

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 13

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love in the body of Christ, highlighting its supremacy and the need for Christians to demonstrate it in their relationships with one another.

Duration: 50:22

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 13:8, Romans 13:10, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 1 John 4:8

Topics: "Gods Love", "Christian Witness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience of preaching about the love of God to a group of people. Initially, he felt guilty for emphasizing God's love instead of His judgment and hatred of sin. However, he later realizes the importance of demonstrating God's love through his own life. The speaker also shares a story of a friend who had a profound impact on his coworkers by living out his faith. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the significance of both preaching and living out the message of God's love and judgment.

Transcript

As we come to this particular chapter, we come to one of those chapters in the Bible that generally speaking is quoted out of its original context. A portion of this thirteenth chapter has been used in many books of poetry. It's been used in many greeting cards.

Actually, a portion of this thirteenth chapter was read by the Prime Minister at the funeral of Diana. And I think for the most part, this thirteenth chapter is considered outside of its original context. But when you look at it in its context, you see that the application is somewhat different than what is generally thought by people.

The application is primarily to Christian people who are meeting and living together corporately as the body of Christ and sharing the gifts of the Spirit. And really it's talking about the supremacy of love in the context of the body of Christ. And how that is the great desire of God for his people that we manifest his love through us toward one another.

And so we're going to look at this chapter today in its context. And in order to do that, let's go back, picking up in verse twenty seven of. The previous chapter, Paul says, now you are the body of Christ and members individually, and God has appointed these in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps administrations, varieties of tongues are all

apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, do all have gifts of healings, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret, but earnestly desire the best gifts.

And yet I show you a more excellent way. So you see, the context here is, again, the body of Christ and the ministry of the body of Christ toward itself through the gifts of the spirit. So Paul is encouraging them to desire the gifts in the 12th chapter.

As we studied, you remember, Paul. Mentioned several of the gifts there, and we gave a brief exposition of those gifts, so he now encourages them, he says, earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

So the gifts are important. And he encourages us to desire them. As we come to chapter 14, he says, pursue love and desire spiritual gifts.

The gifts are important. God's given them in order that his church might attain to the full potential that he desires for it. But the gifts apart from love.

Are nothing, according to what the apostle has to say here. And so even more than the gifts. Now, this isn't an either or situation.

We're not to throw out the gifts in the place of love, but we're to have both. And love is to be the predominant feature among God's people when we gather together. And so now Paul is going to go on and he's going to talk about that.

Love that ought to be manifest among God's people, he says this, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love. I have become a sounding brass or a clanging symbol, and 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, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

So Paul is seeking to show the supremacy of love. And this is really to be, as I said a moment ago, the predominant feature of the Christian individually and of the Christian assembly. When people come and join in an assembly of Christians, the predominant thing that they ought to sense is the love of God.

That's what the apostle is saying. And he says, if you've got all the gifts in operation, you might be speaking in tongues, the tongues of men and of angels, you might be prophesying, you might have all knowledge and understand all mysteries. He said, but if you do not have love.

This is the thing, it's so simple, but so often this is the feature that's overlooked. In our desire for spiritual things, in our desire for gifts and manifestations, and to see the power of God in our desire for those things. So often we overlook the main thing.

And that is to have love for one another. You remember, Jesus said that that would be the distinguishing mark of the Christian. He said, I think so many of us have ignored that statement.

And we're thinking in terms of, oh, if I just had this gift, people would know, oh, if I just had power, people would really know I'm a Christian. If I had power to call down fire from heaven or something, oh, they would know I'm a Christian then and they would surely listen to me. Or if I could just come up and prophesy to someone, if I could come up and just read their mind, oh, then they would know.

And the various things that we sort of put in place of the thing that Jesus said would distinguish us as his disciples. Now, back in the eighth chapter, Paul talked about knowledge here, the context of spiritual gifts back there, he said, we know that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. How often as Christians do we we crave after knowledge? And it's not bad to want knowledge.

Let me clarify that we need to have knowledge of the things of God. But yet sometimes we we covet knowledge. And we see no need for love.

We have this great thirst to know more, but we don't really have a desire to be more loving. And yet we find practically it's not the increase of knowledge that's going to be the determining factor in the lives of people that we know. It's the love of Christ that they sense coming through us.

You see, you can have all knowledge, you could be brilliant, you could be the most articulate person in the world, you could be able to communicate the truths of God better than anyone else. But if there is not a sense of the love of Christ motivating you are coming from your life, then there's not going to be the attraction. Just think if you putting yourself in the position of an unbeliever for a moment, just think if you came into an assembly, maybe like this one today, and you sat and you listened and and you were impressed, you were moved with what was said and you you felt that the person, you know, really knew what they were talking about.

And they really imparted information to you, things that you hadn't known before. And you were really touched by that. And so you decided that afterward, you were going to come up and just, you know, see if you could meet the person and have a word with them or whatever.

And let's say you did that. And when you approach the person, you suddenly sense that they really had no personal interest in you at all. Just, oh, it's wonderful for you.

Yeah. And you know, and you, you know, right away, you would think something's the matter. You see, there would be a failure in the area of love.

And that would also ultimately cause a failure in the communication of the gospel of Christ. The thing, of course, that was so attractive about Jesus was not only what he said. But it was the way he said it, and it was who he was.

And the thing that drew people to Jesus Christ was the fact that they sensed in him that he really did love them. He really cared about them. He really had a heart for them.

Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus overlooks sin. Some people think that, you know, to be loving means that we don't address sin. Maybe you remember reading in the paper this week about the disruption of the Easter service down at the cathedral where the archbishop was preaching and how the these gay activists got up into the pulpit and took over and, you know, began to criticize the archbishop because he's preaching about Jesus, but he's not acting lovingly toward them by supporting their lifestyle.

And and yet, as we look at people, we say, well, yes, God does love you. There's no question about that. But in his love, he calls you to repent.

His love doesn't nullify the fact that you're living in sin and you're going to come under the judgment of God unless you repent. God still loves you. And he proved that by coming and dying for you.

But but you need to turn away from your sin. God requires that or else judgment will come. So we we have to understand when we talk about love, we're not talking about this flabby sentimentality where we just overlook everything and oh, you know, we never say a negative thing or a critical thing about anything.

That's not the kind of love we're talking about. And that's not what it means to be loving. Some people equate being loving with being tolerant of everything.

And if you're intolerant of anything, then they conclude, well, you're not loving. We have to understand in this day and age, we have to make these kinds of clarifications. That's not what we're talking about.

Jesus did not tolerate sin. He said, if your hand offends you, cut it off. It's better to live life maim than to have your whole body intact and be cast into hell.

So Jesus was crystal clear about sin. But yet, on the other hand, the sinner sensed in Jesus that there was mercy. There was compassion.

They sensed in Jesus that he was actually approachable and that he cared for them. And so we as Christian people today, we ought to give that same impression to others, not that we drop our standard, not that we say, oh, the Bible is irrelevant in these particular areas and it's no longer an issue how you live your life or any of that. No, we don't do that.

But yet at the same time, people need to sense from Christian people that there is compassion, there is mercy, there is forgiveness. And there is love available. But here in the context that we're looking at, and I want to bring it back to that, the body of Christ itself.

Among the members of the body of Christ, this is where the love of Christ is to really be demonstrated. There's no room in the body of Christ for bad attitudes toward one another. And again, that's really the context here.

Paul's talking about the church. He's talking about the collective gathering. He's talking about the gifts of the spirit in operation and so forth.

And keep that in mind as we go through now and as we read the description that Paul gives of love. Keep the context in mind, and I think it'll be even more significant to you. Now listen to what he says.

He says, Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own.

Now, think of that in the context. Love suffers long and is kind. There's among God's people.

There's going to be when love is manifest. There's going to be extreme patience toward one another. We're going to be suffering long with each other, and after we've suffered long, we're going to be kind.

And then he says, Love does not envy. Now, you can imagine what was happening in the church in Corinth. Some people were exercising their gifts and other people were sitting by envying the gifts that they had been given and lamenting the fact that they were not the recipients of those gifts.

So there was envy. And you see, as Paul is actually describing the love, he's indirectly rebuking the wrong attitudes that were in the fellowship. So there was apparently an envious attitude among some people.

But Paul is saying to them, This isn't love. It's not love to be envious of others gifts. But then he says, Love does not parade itself.

So perhaps some of those with certain demonstrative gifts, they were parading themselves. They were sort of acting arrogantly as they would express the various gifts that they had. Paul says, This is wrong.

Love is not puffed up. You see, in the body of Christ, there's no room for any of these kinds of attitudes that are so prevalent outside of the body of Christ. This is so typical of the world, but it shouldn't be typical of God's people.

Unfortunately, quite often it is typical of God's people as well. And ironically, sometimes it's in the context of supposed great spirituality being demonstrated by the exercising of the gifts that we see some of these bad attitudes. Many people have been greatly offended by the charismatic movement because there is an emphasis on the gifts and on spirituality.

But when it comes down to something as basic as love, consideration, compassion, concern, kindness, that doesn't seem to be there at all. But you find that there's envy, there's jealousy, there's competition, there's one person exalting their gift over that of another person, and there's arrogance and all of this. You see, these things never should be.

That's what the apostle is saying. He says, Love does not behave rudely. Love does not seek its own.

So much of the problem in these areas where we see an emphasis on the gifts is that the gifts are being coveted more than the giver. People are seeking more the gift than the one who gives it. Now, in order to most effectively minister the gifts of the Spirit, we need to be seeking the one who gives the gifts.

Because when we're seeking the one who gives the gifts, then it's going to be in his spirit and in his attitude that we're ministering the gifts. Love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Now, the word that's translated love is the Greek word agape, agapeo, various ways to pronounce it.

There's two words in the New Testament, two Greek words that are used predominantly, translated by our English word love. Phileo is one that is used frequently, and Phileo describes brotherly love, the love between parents and children, children and parents, the love between brothers and sisters. And that's the word that's translated love often, Phileo.

But then there is this word agapeo, and that's the word that Paul uses here. And the word agapeo or agape, this word is an intense, a more intense form of love. This is the word that's used when we're told that God loves, for God so loved the world with this intense, deep, passionate love.

Now, it's been translated at times an unconditional kind of a love, but I don't think that's really an accurate translation. That's more of a psychological twist on it, actually, because it's not really talking about an unconditional love. I mean, even God's love to some degree is conditional.

In order to experience God's love, I must meet certain conditions. You see, God loves even a person in sin, but a person in sin cannot experience the love of God until he meets certain conditions. He must turn away from his sin, or he cannot experience the love of God.

So to interpret it as an unconditional love isn't, I think, the best interpretation. It's really a love that's passionate, that's deep, that's committed. It's a love of devotion.

It's a love of giving of oneself entirely. And of course, that's what God has done. He demonstrated a giving of himself entirely when he gave his son.

Now, this is the love that God calls us to have toward one another. We pointed out how this is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. Paul said in writing to Timothy, he said, this is the end of the commandment.

The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart. When he was writing to the Romans, he said a similar thing to them. He said, oh, no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another fulfills the law.

So this is, as I said earlier, this is the predominant feature that God is looking for among the assembly of his people, that we love each other. And he gives us here the description of the kind of love that he's talking about. Now, if we were to take and just remove the word love and put in its place Christ, listen to it.

Christ suffers long and is kind. Christ does not envy. Christ does not parade himself, is not puffed up.

Christ does not behave rudely, does not seek his own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Christ never fails. It fits perfectly, doesn't it? You see, because Jesus, of course, is the embodiment of love.

He is the incarnation. God is love. And when God took upon himself the form of a man, love came in human flesh.

Now, this love that we're talking about, because it's God's love, is not something that I naturally possess. It's something that comes to me through my relationship with Christ. So really, honestly, it's impossible to love with the kind of love that God requires apart from the work of God's spirit in our lives.

We can't do it, no matter how benevolent a person I might be, no matter how much natural empathy or compassion I might have. Some people naturally tend to have sort of a merciful kind of a spirit about them. Some people have that passive sort of a nature, and it comes easier for them to express concern and love and things like that for people.

But for every person, there is a limit to that. For every person, there's a place where that love or compassion or consideration or whatever, it runs out. Now, when we become Christians, we're given a new nature.

And we become partakers of the divine nature. Christ imparts his nature to me. And it's through the impartation of the nature of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life that I'm then able to love consistently without an exhaustion of that resource.

In other words, I have an endless resource of love available to me to flow through me. But it's all wrapped up in my relationship with Christ. Even as a Christian, I can fail to love because I'm failing to avail myself of that resource that comes to me through Christ.

Even as a Christian, I can attempt to love people in my own strength. And I can come to an end of myself in that area. Have you ever had the experience of not being able to love someone even as a Christian?

But yet, you know, the Bible says that you're to love your neighbor as yourself.

You find yourself in this dilemma. What do I do? Well, this is where you draw upon the Lord. The fruit of the Spirit, you remember, is love.

So as I seek the Lord, as I ask him to fill me with the Spirit, as I abide in the vine, Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me bears much fruit. What do you think he was talking about there when he said bears much fruit? I think he was talking about love, the fruit of the Spirit.

He who abides in him, the life of him will flow through them. And so this agape, this highest of loves is not my natural possession, but it is my possession as a believer. And it's my continual possession through my abiding in Christ.

So there's absolutely no excuse for there to be a failure of love among believers. There's no excuse for it. And I think that we as Christians, myself included, we far too often, we tolerate carnality and we excuse our lack of love.

And we say, well, I'm only human. I've just had enough. I can't take any more.

But then I go back to this passage here and I read it and I see I'm wrong because it says love suffers long and is kind. It says love is not provoked. Love is not provoked.

How can that be? You see, that's that love of God. And this is where we as Christian people, we need to stop making excuses for our lack of love, realize that that source of love is available, and ask God to fill us and to help us by his grace to love others. That's going to be the factor that makes a difference.

It's going to make a difference right here in our midst for each of us. It's going to make a difference when somebody comes and joins us for the first time. It's going to make a difference as you go out into the world.

Isn't it true that part of the failure of Christians to attract other people to Christ is nothing less than a lack of love? There's some Christian people who don't appear to be at all loving. They appear to be very hostile to everything. They appear to be self-righteous and smug, and they look down on other people.

And we're all guilty of that at times, aren't we? You know, it's easy when we become Christians after some time to sort of forget our past, forget what we were like, forget what God saved us from, and then start judging everybody from a higher standard. And we forget about the grace and the mercy and the compassion of God. But a quick way to remember it all is to just reflect on your own past.

Remember who you really are and remember that the only reason you're saved is because of the grace of God. That will certainly help you to be more compassionate toward people. I know it helps me all the time.

I just have to reflect upon who I am. I remember some years ago, I was out enjoying a surf. I was trying to anyway.

But there were people that were infringing on my territory and causing me to be not so loving. And I remember there was one particular person out there surfing who was, I thought, the most obnoxious person that ever was born into this world. And I mean, I just, you know, every time he opened his mouth, it just cringed.

And I remember just, you know, thinking unpleasant thoughts toward this person. I wasn't thinking, I need to go evangelize. I was thinking, I need to go stuff something in this person's mouth to shut them up.

And in my mind, I was, you know, thinking about what a vile person this was. And, you know, suddenly the Lord spoke to me and he said, you were worse than that person. And I thought, no, I know I was bad before I was a Christian, but I wasn't that bad.

But then the Lord began to recall, bring to my recollection certain things. And I remembered as a young boy surfing, having the same sort of obnoxious attitude and the same foul language and everything. And I just had to sit out in the water and ask God to forgive me.

Because I had forgotten where I had come from. I had forgotten the only thing that distinguished me from that person was really the grace of God. And the only reason I was different than that person is, is because of what God did in my life, not because of anything that I did.

And you see, it brought me really quickly around to an attitude of compassion rather than judgment. And I think a lot of times with Christians, that happens to us. We get saved.

God changes our lives. We get removed from the world and and we forget what God has done for us in a sense. And then we start looking at, oh, why did those people talk that way? What did they do that for? Oh, that's terrible the way they are.

Yeah, it is terrible. But that's just the way you were, too. It's just the way I was.

And the only reason we're not that way anymore is because God loved us. And he showed his love to us. And he gave in his love, his son, Jesus, to come and save us.

And so my point is this, the best way that we're going to attract people is not by having a self-righteous, condemning attitude toward them in their sin, but by showing them the love of Christ. Now, going back to what I said earlier, that doesn't mean that we agree with them in their sin. And I think we do have an obligation when the opportunity comes to point people to the Bible and to show them where their behavior is wrong, where that behavior will bring about God's judgment eventually, if it's not repented of.

But yet it all comes down to my attitude, doesn't it? It all comes down to the spirit in which I do it. And the thing I've always got to keep in mind is the love of God. That God loves these people.

Many years ago, I got caught up in sort of a legalistic version of Christianity. And I was living according to all kinds of rules and regulations that I had erected. And in my zeal to live this life, I became very self-righteous.

And I thought myself to be a truly humble and godly person, and I thought most other people to be worthy of God's judgment. And I remember at this period in my life, my favorite verses in the Bible all had to do with wrath and judgment and punishment. And of course, they were my favorites because that's what God was going to do to everybody else.

I was free and clear. I wasn't going to be involved in that. And I got so distorted.

I mean, I really had this mentality. I was thinking I was a prophet. And every time I got up to speak, if people didn't cry or groan or, you know, do something to indicate their misery, then I felt like I had failed.

I hadn't really communicated the message of God. I was living in the Old Testament. I had come to Christ in the New Testament, but I had gone back to the Old Testament living under the law and all.

But there came an occasion where a member of my family had died. And I was called upon to take the funeral. And he was a young boy.

And there were going to be a few hundred people there. And knowing him well and knowing his background and so forth, I anticipated that everyone there would be sinners. So I was relishing this opportunity to inform this crowd that would gather for the funeral of the coming judgment.

And this is how bad I had gotten, how distorted I had gotten in my thinking. I was really thinking that that was what God wanted me to communicate to these people, his wrath and his judgment. So anyway, I went to the funeral and I was there in the little parlor in the back, just waiting to go out and address the crowd.

And I had written out some notes. And I can't remember exactly what was in the notes, but I do remember that the emphasis was God's judgment and his hatred of sin and so forth. And yet I was really nervous about the whole thing.

And I was really apprehensive. And I suddenly just, I don't know what came over me, but I just took that little paper and I wadded it up and I threw it away. And a moment later, the director came and said, it's time for you to go out and speak.

And I literally, as I was walking out to speak, half of me was going back over toward the bin because I wanted to get my notes out. And I needed to go address the people as God's spokesman, you know, as his prophet. And all of that.

And I got out to, you know, this assembly of people. And there were a couple of hundred people that had gathered together. And as I stood before him, I opened my mouth and I proceeded to tell them about the love of God.

And I preached to them from John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And I preached for maybe 20 minutes or so. And then I finished.

And this is how distorted I was. I went into the back and I lamented that I had let God down because I stood up in front of sinners and told them that God loved them. Oh, Lord, have mercy on me for failing you.

That's how that's how twisted I was in my thinking. That was sort of the beginning of the end of my legalism, the Lord. You know, when I realized that I was lamenting, telling people that God loved them, I suddenly realized something's the matter with my theology.

And I needed to get things sorted out. And God eventually took care of that and brought me to a place of balance again. But we can get that way as Christians.

Toward nonbelievers. But then let's transfer it right into our own midst. We can be so impatient with one another.

We can fail so often with one another. We can fail to show mercy, all the mercy that God has shown us. And yet we don't show mercy to one another.

And instead of loving each other, we're envious and someone's proud and arrogant because what God has done for them and all of these things, these things are ugly and they shouldn't be present in the assembly of the saints. It just shouldn't be there. We have no excuse for it, as I said earlier, because God has told us how we're to behave and he's supplied us with the power to love one another.

So if there's a lack of love, then it's a failure on our part. And we need to ask God to help us. But as we come together as an assembly toward one another, we ought to sense love among us.

When someone is exalted, we ought to rejoice with them. When someone is experiencing difficulty, then we have compassion and we go through their suffering with them. When someone is blessed, well, we need to be blessed along with them.

And not this competitive kind of a spirit. There's nothing more pathetic than a competitive attitude among people in general and Christian people in particular. You know how it is, I remember as a child, you remember times where maybe you would be so thrilled about something that you had done or something that you had gotten and you couldn't wait to tell somebody about it.

And you would go to a friend and you'd say, oh, guess what I got? And then you'd, you know, you'd describe it to them and they'd say, so? And you think, that's not the response I was looking for. And you'd sense in that so there was jealousy because they didn't get it, they weren't going to rejoice because you got it instead. And sometimes that pathetic kind of attitude can come into the body of Christ.

Oh, the Lord, he did this and it was so wonderful. And look what God's done. And so, see, because it didn't happen to me.

These are all real experiences that we have because of the fact that we are sinners. Because we do possess a fallen nature. But we've been made partakers of the divine nature and we've been supplied with the Spirit and we can love each other.

And we're to be patient with each other. And we're to be kind toward one another. And we should seek to extend an abundance of grace toward one another.

I think in the years that I've been pastoring, which is almost 20 years now, I think the one thing I've learned more than anything else is how much I need the grace of God and how much I need to extend it to other people. And you would think that several years into your Christian life, maybe your perspective would be something like, well, you know, I've been a Christian a long time now and I'm really getting more holy. I'm really, you know, I'm quite a spiritual giant as a matter of fact.

But, you know, I find it's just the opposite. The longer I walk with the Lord, the more I'm amazed that he ever saved me in the first place. But it just takes me back to the very beginning of my salvation.

That's what the Bible has always made it clear, that I was saved by grace through faith. And it's a gift of God. It's not of myself.

It's not of works. But somehow we sort of think that it is. We know what the Bible says and we say, oh, yeah, well, of course the Bible said that.

I'm not sure that's true of everybody else. But, you know, I'm just a little bit different. But the longer we go, the more we realize, no, I'm just like everyone else.

I'm self-centered. I'm prideful. I'm just, I'm a bundle of sin.

But God has chosen to have mercy. And if we keep that perspective, I think that that will keep us in a place of being able to love each other the way we ought to. Because when somebody fails, as it says here, love does not take into consideration a wrong suffered.

When someone fails, I just say, you know what? It's all right. I fail too. You remember when Paul wrote to the Galatians and he talked about seeing someone who was overtaken in a fault, seeing another Christian who's fallen in Samaria.

He says, you that are spiritual, go to such a person in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you be tempted also. We've got to keep that in mind. Whenever I'm dealing with a person, even a person that's offended me.

You know what I have to ask myself as I address them? How would I want to be addressed if I was in their shoes? What kind of attitude would I want to see displayed toward me if I had done what they did? And if I think in those terms, I can show grace, I can show mercy, I can show love. But this is the environment that God wants. And this is the environment that's going to cause growth to the body.

And it's the environment that's going to be attractive to the nonbeliever also. It's amazing. I think we over or we underestimate the power of love.

And sometimes just the smallest act of kindness towards someone else can mean more than an entire sermon preached to them. I'm not criticizing preaching sermons. I do that.

And we need to verbally communicate things. And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And all that's right and true.

But when you come to the pages of Scripture, you find that Jesus and the apostles, the message was always so intricately woven together with love. You really couldn't separate the two. So there wasn't just a message, but there was this evident love that was coupled with it that made the message even that much more attractive.

But sometimes it's just the smallest acts of kindness. Those are the things. I've had people say to me over the years, you know, it's strange the things that go through our minds.

And there is a devil and he works on our minds and he plants thoughts in our minds. But I've had people over the years who had come to me and said things like, you know, I sat in your church for five years and listened to you teach. And, you know, I was really blessed.

But nothing blessed me so much as the day you walked up and asked me how I was. Wow, really? But that's a reality. And sometimes it's those small acts of kindness that we maybe just do unconsciously.

We're not even thinking about it. But those are the things that people remember. And so as you go out into the world, as you work with people, as you associate with people who don't know Christ, you have opportunities to verbalize your faith to them, hopefully.

But there are times when you don't have those opportunities. But you know what? You're still a witness. And you can be a tremendous witness by your life and by your love.

And sometimes it's that small act of kindness that you actually just ask somebody, how are you doing today? Or maybe you remember that there was some sort of a crisis in their family and you just come back later and say, you know, I've been thinking about your mother or your dad or I heard you, you know, I've been praying for you. Or can I help you with this? Those kinds of things that really do, in a sense, just come naturally from a life in the Spirit. Those are the kind of things sometimes that bring a person face to face with the love of God.

And those are the kinds of things that are irresistible to people. And I've seen over the years, people who hadn't had the Gospel really articulated to them necessarily, but they were drawn by the love that they saw in somebody else's life. And that love that they saw being demonstrated through another Christian opened them up to listen to the message.

Sometimes people don't want to hear what you have to say until they see it demonstrated in your life. And sometimes that takes a period of time. I have a friend who years ago worked for a company.

He worked there for eight years. And in the entire eight years that he worked there, he had maybe just a handful of opportunities to speak to people about Christ. But on the day he left that job and went into full-time Christian ministry, every person in the factory came to him with tears in their eyes and said to him, we have never met someone who lived their faith like you do.

Every person. Hardened, sinful, worldly people breaking down and crying, saying, you'll never know what just your life has meant to me just watching you. It was just the love of Christ in him.

And so whether we're out in the world or we're right here together with one another, whether it's me as an individual Christian, or us together collectively as God's people, the atmosphere is to be one of love. People can sense the love of Christ. And again, that comes through us abiding in Christ individually.

Through being vitally connected to him, living in fellowship with him, walking with him, and then his attitude, his grace, his mercy, his compassion. Those things, they flow from us. And as it says in verse 8, love never fails.

That's the thing. That's what Paul says. The gifts are important.

They're essential to a healthy body, but never to the exclusion of love. And they should always be coming forth from a base of love. Love should be the foundation of all of the gifts of the spirit.

Now, he says love never fails, but whether there are prophecies, they will fail. Whether there are tongues, they will cease. Whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

So prophecy will fail. One day there will be no need for prophecy because everything will become clear. One day knowledge will vanish away because we'll know everything.

And one day tongues will cease because we'll all praise God right there in his presence. For now we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child.

But when I became a man, I put away childish things. Now what Paul is talking about here, he's talking about the glorified state and he's comparing our present state and the glorified state. In our present state,

we're like children.

But in the glorified state, we're going to be adults. And just as an adult, when they come to adulthood, they put away childish things. So when we come to the glorified state, there are going to be certain things that in a comparative sense are childish.

Prophecy and knowledge in these things are in a comparative sense childish. When I come to the glorified state, I'm going to be there. It's all going to become clear to me.

He says, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. That's the way it is now, isn't it? We see in a mirror dimly. We know the truth.

We can comprehend the truth. And as we seek the Lord, we're growing in our understanding of Him. But at our best in this life, it's still going to be dim.

In this life, I'm never going to see things clearly, perfectly. That is awaiting me in the next life. That's what he's talking about here.

So now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known and now abide faith, hope, love these three. But the greatest of these is love. And now 14.1, pursue love and desire spiritual gifts.

So you see the connection from 12, 13, 14. The context, the gifts, the ministry here among God's people. Gifts are important, but love is essential.

The love of Christ. That's the deciding factor. And the gifts without love, don't bother with them.

That's what Paul's saying. But the gifts with love. And let me say this.

It's not love in place of the gifts either. Some people go to the extreme and say, oh, we don't have any gifts. We just love each other.

Well, we need to have both.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11479.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-brodersen/1-corinthians-overview-to-chapter-13/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net