

I Corinthians

Chapter 13:1-13

¹**If** I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

John MacArthur In his opening, refers to the chapter as a beautiful flower and comments, "Studying it is somewhat like taking apart a flower; part of the beauty is lost when the components are separated." However, he then goes on to explain that it is needful to do just that so we understand the message being given.

Multiple commentators advise us to understand the chapter within the context of the book. Although the chapter makes a beautiful wall-hanging ... studying it within its context reveals more of the Lord through Paul's intent.

If > (Precept Austin) The five "If's" in 1 Cor 13:1-3 are each sentences which describe **potential actions**. Notice that this "If" introduces a statement which might be paraphrased "If we could continually speak in tongues of men or tongues of angels (in their angelic language)." Paul is not advocating or promoting angelic languages, but simply postulating, if that "higher" supernatural language were even possible for finite natural men, it would still be worthless! That's his main point. He is not saying it is possible for men to speak angelic languages.

Do not have > (Precept Austin) present tense > continually

Love > (Precept Austin) Agape is self-sacrificial and seeks the benefit of the one loved (without expecting anything in return), a love which means death to self since the essence of self is selfishness, self-will and self-gratification. Agape is a love activated by personal choice of our will (enabled by God working within us - see Php 2:13NLT+) and is not based on our feelings toward the one loved. Agape may involve emotion, but it must always involve specific actions as Paul goes on to describe in 1Co 13:4-8 (which in itself is an excellent definition of love as "love in action").

John MacArthur > *agape* > is one of the rarest words in ancient Greek literature, but one of the most common in the New Testament.

- Unlike our English love, it never refers to romantic or sexual love, for which *erōs* was used, and which does not appear in the New Testament.
- Nor does it refer to mere sentiment, a pleasant feeling about something or someone. It does not mean close friendship or brotherly love, for which *philia* is used.
- It is sacrifice of self for the sake of others, even for others who may care nothing at all for us and who may even hate us.

- It is not a feeling but a determined act of will, which always results in determined acts of self-giving.
- Love is the willing, joyful desire to put the welfare of others above our own. It leaves no place for pride, vanity, arrogance, self-seeking, or self-glory.
- It is an act of choice we are commanded to exercise even in behalf of our enemies: "I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45). If God so loved us that, even "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:4-7), how much more should we love those who are our enemies.

I have become > (Robertson) (Greek grammar) It is put vividly, "I am already become."

Noisy gong > (Vincent) (*sounding brass* in the KJV) The metal is not properly brass, the alloy of copper and zinc, but copper, or bronze, the alloy of copper and tin, of which the Homeric weapons were made. Being the metal in common use, it came to be employed as a term for metal in general. Afterward it was distinguished; common copper being called black or red copper, and the celebrated Corinthian bronze being known as mixed copper. The word here does not mean a brazen instrument, but a piece of unwrought metal, which emitted a sound on being struck.

Or a tinkling cymbal > (Barnes) A cymbal giving a clanging, clattering sound. The word rendered "tinkling" (ἀλαλάζον *alalazon*, from ἀλαλή *alalē* or αλαλα *alala*, a "war-cry") properly denotes a loud cry, or shout, such as is used in battle; and then also a loud cry or mourning, cries of lamentation or grief; the loud "shriek" of sorrow, Mark 5:38, "Them that wept and wailed greatly." It then means a clanging or clattering sound, such as was made on a cymbal.

Precept Austin > The cymbal was made of two hollow basins which were struck together to create a musical sound. Cymbals were used in pagan worship as well as in the Jewish worship of the true God. Classical writers also used *kumbalon* symbolically to refer to a boastful, empty-headed orator.

Wuest Translation > *If in the languages of men I speak and the languages of the angels but do not have love, I have already become and at present am sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*

²**If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**

Nothing > (Precept Austin) > The Greek word for *nothing* is *oudeis* (not *medeís* which means relatively nothing) which means *absolutely nothing*! This the same word our Lord Jesus used when He declared "*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do (absolutely) nothing (oudeis).*"

Wuest Translation > *And if I have the gift of uttering divine revelations and know all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and if I have all **the** faith so that I am able to keep on removing mountain after mountain, but am not possessing love, I am nothing.*

³ **And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.**

Charity > NASB translates this as *to feed* ... Strong's > *to feed with morsels*

Robertson > to feed, to nourish morsel or bit, and so to feed, by putting a morsel into the mouth like infant

MacArthur > The term for give means to dole out in small quantities, and signifies a long-term, systematic program of giving away everything one possesses. Such an ultimate act of benevolence, giving all one's possessions to feed the poor, would not be a spiritual deed if not done out of genuine love, no matter how great the sacrifice or how many people were fed.

So that I may glory > KJV translates this as *to be burned* (each using different source texts)

Utley > There are two manuscript options: "burned" (i.e., *kauthēsomai*) and "glory" (i.e., *kauchēsōmai*) are both found in early Greek manuscripts and the early church fathers.

No good > This is the same word we saw earlier > *absolutely nothing*

⁴ **Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant.**

Love > (Spurgeon) Note that *agape* "love" is defined by verbs rather than adjectives--by what it does, instead of what it is. Note also that love is not a feeling and as you survey Paul's description of *agape* love, you note that there is not stress on personal feeling. The kind of love Paul is talking about is seen and experienced and demonstrated.

Utley > All of these descriptions of love are active.

Patient > (Precept Austin) (*makrothumeo* from *makros* = long, distant, far off, large + *thumos* = temper, passion, emotion or *thumoomai* = to be furious or burn with intense anger) literally describes prolonged restraint of *thumos*, of emotion, anger or agitation.

Kind > (Precept Austin) (*chresteumai* from *chrestós* = useful, gracious, kind and is related in turn to *chráomai* = to furnish what is needed) means to provide something beneficial for someone as an act of kindness. To be kind and gracious. It is an attitude of being willing to help or assist rendering gracious, well-disposed service to others. It is active goodwill. It not only feels generous, it is generous.

Jealous > (Precept Austin) (*zeloo* from *zelos* = zeal in turn from *zeo* = boil; source of our English word "zeal") properly, to bubble over from getting so hot (boiling) and figuratively to burn with zeal (or intensity), to be fervent, to "boil" with envy, to be jealous.

Brag > (Precept Austin) *perpereuomai* from a word not in the NT = *perperos* = vainglorious, braggart) means to talk with conceit or to behave as a braggart or windbag, exhibiting self display and employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively.

Arrogant > (Precept Austin) (*phusioo* from *phusáo* = breathe, blow, inflate from *phusa* = bellows) means literally to puff up (like a pair of bellows) and is used figuratively to describe one who becomes "inflated", proud, haughty or puffed up with pride.

Phillips Translation > *This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience - it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.*

Wuest Translation > *Love meekly and patiently bears ill treatment from others. Love is kind, gentle, benign, pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh and austere; is not envious. Love does not brag, nor does it show itself off, is not ostentatious, does not have an inflated ego*

⁵ *It does not act **disgracefully**, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not **provoked**, does not **keep an account** of a wrong suffered, ⁶ it does not rejoice in **unrighteousness**, but rejoices with the truth;*

Disgracefully > (HELPS Word Studies) to act unseemly (literally, "improperly"); (figuratively) to lack proper form and hence thought of as unseemly (indecent, unbecoming).

Zodhiates - The Greek word *schema* means "shape or plan," as reflected in our English words "scheme, schematic." It refers not to the substance of a thing or person but to its outward appearance, the shape it takes before others. Paul is concerned not only with the Christian's character but also with the way he expresses this character outwardly. Some Christians think it makes no difference whether they speak bluntly or tactfully, as long as they speak the truth.

Provoked > (HELPS Word Studies) *paroksynō* (from *pará*, "alongside" and *oxys*, "a sharp edge") – properly, cut close alongside, i.e. to incite ("jab") someone and stimulate their feelings

Keep an account > (Precept Austin) (*logizomai* from *logos* = reason) means to think about something in a detailed and logical manner. The idea is to put together with one's mind or to occupy oneself with reckonings (in this case of wrongs done to oneself).

Unrighteousness > (Precept Austin) *adikia* > *dike* > right, justice with *alpha negative* > unjustice

⁷ *it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

It keeps every confidence > (KJV translates it as *beareth all things*) **Strong's** > to cover closely (so as to keep water out), generally to bear up under

Precept Austin (The Greek word for *beareth*) has two shades of meaning and thus this verse could mean that love bears all things in the sense that it patiently endures all things or that it hides or conceals the faults of others

Vincent > It keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out the water, or the roof the rain.

Believes > (Strong's) *pisteuo* > to believe, entrust (This is the same word found in John 3:16)

Hopes > (Strong's) to expect, to hope (for)

Endures > (Strong's) to stay behind, to await, endure (Tie this to *hope* above)

⁸ Love *never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away with.* ⁹ *For we know in part and prophesy in part;* ¹⁰ *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with.*

Never > (Precept Austin) *oude pote* from *oude* = not even + *poté* = ever) means (absolutely and objectively) not even at any time, never at all, neither at any time, never, nothing at any time.

Fails > (Strong's) to fall

Prophecy. . .will be done away. . .tongues. . .will cease. . .knowledge. . .will be done away" (Uteley) Notice the parallel structure. These were the spiritual gifts which the Corinthian Church was magnifying (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Done away with > (HELPS Word Studies) *katargéō* (from *katá*, "down to a point," and *argéō*, "inactive, idle") – properly, idle down, rendering something inert (“completely inoperative”)

Cease > (Precept Austin) *pauo* from which we get English "pause" > means to cause something or someone to cease from some activity or state and so to come to an end.

Part > (Strong’s) a part, share, portion

Perfect > (Strong’s) having reached its end, complete, perfect

Wuest Translation for verse 9 > *for we know in a partial, fragmentary, incomplete way, and we utter divine revelations in the same way. But whenever that which is complete comes, that which is incomplete and fragmentary will be done away.*

¹¹ *When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, **think like a child**, reason like a child; **when I became a man, I did away with** childish things.*

Think like a child > (Vincent) The reference here is to the earlier undeveloped exercise of the childish mind; a thinking which is not yet connected reasoning.

When I became a man > (Vincent) Rev., better, giving the force of the perfect tense, *now that I am become*

Wuest Translation > *When I have become a man and have the status of an adult*

Did away with > (HELPS Word Studies) *katargéō* (from *katá*, "down to a point," and *argéō*, "inactive, idle") – properly, idle down, rendering something inert (“completely inoperative”)

¹² *For now we see **in a mirror dimly**, but then face to face; **now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known.***

In a mirror dimly > (Robertson) Ancient mirrors were of polished metal, not glass, those in Corinth being famous. **Dimly** > Literally, *in an enigma*. Old word to express obscurely. This is true of all ancient mirrors. Here only in N.T., but often in LXX. "To see a friend's face in a cheap mirror would be very different from looking at the friend" (Robertson and Plummer).

Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known > (Wuest Translation) *Now I know only in a fragmentary fashion, but then I shall fully know even as also I was known.*

Fee > “Our present ‘vision’ of God, as great as it is, is as nothing when compared to the real thing that is yet to be; it is like the difference between seeing a reflected image in a mirror and seeing a person face to face.”

¹³ *But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Remain > (Strong's) to stay, abide, remain

But the greatest of these is love > (Constable) Apparently Paul introduced "faith" and "hope," at this point, to show that "love" is not only superior to the gifts, but it is superior even to other great virtues. Faith and hope are gifts, and they are also Christian virtues of the same type as love. Yet love even outstrips the other major Christian virtues because it will outlast them.

Question > will our "faith" and "hope" grow once we reach glory? Love will ... (**Utley**) It is greatest because these others will cease at the consummation of the new age. Faith will turn to sight and hope will have its fulfillment, but love remains because it is the basic character of God (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:8,16).