

1 Corinthians 13:8-13
Dig Deeper, October 15, 2003

The latter part of Chapter 13, **the love chapter**, is devoted to assurances of the preeminence and permanence of love in contrast to the temporary nature of spiritual gifts. Even the best gifts are but for our time on earth. Temporal. And don't we **enjoy the peace and assurance of faith, hope and love now as we walk here below**. But the greatest of these is love! Why? Because when in heaven we won't need faith in the unseen or hope for the promised future any more. **We will be there already!**

***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.***

What a wonderful prospect. We now see as through a glass. Darkly. Today we have excellent clear window glass and mirrors which don't have ripples, dark imperfections, unclear spots, blurring distortions that mar the images we look for. We also have color photographs and big video screens which are becoming clearer with more realistic images all the time. But none of these are the reality. Seeing someone's image does not compare to face to face. Visiting someone with a glass in between doesn't quite make it. Seeing beautiful landscape through a window doesn't compare to being out in it. Likewise what we see and know by faith and anticipate in hope is no comparison to the brilliant, intense REALITY that awaits us.

*1 John 3:1-3 We shall be like Him for we shall see
Him as He is.*

Yet what we are able to see and comprehend by faith in this life is far beyond the imagination of man.

*9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear
heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the
things which God hath prepared for them that love
him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his
Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the
deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the
things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in
him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but
the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the
spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that
we might know the things that are freely given to us
of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the
words which man's wisdom teacheth, but
which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing
spiritual things with spiritual.*

Christ in glory is revealed by the Holy Spirit to believers in a way that changes us to become more like Him even while still here. But it is as a child, so to speak. Once an adult we look back at thing we saw, things we thought, things we did and smile (sometimes cringe and shudder). Paul likens us now to children. Normal children put away childish things as they mature, and go on to more advanced

toys. They look at something they once delighted in and say "that's babyish." Likewise believers mature, putting away things once thought important in favor of better things. So there is a not too subtle exhortation embedded in this statement. For instance, the Corinthian's fascination with spiritual gifts and spiritual manifestations such as speaking in tongues was childish. It was time to put away childish things and grow up.

Even though all of our gifts are but temporal, not eternal, the fruit from godly use of them will be eternal. The wood, hay and stubble would not endure the test of God's judgement, but the gold, silver and precious stones will be an eternal prize. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) endures. But the gifts they felt were so important were actually going to, sooner or later, pass away or cease.

*8 whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail;
whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether
[there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

In contrast **"Love never fails!"** The word fail here is that it will not fall or disappear ever. Why? Because God is Love.

That which is perfect was coming and when it did it would replace that which is said to be "in part." There are differing opinions what this means. I believe most will agree that when the Lord returns for us and takes His Assembly out of this earth the spiritual gifts mentioned will no longer be needed. But some believe the "that which is perfect" said to be coming is the completion of the inspired word of God. This occurred historically upon the completion of the apostle John's last writings near the end of that century. Some spiritual gifts given by the Lord on the day of Pentecost and thereafter were necessary to compile and complete the word which the Lord promised the night before He was crucified.

*John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I
will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of
truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall
testify of me: 27 And ye also shall bear witness,
because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

*John 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but
ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the
Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:
for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he
shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you
things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall
receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All
things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I,
that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

Supernatural prophecies and knowledge direct from God were received when needed during the days when the New Testament was being written. In fact much of it is a result of prophecies and knowledge that were then duly written. These gifts were also needed in the interim to instruct and

guide the believers until the scriptures were completed.

Prophecies were telling God's mind for a given situation at hand. Knowledge was supernatural revelation of applicable truth for the situation at hand. Now the word of God includes all the truth and mind of God necessary for us today. We just have to study and know it and hide it in our hearts. Still we know but in part even after a lifetime of immersion in the word. Tongues were signs mainly to Israel to witness God's initiation of a new era replacing the old. They overcame temporarily the effects of Babel but did not restore one language. We will hear more about tongues in chapter 14.

Some view the gifts mentioned here, prophecies, tongues and knowledge, as now no longer needed and no longer with us today, since we now have the New Testament scriptures. Others believe what is presented here is simply the temporary nature of all the spiritual manifestations that will not be needed after we are in heaven. Either way Paul wants them to let go of them as objects and regard them simply as tools to serve and glorify God. (I suppose some who place great importance on speaking in tongues will probably not agree with either view.)

Whichever view one holds, what a glad surprise

awaits us when we shall know as we are known. Despite the wonderful blessings of our position in Christ, our new life and new nature in Christ Jesus, the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the presence of the Lord in the midst of the Assembly, (and in the midst of the Assemblies) **we are not yet where we will be.** Meanwhile we live and bask in His unfailing Love.

But there is more. Something even better than spiritual gifts, (even those used with love). Prophesying!

By Ron Canner, October 15, 2003

Keep us Lord, O keep us cleaving
To Thyself and still believing,
Till the hour of our receiving
Promised joys with Thee.

Then we shall be where we would be,
Then we shall be what we should be;
Things that are not now not could be
Soon shall be our own.

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