

1st Corinthians Chapter 13 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is the "Purpose of the Spiritual Gifts".
 - a) Chapter 13 is a short, 13-verse chapter that is tucked in between two other chapters that focus on what are spiritual gifts and how they are to be used.
 - b) Chapter 13 is an important break from a direct discussion of those spiritual gifts.
 - c) So what is the purpose of spiritual gifts? I (the reader) thought you (John) answered it in the last lesson when you said the purpose of the gifts is they are only for Christians to glorify God through helping (i.e., showing love to) other Christians.
 - i) That answer still applies to this lesson. Chapter 13 takes it one step further. This chapter is saying those gifts are all about "love". What I mean by that is that we could have only one spiritual gift or all the spiritual gifts, but if we don't have love for the fellow Christian, the gifts are a complete waste of time!
 - d) Chapter 13 is all about is defining what Christian "love" is all about.
 - i) The verbs and illustrations in these 13 verses of Chapter 13 are designed to give us examples of what is meant by Christian love.
 - ii) It is important at this point is define what is meant by "love". It comes from the Greek word "agape". In the Greek, there are several different words for love. There is "philia", which refers to "brotherly love". There is "storge" which refers to family love and there is "eros" which refers to erotic love. Then there is "agape". The basic idea of that word "agape" is to be totally given over to something.
 - iii) The word "agape" is used both as a positive and negative attribute in the bible.
 - a) When Jesus says we are to love each other, the word "agape" is used.
 - b) When Jesus said there were Pharisees that love the best seats in a synagogue (Matthew 23:6, et. al.), He used the word "agape". My point here is the word can be used both in the positive and negative sense.
 - c) The best way to describe "agape" in English is to compare it to the word "agony". The English word "agony" is based on the Greek word "agape". The idea is to have so much love for someone or something, we "agonize" over that love.
 - iv) The concept of "agape" is to love something or someone so much, we don't want anything in return and there is nothing that "someone" could do to change that love. For example, God loves us just as we are, even though God wants to change us for the better! God loves us with that unconditional "agape" type of love.
 - a) God desires that we love other Christians with that same type of "agape" love. In other words, we should show love not expecting anything in return and we should love others despite their personality issues and not based on any physical characteristics!
 - b) God wants us to love others not because we have to or because we should or because we expect something in return. God wants us to have love for others as a command! It is not based on any feelings we have!
2. This leads us back to the topic of spiritual gifts and Christians:
 - a) The basic purpose of spiritual gifts is to help other Christians. We as Christians are to use our spiritual gifts for the benefit of other Christians. The point of Chapter 13 is we are to have unconditional love for other people and that is our motivation for using our gifts.
 - b) The problem with the Corinthian church is not that they didn't have the gifts. The problem is that they refused to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others. Some were jealous that they didn't have certain gifts. The point is the Corinthian churches were more interested in their own self-interest than to show "love" to other Christians.

- c) Jesus commanded us to love other Christians. (See John 13:34.) This command is not based on feelings, but just because we are supposed to show such love to others. In fact, other Christians are to know we are Christians based on when we show such love!
 - d) If you wonder just what is "entailed" in showing Christian love to others, you have come to the right place. ☺ That's what Chapter 13 is all about. The chapter is all about defining "agape" in verbs and examples for us to study and follow.
 - e) Before I begin, remember that this letter is for Christians and about Christians. As bad as the problems were in Corinth, Paul still called them Christians and never argued that their bad behavior would cause them to lose their salvation. One's salvation is based on one's trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and our belief that Jesus is Lord of our lives.
 - i) Given that, the next step is to live a life pleasing to God in all that we do. The one "new" command given by Jesus is for Christians to love one another.
 - ii) That means we are to make every effort to show that love in all that we do. It does not mean one can lose their salvation if we fail to show that love. Remember our salvation is not based on our efforts, but in our trust in Jesus as Lord and our redeemer. One's witness as a Christian and one's rewards in heaven are based on one's ability to show love to fellow Christians, which is a key point of this chapter.
3. Many commentators like to point out that Chapter 13 is a beautiful thing to read straight through and to dissect it verse-by-verse or word-by-word misses the beauty of the text itself. With that said, I encourage you to read it straight few a few times other than to read this commentary.
- a) With that said, let's break it down, phrase by phrase. ☺
4. Chapter 13, Verse 1: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
- a) In the first three verses, Paul is going to review a couple of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the last chapter. At the same time, Paul is going to describe these gifts in comparison to the type of love that God has for us and God desires that we have for other Christians!
 - b) Paul starts by saying that if he "speaks in the tongues of men and of angels" but has not love", then Paul is sounding like a gong or cymbal.
 - i) Let's talk about the "gong or cymbal" reference first, as that's a key point here. Suppose one had the ability to play the drums. That includes knowing how to play a gong or cymbal. The problem is if one is part of a band, one cannot play a gong or cymbal without knowing what the rest of the band or orchestra is doing. The idea here is somebody is banging on a cymbal, but they are not musically communicating with the rest of the band! That sound has nothing to do with what the band is trying to accomplish musically.
 - ii) In other words, Paul's description here is about making a musical sound without a band director saying when a sound should be played or what is the type of music that is to be played.
 - c) Paul's point has very little to do with musical instruments. Paul is just using musical sounds to make a point about spiritual gifts. The real point being made is if one has the spiritual gift of tongues, but no love for the fellow Christian, then the gift of tongues is a waste of time. Let me describe this gift and then come back to this point.
 - d) The idea of "tongues" is to communicate to God in a foreign tongue.
 - i) The idea is that one wants to express their love to God verbally, and the English (or whatever) language is inadequate for that need to express that love.
 - ii) The idea of tongues is to communicate with God in a language one does not understand. Tongues are not for church edification but only for praising God.
 - iii) Like I said in last week's lesson, different denominations hold various views on this. Some believe this gift was only for the early church and people who claim to be speaking in tongues today are only "babbling". In many churches the idea of tongues is discouraged and if one has that gift, they are asked to go elsewhere.

- iv) An extreme view on the other end is that some Pentecostal churches do not believe one has the Holy Spirit within them unless one does speak in tongues. In such churches, people question if one is really saved they have this gift.
 - v) I tend to find that people who practice this gift (be it real or not!) tend to stick together. Let's face it; if you or I believe we can speak in tongues, and are in a church that doesn't believe that gift is for today, we would go elsewhere.
 - e) This leads us back to Paul's point about "clanging cymbals". Let's all agree just for the moment that this gift does exist today. Remember that this gift is only designed to be used to praise God. It is not designed for Christians to communicate with each other.
 - i) The spiritual gift of understanding (interpreting) a tongue is a separate issue.
 - ii) Paul's underlying point is this gift is relatively meaningless if one is not showing love for the fellow Christian. One's ability to communicate with God that way may be real, but at the same time, if we are ignoring the Christians around us, we are truly wasting our time communicating with God.
 - f) I'll end this discussion with a point about the "tongues of angels". The text says if one has the ability to "speak in the tongue of men and angels".
 - i) I am convinced what Paul meant by that is when the gift of tongues is used, whatever language is used is spoken by some human in some part of the world at some time in history. In other words, it is not a made up language.
 - ii) The second point is that angels understand what is being said. I don't believe as some Pentecostal churches argue, that there is a special language of angels. If you study all the passages where humans speak to angels and vice versa in the bible, the angels always speak in the language of the people the angels are talking to. Whenever angels speak in the bible, people understand what they are saying.
 - iii) Therefore, if there is a "unique language of the angels" there is no evidence of such a language anywhere in the bible!
5. Verse 2: If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
- a) Remember that the purpose of Verses 1-3 is to compare the importance of spiritual gifts in comparison to having love for the fellow Christian. When we get to Verse 4, Paul will start explaining what he means by the concept of "Christian love".
 - i) The reason for Verses 1-3 is because the topic at hand is spiritual gifts. That is the main topic of Chapters 12 and 14. Paul interrupts that discussion with this 13 verses discussion of Christian love in Chapter 13.
 - b) In Verse 2, Paul mentions the gift of prophecy. The essential idea of this gift is to understand the "mysteries of God" and have all human knowledge. Paul's point is if he had the ability to understand how and why everything happens to mankind, but at the same time, does not have or does not show any love for the fellow Christian, then it is a waste of time to have that understanding of knowledge.
 - i) Another way to put it is: What good is having great biblical insight if we can't use to help other Christians grow in their faith? In other words, the purpose of biblical insight is not just so that we can gain knowledge or show people how much we know. The purpose is to use that knowledge to help Christians grow in their faith. That is an example of showing love to the fellow Christian.
 - ii) There is a biblical example of someone with the gift of prophecy, but no love for those who are trying to seek God. This is the prophet "Balaam" in the book of Numbers, Chapters 22-24. Balaam was a non-Jewish person who definitely was given the gift of prophecy. He tried to use the gift against the Jewish people, but he could not speak against what God told him to speak. He eventually gave some advice on his own against the Jews and was killed in Numbers 31:8. My whole point here is that one can have this gift and still not have love for God's people!

- c) Verse 2 also mentions the "faith to move mountains". This is a Jewish expression that was used by Jesus himself. The idea is that we have so much faith in God that if it is His will to move a mountain and we have the faith to believe that, the mountain will move.
 - i) There are ancient Jewish commentaries where that expression "'faith to move mountains" is used. Jesus used that expression in Matthew 17:20. There are no records in the bible or in history of a mountain physically moving at all.
 - ii) The idea of this physical gift is that one believes God has the ability to do great things and one trusts that God will work in a mighty way. The way one is supposed to use this gift is to encourage others who believe in God to trust Him.
 - iii) The point of this half of a sentence is that the purpose of the gift of faith is to encourage and help fellow Christians. If we have such a gift to trust in God, but never use it to help fellow Christians, then we are wasting that gift.
6. Verse 3: If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.
- a) In Verse 3, Paul is describing "self-sacrifice" in comparison to love. Suppose one gave all one owns to various causes for the poor, but at the same time does not have love for the fellow Christian. That is the idea being stated here.
 - i) Yeah, but if one is giving away everything they own, isn't that showing love by helping out those poor people? Paul's point is sometimes people have given away all that they own for selfish reasons. Maybe they just want others to see how "unselfish" they are. Some believe that material things are bad and they just give them away to show how life is better without such material things! My point is someone can give away all that they have and still have the wrong motivation.
 - b) On a related note, I don't believe God has called us to purposely a life of poverty! If we give away all that we own, then we become dependant upon others our self. Sometimes Christians have to live in poverty due to their circumstances, but that is a separate issue. My point is, it is not necessary to give away all one has in order to please God. The balance is the fact we as Christians are to live for God and not for "things". I'm not encouraging you to go live for things, but just to state the fact that one does not have to give away all of one's possessions in order to be a follower of God.
 - i) Jesus told a rich young ruler to give away all that he had in order to follow Him. Jesus was making a point, as that person loved his wealth more than God. In a sense we have to do likewise as we have to be willing to give up all that we have to follow Jesus and for some people, all is necessary. My only point here is that God does not require us to take a vow of poverty in order to follow Him.
 - c) Paul's point is that we have to love the fellow Christian more than possessions, but we don't have to give away all that we have in order to show love to fellow Christians.
 - d) Paul's final point is about "surrendering his body to the flames". Some argue this is about being burned alive and others argue it is about taking some sort of tattoo on the body. Either way, Paul's point is that Christian love is more important than self-sacrifice.
 - e) Before I move on to Verse 4, notice the writing style changes from "If I do this or that" in Verses 1-3 to a "gender neutral" style in Verse 4.
7. Verse 4: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
- a) From Verse 4 through Verse 7, we are now describing what Paul meant by "Christian love". The first three verses talk about spiritual gifts and self-sacrifice in comparison to the act of Christian love. Here in Verse 4, Paul gives examples of just what "is" love.
 - b) The first one listed is "Love is patient".
 - i) The King James Version says, "Suffers long". The idea is we put up with stuff. Think of it this way: If we are to show love to someone else, it is often because they are hurting for some reason. We can't expect that pain to go away in 10 seconds. Therefore it often requires a lot of patience to show love to others.

- ii) Another way to put it is, "We shouldn't just spend 10 seconds comforting someone, but to show love as long as it takes to be helpful as needed."
 - iii) Remember the idea of "agape", is similar to the English word "agony". The idea is we agonize over how we can show love to someone else. It is not something we do as quick as we can, so we can move on to some other project. The point is we agonize over how we can show love to the fellow Christian for the moment and even think of ways we can be helpful!
- c) The second one listed is "love is kind". This is similar to patience. Let's face it; if we are going to patiently deal with others, we also have to show kindness to them! Yes there are situations where "tough love" is necessary, but more importantly, we have to show kindness! People won't accept discipline unless they respect the source of that discipline! That means showing kindness to the person in need.
- i) Back to the point, God wants us to be kind to fellow Christians. That is a way of showing our love to the fellow believer. That includes the Christians we are not that crazy about. We should show love and kindness to the one's we barely know!
 - ii) Think of "kindness" as an action verb! One has to take some sort of action in order to show kindness and to show our sincerity.
- d) The next term on this list is "a lack of envy". The concept of envy is to want something we don't have. In other words, we should never have envy as a motivation for helping other Christians. We should not help someone because they have something that we want as well.
- i) The purpose of showing Christian love is to help others. We should not expect anything in return for that love. To envy is to desire something that someone has! We should not desire that "thing" in exchange for that love!
 - ii) The idea of "envy" is the final of the 10 commandments. Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21 say that we shall not desire (or "covet") our neighbor's things. The idea is that God considers it a sin to desire things that do not belong to us.
- e) Next on the list is "love does not boast".
- i) Let's face it; if we are bragging about our love for others, then we have the wrong motivation in mind. God wants us to show love to the fellow believer because it is what God wants us to do. He does not want us to help others so we can brag later about what wonderful Christians we are!
 - ii) This is the idea when Jesus said, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."
 - a) This is a quote of Matthew 6:3-4 (NIV). The idea is that when we give to others, we are not to make a big deal about it. God will reward us and we are not to look for our own rewards. Jesus is condemning the concept of bragging about our accomplishments!
 - iii) If you've ever watched a telethon on television, people present giant 10-foot wide checks to show the crowd what a big donation was made! (Can you take a 10 foot check to the bank? ☺ Just wondering!) The donor should enjoy the moment, as that is the only reward they will get. Jesus point is that when one does a charitable deed to do it as secretly as one can and to let God reward us, and not others!
- f) Next, Paul says, "Love is not proud".
- i) The idea of "pride" is that one is focusing upon oneself. Many argue that pride is the root of all evil in that one desires one's own will over God's will. (See Isaiah 14:13-14, which is about Satan being filled with pride and wanting God's power!)
 - ii) Getting back to the idea of helping others, if one is full of pride, one is helping others just for the rewards or to show others how wonderful we are! The motivation for love is to for the sake of others not our sake!

- g) Before I continue with Verse 5, let's stand back and consider the big picture:
 - i) The point here is Paul is giving positive and negative examples of how we are and are not to show love to the fellow Christian. Paul's point about our motivation as well as our actions.
 - ii) The essential idea is that we are to show love to Christians around us, not out of selfish motivation, but because we care about those other Christians.
 - iii) Also remember that Paul is giving this speech in the middle of a discussion about spiritual gifts. Paul's underlying purpose is to show how and why the spiritual gifts should be used!
 - iv) Meanwhile, we're still describing how God wants us to love other Christians! ☺
- 8. Verse 5: It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
 - a) The idea of "rude" is the idea that one is patient with others.
 - i) The idea of rude is a consequence of not being kind to others.
 - ii) One should not yell at others in order to get the answer one wants to hear.
 - b) The idea of "self-seeking" is that one is truly interested in the well being of the other Christian and is not helping others for some sort of personal gain or benefit.
 - c) Love is not "easily angered".
 - i) Let's face it, one of the problems with helping someone for more than say, 30 seconds, is we can become angered when we have to provide a lot of help to someone. We can become "angered" because we cannot quickly get on with our own life. The point here is about patience when helping others.
 - d) Finally, the verse says, "It keeps no record of wrongs".
 - i) This is based on an accounting term. The idea is we don't keep track of how many people do us wrong, or how often someone hurts us.
 - ii) The idea of Christian love is to "not hold against someone" any and all-past actions. Let's face it, if we were truly showing unconditional love for someone just because they are a Christian and not because we like them, we don't "keep score" of any and all bad actions in their lives.
 - iii) Jesus commented on this. Peter asked Jesus how many times should I forgive a fellow believer? Jesus responded with seventy times seven (some translations just say "seventy seven"). Jesus point is not that we should count to seventy-seven or count to four hundred and ninety and then stop forgiving. Jesus point is that we should not keep records of wrongs and continue to forgive as long as a person asks for such forgiveness.
 - iv) I should balance this one with a point Paul made earlier in the letter. Paul said "But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." (1st Cor. 5:11, NIV).
 - a) So how do we balance "not keeping records" with Paul's statement of not associating with brothers who have sinned? The difference is in Chapter 5, Paul was talking about Christians who refuse to confess such sins and still want to be a part of a Christian fellowship.
 - b) Here in Chapter 13, the issue is help and forgiveness for a person assuming that person knows what he or she did is wrong. Remember the idea of helping one another is not just about when someone sins. I simply wanted to add that point to this section of the chapter.
 - v) The main point is when someone asks for help, we should not keep score of how we have helped them in the past and saying something like, "I'm tired of doing this". There is the related issue of "tough love" in situations of repeating the same problem over and over again. The point is we don't keep score of how often we have helped someone.

9. Verse 6: Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- a) Verse 6 finishes the "negative" comments about God's truth. The term "does not delight in evil" means love is always seeking the best not only for those around us but for our own lives as well. The idea of evil as it is used here is similar to the concept of injustice.
 - i) A sign that one is doing the right thing in terms of love is whether or not the act would be considered "evil". If one is committing a sin in order to help somebody else out, that is a sign one is not doing what God wants them to do.
 - ii) The idea here is that of "delighting in evil". A sign that one is doing the right thing is based on intent. If there are evil desires involved, it is not love.
 - b) The second half of verse 6 is a similar thought. It says love "rejoices with the truth".
 - i) The concept of "truth" is God's truth. In other words, love rejoices in situations that glorify God with the results. To show Christian love to others usually involves God's truth (His word, His principals) coming out.
10. Verse 7: It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- a) Paul ends this four-verse section describing love by switching from the "negative tone" to a "positive tone". Each of the attributes listed in Verse 7 are "positive".
 - b) Notice the word always is used four times in this sentence. In other words, if one is showing biblical love to others, these characteristics are always part of that love!
 - i) I have to admit, the hard part for me to read and write about this text is the concept of "always". I've had my good and bad days of helping others, but I can't use the term "always" to describe these attributes about my personal life.
 - c) Let's start with "protects":
 - i) When it comes to our own children, we will do anything and everything to protect them from harm. We will discipline them, but we will always protect them.
 - ii) God has that same attitude with us. If God wants us to live with Him forever, then there is a sense of protection that comes with that love. Sometimes God allows us to go through suffering and in some cases death to teach us, or to teach those around us some lesson, but there is always "protection" involved in that God's desire is to mature us and prepare us to live with Him forever.
 - iii) God wants us to have that same sort of attitude toward other Christians. God desires that we "protect" His own (fellow believers) just as He protects us.
 - d) Next comes the idea of "trust":
 - i) If a fellow Christian tells us a story of what happened, we need to trust in that story until there is good evidence to prove otherwise. In other words, our first assumption as a Christian is to trust what other believers are saying rather than to assume they are lying. Love is about believing in that person.
 - ii) Most adults know of at least one person that is not trustworthy in life. That person may not be trustworthy and we have to keep that in mind, but it should not stop us from showing love to them based on the need at that time!
 - iii) The underlying idea here is that we are not cynical in our love. To quote John MacArthur, "Love trusts; love has confidence; love believes."
 - e) Next comes the idea of "hope":
 - i) If we trust in someone, at the same time, we hope for the best. Sometimes, when we run out of faith in a certain situation, we can still hope for the best.
 - ii) The idea here is to show the biblical concept of love to one another includes the idea that we are always hoping the best result, no matter what happens!
 - f) The last "always" is "preserve":
 - i) The word was a Greek military term. It meant to hold a location at all costs! Every hardship must be endured in order to hold that position (John MacArthur).
 - ii) The idea of preserve is that no matter what the cost, we still protect, trust and hope in God and use the strength of God's love to help out in a situation.

11. Verse 8: 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.
- a) In Verse 8, Paul puts the concept of Christian love in comparison to several of God's spiritual gifts. The main point is that love will last longer than all of these gifts.
 - b) When we all get to heaven, there will no longer be a need of prophecy, tongues and knowledge in terms of teaching biblical knowledge to one another. At the same time, God's love for us and the Christians love for one another will continue on forever!
 - i) Think of it this way: Will God still love us when we all get to heaven? Yes. Will there still be a need of prophecy (teaching God's truth to others), No! Will there still be a need to speak in tongues? No! Will there still be a need to learn about God's attributes? Given the fact we have all of eternity to learn, God's love will outlast even knowledge.
 - c) Remember what the problem was in this church: The reason Paul spent the last chapter focusing on the spiritual gifts was not that the Corinthian church didn't have any spiritual gifts. They had them, understood them and used them. The problem was they were not using their gifts to show love to the fellow believer. They were ignoring the concept of biblical love when exercising their spiritual gifts.
 - i) With that said, Paul's point is that God's love, which should be manifested in all Christian believers, will outlast all other spiritual gifts.
 - d) The idea of "Love never fails" does not mean if we show love to someone, they will immediately change their way of thinking into "our way" of thinking. The idea is that God's love for Christian believers is unchangeable. God's love is an unconditional promise made to us.
 - i) The bible is full of conditional and unconditional promises. The concept of God's love for us is an unconditional promise. We can't change that if we tried! At the same time, the only people going to heaven are those willing to accept God's love for their lives. Hell is a place where people willfully choose to go because they refuse to accept God's love for them.
 - ii) At the same time, another unconditional promise is that God gives us the ability and capacity to show love to other people. He does not force us to act that way, but He commands that we show love to others out of our own free will.
 - iii) Just as God gives us the free will to choose to love Him back, so God gives us the free will to choose to show biblical love to other people! It is "naturally hard" to show that love because our first instinct is to put ourselves first and not others. Therefore, we have to overcome that self-seeking instinct to show that type of love.
 - iv) When we do fail to show that type of love, that is what confession is all about. Confession is about admitting God was right and we are wrong in a given situation. God is always willing to forgive us if we sincerely turn from sin. It is God's nature to love us and God cannot go back on His unconditional promises!
 - e) Now let's discuss the idea of God's love in comparison to the spiritual gifts listed. The verse says, "Where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away."
 - i) Will the concept of prophecy end one day? Yes, as Verse 8 says so.
 - ii) Will the concept of "speaking in tongues" end one day? Yes, as Verse 8 says so.
 - iii) Will the concept of the "spiritual gift of knowledge" end one day? See Verse 8.
 - iv) Scholars debate about when that exact moment of "ending" will be for the spiritual gifts listed (and probably all the spiritual gifts), but the point of the verse is God's love will continue after these gifts have come to an end! At the same time God wants us to put love for the fellow Christian as a priority over these spiritual gifts as that idea of love will outlast all of the spiritual gifts.

12. Verse 9: For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.
- a) Paul now focuses on the spiritual gift of prophecy in comparison to biblical love.
 - b) Verse 9 says in effect that when "perfection comes" the biblical gift of prophecy will no longer be needed.
 - c) There are some people who use Verses 9-10 as an argument that some of the spiritual gifts are no longer needed when the bible was canonized in the 3rd Century. They argue that "perfection" refers to the completion of God's word, and therefore visible signs given from one believer to the next were no longer necessary as we now have God's word to understand His truth.
 - i) This view was popular in the early part of the 20th Century with the rise of Pentecostal style of worship. This argument was the response to Pentecostalism.
 - ii) The problem with this view is that when Paul wrote it, the Corinthian church would have no concept of an organized bible. All they had were individual letters and the concept of an organized book of sacred writings was unconceivable when Paul wrote this letter.
 - d) John, if what you are saying is true, then what does "when perfection comes" mean?
 - i) It refers to time when we are in heaven and we see Jesus face to face. That will become more obvious in the next few verses.
 - ii) It happens the moment we die or the moment Jesus comes back for the church.
 - iii) I hold the view (as many bible scholars do) that heaven is "outside" of time as we know it. God created this world, and therefore God created time and lives outside of time as we know it. Since time does not exist in heaven, there is a view that all Christians arrive in heaven at the "same time" even though from our perspective, we all die at different times! With that said, the idea of "perfection comes" is that moment when we all see Jesus face to face and therefore, the necessity about prophesying about God and Jesus will be no longer necessary.
 - e) With all that said, Paul's point here is that we cannot fully comprehend God and therefore, cannot fully comprehend God's love for us until we see Jesus face to face.
 - i) This leads to another point: A reason Christians argue "Jesus is God" is that all of God's love is manifested within Jesus, as God's son. If we want to get an idea of what God's love is all about, we look at Jesus as to how that love really exists.
 - f) With that said, its time for a pop quiz. You probably didn't expect that here! ☺
 - i) Take your bible, and turn to this chapter in 1st Corinthians.
 - ii) Now read this chapter and fill in Jesus' name for each of those attributes. If you know your bible at all, you can see how easily Jesus fulfills all of these categories as He dealt with others around Him and as He prayed to God the Father. In other words, if you want to look for the perfect example of how to fulfill all of the love attributes of this chapter, Jesus is that answer.
 - iii) Now comes the hard part of the quiz: Now read Chapter 13 again, and fill in your own name for all of those attributes. When I do this, I have to keep from laughing, as I know how short I fall from being all of these things.
 - iv) Here's the good news about this quiz: Our salvation does not depend on us perfectly keeping this list. Our salvation depends upon trusting Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice for all the sins we have committed!
 - v) At the same time, God does not want us to "wallow" in our sins. God wants to change us to be like His son in every aspect of our lives. That means to show biblical love to others in every situation possible.
 - vi) That means the goal is to live out "Chapter 13". It means to pray to God to have this type of love and use it on others. This list is not designed to be this impossible standard of perfection, but something to shoot for, every day of our lives!

13. Verse 11: When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.
- a) Do I believe God has different standards for children than He does for adults? Of course. God is fair and God always works on our level!
 - b) Paul says that when he was a child, he talked, thought and reasoned like a child. When he grew up, he put his childish ways behind him.
 - i) When you think of the "reasoning" of a child, the focus is on the child himself.
 - ii) When you listened to a child discuss the world around them, it is always about putting themselves first. For a child, it is always about "what is in it for me".
 - iii) When my kids argue, it is usually because they want the same toy at the same time or they both want the same thing. I didn't have to teach my children how to argue and put each other down. It is a "natural" instinct.
 - c) When a child grows up, one learns that the world is bigger than "just them". That is the concept Paul is trying to get across in this verse.
 - i) The idea of Christian love is about putting the needs of others as a priority over oneself. To stop acting like a child is about caring for others. A child may care for his or her parents or friends because that child gets needs from those parents. To "biblically" grow up is about caring for others, not to get some sort of personal pleasure out of that relationship, but simply because one wants to help someone else, with no desire for anything in return.
 - ii) That is the essential idea of Christian love. It is about giving to others without expecting anything in return for that love. That is what maturity is all about.
 - iii) That is Paul's not so subtle point about growing up and not being a child anymore.
 - d) Paul is not claiming to be perfect, but Paul understands what is the goal for Christian living. That is to show love to others by putting the needs of others over our own.
 - i) Does all of this mean we can never take care of our own needs? Of course not. It is a matter of priority and helping people in needs. If one is so physically exhausted, that one cannot even help someone else, one may have to "refresh themselves" spiritually or by some sleep in order to continue to be used by others.
 - ii) I read an illustration of this about a 19th Century Prime Minister of England. He was up late one evening preparing a big speech he had to give the next day. Then a woman came to his room asking the prime minister to go help her son who was dying. The prime minister left the room and spent the next several hours comforting this dying boy and led the boy to the Lord. The story ends that even though the Prime Minister could not finish preparing the speech, it was still one of the best speeches of his career. My point in telling this story is that sometimes God "refreshes us" by putting us in situations where we can be of help to others!
 - a) Jesus practiced that principle in John 4:31-34. Jesus' point in that story is that God the Father gives Him (Jesus) the "food necessary" to complete the work that Jesus was sent to do. In other words, sometimes God himself provides us with the strength we need to show biblical love to others even when we may not feel we have the strength to do it on our own!
 - b) Don't get me wrong. The gospels mention a number of places where Jesus ate and even went to go rest with His disciples. At the same time, there are situations where one looks to God to provide the resources so that we can show love to the fellow Christian despite our "feelings" or "other needs" at that given moment of time!
14. Verse 12: Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
- a) The concept of a "mirror" as we know it today, was not around until the 12th or 13th Century after Christ. The modern glass mirror didn't exist at Jesus' time.

- i) The City of Corinth was known for making mirrors. The type of mirror produced was taken from metal (brass I believe). It was clear enough where one could see themselves, but one has to struggle to see the details. It was not as clear as a still body of water, but it was clear enough one could use it as a mirror.
 - b) With that understood, Verse 12 makes a little more sense. Our understanding of Jesus is like looking at a poor mirror reflection. None of us have seen Jesus face to face. We have read about Him and listened to lectures about Him. Still, that is different from actually seeing Jesus face to face. The point is we can know Jesus from reading and listening, that is still inadequate to fully understand Jesus.
 - i) There is coming a day when all of us will see Jesus "face to face" and fully comprehend who He is.
 - ii) How can millions or billions of people see Jesus face to face? Won't there be a long line? ☺ In heaven, I believe we exist in more than three dimensions. We will each have a personalized body, but those bodies exist in more than three dimensions. That way, we can each be unique and at the same time, we can each be close to Jesus despite the vast numbers. It's just my theory. ☺ We'll find out one day!
 - c) Now let's talk about this verse in context of the rest of the chapter: When we see Jesus, we will fully understand God's love and fully understand what God's desire for us is.
 - i) In the meantime, all we can do is make as much effort as possible to show God's love to others! We will all be judged one day based on the opportunities given to us and did we use them for the glory of God.
 - ii) These verses in Chapter 13 are to remind us of the purpose of life: It is to glory God in all that we do. We do that by using His love for the benefit of those around us. Our purpose for living is to use God's love mainly for the benefit of other Christians, and secondly for all people as we never know who is saved.
 - iii) We are to use our spiritual gifts and the (agape) love that God gives us primarily for the benefit of His church and secondary for everyone and anyone around us!
 - iv) Getting back to the verse, we don't fully "get it" as long as we live in this world. It isn't until we get to heaven that we are going to fully understand God's love. In the meantime, we are to make every effort possible to share God's love with others around us, especially members of His church.
15. Verse 13: And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
- a) This verse is not saying that faith and hope are bad. The key point of this verse is simply that love is the greatest of these three attributes. Let me explain why:
 - i) Faith and hope are both necessary as long as we are living in this world.
 - ii) When we get to heaven faith and hope will no longer be needed as we can see God "every day". We need faith and hope now as we have to live through the trials of this world and we can't see God clearly.
 - iii) At the same time God's love will still be there in the next life. In that sense, love is the greatest of these three attributes.
 - b) A similar idea is that God "is" love. It is part of who He is. Faith and hope are attributes given to us by God and faith and hope help us as we go through life.
 - i) My point is when we think of God, we think of His love. We don't think of God as personally having "faith and hope". Those are attributes He gives us, but He does not need to have faith and hope in Himself as He knows He always exists and He can be trusted through all of eternity.
 - c) So what does that mean for us "practically"? We understand that we need to have faith and hope in order to cope with life, as well as God's love. Does this mean we ignore faith and hope? No. It just means that if you had to rank these three in order of importance, faith would be first. What it also means is that to show Christian love to others is a more important attribute than having or showing Christian faith and hope.

16. OK, thirteen verses in just over 11 pages. I bet you wondered if this lesson would be shorter, given the short length of this chapter! ☺
- a) The reason I focused so deeply on this chapter is to understand the purpose of Christian love, in comparison to spiritual gifts.
 - b) Spiritual gifts are important, and Paul spends two chapters specifically on that topic (Chapters 12 and 14). Paul's point of Chapter 13 is for us to learn how and why spiritual gifts are to be used. Chapter 13 is purposely placed in between two detailed discussions of spiritual gifts so that we know that those gifts should be used to show our love to fellow Christians.
17. Chapter 13 is considered one of Paul's "masterpieces" and is often highlighted as one of the greatest speeches in the bible.
- a) The important thing for you and I to do on occasion is to put our names in the chapter and see how we stack up! These types of attributes described in this chapter are what God wants us to be. They are goals to be shot for in life! It is describing how God wants to live on a daily basis.
 - b) Let's be honest. Living this type of lifestyle is not easy or natural. It is "normal" for us to want to put our own desires first. It is natural for us to do things for others in exchange for something for ourselves, be it a return favor or some sort of reward. It takes effort and practice to show love to others just because we should and expect nothing in return.
 - c) So why should we apply this "agape" type of love? For starters, it is what God commands us to do. Further, God never asks us to do something that He doesn't give us the ability and power to do so in the first place!
 - i) Next, this type of "agape" love is part of God's nature and He wants to share that nature with us. One reason God sent Jesus is for us to learn to live like Him in the sense of "love" for the fellow Christian. That is a reason to read and study the Gospels.
18. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, You have given us the ability to show this type of (agape) love to people around us. Help us to apply that love. Help us to see the needs around us and put the needs of others as a priority over our own. Strengthen us so we can apply this love, especially when we don't "feel" like it! Help our motivation to be solely for the benefit of those we are trying to help and not for any type of personal gain. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.