

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

March 23, 2021

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Corinthian Letters

*The Long Letter* (First Corinthians)

Chapter Thirteen – *The More Excellent Way – The Superiority of Charity Over Gifts*

Text – 1 Corinthians 13

## Introduction

When we ended our examination of chapter twelve, we were admonished: "*But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*" (1 Corinthians 12:31) Love (or charity) is the more excellent way, and that is what chapter thirteen is all about. This chapter is really a hymn that some think may have been written by Paul at a previous time, and then inserted here in this letter.<sup>1</sup>

The three words used in the Greek language for love are (storge - family love – only used in negative - ἄστοργος – *astorgos* – “without natural affection” Romans 1:31); eros (romantic love – not used in New Testament); phileo (brotherly love), and agape (a sacrificial, unconditional love; the love of the Cross).

The word “charity” is used 6 times in 1 Corinthians 13; which is 25% of its entire use of the Bible. God is emphasizing here to these Corinthians that charity is far more important than these spiritual gifts that they were disputing over. It seems that the Corinthians were making the gifts an end to themselves and not just a means to the greater end of loving people to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).

Charity, of course, is a deep, abiding, unselfish, and unconditional love. It is the same word (agape) used by the Lord when He told us “For God so loved the world”. God’s love for us was more than just feeling; it resulted in action: the action of Jesus shedding His blood on the cross for our sins. Missionary Darrell Champlain called this type of love, “love with shoes on.” God is love (1 John 4:8); and love abides in believers through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22). It seems that the Corinthians were quenching this love that was in them and lost sight of its supremacy over spiritual gifts.

### I. Charity is Superior to Our Gifts (vs. 1 & 2)

The last chapter was all about spiritual gifts, and those gifts are important, but love should be the basis of all spiritual gifts. In other words, the gifts are of little use without the foundation of love.

### II. Charity is Superior to Our Giving (v. 3)

You can give without loving, but you can’t love without giving.

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<sup>1</sup> David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 535.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)*

- III. Charity is Superior to Our Good Works (vs. 2 – 6)
- IV. Charity is Superior to Human Strength (vs. 7 & 8)
- V. Charity is Superior to Temporary Gifts (vs. 8 – 13)
- VI. Charity is Superior to Faith and Hope (v. 13)

Faith is extremely important, because without it we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6), but charity is greater.

Jesus emphasized love when He was about to leave the disciples on the earth when He was going back into Heaven:

*"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:33-35)*

*"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." (John 15:9-17)*

*"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)*

*"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" (1 Peter 1:22)*

Turn to 1 John 4:7 – 21

*"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." (Proverbs 10:12)*

*"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)*