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## **INTRODUCTION.**

The "More excellent way," or "more surpassing way," that 1Cor.12v31. tells us to walk in, is not the way of love severed from, or separate and distinct from all other gifts, graces, attributes and talents; it is love as the motivating force and guiding principle of all these desirable and lovely things. It is certainly not what some would have us think, love in opposition to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is love as the guiding and guarding influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The "excellent way" that is spoken of is "a more excellent way" than just desiring the gifts of the Spirit being sought and used out of love for others.

If we desire spiritual gifts out of love for Christ and other people, the gifts will automatically manifest themselves as the need for them arises, if we are living close to God. Let us not desire spiritual gifts just because they are good and remarkable, let us desire them because we love the Lord Jesus and we want to see His will done, and because we love people and want to meet their needs. If we desire spiritual gifts so that we can build up our own denomination, or church, or even our own name, we desire spiritual gifts for the very lowest of reasons. Spiritual desire and love should go together, as 1Cor.14v1. tells us quite plainly, "pursue love and earnestly desire spiritual gifts." We see, then, that 1Cor.13. is an exhortation to use spiritual gifts for loving purposes and with loving attitudes. Paul tells us the essential attitudes of mind that are necessary to make the use of spiritual gifts profitable, and the spiritual principles that have to be followed to obtain a revival and keep a revival going on in the will of God. It is love alone that will keep a Pentecostal revival, or keep us from receiving spiritual gifts, or cause us to use God's precious gifts in the wrong way when we receive them.

When Paul speaks of the "more excellent way" in 1Cor.13., he is speaking of love in its relation to spiritual gifts. Paul states that love should always be the directing force of spiritual gifts. Paul is certainly not saying that we should despise spiritual gifts and prefer love, as some would have us believe. Many expositors take this chapter right out of its context and speak of love quite separately from spiritual gifts. The position of this chapter is an embarrassment to many good expositors, on either side of its experience of which they know little or nothing, and it is always difficult to write of an experience that is foreign to you. However, 1Cor.14v1. tells us clearly why Paul wrote this chapter on love, he said "follow after love and desire spiritual gifts." The chapter on love, 1Cor.13., is placed between two chapters which speak about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to emphasise the need of love in the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, and the need that love has for the manifestation

of these gifts; for without spiritual power love cannot meet the needs of the Church or the world. Love is very often powerless without the Holy Spirit's gifts, and even His gifts can be profitless to us without love. God knew that Satan would attack the power-house of the Church, and He knew that it was in the area of spiritual gifts and love that the Church would fail most, and so through Paul He gives some direction and advice on these great subjects. The oil of love is never needed anywhere more than in the powerhouse of the Church.

Some may say, "You can seek for gifts, but I am going to seek for love." But this is very foolish, for the Bible commands us to seek after both love and gifts. Those who are seeking love from the God of love will also seek HIS gifts. The fact that a person has spiritual gifts does not mean that they lack love, and the fact that a person lacks spiritual gifts does not mean that they possess love, indeed it may mean the very reverse, for it is possible to follow after love and despise or criticise spiritual gifts. If we really desire and follow after love we shall desire, love and encourage spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts are the gifts of divine love, and the last thing we should do is to hurt and slander our heavenly Father by disdain or positively condemning the lovely gifts that He has given. We are not glorifying God by extolling love at the expense of the gifts that He has given

Paul does not say in 1Cor.13. that the gifts are completely profitless without love, he says that without love they do not profit the person who manifests them, they may certainly profit others whose needs are met through them. e.g. a gift of healing or a prophecy. It is not the gifts that are "nothing" without love, for they are given by the God of love and are wonderful; it is the loveless possessor that is "nothing." However, spiritual gifts ministered in love profit both the possessor and the recipients of the gifts. We need to remember that it is not only spiritual gifts that lose their value and profit without love; knowledge of sacred things, gifts to the needy, and even martyrdom are also profitless to us without love. Though spiritual gifts may lose some of their value if they are manifested without love, love is helpless without them. Love needs power to meet the needs of the broken in heart, the sick in body and the oppressed. If we have love and yet do not have the power to meet the needs of suffering humanity we shall be completely crushed and broken-hearted. The gifts of the Holy Spirit have a vital part to play in the ministry of love, for they are one of the main channels of the love of God to a needy Church and world, as the ministry of Christ and His apostles abundantly demonstrates.

The discourse in 1Cor.13. accepts the fact that there are difficulties and dangers connected with the manifestation of spiritual gifts, but this is unavoidable, power always has its dangers. However, nobody in their right senses would say, "Let us do away with electricity, it is very dangerous." We learn to use electricity properly and we should do the same with spiritual gifts. Paul tells us in 1Cor.13. how to use God's power and he tells us the qualities of character that will make the use of spiritual power a blessing. We can desire spiritual gifts because they are so interesting, inspiring, and beautiful, and this is quite proper, however, Paul tells us that the best reason for desiring the Holy Spirit's gifts is because we love people and want to see their needs met. If our desire for spiritual gifts springs out of a love for God and people we will not go far wrong, and the lovely gifts our heavenly Father has given will be the blessing that He desires.

There is a wonderful healing power and exceedingly precious fellowship in mature Christian love. When a spiritually sick or oppressed Christian comes into the fellowship of Christians who have had this beautiful love and affection for one another they experience a wonderful healing balm and comfort. There is a wonderful blessing upon churches where Christians really love one another, but churches, which lack love and have strife and division, are very unhappy places. Spiritual gifts manifested in thoughtful love for others produce a beautiful fellowship and blessing. Spiritual gifts manifested without this beautiful love and affection will lack much of the ability to bless, and, indeed, with a hard and bitter spirit, the effect can even be harmful.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended by God to convey the lovely warmth, compassion and concern of the lovely God of love to His children and the world. The gifts of the Spirit are the gifts of the Holy Spirit; they are the manifestations of divine love. The atmosphere of heaven will be one of perfect love, and the atmosphere of a church where God reigns will be one of perfect love, and it will be a veritable foretaste of heaven. Nothing that defiles will be allowed to enter and spoil the lovely atmosphere of heaven, love, pure love, perfect love, will be the crowning beauty of the kingdom of God, let us strive to make it the crowning beauty of our churches. Let us make sure that we take heed to the qualities of love that are described in 1Cor.13v4-8., and let us make sure that we regulate the gifts of the Holy Spirit with these loving principles in mind.

The Greek word that is used for love in 1Cor.13. is "agapao," it is the word that the New Testament uses to describe the love of God and Christian love. It is the love that God demands for Himself and our neighbour. Mt.5v43,44. 22v37,39. It is the love of the new commandment that Christ gave. Jn.13v34,35. 15v12. It is the love that the abounding iniquity of the last days will cause to grow cold in the careless Christian's heart. Mt.24v12. This is the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts after endurance in tribulation. Rom.8v5. It is the love of God from which nothing can separate us. Rom.8v39. It is the love that caused God to send His Son to die for the world. Jn.3v16. It is the love that is the fruit of the Spirit. Gal.5v22. "Agape" love is not just intellectual, or an attitude of mind, it is a warm and fervent love, "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1Pet.1v22. Hos.11v8. Lk.19v41-44.

"Agape" love is, then, not only an emotion, it is a standard of life, a warm and righteous attitude of mind, "a deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety." It is a matter of the heart as well as

the decision of a benevolent and loving mind. It is usually distinct from "philia," the love of emotion and friendship, for "philia" speaks of a love that could be fervent and tender and at the same time possibly short-lived and weak, whereas without "agape" only speaks of a constant, unwavering, practical love. A good example of the difference between "agape" and "philia" is found in Jn.21v15-19., the Lord Jesus twice asks Peter if he still lays claim to the constant, unfailing practical "agape" love. Peter can only answer that bitter experience has taught him that his love is only the fervent, tender but weak "philia" love. When the Lord Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him with a "philia" love, it breaks Peter, he said in effect, "You know my heart Lord, and you know how broken it is because my warm but weak "philia" love has failed you. I have professed more than I could perform, but from now on I will perform before I will profess." The Lord Jesus comforts His distraught apostle with the disclosure that his life would end in a magnificent display of "agape" love, Peter would lay down his life for his Saviour and His sheep, Jn.15v13., until that occurs he is to follow Him and feed His sheep and lambs. Oh, the wonderful "agape" love of Jesus for us. He accepts our "philia" love and transforms it by His grace. No one can be a disciple of Christ without having a "philia" love for Him. 1Cor.16v22.

We can see, then, that "agape" love in the New Testament speaks of love and affection on the very highest level, whereas "philia," the love of emotion and friendship, is usually dependent upon circumstances, and it is only occasionally used to describe the very highest kind of love and affection, e.g. the Love of the Father for His Son. Jn.5v20. The love of Christ for Lazarus. Jn.11v3,36. Christ's love for the beloved apostle John. Jn.20v2. The affection and love that the Father has for His beloved children. Jn.16v27. So we can see that only on occasions "philia" is lifted from the lower levels of secular Greek to the highest levels of divine love. Another striking example of this is seen in Rev.3v19., where Christ says, "as many as I love, "phileo," I rebuke and discipline." The love and affection of Christ do not change even when His disciples are unworthy of it and are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The affection and love of Christ are constant to His brethren, as believers we are always dear to Him, even if we may be a grief and disgrace to Him.

"Agape" love is usually distinct from "philia" love, the love of emotion and friendship; it is quite distinct from "storge," natural affection; and "eros" and "epithumia," illicit sexual lust. "Eros is a passionate love, and in secular Greek it is used almost entirely to describe love between sexes. However, the word had degenerated to describe a lust that was evil. The New Testament nowhere condemns sexual love as unholy or unclean, it says that marriage is honourable and not defiling. Heb.13v4. 1Tim.4v3. The Bible only condemns sexual lust and uncleanness, and this is what the word "eros" had come to mean. In the world today there is an emphasis upon this kind of love, the erotic is made to look the desirable and the good, the lowest love is pictured as the highest, and much advertising and entertainment is aimed at appealing to and stimulating the fleshly passions. Aristotle rightly tells us that this passion is stimulated by the pleasure of the eye, so we need to take care of "eyebath." The lust of the flesh is stimulated by the lust of the eye. There are no decent ideas of love in the word "eros," and this word is not used in the New Testament at all, however, the sin that it represents is condemned in many places in the Scriptures, and in the New Testament "epithumia" is used to describe evil "eros" love. How grand it is to come from the evil and murky depths of "eros" love, to the pure and lovely air of "agape" love, the word that describes the lovely love of God and pure Christian love, which is far more beautiful and grand than the best love that the world can conceive and achieve. Now let us go on to consider the first main division of 1Cor.13..

### **1. EVERY MINISTRY IS PROFITLESS TO US WITHOUT LOVE. 1Cor.13v1-3.**

Love is that beautiful virtue that gives value to everything that we do, it turns all that it touches into gold. This lovely quality of character makes what we do valuable, precious to God and beneficial to man. Even the excellent actions and the most lovely spiritual gifts lose their power to bless as they should if love does not accompany them, and they can become valueless and profitless to us if we do not manifest the gifts in love. Let us now consider in detail these first three verses.

### **A. SPIRITUAL GIFTS FAIL IN THEIR PURPOSE IF THEY ARE NOT MANIFESTED IN LOVE.**

#### **WE CAN SPEAK IN THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ANGELIC TONGUES, AND YET HAVE AN EMPTY SOUL.**

The Holy Spirit can give us the loveliest languages to speak but if they are not manifested in love we will not impart or receive any blessing. Without love we are "but roaring brass and clashing cymbal." We may have a great flow of language with perfect phonetics and diction, but without love it will be hard and empty and it will chill instead of bless. The tongues of men can be very beautiful to listen to, and the tongues of angels are infinitely more splendid, but without love the most beautiful and exalted of inspired language has a great emptiness and lacks the power to bless. The Holy Spirit breathes into our heart and mind these beautiful and exalted words He lades them with love and grace, but as they go through the human channel they can lose this divine benediction, the human personality can "sieve out" all the beauty, love and tenderness that the Holy Spirit puts into His utterance. The beautiful gift that God has given can be tainted and marred by the nature of the person who manifests the gift, and it can fail to be the blessing that God desires. But when a person conveys the love, beauty and grace that the Holy Spirit breathes into their gift of tongues, it can bring the very atmosphere of heaven upon earth.

The word "sounding" is translated "roar" once in the New Testament, and the word for "tinkle" can be translated "clash," "clanking," or "wail," as the word could be translated, "roaring brass or a clashing cymbal." Some, however, would suggest that "tinkling cymbal" should be translated "tinkling bell," suggesting that there

is a hint of beauty in the sound. Others think that Paul is referring to the piercing high note of the finger cymbals or castanets, whatever this second instrument may have been, the whole impression of this verse is of a hard and harsh noise without any depth or beauty, a noise whose continual repetition is jarring and unpleasant. So the gift of tongues which is given specifically to build up a Christian's character, to strengthen spiritual life and form love, can fail to do these things if we are living unconsecrated and careless lives. Christians who minister their gift of tongues on this low level of unblessed noise are nearly always Christians who speak in tongues in public and fail to use their gift in their private time of devotion; for the Bible makes it quite clear that the place where speaking in tongues should be manifested the most, is the secret place of prayer, and if it is diligently used in private prayer, a Christian cannot help but be blessed openly. 1Cor.14v2,4. Mt.6v5,6. The gift of tongues is primarily for speaking to God in prayer, and the use of this gift in the secret place, with a contrite spirit, will do wonders for our spiritual life and character.

God has given the gift of tongues to His Church because it is absolutely indispensable and necessary. God does not give any gifts that are mean or paltry, they are all priceless, magnificent, good and beautiful, and we should bow the knee to His wisdom, love and authority and we should accept them all, including the gift of tongues. Who are we to criticise the "good and perfect gifts" that our Father has given to us." He is the Lord, let us recognise the value and importance of what He has given. How dare we criticise His gifts, or neglect to seek them, when He has commanded us not only to pursue after love, but earnestly seek spiritual gifts as well? 1Cor.14v1. The proper exercise of the gift of tongues in the life of the believer will enable the Lord to do His will more perfectly in their life, for, as St. Paul tells us, it will build love, faith and spiritual strength in the possessor of the gift. Indeed, it is the one gift whose primary aim is the spiritual well-being of the possessor, and more than any other gift, the gift of tongues will produce spiritual strength, character and the fruits in the Christian believer. For a Christian cannot prophesy, or manifest the other gifts of the Spirit when he desires, and when he does it will nearly always be for the benefit of others, but he can speak in tongues when he desires and be spiritually edified as a result.

So we can see that when Paul is speaking of prophecy and the other gifts as being "greater gifts" than the gift of tongues, he is thinking of public meetings of Christians, for Paul makes it quite clear that the greatest gift for the personal edification of the believer in his devotional life, is the gift of tongues. The diligent, devotional and loving use of the gift of tongues in secret will result in the other gifts being manifested in public. 1Cor.14v2,4,18. with 2Cor.12v12. Paul the apostle spoke in tongues more than the verbose and talkative Corinthians, but he did it mainly in private prayer so that he could edify his fellow-Christians in public, this one of the secrets of Paul's spiritual power. The determined and devotional exercise of the gift of tongues can meet the need of the whole personality, it can result in the mind being relieved from stress and the body delivered from sickness, as well as the soul and spirit being renewed, and the work of God extended. For God the Holy Spirit comes to bring wholeness and salvation to every part of the personality, and he manifests the gift of tongues through us, the need of the whole personality can be met.

So we can see that the possession of the gift of tongues will not produce a lack of love, it is given by God to produce love. Indeed, a lack of this gift is far more likely to result in a lack of love and spiritual power, for every gift of God and means of grace are essential for spiritual progress and spiritual power. Opposition, scorn, ridicule, or even indifference towards the gift of tongues show that a Christian's love and obedience of God's Word is lacking. 1Cor.12v31. 14v1,39. The contrite and devotional use of the gift of tongues will produce a spiritual sweetness and spiritual power that are unattainable without this gift. However, even this gift, which is specifically given for the enrichment of spiritual life and the building of character and love, will not profit us if we are unconsecrated and there is malice and sin in our hearts. However, with love as our guiding principle, we shall use the gift of tongues with real blessing and profit, and it will not only edify ourselves, but the church as well. Any Christian who uses this gift in love will indefinitely richer for its manifestation.

All Christians can know the inspiration, joy and blessing of prayer and praise in "other languages," through the gift of tongues, and this, according to 1Cor.13v1., can be in heavenly, as well as earthly languages. The Holy Spirit through these languages causes us to pray or praise according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit can bring our praise, needs and desires to God our Father; He can cause us to give thanks, to worship, to bless, and even to pray for needs that we do not know. It is God directing the prayer life of the believer on the highest level. The whole effect of the gift of tongues when manifested in love is to produce character, love, fruit and blessing.

#### **WE CAN HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND YET BE "NOTHING." Mt.17v20. 21v21.**

"Nothing," is "outhineimi," not just, a nobody; but a nothing, they are at zero. We can have tremendous divine truth given to us by the Holy Spirit, and give that revelation with great power, and yet be nothing. We can have words of wisdom and knowledge carried in the gift of prophecy, that span the centuries, or even millenniums, and yet it may be no good to us, and may fail to produce any Christ-like character in us. The fact that we are channels of such marvellous manifestations does not necessarily mean that we are in good spiritual condition; we can have a heart like Balaam, a heart full of worldly ambition and devoid of love. You can have the words and desires of God revealed to you, but lacking the emotion and love of God they fail to bless as they should. It is not what you say, but the spirit with which you say a truth that counts with God, the same words from a loving heart and a hard heart are quite different in their effect. The manifestation of the gift of prophecy, or any spiritual gift, with a wrong motive or attitude, can produce and increase spiritual pride and

arrogance, and even if the spiritual and humble a constant watch has to be kept on the attitude of the heart, for even the apostle Paul found that abundance of spiritual revelation can lead to pride, and we read in 2Cor.12v7-10. that the Lord had to take steps to counteract this.

So we can see that the gift of prophecy which God designed to build up the Church, will fail to produce the full measure of good that God intends if it is not manifested in love, for, as with all the gifts and Christian activities, the channel can taint the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Notice that Paul does not say that the gift of prophecy is no good and "nothing," he says that the person who manifests the gift without love is no good and "nothing." The manifestation of a prophetic gift in love brings untold blessing. It brings untold blessing to a needy, sad, or downcast Christian, who finds God speaking to them and comforting their sorrowful heart. It can also be used to exhort the Church and even to convict and convert the sinner. 1Cor.14v3,5,24,25. Prophecy builds up the Church and extends the work of God. It must not be confused with preaching or teaching the Word of God, as good and desirable as these ministries are, for Paul clearly distinguishes a prophetic ministry from a preaching ministry in Rom.12v6,7., he plainly tells us that some Christians have a definite ministry of prophecy.

The gift of prophecy is a very blessed manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It can be a channel for words of wisdom and knowledge; it can reveal God's desire to manifest the gifts of power and demonstration, i.e. the gifts of faith, healings and miracles, in addition to its more normal use for edification, exhortation and comfort. No wonder that the apostle Paul directs us to "Make love your quest, and be eager for spiritual gifts, but chiefly for prophecy."

**WE CAN HAVE GREAT GIFTS OF POWER, AND YET BE "NOTHING." "Faith to move mountains." 1Cor.13v2.**

We read in Acts.2v22. that signs, wonders and miracles can be a sign of the approval of God, but here we read that a faith to trust God for the outstanding or the ultimate in miracles, does not automatically mean that we are pleasing to God, or have a godly character. We can have great healing campaigns, experience great miracles, accomplish great things for God and yet be "nothing." We can perform God's desire to meet the needs of suffering humanity and yet have no real love for them, and though the gifts are manifested may benefit the recipients of the gifts, e.g. a gift of healing for cancer, it profits the channel nothing if the gifts are not manifested in love. However, even if the channel is lacking in love, the gifts of demonstration can be a great blessing, for they do demonstrate the love and affection of God, but where the channel of the gifts is full of the love of God, there is an additional depth, beauty and blessing that is not possible if one is lacking this lovely quality of character.

We read in Mt.7v21-23. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. v2 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied, " propheteuo" 4395, in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' v23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' See also Mt.25v41., "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" In the parallel passage in Lk.13v26,27., people are said to have gone out and in with Him on familiar terms.

These preachers claim to have prophesied in Christ's name and to have done many miracles. But Jesus will rip off the sheepskin and reveal the ravaging wolf underneath. "I never knew you," is "oudepote 3763, egnon 1097, humas" 5209, "I was never at any point in time had any experimental knowledge and acquaintance with you." "Egnon" is the aorist tense "I will declare unto them," "declare" is "homologeso" 3670, the very word used of open profession of Christ before men, Mt.10v32. Rom.10v9., Jesus will use for public and open announcement of their doom,

We can see from Mt.7v21-23., that it is possible to backslide and apostatise after a wonderful manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but this does not make the gifts of the Holy Spirit any the less beautiful, it reveals the perversity and wickedness of the human heart. It is also very wicked to despise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and teach against them. How can one have any real love for God or men and do this? The gifts of the Holy Spirit are essential if the Church is to fulfil the desires of the God of love, let us, therefore, obey the Word of God and "make love our quest, and be eager for spiritual gifts." 1Cor.14v1.

**WE CAN HAVE A PROFOUND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE, AND YET BE NOTHING.**

A Christian may "understand all sacred and mysterious secrets and possess all knowledge" and yet be "nothing." This is not speaking of a person having a great knowledge of secular things; this Scripture is speaking of a great knowledge of spiritual truths. Satan was one of the most intellectual of all created beings, the Bible says that he was, "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty," but the Bible goes on to say that his wisdom was corrupted because of his pride at this beauty, his lack of respect and love for God and his ruthless ambition. Ez.28v12-20. Is.14v12,13. Paul tells us that it is possible to know "all mysteries and all knowledge" and yet be devoid of love, and we can have a full mind and yet have an empty soul. Even the most vital and interesting truth can be dry and barren when it is delivered from an empty soul. Even divine truth coming over the desert of lovelessness loses much of its power to bless. A person may be able to give a perfect discourse on the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit and have little of either. We can have the doctrine of an experience and

yet not possess that experience; we can preach on love and have little or no real love. Solomon was wise and had an immense knowledge, but he had not got enough love for God or his people to stop worshipping his wives idols. It is not knowing the truth, it is obeying it that counts with God.

Knowledge without love brings pride and arrogance, and contempt for people of less ability, privilege and gift. Jn.8v3 with Lk.6v20. We have to serve the Lord with humility of mind, warmth of heart and many tears to counteract intellectual arrogance. Acts.20v19. Paul states in 1Cor.8v1. that, "knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." Col.2v18. The majority of the spiritual leaders of Israel were intellectually arrogant, they sneered in contempt, "this people that no not the Law are cursed," Jn.8v3., but the Lord Jesus, who was "The Truth" and knew more real truth than any of these arrogant leaders, said to the people that they despised, "blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," and he chose His apostles from them Lk.6v20. Intellectual arrogance will in the end blind our eyes to the truth and keep us from experiencing the truth. Jn5v44. with 9v39-41.

In saying these things we place no premium upon ignorance, the scriptures rightly state that ignorance is a dangerous and undesirable thing. Heb.5v11-6v12. What a blessing it is to listen to one who has both knowledge of spiritual things and love as well. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart and mind brings forth good things. There is a real power in knowledge and there is a battle for people's minds going on in the world today, for the leaders of the nations know that if you can get a person's mind you have their life and support. The Lord Jesus came into the world to capture the hearts and minds of people and win them over to the truth, the truth that sets men free from the bondage of sin and Satan.

How important is the knowledge of the sacred secrets of God! They deliver the soul, they feed the mind and spirit, and they establish and sanctify the Christian. This is why the ministry of a teacher is set so high in 1Cor.12v28., but here Paul teaches us that if we have the ministry of a teacher at its very highest level, it does not profit us if we are devoid of love, we are an empty soul and are "nothing." The thoughts that we may utter may be the eternal counsels, purposes and mind of God and of the most tremendous significance and importance, but if we have no love in our heart, then we are "nothing." Even the truth can fail to sanctify us if we hold on to sin and malice in our hearts. Sometimes we can think that because we say or preach a truth that it is part of us, and yet the very opposite can be true. We not only have to preach truth, we have to make sure that it is part of our experience, or we shall be "nothing." A keen intellect is a good thing, and a proper understanding of spiritual truths is most desirable, but we must make quite sure that we have a loving heart as well as an able and well-instructed mind.

### **EVEN THE MOST SACRIFICIAL GIVING IS PROFITLESS TO US, IF LOVE IS NOT THE MOTIVE FOR GIVING.**

Sacrificial giving to the extent of giving all that we possess will not profit us unless love is the motive that drives us to do this. We can give away ALL our earthly treasure and yet not lay up any treasure in heaven. One can give out of a sense of duty, or for prestige, or even with a contemptuous and condescending air. The way that God wants us to give and not give is shown in Mt.6v1-4. Mk.12v41-44. Lk.21v1-3. 2Cor.8v1-9v15. Our giving must come out of a love for God and a love for people, we are warned about giving for praise or self-glory in Mt.6v1-4., the unostentatious secret giver will receive an open reward from God. God not only notes what we give, but how we give as well, He also notes what we keep for ourselves after we have given. The widow gave all that she had out of sheer love for God, though she did not know where her next penny was coming from. Her gift was probably the smallest given, but in God's eyes she had given more than all the other gifts put together. The Lord Jesus let this dear little woman give her all, for He saw His Father's provision waiting for this dear woman, "pressed down, shaken together, and running over," perhaps He promptly dispatched a disciple with some money to meet her need. Lk.6v38. Jn.13v29. The little woman gave all that she had and received a great reward in heaven, however, Paul tells us that we can give all that we have like the widow, and yet, unlike her, it may profit us nothing.

It is very necessary here to state that widows who are poor should not be expected to contribute a tithe of their income to God, under the law poor widows were to receive from the tithes given to God. Ex.22v22-24. Deut.10v17,18. 14v29. 26v12-15. 27v19. Most of the Christian giving recorded in the New Testament was to meet the needs of the poor Christians. e.g. Acts.2v44,45. 6v1-7. 2Cor.8v1 to 9v15. 1Tim.5v16. How blessed it is to meet the needs of the poor, or a need in the work of God, such giving makes the giver more blessed than the recipient of the gift. However, Paul makes it quite clear that we can make tremendous sacrifices for the work of God and yet have little of real love for God or His people. There is no substitute for loving people; it is not enough to minister to people, or meet their need, we have to have a real love for them. However, it is downright hypocrisy to say that we love people and do not meet their physical need, if it is within our power to do so, love will meet every reasonable need where it possibly can do so. 2Cor.8v9,13v13.

Obviously, the great needs of the world today could swallow up all the income of Christians, so we need to follow the Bible rule to give preference to the needs of Christians. Christian giving is to meet a person's need, not their wants. Gal.6v2,5,6,9,10. It is necessary not only to give to God's work and needy people, but also to have our giving directed by the Word of God, the Spirit of God and a heart filled with the love of God.

### **WE CAN EVEN DIE A MARTYR'S DEATH, BUT WITHOUT LOVE IT PROFITS US NOTHING.**

A person can sacrifice their life out of a sense of self-glory instead of out of love for the Lord Jesus. We are told by the Lord Jesus, Himself a martyr, not to court persecution or death, "when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Mt.10v23. The needless sacrifice of our life out of a sense of bravado or pride will bring us no eternal reward or benefit. It is only martyrdom in the will of God and in the path of Christian duty that brings a heavenly reward.

We can see very clearly from 1Cor.13v1-3., that it is not only the gifts of the Holy Spirit that do us no good, or bring us no reward, if they are lacking in love; a profound spiritual knowledge, sacrificial giving, and a martyr's death do not benefit us either if we are loveless. However, this is a point that the critics of the gifts of the Holy Spirit seldom, or never, emphasise. How can one claim to possess love and emphasise love, when they oppose and criticise the gifts of the God of love? If we love God, then we should love His gifts. How will we feel when we meet our heavenly Father if we have been criticising and opposing His gifts during our time on earth? Will the Lord be able to say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? If we do not possess love, we will find at the judgement seat of Christ, that all the works that we have done will not count, for "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1Cor.3v11-17. The only works that will abide the presence of the Lord Jesus are works of faith performed in love. Mal.3v1-3. There is no substitute for loving God and people; love is the quality of character that gives value to all that we do, love makes all that we do precious and valuable to God and man, and beneficial to ourselves.

## **2. THE ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE. 1Cor.13v4-7.**

Here we see the qualities of character that will be manifested from a heart of love. These qualities are essential constituents of a real revival, they are the only means of keeping a revival going on smoothly forward in the will of God, they alone will give value to our work for God. Paul tells us the attributes of character that we must manifest if we are to receive the full profit from the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's gifts. Let us consider the 15 qualities of character that Paul states makes up the character of the loving Christian.

### **1. LOVE SUFFERS LONG. LOVE IS PATIENT. "Makrothumeo."**

**Makrothumeo, "longsuffering," occurs in Mt.18v26,29. Lk.18v7. 1Thes.5v14. Heb.6v15. James.5v7,8. 2Pet.3v9. It is a word that is used in the New Testament to describe relations between people as well as a persons attitude to their circumstances, e.g. 1Thes.5v14. Heb.6v12,13. It signifies the very opposite of retaliation, irritability, spite and vengeance.** There may be some real cause for a Christian to lose patience with a brother or sister in Christ, but the loving Christian suffers long and is patient with those who like themselves, are so much in need of the patience, mercy and grace of God. In regard to the use of spiritual gifts, and this is the particular sphere of 1Cor.13., we may have reason to exercise considerable patience. "The powers of the age to come," Heb.6v5., can be overwhelming even to the most reserved Christian, as well as to those Christians who have ebullient and expressive personalities. Besides these there are Christians who are positively egotistical and they can make themselves a real nuisance if we do not patiently correct them and regulate the meetings properly. This patience with people is an essential part of Christian love, and Paul showed this patience in speaking as he did to the unruly Corinthian church. One may also need to have great patience with those who oppose and object to the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as with those Christians who are too timid to manifest the gifts, or to slothful to seek them. In the Corinthian church this longsuffering was definitely lacking, there were cliques and divisions in the church, but Paul counted them as God's children and was longsuffering with them.

**This patience is very opposite to the spirit of the world. Longsuffering was the very opposite to what the Greeks thought was a virtue, patience was to them a weakness of character; they looked upon short patience as a virtue.** They said that the refusal to tolerate or accept any injury or insult, and the desire for vengeance, was the thing that made a person great. This attitude is very prevalent in the world today; however, in the Christian Church a person cannot be great unless they are longsuffering. If we desire to be like our heavenly Father we must be longsuffering, and Christian leaders are in particular need of this virtue. Mt.5v44,45. Rom.2v4. 9v22. 2Cor.6v6. Gal.5v22. Eph.4v2,3. Col.3v12. 1Tim.1v16. 2Tim.3v10. Titus.2v2. Heb.6v15. James.5v7-10. 1Pet.3v20. 2Pet.3v9. We do not receive revelations about another person's character, or their intents, so that we can attack them, it is to warn us of possible danger, so that we may pray for both them and ourselves. This lovely virtue of long suffering, like all the other virtues, is not one that we can produce by the energy of the flesh, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and it is produced by the grace of God by the obedience to the Word of God.

There does come a time when even the divine patience comes to an end. This is illustrated by the flood in the time of Noah, the destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan, and the judgements at the second coming of Christ. Gen.6v1-7. 15v13,16,18. 2Pet.3v1-18. In each case amazing longsuffering is followed by judgement. During His time on earth, the Lord Jesus gave the most tremendous rebukes to religious hypocrites. Mt.23v1-39. In the Church we are not to be longsuffering with wilful and deliberate sin, the Lord disciplines the wilful Christian, and the churches have to discipline Christians whose lives are a danger and disgrace to the Church. Mt.18v15-19. 1Cor.11v27-34. 5v1-13. However, the aim of this discipline is not only the preservation of the purity of the churches, but also the restoration of the sinning person as well. 2Cor.2v4-8. On occasions the Lord may have to take severe steps to preserve the witness and purity of His Church. 1Cor.11v30. Acts.5v1-11. These are the last steps and last resort of a very patient and loving Saviour, He does not take these kinds of steps in anger, but of necessity, we are His dear little flock. One can only marvel at the divine patience as we see the Lord

Jesus passionately sobbing over those who had determinedly opposed His efforts to bring them salvation, safety and blessing. Lk.12v32. 13v34,35. 19v41-48. Hosea.11v1-12. N.B. v8. Let us rejoice in the great grace and patience of God, but let us take care never to trade on that great grace and patience. Let us also be sure to treat one another with the same grace and patience that our heavenly Father treats us, remembering the tremendous warning that He gives in Mt.18v21-35. to those who are impatient and unforgiving.

## **2. LOVE IS KIND, GRACIOUS, AND GENTLE. "Chresteuetai" 5541. "Sweet to all."**

**"Chresteuetai" 5541, means gracious, kind and gentle in behaviour.** Origen said that "chresteuetai", means "sweet to all." The patience that we have talked about is not a grim endurance but a sweet endurance of awkward, ill-disciplined, inexperienced and immature Christians. Even when it is necessary to correct someone, such correction will be in a spirit of meekness and spiritual sweetness. Gal.6v1. Love does not correct people with cruelty, nor does it look upon God's children with a spirit of criticism and anger. The essence of love is kindness and has been shown to them by God, and they can strive to show it to others. Love not only suffers those people who are a trial to its patience, it is kind to them and does good to them in a positive manner, James.3v17. When people use their gift in the wrong way, they are shown the right way in a kind and inoffensive manner. Those who are critical of the gifts of God the Holy Spirit and the recipients of those gifts, and treat them with suspicion and ostracism, need to remember that they have failed to mount the first two steps on the ladder of love.

As we have said before, there is a time for anger, even as the Lord Jesus was angry with the Pharisees and the other determined enemies of God who plundered poor widows and persecuted God's prophets. Paul was angry with Elymas the sorcerer and brought the judgement of God upon him when he was obstructing people from finding God. Acts.13v6-13. So we can see that on occasions it is necessary to be angry, but it is certainly not right to be angry with the redeemed people of God who are using the gifts of God and doing their best to serve God. The Lord Jesus was never angry with the apostles, even though he was on occasions very disappointed with them and had to rebuke and correct them. The rest of the apostles were angry at James and John when they sought the best positions in the kingdom, but there was no anger from Christ, He showed them that His kingdom was not like the kingdoms of the world, the rule of His kingdom is based on loving service, Church history has revealed to us a continual striving for pre-eminence and a tragic lack of kindness, there has been, and still is, the most vicious persecution carried on under the guise of a zeal for God. However, Christian love is not like that, it not only suffers long, it suffers long kindly; it is not only passive, it is active and constructive as well. Love delights to give and bless, it is kind even when people have failed; it seeks not only to forgive but to please as well.

## **3. LOVE IS NOT ENVIOUS, OR JEALOUS.**

**"Envieth not," is "ou zeloi," the present active indicative of "zeloo" 2206, to boil.** It can be used in a bad sense, as here, but it can also be used in a good sense as in 1Cor.12v31. Envy is worse than jealousy, for it desires to take away what a person has. Love is neither jealous nor envious. Love knows no jealousy; it does not begrudge another a greater manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we are not careful we can begrudge people having what we ourselves have not got. When another Christian is well blessed with natural talents, earthly blessings, or spiritual gifts, we should never say, "If I have not got those blessings, why should they have them?" We should rejoice in their gifts and their blessedness.

Jealousy and envy really spring out of a spirit of covetousness, and this cost Satan his place in heaven, and brought the most soul-destroying sin into his life. We do not gain by being jealous, covetous and envious, we lose every time. Paul exhorts us to desire and even covert spiritual gifts, but he does not mean that we should manifest the envious begrudging spirit that is part and parcel of worldly covetousness. Paul is really saying, "Your desire and effort for spiritual things should be as strong as the worldlings desire and effort for worldly things, but they must be controlled by, and remain within, the confines of pure Christian love." Lk.16v1-15. N.B. v8. 1Cor.12v31. 14v1.

Envy springs from ill will, but the Christian will rejoice with others who are blessed and will try to lead them into greater blessedness. Love recognises that there are "diversities of gifts and differences of operation" in the manifestation of the gifts, and that "we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office." 1Cor.12v4-6. Rom.12v4. The gifts of the Spirit and the ministry gifts of Christ are not in opposition to one another, they are complimentary and independent. Don't be jealous of what God the Holy Spirit gives to another, we all have our part to play, let us rejoice in what God gives to others, as well as over what He gives to ourselves. Envy is one of the evil "works of the flesh," and it should not be found in the Christian Church among the lovely fruits of the Holy Spirit. Gal.5v19-21.

Envy is even more destructive than jealousy. Jealousy, "zelos," casts hostile grudging looks; "phthonos," "envy," is more malignant than jealousy, it has arrived at the stage of hostile acts. It is grief at another person's good fortune; it is not just the pain that they do not possess the other person's good fortune or blessings; but the bitterness that the other person does. It is not so much the desire for what another person has; it is the desire to take away from another what they have, or prevent them from possessing it. "Zelos," "jealousy," can sometimes speak of noble ambition, and desire for something good, as well as a covetous evil desire; whereas. "phthonos," "envy," can only speak of an evil and bitter ill will. It is not just the pain over an enemy's good fortune; it can be the grief over a friend's good fortune. The jealousy, "zelos," of the Jews led to

the active opposition of the more malignant "phthonos," "envy;" and caused them to murder Jesus. Though Satan possessed Judas, it is not recorded that any of the leaders of Israel became possessed; the evil jealousy and envy in their hearts drove them to oppose and murder Jesus. Mk.2v5-7,16,23,24. 3v1,2. 15v10. Mt.27v18.

"Phthonoi," occurs in the Majority Text, in the works of the flesh in Gal.5v19-22.; Paul uses it in Rom.1v29., to speak of one of the sins which people are filled with when they choose not to retain God in their knowledge; and in Phil.1v15,16., of some who preached Christ to spite Paul, and tried to hinder his ministry. We are warned against this dangerous sin. 1Tim.6v4. Tit.3v3. 1Pet.2v1. (Gal.5v26. "phoneo"). The envy that drives one to keep up with the Jones's can lead to tragic circumstances.

#### **4. LOVE DOES NOT VAULT ITSELF. IT DOES NOT BRAG, BOAST, OR DISPLAY ITSELF." "Ou perpereuetai."**

"Vaunteth not itself." is "ou 3756, perpereuetai" 4068, and is derived from "perperos," braggart. It only occurs here in the New Testament. It means to play the braggart. Love does not brag, love is not boastful, love is humble and of a contrite spirit. If a person manifests all nine gifts of the Holy Spirit they are humble and not arrogant if they are controlled by love. If there has been a real manifestation of spiritual power, or some really gracious and kind act, there should be a genuine humility. To make an arrogant claim for love, means that we have little love, and no humility. The loving Christian will not parade his achievements, spiritual blessings or conquests in an egotistical way, Spiritual arrogance and pride, and their companion, self-importance, are very undesirable qualities of character that should have no part in the Christian's life. They are seen in their true light by the following considerations.

#### **1. Spiritual gifts are indeed GIFTS, they are unearned and unmerited.**

They are not because of our righteousness; they are "charismata," i.e. "gifts of grace." Rom.11v6,20. Deut.9v4. 1Cor.12v4,9,31. These gifts are not our manifestations; they are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit graciously channelled through us. In 1Cor.4v4,7. we read, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" All our natural abilities are given to us; they are only left for us to develop. However, with spiritual gifts we cannot even claim credit for development, these heavenly gifts come to us through the grace of God, and very often without us expecting them. The thing that will ensure a profitable working of these heavenly gifts is love and humility, not pride and arrogance.

#### **2. We should realise that it was our sins that crucified our Saviour.**

These gifts are only available to us because the Lord Jesus died for us; they are the outflow of Calvary. So when we think of our spiritual blessings and gifts we should have tears of gratitude over the wonderful grace and love of God, not spiritual arrogance. The gifts of the Spirit are precious gifts from a crucified and risen Saviour. Let us remember our great spiritual need, past, present, and future, and how it took the death of our Saviour to meet it, and we shall never be boastful. We can never repay our dear Lord Jesus for the gifts of His grace, past, present and future, and this tremendous fact of our continual and eternal indebtedness to Christ and our heavenly Father, should keep us humble and contrite.

#### **3. The great need around us should cause us to take our eyes off ourselves, and drive us to seek for those needs.**

We need so much more than we have, if we are to meet the great needs of the world, and there can be no sense of arrival, self-satisfaction, self-importance, or pride, in the light of the worlds needs. The aim of love is the blessing of others, not its own importance or advantage.

#### **4. Pride is the arch foe of the Christian.**

Pride dies the hardest of all the works of the flesh, but it is by far the most dangerous. It is something that can attack all of us, and we need to take care and remember that it was this sin that destroyed Lucifer, and it will destroy us if we allow it to reign in our lives. To be proud over our gifts is quite wrong and it is really very foolish, for it is the Holy Spirit and His gifts that meet the need of the hour, not the human personality it is our privilege to be a channel of blessing.

The fact that spiritual arrogance, pride and boastfulness are mentioned, shows that it is possible for these to be in us. Indeed, this is the continual butt of the Devil. Pride is the last thing to go in the Christian, and so we need to take care. A Christian may have great struggles with their heart, but to allow pride and egoism is very dangerous, we must humble ourselves before God. Satan came to the Lord Jesus and said, "Cast yourself down from the Temple before the people and the religious leaders." Satan was saying, among other things, "You show them that you are the Messiah and have a great and powerful miraculous ministry, if you claim to be God's Son." If the Devil had the impertinence to tempt his Creator to spiritual pride, we can expect similar appeals to our pride. Great power and great spiritual revelation can result in a constant appeal to our pride, and pride can hammer incessantly at one's heart, if one is greatly used of God. This is particularly true when people, in their ignorance, start to give someone the praise that is only due to God; we have to really warn them against this and to direct them to give all the glory to the Lord. Paul said that he was getting over-exalted with the great amount of spiritual revelation that he enjoyed, "a thorn in the flesh" was the cure for this condition. 2Cor.12v7,8. This was certainly something very nasty; I feel that it was the tremendous persecution that Paul received, for in the Old Testament "thorns in the flesh" were people who troubled Israel. Numb.33v55. Judges.2v3. 2Cor.12v10. 11v23-28. Ex.28v24. The Lord can deflate us if we are proud or

boastful. The thing to do is what Paul learned to do; we should "serve the Lord with all humility of mind and many tears." Acts.20v19.

This vaunting spirit is the spirit of the powers of darkness, "Simon made out that he was a great one," Acts.8v9., and he wanted to obtain God's power so that he could vaunt himself even more, and so Peter gave him a great warning and rebuke for it. Our message is not that we are great, but that we have a great and wonderful Saviour and a great, gracious and lovely heavenly Father. God exalts the humble and puts down the proud, so we should be very careful, or we can lose all that we have, or have some severe discipline from the Lord that will bring us to our senses. We boast when we feel superior to other people, but we do not possess any superiority over other Christians, any blessing that we may have is entirely the result of the grace of God. Let us rejoice in the peacock's feathers that God gives to us, but let us humbly thank God for them. Love does not try to parade its beauty, or what it has done, or show people what it can do, love is meek and lowly in heart, let us keep little in our own eyes, and when God gives us some peacocks feathers, let us be humble peacocks and give God all the glory.

#### **5. LOVE IS NOT PUFFED UP AND CONCEITED. "ou phusioutai," to puff oneself out like a pair of bellows.**

**"Is not puffed up," is "ou phusioutai," the present indicative of "phusio" 5448, to inflate oneself, to puff up with false and empty pride.** Love is not inflated or blown up with a sense of its own importance, it is not conceited. This is the inner cause of the previous outward manifestation, and Paul preaches against this undesirable trait of character in several places in the first epistle to the Corinthians, many of them must have been suffering from this spiritual disease for Paul to have mentioned it so often. 1Cor.4v16,18.19. 5v2. 8v1. 13v4. Paul tells them that "knowledge puffeth up," but "love buildeth up," so we can see that if we are puffed up in ourselves, we will find that we are not able to build up either ourselves, or others, in the faith. The result of an imagined importance and puffing up of ourselves will be a spiritual shrinkage, and the bigger the "puff," the greater will be the shrinkage. If we do not humble ourselves, the Lord Jesus will burst our inflation for us in no uncertain way and will humble us in a way that we will not forget. The Lord knows how to bring down the proud.

We need a contrite and loving heart to walk with the Lord, He knoweth the proud afar off. Is.66v2. 1Cor.4v7. Ps.138v6. Loving Christians are not puffed up with pride by their achievements, they humbly confess that it is grace alone that saved and blessed them. When we get puffed up, we take the glory from the Lord Jesus and give it to ourselves. **However, see the lovely humility of Paul and Barnabus, "they preceded to report in detail ALL THAT GOD, working with them, had done, and how HE had opened for the Gentiles the door of faith." Acts.14v27.** It is sometimes necessary to report what God has done, for it can enlighten and encourage Christians, and can produce faith in the sick or unconverted, and so be a real means of blessing. However it is never right to parade God's workings through us, with a puffed up and arrogant air, this attitude will certainly result in discipline from the Lord. Pride goes before a fall, and those who steal the glory from the Lord are certainly heading for one. If anyone could have been puffed up, conceited, or boastful at the end of his life it was Paul, but he realised that all he had accomplished was because of the great grace of God. See his lovely spirit of humility in 1Tim.1v11-16. A humble person is one who realises the truth about themselves. They realise that all blessings and talents, natural and spiritual, spring out of the grace, mercy and provision of God.

#### **6. LOVE DOES NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY, UNBECOMINGLY, OR DISGRACEFULLY.**

**"Does not behave itself unseemly," "ouk aschemonei" 807.** To be or act unbecomingly, to behave unseemly. It only occurs here and in 1Cor.7v36. in the New Testament. The Christian who is controlled by love considers the reactions of others and does allow a genuine inspiration to result in excessive behaviour that is jarring to others, and likely to bring reproach upon the work of God. Let us first consider: -

#### **Order and disorder.**

The apostle Paul is obviously against a disorderly and unbecoming manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, we need to remember that the order of a Pentecostal meeting does not mean a dead order. Christians can pray "with strong cryings and tears" like the Lord Jesus did in Gethsemane. Heb.5v7., or praise the Lord in quite a loud way. Ps.98v4. 47v1. Lk.19v37-40. Rev.19v6., or even on some rare occasions dance in praise to God. Ps.149v3. 150v4., and sometimes, Luke the apostle John and Daniel, spiritual revelation can cause one to lose their strength and fall to the floor, or to lie on their face in worship. Rev.1v7. 4v10. Dan.10v8,11,15,17. Ats.2v13. On the day of Pentecost the 120 in the upper room were so blessed by the Lord and so effusive in their worship that some of those who saw them thought that they were intoxicated.

**Here is a passage from a tract by W.F.P. Burton.** He is telling his reaction to these types of manifestations in Pentecostal meetings when he was first examining the Pentecostal experience and doctrine. Acts.2v13-16. Eph.5v18.

#### **The Question of Manifestations.**

Before I gave myself to waiting on God for the blessing with unrestricted faith, however, one or two matters had to be made clearer to me. These were chiefly concerned with peculiarities which I had seen in the meetings, such as falling to the ground, laughing, groaning, trembling, seeing visions. At times the weight of

glory, the transports of praise seemed to make the participants appear drunk.

A little study of the Scriptures removed my misgivings about such manifestations. I found that on the day of Pentecost, tongues were not used for preaching. They started before the crowd gathered, and it was the noise of the tongues, which gathered the Jewish listeners, who recognised the languages used. When the preaching started it was by Peter, and not in tongues, but in the one language that every Jew present understood. Acts.2v4-6. I saw, moreover, that even on that occasion, the manifestations were mistaken for drunkenness. Acts.2v13-16. Eph.5v18. Such passages as Dan,8v18-26. Neh.12v43. 8v6,12. Job.8v21. Ps.126v2., reassured me, showing that these things were perfectly natural during times of special religious enthusiasm. One of the elder brethren put the matter nicely when he said: "We do not encourage such manifestations, but we are not at all surprised when they do occasionally occur. We have learned the lesson, which Michael learned so dearly, that it does not do to belittle those who are carried away with the joy of the Lord. 2Sam.6v18-23." End of quote.

John Wesley was concerned about people in his meetings who were under a deep conviction of sin; they fell as if they had been pole-axed to the floor. The advice that he received and took from a spiritual and godly lady, was that he should leave God to do His work in His own way. Whenever a manifestation that is very definitely of the Holy Spirit takes place, we should be careful not to criticise. However, it is quite plain from 1Cor.12 to 14. that it is possible to use the gifts of the Spirit, or respond to the blessing of the Lord in an unseemly and unbecoming way. Disorderly conduct occurs when we act in a selfish way and show no consideration for others. It will also cause friction and distress if we try to carry on in the flesh a work that was begun in the Spirit, or if we try to make the exceptional the normal.

### **Public and Private use of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

We are plainly instructed in the New Testament to consider the presence of unconverted and unlearned people in a meeting when we are manifesting spiritual gifts and act accordingly. Paul makes it quite clear that it can be unseemly to use our gifts in public in the same way that we would use them in private. What is quite right in private can be quite wrong in public. Paul says that the continual loud noisy use of the gift of tongues in a church meeting is wrong; our emphasis should be public, not private edification, when in a church meeting. Noisy meetings in the early Church could have meant the death of the believers.

Paul states that in public meetings we must exercise restraint in the use of the gift of tongues, or we shall bring reproach on the work of God. If there are people in a meeting who are unconverted or unlearned and ignorant about spiritual gifts, the person who is in charge of the meeting must not allow anything to proceed that is unseemly and would harm or disgrace the Christian cause. There are times when in meetings consisting of Pentecostal believers and instructed Christian friends, the whole gathering may praise and worship the Lord in tongues, but this should not happen when the unconverted are in the meeting, nor should it continue for a long period or in a loud and noisy way in any meeting. The same thing applies to what is known as "dancing in the spirit," this should also be limited in the presence of unbelievers, and it should not be overdone in our Christian gatherings. Without doubt Christians can be moved to "dance before the Lord," and it can bring great blessing, but it should never exclude, or take pre-eminence, over the Scriptures. We can see that what can be quite alright in a private meeting in a church, has to be carefully controlled when there are unbelievers or outsiders in a meeting, for what is not "unseemly conduct" in the secret place, or in a meeting where only Pentecostal Christians are present, becomes "unseemly conduct" when the unconverted or unlearned are present.

### **Young People and Young Converts.**

Young people will nearly always react in a more lively way to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit than their stayed elders, we should not desire them to act like people twenty to fifty years older than themselves. The young contribute their energy, the older, their experience and wisdom. In a maternity hospital there is a lot of noise, but there is life. In a Pentecostal meeting with young converts you can't always expect an apple-pie order, or a mature Christian reaction from young converts. Young converts will grow in grace and learn as they walk with the Lord. If you are too severe and stop all the reactions and chaff experiences of young people or young converts, you will stop the wheat growing.

Every church ought to have Christian babies growing in them, and where this is happening there cannot help but be some imperfection and immaturity, but we should not get over concerned if everything is not perfect pattern, the young converts will grow in grace and experience as they follow the Lord. One has to make some allowances for immaturity, we know the young converts will learn about such things as modesty and dress watching pornographic T.V., bad company and worldly attitudes etc., and they will also learn how to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit alright, if they are taught properly and set a good example. Though any serious disorder should be dealt with, and any meeting which has outsiders in should be carefully controlled, in gatherings of believers only, we can on occasions overlook and allow certain chaff reactions of inexperienced Christians that are not quite according to the perfect pattern of the Scriptures.

We does not expect a person to master arithmetic in one lesson, or learn to drive a car or pilot an aeroplane as soon as they are placed at the controls, and in spiritual things let us not to expect perfection all at once. We must not go too legal about things, or we can turn the blessed order of the Holy Spirit into legal bondage. We are not under a severe Law; we are under the grace of God. It is far better to have a little disorder than death of spiritual bondage, "Death is the dirtiest dirt." However, a Christian of longstanding should manifest the gifts

of the Holy Spirit in a graceful and gracious way, and there should be no hint of disorderly or unseemly conduct. We should never make an upsetting, unruly, and rowdy exhibition of ourselves.

### **Fanaticism and Experience.**

There is a great difference between jarring incidents that occur because Christians are inexperienced in the use of the gifts, and jarring incidents that are the result of "unruly" young converts and Christians manifesting the gifts in a wilful, undisciplined and disorderly manner. There are Christians who are spoken of as "unruly," and we are told to warn Christians who are unruly. 1Thes.5v14. Christian leaders have to "reprove and rebuke and exert with all longsuffering and doctrine." i.e. they have to give sound teaching, good example, and sometimes stern warnings, 2Tim.4v2. Titus. 2v15., but there must be longsuffering. There is a definite need sometimes for correction in Christian meetings when there is unseemly conduct, fanaticism or excess. However, the leader must exercise great grace and tact, and if possible speak quietly and privately to the persons concerned, for any harsh or graceless "unseemly discipline" may permanently injure a dear Christian, and can bring something infinitely worse than excess in the use of the gifts, it can bring spiritual bondage and death. It needs real wisdom, to control unruly Christians who need a loving but firm discipline, and guide ignorant and inexperienced Christians, who need loving advice. A wise, loving and spiritual leadership will discern between unseemly, spurious and profitable manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and will keep a revival going forward in the will of God.

It is not necessary to roll on the floor, even if Billy Bray did it, indeed, if the Holy Spirit comes in real power, we will not be able to move a muscle, we shall be physically overcome. When we manifest a gift of the Holy Spirit, we do not lose our self-control, the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman, He will not cause us to get into a frenzy, or act in a way that will produce concern, fear, friction, stress and distraction in the saints, and disgust in the outsider. The inspiration may be perfectly genuine, but our reaction to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit may be improper or unseemly. It is our response to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that decides the benefit to the Church. In the Corinthian church there was an imperfect use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. there was an over emphasis on the gift of tongues and a monopolisation of Christian meetings with tongues, they were only thinking of personal, not public edification, but the inspiration of those gifts is not in question with Paul. Paul makes it quite clear that it was the way that the Corinthians were using their gifts and their response to inspiration that was wrong, not the lovely gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wonderful, it is the manifestation of them through imperfect channels that produces difficulty at times. The manifestation of the gifts at Corinth were not counterfeit, they were genuine manifestations of the Spirit used wrongly. It is a sad thing that every revival always brings its quota of excess or fanaticism, but let us not fear seeking a full Pentecostal revival because of the dangers of excess and fanaticism, the dangers of spiritual death and powerless, subnormal, formal Christianity are far, far worse.

### **The cure for abuse of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

1. Consideration of others.
2. Correct teaching and spiritual example from the more mature Christians.
3. The crucifixion of the self-assertive spirit. God's gifts should exalt Christ not draw attention to the person manifesting them.
4. We should remember that excesses in the use of the gifts, and doubtful physical manifestations, arise from a resistance to the Holy Spirit, we will find a cure for these ills, when we submit and yield to the leadings and authority of the Holy Spirit.
5. We need a manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit as well as the gifts of the Spirit. A growth in grace will cure all disgraceful behaviour. This will only be accomplished by a diligent seeking of God and spiritual determination. 2Pet.1v5-12. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit that will cure any unseemly, disgraceful, or unbecoming conduct. This self-control, self-discipline and consideration of others will bring a fullness of the Spirit; excess and unseemly conduct will never bring the blessing that we desire, nor will it exalt the Lord Jesus. We should avoid doing anything that is offensive and unbecoming, or that violates decency or good manners. God is a perfect Gentleman.

### **A Final Word.**

It is behaving most unseemly to suppress or oppose the Holy Spirit's gifts, gifts that Christ has given to His Church. Indeed, this goes beyond excess and fanaticism to real rebellion and wickedness, for by despising the gifts of God, we despise God. The abuses of the gifts are far less than anti-Pentecostal people would think. Wise leadership and mature example, can lead a Pentecostal revival away from any unseemly behaviour, fanaticism, or spiritual danger, into the lovely green pastures of a fruitful manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### **7. LOVE SEEKETH NOT HER OWN. IT IS NEVER SELFISH.**

"Seeketh not its own," is "ou zetei ta heautes." Love does not seek its own interests; it is never selfish, it does not insist upon its rights. 1Cor.10v24,33. This follows on from the last quality of love; it is the cure for disorderly conduct and other misuses of the gifts. Love does not think of its own profit, it considers how others may best profit from the exercise of spiritual gifts. Love does not monopolise a meeting, it is not egotistical and

self-centred, it seeks the welfare and blessing of others first, it does not pursue selfish aims. The loving Christian does not say, "How much can I get from my gift, or from the meeting?" The loving Christian says, "How much can I give?" The aim of love is not self-glory or ostentation. Love does not seek position, privilege, self-advancement, or benefit; it considers how it can minister, and what its responsibilities are. Love's eyes look upon the needs of others as well as their own needs. The surest antidote to spiritual pride and selfishness is to get taken up with the needs of others. The apostles were seeking their own when they were arguing as to who was going to be the greatest among them, they were loving the pre-eminence; but the Lord taught them in a most striking way, He washed their feet, in the kingdom of God the rule is service, not self-seeking. Jn.13. all. Mt.20v20-28.

The Scripture states that God is love, and here we read that love does not seek its own, it proclaims the glorious fact that all of God's actions are totally selfless. There is a no a more striking or important truth in the New Testament than this. We should imitate our Heavenly Father and be unselfish. In a world that is always thinking of its own rights and seeking its own welfare, and is generally quite unconcerned over its responsibilities, we should set a shining example inside and outside the church fellowship. We should take care that we are not swept away by the errors of the wicked. Christian love sees its duties and does not insist upon its rights. We should always do the things that will build up the people of God, we should not love the pre-eminence, and we should think of others and humble ourselves before God. We have a responsibility to seek God for manifestations of spiritual gifts that will be a blessing to others as well as ourselves. In these materialistic days we need to remember that excessive seeking of materialistic things can cause us to be so spiritually run-down, that we shall be a burden to Christ's Church instead of a blessing.

### **8. LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED, OR IRRITATED. IT DOES NOT FLY INTO A TEMPER.**

**"Is not provoked," is "ou paroxunetai" 3947.** The Greek word translated "provoked," only occurs here in 1Cor.13v5., and in Acts.17v16., in the New Testament, where it says that Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw that the city of Athens was wholly given to idolatry. Paul was provoked and moved to action in a good way by the idolatry of Athens, but here in 1Cor.13., Paul states that the loving Christian does not allow himself to be stirred to anger through a misuse of the gifts, he is rather moved to sympathy and compassion. Mt.9v35,36. The response of love to a misuse of the gifts is not irritability, temper and bitterness of spirit; but rather compassion, sympathy, tenderness and forgiveness. Love sorrows over immaturity and excess, but its attitude is curative and edifying not censorious, critical and bad-tempered. When the Corinthian Christians were misusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul gave them sound teaching and advice, not an exhibition of bad temper.

Is it always wrong for a Christian to be angry? No! Though there are times when it is a sin not to be angry. Even the divine love of Christ was angered by a deliberate and unwarranted suppression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by most of the religious leaders of His day. These hypocrites devoured widow's houses and prayed in a most pious way, and they were full of all kinds of iniquity. Mt.23v1-39. Lk.16v14,15. However, we should be very careful lest we call our bad temper by the false name of righteous indignation. A person that cannot control their temper is of no use in the service of God, and can be a downright nuisance and menace, and can injure many people. 1Tim.3v3. The only thing that the Christian has the right to be angry over is downright wickedness, and even then we have to control our spirit. Paul suffered a great deal of opposition and persecution like his Lord, and he tells us what our reaction to it must be, "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God pre-adventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth. 2Tim.2v24,25.

So we can see that anger is a thing that should be seldom seen in a Christian. The Christian may speak the truth firmly and sincerely, but it should be spoken in love, not in a bad spirit. Eph.4v15. Gal.5v13-26. In the proud correction will cause anger, and we need to have the grace to humbly receive any advice, correction, or abuse that we may receive, whether it be right or wrong. See how our dear Lord Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners, and like a lamb went to the slaughter, let us follow His example. Love does not get angry and forbids spiritual gifts, nor does it call this bad temper and unbelief by the name of righteous indignation.

We are saddened to read in Acts.15v39. that Paul and Barnabas had a paroxysm ("paroxusmos" 3948) of anger over John Mark in Antioch. In Heb.10v24. "paroxusmon" is used in a good sense to incite and provoke Christians to love and good works., In Heb.10v24. we read, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." "Consider," is "katanomen," the present active subjunctive of "katanoeo" 2657, the very same verb that is used in Heb.3v1. to tell us to put our minds down on Jesus and consider Him. Let us really think how we can incite our Fellow Christians to love and good works, let us never fly into a temper, or provoke others to anger.

### **9. LOVE THINKETH NO EVIL. IT IS NOT MINDFUL OF WRONGS.**

**"Taketh not account of evil" "ou logizetai 3049, to kakon" 2556.** It is derived from "logos" 3056, and means, to count up, to take account of as in a ledger or notebook. "The evil," "to 3588, kakon" 2556, done to love, but love cancels the debt and settles the account. Love does not store up in the memory a catalogue of wrongs received, injuries done, or manifestations of the Spirit that were misused. Love does not meditate upon

evil inflicted by others, or compile records or statistics of failures and sins in fellow Christians. Love does not harbour grievances, or brood over injuries. Love is not critical over genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit, it holds fast to that which is good. 1Thes.5v19-21. The Greek word that is used is an accountant's word; it is the word that is used to describe the keeping of an account in a ledger of every item that the person wants to remember. In God's business there is no place for keeping an account of injuries received, or imagined, or of the errors, mistakes and excesses of others. Love finds no sense of superiority or satisfaction in the faults of others, and does not keep a record of a person's failings with this end in view.

Christian love learns to forgive, forget and pass over the faults of others. In Polynesia the natives keep articles suspended from the roofs of their dwellings to remind themselves of the wrongs done to them by their enemies, and so they keep the hatred of their enemies alive. Love does not do this kind of thing, love prays for its enemies, and for those who make mistakes and fall into sin and error, the Lord Jesus told us to pray for those that spitefully use us. This aspect of love follows on from the last quality of love that Paul mentioned, i.e. anger. Love does not have outbursts of anger, or keep that anger burning by cherishing the real or imaginary wrongs committed. The only purpose of this kind of malice of heart is to deprecate another's character, and it shows as an unforgiving spirit. The Lord Jesus warned us in Mt.18v21-35. that people who harbour an unforgiving spirit can expect the most severe discipline from God. Mt.6v15. In saying these things, I do not mean to say that we should ignore wrongs that are done in the church, or neglect church discipline. If you have offended someone, it is your duty to ask for their forgiveness. Mt.5v23,24. If we have been offended it is our duty to approach the person concerned personally, then with witnesses if there is no repentance, and finally the matter must come before the church, which has the responsibility to discipline rebellious members.

Wilful sin must not be allowed in the church, the church must use the authority that Christ has given to its discipline members. Mt.18v15-22. Mt.16v18,19. Jn.20v21-23. 1Cor.5v1-5,11-15. Eph.5v11. However, where there is repentance there must always be forgiveness. Lk.17v3,4. 2Cor.2v4-11. If the church fails to carry out the procedure of discipline that Christ laid down in Mt.18v15-22., Christ can, and may, discipline the offender Himself, this can even result in the death of a Christian. 1Cor.5v5. 11v27-32. If we do not put matters right here on earth, we shall have to answer for it at the judgement seat of Christ. Rom.14v10-13. The injured party should be humble and perform positive acts of kindness to the person who has injured them, so that repentance is made much easier. Gal.6v1. Rom.12v14-21. 1Cor.1v10. Christians should not settle disputes between one another by means of unbelievers in courts of law. 1Cor.6v1-8. So we can see that sin and discord must be dealt with, but once there has been reconciliation and forgiveness, all should be forgiven and forgotten and the church should be knit together in perfect love.

We dare not keep a record of what God has forgiven and forgotten for future reference and criticism. Compiling statistics for the purpose of criticism and self-aggrandisement, can only arise when we fail to consider ourselves and our needs. Mt.5v22-26. 7v1-5. We should consider others better than ourselves, not worse, and if there is an obvious need for correction, it should be done in a proper spirit. Phil.2v3. Gal.6v1. When Paul corrected people it was from the attitude that he was "less than the least of the saints." Eph.3v8. 1Tim.1v15. Love does not meditate upon people's faults, or their injuries with a critical attitude. In the diatribes against the Pentecostal experience, people have done the very thing that 1Cor.13v5. condemns. To justify their unbelief in the Pentecostal experience, even Christian men have gone to amazing lengths to compile cases of fanaticism and failure, and they have criticised genuine moves of the Holy Spirit by maligned and perverted reporting.

To strengthen their weak arguments some have felt it necessary to magnify out of all proportion the excesses of a small minority of "Pentecostal failures" or "fringe fanatics" of the Pentecostal movement. But what Christian group has no spiritual failures? Even the apostolic band could be looked upon as "not of God" by this method of examination. Christ was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter and forsaken by all, and the Bible tells us of many good men who have failed God. The Bible tells us to sorrow over the fall of a brother and help to restore him, not to compile a record of his failures for the purpose of exciting public contempt. Gal.6v1. Mt.5v44-48. 7v1-5. What a fearful judgement awaits those who attack the gifts that Christ has given to His Church, by unchristian means! The Lord Jesus warned that it was the very worst form of blasphemy to ascribe the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Mk.3v22-30. One is very thankful that many Christians in all denominations are seeking and receiving the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that in many circles the old prejudices are becoming a thing of the past. Love does not impute evil motives to another Christian's actions, nor is it suspicious of their character or actions. Love puts the best construction and interpretation on actions that look doubtful in a Christian brother or sister.

#### **10. LOVE REJOICES NOT IN INIQUITY. IT IS NOT GLAD WHEN OTHERS GO WRONG.**

**"Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness," "ou chairei" 5463.** Joy in the triumph of evil is the depth of degradation and wickedness. Rom.1v32. Some people find real pleasure in finding out the faults of others and making them known. Some would rejoice if they could find something that would discredit a good Christian person. If there was some excess in a Pentecostal meeting, some critics would exclaim a triumphant, "I told you so!" There is no triumph in knowing that we were right about another's failings; a heart of love has no pleasure or satisfaction over the fall or faults of another. It is a great sin to gloat over the fall of another and those who gloat over another's fall are themselves in need of forgiveness and mercy, and are liable to experience real temptation themselves. A spirit of meekness and godly fear is the only safe attitude for the Christian, we should consider how much we have needed, and still will need, the grace and mercy of God.

Gal.6v1. Love is not full of envy or resentment at the blessing of others, nor does it rejoice when they fail or fall. Indeed, we should hold one another up in prayer, particularly those whose ministry makes them a target for the Devil. Love does not gloss over evil, or say that evil is good, it does not close its eyes to evil, it disciplines it whenever it is necessary, however, love is terribly grieved when people go wrong, or do wrong, love wishes no one to fail. It is even possible to use a revelation of the Holy Spirit in a wrong way, we can use a revelation to expose and condemn, when the Holy Spirit wants us to use it to convert, help and strengthen a person, and as a directive to pray earnestly for them.

This verse can also teach us that a Christian does not and cannot enjoy the evil things of the world when they are walking with Christ the king of love. The apostle John tells us to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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, and the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1Jn.2v15-17.

The systems of the world are under the sway of the Evil One, and should not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and then we shall prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom.12v1-3.

### **11. LOVE REJOICES IN THE TRUTH, AND JOYFULLY SIDES WITH THE TRUTH.**

**"But rejoiceth with the truth," "sungchairei 4796, de 1161, te 3588, aletheia" 225.** Truth as opposed to unrighteousness. Rom.2v8. 2Thes.2v12. **After a series of remarkable negatives, Paul returns here to the positive side of the truth.** Love is pleased when it sees others blessed and going on in the Christian way, it is delighted when others do well, and rejoices over the victory of truth in them. We should rejoice when others are more blessed than ourselves, and are using greater gifts than ourselves, or having a more prominent part in Christian work than we are. Human nature tends to resent the blessing of others, but as Christians we have to crucify any envy or jealousy and rejoice with a loving heart over the blessing of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should never say, "Why have they got this or that gift when I have not got it?" or, "Why should they have such a prominent place in the church?" We should seek God for ourselves, for He has promised to always meet with the sincere seeker and bless them and make them a blessing. We should never let envy stop us from rejoicing with others over their victories, gifts and blessings. Instead of finding pleasure in compiling and gloating over a person's faults, the loving Christian rejoices in their spiritual victories and attainments, and will do all they can to promote further spiritual well being.

Sometimes it may be difficult to rejoice in the truth, particularly if it shows you your deficiencies. Many people do not accept many clearly revealed Biblical truths. Some Christians cannot rejoice in the truth of spiritual gifts, having a fear, dislike, distrust, or even a hatred of this truth. However, it is the truth that makes us free and builds us up in faith. Jn.8v32. Spiritual gifts were given to the Church to build it up, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," so if we neglect this truth we will be much poorer. 1Cor.12v7. Obedience to Christ's commands, springing out of love for Christ, decides how much we experience of God's truth, provision, power and revelation, he who does the will of God shall know the truth that is from God. Jn.7v17. The Christian who deeply loves Christ, will obey Him and love others, and perform His will in all things, and will as a result experience a great revelation of God's love, power and truth. Jn.14v21.

When the Lord Jesus told the religious leaders of His day the truth, the vast majority of them wanted to kill the Lord Jesus, they did not want the truth, because it conflicted with their cherished but incorrect traditions. Jn.8v44,45. Man-made tradition dies hard even when it openly denies the Word of God. It took a vision of Christ to deliver Paul from the bondage of tradition to the truth of the Gospel. Spiritual gifts are a part of Gospel truth, and the Christian "should earnestly contend for the faith which was delivered once for all to the saints." Jude.v3. Gal.1v6-10. Some people will always resist the truth, but the Christian should love truth, whoever it manifests itself through. 2Tim.3v8. Phil.1v14-20. Jn.18v37. 2Cor.3v8. The loving Christian does not condemn or forbid spiritual gifts, he rejoices in the manifestation of them, and sides with the truth concerning them. Do you? 1Thes.5v19-21. 1Cor.14v1,39.

### **12. LOVE BEARETH ALL THINGS. IT SUPPORTS, PROTECTS AND CONCEALS.**

**"Beareth all things," "panta 3956, stegei," 4722.** "Stego" 4722, means, to roof over, to cover, to conceal, (it is derived from "stege" 4721, roof), it is used in 1Cor.9v12, 1Thes.3v1,5. Love forbears and protects, in 1Pet.4v8. Peter states, "love covers and throws a veil over ("kaluptei" 2572) a multitude of sins." Love knows no limit to what it can endure, there is nothing that it cannot face, it bears up under anything, it is always slow to expose faults and does its very best to uplift and sustain. Vine says that the Greek word "stege," means primarily to protect, or preserve by covering, hence it means to keep off something which threatens, to bear up against, to hold out against, and so endure, bear, forbear." So we can see that the Greek word carries with it the thought of enduring, sustaining, uplifting and protecting. Love can bear and endure the faults and hatred of others, it delights to sustain and uplift others, and where it is consistent with Church purity and discipline it covers the faults of Christians. Love does not bring the faults of others into public light so that it can point the finger of scorn.

The loving Christian will also bear with those who persecute and revile the followers of Christ, in order to win them to the Lord Jesus. See how the Lord Jesus tried to win lost men and women, He bore all things to fulfil

the Father's will and to seek and save that which was lost. The apostle Paul was constrained by the love of Christ to seek the lost and point them to the Saviour, and was willing to suffer the most dreadful persecution because of his love for his Saviour and needy mankind. 2Cor.11v23-12v15. We need to remember that 1Cor.13. was spoken to Christians who were under persecution, some were even dying for their faith. Paul tells them that the Christian who truly loves the Lord Jesus will bear all that the world and the Devil brings against them to destroy their love for Jesus, their faith in Jesus, and the spiritual experiences given by the Lord Jesus. Sometimes, like Peter, a Christian may find that their love for Christ is not as great as they thought, circumstances may try their faith and find them wanting. However, like Peter, they can be restored by the wonderful grace and love of God, and as a result be a humbler, wiser person, conscious of their limitations and dependent on their Lord instead of themselves.

Love will bear with Christians who are immature or inexperienced in the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament Church there is not such an emphasis on order that there is a suppression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by a lack of forbearance. We may try to cover up our lack of love by appealing to the Scripture, "Let all things be done decently and in order," 1Cor.14v40., when we have permanently injured someone's spiritual life and use of spiritual gifts by a cruel rebuke and lack of forbearance. We can only reduce the effectiveness of the gifts by excess and disorder; we can also stop the movings of the Holy Spirit by excessive and unreasonable demands for order. Instruction and spiritual example will guide seeking and willing souls into the green pastures of a God-appointed order. It is much easier to destroy the gifts by a lack of forbearance, than it is to kindle a deep desire for them. However, love bears with the Christian who is too timid, quiet, or contemplative to manifest the gifts, as they do with those Christians who are too noisy or free in their worship and use of spiritual gifts.

The loving Christian will not only bear with immaturity in young believers, they will also bear with, and try to help, Christians who refuse to seek or manifest the "good gifts" that God gives to His children. Love will bear up under rebukes and persecution from those Christians who will not accept their genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and will continue to manifest God's wonderful gifts. Those Christians who oppose the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are suffering from disorder and excess of the very worst kind, i.e. coldness, formal worship and rebellion against God's Word. These are by far the most difficult and dangerous disorders to deal with, however, the loving Pentecostal Christian will make a real effort to help and uplift Christians who are in all these circumstances, if it is within their power to do so. Forbearance is a difficult attribute of character to manifest, but the loving Christian prays for those that despitefully use them and will bless and curse not. Mt.5v44. Rom.12v4. James.3v9-18.

What a lovely quality of character this is! No disappointment, abuse, injury or ridicule can stop the ministrations of the loving heart. Love secretly mends and prays over the faults of others, this is a burden bearer, even though it may at times stagger under the burden and need that is laid upon it. 1Pet.4v8. Christians should protect their brother or sister in Christ, they should act as a family of God. What good mother fails to protect her child from a bad name, or the consequences of their wrongdoing? The loving Christian will always try to bear up, sustain, and protect his brothers and sisters in Christ, indeed, love tries to sustain and uplift all.

### **13. LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS. IT HAS NO LIMIT TO ITS FAITH AND TRUST.**

**"Believeth all things," "panta 3956, "pisteuei" 4100.** Christians are certainly not to be gullible; they are to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves. Mt.10v16. Love has an unquenchable faith in God, and completely trusts Him; it exercises faith in every situation. It is eager to believe the best about people. Love views difficult people and difficult circumstances with the expectation and faith that things will improve. Even continual disappointment will fail to crush the love-controlled Christian; they will look upon every circumstance with a conquering and triumphant faith. The basis of this faith is the faithfulness of God and the presence of God, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." The Lord is our keeper, the Lord is our shade, He will preserve, heal and deliver. Ps.46 and 121. Love has the faith that, "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil.1v6., or, as the Amplified Version translates this verse, "I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ, developing that good work and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you." The loving Christian faces obstacles in the Church and hindrances in ourselves with the confidence that God can and will undertake for us as we yield to Him. This complete trust takes the strain and stress out of difficult circumstances.

This faith and trust is an attitude of heart that looks at imperfect brothers and sisters and says, "I know that you are capable of and made for better things." Love sees the best in people and sees them as they will be, not as they are, it sees Christians as they will be, perfect and complete before the throne of God in heaven. Rev.7v9-17. Love does not give people up as hopeless when the evidence is heavily against them. It has faith that they will be moulded and disciplined by the Lord, and that the peaceable fruits of righteousness will prevail. If we have a suspicious and wary attitude to people, we can expect them to improve but slowly, however, if you show people trust, it gives them a tremendous spur on the Christian way. We are told in Heb.3v13. to encourage one another daily, it is a great encouragement to know that we are loved, trusted and honoured by our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, this does not mean that we do not exercise a spiritual discernment or judgement, either in relation to spiritual gifts or a person's character, but it does mean that any

judgement must be loving and just and not critical, censorious and unkind. We have to "Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good." 1Thes.5v21. We are told to be on the watch for ravenous wolves who disguise themselves as sheep, and we have to protect the flock of God from them. Mt.7v1-5. 15-17. Acts.20v28-31.

The Christian should be wise as well as loving. Mt.10v16. However, there is a great difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom, the worldly philosopher, sage, logician and clever debater, will know little or nothing of the wisdom and truth of God. Christianity is an expression of God's living truth, not an argument or theory, God's babes and sucklings can enjoy an experience of God's truth and wisdom, which the wisest worldling knows nothing about. 1Cor.1v19-21. Mt.11v25v30.

The Christian does not believe everything, we must exercise judgement. Prov.14v15. Love will not believe the obviously proved lie, but it will trust that even when a person shows positive evidence of backsliding and sin, that they will improve and get right with God. Suspicion can destroy a move of the Holy Spirit and hinder a manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a great tragedy when Christian people are suspicious and wary about the promise concerning the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The loving Christian will be full of faith and trust in the promises that their heavenly Father has given to them, they will have complete faith in the reality and benefit of the gifts of the Spirit, and will obey the command to "desire spiritual gifts."

#### **14. LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS. IT IS FULL OF HOPE AND NEVER CEASES TO HOPE.**

**"Hopeth all things," "panta 3956, elpizei" 1679.** Love hopes under all circumstances. The victory of hope can be as great as the victory of faith. Rom.4v18. Christian hope is a very close relation to faith, indeed, it springs out of faith. Christian hope springs out of confidence and faith in the character and truth of God. There is a dead hope as there is a dead faith, and there is a living hope as well as a living faith. James.2v14-26. with 1Pet.1v3. Prov.10v28. 11v7,23. Rom.5v4,5. 8v24,25. 15v4,13. Phil.1v19,20. Col.1v5,23,27. Titus.1v2. 2v13. Heb.3v6. 6v11,18,19. 1Pet.1v21. 3v15.,16. 1Jn.3v2,3. 1Thes.5v8. No opposition, temptation, or distress can destroy the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

"Hopeth all things," is a progression from the previous "believeth all things." When love can have very little grounds for faith in a person, they never cease to hope that things will turn out all right. When there are real dark appearances of sin in a person's life, there is hope that the person will get back on the right way, and that truth and goodness will triumph. Love longs and hopes that any bitter and unloving spirit will be purified, and that love may prevail. Love never ceases to hope that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be manifest through all Christians, and in all Christian churches and denominations. The baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the blood-bought heritage of every Christian.

#### **15. LOVE ENDURETH ALL THINGS. IT BEARS EVERYTHING WITH TRIUMPHANT FORTITUDE.**

**"Endureth all things," "panta 3956, hupomenei" 5278. Perseveres.** Carries on like a courageous and valiant hearted soldier. Love is full of endurance, it endures without limit for the sake of others, love gives us the power to endure everything. The word that is used here is the same word that is used in Heb.12v2. to describe how the Lord Jesus bravely endured the cross. It is a triumphant endurance. The loving Christian does not allow things that are wrong to break or mar their spirit. Love goes through trial with a perfect confidence in God. This is one of the things that shows Christian maturity, for it is only mature Christians that can face the overwhelming difficulties and persecutions that our Saviour faced in His ministry and death, with a triumphant fortitude. The loving Christian will endure all things so that the God of love may manifest His power and love through the lovely gifts that He has given. Christ's risen life, power, and ministry are communicated to the Church and world by the spiritual gifts that He has given to His Church. Those who manifest gifts of the Spirit will surely find that, like their Lord, they will have some opposition of one sort or another to endure. Indeed, one may have to suffer the most determined vicious persecution from unbelieving worldly and religious people for the sake of Christ's spiritual gifts. Acts.14v19-22. 13v50-62. 1Cor.4v11-13. 2Tim.2v10-13. James.1v12.

Some Christians mature more slowly than others and so do not manifest spiritual gifts or manifest them aright, but love will endure such difficulties with triumphant fortitude, not with just grim resignation, but with a conquering endurance. We should prefer to endure some misuse of the gifts rather than have them absent from the Church. Some Christians will only progress a short way in the things of God, and there is little hope of altering them, we have to leave such people in the hands of their heavenly Father and love them patiently and understandingly. However, if a person is living in open and deliberate sin they must be disciplined and dealt with by the Church. Mt.18v15-20. 2Thes.3v11-15. 1Cor.5v1-5. 1Tim.1v18-20.

Young believers may sometimes misuse the gifts, but we should be willing to endure a measure of this rather than quench their experience by criticism, harshness, or unreasonable demands for order. Loving instruction and spiritual example will work wonders with young converts. The Corinthians had been saved for about five years when Paul wrote to them, they were still ignorant as to how to use their spiritual gifts properly, and this was sad; but how sad it would have been if they had had no gifts of the Spirit in operation. We must recognise that our Lord Jesus states that Christians take time to grow in grace and spiritual maturity, and some take longer than others. However, I have been impressed how some Christians who have enjoyed correct teaching and wise oversight, have leaned to master the use of the gifts of the Spirit quickly. However, if some don't progress as we feel they should, we should bear them up in prayer. As we have said before, in meetings where there are the unconverted or unlearned, there must be a much stricter supervision than in meetings where only

Pentecostal Christians are present. The early Christian meetings were mostly in homes and so the problem of unbelievers being present did not arise so much, as only those invited would be present.

If we use the gifts of the Holy Spirit with these fifteen lovely Christian qualities in mind, we shall experience revival in our churches, and we shall see the Lord Jesus abundantly glorified. These qualities of character make the use of spiritual power safe and profitable, and will result in a dynamic manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit must accompany one another if the Church of Christ is to fulfil its great commission and be a blessing to mankind. Let us now consider the last main division of 1Cor.13.

### **3. THE ETERNAL NATURE OF LOVE AND OUR PRESENT GIFTS AND KNOWLEDGE.**

Paul states that we are now in a state of imperfection, and that all we now know and experience are but nothing when compared with the glory of the heavenly life, but there is one thing that is the same in heaven and earth, a heart that is full of love for God, and this with faith and hope will abide. Paul shows the Corinthians the imperishable nature of love and compares it with the temporary nature of our present knowledge and spiritual gifts. Paul is telling them that it is qualities of character alone that will make us acceptable to God, and that will endure forever. However, we need to remember the following very important points.

#### **a. Our temporary gifts and knowledge are partial experiences of God's eternal power and purposes.**

The fact that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are temporary does not mean that they are of little use or value. On the contrary the correct use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit has prepared us for the use of the powers of the eternal kingdom of God. We read in Heb.6v5. That the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit are spoken of as "the powers of the age to come," so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are a temporary and partial use of the powers of God's eternal kingdom. Heb.6v5. The gifts of the Holy Spirit do not cease in the sense that there will never again be any miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit; it means that the temporary manifestations of the Spirit and the partial revelations of God, are swallowed up in the continuous and eternal enjoyment and appreciation of the supernatural power and divine nature of God. The part is swallowed up in the whole. In the same way our present knowledge will come to nought, or vanish away, in the sense that our limited knowledge will be swallowed up in the infinite knowledge of the kingdom of God.

When Paul says that "we know in part," 1Cor.13v9,12., he is comparing a partial knowledge with a perfect knowledge, he says that "when that which is perfect and complete is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." v10. Divine knowledge will never pass away, divine truth lasts forever. Paul is comparing our present limited knowledge of divine things with the glorious experience of divine truth that we will enjoy in heaven. The wonderful things we know in theory about heaven will become a glorious experience, our present experience will be swallowed up in something much more wonderful and glorious. Those people who use 1Cor.13v8-13. to prove that the gifts of the Spirit have passed away, are proved incorrect by the fact that their present limited knowledge has not passed away and been replaced by the infinite knowledge and experience of God's knowledge. The perfect kingdom of God has not yet come, the Lord Jesus has not yet come, and these verses state that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will continue right up to the coming of the Lord.

#### **b. God produces love in us through our present spiritual gifts, knowledge and Christian experiences.**

The use of the gifts of the Spirit and our partial knowledge are two things that God uses to produce love in us. Love is like a building, which has to have the scaffolding of the gifts of the Spirit and our partial knowledge around it to build it. Those who say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are no good because they are incomplete and temporary, are way off the track, for the temporary gifts produce eternal love. Is our earthly body no good because it is temporary? God saw this creation and said that it was very good. The disciplining of the body and the right use of it prepares us for the greater powers and eternal blessings of God's kingdom. In the same way the proper use of the temporary and occasional manifestations of divine power through the gifts of the Spirit forms love in us, and prepares us for the continual, permanent and eternal manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The temporary has formed love in us and prepared us for the use of the permanent, so we can see the importance of the temporary gifts of the Holy Spirit, and our partial knowledge. Some day the veil will be taken away, but until then we will rejoice and glory in the beautiful and lovely gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the partial knowledge that we now enjoy, these come from the loving and lovely heart of our gracious heavenly Father.

#### **c. Our present gifts and Christian experience compared with life in God's kingdom of love.**

At present we know very little, we understand only a little of the eternal future, we realise and feel our present weakness and inadequacy. We don't always understand prophecies, revelations, or circumstances. We are limited in our experience of the love and power of God, however, Paul tells us that our experience in God's kingdom will be infinitely greater than our present experience on earth and he illustrates this in two ways.

#### **Paul compares a baby with a full-grown man.**

One Greek scholar tells us that the word "child," denotes properly, a babe, and infant, though without any definite limitation of age. It refers to the first periods of existence, before the period which we call boyhood, or youth." Paul is speaking of the time when the child could speak, but it seems it was the first infant prattlings and thoughts that he was referring to. Paul tells us that our knowledge and most exalted and wonderful Christian experiences in this world, when compared with the knowledge and glory of God's kingdom, are like the first broken and hardly intelligible words and thoughts of a child compared with the infinitely greater

knowledge and speech of a keen and well-informed man. The power that we use now, the things that we know now, are but as "childish things" compared with the knowledge and powers that we shall enjoy in God's kingdom. Oh the glory and immensity of God's kingdom! Oh the glory of His presence! Press on struggling Christian to the glorious life that awaits you in the kingdom of God.

#### **Paul compares a shadowy image through a dark glass with face to face vision.**

We see in 1Cor.13v12., "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known." ASV. The TEV reads, 1Cor.13v12., "What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face-to-face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete-- as complete as God's knowledge of me." "Mirror," is "esoptron" 2072, it only occurs here and James.1v23., the synonymous word "katoptron" does not occur in the New Testament, but its verb "katoptrizomai" 2734, "to look at oneself in a mirror," occurs in 2Cor.3v18. "Darkly," is "en ainigmati," 135, which literally means, "in a riddle or enigma."

Paul is speaking either of a mirror made of polished metal which gave a very imperfect image, or perhaps of the transparent materials of poor quality glass of his day, which gave a very poor indication or representation of persons and things on the other side. Paul tells us of the enormous difference between our earthly and heavenly Christian experiences. Paul says that at present we see the kingdom of God as through an obscure and dark medium, but when Jesus comes again, or when we go to Him, it will be a face-to-face open vision. This again shows to us the vast difference between our present experience of God in this world, and our future experience of God in the ages to come. The Greek word that is translated "darkly," means literally "an enigma, or riddle," and then "an obscure intimation." We only know a little about the future that our heavenly Father has for us in His kingdom; much of that future is left to conjecture. Even the partial revelations that we receive for our present circumstances are sometimes very puzzling until they come to pass.

"Face-to-face," is "prosopon 4383, pros 4314, prosopon" 4383. Note the triple use of "pros" 4314, which means facing one as in John.1v1., "the Word was with ("pros" facing) God" in deepest fellowship and love. The revelations in the Word of God, of the kingdom of God, only give us a little idea of the glory of that kingdom, for no language can describe or convey an experience that is so sublime and glorious. Rev.21 and 22. 2Cor.12v1-4. Peter tells us in 2Pet.1v19., that the word of prophecy given by the prophets of old, is like a lamp shining in a dark and squalid place, but the actual fulfilment of these prophecies and the coming of God's kingdom will be like the rising of the sun. We thank God for the lamp of prophecy, but we are looking for the Sun of righteousness who will arise with healing in His wings. One day the dark vision is going to give way to open vision, we shall see our Saviour face to face, what a wonderful day that will be. Let us abide in Him so that we may not be ashamed of ourselves on that day. 2Cor.4v17. 1Jn.2v27,28. Which brings us to our next point.

#### **d. The perfect day and kingdom of love for which God is preparing for us.**

The most important thing, which God is trying to teach us by our present Christian experiences, is that it is love that counts with Him. Love is the thing that makes heaven what it is, and to see real love staggers both earth and heaven, and when we have real love we can be entrusted with the full exercise of the powers of the age to come. Heavenly powers demand heavenly love. God is not so much concerned about the amount of work we do for Him, as He is over the kind of work that we do for Him. God is concerned how we get His work done and if that work is producing real love in us. The quality, not the quantity, of our Christian work is the thing that is most important in God's eyes, men count actions, God weighs them. 1Cor.3v11-17. We may do the most tremendous things for God, but if we fail to perform them in love, or fail to allow them to produce love in us, then it does not profit us. God could send the arch-angel Michael down to evangelise the world, and He would do it in a far better way and in a fraction of the time that the Church has done. God has not done this because He is getting the Church ready to rule with Christ, He is forming love in His people through the work that He has given them to do. God wants us to do well and be conformed to the image of His Son. Rom.8v29. Eph.1v5,6,17-23. 2v6,7.

#### **e. When Christ comes we shall be known perfectly and know others perfectly.**

"I shall fully know," is the future indicative, "epignosomai" 1921, from "epi" full, and "ginosko" 1097, I know. "I am known," is the aorist passive, "epegnosthen" 1921, "I was fully known," All the things about us that are hidden will be revealed, even the good things about us, our abilities and personality, will no longer hide the secret state of our heart. We shall see and know one another as He knows us, we shall be an open book, our beings will be transparent, nothing will be hidden, and everything about us will be made known. For some this will be a day of great joy, for others this will be a day of sorrow and shame. Only the pure in heart will enjoy the revelation of that day, for they will have nothing to hide and be ashamed of. Those who have pure motives, sincere hearts, single eyes, and lives of obedience, will find that because their lives are full of light, they can stand the light of His presence and they will not be ashamed on that day. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple--- but who may abide the day of His coming?" Mal.3v1-3. 1Jn2v28. What a blessing it is to know that my Heavenly Father knows everything there is to know about me, in my past, present, and future, and that He watches over me.

#### **When God's kingdom comes we shall know God perfectly.**

We shall see our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus face to face, we shall see how glorious and wonderful they

are, we shall experience the most heavenly communion with them, and rejoice in their plans for us. Even those, whose works have been burned and have suffered loss, will rejoice that they have the eternal joy of fellowship with God and the eternal enjoyment of His blessings and kingdom.

### **Love faith and hope will abide eternally in the kingdom of God.**

Paul has been showing that the gifts of the Spirit are temporary, even though they are so important to us now; he finishes by mentioning three graces, three attributes of character that will endure forever. Faith, hope and love will survive all the other things of which Paul has been speaking. In stating that love is the greatest of these virtues, Paul is not saying that love will outlast faith and hope, he is saying that love is the foundation upon which faith and hope build.

In society faith and hope cannot exist without the presence of love, community life, in the end becomes impossible without mutual love. This is why the present world is disintegrating and so full of strife, and why God has an eternal prison called Hell, the loveless, hateful people who would ruin the lovely atmosphere of heaven, as they have wrecked the earth, are excluded from heaven. There is also as much need in heaven as upon earth for faith and mutual trust, for no society can exist in peace without mutual trust between its members. In heaven there will be a perfect faith and trust between God and His creatures, and between the members of that kingdom.

The Christian will also have much to hope for and expect in heaven. There will be the future ages of ages, the eternal and unsearchable riches of Christ to look forwards to. The Christian will not only enjoy perfect happiness, but they will look forward with hope, faith and expectation to eternal happiness, and thank God there will be no disillusionment, God will always do things for us exceedingly more abundant than we have asked, thought, or hoped. Heaven will be a place of eternal expansion, variety and joy; our faith and hope will never fail. The reason for this will be the universal rule of love, and the infinite kindness, affection, and love of the lovely God of love. God is love and love is the supreme quality of character, it is this that informs people that we are the disciples of Christ, so let us make quite sure that we nourish and cherish this fruit of the Holy Spirit. Let us obey the Word of God and the Spirit of God and this quality of character will grow in us and control our lives. 1Jn.4v8. Jn.13v34,35. Eph.3v16-21. Gal.5v22-25.

As we come to the conclusion of this lovely and challenging chapter on love, we cannot do better than use the words that Paul uses to summarise his thoughts on 1Cor.13., "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts." Paul emphasises the need for the gifts of the Spirit as well as love until the Lord comes and the kingdom of God comes upon earth. **Ellicott's "Layman's Handy Commentary on the Bible,"** says of 1Cor.13v10., **"This verse shows by the emphatic "then," that the time when the gifts shall cease is the end of this dispensation. The imperfect shall not cease until the perfect is brought in." End of quote.**

We can now enjoy and rejoice over the Holy Spirit's workings through His gifts, knowing that they are ideally suited to our present circumstances. We can also look forward with anticipation to the time when the temporary gives way to the permanent and complete, and we enjoy the full glory and revelation of the power and love of God. Until that perfect day and kingdom come, let us obey the command of God that Paul gives us, let us pursue and follow after love, and earnestly desire and be full of zeal for the manifestation of God's spiritual gifts.

#### **NOTE:**

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