

1 Corinthians 13

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[0 : 00] We'll turn with 1 Corinthians 13. 1 Corinthians 13, as we come to this very familiar set of scripture to us, not very many verses in this chapter.

We have to look at its entirety, 13 verses in the 13th chapter, the chapter of love, right? One that we've heard so often, one that I have read at every wedding I've ever officiated, one that we quite often hear connected to marriages.

We hear it in wedding services. We go through it in pre-marriage counseling. We go through it in marriage counseling. It is the chapter of love. Like Hebrews chapter 11, we have the heroes of the faith.

We have 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. So familiar to us. But may the familiarity of it not drown out the impact of it. And may we understand what the word of God is clearly saying to us this morning.

If you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm asking if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Paul, writing to the church, not to the marriages, not to the husbands, not to the wives, writing to the church at Corinth, right in the middle of speaking about spiritual giftedness.

[1 : 07] He did it in the 12th chapter, picks it back up in the 14th chapter, has this to say. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gifts of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Love is patient. Love is kind and is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not arrogant. It does not act unbecomingly. It does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

[2 : 33] Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, and love abide these three. But the greatest of these is love.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. God, we thank you for portions and chapters of scripture that are so familiar to us. Lord, we can almost speak them by heart.

Lord, we thank you that you have something to teach and tell us in this word. Lord, we thank you for the presence of the spirit that would instruct us, that will enable us to see things as they are presented.

Lord, may there not be a stumbling block. May we see it in its clarity and its simplicity with all of its strength. Lord, may it find application in our lives for your glory and honor.

Lord, lead us as we go through this passage together and be magnified. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. Paul had closed the 12th chapter with this phrase, and I show you a still more excellent way.

[3 : 38] So if you had to have a title, it is the more excellent way. The more excellent way to do what, Pastor? Well, it's just the more excellent way.

And if you take it in its proper context, you will understand that Paul has been speaking to the church about their public gathering, what we call having church service. And he is done dealing with their personal issues.

He will deal with those later on again. But for this moment, he is addressing questions and concerns of what took place when the church gathered together corporately.

He has spoken of the reality of their love feasts. We call those fellowship meals. He has spoken of when they take the Lord's Supper together, take communion, and how when they come together as a corporate body, each individual must search himself or herself and not take it in an unworthy manner.

He has spoken of the reality that when they had come together corporately to take communion, that some had died for taking it in an unworthy manner. The word says that they fell asleep.

[4 : 42] He has spoken of the exercise of spiritual giftedness. How each and every member has been gifted by the Holy Spirit for usefulness within the body. How the body is placed together not by man's choosing, but by God's ordaining sovereignty.

That God fits and joins the body together as he sees fit. That he gifts every believer as he sees fit for usefulness within the body. We've seen the reality that our spiritual giftedness is not for our own benefit, though we are benefited from it, but that it is put there for the benefit and the sake of others.

Which is a good way of saying that if I'm not exercising my giftedness within the body of believers, then I'm not using it for what it was intended to be used for. That God has entrusted us with that to build up the body.

We have seen that some were magnifying one gift over another. And Paul kind of calls that to count and says sometimes those things which we deem less presentable get more honor.

We put the nicest clothing on the parts we don't want seen. It's a good way of saying it. So be careful how you judge your own giftedness and the giftedness of others.

[5 : 58] That every part, every portion has a reason for being there. Everybody has a place in his body. And then he speaks of a more excellent way. And so this is not just a more excellent way for you to live your life.

This is not just a more, though it is that. It's not just a more excellent way for you to live in your marriage, though it is that. This is not just a more excellent way for, as one book title says, for you to have a new kid by Friday.

I tried that. Friday came and I was just like SM Lockers. I was looking forward to Sunday because I need to get to the altar, right? Sunday's coming. Some of you might not have missed that. I might have missed that. There's all these plans.

This isn't a more excellent way. This is a more excellent way to do church. It has its application, according to the text, to the church.

Now that spills over into everything else because in case you have missed it, how we do church is really how we live life. Because if our relationship with Christ is the most important part of our life, then the coming together within the body of Christ should be that which dictates how we live our life.

[7 : 10] Heard a statement yesterday that learning to follow Christ is learning to treasure the church. I'll ask you a real quick question. Do you treasure the church?

Now I don't mean the church philosophical, the church universal. I mean the church local. Do you treasure the local body of believers called the church to which you are a part? Because how we do church really dictates how we do life.

Because the reality is if we're not getting it right in here, we're not going to get it right out there. And Paul says this is a more excellent way.

Now in the eighth chapter, some of you reading through your Bible reading this morning, some of you will read it this evening. In the eighth chapter, in the first verse of the eighth chapter, Paul makes this statement that knowledge puffs up, but then he says, but love edifies.

Love edifies. Now to edify is to build others up. To have knowledge is to puff self up. To edify is to build others up. And Paul says the greatest way to build others up is through love.

[8 : 20] But be careful. This isn't the wishy-washy, oh well love, I don't see no evil, hear no evil love. This is not that. It is true love. And it is that way in which we build others up.

And if you want a strong church, you want an effective church, you want a biblical church, then you want the church, that is the people, to be strong, and you want to be in the business of building others up.

Because their health is really connected to your well-being. And you want strong church members. The strength of the church is not the integrity of the walls.

The strength of the church is the integrity of the people. And we ought to be in the business of building one another up. That is edification. Edifying our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And Paul says the greatest way to do that is through love. And he dedicated a whole chapter as what it looks like to really love. I want you to see just three wonderful truths about this more excellent way.

[9 : 24] Number one, we see the engine of love. That is, love is the driving force or should be the driving force behind all that we do.

The engine of love. Many of you know, some time ago I blew the engine in my truck. Now, I like my truck.

Some of you may not like it as much as I like it. I got a 1999 F-250. That truck, that bad boy, was built in September of 1998. That's before Carrie and I were married.

I don't like it because it's a classic. I like it because it does what I want it to do. Some of you say, well, there's prettier trucks, right? But have you seen what I do to them? Somebody told me one time, well, I thought pastors all drove pretty cars.

I said, well, you ain't met the right pastor yet. I like my truck. I was going down the road. It was on a Sunday of all things. I'd preach Sunday morning. I went to go pick up something. It wasn't even hauling anything heavy.

[10 : 19] And one of my sons and I were going down the road. And all of a sudden, the truck made a sound. Trucks ain't supposed to make. You know, the bottom of your motor. I mean, the top of your engine coming out the bottom. That type of sound. And so I did what every other pastor would do.

And I drove it the rest of the way home because we had to get it home. He said, what are we doing, Dad? I said, well, it ain't going to hurt it. No worse than we already hurt. And if it's running, we're going to go. So we got it there and I parked it and it had no engine.

Well, it had one, but it wasn't any good. And for months, I'd walk outside. I'd always look at my eyes. That's a good looking truck, isn't it? That truck looks good sitting there.

Problem is, it ain't got no engine. And it drove me crazy because I'd walk by it. And every day, I'd say, that's a good looking truck. Some of you, if you don't agree with that, that's okay. But to me, that's a good looking truck. Look how good that truck looks sitting there.

If only I could use it because it didn't have an engine. Now, God was faithful and I was patient and others were praying. I just found out this week, people were praying that God would bring an engine.

[11 : 17] And he did. We're provided. And we put some sweat equity into it, put another engine in it, and it's running great. The difference is now it has an engine. See, some of us, without love, we have everything that looks good, but it's not doing anything.

Because love is the engine that moves things along. And look at what the Word of God says. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. Many in the church at Corinth were magnifying the gift of speaking in tongues.

Paul makes it clear here that the tongues were known languages that were unknown to the individual. They were languages known around the world, but were unknown to the individual who was being empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak that at that spontaneous moment.

The tongues of men. And then he refers to heavenly speech, the tongues of angels. Paul says, if I've taken to speak in the tongues, even from the earthly value to its heavenly realm.

If I've been given the ability, and that's an if. If I could speak the tongues of angels, but have not love. I'm just a clanging gong or sounding horn.

[12 : 30] He says, I'm making a sound of no distinction. It doesn't matter. Because without love, it doesn't matter what I'm saying or how I'm saying. It doesn't matter in the gift of prophecy. He says, but if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries.

If I can foretell what God has said and the word of God is being opened up to me. And I can understand the mysteries of scripture. And I have the ability to do that, but I don't have love.

It does nothing for me. He says, but if I give all my possessions. If I'm charitable. If I give all my possessions to feed the poor. And as some commentators say, Paul made a declaration here that was so anti his time.

But really looking forward to speak of prophesying here. He says, and if I give my body to be burned. Now you need to understand that was radical. Because at that time, no believers were being burned at the stake.

Now it came very quickly after this. Because Nero came to power. And Nero decided the best thing to do for Christians would be to tar and feather them. And to tar and put them to the stake. And set them on fire and to light his parties. And it began to be the most torturous type of death for a believer.

[13 : 31] Because they would not recant faith. But Paul takes it to the uttermost and says, and if I give my body to be burned. But if I don't have love. Then it just looks good, but it's not doing anything.

Because see, love is the engine that moves the practice. Do you understand? And I hope you do. That it is absolutely possible. And quite often, it is absolutely being done.

To do great and wondrous things without love. It should not surprise you right now around the world. History testifies of it.

There are people dying martyrs' death. I didn't say martyrs for Christian faith. But a martyr's death without love. One of the grand religions of the world says if you die a martyr's death.

Then you get a greater reward. So their reason for dying is not a love for humanity. But a love for self. Because see, it is absolutely possible.

[14 : 35] And if we look around the world. It is absolutely evident that there are a number of great and good things. That are being done. Simply for selfish motives. It is either for self-exaltation.

Self-promotion. Or self-recognition. It is doing it because it makes us feel good. It makes us look good to others. Or it does some wonderful things for us. There are a lot of people who give a lot of money. And they give a lot of money away.

They have the money to give. And Lord bless them. And Lord thank them. This past week, I heard they sold a country ham at the Kentucky State Fair. Maybe you heard about the ham. They sold it at the Kentucky State Fair.

I don't want the ham. I just wanted to be able to buy the ham. That ham sold for \$10 million. There were two bidders who paid \$5 million apiece.

All the money was going to a charitable organization. I told Gary, I don't want the ham. I just want to be able to buy the ham. Now, I don't know who they were.

[15 : 32] But so thankful that God has enriched some people to be able to help. And to help people out. And to be able to minister. There are some people who do it because it makes them feel better. Sometimes we do wonderful things for the sake of the kingdom.

Sometimes we give. We study. We pray. Be careful here. We attend church. We do all these things. And if we get down to the core of the being, we're not doing it because we love.

We're doing it because it makes us feel better. But see, love. True love. Is the antidote to selfishness. Because, unfortunately, much of what is being done is being done for love of self.

But that's not what the scripture is speaking about here. It's not talking about love of self, but love of others. So Paul says, unless there is true love, there's no engine behind everything that looks good.

It should be. It ought to be. And in the church, it must be the driving force behind all that is done.

[16 : 38] Many, many churches have seen significant growth throughout church history. They've done astounding things. Many of them have.

Many of them have done it, and we're not here to disparage or to talk down or to look upon anything. But if you look throughout church history, you'll see that this growth and this rise and this prominence was really not done for love of others, but rather for love of self.

And, unfortunately, most of the time, the self that loves himself the most stands behind the pulpit. He wants to be seen. He wants to be known. And we call that personality. And before too long, personality, that engine spits and sputters and people end up suffering.

Great harm. See, it is the engine of love that should motivate everything. We notice, secondly, in this passage of a more excellent way, the expression of love.

That is, love on display in everything we do. Because if we truly love, we don't have to tell people that. If we truly love, we display that love. It is expressed. Paul goes through, I wouldn't call it an exhaustive list, but if you try to put into practice everything that he does, it will exhaust you, and you will never really come to the uttermost of this.

[17 : 56] If you just put this into practice, you won't have to be looking for anything else of what love looks like. But he says in verse 4, we just read through, and we stand amazed that love is patient. That's probably not the very first thing that I would have put out there if I was trying to define love.

But love is patient. The reason I wouldn't have put it out there is because many of us don't like that word patience, because patience means that we're having to wait, right? Again, we're speaking not in the context of marriage or in the relationship of your relationship with your children, but we're speaking in context of one another.

We're speaking in the church body, right? Think about this. Love is patient. And it's dealing with brothers and sisters in Christ in the church body. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not arrogant. It does not act unbecomingly. It does not seek its own. It is not provoked.

That's hard, right? Because self is provoked. Because I'm just being transparent with you. I can get real mad real quick. And the reason is because there's a bunch of I in there.

[19 : 03] You can provoke me. True love, it says, is not provoked. Does not take into account a wrong suffered. That is, it forgives.

And just in case we think that this is a wishy-washy love, look at what he says. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. He's writing to the church at Corinth where he said that there's so many things going on there, so many immoral things going on that it's not even taking place in the world, but it's taking place in the church.

And the church could have said, well, we're doing it because we love them. Oh, you love the brother who's taken his father's wife for his own wife. He said, that's not love. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

Love really calls to the truth. Love is one that speaks out in love, but it speaks out in reality because it rejoices with the truth.

That is, when we see brothers and sisters in Christ doing things which are inappropriate to the testimony of Christ or harmful to the body of Christ or unbeneficial to the church at large, and they're not building up and edifying, it is not loving just to ignore it.

[20 : 11] Actually, it is more loving to call it out because love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. It is not okay to say, well, that's just the way they are.

Well, it is, but that's not who we're supposed to be. True love for me would be where you come to me and you call me to account and you hold me up and you set a standard.

Why? Because I am a child of the king and I need to live as so. True love looks at me and says, brother, I need you to be what you're supposed to be because I depend on you.

True love realizes that if there's one weak part, it hurts all of us. And we call them to a higher standard.

Why? Because it rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. So many people, when dealing with the church, say, well, I'm just done with it.

[21 : 12] Forget it. I'm just going to give up on it. Don't give up on the church. I'm just frustrated and just so mad, just so upset. And, hey, I've been there. I've said that in my mind. I've done it. I've said it out loud and private.

And I've said it in prayer. And I've been on my knees and said, Lord, I'm done with it. I just want to just go on with it. And then he reminds me, but I'm not done with you. And the biggest project that God has in the building is always me.

And the reason that we're called to live out these expressions is because they were first expressed to us. This is not only how we treat one another. This is how a heavenly father has treated us in Christ.

Do you understand that the very first thing that he had to do with you was to be patient with you? Think of the patience of Christ, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We didn't clean ourselves up. We didn't get fit. We didn't change our clothing. We were defiled. We were in the pit. We were in all of the muck. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[22 : 14] The godly for the ungodly. Think of the patience there. I think of how many years Christ was calling me to himself, patiently enduring and waiting.

And some of you, you say, well, I came to Christ in a moment. You did, but you don't know all the seeds that were planted before that moment. The patience. Think how patient.

Think how kind. Love is kind. Think how kind a holy God is to his children. The hymn we sang that all of that has borrowed life from him. Do you realize that the book of Job says that if God was to call his spirit back to himself, everything would die?

That the very breath in your lungs is an expression of the kindness of God? How kind is God? He's not jealous. You say, well, pastor, your favorite verse is, Lord, our God is a jealous God.

He is a consuming fire. Right. That's a good jealousy. There's a difference in jealousy and jealous. Right? You say, well, that makes no sense. There's a godly jealous, which means that God doesn't want you to love something secondary.

[23 : 15] He wants you to love the primary. And he loves you so much that he's not going to be jealous over everything that you're fighting against. But he wants you to love him dearly. He's so kind and he calls you to himself.

Love does not brag. It is not arrogant. You think about your savior on the cross. Think about when he's going to the cross. It doesn't say anything. Right? It does not rejoice. It does not act unbecomingly.

It does not seek its own. It is not provoked. It does not take into account a wrong suffered. All these are expressions of Christ's love for us. Why? Because the nails didn't hold Jesus to the cross.

We understand that. The Romans didn't kill him. The Jewish people didn't kill him. The Bible says that he bore the sins of the world. It was my sin. It was my sin.

It caused him to stay on that cross. That's my wrong. Yet, he does not take that into account.

[24 : 14] He bears my sin and calls me to himself. See, love is the expression of all that we do. It should be on display. Here's something else I want you to notice.

Some of you reading from the King James, and the word there is charity. Others reading from other translations, the word is love. I had a sneaking suspicion. I did a little word study, and I was right. Nothing against any other translations.

I don't like the word charity, because charity doesn't mean what it used to mean when it was first written there in 1611. Charity, now, when we think of charity, well, it's going to be a little charitable to this person.

I'm going to throw a little bit on it. Maybe they'll leave me alone. Charity is the thing we do to get people away from us. That's not what the word is. Love is a very vague term, because we say we love everything. I try to be careful with this now.

I try to be careful. I really like some foods. I try to be very, very careful not to say that I love those foods. You say, well, Pastor, you're splitting hairs. Well, I am, because hairs matter. Especially when you start losing them, they matter, right?

[25 : 12] You count them. So, anyway, I try to be careful with this, because the more I understand the impact of words, the more I try to be intentional of how I use them. So, now, I try not to say that I love secondary matters.

You say, well, does that really matter? Well, it matters to me. If it doesn't matter to you, if it's not a matter of conviction with you, that's okay, but words matter. And we try to teach that. We try to understand that.

But the word here is not euros, a phileo. It's not any of those words. Euros love is easy. You get your word erotic from it. It means a sensual feeling love.

You know, when you met your spouse for the first time, you didn't have a phileo love. You didn't love them like a brother. You had a euros love. You had an attraction. The more you're with them, you get a phileo love.

You have a brotherly love, right? My best friend. You love them like a brother. Philadelphia, it's easy. You see the brotherly love. There's all these different loves. But the word used here throughout the 13th chapter is the word agapeo.

[26 : 18] Agape love. Now, agape love is what you find in John 3, 16. You find it when Jesus is speaking to Peter and he's restoring Peter two times.

He asked Peter, does he agape him? And Peter says, Lord, you know I phileo you. Peter, do you agape me? Lord, you know I phileo you. Peter, do you phileo me? Yes, Lord, you know I phileo you. It's a love that Peter would not acknowledge.

Because agape love is the active, sacrificial love on display for another person. Agape love is the love that God has for you and the love that God has for me.

God so agapeo loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. So agape love is a love that does something even when the person receiving that something doesn't deserve it.

That's how you get to understand John 3, 16 a little bit more. God so loved you, he did something for you when you didn't deserve it. That's agape.

[27 : 21] When I do pre-marriage counseling, I tell spouses, this is what you got to get to. Because the reality is, is there is a moment in every marriage, some of you know that. Carrie and I are just touching the tip of the iceberg.

We're coming upon 25 years just touching it. But you know that in every marriage, there comes a time where, number one, you're not lovable. And number two, you don't feel like loving. Love is not a feeling.

Love is an intentional action. And what we're told in 1 Corinthians 13 is that we ought to express love in intentional actions for the sake of others, not for what it does for us.

You're kind and patient and not acting unbecomingly, not being puffed up, not arrogant, bearing all things, enduring all things, suffering all things, believing all things, and hoping all things.

Because that's what the person in front of you needs, not what you need. It is to have the love of God on display for the love of the people of God. Jesus said it this way, By this will all men know that you love me by your love for one another.

[28 : 31] And no wonder the world doesn't realize how much Christ loves them. And I don't mean this to be harmful. I just mean it to be honest.

When the church quit loving each other intentionally, and when the church quit loving each other so intentionally that we would call one another to a higher standard, that we would expect more from one another, that we would not rejoice in unrighteousness, but that we would rejoice in the truth.

When the church moved away from that love, the world moved away from Christ. The world needs a Savior. Men and women, boys and girls, are lost and doomed to a Christless eternity.

They cannot sing. The eye fly away. They cannot rejoice with that. The sorrows fill the halls. They go to a place of mourning. They don't go to a place of rejoicing. And the blame for that lays at the threshold of the church.

Not the threshold of the world. Read the book of Ezekiel. That grand book of Ezekiel. Wheels inside wheels and eyes going everywhere. You know, it's so confusing.

[29 : 35] There's one part of Ezekiel that's really clear where God looks at the prophet Ezekiel and says, If I tell you that they're doomed and go into destruction and you warn them and they go anyway, the blood is on their hands. But if I tell you they're doomed and go into destruction and you don't warn them, they're going to die and go to destruction.

But Ezekiel, their blood is on your hands. But God says, Ezekiel, if you know but you don't do anything, then it's on you. That goes to the church.

Right? How do you do that? What's the more excellent way to do it? By having this intentional, active love for one another. This intentional, active love.

Love is an attractant. People want to be loved. They want to be accepted. They want to be, they want to have a place. But when the church is intentional and active in their love for one another, God tends to draw people to that.

Number three, and finally, you see the endurance of love. See the engine of love, the expression of love, the endurance of love, and that is that love never diminishes, fails, or falls away.

[30 : 37] Look at what it says. Verse 8, love never fails. There's a lot of things. There's a lot of things that you can do that are going to fail. They're going to fall flat on their face.

A lot of things that I've done over the years, I've fallen, and I've failed, and miserably, it just doesn't work. A lot of things that I've tried to do for the church, they've failed, and it just doesn't work. But there's one thing, that is that intentional, active love, that it never fails.

He says, but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away. Notice here, Paul calls out three gifts of the Holy Spirit that were so desirable to the church at Corinth.

He'll address them a little bit more in the 14th chapter. Things that they were kind of putting some weight behind. They were exalting people that could speak in tongues. They were exalting people that have prophecy.

They were exalting people with the gift of knowledge. They were magnifying them. And those are the very ones that, through the Spirit of God, Paul pens this letter and calls those three desirable gifts out and says, every one of them are stopping.

[31 : 41] You can speak with tongues, it's going to fail. You can have all prophetic energies, and you can have all the prophecy, and it's going to fail. You can have all knowledge, and it's going to fail. Those things have an end date.

But love never fails. And he says it this way, Now you need to understand that many Bible scholars think, and I tend to agree, there's some division over what Paul is saying in the 8th verse here.

But I kind of want to just pause for just a moment. And I agree with the majority here. I'll give you both areas, both ways, and then I'll let you know.

First, some people think that what Paul is writing to is that when we get to glory, we'll no longer need to speak in tongues because we'll all be in one language. We'll no longer need to prophesy because why would we foretell what we can see with our eyes?

And we'll have all full knowledge because we'll see face to face, right? So some people believe that what Paul is stating here in the 8th verse are things that will all cease at a time to come in eternity in heaven.

[32 : 45] Others see here that what Paul is declaring is that there will be a time in history where these, what we call sign gifts will fall off the scene.

That these prophetic sign gifts, these testimonial gifts will no longer be needed in history, not just in eternity, not when we get to heaven. But what Paul is saying is that there was a time in history that sometime future of when Paul was writing in history that you would no longer need the speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy or the gift of knowledge.

You say, we don't need knowledge. Well, the gift of knowledge is written here is the knowledge to understand special prophetic word. That is that if God moved you by the spirit to prophesy, I would have the knowledge to discern your prophetic word.

And therefore, I could clarify what you prophesy. Understand that, right? It's different than just knowledge studying. It's a special gift of knowledge to be able to clarify what somebody else is prophesying.

So you needed both of those in the church. Paul was saying there would be a point in history where that would stop. I tend to agree with the second. Why? Because in the wording, in the original wording, Paul seems to be alluding to sometime in the immediate future that these three gifts would stop.

[33 : 53] Now, this answers the question, what about speaking in tongues? What about the gifts of prophecy? And what about the gift of knowledge? This answers that question. That's why I want to take some time on it. And many scholars who tend to think that way, and in my agreement too, believe that what Paul is referring to is to a point in history in which these three would pass away because the church had moved beyond its childish stage.

Because Paul says, when I was a child, I used to think like a child, reason like a child, act like a child. But when I became a man, I did away with childish things, right? So many believe that these sign gifts would reach a point where you no longer needed the supernatural sign to verify the truth of what the word of God says.

You tracking with me? I hope you're staying with me. Because when you're a kid, you need something to captivate your attention. When you're a kid, you need something miraculous. When you're a kid, you need all these things. When you mature, you ought to be disciplined enough to know what the truth is and understand it through maturity.

These things are true because they say they are true, and I don't need these miraculous testimonial gifts. History shows us that by the 400s, by 400 A.D., many church fathers in the 400s, various times, not all at one time, all of them writing had said that all three of these gifts were no longer present in the church.

Something amazing happened right before that, in the late 300s. You had the first church councils where they got together and they completed the canonization of Scripture and they settled the matters of theology.

[35 : 22] The Trinity of God, that Jesus was fully man and fully God, the church reached a place of maturity. The church came to a place of maturity that said Jesus is fully man, he's fully God.

These are the 66 books of the Bible. This is what we think is authoritative. Right after those things were completed, church fathers testified to the reality that the speaking in tongues, the gifts of prophecy, and the gifts of knowledge were no longer on display in the church.

Why? Because the church had reached a place of maturity. It had spread into the world. Again, be consistent in your scriptural interpretation, right? Be consistent in that. When you open up the book of Acts, we find people speaking in tongues.

Where do we find them speaking in tongues? Every time the gospel goes into another region. It's a testimonial sign. By that time, the gospel had spread.

It had reached every continent. Can God lead you to speak in tongues? Well, absolutely, because he's God. Absolutely.

[36 : 24] Do we need him to do it today? In our maturity, we should not. Because what we're saying at that time is, God, the fullness of your revelation is not enough.

We need some razzle and dazzle to keep our attention. The book of Hebrews says, in these latter days, he has spoken to us through Jesus Christ, his son.

And when we have the fullness of scripture. Now, we need knowledge. That is, we need to study to show ourselves approved. We need that. We don't need a prophetic word. Why? Because we have the fullness of the word.

I don't need someone standing up saying, well, I've got a clear word from God. Because this is one thing I have found out. And not through prayer and Bible study. I'm just talking about someone saying, God has given me a new word. If anybody ever comes to you and tells you that God has given you a new, given them a new word, tell them you don't want to hear it.

Because God has declared all he has. Until we finish this word, we don't need a new word. I have not found anyone that can do the fullness of this word. And I don't need a new word because I'm still trying to work on the word.

[37 : 32] Right? As Henry Blackaby used to say, when you've done everything that God has already told you in the Bible, then go to him and ask him what to do next. But until then, just continue to read the Bible. Now, you get a word from God by prayer, by Bible study, but it's always consistent here.

I don't need a prophet standing up with a new word because God has already told me what happened in the beginning. He's told me what happened in the end. I know from beginning to end, everything that's going to happen in the history of man contained in Genesis and Revelation.

The mysteries of the gospel. Paul writes letters about the mysteries of the gospel. So how do we get knowledge? Not through some, the spirit moves through the word.

Right? This is how he speaks to us. There are times, and I've heard this, and I know you're saying, well, pastor, you're lingering over this a long time. It's because I think it's worth lingering over.

I have heard of people going on the mission field, and I believe these are valid. This, again, just shows the power of God. Standing in a group of people who were speaking a language they knew nothing of.

[38 : 36] These people just desperately wanted to share Christ with them. I've heard mission testimonies of saying that God empowered them to share the gospel in that native tongue. If it was Mandarin, Chinese, whatever it was at that moment.

They shared the gospel, but the moment they got done sharing the gospel, they could no longer speak that language. Now, I absolutely believe God has the ability to do that. Absolutely.

Absolutely. Absolutely. Why? Because God wants his son to be declared and to be praised across the nations. But I also believe the fullness of Scripture tells us that we don't need those testimonial signs anymore.

Because we have here the endurance of love. What Paul is telling the church, instead of trying to speak in more tongues, what about trying to be more loving?

And when you've done with all the loving, let me know. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face, for I know in part, but then I will be known fully as I also have been fully known.

[39 : 39] That is, there'll be a day. You know what causes us to love more? The more we realize how much he loves us. But now faith, hope, and love abide these three, but the greatest of these is love.

And love is a more excellent way. It's a more excellent way to edify the body. It's a more excellent way to mature the body. And it's a more excellent way to be a part of the body. It's a more excellent way.

Because how we live out love within the body of Christ, ultimately, my friend, is going to determine how we live out love outside the body of Christ. Always.

My greatest encouragement that I give every couple that sits down with me in pre-marriage counseling. Greatest encouragement. I don't encourage them simply to love their mate more every day.

I tell them to love the Savior more each and every day. Because the more you love the Savior, the more you'll love your mate. Because the more you fall in love with the Savior, the more you realize how much the Savior loves you.

[40 : 51] A whole lot easier it is to love other people. But if you're focused on any person, in the church, or in your personal life, you're going to get frustrated.

But love. Intentional love. Falling in love with the Savior. I love the church. Not simply, I love that you're all here.

But I don't love the church just because you're here. I treasure the church because it's the bride of Christ. It's the bride of Christ.

It's the church that's getting the wedding supper of the Lamb. It's the bride of Christ. And the more I love Christ, the more I have to love the church. Which means I have to be intentional.

I have to be active. And I have to be on purpose. 1 Corinthians 13. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this day. Lord, we know that the standard of love seems so unattainable.

[41 : 58] Lord Jesus, through your presence, through your mercy, through your forgiveness, through your compassion. Lord, you can move us to it. Lord, may we be a loving people as the word declares.

Not as this world declares, but as the word declares. May you be magnified in our actions. May you be exalted in our relations with one another.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[44 : 28] Thank you.