

1Corinthians 13 Review Dig Deeper, October 22, 2003

Spiritual gifts are great blessings if not neglected or abused. They are not only to be desired but are essential for the edification of the body of Christ. And they do edify if used in love, and as led by the Holy Spirit (ch. 12). Love is the supreme, preeminent, unassailable, virtue given by God to every believer to motivate and empower us as channels of God's love to saint and sinner. It will never let one down.

Yet these wonderful, freely given gifts were so free that they were also liable to be diverted toward promoting one's personal glory and power rather than edification (building up) of the body of Christ. While they are given by the Spirit for the use as directed and empowered by Him, anyone can usurp the Spirit's place and go about directing and using **his own gift** as he sees fit. This very human (fleshly) tendency is exposed here in the first part of chapter 13. It is further countered in chapter 14 with God's blessed, more excellent provision for **responsible involvement of all**, not only the gifted, in the process of edification. (Sometimes men will seek to direct the use of **someone else's gift**, whether in pre-arranged assembly services, ordination, missionary boards and the like.) Let the Lord direct, through the Spirit.

While the apostle delights in the diversity and competence of the multi-gifted assembly he discourages fascination with the gifts themselves and their selfish use of them. So in the latter part of chapter 13 he demonstrates that the gifts themselves are only temporal in nature. They will all pass away upon the rapture of the assembly into Christ's very presence. Some have already. Apostles no longer walk this scene. Gifts of supernatural prophecy and revelations of knowledge have been replaced by the completed scripture they helped form. Even the remaining gifts are nothing in themselves but wonderful tools to be used as the Lord directs for the glory of God and the blessing of man. Other uses are futile. They do not benefit or reward the user or the hearers. They cause disorder, distraction, dissension, discouragement, disillusionment and division rather than edification and blessing.

Even the God given universal virtues of faith and hope are but for this time on earth alone. For faith will be turned to sight, and hope rewarded with fulfillment. There are many, many scriptures confirming this for the believer.

2Corinthians 5:6 *Therefore [we are] always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we*

walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

1John 3: 2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but **hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?** 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

Love outlasts Faith and Hope which are relevant only while we are here upon earth. But Love will be with us and in us for eternity. Or can we better say, we will be with Love eternally.

Love is intrinsically supreme, not merely one of God's attributes we are to display as His children. John TWICE declares that **GOD IS LOVE**. This seems to mean that Love is God's intrinsic nature. All other characteristics and attributes of God flow from this ultra infinite source, LOVE. Love generates, embodies and saturates Life. Love displays its glory as unapproachable, yet all pervasive Light. All three, Light, Life and Love, are perfectly revealed to created beings in Christ. But the greatest of these is Love.

Romans 5:5 *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*