatribe against it will come in Chapter 14 as he speaks of a gift that is more relevant to believers than tongues. And this emphasis of speaking in tongues had started to ruin the fellowship, unity and function of the Church in Corinth. People were constantly striving to obtain tongues or use tongues as a form of self-acknowledgement, self-importance and pride in the body. And so Paul has thus responded to that by showing different spiritual gifts that function in the Church, and that we cannot merely see the use of gifts as our importance because everyone has been given a gift for a very specific purpose and function in the BODY of Christ or the BODY of the Church. 1 Corinthians 12:11 — **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.**
- C. And as we get going this morning we are going to start our reading not in chapter 13, but actually back in chapter 12, starting in verse 22, because Paul actually gives another dimension to the issue of seeking after and elevating one spiritual gift amongst the many, which is that we not only miss the unity in diversification of the BODY. That each gift has been given to provide the Church with diverse gifts that will bring unity to the BODY; but that the elevation of a single gift also completely discredits the other gifts. Particularly the ones that are less seen, that are considered gross or in need of hiding. **A commentator put it like this (and I am paraphrasing), that we might see the beauty**

**of the eye and the eloquence of the mouth, and completely forget that both are only functioning because the lungs are working hard under the surface. The gifts that are more visible are, all only truly functioning because the other gifts that are less visible, are being administrated and worked out faithfully.**

D. And with that, let us start our reading, with 1 Corinthians 12:22,

II. Read — 1 Corinthians 12:22–13:1-3 :

A. **22 On the contrary, [m]it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those *members* of the body which we [n]deem less honorable, [o]n these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, 25 so that there may be no [d]ivision in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is [g]honed, all the members rejoice with it.**

B. **27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has [r]appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then [s]miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* [t]miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts.**

C. And I show you a still more excellent way.

D. **1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 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. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body [a]to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.**

### III. The Controversy

- A. One last thing before we really dissect verse 1-3 and get into the root of the controversy; I want to point to verse 26 of chapter 12, which read **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.** As I stated earlier, Pastor Dan is not with us this morning, and so I wanted to not only recognize and honor him but also to let you all know why he is not here this morning. As we are gathering this morning, Dan is on his way to Washington D.C.. About a month and a half ago, Dan received a call from the organization *Christians Unified for Israel*, asking him to go and speak before some Senators and Representatives in the Capital. And to lead them in a Bible Study. Although this didn't come from any direct association from Dan with this organization, I can't think of a better illustration of God using those that he has intentionally gifted, to go speak in front of national leaders, specifically with the intention of preaching and teaching the unadulterated truth of the Gospel. That is why Dan is not here this morning.
- B. So what is our controversy? What is it that the Church in Corinth was missing? That had no understanding as to how to use their gifts because they never approach them with the right motivation. The church was missing the most important component when it came to spiritual gifts, and the life of the Church, specifically that they would love and have love for one another.
- C. Chapter 13 is so highly seen but all people as the definitive chapter on love, as verses 4-7 give us such a beautiful and rich understanding of how love acts. Many theologians have pointed to the fact that this chapter is the Magnum Opus of Paul's writing, the most

eloquent and beautifully written of his. To the point that some don't think he wrote it, which is down-right silly on its face. And we cannot deny the great impact and depth of what Paul is getting to here in this chapter, but what I am about to say is going to come across controversial. And that is, that most of the time, if not almost all of the time, we are completely missing the point of this chapter, because we quickly turn to this chapter and completely disengage from its context. And in doing so we actually discredit the intent from the Holy Spirit in the process.

- D. There is a hermeneutical tool that is used when traversing scripture, that every verse pulls meaning and understanding from itself. Or another way to say it, is that the Bible interprets the Bible. It is one of the main reasons that this Church expositors the Bible every Sunday, going verse by verse, allowing specifically the context to be the main driver in our interpretation of its meaning. Contrary to popular belief, there is only one point or interpretation for all of scripture, one point to draw applications from. Not a point that we read into, this is called Eisegesis, where we read our current context into the verses. One of my favorite examples of this is Philippians 4:13 — **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** To read our context into that verse means I can say, “since Christ is with me, I can score the winning play in our softball game later today” or “I can go and face my fears of doing \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blank”. And where scripture does defend that those things, specifically not living in fear. Those are not the principle that Paul is stating. Paul, who while writing to the Philippians, is jailed, hungry, lonely, and yet he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him, while he is in prison. That he will still be able to preach the Gospel and God will use him to bring people to Christ. And we can know, that God will always sustain and use those that are faithful to Him in sharing the Gospel, regardless of the circumstance. That is called Exegesis, or pulling the meaning out of the text, rather than reading it in.
- E. And when we come to 1 Corinthians 13, so often we turn here to be told what love is, how we can define it. Better ways to live out our marriages, or to treat other people on the street. And the truth is, that this is an extremely definitive passage of scripture, and

we can never forsake looking at these verses when we speak of love, that isn't Paul's main point. His main point is, that if you are attempting to use God's spiritual gifts, that God has given you, without Love, you are doing it wrong. And not just how we think of love, as a gushy, feelings based love. Or that "Love is Love", which we are going to talk about shortly, but that we are to love as God Loves. And so we have hear to about it from His perspective and not our own.

#### IV. What is Love?

- A. So let's define love. There are four words in the Greek that are used for love: Storge (Parental Love), Phileo (Brotherly/Affectionate Love), Eros (Sexual/Erotic Love), and Agape. The word for love that is found here in the 1 Corinthians 13, is the word agape. Agape is referenced in somewhere between 110-120 verses in the New Testament. And prior to the writing of the New Testament, this word is almost non-existent in the Secular Vernacular of that day. The Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, basically grab ahold of this word a brought such magnificent light into it, because it be defined in a way that only God or those empowered by the Holy Spirit can truly love.
- B. Contrary to our immediate thought of love, when we are commanded to love in scripture, we are not being commanded to feel loving towards someone. We are not being told to be romantically in love with our spouse, or to have deep affections for our brothers and sisters in the Church. These feelings should follow true agape love, but are rather the greek words of Eros and Phileo, that are used for love. Rather Agape love is an action that is required from the Church because it is an action that we first see in God. Even more specifically we see each person in the Godhead show us this love, and it is only from those actions that we can even understand what it means to actually love.
- C. God is Love! And is Manifested through Jesus Christ! And is testified to by the Holy Spirit!

1. 1 John 4:7-8 reads, **7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is [a]born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.** We are literally being told here that God Himself, God the Father is in an of himself Love. Meaning that every action, and manifestation of one of his attributes, whether it be his sovereignty, his grace, his wrath, or his omnipotence are done in Love. All of them are done and through His love. The clearest way that we see his love manifested, is through His son Jesus Christ. That in God's plan of redemption, in order to satiate His own wrath, God had to send His own son to this world, the only one who was strong enough to withstand the wrath of God, because He is God. As well as a human who could bear any punishment from God.
  
2. Continuing in 1 John 4:9-10 states, **9 By this the love of God was manifested [b]in us, that God has sent His [c]only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** Not only was God willing to send His son to be sacrificed on behalf of people that have slandered Him, mocked Him, blatantly disobeyed Him. Jesus does endure the scorn, ridicule and false witnesses without ever retaliating, all that He might become the propitiation for our sins. While I was in Bible College I was exposed to this word Propitiation, and I became absolutely enamored with it. The idea that God not only was willing to use His own Son to die on a cross, to place all of my sin and the condemnation that I deserved (alongside all others who would be saved) and then take all of Christ's righteousness and place it inside of me, mold me by it, move me through it, justify me before God was some thing that I fell deeply in love with. I was so enamored with it, that while I was working one day, which at the time I was at the YMCA working in they Child Care. I was sitting with some students in middle school, and one of girls was working on here spelling lists, but felt as if she had mastered her words already, that she asked for another word, so I happily obliged by giving her my favorite word,



PROPITIATION. Which she immediately gave me a strange look, and asked “WHAT?!”

3. Propitiation succinctly shows us that this love of God, that permeates His attributes, is something that is self-sacrificing, outwardly focused, and reaches across the aisle to affect even enemies of God. It is not merely applied to those who are already in good standing with God. This is one of the key elements of Agape love, Paul takes this point further in Romans 5:7-10, when he says, *7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; [d]though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified [e]by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved [f]by His life.*
4. The love of God is not only self-sacrificing, outwardly focused, and freely given to His enemies that they made be saved from eternal damnation, but He freely gives us the Holy Spirit to show us that He loves us, that He will always take care of us, comfort us, pours out His grace to us, transform us, conform us into the image of His son. This is all promised by indwelling of the Spirit of God inside of us, 1 John 3:23-24, *This is His commandment, that we [l]believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He [m]commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*
5. In return, we are told throughout the New Testament that if the Love of God truly abides in us, we have been truly affected by the love of God, then we too will love. We will love God and we will love other people. Because we have both been the ones to truly experience the love of God, but also because that is one of the main fruits or evidences of the Holy Spirit residing in us. Galatians 5:22, *2 But the fruit of the*

*Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* This list is not full of items that we have to attain, although at times they are commanded, but this list is given to show what being transformed truly looks like. How do we know that one is truly saved, it isn't because someone starts going to Church more, or reading their Bibles more, or even seeing the world from a Biblical Perspective. Although those things are good and must be sought after by those who are saved, but the truest test is to see whether a person has been transformed internally. Do you bear the fruit of the Spirit. Do you embody self-control, or speak kindly? Do you start to see your actions guiding by this love that Jesus Christ pours out for us on the cross.

6. This is control, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is exactly why Paul is bringing love into the picture here in 1 Corinthians 13. When the Church here in Corinth, only sees that which has been given to them from God, as means to better show off their importance to the world and the Church. When the truth could not be more the opposite. Where they saw pride and vanity as the motivation for their Gifts, seeking after bigger and better gifts for their own self worth, Paul is going to show them a greater way, a greater motivation for using their gifts.
7. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, **1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 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. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body [a]to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.**

V. Paul gives us three examples that show us the depravity of carnal use of spiritual gifts, without love. He starts off in verse one, speaking in reference to tongues.

1. Tongues

- a) "If we speak in the tongues of men", as in we are able to go and speak any and all languages to all people. Or we speak even tongues of angels. We are nothing but empty and obnoxious noise. The reference here to tongues of angels is not specifically speaking of the ability to actually converse with angels, or even that angels have some sort of special language, unannounced to us. There is no specific teaching on this throughout the Bible, cause even when Isaiah is brought before the throne of God, in Isaiah 6, Isaiah doesn't hear a special language, unknown language that is interpreted for him. He merely hears the seraphim calling out, "***Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.*** (Is 6:3)".
- b) Rather the point that Paul is getting too, is that even if you were the most talent, eloquent speaker, in any language so needed, but did not use it out of love, you are the equivalent of a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. Obnoxious and without any sort of edifying or God glorifying worth. This would completely wreck the Corinthians who sought tongues so highly!
2. Prophecy, All Mysteries and All Knowledge, and have faith to move all mountains.
- a) Paul doesn't stop there though in spiritual gifts, because he states, **2 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.** The Gift of Prophecy, which is further defined in 14:3, that one who prophesies speaks "edification and exhortation and consolation." Or in other words seen as the proclamation of the truths of God for building up and encouragement and admonition. That even if we have the gift to proclaim truth boldly, but do not are not motivated by and acting out of love we are nothing. There is no extra worth to be found in prophecy of that sort!

- b) To know all mysteries and all knowledge, both of these gifts speak of a greater ability to understand the word of God. To know all mysteries is to see and understand the will and revelation of God, and easily apply it to everyday life. Where to have the gift of knowledge is to understand the deep mysteries of God as are revealed in scripture. Both of these gifts are usually manifested as a form of teaching or speaking gifts, and may come from those that are seemingly uneducated people and yet supernaturally have given a rich understanding to the Word of God. And yet Paul is telling us that even you have all of this knowledge and wisdom, but cannot exercise them out of love for other people, that are still worth nothing!
- c) There is a great illustration of what it looks like to have these gifts come down through the Spirit, and yet to not exercise them in love and it comes from the Book of Jonah. The general story being that God comes to the prophet Jonah, and tells him to travel to the people of Ninevah, who are a strong and evil people, and enemies to the Israelites, and to go and preach repentance. Jonah, being upset about this flees to go to Tarshish, which is in the opposite direction of Ninevah. God sends a storm that scares the living daylights out of the sailors that are transporting Jonah, and Jonah knowing that the storm is because of him, has the sailors throw him in the ocean. The storm immediately ceases and a fish comes and swallows Jonah whole. After Jonah repents in the belly of the fish, God spits him out and repeats his command to go and preach repentance in the pagan city of Ninevah. After Jonah does this, the people actually repent and God stays His hand of judgement. And this is how Jonah responds to Ninevah, not being destroyed. ***“But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, ‘Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.*”**

*Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.' The LORD said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'* (Jonah 4:1-3). Jonah was so upset that God would pour out His love on the Ninevites, that he would rather die than continue to be an instrument used by God. In which even God responds with a “why are you even angry”. That is what it looks like to prophesy and have all mysteries and knowledge and yet have no love.

- d) Back in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul also states that even if you have the gift of Faith, this is not the gift of saving faith which all believers have, but the supernatural gift of faith, that believes that God does and will move in amazing ways. This is sometimes referred to as the gift of prayer, because the people with these gifts, live their lives completely dependent on prayer. An example to being that of George Mueller, who was from Bristol, England. At the time there were mass amounts of orphans roaming the streets, the Mueller felt led to start an orphanage to be take care of these children. He would bring in as many children as he could and feed them, clothe them, house them and share the Gospel with them. But he never did fundraisers, he never worked. Rather every time they had a physical need, Mueller would lead everybody in the orphanage in prayer for their needs to be met. And God would always provide for their needs. Mueller would go on to open several orphanages at a time, it is reported that Mueller took care of over 10,000 orphans. That is what it looks like to have exercise the gift of faith in love. Any other use of the faith, that is not attempting to love like that leaves a man with nothing to show for it.
3. Self-Sacrifice (Give Away all possessions and burned at the Stake)
- a) In case we are prone to only think that doing things out of love only applies to spiritual gifts, Paul even brings in acts of self-sacrifice to say that even those actions can be done in pride and conceit rather than in love.

- b) Paul says in verse 3, **3 And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body [a]to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.** In showing us the importance of all our actions being done out of love, Paul is even telling us that even if we sell all that we own to give away, that too can be done in vain. That there is no spiritual benefit attributed to it. We can relinquish ourselves from this world, that we wouldn't be tied to anything and yet not love in giving it away. That we can be so prideful and haughty that even the needs of another are a secondary motivation to fulfilling our own desire of sacrifice, or looking a certain.
- c) Paul also uses the example of being burned and as a form of self-sacrifice. It is unclear as to exactly what Paul is speaking about here, as bodies being burned as a form of immense persecution by the Romans had not yet started. There is some debate over whether the Greek word for burned, means burned or boasting. As to surrender one's body to boasting, as in 2 Corinthians 12:5, **5 On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.** Thomas Schreiner points out though, that the surrender and body put together in this manner, reciprocates the same phrasing in the Hebrew found in Daniel, as Daniel's friends surrender over their bodies to be put in the fiery furnace. Meaning that Paul more than likely has sacrifice or martyrdom on his mind. That being the case, this is a remarkable statement, that we can go all the way to the stake without even having the love of God being the internal motivator.
- d) This idea of sacrifice not sufficient enough without a true love for both God and other people brings no profit to you or to me, but is all done in vanity.

VI. Our main principle and take away of these three verses and what will lead to the whole reason for this chapter, is that if we separate the Spiritual things and Spiritual Gifts from the internal motivation of the love of God, we are leading lives in the Church body in

selfishness, pride, and robbing the glory of God that we might cast it on ourselves. Because we cannot get ourselves out of the picture.

VII. So what?

A. Rejecting Authenticity

1. I want to give us two application points as we leave this morning, based on that principle of being motivated to love, rather than motivated to interact out of pride. The first point of application comes from outside of the culture. Although some churches do suffer from a similar emphasis on tongues that Paul is refuting in these chapters, there is a greater threat to our understanding of spiritual gifts today. Our culture is absolutely obsessed with this idea of the self, the world is constantly telling us that however we feel inside is exactly how we shall live. We see this manifested through the Homosexual and Transgender movement, that I feel opposite of how God has made me and whom I should be attracted to, and therefore I must be more true to how I feel or how I think I should live. And then it is justified by saying well love is love, no matter where it is found. And before anyone says well that doesn't apply to me, realize that this same type of thinking permeates through things like how the Church is to function, men in pulpits without women preaching; or the family, that men should be the heads of their homes and that wives are to submit to them. Or that if I have the gift of prophecy, I should be front and center because I'm just as important. Or my gift of faith is so powerful look what I can do for the Church. God and the Spirit moving in us, gets replaced with ME! The more that we listen to the culture and allow that to permeate our minds, the more that we replace God as the authority of our lives, we are led astray by the ideologies of this world. Paul here is calling us not only to live our Spiritual Lives in the Church, but that all that we do is to be done out of love. A love that puts God at the forefront of our minds, and people as who we want to build up; not ourselves.

2. Or else we will continue to take part in Church to make our name bigger, than making Christ's name bigger. To come and edify, and then allow others to build us up, rather than to do it ourselves.
3. We talked about love earlier, and we described what love is, but scripture also tells us what love is not. 1 John 2:15-17, ***15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*** The word used there in verse 15 for the love of the world is Agapao, which is the verb form of Agape.
4. This is a warning that we are not to merely just go out and just love randomly because God is love. To take it back to our original point, Love is not Love. We cannot merely equate the fact that when people talk about love they automatically mean love in the same sense that Paul is talking about it here in this letter. A.W. Tozer in this same vein, in his book Knowledge of the Holy states, "Equating love with God is a major mistake which has produced much unsound religious philosophy and has brought forth a spate of vaporous poetry completely out of accord with the Holy Scriptures and altogether of another climate from that of historic Christianity. (Tozer, P. 151-152)"

#### B. Love is a Spiritual Fruit

1. The second point of application that I want to make is that as we stated earlier, Love is fruit of the Spirit. Love is a commandment and Love is an essential part of the Church. Jesus before He went to the cross told His disciples in John 13:33-35, ***33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'*** ***34 A***



*new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” The Church is to be known by the way that we live. When we love and build each other up in the use of our spiritual gifts, we take part in fellowship or the greek word for Koinonia, which a deep rich fellowship that cannot be found in the world. Because that fellowship watched over by God the Father, bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, and administered through the Holy Spirit in each and everyone of us through Love. Love that is patient and kind, but also hates unrighteous and rejoices with truth, and bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Which just points us all back to Christ and the love that He should us on the Cross.

2. There was a secular philosopher in the 2nd Century who summarized what he saw the Christian Church to be, and I want to read this, and let it be both a challenge and encouragement to you that what we talked about today makes massive ripple effects in a world that can only promote the self.
3. ““They abstain from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense that is to come in another world. As for their servants or handmaids or children, they persuade them to become Christians by the love they have for them; and when they have become so, they call them without distinction, brothers. They do not worship strange gods; and they walk in all humility and kindness and falsehood is not found among them and they love one another. When they see the stranger they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as over a true brother; for they do not call brothers those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit and in God.
  - a) And there is among them a man that is poor and needy and if they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast two or three days that they may supply the need with the necessary food.

- b) They observe scrupulously the commandment of their Messiah; they live honestly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and all hours on account of the goodness of God toward them, they praise and laud Him and over their food and their drink, they render Him thanks.
- c) And if any righteous person of their number passes away from this world, they rejoice and give thanks to God and they follow his body as though he were moving from one place to another. And when a child is born to them, they praise God, and if again it chances to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins.
- d) Such is the law of the Christians and such is their conduct' (Aristides, 2nd Century Secular Philosopher).