

Call to Worship— Psalm 36:7-10

Sermon Text— 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Benediction— 1 John 4:7-10

## Text — 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 ESV

[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

[2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

[4] Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[8] Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. [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. [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.

[13] So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**NEXT WEEK: "Prophecy" 1 Corinthians 14:1**

## Outline: "Perfect"

- **INTRO— "A still more excellent way" is fueled by enduring love that bears all things, believes all things and hopes all things. The ability, if you will, for this gifted love to tolerate all that it faces, epics, reigning kings, natural disasters, wars, and famine gives us a glimpse today of HOW to evaluate the gifts as both temporary (or better yet, intermittent) and perpetual as long as their is purpose. Perfection, satisfaction, completion, is every Christ followers goal, glorification it is called. So as long as their is purpose to glorify God in history EVERY tool gifted to be used by creation WILL sing, speak, proclaim, and prophecy or else the very stones will cry out in our place.**
- **TRANSITION: Read 13:7**
  - **this described enduring love will have within it ALL the attributes credited to it in the previous verses for eternity, even in perfection/completion LOVE never ends, because its purpose remains. We'll address this again when we reach v13.**
- **v8 CONTRAST Love never ends... vs prophecies, tongues, knowledge... pass away/cease**
  - **As described in v1-8a LOVE NEVER ENDS (not now in history or forevermore) OTHER ... never FAILS**
    - **NLT Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!**
  - **This is about timing, this is about longevity, this is GOOD NEWS**
    - **FIRST LOOK... IF/WHERE/WHETHER vs AS FOR... Already indicates that at the time of this writing these gifts were either already fading from use OR were not in EVERY setting/assembly... THIS IS IMPORTANT. AS FOR is not wrong but it pre-interprets this phrase in a universal way and removes a smidge of the rhetoric that has been established in this section to help the reader be persuaded of Paul's INFORMING re: the still more excellent way**
      - **PROPHECY— purpose to provide instruction, correction, interpretation, revelation ON DEMAND (in the church)... prophecy passes away (rendered useless/obsolete/inoperative) in contrast to enduring LOVE**

- TONGUES— a gift utilized to edify/build up/encourage the body as a unique assembly indwell with the Spirit, this manifest gift in particular was used readily (ACTS) to show continuity between the converted Jew and converted Gentile, also a mark of continued power and witness for the fledgling church (without Bible, books, training, seminaries, or even basic experience to lean upon), minimal ways for the ecclesia marginalized, persecuted, and scattered to confirm unity and authentic brotherhood... WHAT IS DIFFERENT TODAY and for the last epic of church history?... TONGUES CEASE (this has a helpful hint of INTERMITTENT as this word reflects the act of restraining or told to cease and desist, no longer have permission to use, it also fits with our being released to rightly look back on this gift as past tense as part of either church maturity or expanse)
  - KNOWLEDGE— teaching, instruction, interpretation, as a systematic regular devotion to strengthen the body and to prepare it for generations to come in anticipation of Christ's return. This would have also been key as doctrine was being established and scripture was being written, authenticated and collected. This of all gifts mentioned here is the most familiar to our setting, and even so, this setting will be obsolete in God's presence, will we worship him, sing to him, declare his greatness YES for eternity, will we sit in pews, around tables, in caves or under shade trees studying the mysteries of God and how to follow him NO faith and hope will receive their "completion" and yet COMPLETE love will remain our fuel for enduring worship and joy
- v9-12 WE... I... WE... I...
- FACT— We KNOW and PROHESY... in part (incomplete view/partial/impossible to fully comprehend, but not without help)
    - FACT— the partial WILL PASS AWAY
  - BUT WHEN the PERFECT comes, the partial (the gifts mentioned) will pass away... WHAT IS THE PERFECT?
    - THE PERFECT— apostolic authentication anticipating the completion of the canon of scripture
    - THE PERFECT— the second coming and our glorification
    - both are a crescendo of the church and gospel moving victoriously forward in victory
      - BUT only one is ultimate (knowledge passes away... even the "temporal" teaching of God's word in it's understood setting will pass away as our finite minds and feeble flesh are glorified and the enduring word is seen and understood like never before... the very words of God become the VERY WORDS OF GOD)
  - We see this progressive approach in v11 as Paul confesses to the natural concept of thinking/speaking/acting like a child as he was a child and then giving up (ceasing/rendering inoperative) his childish ways for adulthood. This would be a DUH statement but necessary to anchor the loftiness of this section back to the ability of the reader to comprehend upon reading the essence of what is being stated. ONLY MODERN DISCIPLES SQUABBLE ABOUT THE MINUTIA OF MANIFEST GIFTS BECAUSE IT IS NOT NORMATIVE AND IS A SENSATIONAL PART OF OUR FAITH HISTORY. This uninformed ness of the reader was due to malpractice and misunderstanding ours is because we are trying to take things that are descriptive and make them prescriptive... because our culture for centuries fears we're "missing out" on something, THIS is the the satisfaction and contentment issue that plagues the church in our waiting.
  - MIRRORS— Thus the mirror illustration serves as yet another perfect reminder: we can't see perfectly, therefore we can't understand perfectly, NONE OF US CAN and those that claim they can are at best misguided and at worst gnostic.
    - FACE TO FACE is coming Coram Deo is on its way! Full knowledge is coming even as God himself fully knows me this moment! Meditate on that for just a moment.

## **CONCLUSION: “Great LOVE”**

- Now these three remain: faith, hope and love— but the greatest of these is love.
  - They last forever because they will all 3 be fulfilled BUT...
    - GREAT LOVE will continue to have PURPOSE for everlasting

WE NEED EVERLASTING LOVE BECAUSE WE HAVE AN EVERLASTING GOD! This love MUST come FROM him because it is FOR him.

## **LORDS SUPPER**