

1 Corinthians Study 20

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

KEY VERSE—

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (13:13)

SUMMARY—

In their desire to receive gifts from God, the Corinthians were seeking the lesser gifts instead of the greater. Therefore, Paul begins this chapter by contrasting the worth of the spiritual gifts with the worth of love (13:1-3). Without love, the greatest gift is meaningless. He then defines love, by showing it in action, especially in the manner in which they should be using their spiritual gifts (13:4-7). He concludes by emphasizing the eternal nature of love and the transitory nature of these spiritual gifts (13:8-13). The gifts were only designed to be temporary, as partial revelations until the whole was revealed. Love has always been the greatest thing—God is love (1 John 4:8), the Old Testament law and prophets hinged on love (Matthew 22:35-40) and love is the great commandment for Christians today (John 13:34-35).

QUESTIONS—

- 1) What was the “more excellent way” of which Paul spoke (12:31ff)?
- 2) What effect does “love” have on all of these actions (13:1-3)? What effect does a lack of love have on them?
- 3) Is Paul suggesting that tongue-speakers spoke with the language of angels, or saying “even if they were to speak with the tongues of angels”? What is still greater?
- 4) How important were the “tongues”, “knowledge”, and “faith” to the development of the early church (13:1-3)? As valuable as they were, were these gifts worth having at the expense of love, like the Corinthians were experiencing?

5) Define each of the following descriptions of love:

- ⇒ Love suffers long (13:4)—
- ⇒ Love is kind (13:4)—
- ⇒ Love does not envy (13:4)—
- ⇒ Love does not parade itself (13:4)—
- ⇒ Love is not puffed up (13:4)—
- ⇒ Love does not behave rudely (13:5)—
- ⇒ Love does not seek its own (13:5)—
- ⇒ Love is not provoked (13:5)—

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- ⇒ Love thinks no evil (13:5)—
- ⇒ Love does not rejoice in iniquity (13:6)—
- ⇒ Love rejoices in the truth (13:6)—
- ⇒ Love bears all things (13:7)—
- ⇒ Love believes all things (13:7)—
- ⇒ Love hopes all things (13:7)—
- ⇒ Love endures all things (13:7)—
- ⇒ Love never fails (13:8)—

6) Even though they are different gifts, what do the gifts of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge have in common (13:8)?

7) What is the purpose of the contrast between things which are partial and things which are whole (13:9-10)?

8) Based on this context, what would we have to say is being described by the phrase “when that which is perfect comes” (13:10)?

9) How long were spiritual gifts needed? How long was love needed?

10) What is the point of Paul’s two illustrations (13:11-12)?

11) Some things are transient and pass away (13:8), while wholesome things abide (13:13). What is the contrast?

12) What is superior to all of those things which perish (13:8)? What is superior among all of those things which abide (13:13)?

13) What were two important things he stresses about spiritual gifts?

⇒ 13:1-3—

⇒ 13:8-13—