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The Greatest Gift is Love

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition
or Roget's Thesaurus – **May 31, 2015**

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Introduction: This chapter is a continuation of the subject commenced in chapter 12. In that chapter Paul had introduced the subject of the various endowments which the Holy Spirit confers on Christians, and had shown that these endowments, however various they were, were conferred in such a manner as best to **promote** the **edification** and **welfare** of the **church**. In the close of that chapter (1 Corinthians 12:31), he had said that it was lawful for them to desire the most eminent of the **gifts** conferred by the Spirit; and yet says that there was **one endowment** that was more valuable than all others, and that might be obtained by ALL, and that he proposed to recommend to them. That was **Love**; sold to illustrate its nature, excellency, and power, is the design of this exquisitely beautiful and tender chapter.

(Source: Barnes' Notes on the New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bnn/)

Intro continued: In order to get the correct **context** of Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 13, let's back up to chapter twelve and look at the last five verses.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Now ye **ARE** the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath SET some in the church, first **apostles**, secondarily **prophets**, thirdly **teachers**, after that **miracles**, then gifts of healings, helps, **governments**, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But **covet earnestly (desire)** the **best** (more advantageous) **GIFTS**: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent (superior, important) **way (ACT [deed])**.

Gifts defined 5486, miraculous faculty [the power of doing any thing; ability.

There is no faculty or power in creatures, which can rightly perform its functions, without the perpetual aid of the Supreme (highest) Being].

Thought 1. So, the last verse reads: "But desire the more advantageous ABILITY assigned to somebody. And yet shew I unto you a far more important ACT."

1 Corinthians 13:1, Though I speak with the **tongues** of men and of **angels**, and have not **CHARITY**, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Charity defined 26, noun, agape pronounced: ag-ah'-pay: LOVE, i.e. affection or BENEVOLENCE; a love-feast, love.

Benevolence, the disposition (frame of mind) to do good; kindness; the love of mankind, accompanied with a desire to promote their happiness.

NOTE: ...*speaking with the tongues of men.* Though I should be able to **speak all** the languages which are spoken by men. To speak foreign languages was regarded then, as it is now, as a rare and valuable **endowment**. Comp. Virg. AEn. vi. 625, seq. The word *I*, here, is used in a popular sense; and the apostle designs to illustrate, as he often does, his idea by a reference to himself, which, it is evident, he wishes to be understood as applying to those whom he addressed. It is evident that among the Corinthians the power of speaking a foreign language was regarded as a signally valuable endowment; and there can be no doubt that some of the leaders in that church valued themselves especially on it. See chapter 14. To correct this, and to show them that all this would be vain without love, and to induce them, therefore, to seek for love as a more valuable endowment, was the design of the apostle in this passage. Of this verse Dr. Bloomfield, than whom perhaps there is no living man better qualified to give such an opinion, remarks, that "it would be difficult to find a finer passage than this in the writings of Demosthenes himself."

And of angels. The **language** of **angels**; such as they speak. Were I endowed with the faculty of eloquence and persuasion which we attribute to them; and the power of speaking to any of the human family with the power which they have. The language of angels here seems to be used to denote the highest power of using language, or of the most elevated faculty of eloquence and speech. It is evidently derived from the idea that the **angels** are **superior**, in all respects, to men; that they must have endowments in advance of all which man can have. It may possible have reference to the idea that they must have some **mode of communicating** their ideas one to another, and that this dialect or mode must be far superior to that which is employed by man.

(Source: Barnes' Notes on the New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bnn/)

1 Corinthians 13:2 ...*though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all MYSTERIES, and all KNOWLEDGE; and though I have all FAITH, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am NOTHING.*

Mysteries defined 3466, a secret or "mystery" (That which is beyond human comprehension until explained. In this sense, mystery often conveys the idea of something awfully sublime or important; something that excites wonder.)

Nothing defined 3762, nobody (a person of no influence, 1913 Webster's), nothing (no VALUE; no USE).

Thought 1. This word "mysteries" is the same Greek word found in 1 Corinthians 4:1 where Paul says we are stewards (managers) of the mysteries of God. And that we should be faithful as managers because we will have to give account to the owner of the house one day as to how we distributed what he gave us. Our giving account will not only cover what we gave out, but it will also cover if we gave it out because of LOVE for Jesus and his lambs and sheep.

John 21:15-17, So when they had **dined**, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, **LOVEST** thou me MORE than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed** my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest** thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed** my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, **lovest** thou me?

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, **Lovest** thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, **Feed** my sheep.

Ephesians 4:15-16, But speaking the **truth** in **LOVE** (affection, charity), may GROW up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which **every joint supplieth**, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the **edifying** of itself in **LOVE**.

Proverbs 16:6, By **MERCY** and **TRUTH** iniquity is **purged**: and by the FEAR of the Lord men depart from evil.

Mercy defined 2617, kindness [benevolence; that temper or disposition which delights in contributing to the happiness of others, which is exercised cheerfully in gratifying their wishes, supplying their wants or alleviating their distresses] **good deed, [loving] kindness, PITY** [the feeling or suffering of one person, excited by the distresses of another].
Truth defined 571, verity (moral truth; agreement of the words with the thoughts.).

Thought 2. These scriptures reveal why some people, especially the pastors; who are called to grow up the LAMBS and sheep of Jesus, are NOT effective in helping the flock. They may be giving truth, but LOVE (mercy) is needed FOR it to be effective as well as for his, or her work to have God's desired influence in their lives.

1 Corinthians 13:3. *And though I bestow ALL my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not **charity**, it **profiteth (benefit)** me nothing.*

Thought 1. So, our LOVE for Jesus and people has to be the motivation even for our giving in order for us to receive a reward from Father. See Matthew 6:1-2.

1 Corinthians 13:4, Charity **suffereth LONG**, and is **KIND**; charity **ENVIETH** not; charity **VAUNTETH** not itself, is not **PUFFED UP**,

Long defined 3114, exercising patience) or patient (1. having the quality of enduring evils without murmuring or fretfulness; sustaining afflictions of body or MIND with fortitude, calmness or Christian submission to the divine will; as a patient person, or a person of patient temper. 2. Not easily provoked; calm under the sufferance of injuries or offenses; not revengeful. 3. Persevering; constant in pursuit or exertion; calmly diligent).

Kind defined 5541, act benevolently [1. lacking any hostility 2. FRIENDLY, kindhearted, CARING frame of MIND to DO GOOD and PROMOTE the WELFARE (good fortune, happiness, WELL-BEING) of others].

Thought 1. Some people suffer long with others, but they're not KIND, or they reach a point where they STOP loving and are no longer KIND. Love will always be kind; no matter what the situation at hand. It covers (overcomes) all sins.

John 13:34-35, A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **LOVE** one another; AS I have **LOVED you**, that ye also **love** one another. By this shall all men **know** that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love** one to another.

Proverbs 10:12, Hatred **stirreth** (to wake [arouse]) up strifes: but **LOVE covereth** (overwhelms [overpower], 1913 Webs.) ALL sins.

1 Peter 4:8, And **above** all things have **fervent (without ceasing, fervent** [glowing, earnest]) **charity (LOVE)** among yourselves: for CHARITY shall **cover** (overwhelm [overpower]) the multitude of sins.

Envieth defined 2206, move with envy [feel uneasiness, mortification or discontent, at the sight of superior excellence, reputation or happiness enjoyed by another], **be jealous** [Suspicious; apprehensive of rivalry; uneasy through fear that another has withdrawn or may withdraw from one the affections of a person he loves, or enjoy some good which he desires to obtain; followed by of, and applied both to the object of love and to the rival].

Vaunteth defined 4068, braggart (boastful; vainly ostentatious [showy]).

Puffed up defined 5448, haughty (having a high opinion of one's self, with some contempt [disrespect] for others; lofty and arrogant [proceeding from undue claims of self importance])

1 Corinthians 13:5, Doth not **behave** itself **unseemly (act unbecoming [harsh, improper])** seeketh not her **OWN**, is not **easily** provoked, **THINKETH** no evil...

Own defined 1438, own conceits [1. striking thought 2. opinion: VIEW].

Thinketh defined 3049, suppose (imagine; to believe; to receive as true).

NOTE: Is not desirous of her **own** spiritual welfare only, but of **her neighbour's** also: for the writers of the Old and New Testament do, almost every where, agreeably to their Hebrew idiom, express a *preference* given to one thing before another by an *affirmation* of that which is *preferred*, and a *negative* of that which is *contrary* to it.

"Believes no evil where no evil seems." **Never supposes** that a **good action** may have a **bad motive**; **gives** every man **credit** for his profession of religion, uprightness, godly zeal, his *conduct* or in his *spirit* inconsistent with this profession. His heart is so governed and influenced by the love of God, that he cannot think of evil but where it appears. The original implies that he does not *invent* or *devise* any evil; or, does not *reason* on any particular act or word so as to *infer* evil from it; for this would destroy his love to his brother; it would be ruinous to *charity* and benevolence.

(Source: The Adam Clarke Commentary classic.studylight.org/com/acc/)

1 Corinthians 13:6-7, Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth **in** the truth; **BEARETH** all things, **believeth** all things, **hopeth (expect)** all things, **ENDURETH** all things ..

Beareth defined 4722, endure patiently (without agitation, uneasiness [unquietness of mind; moderate anxiety or perturbation] or discontent; without undue haste.).

Thought 1. He's referring to the ability to suffer without murmuring and to be **content** in spite of the state in which we may find ourselves.

Philippians 4:11-13, Not that I speak in respect of **want**: for I have **learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be **content**. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am **instructed** both to be **full** and to be **hungry**, both to abound and to suffer need. I can **DO** all things through Christ which **strengtheneth** me.

Believeth defined 4100, to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to a PERSON).

NOTE: The whole scope of the connexion and the argument here requires us to understand this of the conduct of others. It cannot mean that the man who is under the influence of love is a man of universal credulity (easiness of belief); that he **makes no discrimination** in regard to things to be **believed**; and is as prone to believe a **falsehood** as the truth; or that he is at no pains to inquire what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. But it **must mean**, that

in regard to the conduct of others, there is a disposition to put the best construction on it; to **believe** that they may be actuated by good motives, and that they intend no injury; and that there is a willingness to suppose, as far as can be, that what is done is done consistently with friendship, good feeling, and virtue. Love produces this, because it rejoices in the happiness and virtue of others, and will not believe the contrary except on irrefragable (undeniable) **evidence**.
(Source: Barnes' Notes on the New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bnn/)

Endureth defined 5278, to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere (to pursue steadily any design or course commenced; not to give over or abandon what is undertaken).

1 Corinthians 13:8, Charity never FAILETH: but whether there be **PROPHECIES**, they shall **FAIL**; whether there be tongues, they shall **CEASE**; whether there be **KNOWLEDGE**, it shall **VANISH AWAY**.

Faileth defined 1601, become inefficient [unproductive, ineffective].

Prophecies defined 4394, prediction (scriptural or other).

Fail defined 2673, to be entirely idle (USELESS).

Cease defined 3973, "pause [TEMPORARY stop or rest, 1913 Webster's]".

Knowledge defined 1108, knowledge (1. a clear and certain perception of that which exists, or of truth and fact, 2. Information.

Vanish away (both words) defined 2673, to be entirely idle (USELESS).

Thought 1. As we see, "charity" (LOVE) is never "ineffective." But, when it comes to "prophecies", there comes a time, in everyday life where they are "useless." He goes on to say "tongues" will be "pause" in certain occasions. This is why in the next chapter, he says, in the church, he'd rather speak a few words to teach, than thousands of words in tongues. So, when he's teaching, "tongues" are on "pause."

1 Corinthians 14:18-19, I thank my God, I speak with **tongues** more than ye all: Yet IN the church I had rather speak five words with my **understanding**, that by my voice I might **TEACH others** also, than ten thousand words in an unknown **tongue**.

Thought 2. He even said that "knowledge" is USELESS at times. Did you notice that the Greek word for "fail", speaking of prophecies, is the same Greek word for "vanish away"? But, whatever the situation, "charity (LOVE) is never USELESS.

Let's continue to look at "knowledge" as we consider the belief by some that verse eight is saying that "the gifts of the Spirit HAVE passed away. I choose to look at "knowledge" because IF it's already passed away, how can the Holy Spirit keep imparting "knowledge" to anybody? This proves they haven't passed away.

Actually, to prove to everyone that no "gifts" have passed away, God still does things by the gifts of Spirit to help his people as his wisdom and our faith dictates.

As a matter of fact, if God didn't work miracles any longer, I wouldn't be alive today. At age 12, he healed me of a disease that to this day the doctors couldn't diagnose, nor explain how I was healed. I know, because, after I was healed, my Mom told me when the doctors said, I could die at any time, she went home and prayed for God to heal me. She came back to the Hospital, called name, and I woke up out a coma and the rest is history. And upon hearing of God's LOVE, for me, I trusted Jesus for salvation and was born again in the hospital. So, I can testify, God's hand (power), including the gifts, haven't grown short. And there are many people God has healed since Paul wrote 1 Cor.13: 8 that have my same testimony.

1 Corinthians 13:9-11, For we **know** in **part**, and we **prophecy** in part. But when that which is **PERFECT** is come, then that which is in part shall be **DONE AWAY**.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a **man (man [adult male human].)**, I **put away childish things**.

Perfect defined 5046, complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); completeness: --of full age (mature years), MAN. Done away defined 2673, to be entirely idle (USELESS).

Thought 1. Seeing these definitions reveal just how easy it is to miss the meaning intended by our Father when he inspired the writing of his word. We see he is not saying these things would pass away, or whatever as taught by some of our brothers and sisters. He is saying they are not USEFUL or effective at all times.

And even today when we speak in tongues as the Holy Spirit gives the utterance, we build up ourselves. But, when the “gift of tongues” is being manifested, and interpretation take place, we build up others. But there is a “pause” in speaking in tongues! We don’t speak in tongues all of the time! It wouldn’t be useful all of the time! (1 Cor.14:16-17) But love is never USELESS.

And once we mature (to be like Jesus) in LOVE, we’ll lay aside the childishness of wanting certain gifts because of a desire to look impressive, or thinking ourselves above others because we’re used by God in certain ways.

Proverbs 17:17, A friend **loveth** at **ALL times**...

1 John 4:12, No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his LOVE is **perfected (consummate [to bring or carry to the utmost point or degree.] in character)** IN us.

Ephesians 5:1-2, Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And **walk (to tread all around, to LIVE)** in love, **AS** Christ also hath **LOVED** us...

Thought 2. Another set of verses came to mind about LOVE reaching a point of being perfect (COMPLETE) is found in 1 John 4.

1 John 4:16-18, And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our **LOVE** made **perfect (complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.))**); that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no **fear (terror)** in LOVE; but **perfect (complete) LOVE casteth out fear (terror)**: because **fear (terror)** hath torment. He that **feareth** is not made **perfect (complete)** in LOVE.

Thought 3. Comparing what’s “childish” to what’s “mature”, when it comes to our love, it’s childish for a Christian to be in terror of the Lord Jesus, or of our Father. But, until our love is made “perfect” (complete), we can’t “cast out” nor “put away” terror of our Lord or of our Father.

1 Corinthians 13:12-13, For now we see **through (by reason of) a glass (mirror)** darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now **abideth (continue [to keep up an activity]) faith, hope, charity, these three**; but the **GREATEST** (MORE important than others) of these is **charity (LOVE)**.

NOTE: Love is greatest because it will continue, even grow, in the eternal state. When we are in **heaven**, **faith** and **hope** will have **fulfilled their purpose**. We won't need faith when we see God face to face. We won't need to hope in the coming of Jesus once He comes. But we will always LOVE the Lord and each other, and **grow** in that **love** through eternity.

(Source: David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible classic.studylight.org/com/guz/)