



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 13

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Introduction

- In the middle of his discussion on spiritual gifts, St. Paul describes the "more excellent way" of love
- First he emphasized the importance of love (1-3)
- Then he defined love by what it is and what it does (4-8)
- Ending with love's quality of "permanence", Paul contrasts it with the temporary nature of spiritual gifts (8-13)



The Importance of Love (13:1-3)

- In 1 Cor 12:8-10 St. Paul spoke of spiritual gifts, one of which was to speak in tongues
- A more excellent way (1 Cor 12:31) is now to be shown.
- Hence, various spiritual gifts are taken up and shown to be useless and vain without love
- If he spoke with the tongues of men and angels, but without love, it would be as sound without soul or feeling



The Importance of Love (13:1-3)

- Prophecy: delivering message from God
- Mysteries: of God's word and providence
- Knowledge: of things divine and human
- If I have the highest degree of miracle working faith, and have not this love, I am nothing
- One might give his goods from a desire of praise
- If I give not only goods, but my body itself
- All these sacrifices are useless and profitless without love



The Definition of Love (13:4-8)

- Love is patient toward all men
- It suffers all the weakness of the righteous; all the wickedness of the sinners to the end
- In every step toward overcoming evil with good, it is kind and soft
- Envy makes the person unhappy when he sees the good of another e.g. Cain
- Love does not boast even of gifts which it really possesses nor is puffed up (1 Cor 4:6)



The Definition of Love (13:4-8)

- Love does not behave in a way compromising good manners or morals.
- Love is unselfish and unbiased
- Is not easily provoked: does not fly into a rage, but keeps the temper under control
- Love takes not account of evil so as to return it
- Instead of rejoicing with iniquity, love is filled with sadness by wrong doing of any kind
- Love rejoices with the truth in its triumphs



The Definition of Love (13:4-8)

- Love bears up against the tide of evil, as the rock against the waves
- Love is not distrustful and suspicious
- Love is hopeful for the best
- Love endures patiently persecution and suffering (unyielding persistence)
- The superiority of love over all is shown by its survival of all with which it is compared
- It is eternal and imperishable

The Permanence of Love (13:8-13)



- The gift of prophesying shall cease
- The gift of speaking in tongues was transitory
- Even the supernatural knowledge, granted as a spiritual gift, is temporary
- All these were only granted while the church was in an immature state
- The wisest of men have here but short, narrow, imperfect conceptions of the things about them, and much more of the deep things of God

The Permanence of Love (13:8-13)



- Even the prophecies which men deliver from God are far from taking in the whole of future events
- At death and in the last day, the imperfect will give way to the perfect
- In our present state we are infants in knowledge, compared to what we shall be hereafter
- When I became a man, the speech, thoughts and feelings of the child give way to those of the man
- This what will happen in the second coming

The Permanence of Love (13:8-13)



- Mirror: The images were indistinct in comparison
- Dimly: our knowledge of divine things--imperfect and incomplete
- Face to face: without a veil, or obscurity
- Now there are limitations upon our knowledge
- But then: when the veil is taken away, and the full revelation has come in the presence of Christ
- I shall know even as also I am known: in a clear manner as God knows me

The Permanence of Love (13:8-13)



- Faith and hope, love abide after the extraordinary gifts have ceased; for those three are necessary and sufficient for salvation at all times
- Whereas the extraordinary gifts are not at all so
- Love is the bond between the brethren, faith is towards God, hope is in behalf of ourselves.
- Faith and hope shall be done away, faith being superseded by sight, and hope by actual fulfillment; but love, alone never fails (greatest)



Conclusion

- What is necessary for any service that we may render to be of value?
- What is the main difference between love and spiritual gifts?
- What does "that which is in part" refer to in verse ten?
- What does "that which is perfect" refer to in verse ten?
- What two illustrations does St. Paul use to show the temporary nature of spiritual gifts?
- What will remain after spiritual gifts cease?