

Revival - Part 13

by Doc Greenway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the greatest fruit of the Spirit, and it highlights the tests and qualities of love that are essential for a meaningful life.

Duration: 57:05

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker outlines the chapter into three parts: the tests of love, the qualities of love, and the triumphs of love. The first test of love is that gifted oratory without love is meaningless. The speaker emphasizes that speaking in tongues should not be the sole measure of spirituality, but rather the amount of love that motivates our actions. The qualities of love are then discussed, with the speaker highlighting the patience and preference of love. An example is given of a Korean minister who showed extraordinary love by offering forgiveness and care to the soldier who killed his sons. The sermon emphasizes the importance of divine love in all aspects of life.

Transcript

In considering the Holy Spirit as the agent in revival, which we have been doing now for some time, we've been studying together several of the emblems of the Holy Spirit, and we have seen how these underline certain aspects and facets of the teaching that is given to us in the New Testament, particularly concerning the work and ministry and the function of the Holy Spirit in the Church today. Then, for two nights, we looked at one of the small but very important prepositions of the Spirit, and we saw that out of this emerges the indwelling and infilling presence of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. We saw that this small preposition, *n*, is used eight times in one connection, 26 times as the infilling and surrounding Spirit, and we were, I think, enabled by the Spirit of God Himself to see something of the truth conveyed to us by our study of this little but important preposition.

When I had all kinds of ideas, I thought we would continue along the lines of looking at the prepositions of the Spirit, because there are so many of them and they're so very interesting, at least they are to me, and they seem to convey so much truth. For instance, the one *apple*, which means moving from one position or place to another. The preposition *dire*, which means through, as when a prisoner's case is considered through an advocate.

The preposition *eis*, which means into, as when a little baby settles down into its mother's comforting arms. And the preposition *metta*, which means with, as when one friend walks and converses with another friend in close association and in real heart fellowship. And I thought, well, we could look at some of these prepositions together and see how they are applied in the New Testament and particularly in relation to the Holy Spirit.

But the Lord evidently had other ideas, because as I began to study along these lines, there was a blank wall, and I realized at once that this wasn't it at all, so far as God was concerned. As I said earlier on, I don't want to come here Tuesday by Tuesday just to preach sermons, but to give God's message as he gives it to me. And so I found that the Lord was erecting me to quite a different aspect altogether of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And I feel it is his purpose that tonight we should look at the fruit of the Spirit, which is mentioned, as you know, in Galatians 5 and 22, where it is said, in contrast with the works of the flesh. We aren't going to look at that particular chapter, by the way, but I'll mention in a moment where we will be settling our thoughts tonight. But it is said, as you know, in Galatians 5, 22, that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Against such there is no law. And the list, as you see, is headed by the word love. And I'm sure this is not by accident, because it seems to me that every one of the graces of the Spirit is connected with this one.

And so far as I'm concerned, it seems to flow out from it. And I'm sure that this is not by accident, as I said, but by design. I'm sure, too, it is the purpose of God that when Paul speaks about faith and hope and love, that he reminds us the greatest of these is love.

And you know that this is how he concludes that great classic chapter on love in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians chapter 13. It has often been observed that it is a sad commentary on the defects of our English language that the same word has to cover so many meanings when we think about love. That is, it's use of the affection between the sexes.

It's use of the love that a friend may have for a friend, an unimpassioned love, a love of liking. It's use of the general love of mankind. And it's also used for all sorts of other meanings and ideas and concepts that flow out from this one word love.

And I'm sure that this is a defect because, you see, if it's used for the affection between the sexes as it is, and if it's used for the mutual regard we have one for the other, which a friend has for a friend, if it is used in general of mankind, and if it is also used of the Hollywood version of sex relationship, this one word, and the same word used for the passion at the heart of God, well, somehow it seems to me there's something sadly wrong somewhere. But this is our English language, which is just a conglomeration, which, as you know, the Welsh language is the purest language in the world. But I wouldn't say it's the richest.

The richest language, I think, is the Greek language. And when you come to the Greek language, you don't discover any of this sort of weakness at all. When the Greek talked about love that came from the heart of God, he used the word *agape*.

When he talked about the Christian man who loved God, he used the same word, *agape*. When he talked about the love between friends, well, he used the love, the word *philia*, or *philine*, to express this unimpassioned love. And when he spoke about the love between the sexes, he used the word *eros*.

When he wanted to talk about that lust in the hearts of men, that debases the beauty and the reality of love itself, he used the word *epithumia*, strong passion on fire. And that strong passion on fire is based in the emotions, not in the mind at all, but in the emotions. And so there is no sparsity at all of expression when it comes to the Greek language.

And so when we read, as we have just done, that the greatest of these is love, as Paul uses it, then it is this strong, godlike word, *agape*. Not a love of liking, as we've often said, but a love of prizing. There is a love of liking that can become the basis for unity amongst the people of God.

You can have people who like each other, and the result is that they hive off into little groups, because they found a love of liking. They like the same things about each other, it may be. But this love, *agape*, this strong love word, this does not depend upon the beauty or the worth of its object for its existence, not at all.

It isn't a love that exists because of likable qualities in the person being loved. It exists because it loves the soul for whom Christ died, and prizes that soul. And this is the reason why this word is used by Paul in that great classic on love, 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Now I would like to look at that chapter with you tonight, and I realize because of the pressure of time that we are not going to deal very great length with this chapter, or very deeply with it, but just touch lightly on some of the aspects which I think to be important. Well, this is the general idea anyhow, and we'll see how the Spirit of God guides us as we go through. 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Now I'll give you the outline of the chapter first of all, and it is a very simple one. First there are the tests of love in verses 1 to 3, and then there are the trays or qualities of love in verses 4 to 7, and finally the triumphs of love in verses 8 to 13. The tests of love, verses 1 to 3. The trays of love, verses 4 to 7. The triumphs of love, verses 8 to 13.

And you'll realize that all the way through we are dealing with this *agape* love, this divine love that is in the heart of God. The tests of love. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

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 and 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 and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. This is a very dogmatic statement, isn't it? And here Paul makes five comparisons, and in doing so he submits some of life's great issues to this test of divine love.

The first is this, that gifted oratory without love is of no meaning at all. If I, I'm giving you now the living letters version of this verse, if I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without even learning them, and could speak in every language that is in all heaven and earth, and did not have love, I would only be making a noise. Gifted oratory, I mean in the sense of inspired oratory, without divine love is noise without meaning.

I know that in some quarters it appears to me that speaking in other tongues is so strong that it has become the criterion of spirituality. The emphasis, in other words, is so positive and so strong that this appears to become the criterion of spirituality. If you can speak in tongues, brother, you have arrived.

But the ultimate test of discipleship is not the exercise of spiritual gifts at all. But in this, by this shall all men know that he are my disciples, if he have love one to another. The ultimate test then is not the exercise of spiritual gifts when it comes to discipleship.

And neither is it the final test in spiritual transformation. It's not the ability to speak with tongues that gives you this final test. It lies in this rather.

We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. And immediately you see how this quality of love becomes of supreme importance in the thinking of the apostle, and I believe too, in the thinking of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We're not denying that speaking with tongues is from God, not at all.

We're not denying it has a purpose in general for the church when linked with interpretation and in a personal way for the believer in private devotion. Certainly, speaking with tongues, singing in the spirit, praying in the spirit, it all has its significance and its meaning. But unless there is this principle of divine love which governs and controls the person being thus exercised, it's nothing but a clashing cymbal.

It's nothing but a meaningless noise. So says the apostle. Prophetic ministry, he says, without love is only effervescence.

If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen in the future, knew everything about everything but didn't love others, what good would it be? Of course prophecy is a gift from God. Of course there's such a thing as present-day prophetic ministry in the church. And of course there is prophetic foresight and prophetic insight.

There is predictive prophecy. There is preceptive prophecy. There is prophecy that unfolds the future.

There is prophecy which explains the present. In teaching ministry we know this is so. But if it is preceptive prophecy or predictive prophecy, it makes no difference what realm, what area, what function it may fulfill.

Without love it's nothing but effervescence. It has no real purpose. It has no real meaning.

Personal authority without love, he says, is worthless. Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love. This kind of utter faith that could move, and this is what it really means, that could move mountain after mountain after mountain, not just one little mountain, but mountain after mountain after mountain, move them.

This kind of utter faith surely is not to be considered lightly. In the Bible itself there are many inspiring illustrations of this kind of faith. The centurion who came for healing for his servant.

I'm a man under authority. I say to this man, go, and he's gone. To this man, come, he's here.

To this man, do this, it's done. And therefore there's no need for you to come into my house, but speak the word, Lord. That was faith.

There's the faith of blind Bartimaeus when he knew that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, and kept on crying out, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me. Kept on and on. When they said, hold your peace, you blind beggar, but he refused.

He had faith to believe. And there is a woman who pressed through the thronging cloud to touch the hem of Christ's garment, determined that she would get what she was seeking. That was great faith.

And the side of a Phoenician woman who came for healing for her daughter, and was prepared to take the place of the little dog under the table. I can't take the children's bread and throw it to the dog, said Jesus. In all kindness, he used the word for pet dog, little pet dog under the table.

He said, it's all right, master, I'll be the little pet dog, as long as I can get a crumb, that's all I want. Great faith, said Jesus. And even outside the Bible itself, there are evidences of great faith that men have had.

What about the faith of Charles Penny in that place so terrible, it was known as Sodom, when he faced that crowd that were so much against God and the things of God, and believed God for a mighty outpouring of his spirit, and saw it happen until he was able to say, I saw them moan down before me. That was faith. What about the faith of George Muller, as he looked after those orphaned children? What about the faith of Hudson Taylor of China, and C.T. Studd, and so on and so on, why their names are legion.

And yet, you see, the apostle dares to state that unless the love of God is positively present, then so far as God is concerned, all this demonstration of mighty faith is quite valueless, quite worthless. Sacrificial giving without love is completely valueless. If I gave everything I have to poor people, so that I doled away my goods to the point of penury, but had no love of God in my heart, it would be of no value whatever.

What a statement. There's at least one instance in the New Testament of this kind of sacrificial giving, 2 Corinthians 8, verses 1 to 4. Now I want to tell you, says the apostle, about the way God has been leading the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and deep waters, they have mixed their wonderful joy with their deep poverty.

And the result has been an overflow of giving to others. They gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And I can testify they did it because they wanted to, and not because of nagging on my part.

They begged us to take the money, so that they could share in the joy of helping the Christians in Jerusalem. That was giving, wasn't it? Out of their deep poverty, yet out of their great joy, giving. But what is Paul saying to the Corinthians? You may give like this.

You may give until it hurts, and then you may give until it doesn't hurt anymore. You may keep on giving, for it is love's prerogative to give and give and give and give, but unless love is present, then all your giving is valueless in the sight of God, completely without worth at all. I knew of a man in Pentecost, he was an old gentleman when I knew him, even in my days as a young fellow.

He had been a very rich man, and he had one day come across the scripture which says, from him that asketh of thee, turn not away. And he took this quite literally, and of course the news got around, and soon he himself was dependent upon other people. And he came to realize in the end that the reason for his condition was that what he had done was out of a sense of duty, but not really out of a sense of deep love for God.

And this taught him a tremendous lesson. And I believe that this is true in our giving, unless the principle of love to God and love to others is present, then our giving is meaningless and valueless in the sight of God. Absolute loyalty without love is meaningless.

And if I were actually burned alive for preaching the gospel and did not have love, it would be of no value whatever. Surely this is the ultimate in loyalty to Jesus Christ, to give one's life for the cause one champions. And yet, tested by this love of God, even this sacrifice is meaningless.

Now the point I want to make is this. What tremendous value God must attach to this fruit of the Spirit in the light of such tests as this kind of love imposes. And yet we know that the love of God itself is meaningless in human experience, unless it is expressed to others through our own lives.

Unlike the Apostle John, Paul does not say God is love, but he does say God commendeth his love toward us, him that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. John's expression is abstract, but Paul's expression is concrete. God is love, says John.

No, says Paul. God is a loving God in action. And behind all these tests that we have mentioned, there is this thought of divine love in action.

If it is not present, if it is not active, then all that has been said and all that has been done in the sight of God is meaningless and valueless. These are the tests of love, and you must agree with me, I'm sure, that they enter very deeply into our hearts, into our lives. If they don't, then there's something wrong with us.

If they don't challenge us in the deep places of our own lives, then I'm afraid we need to seek God very earnestly and very urgently. For so much of our life can be taken up with the ecstatic, with the demonstrative, with the seen, the manifest, with what is tangible, until we sometimes forget that the great thing in the eyes of God and the meaningful thing where he is concerned is the amount of love that stirs us in all that we do and say and are and hope to be. And now the trays of love, or the qualities of love.

Verses four to seven. I'm only touching lightly upon these, and I do beg your concentration, because I know it isn't easy when you have a long chapter like this to concentrate all the way through. First, then, the patience of love.

Love suffereth long. The word is makrothumai. Makros means great or long, and thumos means boiling up, ardor or passion.

It's a reaction of the love-filled life to affront, to wrong, to injury, to provocation. This patience of love is the long drawn-out steadiness of the soul under these pressures, protracted patience which shows no indignation. Like Jesus led as a lamb to the slaughter.

That's the idea behind this patience of love. When he was reviled, we read, he reviled not again, but kept on committing his soul to God. This is the attitude of Jesus.

This should be the attitude of his followers. I have a friend who today is a Baptist minister in America, but in his unconverted days, he was an amateur boxer and a very good one. And then he got converted.

Somebody persuaded him to stand outside the public house in this little open-air meeting. They said, well, it's like this, you see, you may not be able to say anything, but you can sing along with us, and you can do your best to stand here as a testimony. So Gwilym stood there with the others, and out of the public house came a man with whom he had fought just the fortnight before this and beaten him soundly.

And the man came with a full mug of beer and stood in front of Gwilym, and then upended the mug of beer all over him, right down all over him, grinning into his face at the same time. Well, he said, what do you say

to that? Gwilym took out his handkerchief and began to wipe his face, and still smiling, looked at him and said, Jesus loves you. And that was all.

Well, the man himself was flabbergasted, as we say. He had no answer to that sort of thing at all. I remember asking Gwilym some years afterwards when he recounted this story, well, how did you feel at the time? Well, he says, as far as the old man was concerned, he said, I was still the boxer.

But so far as the Lord Jesus Christ in control of my life was concerned, he said, I bore him no malice at all. And this is the idea of this patience of love, the preference of love, and it's kind. Now, you don't see this on the surface, but the word kind is christos, and it means serviceable, useful, with an urge to be of useful service to other people.

And so love prefers usefulness to idleness. This sort of love prefers giving out to receiving in. Kindness in serving rather than selfishness in receiving.

Looking upon life as a measure to be filled, not as a cup to be drained all the time. The patience of love enables the offended one to stand silently and still in the face of injury. But the preference of love goes the second mile, responding kindly to those responsible for all the hurts and all the grief.

When that little Korean minister, Soon-Chen, bid farewell to his two boys that day as they went off to their leper friends, little thought he would never see them alive again. But a guerrilla soldier, if you've read the story, killed both of them. Then their bodies were brought back into the village.

It was great mourning, as you can well imagine. But this guerrilla soldier was caught, and he was tried, and he was sentenced, and he was to be killed, shot. But Soon-Chen stood up in the courtroom and asked permission to take him into his own home.

I will look after him, he said, I promise you. I will make him as one of my sons, and I will show him the same love as I would have shown them had they still been alive. Is that love? It's not the ordinary level of human love and affection, is it? There's something of the divine about it.

This is the preference of love. The complacency of love. Love envieth not.

Love knows no jealousy. The kind of jealousy created through discontent and through envy. The love-filled soul knows that no one could possess more than God himself as a heritage, as a personal possession in a love-filled life.

And so there's no cause for any jealousy here, no cause for any envy. There is, of course, a good sort of jealousy, isn't there? A good kind of jealousy. For I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, we read.

But he is not jealous with a crudely insistent demand that men respect him and revere him. No, he's jealous for the ultimate good. Love knows no jealousy that is rooted in selfishness.

That is the thought behind this. The complacency of love. Love envieth not.

The reticence of love. Love vaunteth not itself, is not packed up. Love does not parade her gifts like a braggart showing off.

Nor does she cherish ideas of her own importance, swelling with self-conceit. I'm giving you a paraphrase as we go along. There is a healthy reticence about love's consciousness of her qualities.

Self-respect, certainly, that's present. But not pride. Not when there's real love, the love of God.

There's no foundation for pride at all. And yet, there are so many kinds of human pride in evidence, aren't there? Pride of face. That's a fairly common one.

I remember asking a Japanese teacher in Okoma when I was out there. He'd been to America. I said, what did you think about the Americans? He said, I thought they were very ugly people.

What was ugly about them? Oh, their eyes, he said. All wrong. Their eyes weren't slanted.

Very ugly. Pride of face. And then, of course, there's pride of race too.

You have this with the Jews and the Gentiles. And unfortunately, even in our present society, you have it still in some places. And there's pride of place.

Like the Pharisee who said, oh God, I thank Thee, I am not as other men. And then, catching sight of the poor old publican, especially not like him. And there's pride of grace.

At the largesse in church, who could say, I am rich, increased with goods, and of need of nothing. But love knows no pride. There's a reticence about love.

Divine love as a healthy reticence is not puffed up. Temper blows you up. Guilt dries you up.

Pride puffs you up. But love builds you up. This is how love always acts.

So this is the reticence of love. It does not parade her gifts. The conscience of love does not behave itself unseemly.

Love does not flout decency. That's the meaning. Seemliness is the right way of doing things with tact and sensitivity.

The Holy Spirit has his own standards in love from which he will never depart. So love has a conscience which reacts to the spirit of truth. It regulates conduct by standards of truth.

And love has a conscience which relates truth to circumstances. It isn't enough then that we speak the truth in response to the Holy Spirit of truth, but that when we speak the truth, it be spoken in love, with due regard for the circumstances, for the time element which is important, and for the manner in which the word is spoken, for the occasion. Love is like this.

This is the conscience of love. It does not behave itself unseemly. It's like a minister that was listening to an elder who had a complaint about some other elder in the church.

And he said, he's such a fellow, he said, he always thinks he's right. But he said, I put him in his place. I gave him a piece of my mind.

The minister said, did you? It's a wonder you could have afforded it. There is a time and a place for speaking the truth, and a way in which it should be spoken. And this, I'm sure, is the conscience of love.

The benevolence of love seeketh not her own. Divine love is never self-centered. It is not self-willed, self-satisfied, self-opinionated.

Why not? Because it lives for other people. I think it's summed up in that message which General William Booth sent to the International Congress in New York on one occasion. Just one cabled word, one word only, others.

And that summed it up. It summed up his life too. And it sums up the benevolence of love, others.

Not seeking one's own benefit, but the benefit of all. The tolerance of love is not easily provoked. The word provoked is the basis of the word paroxysm.

It comes from this word, actually. It means a sudden, violent, explosive action. Love is not easily provoked.

Ah, but the word easily is not in the Greek text. So you don't get off very lightly here, do you? It does not really say love is not easily provoked. It says simply love is not provoked.

That's it. Although love will not rise in resentment against wrongs done to itself, it will arise in the defense of others. For divine love is not simply sentiment.

It has strength of purpose. You see this in the case of Jesus, intolerant of evil. When he whipped out the money changers from his father's temple.

Why doesn't someone sometime paint a picture of the angry Christ? I've often thought of that. For he was angry when he took them and thrust them out. And yet how wonderfully patient he is with those who come to him in contrition, for forgiveness, for healing, and so on.

There's nothing of sickly sentiment about this kind of love at all. The intolerant of evil, but so tolerant with those who were contrite and whom he knew had a deep soul need. The remembrance of love thinketh no evil, does not reckon up the evil things done to it, has no memory for injuries.

Love does not hold grudges in other words, and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. This I'm sure is the sense of what you have here. Thinketh no evil.

I recall a Christian lady and her secretary. She, the lady herself, was the leader of a huge international women's movement. I forget the name of it now.

But she and her secretary came to a certain city and the secretary said, oh yes, remember what happened when we were here the last time? And the lady looked at her and she went on quite eagerly to recount the occasion. You know, when that woman, the leader of one of the local groups, when she said that nasty thing to you? Well now, she said, I distinctly remember forgetting that. Love thinketh no evil, has no memory for injuries.

The exuberance of love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Does not exult over wrong triumphant, but has spontaneous and exuberant sympathy with truth. Love has the capacity to distinguish between the cheap victory won by easy compromise on the one hand, and the lasting triumph of that truth, which is enduring a Gethsemane grief and a Calvary darkness.

The love of God in its exuberance is never overjoyed with a half-truth on the throne, but sympathizes with joy and gladness with a whole truth on the cross. And herein lies the difference. There is no right way of doing a wrong thing, and there is no blessing of God upon easy compromise.

And the love of God in the heart teaches this. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. The silence of love, you don't see this on the surface, but it's here, beareth all things, holding firmly like a water-tide vessel, bearing in this way, not divulging to the world all its wounds and its hurts.

The silence of love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. This kind of love that does not indulge in self-pity, this is the silence of love, about which the Apostle writes, the credence of love believeth all things, literally and suspiciously believes all things that are not palpably false, evidently untrue.

It naturally gives the benefit of the doubt to the person concerned, and does this spontaneously and generously, for it is not in the nature of divine love, which is a fruit of the Spirit, to believe anything but the best about people as a first natural response. For love knows that trust begets trust, most all of the time. And yet, when we examine our hearts in God's presence at night, is this how we treat people? Is this our natural response to them? Is this our regard for them? Is this how we evaluate them? Is this our summing up? Believeth all things.

The confidence of love hopeth all things. It is said of Abraham that against hope he believed in hope. And this is the attitude of love.

What is hope? Hope is the windscreen wiper of the mind. Hope enables you to see through the murky gloom, and catch a vision of the radiance that lies beyond. For it is in the nature, you know, of this sort of hoping, that as we study the Word of God, and as we read what God Himself has recorded through His servants, this sort of hope is engendered in our own hearts and lives.

For whatsoever things were written, we read, aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. The foundation of love's confidence is in the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever. And here is the basis, the foundation, on which hope builds, the hope which is the confidence of love.

The endurance of love endureth all things. Now, what is the Christian call to endure in this world? Well, there are some specific things. Hatred is one of them.

He shall be hated of all men for my sake, so take heed if the world speaks well of you. This is what we are taught in the Scripture, isn't it? Chastening. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons.

We are called to bear this too. Suffering wrongfully. That's a hard one.

For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience' sake endure grief, suffering wrongfully. Part of the enduring of the all things, the fruit of the Spirit is love, which has this quality of endurance under all sorts of pressures, from whatever angle they may come. A love that enables a person to bear up and to stand still and stand strong.

Well, these are some of the trays of love. As we mentioned at the beginning, I'll touch very lightly upon these. We could have taken several evenings, I'm sure, because there's so much underlying the surface here.

But I wanted to come to the last part of this chapter, verses 8 to 13. The triumphs of love. Now, how does love become triumphant, and in what areas can we see its triumphs? First of all, it is triumphant over the changefulness of ministries, verses 8 to 10.

Now, as for these gifts, first of all, you'll notice that their cessation is predicted. They're going to cease. Love never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.

Their usefulness will cease at the second advent of Christ, that's verse 8, because prophecy is consummated in that event. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. And this will be done automatically.

We are not given any reason why they should be, at all. It just states categorically, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away, and here surely it is the utterance of knowledge, the word of knowledge, which is a spiritual gift that is mentioned.

And so they shall cease. Future tense, of course. There are some who want to make future tense past tense, and say they have ceased.

But if you make future tense past tense, that's only pretense. The word of God itself is absolutely sure on this point. It looks to the future, but it does emphasize the cessation of all these gifts, gifts of the Spirit, in their function, in their ministry, in their contribution to the upbuilding of the life of the church, and the life of the believer.

Not only so, but their limitation is indicated too, in verse 9, for now we know in part, and prophesy in part. The function of spiritual gifts is always limited in scope. Our knowledge of the things of God is always fragmentary, incomplete, and relative, never absolute.

For God is beyond our comprehension. And the things of God, the deep things of God, are also beyond our comprehension. Were it not for the blessed Holy Spirit, who is investigating, and searching, and plumbing the depths, the abysmal depths of God's designs, and bringing to us by revelation, line upon line, the things which He perceives, we would have no knowledge at all of these things, for they are spiritually discerned.

But even though we may say we've been Christians for many, many years, we've been baptized with the Spirit, it may be 20 years ago, we've heard tremendous prophecy, we've studied the word of God, we've had great revelations brought to us, sum it all up, we still have to say, we know only a part, and a very little part, of what yet remains. And their function is to be terminated, verse 10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

This surely points to the second advent of Jesus, and not simply to the church attaining maturity. While there will then be no further use for the gifts, yet the amazing thing is that love will continue to grow in understanding, in comprehension, and so the function of these gifts will be terminated. And I wonder whether tonight we have been taught that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are of such great importance to the church of Jesus Christ.

We must seek after them with all our hearts, we must sacrifice for them, we must do whatever we can to see that they're in operation, they must function, they must fulfill their ministry, they must indeed contribute to the revelation for these last days, and so our eyes have been focused upon the tremendous importance of these spiritual gifts. What are they without divine love? This is the kind of question we should be asking ourselves, it seems to me. What do they really mean in view of the fact that their function is to be terminated? How much do they mean to us personally in the light of what love is intended to produce, of what love is intended to be in the heart and life of the believer? Now no one is going to accuse me of

decrying the gifts of the Spirit, I wouldn't have that.

It's many, many years since God baptized me with the Holy Spirit, and I spoke the tongues and magnified the Lord in a marvelous and glorious experience. I shall never forget it. I was there when it happened, and I ought to know.

But in spite of all this, as I've come down through the years in ministry and service for God, in counseling people, in witnessing so many things, I have seen again and again how these precious gifts of the Spirit, their background divine and holy and beautiful, can somehow, in the transference from the background which is divine into the foreground which is human, lose so much of their beauty and their blessedness, and instead of becoming something that fills our hearts with joy and gratitude, becomes instead very often an occasion for confusion and for misunderstanding, sometimes indeed even for bitterness. I sometimes wonder how this could be, and I am sure it could not be, if the emphasis on divine love were placed where it should be placed, always and ever in relation to the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the Christian church. So you have love triumphant over these ministries which are going to terminate one of these days.

And love is triumphant over the childishness of immaturity. Verse 11. When I was a child, I speak as a child, thus childish conversation which is limited, of course, by the extent of its knowledge.

I understood as a child, thus childish comprehension, explained by the words, I thought as a child, as a child would think. Evidently then, at Corinth, although they came behind in all gifts, they were still childish in their comprehension of spiritual principles. But, says the Apostle, when I became a man, I put away childish things.

This is childish preoccupation. The mature believer is no longer occupied with toys and games. He isn't playing with divine things.

When I became a man, I put away childish things. What Paul is saying is that unless the gifts of God are operated through love-filled lives, they are simply childish in their concept, in their function. They are simply toys and games in the church of the living God.

This is what Paul is saying. Love is triumphant over the childishness of immaturity. Thirdly, it is triumphant over the dimness of vision.

Verse 12. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known.

The contrast, you see, is between the now and the then. Between the poorly reflected vision and direct sight. Between what we know in part and what we are going to know as absolute truth.

It's going to be a glorious time, isn't it? I think for the first million years, I want to sit down on the hillsides of glory and have a chat with Paul about some of the things I've never been able to understand. I've got a few questions for him when I need him. But to know as we are known.

I like the Living Letters version here. I don't often use Living Letters. I don't know why, but I've got nothing against it personally, but I like it here.

Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly. Just as clearly as God sees into my heart right now. So you see, love is triumphant over the dimness of vision that afflicts us as we

journey through the enemy's country.

And love is triumphant over other graces. Verse 13. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three.

But the greatest of these is love. You see, the focus of faith will change the sight. And when that happens, then there is no longer any necessity for the function of faith as we know it now.

What is going to happen, I don't understand and I don't worry about it. But I do know this, that the focus of faith will change to sight. We shall no longer walk by faith, but we shall walk by sight because we shall see him as he is.

And the fruit of hope will change to realization. In other words, no more anticipation, but realization. It's here, it's in our grasp, we possess it, that the fullness of love will deepen and widen forever.

For God is love, and love is of God, and the fruit of the Spirit is love. I'm inclined to believe that this first grace that is mentioned is the fountainhead of every other grace that constitutes the fruit of the Spirit. And if you care to put it to the test, you'll find that as you go down and look at the trays I've mentioned, the qualities or characteristics of love here, you can put under these, each one of the fruit of the Spirit that is mentioned.

Joy, what is that that love's saying? Peace, love resting. And you can go right down through the whole list and you'll find that they compare. The fruit of the Spirit is love, divine love, holy love, deep, sweet, strong love.

And that love of God shed abroad in your heart and mine by the Holy Spirit may be shed abroad from our hearts. Well may we say love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown, thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as the hosts above, pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love. May God bless this word.

Let us pray. Tonight again, O God, we have been walking along the shores of time, or so it seems to us, picking up here and there a shell or two, and yet knowing that there are waters to swim in out there, a mighty ocean, fathomless deep of revelation that we have not comprehended. But what we have seen tonight by and through the ministry of thy Holy Spirit, we pray that thou would make very precious to us, for we know that we have been touching not the fringe of things, but the heart, the core, the center, the hub of everything.

For God is love, and love is of God, and the fruit of the Spirit is love. O God, help us to cherish this and to treasure it, to know that it must have its rightful place in our lives. Without this deep, strong love of God motivating us, and all our service is meaningless, and all our gifts are sacrificed, is worthless in my sight.

O God, speak to our hearts, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27129.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/doc-greenway/revival-part-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