

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“A Forever Love”**

September 30, 2018 - *1 Corinthians 13:8-13*

---

**Objective:** To help people know that love is eternal - everything else in this life is temporary.

---

## Prayer

It’s difficult to watch the news.

Whether it’s the political theatre in Washington D.C., or the reporter at the location of the most recent murder - the news is difficult to watch.

Why? Not only because of the bad news and the lives which will never be the same, but so much of what we see are actions and attitudes devoid of love.

*Turn to 1 Corinthians 13:8-13*

Love which Paul has defined for us in vs. 4-7 is a rare thing.

The love which Paul described is missing in many churches - and it’s often missing in my own life.

In this great chapter on ‘love’, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth - and to every church since then - giving instruction on how we are to love one another.

Jesus said our love should be the identifying trait which would give us credibility with the world. (John 13:34-35)

He also said our love for God and our love for others are the keys to obeying His commands.

This love is not something we have within ourselves.  
Putting this love into practice requires faith in Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our human will to work in harmony with the Spirit.

This love is action - not feeling - action, not ideas.

But this love is also bigger than this life.

Paul starts vs. 8 with this great truth:

“Love never ends.”

This is the main point for everything that follows.

We saw in vs. 1-3 how important love is for the church. It’s more important than our spiritual abilities, than knowledge, than fearless and limitless faith. It’s even more important than great charity and martyrdom. We are nothing without love.

Last week, in vs. 4-7, this love was defined - identified.

Today, we see the permanence of love - the eternal nature of love. This is “A Forever Love”.

“Love never ends.”

The Greek word for “ends” means: *to fall, to fall down*. It was used to describe something falling to the ground, or someone falling in their stature (from a position of respect to a loss of dignity), or in reference to someone’s death.

Paul says this won’t happen to love.

Love will never end or fail.

In contrast, he lists 3 other prominent things in the Corinthian church (and many other churches) which will end.

“As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.”

Prophecies / tongues / knowledge

One of the keys to understanding the Bible is to look for the verbs. The verbs are the action points - letting us know what happened in the text...or letting us know what action we're supposed to take in our obedience.

Here we have an interesting issue with the verbs.

Prophecies and knowledge will both “pass away”.

Tongues will “cease”.

Why the different verbs in the same sentence?

I think Paul uses the different verbs to communicate some inherent differences in these 3 areas of spiritual gifting.

Earlier (12:8-11) Paul gave us a partial list of spiritual gifts, and when I covered that list, I briefly addressed the 2 different views relating to the miraculous gifts such as healing, working of miracles and speaking in tongues.

Here in 13:8, by use of the different verbs - Paul makes a clear distinction between prophecy and knowledge - and speaking in tongues.

“they will pass away” - this is the verb for prophecy and knowledge - and it's in the passive voice. A verb in the passive voice means that something / someone makes the action happen. So, something / someone will make prophecy

and knowledge “pass away”. The Greek word means: *bring to naught, sever, abolish, make idle (inactive), make of no effect, to annul*. Possible translation: *‘Prophecies and knowledge will be stopped.’*”

The verb for “tongues” is a completely different Greek word - and it’s in the middle voice. A middle voice verb has the idea that the subject plays the role in the action. This means that tongues will cease by itself. Someone / something will not cause them to stop - they will stop / cease on their own. Why? Because they wouldn’t be needed after the Apostolic age - the age of the Apostles - after the Church was established.

Remember, when Paul was writing this first letter to the church in Corinth - there was no N.T. yet. In fact, **1 Corinthians** was one of the earliest letters written. Out of the 27 letters/book in the N.T., scholars believe **1 Corinthians** was the 5<sup>th</sup> one written - around 55 A.D. (James - AD 40-50 / Galatians - 48-55 / 1 & 2 Thess. - 50-51 / 1 Corinthians - 55). There was no N.T. yet - none of the Gospel had been written - so gifts like prophecy, knowledge and tongues were very important for communicating the Gospel to people throughout the world.

By the end of the Apostolic era, the N.T. books were written and were being circulated and copied - so the need for speaking in tongues (*which was primarily the ability to speak in a language you didn’t know*) was no longer needed as the N.T. letters could

be translated into other languages - a work which continues this day!

So, "Love never ends.", but "tongues" will cease on their own, and "prophecy" and "knowledge" will "pass away" through the action of someone / something.

What we see here is:

**Love is eternal, spiritual gifts are temporary.** vs. 8a

This doesn't mean spiritual gifts are bad...or they have shortcomings. It simply means God has designed them with a shelf-life. They have an expiration date - a period of time God intends to use them in building and strengthening the Church, and then He will no longer use them or need them.

"Prophecy" is the ability to speak the word of God. For some in the early Church, they spoke new revelation from God. The Apostles did this. But for most - and for someone like myself - a Pastor - I don't speak new revelation from God - I'm repeating and reiterating what God has already said. I don't speak new revelation - I don't predict the future - I repeat, reiterate and explain the truth of God to build up and strengthen the Church. "Knowledge" is Spirit-enabled insight into the truth and mysteries of God. I wouldn't be able to do my job very well if other men and women throughout Church history with the gift of "knowledge" didn't do their work of

explaining, investigating and clarifying the details of the Bible's language, culture, historical and political settings of the first century.

But, as helpful and important as the gifts of "prophecy" and "knowledge" are, "they will pass away."

**Our partial knowledge is temporary.** vs. 9-10

The most important thing for any of us to know...is that we don't know that much.

The smartest - most educated person in the room - has partial knowledge.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

We tend to think we're a lot smarter than we really are. Whether it's theology - or physics - or medicine - or biomedical engineering - or genetics - or fission reactor technology...we "know in part". The verb tenses here speak to a present fact. I believe this speaks to all human knowledge, not just our knowledge of God and spiritual things.

We may know some great things about God...we may know a lot of things...but we only know part of the whole truth.

This is what the Greek word (*meros*) means (translated: "part"): *a part, a portion*

This doesn't mean there's anything wrong with what we know. What we know is rock-solid. What we know is what God wanted us to know. He has given us what we need. His Word (The Bible) is sufficient for everything we need in this life. I've been in ministry since November 1989 - I studied theology for 3 years in seminary - and I've continued to study it and learn about God from the Bible and the wisdom of other Christians every year since I graduated from seminary in 1995. Compared to some of you, I know a lot about God - some of you in this room are way beyond my level of knowledge.

But one thing I know for sure...**I ONLY KNOW A FRACTION OF WHAT THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT GOD!!**

That's not a negative statement about me or my intelligence. It's a recognition of the vastness of God and the limitations of my fallen, human mind.

**Deuteronomy 29:29**

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God..."

**Psalms 139:6**

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it."

**Romans 11:34**

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?"

Paul continues...**vs. 10:**

"but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away."

Our partial knowledge is not our forever state!

When “the perfect comes”, it will change everything.

What is “the perfect”?

“the perfect” is heaven - the eternal state.

This is looking forward - to the time when we’re in heaven. We will no longer live in partial knowledge - or live with a partial understanding of God’s truth when we’re in “the perfect”.

When we’re in heaven, God will cause our partial prophecy and knowledge to “pass away”. Why? Because we will no longer need to hear the Word of God from another person - or have another person explain to us the mysteries of God or provide insights into the Bible - because we will be in God’s presence - and He will speak to us. Our knowledge of God will no longer be partial! ***We won’t be God...but we’ll have full knowledge of God!***

(Not God’s full knowledge - we won’t be omniscient.)

There will come a time when every believer will be complete in their knowledge about God!!!

This is what Paul is illustrating in vs. 11-12.

11 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 gave up childish ways.

In this life - what we know and prophecy about is limited - like the understanding of a child. This doesn’t imply that our present knowledge and prophecy is wrong or misleading. It doesn’t mean that it’s not



sufficient in some manner. It simply means it's partial - that we will have a full understanding in heaven.

Much like the understanding you have as an adult compared to when you were a kid.

$1+1 = 2$  /  $2+2 = 4$  Children's math compared to quadratic equations

Or when you were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and you liked a girl or a boy - compared to your understanding of love and relationships after being married for 30 years!

12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Corinth was known for having good mirrors - but even the best mirrors in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were much lower quality than our modern mirrors because mirrors back then were made of metal which had been hammered out as smooth as they could, and then polished so you could see your reflection. But your reflection in these mirrors was a bit blurred - and metal degrades - especially near salt-water - which Corinth was a city-port on the Mediterranean - and the shiny metal would soon become dulled and tarnished. What we know in this life - is a poor reflection - a "dim" reflection of the spiritual reality. But when "the perfect comes", we shall be "face to face". Face to face with who? With Christ!

The illustration speaks to the clarity of understanding and knowledge we'll have in heaven - because we will be in the presence of Christ!

A beautiful detail at the end of vs. 12 is this:

“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

Once again - Paul states the “now” - our present situation is partial knowledge. But, in heaven “I shall know fully” - here's the amazing part: “even as I have been fully known.” I guess this could either be encouraging...or concerning to you.

Concerning if you're not walking with Christ.

Concerning if you put on your Christian, Sunday mask when you come to church.

Concerning because you are “fully known” by God.

You can trick people in this life - it's not that difficult.

But the people in this life aren't the ones that matter.

God will be your judge!

But this can be so encouraging for the believer walking with the Lord - no matter if you're experiencing joy or trials. God fully knows what you're going through. He is there for you - loving you - giving you hope for now, and for the future!

The things in this life that don't make sense - you don't know why they happen - you “shall know fully.”

The mysteries of this life - will no longer be mysteries in heaven!

The struggles in this life - the loneliness you have in this life - God fully knows - He has taken notice - He gives you His grace and the comfort of His Spirit.

**The best and the greatest is Love.** vs. 13

“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Faith is needed where we can't see Jesus “face to face”.

Faith is needed where we don't have sight.

**Hebrews 11:1**

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Faith won't be needed in heaven, and neither will hope. In this life we have a certain hope in the promises of God - and in the certainty of heaven.

- When we're in heaven, we will no longer “hope”, because we will be there!
- After you get married, you stop hoping to get married...because you are married!
- When your first child is born, you stop hoping to someday become a parent.
- When your first grandchild is born, you stop hoping to someday become a grandma or grandpa.

Heaven will not be a place of hope - it will be the realization of our hope!

But “Love never ends”. (vs. 8a)

Love will be the only luggage we bring from this life into heaven.

We will forever love God in heaven.

We will forever love each other - other believers in heaven.

Love will be in heaven - in its perfect form - perfectly applied (see vs. 4-7).

### ***Apply it...***

In chapter 13, we learned that love is primary - we're nothing without love (vs. 1-3), we also learned what love is - and what it's not (vs. 4-7).

And we learn that love is more important - the most important - because love will last forever.

Love we know in this life will be perfected in heaven.

Tongues, knowledge, prophecy, faith, hope - all of them will be gone - they will cease on their own - or they will be made to pass away - but love will be alive and well for all eternity.

Knowing this...what should you “pursue”?

Theology?

Spiritual Gifts?

Wisdom?

Knowledge?

Preaching?

All good things...necessary things...but they are all nothing when compared with love.

14:1 “Pursue love...”

May that be our highest priority.

**John 13:35**

“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Our Fall Festival is 34 days away.

In 34 days, we will have the chance to love on our community - the largest, most tangible expression of love that we do all year.

Will you put this love into practice?

Will you dedicate your life to this “Forever Love”?

Close in prayer