

1 Corinthians Chapter 13

1. **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.**

A. **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,**

1. **speak-** Gr. **laleo**

2. **tongues-** Gr. **glossa**

a. Paul singles out tongues first here because the Corinthians apparently prized this gift above all others.

3. **men-** Gr. **anthropos-** *general word for mankind*

a. These are the tongues of known languages. This occurred on the day of Pentecost. [Acts 2:1-11](#)

4. **angels-** Gr. **aggelos**

a. These are heavenly languages. Most of the time your personal prayer language will be in heavenly tongues not natural languages.

B. **but have not love,**

1. **have-** Gr. **echo**

a. This means to have and utilize.

2. **love-** Gr. **agape**

a. This is the God-kind of love. It is selfless and sacrificial by nature.

C. **I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal**

1. **become-** Gr. **ginomai**

2. **sounding-** Gr. **echeo-** *echoing*

3. **brass-** Gr. **chalkos-** *a brazen musical instrument*

1. This is probably a trumpet which was in use for centuries before Paul wrote this.

4. **clanging-** Gr. **alalazo-** *to ring loudly, to clang*

5. **cymbal-** Gr. **kumbalon-** *a cymbal, i.e. a hollow basin of brass, producing when struck together a musical sound*

1. Love is the divine conductor of God's heavenly symphony. If love is not conducting and controlling in the church then everyone is just playing their own instrument and making noise. If there was no conductor of a symphony it would be just be a huge racket and nerve fraying experience! The church services at Corinth were like this.

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, but have not love, I am nothing.

A. And though I have the gift of prophecy,

1. gift of prophecy- Gr. *propheteia*

a. The false pagan religions had prophecy.

b. You don't have to be spiritually mature to prophesy. Balaam and Saul of the OT prophesied and they were both carnal as all get out.

B. and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,

1. understand- Gr. *eido*- *to see mentally*

2. mysteries- Gr. *musterion*

a. The Corinthians came out of the false cult religions that were based in mysteries.

3. knowledge- Gr. *gnosis*- *this is regular natural knowledge*

a. The Corinthians prided themselves in superior knowledge.

C. and though I have all faith,

1. faith- Gr. *pistis*- *firm persuasion*

a. This is not the measure of faith every Christian has, but the gift of faith.

D. so that I could remove mountains,

1. remove- Gr. *methistemi*- *to exchange places*

2. mountains- Gr. *oros*

a. Jesus said that if we had the faith of a mustard seed we could remove a mountain.

b. If you don't have love you could move a mountain out of your way right into the path of another person.

E. but have not love,

1. love- Gr. *agape*

F. I am nothing

1. nothing- Gr. *oudeis*- *not one thing*

a. It is God's love for us and to us that makes us what we are. It also makes others who they are.

3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

A. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,

1. **bestow all my goods to feed the poor-** Gr. **psomizo huparchonta-**
to feed out in morsels, dole out

a. Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had and give them to the poor and follow him. He walked away sad. [Luke 18:22-23](#) He could not do this because he did not have the love of God in him.

b. Some might give everything they have away to earn man's praise or God's favor, but without love, it profits them nothing.

B. and though I give my body to be burned,

1. **body-** Gr. **soma**

2. **burned-** Gr. **kaio**

a. Sometimes people can do outwardly great sacrificial things but they are motivated by pride and self-promotion.

b. Some back in that day thought that martyrdom was a way to earn heaven. This is false. True martyrdom is the outcome of the love of God and for God.

C. but have not love,

1. **love-** Gr. **agape**

a. God's love is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit when we get saved. [Rom. 5:5](#)

D. it profits me nothing.

1. **profits-** Gr. **opheleo**

a. Without God's love operating in you then you do what you do to profit yourself. God's love operating in you will lead you to profit others.

b. Without love you have a string of zero's- gift of prophecy=0, understand all mysteries=0, have all knowledge=0, have mountain moving faith=0, give everything away=0, give your body to the flames of martyrdom=0. However, if you add love to the equation then they all add up to something big. -J.

Vernon McGee

4. Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

A. Love suffers long and is kind;

1. **Love-** Gr. **agape**

- a. Most of the time when this chapter is taught the focus is on how we are to treat others in love. This is true, but we also need to see that this is how God treats us first. We love because God first loved us!
- b. God is love. You can insert the word God where you see love in these next few verses and you will see how God operates towards us.

2. suffers long- Gr. **makrothumeo-** *long-suffering*

- a. This Greek word is associated with patience towards people.
- b. God is long-suffering. [Exo 34:6](#) Aren't you really glad God is so long-suffering with you?
- c. His love in us empowers us to be long-suffering with others.
- d. The Corinthians had not been showing patience with others in the use of the gifts and during the communion meals.

3. kind- Gr. **chresteuomai-** *to show yourself useful, obliging, willing to help or assist*

- a. God is kind. One of the fruit of His Spirit is kindness. [Gal. 5:22](#) He is obliging and willing to help and assist when we call on Him. Aren't you glad?
- b. God's love in us empowers us to be kind and useful to others.
- c. The Corinthians were being unkind to each other in many different areas Paul brings out in this letter.

B. love does not envy;

1. envy- Gr. **zeloo-** *jealous*

- a. The Corinthians were being jealous of other people's gifts.

C. love does not parade itself,

1. parade- Gr. **perpereuomai-** *a self-display, employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively*

- a. The love of God is not self-centered. Envy, parading yourself, and being puffed up are all signs of self-centeredness.
- b. If anyone has the right and deserves to parade himself around it is God. However, God hides himself in the world around us. I think one of the things atheists bring out about there being no God is because he does not display himself. We can see His handiwork in creation but he does not overtly appear everywhere. Man tries to make God into their own

image. Man naturally likes to draw attention to himself, but God is not like that. They think if there was a God He would naturally do this. They are mistaken!

c. God's love in us will empower us to take a backseat and serve without craving the lime-light for all to see.

d. The Corinthians were boasting in gifts they possessed that others did not.

D. is not puffed up

1. puffed up- Gr. **phusioo-** *to fill with air*

a. Some people are just full of hot air. Some people are in danger of just floating off.

b. God is not proud. God's nature is a servant. Jesus came and took on the form of a servant. [Phil. 2:7](#) The word "form" there is the Greek word **morphe**. This word means *to take on an outward form that is indicative of one's inner nature*. Jesus had a nature of a servant from eternity past, but when he took on humanity, you could see it in outward display through His life.

5. does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

A. does not behave rudely,

1. behave rudely- Gr. **aschmoneo-** *unbecoming, indecent, ugly*

a. God never act ugly towards us.

b. God's love in us will empower us to refrain from being ugly with people.

c. The Corinthians were being rude to each other especially at the communion meal.

B. does not seek its own,

1. seek- Gr. **zeteo**

a. In these verses we have some things love is not and some things love is. Concerning the things that it is not is summed up by it is not self-centered.

b. If anyone could or should seek their own it is God. God does not just seek his own but also seeks for our good.

c. God's love in us empowers us to seek the good of others, and not just our own.

C. is not provoked,

1. **provoked**- Gr. **paroxuno**- *incite, irritate, to exasperate*
 - a. God is not easily irritated, exasperated, and provoked. Aren't you glad about that!
 - b. God's love in us empowers us to not be easily bent out of shape by circumstances and people.

D. thinks no evil

1. **thinks**- Gr. **logizomai**- *to take into account, count up, compute*
 - a. God is not keeping record of our evil [sins] and taking them into account. [2 Cor. 5:19](#), [Rom. 4:8](#), [Heb. 8:12](#) They were all put on Jesus on the cross and put to His account. He paid for them all in full. He shouted out as He died- "Tetelestai- Paid in Full!"
 - b. Aren't you glad God is not keeping record of all our wrongs and holding them against us?
 - c. God's love empowers us not to keep a record of other people's wrongs and hold them against them.
2. **evil**- Gr. **kakos**

6. does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

A. does not rejoice in iniquity,

1. **rejoice**- Gr. **chairo**
2. **iniquity**- Gr. **adikia**- *unrighteousness*
 - a. Some in this congregation had been boasting and rejoicing in sin, as with the man sleeping with his step-mother.

B. but rejoices in the truth

1. **truth**- Gr. **aletheia**
 - a. Falsehood brings iniquity and unrighteousness. The truth promotes godliness. [Titus 1:1](#)

7. bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A. bears all things,

1. **bears**- Gr. **stego**- *to roof over, that is, (figuratively) to cover with silence*
 - a. God does not blab everything He knows about people. His love covers our weaknesses. When you seek love you cover the transgressions of others. [Prov. 17:9](#) Love covers all sins. [Prov. 10:12](#), [1 Peter 4:8](#)
 - b. God's love in us will empower to protect others and not

share the negative things we know about them.

B. believes all things,

1. **believes-** Gr. **pisteuo-** *to be persuaded of*

- a. Many believe tend to believe the worst about people. God's love in us empowers us to believe the best in people.

C. hopes all things,

1. **hopes-** Gr. **elpis-** *to have confident expectation*

D. endures all things

1. **endures-** Gr. **hupomeno-** *to remain under, patient*

- a. This Greek word deals with patience in circumstances.
- b. If you are falling apart like a cheap suitcase in your life, it is because you are not receiving God's love for you!

8. Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.

A. Love never fails.

1. **fails-** Gr. **ekpipto-** *drops away*

- a. Love never fails because God never fails. God is love.
- b. It may appear at times that we failed, but if you are receiving God's love for you and walking in that love, you never will fail.

B. But whether there are prophecies,

1. **prophecies-** Gr. **propheteia-** *forth-telling*

- a. This speaks of the gift of prophecy.

C. they will fail

1. **fail-** Gr. **katargeo-** *to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative, to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish*

D. whether there are tongues,

1. **tongues-** Gr. **glossa**

- a. This speaks of the gift of tongues used in the local assembly.
- b. We will continue speaking in our heavenly language that communicates with the Father.

E. they will cease,

1. **cease-** Gr. **pauo-** *to cease, to leave off*

- a. Some teach that tongues ceased when John the Apostle

died. There is no biblical basis for this. We will look at this in verse 10. Can you imagine saints praying in tongues right when John died and they immediately lost the ability to speak in tongues? That is hogwash theology!

F. whether there is knowledge,

1. knowledge- Gr. **gnosis**

a. This speaks of the Word of Knowledge. We will not need a Word of Knowledge any longer because we will have the fulness of knowledge in eternity.

G. it will vanish away

1. vanish- Gr. **katargeo-** *to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative, to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish*

a. The gifts of the Spirit are needed in this imperfect fallen world. In the next, they will not be needed. We will be operating on a much higher plane.

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

A. know- Gr. **ginosko-** *to have experiential knowledge of*

1. What we know about God experientially now in this life is like a thimble full compared to what we will know in heaven.

B. part- Gr. **meros**

1. In heaven we will have the fulness. There will be no need for the partial like getting a word of knowledge. We will have fulness of knowledge. There we will know as we are fully known by God. [1 Cor. 13:12](#)

C. prophesy- Gr. **propheteuo**

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

A. But when that which is perfect has come,

1. perfect- Gr. **teleios**

a. Some say the perfect here is the completion of the NT. This is false. The Greek word for **perfect** comes from the root word *telos*. Considering the way the New Testament uses *telos* in other passages, it certainly seems to be speaking about the coming of Jesus ([1Co 1:8](#); [1Co 15:24](#); [Jas 5:11](#); [Rev 20:5](#);

[Rev 20:7](#); [Rev 21:6](#); [Rev 22:13](#)). -Guzik

b. In the New Testament (which at that time was not completed) we have a complete revelation, but our understanding of it is partial. (Review [1Co 8:1-3](#) if you think otherwise.) There is a maturing process for the church as a whole ([Eph 4:11-16](#)) and also for the individual believer ([1Co 14:20](#); [2Pe 3:18](#)). We will not be fully completed until Jesus returns, but we ought to be growing and maturing now.- Weirsbe

c. The perfect that Paul is talking about is our eternal state after this life. We will experience in full and not just in part like now.

d. Paul knew all the other writers of the NT. He was given the supreme revelations of the NT. Paul prayed in tongues. If the revelation of the NT makes tongues cease then Paul would have not needed tongues, but, the great apostle said, "I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all!" Folks if Paul needed to speak in tongues so do we! Do we know more than Paul did?

2. **come**- Gr. **erchomai**

B. then that which is in part will be done away.

1. **part**- Gr. **meros**

a. The partial ministry of the Holy Spirit now will be replaced with the fulness of the ministry of the Spirit then. This will be the powers of the age to come spoken of in [Heb. 6:5](#)

b. Just as the law was done away in this age, so the partial ministry of the Spirit will be done away in the next age.

2. **done away**- Gr. **katargeo**- *to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative, to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish*

11. 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.

A. When I was a child,

1. **child**- Gr. **nepios**- *just learning to speak*

B. I spoke as a child,

1. **spoke**- Gr. **laleo**

a. When we first learned to speak we spoke in syllables or just a few words. Our full vocabulary was not yet formed. It was partial. In this life our spiritual vocabulary is limited [unless you speak in tongues]. In heaven it will be complete.

C. I understood as a child,

1. understood- Gr. **phroneo**

a. When we were just starting to learn in school we only understood basic and partial principles- A,B,C,'s, addition and subtraction, etc. Our understanding was very fragmented compared to adulthood. So it is in the spiritual. Our understanding of God now is fragmented, but in the next life it will be developed and full.

D. I thought as a child,

1. thought- Gr. **logizomai-** *to reason, to reckon*

a. A small child has difficulty reasoning out things. They just react to stimuli. Now our thoughts are sometimes spiritual but also they can be quite carnal. In heaven we will have only spiritual thoughts in line with God's thoughts.

E. but when I became a man,

1. became- Gr. **ginomai**

2. man- Gr. **aner-** *specific word to denote a male*

a. We will need all the gifts of the Spirit until we come unto the unity of the faith, unto the full measure of stature in Christ.

[Eph. 4:13](#)

F. I put away childish things

1. put away- Gr. **katargeo-** *to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative, to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish*

2. childish- Gr. **nepios**

a. In the next life we will put away the immature ways and things of this age.

12. 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.

A. For now we see in a mirror,

1. see- Gr. **blepo**

2. mirror- Gr. **esoptron**

- a. The mirror is the Word of God. [James 1:23](#), [2 Cor. 3:18](#)
- b. Yes, the Word of God is perfect but our understanding of it is imperfect. The Word is complete, but our understanding of it is partial. It is like looking through a mirror with blurred images. The Word is not distorted, our understanding is!

B. dimly- Gr. **en ainigma-** *in an enigma, riddle, obscurity*

1. Paul used the word "we" here. He was including himself and he was the one who wrote two thirds of the NT! If he was looking at the Word dimly, so are we! Paul needed to pray in tongues to get an accurate understanding of the Word. [1 Cor. 14:2](#) If he did, so do we!
2. Praying in tongues and receiving revelation knowledge brings the realities of the Word into sharper focus for us. For an unbeliever reading the Word it is all a mystery to them. When are saved and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, pray in tongues, and as we grow in the Lord, we receive revelation of the Word of God.

C. but then face to face.

1. face to face- Gr. **prosopon pros prosopon**

- a. Many would love to speak to Jesus face to face all the time. That is not the best for us while we are in this fallen flesh body. The flesh wants to see, hear, and feel. It is never satisfied. If Jesus came to you in a low point in your life and sat down with you face to face and encouraged you, what would you want the next time you were discouraged? Yes, for him to come face to face again but stay longer than the last time. The flesh is never satisfied. The devil could deceive us if we are looking for what we can see, touch, hear, and feel. The Word of God is our anchor for reality in this fallen world. We don't need Jesus to come and tell us that He loves us and has provided for us. The Word tells us that! In this age when we are in our fallen body it is more safe and blessed for us to believe and not see than to see and then believe! [John 20:29](#)

D. Now I know in part,

1. **know-** Gr. **ginosko-** *to know experientially*
2. **part-** Gr. **meros**

E. but then I shall know just as I also am known

1. then

- a. In the next life when we will see Jesus face to face in our

glorified body.

2. **know**- Gr. **epiginosko**- *to have higher level knowledge, revelation knowledge*

3. **known**- Gr. **epiginosko**

a. God has a higher level of knowledge of us than even we do of ourselves right now! We don't even fully know ourselves in Christ yet, but we will!

13. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

A. And now abide faith,

1. **now**- Gr. **nuni**

a. Most people take this verse that in eternity there will be these three- faith, hope, and love. I don't doubt they will be present in eternity, but that is not what this verse is saying. It is saying **NOW**- in this life where we see partially, understand partially, experience partially we have faith, hope, and love. We might not have fulness of knowledge and understanding now, but we have the fruit of the Spirit that will cause us to be victorious and be able to get along with those who are on the journey to heaven with us even when we don't see absolutely clear yet. Love is a bright beacon to lead us through the darkness of this life!

2. **abide**- Gr. **meno**- *to remain*

3. **faith**- Gr. **pistis**- *firm persuasion*

B. hope- Gr. **elpis**- *confident expectation of divine good*

C. love- Gr. **agape**

D. these three;

E. but the greatest of these is love

1. **greatest**

a. Love is the greatest because you can't have faith and hope without it. It is also the greatest because it is the essence of God. God is love. It does not say God is faith. It does not say God is hope. He is the God of faith and the God of hope, but God IS love!