

# Transcription of 24ID3734

## 1 Corinthians 13:6-13 - A More Excellent Way - Part 2

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All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight as we continue our study through 1 Corinthians in chapter 13:6.

If you've been with us, I'm sure you are well aware now of the setting of this letter that Paul wrote – one of at least three letters that Paul wrote to this church; a church that he planted, spent a year and a half there, showed up here at the worst time in his life. He was as discouraged as someone could be. If you read the first part of this letter, you will find that Paul showed up ready to quit. He didn't preach to anyone. He just went to the synagogue. He had some terrible trouble since he'd landed in Europe. He's been beat up and arrested and chased out of more than one place; now finds himself several hundred miles away from his friends who told him to get out of Dodge before they hurt him, and he shows up in Mars Hill in Athens, and that didn't go well. And then he arrives in this very decrepit and very immoral city - one of the most immoral cities - Corinth.

Now he was discouraged. It would be so discouraging that the Lord would actually appear to Paul and encourage him that this was a city he would be protected in, that God had lots of fruit in this town, a lot of people He wanted to reach. And Paul would spend the next year and a half doing just that, protected in every way. He finally had his friend show up, and his spirit was revived. The fellowship was helpful to him, and the church was planted.

But that was seven-eight years ago. Paul is now in Ephesus planting a church, and he'll be there for three years. Then news comes of this church's struggles, and it's not been easy. It's in a very, like I said, carnal place, and the church has not grown very much. They definitely had the fruit of God's Spirit in their lives, and Paul remembered it very well. He was sure this was a work of God, but there was a lot of sliding away from what God had intended them to be. And so this letter – and the next letter in your Bible (the 2 Corinthian letter) as well as the one he refers to in a couple of places that we don't have that was a letter of questions written by some elders and some folks in the church – Paul tries to address, literally, everything that's going on. But at the root of it was carnal believers who really weren't walking with God; and things had gotten worse rather than better, and things needed to change.

And so this is Paul's love letter as a father to a church that he cared for. It is in-your-face kind of stuff, but it's like a dad would talk to his kids. He wants them to do well.

Beginning back in chapter 11 – and it'll continue through the end of chapter 14 – Paul writes to them about their life as a body in the church when they meet together, as we are here; when the church met together. He commended them early on for their diligence in wanting to do things as far as the Lord was concerned regarding women in leadership. But then he spoke to them about how their potlucks, if you will, that were designed to help the poor who didn't have much, as well as their approach to communion, which wasn't at all discerning the Lord's body. He said, "I commend you on the one but not on the other." And so he spoke to them, and invariably these gifts of the Spirit came up which were being used not to serve but to get honor for yourself.

And Paul wrote, in chapter 12, that the Lord works in various ways. He called them "diversities of gifts." He called them "differences of ministries." He called them "diversities of activities." But he said in all the ways that the Lord works, it's always for His glory and for the good of others; that the gifts were given to profit the body as a whole, not to say, "Look what I can do," and then try to get some honor out of it. The Lord was behind it all, and it is of great value to the church; but the Lord should get the honor, not us, and it should be used so that He would be honored.

He gave us a partial list, there in chapter 12. There's also a list in Romans 12, Ephesians 4. And the message from Paul to the church was there are many gifts that you are given as work-related, if you will, skills that God gives you that are in your possession, and then there are gifts that God gives you – spiritual gifts, vocal gifts, power gifts – that really come from the Lord at a time when He is willing to impart them to you and you need them. Whether it's a word of knowledge or whether it's a prayer for healing or faith, you don't carry them around, saying, "I can use these when I want." Rather you walk around looking to the Lord, hoping He'll use you. And so Paul spent a lot of time talking about that down through the end of verse 31 of chapter 12. In fact, he said to them, "You should really want the best gifts," but those are really situational-driven in the sense that depending

on where God has put you, these are the things you need to depend upon Him for.

Now he'll pick up in chapter 14 this use of the gifts in the public assembly, and it'll be the longest portion that we have on order in church meetings and how the gifts of the Spirit should operate among us.

But in the middle of this he stops to say, "You know, in the middle of this, you have to consider why you do what you do," and he turns to talk about the fact that these saints were using the gifts of God to honor themselves; almost as if it was a competition, rating them, if you will. And Paul interrupts his own teaching to say, "Look, the motivation has to be the love of God in your heart to be useful to serve others. You're a vessel that God wants to use." And though the Corinthians had not come behind, Paul said, in any gift the Lord had given them, there was very little love to drive them. So the purposes of God were not being accomplished.

I mentioned to you last week it is much easier to be doctrinally correct than to love. It is much easier to be active than to be merciful. It is easier to be angry than it is to forgive. And Paul goes out of his way in this chapter – and it's a short one, but it's powerful – to say we need God's love operating in our hearts. And we told you last time this word "agape" is really a New Testament word. It very rarely appears at all in historical Greek because it really is a definition that is a New Testament one: the love of God in the hearts of the people as displayed by God sending His Son to die for sinners like us, who don't want to hear from Him, who aren't walking with Him, who are in absolute rebellion against Him. And yet God moves in His love to save us. And then he says once we're saved, He puts in our hearts His Holy Spirit which brings to us that characteristic of love, so much so that in John 13:35 Jesus said, "It is this love" (this "agape") "in your life that will define you as a believer," will identify you as such. More so than these gifts or power or whatever it is, your talents, it's the love of God shed abroad in your heart.

We talked last week about the fact that, by definition, this "agape" love is self-sacrificing; it seeks the betterment of others, not yourself; it is not emotional, it is first a choice. When the Lord said, "Love your enemies," you can't feel love for an enemy, but you can choose to act in love towards your enemies, "praying for them, even those that spitefully use you." And when the Lord said that, there in Matthew 5:44-46, He said, "If you just love those who love you, what difference are you from the world?" But this is the love that transcends those things and overcomes them.

So throughout the New Testament the Holy Spirit calls on us to pursue love, to put on love, to walk in love, to practice this love of God which is clearly defined in these verses. And if you read them fast enough, they won't hurt you. But if you stop to think about them, they'll just lay you out because, yeah, I don't like them. And I see myself and I'm thinking all these years I'm growin'. Yeah. But not like I should.

So last time we looked at just the first five verses here and saw that there was a supremacy – God's love over any gift that He would give you. In other words, those gifts can be used because of love, but you remove that love, that gift becomes useless to God's...well, not that God can't use it, it'll become useless to your relationship with the Lord and to the long-term effects of it. Nothing can precede His love. It leaves you bankrupt and kind of worthless in the lives of others. Without that love, it profits me nothing. There's no gain in it at all. So, if His love in you as a born-again believer needs to be the motivating factor behind your behavior and your sacrifice and your service, Paul then lays out for us what that definition is. And, like I said, we went through some of them last week. He uses fifteen descriptions of "agape" in all. It's the most insightful, I guess, in-depth definition; it's just in a few verses. Seven of them are positive; eight of them are negative (what this love is not). So you learn by both contrast and comparison, if you will.

Last week, we looked at one positive (as we started), and then we looked at seven negatives. Tonight we will finish one negative and then the six positives. Last week, here's what we learned: God's love in your heart suffers long and is still kind. That's terrible to read, isn't it? The love of God in your life suffers long, it is patient, it is responsive to pressure with kindness. We read that His love in our hearts doesn't envy; it's the word for covet or to be jealous. And it doesn't parade itself around to make others jealous. Not only does it want what somebody else has, it doesn't take what it has and says, "I bet you wish you had this, and look at me." It is not puffed up. We read that God's love in your life and mine should not behave itself unseemly. The word unseemly is the typical Greek word for rude. It literally means that you push to have your own way, that you're not willing to give in. It is a word that speaks a lot about being provoked into even outbursts of emotion. God's love in your heart, that's not the motivator; that's not how His love works. This love also thinks no evil. How are you doin' so far? It thinks no evil. Now I'm pretty happy when I say no evil, but thinking no evil, that's a whole different ballgame, isn't it? In fact, you don't even know that I'm thinking evil. But guess who does know? The Lord does. And He'd like to change that in my life. His love, when

it's in control, doesn't think evil. This love does not think evil. It doesn't look for hidden motives, it isn't cynical; it's very hopeful. And so often the problem is, over time, we get very cynical. We don't trust anybody, we don't believe anything. We're sure that whoever's shaking your hands is out to take your fingers from you. You know? You're just forever looking over your shoulder. And unfortunately, the world can leave you that way. But His love will not. We read that His love bears no resentment, it holds no grudges, it keeps no record of wrongs. Whoooo. Thank you so much. Look, the definitions (in this chapter) of His love in us are designed to bring us to a place where we want God to equip our hearts, to bring us to our knees and cry out for His help; to realize that we have a long way to go from having victory over the sinful nature that we've been delivered from; that we pray that God would put upon us to be those who walk in His love because ultimately it is so distinguishable and so far-removed from the way the world operates that you can't help but hide it. People just notice.

Last week we encouraged you to go through these first five verses and to read what love is, but take that word "love" and replace it with Jesus' name, and you won't hurt the text at all. You'll go, "Oh, that's exactly the way it should be." And then we said, "And then try it with your own name." Good luck with that. Try it one time. Love or "Jack" suffers long, and he's kind. Well. Now and then. But that's not really what the Lord is looking for. So I find it painfully hard to read. It's easy to understand. The words are pretty much self-explanatory, if you will. They're not difficult to understand...to get through to the knowledge of them. But, at the same time, if you're really interested in pleasing the Lord's heart and being useful to Him, boy, these things hit home.

So we broke it up into two studies so that we wouldn't just all fall apart, and I'll try to get through this so you can go home at 8:00 so you don't have to think about this any longer. But at the same time, God help us to be more like the Savior that has loved us so.

So let's start in verse 6 where Paul continues. It's the last of the negatives, if you will, by definition so we can learn by that contrast. He says, "Love does not rejoice in iniquity." The love of God in the life of the saint finds no joy in iniquity. The word means unjustness, unrighteousness or, if you will, just simply wrong behavior. You've probably heard Christians remark about someone that they don't like or that they have little respect for. "See, I told you I never trusted them. Now they've gotten what they deserve." And rather than breaking your heart, it rejoices your heart. "He had it coming! Got what was coming to him." But that's not God's love, that's man's sinfulness. And even if it was true, I think I would challenge you to find one place in the Bible where the Lord rejoices in judgment. In fact, every judgment of God proceeds from a God with a broken heart, not from one that is rejoicing. "Oh, that My people would listen to Me. Oh, that Israel would walk in My ways," the psalmist writes in Psalm 81:13. And the LORD's lamenting. It's a weeping God. He's not rejoicing in iniquity. He just wants you to straighten out. Your love for the Lord and His love in your heart should be that you would leave the ninety-nine who are doing well to track down and follow and deliver and carry back the one who has wandered off and now made his own life miserable for himself. That would be the heart of the Lord.

Perhaps the most common form of rejoicing over iniquity is gossip. Gossip would actually do little harm if there weren't so many eager listeners. There's an audience for gossip, isn't there? And gossip, even when it's factual and completely accurate, still reveals the heart of a sinful person who loves to find enjoyment in the teller of someone who has failed. And that's a tragedy. Just for the sake of feeling better about themselves, lording over them in self-righteousness. It is a benefit to no one. You can see how hungry people are for this by the popularity of talk radio. It is constant. You listen to talk radio every day, I guarantee you you're going to be the most cynical person in the world. You're not going to like anyone or anything, and you're pretty sure everything's a conspiracy. They're out to get you. Everyone and everything. There is no peace, there's no rest; there's just this hunger for the latest gossip.

By contrast, God's love in our hearts wants the best for others; like the Lord wants the best for you - He doesn't want you to sin. He doesn't want you to suffer the consequences of sin. I don't think one time will the Lord say to you or me, "I guess I just want you to find out the hard way." No. He does what? He says, "Don't be like a mule. Just look at My eyes, and let me do like this, and you come over there, and we're all good, and nobody gets hurt. It's the bit in your mouth that you won't like, and I don't like it either." And He uses the horse and a bridle for us to understand. God is much more interested in us doing well. I want them to find God's best for their lives. I want them to be blessed. Because if you'll do things right and godly and obediently, you're in line for God's best.

But what does love not do? It doesn't rejoice in the iniquity of others. It doesn't find joy or satisfaction in the failures of others. I think it's for that very purpose that certain church discipline, at least from a biblical perspective, is an act of love carried out by

the body for somebody who has had a sinful life that won't repent and that really does need to own up to them. So the Bible has these directions like even chapter 5:9-11 of this book, where Paul said to them, "Don't keep company with anyone who calls himself a brother but lives these kinds of sinful lifestyles." Treat them as someone who's not listening. He's still a brother, but you have to put some pressure on. The Lord will say, in Matthew 18:15-17, laying out that whole issue of church discipline, that it can come to the point where someone is asked to leave a fellowship so that they might so hunger for it that whatever sin they're hanging on to is less important than what they're losing. And God uses that because He doesn't rejoice in iniquity. He wants you to do well. Some people say, and we hear it sometimes, "You should tolerate everyone in love." But, look, if the building's on fire, it's not love to say, "Hey, sit down, we're going to be fine, and don't mind the smoke." You know? That's not love. It's always, "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). But the truth has to be involved.

When Paul wrote his Thessalonian letter, he said in chapter 3:5-6 of 2 Thessalonians, "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly, not according to the traditions you've learned from us." So, grow in love, but pursue the truth. Love will have both, equally so. Love doesn't rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in repentance and doing what is right.

I think there's something evil about a malignant kind of joy that finds the sinful lives of others as pleasurable. I was reading a couple of weeks ago (back in Genesis 32) where Jacob struggles all night with the Angel of the Lord, and he wouldn't let Him go. But in the end, he was touched in the hollow of his thigh, and it says that the sinews or the muscles of his thigh shrank, and the one thing Jacob had left to do – run – he could no longer do. He was literally brought to nothing. And from that day forward, we read there in Genesis, Israel would not eat that part of the animal that was around the thigh because they didn't want to rejoice in or partake in the failures or the shortcomings of others. And so they stayed away from it. There's no joy here in finding someone who has to be brought to the end of themselves that way. So love does not do and rejoice in wickedness; it rejoices in the truth.

So look at verse 6, the second part. The positives begin, "Love rejoices in the truth." We read last week "love suffers long and is kind." Those go together. And then we read he's "not envious and not puffed up," which were paired together as a contrast. But here, love does not rejoice in iniquity; instead it rejoices in the truth. Not the, "Well, that's the truth" variety but really God's truth prevailing in the lives of people that are around us. So after eight negatives in a row, what xxxxx is now Paul finishes with a flurry of six positives to tell us what His love in us is. And it begins with we're rejoicing in the truth. We find great joy when people rejoice and embrace and follow the truth – when people are obeying the Lord, when they're trusting in His ways, when He's at the top of their list, when they consult Him for counsel before going their way, when they value His Word, when they love God and His ways, when the Lord is honored. We should be excited. It's so good to see you at church; it makes me happy. I wish to get everyone to church during the week so they can grow. It's important to them. But here you are; you're the joy of our life. It is good that you're here. It is good! And we can easily rejoice in seeing those things. A lot of times churches see the other things. Not so easy to see. But the love of God always finds tremendous joyfulness in the truth of God being pursued and taught and followed, and that's God's work in you.

In verse 7, he kind of throws them all together real quick, like a....he says this love of God in you "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." I always get stuck with the words "all things." Had Paul written "love can deal with most things or some things or many things," I could get off the hook. But it says "all things." God's love in your life doesn't seek an easy life for itself; that would be self-love. It's a denial of self. And so it operates in the hardest of conditions, and it will "bear all things." The word "bear" is the Greek word "stego." "Stego" means to cover up or to support or to protect. God's love in your life will protect those around you and while suffering, it continues to reach out to support; in correction, it does so at the least amount of hurt. It's interested in the life of another. Though it is not willing to protect in sin, it is anxious to find ways to forgive. I forget who said it, and I should remember....I wish I, as a young guy, would have started writing down all the quotes I write in my Bible and who they were because I go, "Oh, that's good," I write it down and forget who it is. But someone said of this verse, "God's love puts a roof over the sin of others." It protects those who the Lord loves. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34). Peter wrote in chapter 4:8 of his first letter to the church at large, "Above all things have fervent love for one another, because this 'agape' love will cover a multitude of sins." We're not hiding sin; we're just seeking to "bear all things." And it's so different. An oyster gets a little particle in its shell, and it hurts. But it can't get rid of it. So what does it do? It covers it with precious substances extracted from its own life. You get a pearl. But it takes, really, that life of the oyster in many ways. "He's borne our griefs, He's carried our sorrows; He was smitten of God, wounded, bruised. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed," Isaiah 53:4-5. "Love bears all things."

When Ham came to his brothers and said, "Hey, Dad's naked, just lying around naked," Shem and Japheth responded at once

(Genesis 9). But they didn't respond like Ham. They backed into the tent, they had garments with them to cover their father's nakedness in their hands, and they (in love) bore his sin. Eventually Noah would bless these two boys while silently passing over Ham, pronouncing a curse upon the Canaanite branch of his family. It didn't go well for him because "love bears all things," but there was no love here.

You can measure your "agape" growth by how quickly you're willing to cover the failures of others rather than pointing them out and all. "Did you hear what they did?" Proverbs 10:12 says, "Hate stirs up strife, but love covers all sins." It bears all sins. Hey, wouldn't it be good if you fell and somebody just said, "Hey, I got you, man. I'm praying for you. We'll get up. Let's go." Rather than (in a whisper), "I'm tellin' everyone. I'm putting it on Facebook with your name." Not good.

It's convicting, isn't it, this chapter? Aren't you glad we're going to get to chapter 14 pretty soon?

All things. It "bears all things," and it "believes all things." Now this doesn't mean that God's love in you is gullible or that somehow you just throw your hands blindly over your eyes and, "Well, whatever you say" because we are to be discerning. But the love of God in your life will make you hopeful and ready to reach for what you hope is the best rather than the worst. It is quick to give the benefit of the doubt. It prefers to be generous rather than suspicious. It prefers to be forgiving. If the question is one of motivation, opt for the favorable. If it's about forgiveness, seventy times seven. If it's about hopefulness, God is more than able to do what He has promised. I think we all have a tendency to presume the worst. It almost is a sinful, I think, quality. If you look at Job's counselors, they absolutely came to the conclusion that he was just a sinful man; that's why these things came upon him. Job finally said to them, in chapter 21:27, "I know your thoughts, and the schemes by which you would wrong me." And they were absolutely wrong about Job. In fact, God said of Job, "There's nobody like him" (Job 1:8). That wasn't the issue. But there's this tendency in our sinful lives to place blame and to think the worst when God's love in us should harbor a hope that sees God in it and sees His mercy. I think literally God's love is the opposite of cynicism. And it is easy to begin to be cynical in the world in which we live, which always expects the worst at every step. But God can do more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Oh, He's more than able, and His love is hopeful.

I don't know...how many of you...I'm not even going to ask you. I don't know if you've ever read the book "Oliver Twist." I remember in college having to read a lot of these novels. But there was a guy named Mr. Brownlow who had taken Oliver Twist in his home, willing to believe the story that Oliver was telling that he had fallen among thieves, which is why he was in the condition he was. But there was another guy – his name was Mr. Grimwig (maybe should have known he wasn't going to be helpful) – he was very scornful, he was very skeptical, he was very hateful. And so they had an argument about Oliver and his character, and they set up a test, sending him to the library with sizeable money in his pocket. And Mr. Grimwig said (in typical old English), "I will eat my own head," (which I think he meant, "eat my own hat," his favorite expression, by the way; it always shows up, real cynical guy) "if you ever see Oliver again...if he ever comes back from the library with money in his pocket." What happened next takes up the rest of the classic book, so now you have something you can go read if you like. But I'll ruin it for you if you want. Mr. Brownlow was right. Love does believe all things. We just trust the Lord. "Oh, I bet he's not going to do it." Yeah, maybe so. But God is able.

I think we should be the most positive people in the world. Don't you think? Because of the love of God. We know where we're going, we know what He's promised us. Even in a non-election year, you should be the most hopeful people in the world.

Not only does love "believe all things," love "hopes all things." In conjunction with the previous one, God's love in us has its eye on the bright future, and it's not easily discouraged because God has made promises that you can count on. He sees beyond the immediate. If God's grace is at work – it is always at work – and if God is on the throne, He is always on the throne. We can be very hopeful, can we not? We shouldn't be discouraged. We shouldn't give up hope. God would not give up on backsliding Israel, even though He said, "You kind of divorced Me, but I'm still around. Still hangin' out." Paul would not give up on backsliding Corinth. Parents very rarely give up for their wayward children; they will pray with real diligence, in love. And His love in us has an expectation of greatness. The psalmist wrote time and again – you can read it in a couple of psalms – "Why are you so disquieted and cast down, O my soul? Hope in God, for I yet praise Him for His countenance, for His help." And you read that in Psalm 42, 43 over and over again. "Why am I so discouraged when all I have to do is hope in the LORD?" Love, His love, "hopes all things." The future belongs to the Lord who is love, and He's for you, and there should be tremendous amounts of anticipation and assurance, not hopelessness as the world. The world's hopeless. I guarantee you within a few weeks, everything's going to be wrong again. And God's still going to be right.

Love “hopes all things,” it “bears all things,” it “believes all things.” Last portion, it “endures all things.” The word “endures” is the Greek word “hupomeno.” “Hupomeno” is a military term that means to stay in your position even when under attack. You’re not going to flee or run; you’re going to stand against the overwhelming odds, against the opposition that comes your way. We mentioned, I think last week, of Peter and Jesus talking about forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22) and Peter thinking that he had it all figured out when he said, “I’ll forgive seven times.” And the Lord said, “Well, that’s a good multiplier. Now multiply it times seventy, for love still refuses to stop loving.” The last words out of Stephen’s mouth while he was being killed by the people he sought to reach was, “Lord, don’t lay this sin to their charge” (Acts 8:60). By His love, I can bear the unbearable. I can keep no records of wrongs. And by this love in my life, everyone can see that Jesus dwells in me. His love will not let us off, will not let us go, will not let us down. It’s stronger than death, and many waters can’t quench it (Song of Solomon 8:7). This is what God introduces into your life when you’re saved. This is what He wants to work in you from the inside out.

So when you get to verse 8, I think you agree love should never fail. Well, no. If all of these things line up, I’ll be cookin’. I fail back here in verse 4. Having read and looked at the definitions of love in just these verses, it would seem that it should be no surprise that you read this: His love in you won’t fail. How could it when the Lord is in view? Love will outlast everything. It will outlast the Corinthians. It will outlast their petty differences. It will outlast the gifts which He’s given them. It will outlast the life that they’ve had. When all is said and done in eternity, in the brightness of God’s presence, the love of God will still remain, and everything else will have passed.

Now this is not a promise that love will always succeed. I want you to think about that. Jesus loved us with a perfect love, and lots of people denied Him, rejected Him to this day. You might say, “Well, that love didn’t work.” No. His love will not fail, but if you reject it, you fail. It’s not His love that fails. He’s available, but His love sometimes is set aside. The accomplishments of God’s love will never cease. In fact, the love will outlast these gifts that the Corinthians were arguing about – favoring some, despising others, trying to use them to sound more spiritual. “Prophecies will fail, they will cease. Tongues will give way. The need for a word of knowledge will not always need to be there.” They are temporal gifts; they are meant for today while we wait for the Lord. But love will never cease, never fail, for it is God’s nature in us and will bring us into eternity because of it.

How’re you doin’ in the love department? I know. I was judging each one of you, thinking to myself.....No!! Not even.

Verse 9, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. 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. 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. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” We now see in part, know in part, prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part will be done away.

Until the 20th century, every Bible commentator on this verse – and there were thousands of books – saw this correctly as identifying the return of Jesus, when we will see Him face to face; He who is perfect, He who will make all things known to us even as we’re known. Now we see in part, we see dimly, but we’re not there yet; we need all these insights from God’s Spirit. But then, when He comes, the need for the gifts of the Spirit will completely go away because we’ll know even as we’re known. We’ll see Him face to face. The issue is now we need them; then we won’t need them.

In the last 100 years, however, there has been a movement very critical of the work of the Holy Spirit, today of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of the need for the spiritual gifts in the church. And to substantiate that opposition, they have interpreted this word “perfect” and said it’s the Bible. So when the Bible was written, when the Word of God is completed, when the manuscript was handed in, by the time the 1st century or so was over, there was no more need for these gifts of the Spirit because we have the Bible, that which they said is perfect. Now, I don’t know how you come up with that unless someone tells you that because just giving a fleeing reading, and the way you understand the Bible – first and foremost – is go with what it says. Don’t seek to spiritualize it. In verse 12, we are told that, as believers, we’re seeing dimly as in a mirror. Now we have the Bible, but we’re still seeing dimly as in a mirror. You know, all mirrors prior to the 13th century, I think, were always a very dim ability to reflect what we see. It wasn’t until the 13th century, I think, they began to put silver backing upon them. But before that, it was just highly-polished metal and, at best, you got a distorted reflection of yourself. That’s the word that Paul is using here. You look in the mirror, you don’t really get to see everything because we’re not there yet! So we need what God gives us until that day that He comes for us.

In verse 11, we’re told we’re spiritual infants in many ways. We’re learning of God, but one day – not when the Bible is complete because we’re still sinners, we’re all in by grace – when Jesus returns, we shall see Him face to face, and we’ll have all the

understanding we'll need, and, like I said, we'll be able to....what did Paul say in 2 Corinthians 3:18? "With unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, we're being changed into that mirror." But then John writes, in 1 John 3:2, "As children of God it hasn't been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He's revealed" – not when the Bible's revealed, when He's revealed – "we shall see Him as He is, and we will be like Him." Peter wrote, "We've seen His love in us, and yet we don't see Him yet. We believe in Him, we rejoice with Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8-9). The idea is we need these gifts of God's Spirit and this love of God working amongst us because that's our witness, that's our insight, that's the work of God in the life of the church; we depend upon each other, every gift, every part of the body. But when Jesus comes, these will all be gone. The only thing that'll be left is His love. We won't need faith. He's right there. We don't need hope. He's right there. We'll still have His love.

So, it is a questionable doctrine that says that the Word of God which taught us that the gifts of the Spirit - which printed them, it's printed in here - we need them now says we don't need them. It is doctrine based, not upon the Word of God, but upon prejudice and upon preconceived ideas and, I think, not forming a very good exegesis of the Scriptures. It doesn't support itself. But if you're one of those guys that believes the gifts of the Spirit are dead, we don't need them for today, they're abusive and have been abused, and they're way out to the....look, the argument could be made there is a lot of abuse of the gifts of the Spirit; that doesn't negate them. It just makes comment unto their misuse.

The church needs these gifts of the Spirit today. I always say this to people – if the apostles and the early saints were told to rely upon them, how much more do we need them? They were there with Jesus. They watched, and they saw. They had a lot more to go on outwardly than we do, in fact. But they will not survive to the next age when Jesus comes in, for then we'll have the full revelation of God.

So, be careful when someone tells you, "Well, we have the Bible. We don't need the gifts of the Spirit anymore." Not so. We need all the help we can get. That's why His Spirit has come to live within us. And one day, when we stand before the Lord, hey, we'll have arrived, and then His love will be the only thing that needs to continue. Everything else will have been fulfilled. So, when Jesus comes, those things will fail, but love will not. And that's, I think, Paul's point. Look, we need a lot of these things that we were counting on now but not for our glory, just to keep us close.

So he ends by saying there are faith, hope and love, but the greatest, the one that lasts the longest, the one that will continue – when you get to heaven, no need for faith, no need for hope, but you'll still need His love. So may God's love fill your heart. May we practice that. Not just talk about it.

And next week, we will tackle the use of the vocal gifts in the church assembly. I think there's a lot of misinterpretation. I hope that we can clear them up. The Bible's fairly clear on these things. It isn't very difficult, but people tend to make it so. Even like those who want to write off what we just mentioned to you there, a few verses up. Notice what Paul starts, though, in verse 1 of chapter 14. He uses the word just "pursue love," and then we can talk about the gifts in our midst. So, next week we will talk about God's guide to an afterglow service. I hope you won't miss it. Read ahead, and see what the Lord will say to you.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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