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1 Corinthians 13

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

1 Corinthians 13.

Topics.

- If I speak in tongues but have not love I am a clanging cymbal.
- Tongues of angels.
- Love is patient kind; does not envy or boast and is not arrogant.
- Prophecies, tongues and knowledge will pass away, but love never ends.
- When the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.
- As a child I acted like a child, as a man, I gave up childish ways.
- We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.
- Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul told the Corinthians no-one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, "Jesus is accursed!" He spoke of the multitude of gifts in the body of Christ and said that though there is only one body it is made up of many members who all need each other to function as a healthy body. The chapter ended with Paul saying that he will show the Corinthian brothers and sisters a gift that surpasses and excels far beyond all gifts, which he beautifully does in this chapter.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3

If I speak in Tongues but have not Love I Am a Clanging Cymbal.

- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3:** If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Paul in these verses is speaking in extreme hyperboles (exaggerations overstatements and magnifications) we know this because no-one in the Bible had faith that moved mountains, he is speaking this way to overemphasise and shine a brilliant spotlight on the point he is making which is this:

- If anything is done, no matter how great or self-sacrificing, if it is done without love then it gains nothing and the one doing it counts for nothing. Paul's statement:
- If he does anything without *love* he is nothing.

Gives us a clear understanding of what God values above all things, sadly amongst the faithful global family of Christ and in many faithful local churches there are divisions and hurts, which could be avoided if every brother and sister in Christ was able to give love the high priority God gives it and with all its royal glory gracefully cloth their particular understanding of the Scriptures (outside of the Gospel and the message of the cross) with loves majestic splendour and abundant grace. It is certain if we had the same attitude toward love as Paul did many hurts in the family of Christ would be healed and many divisions would vanish.

Tongues of angels: it is interesting to notice whenever angels spoke in the Bible the people they were speaking to and the ones who were listening always understood what the angels were saying which means even if we could speak in the tongues of angels, those listening to us would still understand what we were saying. The words: -

- If I speak in the tongues of angels.

Conveys two ideas:

1. Speaking with the understanding of God and His ways as the angels did.
2. Speaking with purity and holiness and in full accord with God's will.

For further information concerning speaking in tongues see:

- I Corinthians 14 in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

Love is Patient Kind; does not Envy or Boast and is not Arrogant.

2

- **1 Corinthians 13:4-8:** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

Patient: (Suffereth long in KJV) means to be longsuffering it carries two thoughts firstly of a long enduring temper i.e., one that is tolerant forbearing and remains unflappable, calm and level-headed under great testing and secondly of an easy-going personality.

Kind: means to show oneself useful, to act in a generous and useful manner or with good morals, it carries the idea of being helpful, gracious, friendly and polite.

Envy: means earnestly craving, desiring and longing to have something, in this context it carries the idea of having a feeling of bitterness and resentment and moving with spite and jealousy against someone else because of their actions, possessions, wealth, talents or success etc.

Boast: (Vaunteth in KJV) means a braggart, i.e., a know-it-all or show off, it carries the idea of a person puffing, boasting, flaunting, exhibiting and promoting themselves (intellectually or in behaviour) either to make themselves stand out so as to be known or to exalt themselves above those they are with.

Arrogant: (Puffed up in KJV) means to inflate, it carries the idea of being conceited, self-important, snooty, stuck-up, overconfident, self-aggrandizing and of feeling superior to others.

Rude: (Unseemly in KJV) means to behave inappropriately, indecently, wrong, improper unsuitably and offensively to those who one is with.

Irritable: (Provoked in KJV) means to exasperate, aggravate, anger or annoy easily.

Resentful: (Thinks on evil in the KJV) (See evil)

Evil: refers to the essential character (i.e., wickedness in character) it carries the idea being deliberately hurtful and malicious in effect and influence and to failing morally in duty and integrity, honesty and truthfulness.

Love does not insist on its Own Way: the flesh (self, ego and pride etc.,) without question hate the statement, "Love does not insist on its own way" (v5), thus one of the reasons many relationships eventually fail since unless both partners care about the other more than themselves (or at least as much as they care about themselves) that relationship is heading for failure it's not so much about whether it will fail, but how long it will take to fail.

The reason for this sadness is because we all have (at some level) dwelling within our corrupted and fallen nature self, ego and pride and because of this a relationship will not survive unless both partners are giving and supporting each other and when things go amiss are both willing to always maintain an attitude of forgiveness i.e., when Peter asked Jesus:

- How many times should he forgive his brother when he sins against him?

Jesus said:

- Seventy times seven (Matt 18:21-22)

This in Bible prophecy means to the end of this age and the return of Christ, but applied to relationships it means always. Tragically because of the power of self, ego and pride and the lack of humble forgiveness friendships fail, married partners separate others through remaining together are emotionally and spiritually apart, the church is full of divisions and brothers and sisters in Christ divide. Thus, the reason God places the highest priority on, love

Forgiveness: Jesus told the twelve, "If they do not forgive, neither will their Father which is in heaven forgive them their trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26) this shows a brilliant spotlight on the truth that it is absolutely imperative to forgive.

NOTICE: Jesus does not add, providing they repent this forgiveness is independent of the other person's response, for the following two reasons:

1. God freely grants to everyone in Christ forgiveness and righteousness every-day. Everyone who has eternal life is totally indebted to God, simply because without the righteousness that God grants to them because of their faith in Christ none of us would be counted worthy, added to this there is nothing we can do to repay God for the life of His Son or repay Christ for his suffering.
2. God wants to set us free from the mental torment that comes with unforgiveness, but He can only do it when we forgive. If we do not forgive whoever offends us bitterness, hatred and a craving for revenge, i.e. to see the other person suffer will take hold of our hearts and fill it with every other destructive attitude and in extreme cases even murder.

Added to this as long as we remain in unforgiveness we continue to allow the person we are not forgiving to have control over our thoughts and our hearts and that will hurt us mentally and emotionally and rob us spiritually. The Spirit of God i.e. joy, peace and contentment cannot dwell in a human heart that is filled with bitterness, the lust for revenge and hatred. Forgiveness keeps our hearts free from all these destructive attitudes such is its tremendous healing power.

Forgiveness and repentance: Jesus heart is always open and ready to forgive whoever comes to him in repentance, his heart is continually overflowing with forgiveness, but only those who come to him in repentance enter the family of God. The following verses show that it is a Bible principle, that before forgiveness can be received a person must acknowledge (confess) their wrongdoing. God in the Old Testament said:

- If Israel confesses their iniquity that they committed against me and if their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, with Isaac and with Abraham, and I will remember the land” (meaning bless it) (Lev 26:40-42).

David when speaking of himself in Psalms says:

- I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity,” I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

In the New Testament the apostle John says:

- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Added to what God, David and John say God’s forgiveness though permanently available to everyone through Jesus is only realised when a sinner comes to Christ in repentance and sorrow. If a person does not acknowledge their wrong doing how can they possibly be sorry for the hurt they have caused? Even more how can they put right something they don’t acknowledge is wrong, thus God’s forgiveness is always available, forever flowing, as should ours be, but confessing one’s wrong actions is required before it can be received and experienced in the heart of the guilty. In some cases when possible restitution may be required to help repair the hurt caused to others. True repentance would automatically bring about this desire in the heart. Restitution in most cases may simply be saying sorry to the person offended or to God.

Forgiveness and trust: trust is different to forgiveness, trust must be rebuilt over time it requires a track record if someone hurts you repeatedly, you are commanded by God to forgive them, but you are not expected to trust them immediately. They must prove they have changed over time. A person may forgive another but that does not always mean that they will become a bosom friend or even have contact with the person who is forgiven, in many cases that would be foolishness, i.e. a girl who has been raped will have to forgive to set her own heart free from the hurt and bitterness and everything that stems from it, but she would be foolish to have immediate contact with the man who raped her until that man had proven he could be trusted. Forgiveness is never easy because it always involves forgiving someone who has hurt or offended us, to overcome the reluctance to forgive it is helpful to look at Jesus who even though we were sinners against God was prepared to be cruelly nailed to the cross, and even more while in tremendous suffering he prayed:

- Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:32-34).

There is no malice in the heart of Christ only love and if we are to have a deeper relationship with God, we cannot do it with malice in our hearts. Take the hurt, the tears and the pain to God and lay it on the altar in prayer and forgive and the Lord will free you from the mental and emotional torment.

Prophecies, tongues and knowledge will pass away, but love never ends: the statement:

- Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away (v7)

Refer to the New Age when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to establish God’s Kingdom of righteous, justice, joy and peace on earth. When the King of kings and Lord of lords is with us there will be no need for prophecies, no need for tongues meaning we will all speak the same

language contrasted to their being many foreign languages within the global body of Christ at the moment and there will be no-need for us to study and learn knowledge regarding God and the Lord Jesus Christ since we will all be united with the Lord (the world made flesh), but love will endure on throughout all eternity it alone will never end.

NOTE: since it is not doctrines, traditions, rules, ceremonial laws and practises that will remain for all eternity, but, love and Paul clearly states that love is the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12: 31) and the gift that surpasses all other gifts surely it is the one gift we should all place the highest priority on and earnestly desire its eternal, majestic and royal glory not only in our own lives but in the manner and way we treat and speak of others.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-12

When the Perfect comes, the Partial will Pass Away.

- **1 Corinthians 13:9-12:** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When 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. ¹²For 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. ¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

This is amazing when we consider that even though Paul wrote a great majority of the New Testament, had an abundance of revelations and was even caught up to heaven and saw things he could not speak about is still able to say that he does not know perfectly and completely the entire whole i.e., he only knows in part. In this context the word-perfect means being complete, it carries the following two ideas:

1. Those in Christ being complete in growth and mental moral and spiritual character (i.e., perfect and without sin).
2. Creation being restored to its original state (i.e., animals eating vegetation in contrast to eating each other, deserts blossoming and the land being fruitful).

Thus the words, "When the perfect comes, the partial will pass away" (v9) is not talking about the canon of the Bible being completed as many teach, we know this because the word perfect embraces mankind, their labour and mental and moral character therefore the perfect condition in focus is the perfection of those in Christ and creation which will only come about when God's plan for this world as we know it is completed and comes to its full age. This of course will be when that which is perfect comes referring to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign.

In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all

that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As a child I acted like a child, as a man, I gave up childish ways:

when Paul made the statement, "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 (v10) to those in the Corinthian church he no-doubt had in mind their divisions, their boasting and their exaltation of each other (i.e., "I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow Cephas and I follow Christ" etc.), (1 Cor. 1:12) and is telling them to stop acting in this childish manner and grow up to be mature men and woman in Christ meaning put on kindness, patience and consider the well-being of others in contrast to behaving from ego and pride and being focused on what is best for self (i.e., put away the me first attitude).

We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face: the mirror in the following verse, "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" (v11) is a symbol of the word of God since it gives us insight not only into ourselves, but to the righteous and holy character of the Lord Jesus Christ it is through the Scriptures that we know Christ and learn of him thus the pages of the Bible are in this sense like a mirror they reflect to us both our nature and the sinless and compassionate nature of the Lord. The word face when used in the Bible often refers to the countenance and presence of a person (especially of God), but in the context of what Paul is saying in this verse it applies both to Paul and to all who are in Christ and is referring to that glorious moment when we will all literally and physically see the Lord face to face. This glorious event will take place when:

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ are resurrected then we who are alive, who are left, are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14-18).

When this glorious and majestic day comes, we will fully know Christ just as he has fully known us contrasted to us only knowing him now by the Spirit and by the word of God.

Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love: the words, "Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" clearly shines a mega floodlight on what God gives the highest priority. There was a moment in Christianity when wearing a wrist band with the letters WWJD (meaning, What Would Jesus Do?) became the in thing to wear. The idea was to remind Christians to ask themselves in any given situation, "What would Jesus response to this be?" Since God exalts love above all other gifts, knowledge and even faith itself maybe complimenting the letters, WWJD would be the letters WITLR (meaning what is the loving response) perhaps if we asked ourselves before making a decision or taking any action the question, "What is the loving response?" meaning what can I say or do that will best benefit the people involved in this situation or circumstance many hurts and divisions would be avoided.

Perfect love: the following is the most perfect example of love and the most splendid and humbling of all Scriptures since it clearly shows how much Christ loves us, the apostle Paul wrote the following to the brothers and sisters at Rome: -

- While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6).

This means that though we were full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations dwelling within our bodies (i.e., self, ego, pride, greed and lustful thoughts etc.,) Christ died for us, he laid down his life that we could be made righteous by faith apart from the law, self-effort and works. In in spite of our fallen corrupted nature God counts our faith in Christ as our righteousness and imputes it to us as a pure and free gift. Though some of us might die for a friend or loved one, Christ died for us while we were ungodly, meaning indifferent to God and His ways and in many cases blasphemers.

Consider the following words of Paul:

- God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).
- While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:10).

These two verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that God loved us long before we loved Him. Some in the Christian faith determine whether God loves them by their good or bad circumstances, i.e., if life is charmed and blessed God loves them, but if it suddenly takes a turn for the worse and trouble comes they feel God has withdrawn his love, but this is superstition and judging God according to the fickle circumstances of this world. When anyone who believes in Christ doubts God's love all we have to do is look back to the bloodstained cross and see what it cost the heart of the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered to redeem us and spiritually crown and cloth us with a royal and majestic robe of righteous so that we could be justified and granted eternal life in everlasting glory apart from self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.