

1ST CORINTHIANS

Chap. 13-16

HPC Trinity Class

Dec. 1, 2024

The “Love Chapter,” chapter 13:

12:31b-13:1-3

13:1 Our word “love” is much too general. Here are just some examples of what the English word “love” can mean:¹

1. a strong affection --- *e.g., a maternal love for a child*
2. sexual desire or sexual embrace
3. a warm attachment --- *e.g., love of the sea*
4. the object of devotion --- *e.g., baseball was his first love*
5. to take pleasure in --- *e.g., she loves to play the violin*
6. to thrive in --- *e.g., the rose loves sunlight*

The Greek language, unlike English, has four different words for “love”:

1. **“agapē”** (brotherly love) is used throughout the New Testament to express the deep and abiding affection of God and Christ for each other and for us (John 15:10, 1 John 4:8-9). Its use is confined almost entirely to religious texts.
2. *Agapē* conveys a deeper meaning than the word **“philos”** (having affection for), as found in MT 10:37 and elsewhere.
3. And *agapē* is very different from **“eros,”** which implies sexual love.
4. Finally, there’s **“storgē”** (familial love between parents and children).

Over the centuries numerous Bible renditions have attempted to avoid the slightest hint of a sexual connotation when translating the word *agapē*. One of our oldest Bible translations from Greek is the Vulgate (@400 A.D.). This Latin interpretation became the standard of the Roman Catholic church for centuries. In 13:1 we find “love” being replaced by the Latin word *caritas*, meaning “charity,” which the Latin scholars believed would prevent any confusion with *amor*.²

13:2-3

Verse 3 has been revised many times throughout the centuries.

Is it “to burn” (*kauthēsomai*) or “to boast” (*kauchēsōmai*)???

¹ Meriam-Webster lists over 17 definitions for “love” in English.

² In 1611 “charity” meant the highest form of selfless love. However, some older English versions do use the word “love,” notably the Tyndale and Geneva Bibles. Today the KJV still uses the word “charity,” but it is found only here in 1 Corinthians.

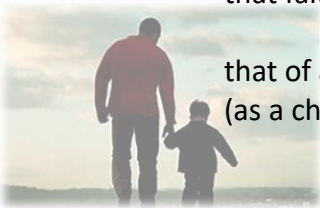


13:4-7

Paul tells us what love is---and isn't. In a nutshell, love "always perseveres." This means that some of the things that the Corinthians deemed as "religious" were not going to be persevered. Prophecies, speaking in tongues, and even certain knowledge would pass away (vs. 8-10).

Some modern commentators think Paul meant that these three gifts would halt when the original apostles died, @100 A.D. However, in verse 10 Paul seems to be speaking in a conditional sense: "whenever the end should come," which implies that Paul did not know when the Second Coming would arrive. The importance of his message is that faith, hope, and love should continue (v. 13).

The well-known verses of **13:11-12**, where Paul compares a child's viewpoint to that of an adult, is an apt comparison of how we view and express spiritual things today (as a child) vs. how we will actually know them when in heaven.



Prophecy over Tongues 14:1-25

Three times in the Book of Acts we hear about the fruits of speaking in tongues: Acts 2:4-8; 10:46; and 19:6. In these three instances the Lord allowed both the speaker and his audience to clearly understand the message. The Greek word used in Acts (*glōssias*) shows that speaking in tongues wasn't gibberish; it was simply spoken in dialects or foreign languages which normally would not be understood by the listeners.

Paul is not criticizing this. His "usage of the singular form *glōssa* (tongue) in this passage, however, may refer to an ecstatic utterance which no one understood."³ Since the members of a congregation are supposed to build each other up spiritually, no one should speak unless the hearers can understand what is being said. If no one can interpret what is said the speaker is talking only to God.

14:12 and 14:18-19

Paul places prophecy much higher in importance than the speaking in tongues: **14:22-25**.

Orderly Worship, 14:26-40

Paul gives a general concept as to how worship should be conducted, with emphasis on Christian instruction and edification. Keeping an orderly worship ensures that the church will be strengthened.

14:33b-35 "...women should remain silent in the churches."



³ Key Word Bible, fn. to 1 Cor. 14:1-28, pg. 1344.

Women were allowed to speak, but not to interrupt those giving a sermon or a prophesy. It was considered rude to even whisper to one another during a lecture. “Paul was addressing relatively uneducated women who were disrupting the service with irrelevant questions.”⁴ Rather than interrupting they were to keep quiet in church, then ask their husbands when they returned home. Paul here is continuing his earlier emphasis: a church must maintain order, meaning that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (v.40). His “remain silent” order was not a general injunction for all women to always be silent in church.

Some scholars believe that these two verses were 2nd Century interpolations, not from the apostle Paul.⁵ However, we know that 1 Corinthians was already familiar to Pope Clement of Rome as early as the ‘90s, and by that time both 1st and 2nd Corinthians would have been in circulation for some time; any additions of this size to the text at such a late date would have been unlikely.

The Resurrection of Christ and the Christian

15:1-11---Paul gives a quick summary: Christ died for our sins, was buried but rose from the grave. He appeared to many, including Paul himself.



But some in Corinth argued that there is no resurrection of the dead. (Now we’ll see the lawyer side of Paul’s past coming forth.) **15:12-19**

15:20-22

15:30-34---Paul was writing to the Corinthians from Ephesus, where he was under great stress every day. When he mentions that he fights wild beasts here he is probably speaking metaphorically, because (1) Acts 19 does not indicate this, and (2) the fact that he is a Roman citizen would shield Paul from such torture.

In verse 33 Paul cites Greek literature of his era to support his argument. It’s a simple truism from Menander’s comedy *Thais*: “Bad company corrupts good character.” This line would have been familiar to his learned audience, and it ties the common secular world of the Corinthians to that of the holy. The “bad company” in Paul’s mind were those who threatened the church by claiming there is no resurrection.

15:35-38---The Corinthians are confused: “How are the dead raised?” He uses a tool very much in line with Greek thought: logic. He gives the simple illustration of a plant: when it dies and decays in the ground it also gives birth (the seed) to a



⁴ Keener, pg. 70.

⁵ Some ancient manuscripts (Bezan codex [D] and others) place vs. 34-35 at the end of the chapter, which has led some theologians to believe that this to be evidence of a marginal gloss. The better MSS have the verses as shown, however.

new and different body, yet one that is related to the seed from which it sprung. In vs. 39-41 he gives examples of a variety of life forms, then of inanimate objects.

Therefore, **15:42-44**.

Paul develops a distinction between a natural body and a spiritual one. Adam and all of his descendants existed in only natural bodies which perished. But those who now follow Christ are blessed with spiritual bodies when their natural, physical bodies pass away. The former perishes and is dust; the latter is resurrected forever and is without sin, just as Christ was resurrected. But the natural body always comes before the resurrected one (vs. 46).⁶

15:49

Paul concludes his argument for the resurrection in vs. 50-58:

- mortal bodies are perishable and therefore can not inherit that which is imperishable;
- not all Christians will be dead (“asleep”) when Christ comes again;
- all Christians will receive changed bodies (i.e., the rapture), which will happen in an instant;
- for emphasis Paul quotes from two well-respected prophets of old:
 - Isaiah 25:8---“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”
 - Hosea 13:14—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”
(This is the wording of the KJV, which followed the Hebrew translation of Hosea. Almost all other Bibles place “victory” before “sting,” which is the LXX [Greek] translation.)

Paul wraps it up, chap. 16

Collection

The Corinthians seem to already know about this request for donations. We don’t know why the Jerusalem church was in such need, but Paul mentions that he is collecting it from other locations during his travels, such as Galatia. He gives a primer on tithing: once per week on the first day (i.e., Sunday).⁷



⁶ This concept of natural-to-spiritual was not something new in Paul’s theology. He is writing this letter to the Corinthians in about 56 A.D. Several years earlier he presented the same thoughts to new Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thes. 4:17).

⁷ Saturday was the Sabbath for Jews; that tradition continued for new Christians. The first mention in the NT of worshipping on a Sunday is Acts 20:7.

Travel

Paul plans to leave Ephesus and travel through Macedonia (see map). Many of his travel plans correlate with the events in Acts. Timothy may also come to Corinth (vs. 10-11); if so, welcome him. The young man Apollos seems to have been requested by the Corinthians, but he can't come yet (v.12).



Greetings are given to the Corinthian Christians from Aquila, Priscilla, and others of faith. Paul concludes with a confirmation that he approves of this letter by attesting to its authenticity with a final tribute “in my own hand.” The rest of the letter would have been dictated by Paul to an amanuensis (scribe).

v. 22 “Come, O Lord” is an expression in Aramaic.

● = Ephesus

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