

## **The Permanence of Love** **1 Corinthians 13:8-13**

September 4, 2022

*Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

### **First: What is God Doing in the World?**

- 1 – Creation - He made everything 'very good' (Gen 1:31) with everything good represented in the Garden of Eden
- 2 – Fall - Adam and Eve, as our representatives, tainted all creation with sin, damning themselves in the process
- 3 – Israel - God established Israel as a re-presentation of what He intended in all the world, but Israel failed to represent him.
- 4 – Jesus - After millennia of human failure, God sent his Son to rightly represent him and Jesus created a model eco-sphere that demonstrated life before and after the Fall
- 5 – Church - Jesus established the church to re-present him to the world
- 6 – New Creation - One day, Jesus will return to complete his Father's divine design, returning the whole world to its original Garden of Eve status, only better.

Those six steps illustrate the whole of Bible history. This is what God is doing in the world.

(Can you do that? No. And that's why Jesus is the Hero of the Bible and not us. If we make ourselves the hero and our lives its theme, we misrepresent the Bible, God, and ourselves).

### **Second: Why is God Doing This?**

- 1 – God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and has always existed in Trinitarian love
- 2 – He's also equally holy (Is 6:3) and eternally exists in Trinitarian holiness
- 3- All creation is the overflow of Trinitarian holiness and love
- 4 – Hence, the cross. God in holiness created everything that fell. God in love seeks to redeem all creation. Neither his holiness nor his love can exist at the expense of the other. The cross exhibits God's holiness (sin is punished) and his love (God saves those who have sinned)
- 5 – The church, representing God's redemption is intended to live in that holiness and love.

Think with me. For 12 chapters Paul has been encouraging holiness in the Corinthian church. In this chapter, he is dealing with the 'why' and 'how' of holiness.

- Why do we live holy? Because we love God, each other, and ourselves.
- How do we live holy? God's love in us, for him, each other, and ourselves, enables us to live holy lives.

Turn 1 Corinthians 13 Godward.

Because you know that God loves you, do you

- Bear all things
- Believe all things
- Hope all things
- Endure all things
- Never ends

I ask, because life will lie about God, or make you doubt God, and will take all of this away from you.

...which leads me to two thoughts:

Let us hope, and we know, in fact, that God's love for us - bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and will never end.

Let us ask God to grant us this agape for him. Love that will bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, and never end.

### **Third: The Things that Pass Away 8b**

Isn't it our nature to major in the minors and minor in the majors, to argue over the inconsequential, and to lose valuable, irreplaceable time to love each other? We do this, don't we? (Think of all the times and relationships in which you do this)

- a) Prophecy in both 1 Cor 12:10 & Ro 12:6 can mean either forthtelling or foretelling. But, when we get to Heaven, there will be no need for either.
- b) Tongues enabled that preaching to be understood. There will be no need for it in God's kingdom.
- c) Knowledge = *gnosis*, simply to know. But the day will come when we know everything we need to know and will have no more questions.

Paul says the very gifts that caused such dissension in the Corinthian church, "*prophecies, tongues, and knowledge...will pass away.*" They, like much of life, are not worth the fight.

Isn't it sad, that generally speaking, we tend to fight over things that pass away and, in the turmoil, ignore, and lose what will never pass away?

"I think "that which is perfect" is "*your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven*" (Mt 6:10), the establishment of the New Jerusalem on earth (the re-establishment of the Garden of Eden.

Some people think it is the Bible, but the completion of the Bible did not put an end to prophesy (preaching) or knowledge (study/understanding). The church today still benefits from those gifts. However, we both preach in part and know in part now (13:9). But, when Christ's kingdom is established on the earth, those things will pass away. We will see Jesus, face to face, and there will be no need for preaching or studying.

(Note: But what about tongues? Verse 8 says that prophecies and knowledge will "pass away" but tongues "will cease." (All of this is in contrast to love, which "never fails"). Paul uses one Greek verb in reference to prophecy and knowledge, and a different Greek verb in reference to tongues. Prophecy and knowledge will naturally pass away when the kingdom arrives. Tongues is stopped/ceases before that time.)

What we do know is that prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will pass away. They, while all a valuable part of how we see Jesus, are like speaking, thinking, and reasoning "like a child" (11) and "looking in a mirror dimly,"(12) compared to seeing Jesus "face to face."

PS - vs 9-11 – Don't get caught up in those things or, '*when the perfect is come.*' That would be, as Paul says in vs 11, childish. His point is not 'the perfect' but 'love.' And **love protects God's children from childishness.**

#### **Fourth: Till We Have Faces 12**

Mirrors in the ancient world were made of polished brass so the reflection provided generalizations but not specifics about a person's appearance. And the lighting was by candle. This gives us a sense of "For now we see in a mirror dimly..."

Even with Scripture and all the gifts and gifted people, seeing God now is like looking at His reflection in polished brass. We see "in a mirror dimly..."

"But then face to face."

Three thoughts:

- 1 - Every mask you wear hides the face of Jesus.
- 2 - It is only when you doubt God's love that you don a mask.
- 3 - God is daily conforming you to the image of Jesus, to reflecting His face.

*"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal....it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."*

– C.S. Lewis in "The Weight of Glory."

What is Lewis saying? Every day of our lives, with every choice, emotion, thought or action of our lives, we are becoming more Christ-like or devilish. And, in our interactions with others, we are helping people move toward one of those eternal destinations. No one, not even you, is ordinary. Everyone is immortal. And the hope is that one day, the masks of self-deceit, and of deceiving others, will fall to the ground and we will see Jesus, with nothing between us, so that we are not only seeing him, but reflecting him, and we have his Face.

### **Fifth: Until Then... 13**

*"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

- Do you love God first and foremost?
- Do you love others more than you love yourself?
- Only as you love God first, and others second, do you truly love yourself.

### **Community Groups**

- 1 – What are the six steps to understanding the 'metanarrative' of the Bible?
- 2 – Unpack each of them.
- 3 – What are the various reasons why it is important that we see the Bible as one story, with one Hero and one theme?
- 4 – How do God's love and holiness explain the reason for the cross?
- 5 – Where in your life does Satan attempt to make you doubt God's love?
- 6 – How can you combat this lie? (specific steps so that others can benefit from your testimony)
- 7 – What do prophecy and knowledge passing away tell us about the wonder of Heaven?
- 8 – How does love protect us from childishness?
- 9 – what does it mean to 'look through a glass dimly'?
- 10 – How does remembering that you and everyone you encounter is immortal, change the way you interact with people?

## Daily Devotion

**Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup>** – How/where is your love for God challenged? Or how/where do you doubt God's love? What specific Bible texts can you read, memorize, and meditate on to combat this challenge/doubt? What about John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 2:1-2? It's important to memorize Scripture so that you can call it to mind when you are combatting the flesh, the world, and the devil. If you don't already have a Scripture memorization plan, here's one -

<https://www.amazon.com/Topical-Memory-System-Navigators/dp/1576839974#:~:text=Wherever%20life%20takes%20you%2C%20the,Freedom%20from%20anxiety> and a word about it - <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/you-can-memorize-scripture-this-year> Start memorizing Scripture asap.

**Tuesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>** – It's too easy, isn't it, to make everything important and to die on every hill of the unimportant or trivial? How can you insert 'love' into every conversation, every action? Invest 'love' (working toward someone else's temporal and eternal good) in every relationship today and make it the priority of every interaction.

**Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>** – Hardship, disappointment, and hurt do discourage us. But God intends them to encourage us to look for, pray for, and work for his coming kingdom. Instead of being disappointed, be reminded that this world is temporary. We are pilgrims on the way home. Every time you are hurt, disappointed, or endure difficulty today, pray Matt 6:10 and be encouraged that "the perfect" is coming! And then live like it.

**Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>** – It's a good thing we are God's children but a bad thing to behave childishly. What do we have to prove? To whom should we feel superior or inferior? Remembering that we are God's children, keeps us from childishness. He is our Father. He wholeheartedly, permanently, loves us. He gives us everything we need. In those moments when you are tempted to behave childishly today, speak, think, and reason (1 Cor 13:11) as a mature son or daughter of God.

**Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>** – *"Every mask you wear hides the face of Jesus" and "It is only when you doubt God's love that you don a mask."* Be whom Christ is making you to be. Only your truest self can truly reflect Jesus. This is a hard task, I know. But God loves you, has saved you, placed you in His body, and has a purpose...just for you. Be the you God is re-creating in the image of Jesus. This is the only way you can re-present Jesus to a world that needs to see him.