

His growth from infancy to maturity was like that of the church. When maturity arrived (final revelation), the gifts mentioned were no longer required. The perfect tenses of "become" and "put away" show irrevocably that the matter is a settled issue with God --no matter what modern men say! The latter verb is the same as used earlier with prophecy and knowledge (v. 8).

b) Practically. v. 12. The mirrors of the ancients were of metal and those made at Corinth were famous. The image they reflected was obscure, hence "in part." The final revelation is equivalent to the phrase "then face to face." The thot is patent. The final revelation provided in the Bible makes the earlier gifts non-essential and unnecessary (cf. Num. 12:6-8; Ex. 33:11 where the references are related to revelation).

c) Relative to virtues. v. 13. The "now" is logical. In contrast with the temporary gifts, "faith, hope, and love" are three items which persist. The superiority of love may be attributed to the fact that it is an essential of the essence of God Himself.

Conclusion: What to men is attractive and psychologically satisfying is to God of a meaner proportion. What God bestows sovereignly, He can with the same fiat withdraw! His scheme of things disallows a primacy to what men have advanced. His real goal is salvation through the blood. Following this, it is a matter of filling or controlling by the Spirit. A fruit of that experience will be "love." Be concerned about the fruits and leave the gifts with HIM. Amen.

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"The Greatness of Love"

1 Cor. 13:4-6, 8-10

Introduction

1. It is imperative to locate this chapter in the argument of the apostle Paul. To divorce it from its median position in the chapters dealing with Charismatic gifts (12-14) is hermeneutically dishonest and unsound.

2. The core of Paul's premise is that whatever place gifts may have in the sovereign will of God, there is nothing which can touch the role of love in a man's life. It is presumed that the man is saved and filled with the Spirit from which life the fruit of the Spirit is experienced (Gal. 5:22).

3. To further strengthen his contention that love as a fruit of the Spirit is central to the discussion of gifts, Paul looks at the matter in two additional forceful ways:

1. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOVE.

Love is described by the apostle as having certain negative qualities. These, infact, serve to accent the positive ones (vv. 4, 6, 7). Here are the ones to digest:

- a. Love is not envious. v. 4. The verb used here is the same one used earlier in connection with objects (12:31). When applied to persons, it is base envy and jealousy. The desire for the excellencies of others is utterly inconsistent with the Bible concept of love.
- b. Love is not ostentatious. v. 4. This verb is only found here in the N.T. It's root meaning denotes an act of transgressing the just measure. It signifies a braggart or boastful person. Ostentation is its most common factor. It is one who sounds his own praises.
- c. Love is not arrogant. v. 4. This is an inward arrogant spirit which is the presumptuous self-satisfaction seen in ugly inflation (cf. 4:6). The original Greek is a present middle denoting to "puff oneself out like a pair of bellows."
- d. Love is not indecent. v. 5. The word "unseemly" is only used here and one other time in the N.T. (7:36). It notes that love adds the delicacy

of feeling beyond the rules of politeness. This is an important factor when considering how bereft of respect are some groups which think that gifts are the most essential ingredients of spirituality! Love just doesn't have a mark of bad taste.

- e. Love is not indulgent. v. 5. Many at Corinth exercised their spiritual liberty without respect to love (cf. Chaps. 8-10). Real love, says Paul, does not pursue its own interests (10:24, 33). Love does not get angry when others are at cross purposes with its designs.
- f. Love is not irritable. v. 5. This is probably an allusion to the divisions and troubles at Corinth (chaps. 1-6). Selfishness generates the Spirit of exasperation and irritableness. Love is not involved in such matters. What Paul is led to condemn here, he writes about in connection with himself (Acts 15:39; 16:7) and the saints (Heb. 10:24).
- g. Love is not vindictive. v. 5. The verb "think" is the common Pauline one for "reckon." Love does not enter evil as a debt in its account book, but voluntarily sponges over what it endures. The article before "evil" suggests that the evil in question is actually there. Love, therefore, takes no vigorous course to get even with the wrong which it bears. There is no black book of debts which need repayment!
- h. Love is not misdirected. v. 6. It is criminal for love to joy over the faults of another. However, love does not approve of lawlessness! To do this is a sign of debasement (Rom. 1:32).

NOTE: Taking the 8 negative and the 7 positive qualities of love as listed in the text, it becomes clear that the work must be divine. That's just the point. Such love as singled out here is possible only as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:18).

2. THE CONSTITUTION OF LOVE

That love "never fails" sets the theme of the final verses of the chapter. "Fail" means to "fall" in the sense of cessation or dropping out of existence. Not moral failure. Gifts serve the church

pro tem. Each ceases at a predetermined point (12:11), but love is an everlasting fruit of the Spirit.

a. Relative to gifts. vv. 8-12

1) The gifts listed. v. 1

a) Prophecy. This refers to special revelation. It shall be done away. This verb means "set at naught" (Rom. 6:6). Prophecy has a terminal point!

b) Knowledge. This speaks of the proper use of special revelation. The verb "vanish away" is the same as "rail" with prophecy. Both verbs are passive showing that God does the stopping of these two gifts.

c) Tongues. Dramatically, Paul changes the verb from the one used with the other two gifts. The original means "to stop or cease." The verbal interchange is phenomenal. Being middle voice, the verb carries with it the design that tongues will come to an abrupt end in and of themselves. They would just die out. The intent is obvious. Corinthians were placing far too much emphasis on something which was entirely temporary.

2) The facts stated. vv. 9, 10.

a) Partially. v. 9 Both prophecy and knowledge are stated to be "in part." This shows the reason for the previous verse (v. 8). Tongues is omitted from the discussion suggesting that they are already considered out of the picture.

b) Completely. v. 10. The word "perfect" is critical to the whole interpretation. Contextually it lends itself to the matter of "revelation." The gifts used in the transmission of special revelation (prophecy and knowledge) will no longer be operative. When the final revelation of the N.T. was "perfect" (about 100 A.D.), the "in part" phrase was over and so the gifts related there to were set at naught by God.

3) The item illustrated. vv. 11, 12.

a) Personally. v. 11. Paul uses his own physical development as a case in point.