

Spiritual Gifts: Used In Love

1 Corinthians 12:22-13:13

Pastor John Miller

Paul is speaking about the subject of the Holy Spirit, and I want to remind you that what Paul says in these closing verses of 1 Corinthians 12 are because evidently the Corinthians were actually making a bigger deal out of the gifts of the Spirit and weren't using them in love as we're going to see in chapter 13. Paul is trying to clarify that everyone in the church has a gift, everyone is important, and you might say there are no vestigial organs in the body of Christ.

The concept of the body is a reference to the Church, the universal Church made up of all true believers. He's using this imagery of a body and how all the parts of the body are necessary and important. We have only two sections left on this subject, so let me give it to you in outline form. In verses 22-26, we see the importance of all the members of the body; just as our physical body, all its members are important, so in the spiritual body of Christ all the members, all the gifts that God has given to them, are indeed important.

Let's read verses 22-26. Paul says, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." You might back up one verse. Forgive me for not starting at verse 21 where he has closed off saying, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you"—he says—"Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable"—or less important—"upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked"—and this is the reason why—"That there should be no schism in the body"—my King James translation has 'schism.' The word means divisions. There's not to be any divisions, which is what was happening in Corinth over the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come to bring unity and to glorify Christ, so we don't want schisms in the body—"but that the members should have"—and here's the key—"the same care one for another." As he goes from here, in chapter 13, that care is demonstrated by our love for one another. So, using our gifts in love for the good of others and the glory of God.

You need to get that down deep into your heart and mind—using your gifts for the good of others in the body of Christ, not for you to show off or not for you to display or to fight over, they're to be used in love for the good of others and for the glory of God. That's foundational when it comes to the purpose and the work of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 26 Paul says, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Paul tells us here that in the body of Christ that importance is not based upon appearance—importance is not based upon appearance.

Go back with me to verses 22 and 23. "Nay, much more those members of the body, which

seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” I know sometimes you might look at parts of your body and think, What does it do? Why is it there? It’s not really that important, I can live without it. There are parts of the body that you can live without, but if you really want to function, if you really want to be functioning properly, you want everything working, right? And all the old people say, “Amen.” You know, you get together after 60 or 70 years old, you get together with your friends and it’s like an organ recital, you just talk about what’s not working and what used to work, what doesn’t work anymore, and you think, Oh, man, I wished that worked, and it doesn’t work, and you just kind of freak out. What a blessing when every member of the body, even those “ . . . which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” So, importance is not based upon appearance.

Verse 23, “And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable”—in the church. Some in Corinth could’ve been thinking, I’m not important, I’m not an apostle. I’m not important, I’m not a prophet. I’m not important, I’m not a pastor. I’m not a teacher, I’m not important. Every member of the body of Christ is important, and learning to accept your position in the body and to use your gift in love for others for the glory of God, you will be rewarded by the Lord someday when you stand before Him. We all want to hear those words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of the lord.” Whatever God’s given you as a gift, use it for others for the glory of God; and use it in the body of Christ. This again points out the importance of being a part of a local church. The New Testament knows nothing of “Lone Ranger” Christianity. We’re to be part of the body of Christ building up each other, loving one another, caring for one another, no schisms in that body. It’s so very important.

Verses 22 and 23, importance is not based on appearance. There are those parts of the body which we don’t see but we know are important. You don’t wake up in the morning and say, “Man, I just thank God for my pituitary gland. I’m so excited that it’s working right today,” but if it doesn’t work, you know it, right? If it’s not working, you’re aware of it. Those parts of the body which don’t get the attention, maybe they don’t have a public spot, they’re vital. They’re very important. The body’s not just a hand, it’s not just a foot, it’s not just an eye; it’s certainly not just a mouth, it’s every part of the body which is very, very important. So, the “ . . . more abundant honour”—we give to those comely parts which—“have more abundant comeliness.”

Verses 24-26 we actually see that importance is equally distributed by God throughout the Church. “For our comely parts have no need: but”—I love this—“God hath tempered the body”—God’s sovereign, and He tempers the body—“together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” I’ve told you that you should do a study running that phrase “one another” through the New Testament. Just take a Concordance and look up all the “one another” texts in the Bible, which we are to put into practice of caring for one another, loving one another, forgiving one another, serving one another, washing one another’s feet, all part of the body.

Verse 26, “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be

honoured, all the members rejoice with it,”—which, again, if we have agape love for the others in the body of Christ, when God uses someone else in the church we should rejoice because all the body is benefited. When someone suffers in the church, we should weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We need that unity and that love in the body of Christ. He’s trying to encourage those who feel unimportant; and he’s trying to temper those who feel like they are more important than others.

Verses 27-31 we see God’s sovereignty over the members. That’s the second division of chapter 12. We see the sovereignty of God over each member and their place in the body and the gifts that God has given them. Look at verse 27, Paul says, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Again, the imagery of the Church, that of a body, “. . . and members in particular.” God has placed us in the body as it sovereignly pleases Him.

Verse 28, “And God hath set some in the church,”—again, the body is actually the work of God putting you where He wants you to be—“first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Not all the gifts are mentioned in that verse, but there are some gifts and gifted men that God has given to the church mentioned here. I don’t think that Paul is laying out their rank in order of importance, but I think he’s laying it out in the order of historic order, that the foundation of the church was laid by the apostles and the prophets.

Now, I happen to believe that there are no apostles in the primary sense that there were in the New Testament today, that is, an individual that personally encountered Jesus Christ and personally saw the Lord and saw Him risen and was commissioned with apostolic authority. I don’t believe that we in the church today have apostles that have apostolic authority to add on to the Scriptures, to write the Scriptures, to give new revelations. The Scriptures in Jude says, “. . . that ye should earnestly contend for the faith”—that’s the body of truth we hold—“which was once”—and for all—“delivered unto the saints.” So, if it’s new, it’s not true; and if it’s true, it’s not new. I don’t believe we have apostles today.

But you might think of in a secondary sense that a missionary is an apostle because the word “apostle” is very similar to the word ambassador—someone who’s sent out to represent with a commission. They’re commissioned in representing others. Missionaries are sent out by the church representing Christ and the church, so some think that missionaries could be classified as apostles, but I think it’s kind of stretching it a little bit. There were apostles in the New Testament in the laying of the foundation of the church and the doctrines and the truths that were laid out in Scriptures. In the book of Acts 2 when the Church was born on the day of Pentecost, it says, “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”—they were getting teaching by the apostles and continuing in that doctrine.

Then there are the prophets. Again, I don’t believe that there is in the church today the office of a prophet. I believe that there’s the gift of prophecy, which the word “prophecy” simply means to speak forth or speak before. It could mean that you speak about something before it happens, which is what we think of prophecy, or it can mean that we just speak forth the Word of God.

Again, I don't believe that the office of a prophet is in the church today. When you read the pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, there's no reference to qualifications for apostles or prophets. The only two offices in the church today are for pastors and deacons. Pastors are also called bishops or overseers, and the word "pastor" comes from the latin to mean shepherd. Those are the only two categories given in the New Testament for offices in the church today.

Thirdly, he also says there are teachers. In Ephesians 4 Paul mentions that God's given to the church pastor-teachers. I say it that way because it should be hyphenated. It's one person, pastor-teachers. Everything indicates very clearly from the New Testament that a pastor must be a teacher along with the gift of calling to be a pastor is the gift of teaching. I've had people say, "Well, we go to church and the pastor's a really loving guy. He comes to our potlucks, and he hangs out with us. He goes to the hospital, but he's a terrible teacher. He's a terrible preacher." God gives a pastor a gift of teaching and should give him a desire to teach God's Word. That's how he feeds the flock. The word "pastor" means shepherd, and when the Bible says, "Feed the sheep," you feed the sheep the Word of God, so he has to have that ability to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully.

" . . . after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments,"—'governments' would be the gift of administration, and what an important gift that is, actually in the church. God gives you an ability to coordinate people and to put ministry together to just oversee ministry, and it's an important gift of administration—governments. Then, " . . . diversities of tongues,"—again, we're going to talk in great detail about the gift of tongues when we get to chapter 14.

Verse 29, "Are all apostles?" I want you to notice the question marks here. I think there's seven, if I counted them correctly. They're all rhetorical questions expecting a no answer. "Are all apostles?"—no—"are all prophets?"—no—"are all teachers?"—no. Remember, the body has different parts. It's not all just a hand or an eye or a body's not just a foot. " . . . are all workers of miracles?"—no—"Have all the gifts of healing?"—the answer is no—"do all speak with tongues?"

This is an important one because there are those that say that if you're really spiritual, you will have the gift. There are a lot of Christians and Christians today—and believe me, I know that, I've been there, I grew up in churches that were teaching this—that unless you spoke in tongues, you weren't filled with the Spirit or baptized in the Spirit; that the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which they taught was subsequent to conversion, is speaking in tongues, and they base that on some of the people in the book of Acts that got saved and spoke with tongues. They take that historical narrative and try to apply it universally to all Christians today. It's a dangerous thing to interpret historical narrative without the lens or the Scriptures of the doctrines in the epistles or the didactic sections of the Bible.

You don't interpret historical narrative unless you interpret it through the lens of doctrinal letters in the New Testament, the didactic sections of the Bible—did Jesus teach it, was it practiced in Acts, was it taught by the apostles in the epistles. If so, you have a solid foundation for what

you believe. I don't believe...and again, my plug for chapter 14, we're going to see that not all Christians will be given the gift of speaking with tongues, but I believe that it's still available today and that gift has not left the church. But not all Christians have that gift. If you don't have that gift, it doesn't mean you're not spiritual.

" . . . do all interpret?"—that is, interpret the speaking in tongues, the language that is spoken, no—"But covet earnestly"—this is the transition or the segue into chapter 13—But covet earnestly the best gifts" What are the best gifts? The best gifts are whatever meets the need. If you're sick, the gift of healing would be best. If you need to be taught, the gift of teaching would be best. "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way,"—and great to see that because as you go into chapter 13, as we're going to do, the "more excellent way" is the way of using the gifts in love.

Paul's not going to say that gifts are unimportant. He's going to say the gifts are important, but they are nothing if they're not used and exercised in love for the good of others and for the glory of God. So, " . . . shew I unto you a more excellent way," take that into consideration when you're moving in chapter 13. Someone said, "Diversity leads to disunity when we compete with one another; but if we care for one another, diversity leads to unity." It's so important.

Now, chapter 13. Ray Stedman called 1 Corinthians 13 the most beautiful chapter in the New Testament. I've always wanted to do a series on "Great Chapters of the Bible." The challenge is by whose standards do you determine what is a great chapter in the Bible, but definitely, 1 Corinthians 13. I have several books in my library on great chapters of the Bible. Charles Hadden Spurgeon preached a series, "Great Chapters of the Bible," and in that book is 1 Corinthians 13. Everyone knows it, everyone hears it read quite commonly at weddings. It's a very favorite chapter on the subject of love.

Why does it appear in this section on gifts? Because it's important that the gifts are exercised in love. This chapter divorced from its context is many times misapplied and misunderstood. We must remember that Paul is dealing with the problems concerning spiritual gifts. Paul's seeking to show the Corinthians that unity and diversity must be balanced by maturity, and the maturity comes with love. It's not enough to have the gifts of the Spirit, we must also have the graces of the Spirit.

I think I've said it already, but I'll say it again; that is, the greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled life is fruit or godly character not spiritual gifts. The church at Corinth is an example. You can have gifts of the Spirit, but you can be exercising them in an unloving way or an unspiritual way, even in an unbiblical way, and that's not spiritual. The greatest evidence that you are a Spirit-filled, controlled by the Holy Spirit Christian is love. What did Jesus say? He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He didn't say that you speak in tongues. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,"—that you can heal each other, you have the gift of healing. No, He didn't say that. He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,"—because love is the fruit of the Spirit.

When you come to Galatians, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love,”—right? then—“joy, peace . . . gentleness . . .”—then meekness and self-control. I’m convinced it’s true that basically the fruit of the Spirit is love—love is joy, love is gentleness, love is peace, love is kindness. All the qualities listed in Galatians of the fruit of the Spirit basically are found in love, and we’re going to see that in chapter 13 tonight. Analyzing, someone said that 1 Corinthians 13 is like tearing apart a beautiful flower, yet it’s important that we study it, understand it, and put it into practice in our daily lives.

There are three things that I want to look at in 1 Corinthians 13, and that’ll be the preeminence of love, love’s values; the practice of love, love’s virtue; and the permanence of love, love’s victory. Let’s look at each one of those one at a time. Verses 1-3, the preeminence of love, Paul says, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity”—my King James Bible has ‘charity’ but it is the word love. It’s the word in the Greek, *agápē* and we’ll talk about that in just a moment—“I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity”—or love—“it profiteth me nothing.” Paul is talking about the preeminent and the importance of love. It’s so very, very important.

The Greeks elevated what man knew, the intellect; the Romans worshiped what a man could do, power; but Paul in his epistles and in Christian doctrine stressed what a man is, character. The character is what’s to be behind the exercising of the gift. For the Christian, the pinnacle of spiritual development is to love God with their total being and to love one’s neighbor as himself.

There are three words in the Greek which are all translated by one word; that is, the word “love.” Our culture today has totally lost a knowledge of what love is. I haven’t seen them recently, thank God for that, and even though it’s June supposedly gay pride month, when our government ran ads on tv, and they ran that little phrase, “Love is love.” Remember that? “Love is love,” implying that if two men love each other, that’s okay; two women love each other, that’s okay, “Love is love.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. In the English language we are so limited because we only have one word for love, and that’s the word “love,” and we use it on such a broad spectrum.

I always use the illustration of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I can’t tell you how many times people have bought me t-shirts about “I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches,” because of that. I don’t need any more t-shirts. Not only do I love peanut butter and jelly, but I love my wife. Notice I used the same word for “love,”—I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to I love my wife. Obviously, I love my wife a whole lot differently than I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Amen?

How are we to understand the word “love,” we use it on a broad spectrum. In the Greek there are technically four, but fundamentally three, words for “love.” The first word is *eros*, e-r-o-s. It’s where we get our word erotic from. It’s not in the New Testament. *Eros* is not in the Bible.

What we should use in the English language when we eros someone we should say, "I lust after you. I want you." It is to me a love that wants to take only and not to give. You don't want to get married, we just eros love. Physical attraction is great in a marriage, but you don't get married just because you want to satisfy your sexual drive. Eros is not in the Bible, but it is a word that should be understood. It's a love that only wants to get, not to give.

The second word is used in the New Testament, it's the word philé. Philé means to have affection or a fondness for. We get our word Philadelphia from it, and that's where we get the word brotherly love. We also get the word philanthropist from it. This is a love that wants to give as well as receive. This is a sharing love. This is a give and take kind of love.

The third word that's used for love in the New Testament, which was popularized by Christianity and by the New Testament, is the word agáp. agáp is a-g-a-p-e. John 3:16 says, "For God so"—agáp —"the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" Agáp is, I believe, God's love giving to others without any expectations or demands that that love is reciprocated or given back. This is the kind of love that makes a marriage last a lifetime. This is a giving, sacrificial, self-denying, giving love.

This chapter is so great for married couples. In marriage agáp is so very important. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" It's the word agáp. Wives are to love their husbands. Husbands are to be leading, protecting, and providing for their wives. Wives are to be submitting and loving their husband. Agáp love, it's a giving love. It's a sacrificial love, a self-denying love. It's a love demonstrated by God giving His Son and Jesus dying on the cross. It is the love described in Galatians 5:22 when Paul says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is"—agáp. It's a sacrificial, self-denying, giving love. Love, by the way, especially in a marriage, is not a passing emotion, it's a continual devotion; and it's a decision you make to seek the highest good of that object loved. Love isn't a feeling. Those feelings follow the decision you make, "I'm going to love my wife," if you're a husband; or the decision you make as a wife, "I will love my husband." In the body of Christ, "I will love other people that may rub me the wrong way or irritate me or bother me. I'm going to seek their highest good." It's a commitment you make to love that other person.

Paul gives three hypothetical illustrations to demonstrate the preeminence or the necessity of love in the Christian service. In the area of speaking, look at verse 1. You may speak eloquently, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,"—I have to confess I have no idea what Paul is referring to and the difference between the tongues of men and of angels. Some say that tongues of men is just your normal language that you talk in; the tongues of angels is speaking in tongues, which I don't know how they come up with that. He's just saying that you speak eloquently as a man or you can speak eloquently as an angel, but if you don't speak in love, verse 1, then you're just " . . . as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." You're just two cymbals clanging together making noise. There's no real purpose or meaning, if you don't speak in love. All the speaking gifts and all words that come out of our mouth should be motivated by love. The Bible says, "But speaking the truth in love" Not just truth, but truth in love. It's so very important.

Secondly, Paul uses the illustration of the area of knowledge or knowing, verse 2. So, we can speak eloquently, we can understand profoundly, but if we don't have love, it's no value. Look at verse 2, he says, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,"—like I said, a lot of people like to get quite braggadocious and boastful about their prophetic revelations and their knowledge of the Word of God—"and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not"—love, agáp 9y4• am nothing." You might be able to speak eloquently; you might be able to have great, profound understanding; you might have a full head but an empty heart; it is worth nothing.

Thirdly, verse 3, Paul speaks of giving. You might be giving sacrificially, and you do that, but if you don't do that in love, it's not motivated by love, it means nothing. You can practice philanthropy, but again, if it's not done in love—for the good of others and the glory of God—then why are you doing it. It's nothing. He says, verse 3, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,"—and you would applaud somebody that does that, "Oh, that's wonderful! You give to feed the poor, wonderful." " . . . and though I give my body to be burned,"—you sacrificially deny yourself and give yourself for others—"and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing."

Just a quick illustration in Matthew 6. Jesus was using the religion of the Pharisees to show that what we do needs to be done with the right motives, and He was talking about the way they would give. They would give very ostentatiously with great show. They would show off. It's sad, but in many churches today they cater to people's flesh and pride when they like to publish who's giving what so that people can applaud them and recognize them and praise them. It's okay to say, "Thank you, for your gift," and "Thank you for your giving," but we don't want to exalt one member over another or members the can't give in a way others can. We don't hang a photo of you in the foyer at church, you know, "Top Giver of the Month," everybody applaud them and pat them on the back.

You know, the human body is quite sensitive. When you pat it on the back, the head begins to swell. Many times they kind of placate to this. "We'll do this, we'll put your name here. We'll give a gold plaque and put your name on this." No, Jesus said, "When you give, ' . . . let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'" He said, "When you give, give ' . . . in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.'" It needs to be motivated by love, not for the glory of man and the recognition of man. It should be done out of love for the glory of God.

The second section of 1 Corinthians 13, we see the practice of love. This is where it gets down to shoe leather, rubber meets the road. What is this love? How does it work out in our daily lives? Verses 4-7, "[Love] suffereth long, and is kind" I recommend that you take verses 4-7 and look at it and read it in other modern translations or paraphrases. So, "[Love] suffereth long, and is kind,"—I'm going to go over each one of these qualities—"[love] envieth not; [love] vaunteth not itself,"—or puffs not itself up—"is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly"—or rudely—"seeketh not her own, is not provoked,"—the word "easily" in the King James Translation is unfortunate. It's not in the Greek, so it just should be is not provoked. " . . .

thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Paul now lists 15 properties or qualities of agápē love, and unless they’re all seen simultaneously in the life of a believer, you cannot claim to be like Jesus. If you take these verses and change the word “love” or “charity” to the word “Jesus,” it reads perfectly. “Jesus suffered long and was kind; Jesus envied not; Jesus vaunted not Himself, He was not puffed up, Jesus did not behave Himself unseemly.” You just read the whole thing and substitute the word “Jesus” and it just fits perfectly.

But try putting your name in there and see how it sounds, how far you get. Let’s put “John” in there. “John suffers long and is kind,” stop right there. That’s as far as we can go. When I suffer long, (laughs) I’m not very kind, especially when I suffer on a freeway. I hate traffic. I feel like I lose my salvation every time I drive somewhere. It’s so hard to be sanctified in California and drive the freeways. It’s like the little boy that asks his mom, “Mommy, where are all the idiots?” She said, “What do you mean, where are all the idiots?” “Well, when I was riding with dad yesterday, there were idiots all over the highway. Where are the idiots today?” Sometimes even Christians, “You idiot!” Can you imagine driving to church on Sunday, “You idiot! You idiot!” Then, you get to church, “Praise Jesus. Hallelujah. Isn’t God good?” Your kids are listening to you, by the way, and you’re like, “Okay children, go to Sunday school and learn about Jesus. Learn to love one another,” and then you get back in the car to leave the parking lot, “You idiot!” So, love suffers long and is kind.

Let’s go back over these 15. Lord willing, we’ll try to cover them quite quickly. Suffers long or is patient is a better translation, verse 4. That’s the first quality of life. It’s patience with people, not with circumstances, primarily. When we are wronged by people, it goes on loving regardless of the response from the other person. You don’t say, “I’ve taken it, I’ve taken it, and I’ve taken it. I’m not going to take it anymore! I’ve had it!” You just blow up. You know, that “suffers long” literally means long-fused. It actually literally means long-fused. Have you ever met somebody that’s got a short fuse? You light them up and they just blow up. They don’t go very long, whoa something ticks on them, they just blow up. They’re short-fused. It means that we’re patient. We abide under pressure.

The second word in verse 4, kind. It means it’s not inconsiderate but benevolent or constructive or helpful. I heard Harry Allen Ironside once say, “If you’re not kind, you’re not spiritual.” You’re not spiritual because you know Greek and Hebrew and theology or have some gift of the Spirit. You’re spiritual if you’re kind. Jesus was kind. Christlikeness will produce that kind of kindness, verse 4.

Thirdly, “. . . envieth not,” or is not jealous would be a better translation, verse 4. It does not mind when someone else has the limelight. How important is that for the church today, that we don’t get jealous of other people and their gift used in the church. I love the story of Jonathan and David in the Old Testament, how Jonathan was never jealous of David and how he rejoiced with David when he was exalted as king.

Fourthly, it says, verse 4, “. . . vaunteth not itself,”—this is actually a reference to not boastful. Love does not brag about one’s abilities or achievements and is not inflated with its own importance. Moffatt translates this that love makes no parade. It doesn’t show off. It’s modest.

Fifthly, verse 4, “. . . is not puffed up,” which means arrogant or filled with pride. Love is humble. It does not seek its own way. It’s not feeling superior to others, it’s humble. Humility is again a primary virtue of Jesus Christ. He’s that meek and lowly and humble of heart. You know what humility is? Humility is just not thinking about yourself. It’s not thinking less of yourself; it’s not thinking more of yourself; it’s just not thinking about yourself. Do you know people like that? They just always seem to be thinking about others, not thinking about themselves. That’s a humble individual. It’s so very, very important. So, not puffed up with their own importance.

Verse 5, “Doth not behave itself unseemly” This is the sixth quality, not behaving unseemly. It’s not rude. Love is courteous or polite. The seventh would be again in verse 5, “. . . seeketh not her own,”—that means it does not insist on its own rights. Again, how important is that in a marriage relationship—not seeking or demanding your own rights. Eighthly, verse 5, “. . . is not provoked” This is a tough one, “not provoked.” The King James as I said has the word “easily,” but it’s not there. It’s actually, is not irritable in some translations or not touchy. William Barclay has that love never flies into a temper. It’s not irritable or touchy. The Spirit-filled life is not provoked. It’s so very important.

The ninth, verse 5, “. . . thinketh no evil” It’s not resentful or vindictive. William Barclay has “Love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received.” Love does not nurse its wrath to keep warm or bring up again. Love forgives; love forgets.

The tenth, verse 6, “Rejoiceth not in iniquity”—it does not rejoice in the sins and misfortune of others. Sometimes you hear about some tragedy happening to somebody that you may not particularly like, and there’s a little bit of rejoicing with those that are weeping when we should weep with those who weep. “Oh, they deserve that. I’m glad that happened to them.” That’s not loving.

Verse 6, “. . . but rejoiceth in the truth” Love looks for the best in people, not the blemishes. We should be looking for the best in others, not the worst. Love also speaks the truth and walks in the truth.

Verse 7, the twelfth, “Beareth all things” Love conceals what is displeasing in others. It doesn’t broadcast it. Love accepts without grumbling the trials and the difficulties of life. That’s one we all need to take to heart. Love accepts what God allows in your life knowing He loves you, He’s in control, He knows what He’s doing. Instead of growing bitter, we grow better. Look at Joseph in the Old Testament. All the bitter experiences of his life, and yes he was always focusing on God and became better not bitter.

Love “. . . believeth all things,” verse 7. It’s not suspicious of the deeds and motivations of

others. In other words, it believes first of all the best of others. It's trusting. It's trust in God, even when there's nothing but darkness all around as well.

The fourteenth, “. . . hopeth all things,” verse 7. Love hopes all things—anticipates the spiritual good that will result even from wrongdoing. Love always hopes the best for people.

The fifteenth is in verse 7, “. . . endureth all things . . .” Love is not shaken, even in the midst of storms. It's steadfast, unmoving to the end. Look at verse 7, “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” You see why this is so important in a marriage relationship? It's basically describing a marriage that will last a lifetime, but what a blessing when these qualities are in our lives found in the body of Christ.

Third, and last division, verses 8-13. We see the preeminence of love. Verse 8, “[Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly”—literally it would be a polished piece of metal. It was a mirror that it's referring to, but we don't see a clear image—“but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth”—these three—“faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love].”

Song of Solomon 5:7 says, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it”—genuine love continues. Paul contrasts the permanence of love with the transitory character of the gifts. The first, verse 8, gifts are temporary. It says, “[Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” Notice gifts are temporary. The question is when will these gifts fail or pass away?

I'm going to propose from the text that it's when we get to heaven, when we see Jesus face to face. There are those that are called cessationists that believe that the miraculous sign gifts have ceased today because the Bible, that which is perfect, has appeared and we don't need the gifts any longer. I understand what they're trying to convey, but I think in this text that it's saying that these gifts will be unnecessary when we get to heaven. We won't need them. We're not going to speak in tongues in heaven. Can you imagine being in heaven and everybody's speaking in tongues? That's not going to be done. We're not going to need the gift of healing in heaven. We're not going to need the gift of teaching in heaven, we'll know even as we are known. There's a lot of things we won't need in heaven. It's going to be glorious. So, “. . . prophecies, they shall fail . . . tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” God's gifts are only partial.

Look at verse 10 with me, gifts will end. Again, very clearly Paul says, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part”—which are these gifts—“shall be done away.” Again,

we could spend time on all the different views of “that which is perfect.” I personally believe that “that which is perfect,” is the perfect state of being in heaven with Christ face to face. Don’t you think that when we get to heaven it’s going to be perfect? You think we’re going to be bummed, “Oh, man! I thought my mansion was going to be a little bit bigger than that. I wanted a giant flat screen in heaven.” I believe and as you go into the verse that it’s clear that it’s talking about the state of being in heaven, eternity. “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Paul then uses the analogy in verse 11 of being a child and getting rid of childish things and maturing. The gifts are infantile. He says, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child,”—which is fine. When you’re a child, you speak like a child, you understand like a child—“I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” So, when we are in heaven in the perfect state, we’re going to put away these childish things. We won’t need them any longer.

Verse 12, knowledge is not complete. Our knowledge is not complete. We don’t know everything. He says, “For now we see through a glass, darkly” This verse has great implication to remind us that in this present life, at this present time, when we’re not in heaven, we’re not there with Christ, we’re not seeing Him face to face, that we’re still living by faith not by sight, that we have limited knowledge. I don’t have any problem with the fact that God has not revealed everything there is to know about everything. I don’t need to know what God doesn’t want me to know, and I know if God wants me to know it, He’d reveal it; if He hasn’t revealed it, no big deal. But some people are plagued by that. But if you trust the Lord and rest in Him, whatever He’s revealed, whatever He wants me to know is fine.

But right now life is like looking through a glass darkly. Now, he’s not talking about glass that we would use glass today, a window. They didn’t have glass. They didn’t have mirrors. They would use a piece of metal—brass or silver—and polish it up real shiny. That’s how they would...it’d be like looking in a chrome hubcap on an automobile seeing your image. It’s not really the best mirror. I mean, today we have these super mirrors with the lights all around them so you see every spot and blemish and wrinkle. I don’t know why anyone wants a mirror that shows everything. You know, these mirrors that make you really look big and see all your...it’s like, “No, thank you.” I like to dim the lights when I look in the mirror. In those days they’d look in this polished metal, and it wasn’t a real clear image. That’s what life is like for us right now. We don’t see clearly everything. We have to trust the Lord and live by faith.

Notice it says, verse 12, “. . . but then face to face” This is why I believe, verse 10, “But when that which is perfect”—it’s at least implying that it’s the perfect state when we’re in heaven with the Lord. “. . . now I know in part; but then”—when? When I’m face to face with the Lord —“shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love].” Someone said, “Faith will become sight, hope will become reality, but love lasts forever. Faith will vanish into sight, hope is emptied into light, love in heaven will shine more bright.” How wonderful when we see Jesus face to face. Amen? I have this theory that when we get to heaven we’re going to be so blown away by understanding that

which we don't understand now, that all that God did in our redemption was wise and wonderful and He's to be praised.