

Greater Love

The Power of Greater Love

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

February 15, 2026 am

HDBC

A few weeks ago we started a series on 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. It is a call for us to see the importance of real love, the way God loves and the way He wants us to love. This is the greatest piece of literature ever written on the subject of love.

Here Paul challenges typical signs of greatness. Things that most people consider to be great, are actually nothing without love. **Gifted speaker, extensive knowledge, extraordinary faith, self-sacrifice, and even martyrdom all must take a backseat to Love.**

I've read this chapter hundreds of times, and taught it many times. But never tire of reading it, pondering it, meditating on it. It seems the older I get the more precious these words become and the more I realize just how far short I come in living them. I want to . . . I really do. But I find myself being impatient, unkind, jealous, prideful.

I also realize the answer is **not simply to try harder.** This kind of love can only be produced by the Holy Spirit who lives within us. In fact it is the first thing Paul mentioned in his list of the fruit of the Spirit. Love, Agape Love, Calvary Love. So, the key to operating in this love is becoming completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Amy Carmichael understood this when she wrote down the statements about Calvary Love that would one day become the little book, *If*. In it she helps us see Calvary love in practical terms. Here are a few examples of what she wrote as she ponder the kind of love that led Jesus to Calvary.

If souls can suffer alongside me, and I hardly know it, because the spirit of discernment is not in me, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I refuse to be a corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies (is separated from all in which it lived before) then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I can enjoy a joke at the expense of another; if I can in any way slight another in conversation, or even in thought, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

This is the love of 1 Corinthians 13. Here Paul . . .

Wrote about the **need** for this love (1-3)

Offered a **picture** of this kind of love (4-7)

Pointed to the **power** of this kind of love (8-13)

Four things to note about this love in these last few verses.

1. **This love goes the distance (8-10)**

Paul begins this section with the emphatic declaration . . .

Love Never Fails.

Fails - means to fail or to fall away. It was used of a **leaf falling to the ground**, never to be re-attached to the branch. Cease to live. The word is not about failing in the sense of being the opposite of success. It speaks more of failing in the sense of **ceasing to continue**. ***If my truck battery fails, it simply means it stopped working. It stopped doing what a battery does.***

Never - communicates an absolute negative. It is impossible for love to fall away & to cease to do what love does. The present tense. Literally you could translate *love goes on never failing or never ceasing*.

This simply means that love is enduring. It will never be eradicated. It keeps on going. It cannot be defeated.

Paul then offers a contrast. Remember the context. Paul has been writing about the importance of spiritual gifts. But he points out that one

day they will no longer exist as they currently do.

A. Prophecy will be done away with.

Katargeo – To be completely eradicated. To do away with something. Future, Passive. The preaching and proclaiming of God's word will not be permanent.

B. Knowledge will be done away with.

Katargeo – Same word. Knowledge, the ability to discern and understand the deep things of God. This is not eternal.

Both will end when **the perfect** comes. What is **the Perfect?**

1) Completed Scriptures

Not likely since these are two of the more important gifts of the Spirit for the church. Though the completed Scriptures were important, that did not negate the need for clear exposition & explanation of the Scriptures which was a function of prophecy.

2) Rapture

When Jesus comes to take his people to Heaven. It seems that these gifts will be operative during the tribulation, which many believe will happen after the rapture.

3) Eternal State in Heaven

This seems to be the most likely meaning. When we are taken to Heaven there will be no more need for these gifts.

C. Tongues will cease

Pauso – Different word for the gift of tongues. This word means to stop or to come to an end. Middle voice. When used of persons it indicates an intentional, voluntary action upon oneself. When used of a thing it indicates a **self-causing action**. The cause comes from within. Like a battery which has a lifespan.

This may indicate that tongues will cease sometime before knowledge and prophecy end, because it is not mentioned in verses 9-10 and 12. Some believe this is an indication that this gift was not meant for some future generations of believers.

These verses have implications for our understanding of spiritual gifts, but that is not Paul's primary purpose. His main purpose is to show the permanence of love.

Agape love goes the distance.

2. **This love brings clarity and maturity (9-12)**

Paul speaks of the operation of two spiritual gifts (knowledge and prophecy). We can use them, but without love they are incomplete, imperfect, always lacking. It's like when we were children. We could do some things, but never as good as someone who was a grownup, someone who is mature.

We spoke in childish ways and we did childish things because of our understanding was limited. Children see the world in a certain way because their knowledge is not complete. Like looking at a distorted mirror. They can see things but their understanding is very limited. Because of this, they lack maturity and therefore act in childish ways.

That is a description of believers who do not understand agape love. They lack understanding, which leads to a distorted view, which leads to childish behavior.

Love . . . agape love remedies this. The remedy is not knowledge but love! *Became a man = learning agape Love.*

Agape love, Calvary love clears things up, completes our knowledge and understanding and therefore leads us to maturity. The more we know this love the more we understand **why God does what He does and allows what He allows.**

The more you and I are able to grasp the love that is found in the cross of Jesus the more we understand God's ways. Many of the "why" questions become less important as we understand the depth of His love for us. So, keep looking to the cross, keep striving to understand the depth of His love. It will help clear things up in this life.

However, things will only become crystal clear when ***the perfect comes***. Heaven! (12) When we see Jesus face to face, things will be so much clearer. We will no longer be bound by the restrictions of this broken world and of our broken minds, hearts and bodies. One day, things will clear up. That does not mean we will know everything, but it means there will be clarity.

This love goes the distance.

This love brings clarity and maturity.

3. **This love reigns supreme (13)**

Paul closes the section with the statement that three things will remain; faith, hope and love. And then he raises one to a position of prominence above the others. Love is the greatest. **Love reigns supreme!**

Why is love the greatest? Why does it reign over those other two things that are clearly important enough that God has declared them eternal. Let me offer a few thoughts.

First, faith and hope are encompassed in love. Remember what Paul wrote in verse 7. Love . . . *believes all things and hopes all things*. So faith and hope are found in love.

Second, faith and hope are gifts that God gives to us for our benefit primarily in this life. He has no need for hope or faith. Both of these things look forward to a future time or future experience. God is not bound by time. He has no need for either, but we do. We need faith in order to enter into a relationship with Christ. We need hope in order keep from living in despair. We need these, but God does not.

Love, on the other hand is something God embodies and enjoys. It is part of His nature. God is love. God is eternal, so love is eternal. God reigns supreme, so love reigns supreme. We are most like God when we love Him and when we love others. Remember what Jesus said. The entire law can be summed up in two statements and love is at the heart of both of them. Love God and Love others!

It was love that led Jesus from Heaven to earth.

It was love that led Jesus to touch the untouchables

It was love that led Jesus to speak up for the weak

It was love that led Jesus to heal the broken

It was love that led Jesus into Jerusalem that final week

It was love that led Jesus to wash the feet of His disciples

It was love that led Jesus to submit to Pilate

It was love that led Jesus to yield to the abuse of the soldiers

It was love that led Jesus to Calvary to be crucified

It was love that led Jesus to submit to a borrowed tomb

It was love that triumphed when he broke out of death's grip & the grave.

It is love on display every time an individual is forgiven and saved.

Henri Nouwen said,

If you allow someone to love you, that love will take you to painful places

Clever and often true. I've got one that is absolutely true.

If you love someone with Agape Love, Calvary Love, that love will call you to die to self for the benefit of the other.

That is what Jesus has done for you.

That is what He wants to do for others through you.