

LOVE IS

1 & 2 Corinthians

Week 14: 1 Corinthians 12

Issue #4 - Order in worship - Chapters 11-14

- 1 Corinthians 11 - Headship and Communion
- 1 Corinthians 12 - The Place and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts
- 1 Corinthians 13 - Love as Prime Motivator
- 1 Corinthians 14 - Language and Order in Worship

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - Without Love

- “Tongues of men and angels.” We understand tongues of men to be languages. Tongues of angels may be represented by what John records in Revelation (I heard a voice like a trumpet), or may be what the Dead Sea Scrolls record as eternal praise and worship, also displayed in revelation. Also possible is the idea that the heavenly language is distinct from earthly.
- The idea is that the gift and/or ability divorced of love is entirely **useless**, detracting even. We would politely ask the cymbal player to quit if they continued to bang the cymbals during the sermon.
- Concerning spiritual gifts: when love is not the prime motivator, they are detracting. Today our gifts and abilities **amplify** our love for God, our love for each other, and our love for the lost. Even the “higher gifts” and self sacrifice are pointless without love’s motivation.
- Instead of a church supremely gifted, Paul desires to see a church supremely loving! Love **completes** what gifts can only start.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - Love

- When Paul teaches us to examine ourselves before taking communion, this definition of love is the ultimate **‘answer sheet.’**
- Ambrosiaster: Love is the defining **characteristic** of the body of Christ - both as individuals and as the Church.
- John Chrysostom: Love is our **coat** of many colors!

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 - The Future

- Love never ends - it **continues** on through the new heaven and earth.
- Prophecies (repentance or predictive) will reach their **horizon**. Heaven will not include 'end times prophecies' or 'preaching for repentance.'
- Tongues and knowledge will also reach their horizon - their use is for this **present** age. I believe this helps make the case that tongues are not a heavenly prayer language or the language of God Himself. A unified new creation will have one language and not many tongues.
- Knowledge and prophecy are currently **partial** - not complete. Our new creation bodies and minds will be complete in unity with God.
- "when the perfect comes" - "perfect" is the Greek word "**telos**" which has a range of meaning from the end, mature, complete, ripe.
- Paul's example coming up in the next verses tells us that the "telos" is a time of face to face interaction - this is the new creation of heaven and earth together. The "telos" is not a new baptism, a new movement of the spirit, or anything related to missions, church growth, evangelism, or gifts. It is the day of judgment and the completion of God's **covenant** promises and plan.

1 Corinthians 13:11-13 - Examples and Conclusion

- The current age is like our childhood and the "telos" will be our **maturity**.
- The current age is like a dimly lit mirror and the "telos" will be face to face **interaction** with our creator.
- Matthew 24:12, Romans 13:8, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 3:14

For Us:

- What could you see going wrong in the Corinthian church when it comes to gifts and talents divorced from love? In today's church?
- Big translation point in verses 4-5 - Paul uses a series of verbs which usually get translated into nouns. Patient = being patient, kind = being kind, etc. What's the difference between a noun and a verb?
- We read chapter 13 as a celebration of love's virtue, but Paul is using this chapter as a correction to a church caught up in individualism and ego. Has the last year of pandemic life impacted your personal character?