

**1 Corinthians 13:1 (NIV)**

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

## 46-13-06-A Tongue Guided by Love

tongues, speech, words, manipulation, sharpness, healing, love  
1 Cor. 13:1

When love controls us, our words will not be *hollow* but *wholesome*.

**INTRODUCTION:**

–[“*There are things of which I may not speak; / There are dreams that cannot die; / There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak, / And bring a pallor into the cheek, / And a mist before the eye. / And the words of that fatal song / Come over me like a chill: / “A boy’s will is the wind’s will, And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”* These lines are from Longfellow’s poem, “My Lost Youth.”] They help us understand why the key to applying the *Love Chapter*, **1 Cor. 13**, is in **v.11**. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

–I’ve given 4 sermons to prepare for this this series: **Cleansing God’s Temple** was on Christ’s goal of *purifying His people*; **Understanding the Inner Child** was on facing *childishness* & embracing *childlikeness*; **Divine Glory Through Divine Love** was on growth in God’s glorious “likeness” of *love*. **Confronting the Inner Child** needs a deeper review:

1. Each of us have an “*inner child of our past*” affecting us today.
2. For *childlike* spiritual growth, we must confront our *childish* ways.
3. When God exposes our *childishness*, we need be open not resistant.
4. We prepare for growth by *katargeo*: to “*put childish ways behind*” us.
5. We replace immature behaviors by adopting the ways of love.

–With that review, let’s go to **v.1**, *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal*. Our goal is Christ’s goal: having **a tongue guided by love**. **HOM.idea**.

**I. Why Does the Love Chapter Start with a Focus on the Tongue?**

- A. Human speech comes from being made “in the image of God.” (As God spoke *creation into being*, so our speech *has creative power*.)
  1. But, our inner love determines whether the tongue’s creativity is *constructive* or *destructive*, **Prov 18:21**, The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its **fruit**. (*We feed upon the fruit of our own lips* [we eat our words], and so do others....)
  2. Christ says that our words reveal our hearts– **Luke 6:45**, The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

3. Christian tongues can jump from *childlike blessing* into *childish ranting*– **James 3:9-10**. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. (The only way it will “not be” is when “love” controls the lips.)
- B. Also, human speech reflects a huge *motive* in God's loving nature: *communication*. (**Love communicates**, and where love is missing in a *marriage*, in a *family*, a *neighborhood*, *city*, *state*, *nation*, or in a *world*, the telltale symptom is a *breakdown in communication*.)
1. When speech is empty of God's love and full of selfish self-love, it can sound *nice* without resulting in godly communication. (Any eloquence in speaking “with the tongues of men” is just hollow noise, if I “have not love” **as** my *motive* and **behind** my message.)
  2. **OR**, “If I speak in the tongues... *of angels*, but have not love,” it may sound angelic, but it will be *unhelpful* and *hollow*. [**Ch.14** addresses a problem where “the gift of tongues” was evidently being used for public *display*, perhaps to gain *attention*. But it was edifying no one.] (Praying in “tongues” privately can edify a believer's “spirit,” but in church, it needs *interpretation* for all to understand: **love communicates!**)

**TRANS:** [When I was a boy, my dad took me to a church where a lady disrupted a sermon by running up and down the aisles waving her arms and speaking in tongues. It looked immature to me, but they said she was “*getting blessed*.” Maybe so, but I think her inner child got control of her “gift of tongues.” She might have blessed the congregation better with a “*Amen, brother, preach it!*”] Paul said “be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues,” but the *motive must be love*. Eloquence is communicates in Prov 25:11. A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. But love communicates in Prov 12:25. An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. **When love controls our us, our words are wholesome**. When a self-absorbed inner child gains control, our words can become hollow or even hurtful.

## II. How Does This Inner Child's Control of the Tongue Manifest?

- A. In areas of life where we haven't mastered wise or loving ways of responding to people, we may use *childish behaviors to cope* with similar situations. (Those behaviors may never have worked in the past, but using them was *formative: they became part of us.*)
- B. Two loud percussion instruments are used to *illustrate the effects*

- of the *childish tongue*: “a *resounding gong* or a *clanging cymbal*.”
1. One effect is a hollowness, manifested in a *variety of ways*....
    - a. Inflated speech is when an *inner child* is not only **in control** but also **controlled by** an endless craving to gain attention through:
      - (1) exaggeration– it stretches facts to impress... until they snap.
      - (2) past glory stories– they surprise at first, then they annoy....
      - (3) name-dropping– captures *interest*... till *interest drops off*.  
(Inflated speech does gain attention... the *unwanted* kind.)
    - b. Trivial talk is a way the *inner child* tries to gain acceptance by bringing up almost anything, just to *feel part of a group*. (This *preoccupation* backfires by keeping the person from really *being attentive to* and *interacting with* the group itself.)
    - c. Inflated or trivial speech doesn't define a person as *hollow*, but they may show how an inner child's unmet needs are using the tongue in a *childish* way rather than a *childlike, receptive* way.
  2. Another characteristic effect of the childish tongue is *sharpness* or *painful noise* to the ears of those hearing it.
    - a. Profanity is easy to *pick up* but hard to *clean up*. (An angry inner child can grab the steering wheel with old bad language.)
    - b. Prejudicial language may seem like pride on the surface, but is usually rooted in fear and insecurity about *personal identity*.
    - c. Cutting remarks can be retaliations for *real* or *perceived slights* from others. (An insecure inner child is quick to hold grudges and keep a *chip on the shoulder*: “*Just try knocking that off!*”]
- C. The cure for a *hollow* or *hurtful* tongue is **v.11**. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (*Childish behavior* has to be put away to make room for the mature *childlike behavior of love*.)

## CONCLUSION:

–We make progress by silencing a *childish tongue*– **Prov 17:28**. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. But that's **not God's ultimate goal**. In His image, our tongues were designed with creative power for godly purposes. His *glorious nature of divine love* must be in the driver's seat and take away the wheel from a wounded, disgruntled, insecure inner child, so that, as it says in **Eph 4:15**, Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.