

Christian Love: Living It Out In Loveless Times

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

1 Corinthians 13:8

(KJV) Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

(NIV) Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Paul is clear here. Love is forever. Our spiritual gifts are for now, to edify and build up the church. They are not to be discarded, for they do have eternal value. Beloved, we are accomplishing God's kingdom-building purposes with the spiritual gifts He has imparted to us. We get to share these gifts with our brothers and sisters in Christ!

It is imperative that we understand that God is Spirit, God is eternal—and God is love. Therefore, love goes the distance. It will outlast the spiritual gifts we enjoy in the Body of Christ today. Paul is bringing this up as a way to correct the Corinthian church. They have turned their spiritual gifts into idols—becoming competitive and prideful, especially in regards to the gift of tongues. Today in the church, we also need to heed Paul's correction here and stay humble and in prayer so that our hearts do not become consumed with pride. Ultimately, God alone is the great gift-giver:

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Therefore, we need to watch what we input into our hearts:

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

The spirit of the world can so easily slip into our minds and hearts and cause our eventual downfall.

1John 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Note here that the world system is all about self and crowds out the love of God that Paul says must accompany our spiritual gifts. Because we still live in the flesh, we are vulnerable to a world system attuned to our old carnal nature. The good news is we are each works in progress and God will oversee our spiritual growth faithfully, until Jesus returns.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

In others words, as we continue to abide in Christ, God Himself will develop a deeper agape love in us and through us to our fellow brethren. Hallelujah! Be encouraged that God is 100 percent committed to this sanctification work of love!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever tried to love the unlovable in your own power? What was the result? What would it look like for you to surrender to the Holy Spirit's enabling of agape love in your life?

*STUDY POINT: Conduct a personal Bible study, tracing Paul's journey from being a murderous, religious zealot to becoming a surrendered, loving soldier of Christ. Include Scripture references.

So, a connected life to Jesus will bear the fruit of love:

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Charity never faileth: Love goes on and on!

In the end, prophecies will all be fulfilled, according to God's Word:

Matthew 5:17-18

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

We won't need a prophetic word anymore. All will be fulfilled!

Tongues, while they have value now in edifying and confirming the building and direction of God's church, won't be needed in eternity either. Paul emphasizes this fact in 1 Corinthians 13:8 as this gift in particular was being abused and used without love—with envy and pride.

We have to note here in 1 Corinthians 13 that Paul, with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, simultaneously brings correction to the Corinthians while teaching us today what God's love does. Amazing!

Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: this is not intellectual textbook knowledge, but knowing God more and more and enjoying Him forever. Amen! And how do we get to know God better? Moment by moment prayer, study of His Word, meditation on His Word, obedience to His Word. In other words, we must put first our intimate connection with God:

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

John 15:4-5

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. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Also, answering the call He most certainly has on your life is key! Use the spiritual gifts He has freely given to you to bless your brothers and sisters in Christ. And finish the race well, knowing that your present knowledge of God—however glorious it may seem—is incomplete, until you reach heaven, when we will know God relationally, eternally, and completely—through His love.

1 Corinthians 13:9

(KJV) For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

(NIV) For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

Yes, our knowledge—and our prophetic words based on that knowledge of God's Word—is partial right now. But we see glimpses of God's eternal love as He transforms us through the renewing of our minds with His Word:

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Oh, but be assured dear believer that God will complete His work in us in the end:

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

1 Corinthians 13:10

(KJV) But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

(NIV) but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

Paul couldn't be more clear to the Corinthians, and to us in His church today: our spiritual gifts must be administered with love. Why? Because God is our pursuit and final, eternal destiny.

And God is love.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland