

Lesson 39 - Insight into 1 Corinthians 13

For this study we will be reviewing insights the Lord has given concerning 1 Corinthians 13. You may recall that it is often referred to as the "Love Chapter". Excerpts from this chapter are frequently read at weddings because it offers wisdom regarding the essence of love. This study is taken from the 1/25/11 telephone conversation with Stephen Gola that was added to the THH website on 2/21/11. This article was labeled "No Self, No Mirror, Face to Face" (<http://www.takehisheart.com/pdf/no-self-no-mirror.pdf>).

In addition, we will look at elements from Chapter 12 that will help us to have a more complete understanding of Chapter 13. In these chapters Paul is teaching us about a better way to flow in the things of God starting with love. Therefore we must be thorough because love is very important.

Since love seems to be the main focus of this chapter then I think the best place to start this study is by looking at the definition of love. Love is a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; a warm attachment, enthusiasm or devotion; the object of attachment, devotion or admiration, unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another; a god or personification of love. However, I think one of the best definitions of love I have heard came from a minister who said that the definition of love is simply when you want the best for someone. We need to keep this definition in mind as we continue our study.

Stephen began the discussion with these remarks:

You remember Paul was talking about the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:31) and that he was going to show us "a more excellent way", a better way to receive and flow in the things of God---and that is to walk in love?

The gifts of the spirit Paul was speaking of were mentioned specifically in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the Profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*

Paul mentioned various gifts like wisdom, faith, healings, preaching, speaking in tongues, prophecy etc. Then he goes on to explain that the body in fact is not one member but many. God has given us gifts but He has not given all the gifts in total to each one of us. We are not all teachers, apostles, healers,

ministers etc. all rolled into one. No, these gifts from the Lord are spread throughout the entire body. None of us have all the gifts combined.

Paul explains that we have all come together as one body in Christ though we have many members. The various gifts are spread throughout the body (the people). Paul reiterates this in **12:20** *But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.* In these verses he is likening the various gifts to parts of the body. He explains that all the various parts of the body are equally important. In other words all the various gifts are equally important.

I got the impression after reading this chapter that the people of the early church must have been having some difficulties with the issue of gifts. I think that there must have been some members who felt that they weren't really contributing a lot while others must have been competitive, envious, even covetousness and some were probably proud and haughty. They were letting self get in the way. However, Paul said, in effect, I know of a better way, a more excellent way. And this is the point where he writes chapter 13.

The beginning of chapter 13 states *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging 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, but have not love I am nothing.* Thus Paul begins teaching us about love. I think he is encouraging us to act out of love not self. However, let's take a moment and get back to the article by Stephen Gola.

In the [No Self](#) article Stephen Gola refers to verses 8-13 of chapter 13 that states:

*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. **For 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. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. 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.*

Stephen explains that currently we are incomplete because of our separation from Christ; however, these gifts help to fill in the parts of us that will not be whole until Christ returns. He stated, "They're talking about prophecies, knowledge and being a child as all being only a part of the whole". He explains that these gifts are elements of the whole. These gifts help us to "see in a mirror dimly until Christ's return. Stephen stated: *Meaning, a prophecy is a part that we speak or read, knowledge is a part that we understand here on earth but when the full knowledge, the full understanding, the fullness of it comes, the fullness of maturity of itself, you no longer have a part of the maturity or a part of the whole but rather the whole thing.* None of us have all the parts or gifts while we are separated from Christ because we are as a child now.

Currently we are incomplete but this is not the entire issue. This is where self comes into the picture. He explained that the more "self" we can remove the more we will become the person God wants us to be.

Isaiah 58:6-8 *Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.*”

Stephen explains, “Being in part, is **having** Self. Getting out of Self and seeing the bigger picture is in God, in Christ. Then you start seeing with His eyes and hearing with His ears, and understanding with His heart and believing with His faith, the faith of God.” I think the fast that Isaiah was talking about is in fact giving up self and acting out the love and faith of Christ.

John 15:4 *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me”.*

The more we are abiding with Christ then the less we will be abiding with self. Stephen explained that “it says that if you abide in Me and My words remain in you then”

John 14:23 *“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”*

You are in effect opening yourself up to Him, seeking after His will for your life. Stephen explained that *we’ll come make our home with you,*” means, the words that remain; the words that live in you are words that are not rejected. His thoughts, His ways, His acts, His deeds are not rejected.

Self will always have the right to reject those words or the thoughts behind His words because we have free will. However, we want to get rid of self. We want to become the person He wants us to be. We want to live in His will. So without Self, as soon as you look in the mirror and you don’t see “your” Self anymore, you see face-to-face with Love “Himself”.

1 John 4:7-8 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love**.*

And this is where the full meaning of chapter 13 comes in. I want you to read the sentences below from the standpoint of thinking about the envy, competition and covetousness that Paul was speaking to them about (in relationship to the gifts of the spirit).

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, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

I think it is rather like the two disciples asking Christ for permission to be the ones to sit at His right side but Jesus corrected them. Here Paul is saying I have a more excellent way. The way of the Lord. Remember in Chapter 12 he said *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the Profit of all. Therefore, Paul is*

teaching us that there should be no envy, no competition, or covetousness. Self needs to go because all the parts are actually given for the benefit of the whole.

Stephen said: Self is always based on limitations, and limitations are based on not being able to see outside of your own ability of what you've experienced, grown and learned, which means its always going to be a detriment to the whole. Self will keep us from giving our best because it is limiting.

When I was reading this article the Garden of Eden came into mind. What was the garden like before Eve partook of the fruit? Were humans complete at that point when we had direct contact with the Lord? This article to me is talking about what our current relationship is like after our fall from grace. The Lord has provided these gifts which kind of fill in some of what we lost but He is telling us that all of this is not even important in comparison to the gift of love that is Christ himself. This is the gift that truly keeps on giving. This is the gift that should be valued the most.

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.

Remember love is **when you want the best for someone**. The bible says, "*Love never fails*". I think this is true. Love never fails to give comfort. Love never fails to give hope. Love never fails to reach out. I could go on but just suffice it to say that love is the greatest gift of all.

Now we are incomplete but when Christ returns; when all is righted and is as it should be we will no longer have use for prophecy or mysteries, apostles or prophets because we will be with love and that is Christ. All will be as it should be. We will no longer be incomplete or seeing dimly because we will see face to face. We will be whole. But for now while we are incomplete we should work together. We should value each member for their contribution, their gift, and we should walk with the love of Christ in our hearts.

May the Lord Bless and Keep You,
Cindy

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