

I Corinthians

Chapter 13

Let's open with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

Again, we stop to acknowledge you, to thank you and to praise you for who you are, and for your faithfulness to us. We pray that as we study your word, and as we depend upon your Spirit, that you would give us the understanding that we seek and that we desperately need. We pray that you would take this important chapter and bless our hearts and minds. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!

In the last verse of Chapter 12, Paul said "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way." And that's Chapter 13 that we are taking now. Chapter 13 is a small chapter and it's the chapter on love.

M.V.

I Corinthians 13:1

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

He starts out by saying "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,"

Now the word charity in the King James text is our word Agape in Greek. And there are different words in Greek for different kinds of love.

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Over the years, the church has relegated Agape to be something special. But not that special, because we think we can produce it!

But the word charity is Agape.

Agape is the fruit of God's Spirit according to Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love." And that word love is Agape. God's Spirit produces Agape.

In 1 John Chapter 4 Verse 8 tells us that God is Agape. It's His nature. In fact, outside of the New Testament, the word was hardly ever used.

We could only find it twice outside of the scriptures because it was such a special word and could not be used in the human realm. But God is Agape.

Agape love includes sacrifice. Agape is the concern for someone's spiritual welfare. God exhibited that toward us in that "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

He looked at us and said your spiritual condition needs help. If I don't send a Savior, you're going to die in your sins!

Again, it takes sacrifice. So God sent His own Son to sacrifice Himself for me and my sins because God the Father won't accept my sacrifice because I'm a sinner. His requirement is somebody who's perfect.

I couldn't do that. I couldn't even be my own sacrifice. So God sent His own Son who died for us on the cross. You see, it is sacrifice. It's for somebody's spiritual welfare.

That might include providing food and clothing from a human sense if somebody's suffering. But everything is spiritual. As a matter of fact, sometimes you have to say no to helping people.

Many times, in just a humanitarian way when we try to help people, sometimes we are enabling them. Sometimes we have to tell them "The Lord doesn't want me to help you."

And people don't understand that. Sometimes God has to tell us no and we have to suffer the consequences so that we can see our need.

And we can come to Him and say "Lord, I need to change. I need you to change me. I need you to help me. And I never would have gotten to this point had the brethren just continued to supply all of my needs!"

So the word charity through all of this is the word Agape. It is Agape love. It doesn't mean charity like we know it today.

But he starts out in Verses 1 through 3, and we're going to have three sections here, and the first one is the effectiveness of love.

Please look at these next verses and notice the word "though." Maybe you might even want to circle that word in your bible.

We have one right away in Verse 1. He says "though" I speak with the tongues of men. Verse 2 is the second word, and "though," and then a little farther in Verse two it says and "though" I have all faith. There's your third "though." And in Verse 3, we have two of them.

There are five of them.

The first verse reads "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and there are some people that use that verse to say "You see, Paul spoke with these mystical languages!"

Though I speak the language of men and of angels, and so people will say that even though I violate what the bible says about tongues, the bible does say that there's an "angelic language" that we can speak, because Paul says "even though I speak...."

No, he didn't say that! That's why I told you to notice the word "though" and circle it.

In the Greek, these are all words that are called Eon, which mean "if." It is called Eon with the subjunctive.

In other words, Paul is presenting five phrases that are hypothetical. He's not saying "though I do speak," he's saying "if" I did!

I wanted you to see that because that is very important in the original language. Some people think that just because of the English, Paul is saying though I do speak with the language of angels, and he's not saying that at all. This is all hypothetical.

The first one: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Agape, I become as a sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal.

It's just noise!

It's kind of interesting because hypothetically, and in fact, it is called hypothetical exaggeration. The Corinthians are so carnal and because they were carnal, he is pushing this out to exaggeration in the human.

Some of them did think that they were speaking in the languages of angels and they thought that this was "super spirituality."

Paul says "Even if I should be able to do that, and I don't have Agape motivating it, I'm just making noise. It's worthless!"

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 charity, I am nothing.

And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;

And there are people that go around and say that they know all mysteries. But we already know the mysteries because God's word reveals, and anything that we don't know is because we're not supposed to know.

But Paul says "If I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and I have the gift of prophecy, I hear from God and I reveal it to you, and though I have all faith!

You hear a lot of that today. People will tell you that you got to come up with your own faith.

Paul says "If I have all faith so that I could remove mountains."

That's a whole lot of faith! Those are the words of Jesus where He says if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can tell this mountain "be removed!"

Those were phrases known amongst the Jewish Rabbi's. To "remove mountains" in a person's life is to remove the difficulties. So the counselors would teach them to trust the Lord and make it through their difficulties.

So if I had all faith so that I could remove mountains, and I have not Agape love, I am nothing.

Can you imagine someone mustering up enough faith to stand outside and move mountains around? And people would probably say "That's got to be the power of God."

And yet Paul says if you're not motivated by Agape, that is to say whatever this thing is that you do, if you're not motivated to minister to other people's spiritual condition, it doesn't mean anything. It's 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, it profiteth me nothing.

And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and if I give my body to be burned, and that's what I mean about hypothetical exaggeration.

What, are you going to sacrifice your life for the Lord? "Yup, I'm going to burn at the stake just for Him!"

And I have not Agape, it profits me nothing.

I've been guilty of it in my own life, and I see it running rampant in the body of Christ today, where people are pursuing what they call the "gifts" of the spirit for their own personal experience, and parading themselves around as if God's Spirit has made them be somebody great and important.

But you can tell if it's from God or not because it's for their own show, not to help anyone follow Christ.

Now the expression of love, and there are 15 things that describe what love does. These are all the attributes, the qualities and characteristics of Agape.

Remember I told you that Agape is God, and Agape is produced by the Holy Spirit. Now this is how you know when it is Agape ministering, or human love.

4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

First of all in Verse 4, Agape suffers long. The Greek word has to do with being slow in reaction toward people.

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The second thing: And is kind. It's literally the word useful, spiritually useful. I'm sure it helps to be kind, but God's Spirit makes it spiritually useful.

The third thing: Agape envies not. There is no jealousy with Agape love.

Fourthly: Charity, or Agape vaunteth not itself. The word vaunteth is the translation of parade. Agape doesn't parade itself around for everybody to see.

Fifthly, and this is associated with the fourth one: Is not puffed up. That's the word for arrogance. And it is literally the word for like blowing up a balloon. This is a person who is arrogant.

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Sixthly: Does not behave itself unseemly. The word unseemly means shamefully.

Number 7 is one we should all remember: Love does not seek its own. If I am under the influence of God's love, I will not be seeking anything for myself. Nothing!

Number 8: Love is not easily provoked. It's interesting that the word easily is not in the original but the figured there's got to be some point of breaking here.

The word provoked means to jab somebody with a spear. I guess we would call it irritated!

Number 9: Love thinketh no evil. Two words, the word thinketh is an accounting term that means to write things down. And the word evil is the word wrong.

So love does not keep account of wrong. I don't know if you have ever been around somebody that you have not seen for 10 years, but they already have it packed away in their brain "Yea, I know 10 things that you did to me!" They are keeping a list. It's all filed. But love doesn't do that!

M.V.

I Corinthians 13:6

I like these in Verse 6:

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, that is unrighteousness. It does not rejoice in sin at all. But rather, it rejoices with the truth; God's love rejoices with the truth, not with the error.

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love bears all things. The word beareth means to cover. In essence, God's love is more interested in covering someone's sin and weaknesses rather than exploit them.

Next, love believes all things. It goes along the adage of innocent until proven guilty. "I'll believe you unless it's proven otherwise."

Love hopes all things. The word hope in Greek doesn't mean I "wish" it would. It's actually a word of expectancy. I expect everything's going to turn out okay!

It's not a matter of positive thinking. It's a matter of God's Spirit saying "God's love has got you covered!"

And lastly: Love endures all things. All things! It remains under. It doesn't have to run away. It remains and endures all things.

It goes right along with Paul in Galatians Chapter 6 about bearing one another's burdens.

When people are involved in sin or difficulties in their life, it's very heavy. And we have a tendency to say "Hey, you've got your thing. Go take care of it and then come back. I've got too much to carry in my own life!"

But Paul says to identify with the weightiness of others, the weightiness of their life. Love endures all things!

So far, we have taken the effectiveness of love where Paul says that no matter what miracle you perform, if it's not motivated by love, it's nothing.

We've take the expression of love. There were 15 different expressions of Agape love. It's not something that a human being can work at. Even though we can create the impression of some of those things in a human sense, it's not the same!

And now we are in the endurance of love. And some of these scriptures, I'm sure that some of you know some of these parts are confusing as to what it might mean. And people have actually misused it, and hopefully we can clear that up right in this section.

The endurance of love:

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8 Charity 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.

Charity, or Agape never fails:

It never stops and it will never stop. The only way Agape can stop is if God stops because Agape is God and that's His nature.

But there are a couple of concepts here. Now I'm going to ask you to do something so that you can see from a concept as to the flow of things.

Under the concept, part 1 where it says whether there be prophecies, underline they shall fail.

Whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, underline it shall vanish away.

Now go down to Verse 10 and at the end when it says which is in part shall be done away, you can underline part shall be done away.

And lastly, at the bottom of Verse 11, where Paul says I put away childish things, underline I put away.

That is to tell you that in all four of these places it's the same Greek word. And he's setting up contrasts.

I'm going to ask you to put in numbers here in a moment so that you can see in context that there's no doubt about what's being said!

So let's start at Verse 8: Agape never fails.

Then the concept part 1:

But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; they're going to stop!

Whether there be tongues, different word, they shall cease;

Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

So you've got three things that some Christians hold to be very important, prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.

Agape will never stop and it will never fail. But everything else is going to stop.

Someday there will be no more prophecies, tongues, or knowledge. When we get to heaven, there's going to be no more bible studies because we will have the word of God Himself right in front of us!

The concept part 2, and here's where we start marking things up.

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

For right now, we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

And again, prophecy has to do with ministering the word of God both to believers and non-believers. That's the job of the prophet.

So right now, we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

And for those two lines, if you can put a 1 there and circle it.

M.V. I Corinthians 13:10

Verse 10, and here's the trouble part:

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

So you see there's two phases here.

Whatever is now is in part. Knowledge is in part. Prophecy is in part. And tongues is in part.

But there's going to come a time when that which is perfect is come, and everything else is going to be done away.

Now some people say that which is perfect was the scriptures, that once the bible was finalized, we call it canonized, and the stamp of authority put on it by the early church, that when that happened, we no longer need prophecies and tongues and knowledge.

Other people say that it has to do with the coming of Christ.

But the Greek word for that which is perfect is Toteleion. It is never used in the bible for the coming of Christ.

Some people say that it means Christ Himself. Certainly He is perfect, but Toteleion is not used for Jesus Christ either.

Interesting it is neuter. It is never used for the coming of Christ. It's never used for Christ. It's never made in reference to the bible. That's just a personal belief.

But Toteleion, Teleion is the word in the scriptures that represents maturity, perfectness!

Now if you just hold that thought right there, I'll show you how this works.

M.V. I Corinthians 13:11

Now we go down to Verse 11. And all four of these lines are number 1. I should have told you that up at Verse 10, those two lines should be number 2 with a circle.

In Verse 11, all four of these lines should be number 1 with a circle.

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.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, and that's the word frame. My frame of mind was as a child. And I thought as a child:

Now these next two lines are number 2 with a circle.

But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

M.V. I Corinthians 13:12

In Verse 12, these two lines are going to alternate 1 and 2.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; obscurely.

And number 2: But then face to face:

Now I know in part; That's number 1. Number 2: But then shall I know even as also I am known.

That's an interesting little phrase. It means that when I get to this perfection, when I see Him face to face, I'm going to look back and know me as I was known by Him. Right now, I don't even know myself. But then I will know even as I was known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

This is number 1:

And now abides faith, hope, Agape, these three;

This is number 2:

But the greatest of these is Agape.

He's only talking about two different things here. If you line up all your 1's and all your 2's, you find out what those two things are.

In Verse 9, for we know in part, we prophecy in part.

Verse 11, when I was a child, I spoke as a child.

Verse 12, for now I see through a glass darkly. Again, now I know in part. And now abides faith, charity, and hope. All of those are talking about the same thing.

Now let's take our number 2's:

In Verse 9, but when that which is perfect is come, (Toteleion), then that which is in part shall be done away. So whatever that first section is, whatever he's talking about, it's going to be done away when I reach that perfect!

In Verse 11, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Verse 12, the number 2 is but then face to face. And again, but then shall I know even as I was known.

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In Verse 13, and the greatest of these is Agape.

We're talking about our earthly pilgrimage. We know in part. We only know what God gives us. We don't know everything. We have to study the bible and trust God's Spirit to reveal the truth of Christ to us. We can't study it like a textbook because it requires the revelation of God's Spirit.

Someday, we won't need that. We'll be with the Lord face to face. We won't need a bible study. There will be no bibles in heaven. We'll be with Christ!

So this is the childish thing. This is when we're looking through the glass obscurely. We only see certain things.

And now I know in part. But you see the other half is but when that which is perfect is come. When I reach what would be called maturity, not maturity spiritually here, but the completed perfect state. When I reach the Lord, all the other stuff will be done away!

I won't need a bible. I won't need all the tools that we struggle with. I'll be with Christ and I'll become that complete person, and I will see Him face to face. And I will know even as I was known. And guess what? Agape will still be there!

I had you underline those words because each one of those words represented the first phase, doing away with things. Right now we are handling things that are temporary. When we see Him face to face we won't need that.

So the text itself interprets. Whatever Toteleion is, whatever that which is perfect, is also when I became a man and put away childish things.

It's also when I see Him face to face. It's also when I shall know even as I am known. And also where Agape endures while the others are no longer in existence.

I hope that wasn't too confusing, but you can see through the language and you can see through the structure of the document itself that he has a formula going.

All of the 1's equal each other, and all of the 2's equal each other. So he's talking about being on the earth as number 1, and number 2 is being with the Lord, when you reach that perfect state, and the greatest of these is Agape!

Let's close with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

Again we thank you for your provision. We thank you for the ministry of your Spirit. We desire to know you more and we desire to know the truth of your word.

Help us to continue to grow in Christ. We only know in part and we go through this earthly pilgrimage totally dependent upon you for everything. Strengthen our hearts and our minds so that we might maintain the desire to follow you. Again we do thank you and we pray in Jesus' name, Amen!