

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NIV)

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

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

10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

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.

12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

46-13-13-Love Is Faith's Ultimate Destiny

love, gifts, knowledge, maturity, completeness, union life

1 Cor 13:8-13

Jesus gave Himself *to us* so that His love can flow *from us*.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading)

–“**God is love**” and wants us to grow up to behave like Him, manifesting *loving attitudes* and *loving actions*. ***Love is our ultimate destiny!***

–*Spiritual gifts help us grow mature*, but miraculous ones can sidetrack believers, as they did at Corinth, if we receive them in a childish way.

–The *Love Chapter's focus* is the *mature manifestation of Christ's love* in our lives. **HOM.idea.** *Since our future is all about Love,*

I. Love Should Be Our Focus Now– v.8-10, Love never fails. *But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.*

A. The **GNB** rendering is, “*Love is eternal*,” and that’s correct, because God is eternal, but this phrase literally means, “*Love never drops down* [never leaves its high position for a lower one].”

1. God's gifts are sacred and precious, not to be taken lightly, but neither to be exalted beyond their holy purpose [#1 of **God's 10 Commandments (Exo 20:3)** was “You shall have no other gods before me.”]
2. People lower God in their hearts by giving *religious devotion* to what He intended for limited spiritual purposes– Num 21:9. So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. (then, some years later) **2 Ki 18:4b**, He [Hezekiah] broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it....

B. In a *subtle, less obvious* way, we may lower our focus from God the Giver to the gifts He bestows on us for our spiritual growth.

1. Despite how spiritually uplifting Spirit-anointed “prophecies” can be, “*they will cease*.” (God’s purpose for *prophetic preaching* isn’t to *enthrall* our souls but to help us *grow mature in Christ*.)
2. In **1 Cor 14:2-5**, Paul said “*tongues*” are a help in prayer: “For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God...[and]... edifies himself. [So, he adds,] I would like every one of you to speak in tongues.” (This “gift” doesn’t show we’ve arrived, but helps us arrive, for it “*will be stilled*,” when we finally reach maturity in Christ’s love.)

3. Pursuing “knowledge” as our goal was our downfall back in Eden, but humanity’s goal is not learning facts but knowing God— Prov 9:10b, knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Even supernatural “gifts” that tell us facts [*prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom*], after they’ve helped us grow to maturity in love, “will pass away.”)
- C. While “spiritual gifts” may help us see the big picture—*the limitless viewpoint of God’s eternal Love*—they’re not to be our focus!
1. Supernatural help is wonderful, but it comes in limited doses to us as finite creatures— v.9, *For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [because our limitations require that any help we get can only be partial], “but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”*
 2. Some say the completed Bible is the “perfection,” but *the written Word* didn’t make “the imperfect” disappear? (*The living Word* is the real “perfection” [Gk. *teleios* = finished goal or full maturity].)
 3. At Christ’s returns to reign in “the kingdom of heaven,” we’ll know fully the “perfection” we know “in part.” (*Love Himself, He Who makes Heaven feel like heaven*, “perfection” the Person, is already living inside our hearts, but He wants to reign there right now!)

TRANS: The *finished goal* isn’t automatic. For Love’s full maturity, we must “put childish ways behind” and be *childlike* in union with Christ. *Jesus lived a perfect life in Galilee and wants to do it again in us* and hear us say (Gal 2:20), I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **He gave Himself to us so that His love can flow from us.** In Heaven, we won’t get more of Him than is living in us right now. Our task down here is to let our Jesus get more of us!— v.11-12, *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. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

II. Growing in Love Is Faith’s Ultimate Destiny— Gal 5:6b, The only thing that counts is **faith expressing itself through love**.

- A. Humanity’s deepest needs in the *past* and still *today* are **relational**. (How we perceive, understand and appreciate one another affects the *peace and welfare* of couples, families, neighborhoods, cities, states, nations, and the whole planet.)
1. One *hindrance* to “faith expressing itself through love” is seen in v.12a,

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. (We know all relational misunderstandings will be resolved in Heaven, but Love calls us to see with loving eyes now!)

- a. That first means accepting and loving ourselves. [Mirrors used to be made from brass that easily tarnished, giving “a poor reflection.”] (We may hate what we see in the mirror or try changing our looks, in order to “fit it.” But God loves us as individuals and wants us to love ourselves and to let Him love others through us.)
 - b. Fear of rejection leads to wearing masks to hide our true self with a persona, but feeling secure in God’s love allows us to be honestly open with others and accepting toward them. (*Love’s help in living openly now, “face to face,” with all masks removed, prepares us for Love’s light in Heaven, where are our souls will be so exposed that we’ll be nakedly transparent to each other*.)
2. Another *hindrance* to relational harmony is described in v.12b. *Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*
- a. While Eden’s *independent* “knowledge” limited us to *knowing “in part,”* the clashes of “know-it-alls” characterize human history.
 - b. We’ve not reached the time when “[we] shall know fully, even as [we are] fully known,” but the *Love Who fully knows all things, sees the complete picture, and lives inside of us*, is asking us to trust His view of things and follow Him in loving others, as He does.

CONCLUSION:

—*Our present goal isn’t Heaven* but that God’s “will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” **Jesus gave Himself to us so that His love can flow from us.** 1 Cor 13:13 concludes, “*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*” In Heaven, “faith” will “remain,” growing stronger. And “hope” will “remain,” multiplying in anticipation of further blessing. But “*the greatest... is love,*” because Love is what “eternal life” is all about! —*Love the Maker created us: to know Him, be like Him, live like Him.* So, Jesus prayed in John 17:3, “Now this is **eternal life**: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” That “eternal life” starts now, because (1 John 4:8), Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is God’s call from the Love Chapter: “put childish ways behind” so that we grow to full maturity in the *childlike ways of love*.