

# Love Never Ends

## *1 Corinthians 13:8-13*

### Overview

In this text, Paul arrives at the climax of his argument on the superiority of love. Everything else will pass away ... but love will remain. In this, the Corinthians who were so focused on obtaining the flashiest of supernatural spiritual gifts, needed to understand they were not seeking the greatest thing. What they were seeking after was temporary. What was permanent concerned them little.

### The Bigger Picture

Love was missing from the Corinthian Church. Ungodliness, materialism, pride, selfishness, indulgence, hatred, sexual immorality, jealousy, and a whole host of other sins had filled their hearts. It is seen in their division, carnality, litigious behavior, and attitudes towards spiritual gifts. They had been called to point the way to Christ ... and instead they were allowing their world to impact their lives. The core spiritual ingredient, love, was missing. When that spiritual virtue is absent, nothing will go right. Someone has said that the presence of love “covers a multitude of sins, 1 Peter 4.8, and that the lack of love causes a multitude of sins.” That certainly seems to be the case at Corinth. What they needed (and what we need too) is the greatest of spiritual virtues ... love. The quality that most characterizes God Himself should characterize His children.

### The Text

#### NLT

1 Corinthians 13:8–13 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup> Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! <sup>9</sup> Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! <sup>10</sup> But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. <sup>12</sup> Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. <sup>13</sup> Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

#### CSB:

1 Corinthians 13:8–13 (CSB)

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the

perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known. <sup>13</sup> Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.

## Explore the Text

1. What things were going to cease and come to an end? How is this contrasted to love?
  
2. What is the “perfect” that Paul referenced?
  
3. What is Paul’s point as he makes the application, *when I became a man, I put aside childish things...* ?
  
4. Of faith, hope, and love, which is the greatest? Why?

## About The Text

The Corinthians had their eyes on many things but were missing the most important thing. The spiritual gifts they all sought were only temporary. What they truly needed to be seeking was love. It is God’s greatest gift.

### I. 13.8: Supernatural Spiritual Gifts Will Pass Away

- A. 1 Corinthians 13.8: *Love never ends.*
  - i. Like God, love is permanent. Everything else will pass away, but it will remain. One day our faith and hope will be realized through our eternal reward ... yet love will continue to abound and thrive.
- B. Gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues will all go away.
  - i. Tongues would *cease*. When the time for their purpose had run out, they would cease.
  - ii. Prophecy and knowledge would *come to an end*. God would bring them to an end.

### II. 13.9-10: Supernatural Spiritual Gifts were only Partial

- A. Gifts of knowledge and prophecy were only partial regarding understanding God’s will, mind, and knowing the understanding of His presence.

- B. The *perfection* of 13.10 could be pointing to the cessation of the supernatural spiritual gifts after the completion of the New Testament, Ephesians 4.11-13; Hebrews 2.1-4).

### III. 13.11-12: Supernatural Spiritual Gifts were elementary

- A. With the coming of the Word, Christians would be led into spiritual maturity having complete access to God's revealed will.

### IV. 13.13: Love is Eternal

- A. Here Paul mentions the three greatest spiritual virtues: faith, hope, and love.
- B. One day, faith and hope will be realized ... in heaven. But love will remain.
- C. It is the greatest because it is like God. *God is love*, 1 John 4.8.

## Reaction

1. What is Paul trying to stress in these verses regarding the superiority of love? What is permanent? What will pass away?
  
2. In what way were the supernatural spiritual gifts *imperfect*?
  
3. How were they *elementary*?
  
4. When will our faith and hope be realized? What will remain?
  
5. Why is love the greatest spiritual virtue?

## For Today's Christian

**Love must always be our primary aim.** Too often we have our sights set lower on things that will not matter in the long run. We get caught up in present issues, disagreements, and squabbles ... which will matter little years from now. My favorite social media feed has a feature where it will look back on my posts on this day from all the years past. Now, after years have passed, I look at some of those old

postings and can't remember the context or meaning behind the problem I felt I needed to address. The problem that appeared so pressing then, matters little now. We must always aim higher . . . seeing *the person* more than *the problem*. Only then will we move to address our issues in the spirit of love. Problems can fade away. Love remains.

## Journal

In your relationships with brethren, what are some things that challenge you keeping your focus on love? Why do we allow temporary problems and issues to cloud our judgment? What are some things we can do to keep love in view?

## For Further Study

The view that *the perfect* in 1 Corinthians 13.10 is referring to the completion of the revealed word is just one of several interpretations of this text. Others hold that *the perfect* has to do with the consummation of the age and time after the End. What are some of the implications of this position? Does it seem to fit more aptly than what has been our traditional interpretation? Explain.