

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY OF "AGAPE" LOVE. 1Cor.12v31. 13v1-13. 1Jn.4v16.

1Cor.12v31. "But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." (NIV)
1Cor.12v31. "But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way." (NAS)
In 1Cor12v31., "a more excellent way," is "a more surpassing way," than just coveting spiritual gifts. It is not love 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; as some would have us think, love in opposition to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The position of this chapter is an embarrassment to many good Christian expositors; on either side of it are experiences of which they know little or nothing, and it is always difficult to write of an experience that is foreign to you. Many expositors take this chapter right out of its context and speak of love quite separately from spiritual gifts. However, Paul clearly tells us in 1Cor.14v1., why he wrote this chapter on love; he writes, "follow after love and desire spiritual gifts." Paul places this discourse on love in the middle of his instruction on spiritual gifts, to emphasise both the need that love has of spiritual gifts, and the need for love in the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Without God's power, love cannot meet the needs of the Church or world, and without love, power from God can be terribly misused, as Satan abundantly demonstrates. Love is very often powerless without the Holy Spirit's gifts, but even His lovely gifts can be profitless without love.

God knew that Satan would attack the powerhouse of the Church; and knew that it was in the area of spiritual gifts and love that the Church would fail most; and so through the apostle Paul He gives direction and advice on these great subjects. The oil of love is never needed anywhere more than in the powerhouse of the Church. The Bible COMMANDS us to seek after both love and spiritual gifts. If we really desire and follow after love, we shall desire, encourage, and love spiritual gifts. Those who are seeking love from the God of love, will also seek His "charismata," His gifts of love. There is a wonderful healing power and precious fellowship in mature Christian love. When people come into the fellowship of Christians who have this beautiful love and affection for one another they experience a wonderful healing balm and comfort, and if those Christians have all the gifts of the Spirit in operation, they can experience God's delivering power and love through them. There is an absolutely wonderful blessing upon a church where Christians really love one another. However, a church where love is lacking, and there is strife, division and a struggle for power, is a very unhappy place. Ps.133v1-3. Gal.5v14,15.

Paul exhorts us to manifest "agape" love.

"Agape" is the word that is used in the New Testament 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 Jesus gave. Jn.13v34,35. 15v12. "Agape" love is a fruit of the Spirit. Gal.5v22. It is the love that the abounding iniquity of these evil last days will cause to grow cold in the careless Christian's heart. Mt.24v12. "Agape" love caused God to send His Son to die for us, and nothing can separate us from His love. Jn.3v16. Rom.8v39. This is the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts after endurance in tribulation. Rom.5v5. "Agape" love is a matter of the heart as well as a benevolent and loving mind, it is not just intellectual, it is a warm and fervent love; Peter said, "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. " 1Pet.1v22. Hos.11v8. Lk.19v41-44. "Agape" love, then, is not only an emotion, it is a standard of life, a warm and righteous attitude of mind, it is God's Divine principles and compassion manifested to us, through us, and in us.

"Agape" love is usually distinct from "phileo" love, the love of emotion and friendship, which could vary a great deal in intensity and sincerity. "Phileo" love is used at its lowest level to speak of the base love of the Scribes and Pharisees for prestige and position, and of Judas's kiss of betrayal. Mt.23v6. 26v48., "Phileo" is, in sharp contrast, also used to speak of the highest levels of Divine love and affection. Jn.5v20. 11v3,36. 16v27. 20v2. Indeed, Christian usage raises "phileo" love to a level of beauty and tenderness quite unknown among the unconverted Greeks. Christ's "phileo" love for the Laodiceans, would be quite incomprehensible to the worldly Greek. Rev.3v19. A good example of the difference between "agape" love and "phileo" love is found in Jn.21v15-19. Jesus twice asks Peter if he still lays claim to the constant, unflinching, benevolent "agape" love. Peter can only answer that bitter experience has taught him that his love is only the fervent, tender, but weak "phileo" love. When the Lord Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him with a "phileo" love, it breaks Peter, he said in effect, "You know my heart Lord, and my "phileo" love for you, and you know how broken I am because my warm but weak love has failed you." 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, and 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 "phileo" love and transforms it by His grace. 1Cor.16v22. "Phileo."

The world needs the "agape" love of Jesus, worldly "phileo" love and "Eros" love can never satisfy the soul, or transform it into something beautiful, only Divine "agape" love, can do that. When the world sees Christians united by Divine "agape" love then, and only then, will it believe that Christ has the answer to their need. Jn.17v21.

1. EVERY MINISTRY IS PROFITLESS TO US IF WE DO NOT POSSESS LOVE. 1Cor.13v1-3. a. We can have spiritual gifts, but without love our souls are empty.

We can speak the most beautiful tongues and yet have an empty soul. The Holy Spirit can enable us to pray and praise with the most wonderful languages and with the most exalted words, but if they are not manifested in love, we will not receive or impart any real or lasting blessing either to others or ourselves. Without love speaking in tongues is empty unblessed noise, "roaring brass and clashing cymbal;" with love it opens the very gates of heaven.

We can have the gift of prophecy and yet be nothing. We can utter tremendous Divine truth and predictive prophecy and yet be, not merely "a nobody," "outheis;" but a "nothing," "outhen," at absolute zero spiritually. Mighty inspiration without love still leaves us a complete failure; it is a tragedy when the gift that is designed to edify the Church, fails to edify the possessor of the gift.. With love, prophecy conveys the comfort and strengthening love of God into the Church. Even the gifts of the Holy Spirit do not profit us if we do not possess love.

We can have the gifts of power and demonstration and yet be nothing. Signs and wonders can be a sign of the approval of God, Acts.2v22., and can bring tremendous blessing to needy people, however we can manifest these gifts and yet be a complete failure in God's eyes, if we do not love people.

b. We can have a profound Scriptural and spiritual knowledge and yet be nothing.

Paul tells us that it is possible to know "all mysteries," "musteria," that is, God's secret purposes and plans, and "all knowledge," and yet be devoid of love to people. We can have a mind full of Divine truth and yet have an empty soul. Satan is the perfect example of this. Ezek.28v12-20. Is.14v12,13. Rev.12v10-12. Knowledge without love produces pride and arrogance, and a contempt for people of less ability, privilege and gift. Compare Jn.8v3. with Lk.6v20. Divine truth can deliver the soul, feed the mind and spirit, and establish and sanctify the Christian; it is absolutely vital; but we need love to make it profitable to us.

c. We can give most sacrificially but without love it does not profit us.

Our most sacrificial giving is profitless to us unless love is our motive for giving. We can give away all our earthly treasure, and yet not lay up any treasure in heaven. We can give away all that we have, like the widow of Lk.21v1-3., and yet, unlike her, it will profit us nothing, if we have no love for people or God. Mt.6v1-4. Mk.12v41-44. 2Cor.8v1. to 9v15. Gal.6v2,5-10. Acts.2v44,45. 1Tim.5v16. Christian giving in love is wonderful, it blesses the giver more than the recipient of the gift.

d. We can even die a martyr's death, but without love it profits us nothing.

We are told by our Lord, Himself a martyr, not to court persecution or death. 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 unavoidable martyrdom in the will of God, and in the path of Christian duty, and out of love for Christ, that brings a heavenly reward. If we are lacking in "agape" love; not only spiritual gifts, but also a profound spiritual knowledge, sacrificial giving, and a martyr's death do not benefit us either.

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

1. Love suffers long; love is patient. "Makrothumeo," literally, "long passion."

Paul uses "makrothumei," the present active indicative of "makrothumeo," to emphasise the continual habit of controlling the mind and passions for a long time. Paul showed this patience in speaking as he did to the unruly Corinthian Christians. "Makrothumeo," occurs in the New Testament in the following places. Rom.2v4. 9v22. 2Cor.6v6. Gal.5v22. Eph.4v2. Col.1v11. 3v12. 1Tim.1v16. 2Tim.3v10. 4v2. Heb.6v12. Jam.es.5v10. 1Pet.3v20. 2Pet.3v15. It speaks of Divine patience, as well as patience with people and with circumstances. It signifies the very opposite of the attitude of the worldling, who look upon short patience, retaliation, spite and vengeance as virtues. With the Greeks "megalopsuchia," was a virtue; it was the desire for vengeance and the refusal to tolerate and accept any injury. These attitudes should have no place in God's family; God has been very longsuffering with us; let us imitate our longsuffering Lord, and show patience with others.

2. Love is Kind. "Chresteuetai."

"Chresteuetai," is the present middle of "chresteuomai," to be gentle, benign, and kind in behaviour and service to others; from "chrestos," useful, kind, gracious, gentle (like Christ's yoke in Mt.11v30.). Origen says it means, "Sweet to all." Though "chrestos" occurs elsewhere, (Mt.11v30. Lk.5v39. 6v35. Rom.2v4. 1Cor.15v33. Eph.4v32. 1Pet.2v3.), "chresteuomai" only appears here in the New Testament; it speaks of a gracious, kind and gentle behaviour. Love not only suffers long with people who are a trial to its patience, it is kind to them and does them good in a positive manner. The present tense again shows the continuous nature and habit of this constructive kindness.

3. Love is not envious. "Ou zeloi."

"Zeloi" is the present active indicative of "zeloo," from "zeo," to boil. Paul here warns us that love does not boil with envy or jealousy. The present tense shows the permanent lack of envy and jealousy in the soul of the Christian who is motivated by "agape" love. The noun "zelos" is used in a good sense of the noble aspiration, and godly zeal and ardour of our Lord in Jn.2v17. The verb "zeloo" is also used in a good sense in 1Cor.12v31., where Paul exhorts us to covet spiritual gifts, but he does not want us to manifest the envious begrudging spirit that is part and parcel of worldly covetousness. Love recognises the various ministries of Christ's Church, it is

not jealous of what God gives to others. 1Cor.12v4-6. Rom.12v4. Gal.5v19-21. Acts.13v44,45. Love never boils with jealousy.

4. Love does not vaunt itself, it does not brag, or display itself.

"Vaunteth not itself," is "ou perperueetai," the present middle of "perperuomai," to brag, to boast ostentatiously; from "perperos," braggart." Paul is speaking of a loud talking, presumptuous, ostentatious, arrogant braggart. Paul said, "What hast thou that thou hast not received." 1Cor.4v7. Every good gift, ability, achievement, spiritual blessing, and conquest; arises from God, and "agape" love, humbly and contritely recognises this. The present tense shows that "agape" love always refuses to brag and boast. This vaunting pride destroyed Lucifer, the light bringer, and turned him into Satan, the prince of darkness; it will also destroy us if we allow it into our beings. Is.14v12-20. Ezek.28v12-20. This vaunting spirit is the spirit of the powers of darkness. Acts.8v9. It has no place among the children of God. If God gives us peacock's feathers, let us be humble and give God all the glory. Love is never anxious to impress others with its gifts and achievements.

5. Love is not puffed up. "Ou phusioutai."

"Phusioutai," is the present middle indicative of "phusioo," to puff oneself up like a pair of bellows. It is only used by Paul in 1Cor.4v6,18,19. 5v2. 8v1. 13v4. and Col.2v18. The Corinthians must have suffered a great deal from this spiritual disease, from the number of times that Paul mentions it. Jesus is "meek and lowly in heart." Mt.11v29. He knows the proud afar off, but dwells with the contrite in heart. Ps.138v6. Is.66v2. Love is not conceited, or blown up like a pair of bellows, with a sense of its own importance. This is the inward cause of the previous vaunting. The greater our "puffage" is, the greater our spiritual "shrinkage" is, and the more certain it is that our Lord will deflate us. The present tense shows that the truly loving Christian always refuses to have conceited and inflated ideas about themselves, or get puffed up about their successes, achievements, or spirituality.

6. Love does not behave itself rudely, unbecomingly, or disgracefully.

Love never behaves indecently, or unbecomingly. "Aschemonei," is the present active indicative of "askemoneo," to behave in an unbecoming, indecent, or shameful manner that is open to censure. It is only used here and in 1Cor.7v36., where it speaks of a virgin being shamefully hindered from marriage by a father or prospective husband. The adverb for "decently," is "euschemonos," Paul uses it to state that all should be done decently and in order ("taxis") in the Church. 1Cor.14v40. The present tense shows that Christians who have "agape" love always refuse to act in a disorderly and unbecoming manner.

Christians can experience strong workings of the Holy Spirit and be in perfect order in God's eyes, when men are critical of their response to God's power. Acts.2v13-16. Lk.19v37-40. See also. Heb.5v7. Neh.12v43. 8v6,12. Ps.47v1. 98v4. 126v2. 149v3. 150.v4. Dan.8v18-26. 10v8,11,15,17. Rev.1v7. etc. However, we must realise that what is "seemly conduct" in the secret place of prayer, can be "unseemly conduct" in a meeting of Christians, or when the unconverted are present. Paul informs us in 1Cor.14v17-25., that continual and loud speaking in tongues is undesirable even in gatherings, which are composed entirely of believers; and are totally wrong when the unconverted and unlearned are present. We should show restraint in speaking in tongues, shaking, laughing, and anything else that causes consternation in people. We make some allowance for immaturity in young Christians, or young converts, but "unruly" Christians must be gently but firmly warned and controlled. 1Thes.5v14. 2Tim.4v2. Titus.2v15. However, we must beware of "unseemly discipline," for by being harsh and graceless, we can permanently injure people, destroy Christian fellowship, and bring churches into spiritual bondage.

The Holy Spirit is a perfect Gentleman, He will not cause us to get into a frenzy, or act in a way that produces concern, fear, stress and distraction in the saints, and disgust in the outsider. Sadly, every revival always brings its quota of excess and fanaticism. However, the dangers of a powerless, sub-normal, formal Christianity are far worse. Wise leadership, good teaching, and mature example can lead Christians from "unseemly conduct," into the green pastures of a fruitful manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

7. Love seeketh not her own, and does not insist upon her rights. "Ou zetei ta heautes."

Love does not seek its own interests. 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 or interests. it considers how it may best profit others. The present tense shows us that the permanent guiding principle of a heart of love, is service, not self-seeking. Jn.13 all. Mt.20v20-28. Rom.15v1-6. N.B. v3. 1Cor.10v23,24.

8. Love is not provoked or irritable, it does not fly into a temper.

"Provoked," is "paroxunetai," the present passive of "paroxuno," to sharpen, provoke, or stir up, it only occurs here and Acts.17v16., where it says that Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry. There are times when it is a sin not to be angry, but a person who can't control their temper, is no use in the service of God, for they can hurt and injure many people. Lk.16v14,15. Mt.23v1-39. 1Tim.3v3. 2Tim.2v24,25. Eph.4v15. Gal.13v26. When the Corinthians misused their spiritual gifts, Paul gave them sound teaching and advice, not an exhibition of bad temper.

Love never gets angry and forbids spiritual gifts, nor does it call this bad temper and unbelief by the name of righteous indignation. For the noun "paroxusmos," see Acts.15v39., where Paul and Barnabus both failed to

manifest "agape" love, and had a most unchristian angry dispute. See Heb.10v24., where "paroxusmos" is used in a good sense, "And let us thoughtfully consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Here Paul uses "katanoomen," the present active subjunctive of "katanoeo," to put the mind down upon, to thoughtfully consider; and he uses the present tense to show that "agape" love always thoughtfully considers how to provoke to love and good works, and is never provoked to fly into a temper.

9. Love thinks no evil, is not mindful of wrongs.

"Logizetai," is the present middle passive indicative of "logizomai," to count, to set down as a matter of account, as in a ledger. Love does not keep an account of wrongs done to it, or scores to be paid back. Love does not have outbursts of anger, or keep that anger burning, by cherishing real or imaginary records of the failures and sins of fellow Christians. Christians with "agape love will love their enemies, even if they do not like them or their ways; and prays with genuine concern for those that despitefully use it. Mt.5v43-48. Lk.6v26-28. 23v33,34. Acts.8v51-60. Love does not compile or settle accounts with people. It finds no sense of superiority or satisfaction in the faults of others. Those who harbour a bitter unforgiving spirit can expect severe discipline from God. Mt.5v21-26. 18v21-35. Mk.11v25,26.

Injuries and emotional wounds caused by hurtful words and actions should be dealt with immediately and not allowed to fester, and where there is repentance there must be whole-hearted forgiveness. Mt.5v23,24. Lk.17v3,4. If the Church fails to follow Christ's procedure of discipline laid down in Mt.18v15-22., then the Lord Jesus personally disciplines His loved ones. 1Cor.11v27-32. It is better to put matters right now than to have to do it at Christ's judgement seat. 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 and reconciliation is made much easier. Gal.6v1. Rom.12v14-21. 1Cor.1v10. Phil.2v3. Eph.3v8. 1Tim.1v15. Severe judgement awaits those who have compiled cases of "Pentecostal failures," in order to deny Christ's spiritual gifts to His Church. Love longs that they would change their unchristian attitudes and be blessed.

10. Love rejoices not in iniquity, it is not glad when others go wrong.

Love does not rejoice, "ou chairei," over evil, sin and failure; this is what the wicked do. Rom.1v32. Love does not enjoy evil, nor does it find pleasure in finding out the faults of others and making them known. 1Jn.2v15-17. There is no triumph in knowing we were right about another's failings, a heart of love is sorrowful, prayerful, and broken over the fall or faults of another. We are in real trouble with God if we use a revelation of the Holy Spirit to expose and condemn, when God wanted us to use it to convert, help and strengthen a person, and as a directive to pray earnestly for them. See how prayerfully and kindly our Lord dealt with Peter and the woman at the well. Lk.22v31-34. Jn.4v16-18. Love wants to help the fallen, not condemn them. Love never gloats over, or finds satisfaction in, other people's failures.

11. Love rejoices with the truth, it rejoices when the truth prevails.

After a succession of powerful negative aspects of love, Paul turns again to the positive aspects of love. "Love rejoices in the truth," "sunchairei de tei aletheiai;" it sides with the truth, and rejoices when truth sanctifies the lives of Christians. Jn.17v17. Truth, as well as love, is here personified and powerfully compared with unrighteousness. 2Thes.2v12. 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. It may be difficult to rejoice in truth when it shows us our deficiencies, but it is essential if we are to make spiritual progress. Jn.8v32. 7v17. 14v21. 2Tim.3v8.

12. Love bears all things; it bears up under everything. "Panta stegei."

"Stegei," is the present active indicative of "stego," to cover, to hold off, to hold out against; it comes from "stego," a roof, a flat roof of a house. It means to protect by covering, and has 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 struggling souls; and where it is consistent with Church purity and discipline, it covers with silence and conceals the faults of people. Love secretly mends and prays over the faults of others, no disappointment, abuse, injury or ridicule, can stop the healing ministrations of the loving heart. Peter knew that Christ's "agape" love "covered his multitude of sins." In 1Pet.4v8., Peter uses "kaluptei," the present active indicative of "kalupto," to throw a veil over, to cover, hide, and conceal. The noun, "kalumma," is used in 2Cor.3v13-16., of a veil. Where possible, love bears up, covers and veils the sins and failures of people.

13. Love believeth all things, it has no limit to its faith and trust. "Panta pisteuei."

Love is not gullible, but it does not give people up as hopeless when the evidence is heavily against them. Prov.14v15. 1Thes.5v12. Even when there are dark signs in a person's life, love earnestly prays for them, and trusts God to bring them through. Love also has a perfect trust in the Word, love and provision of God. Phil.1v6. Faith based on love is a present tense reality, and it is an infectious faith that encourages others to trust in God. Heb.3v13.

14. Love hopes all things; it is full of hope in all circumstances. "Panta elpizei."

Hope looks at the character of God as the grounds of its expectation. The victory of hope can be as great as the victory of faith, as can be seen in the case of Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope." Divine grace, and a spirit of praise and worship strengthened Abraham. Gen.18v1-15. Rom.4v17-23. No opposition, temptation, or distress can destroy the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. 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.5v4,25. 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. When love has very little grounds for faith in a person, because of real dark appearances of sin in their life, love never ceases to hope that the person will get back on the right way, and that truth and goodness will triumph. Christian hope springs out of faith in the character, love and truth of God, and is a present tense reality.

15. Love endures all things with triumphant fortitude. "Panta hupomenei."

Love endures when it can no longer believe or hope. It endures without limit for the sake of others. The word for "endure," is, "hupomenei," the present indicative active of "hupomeno," which means, "to bear up courageously with triumphant fortitude." The same word is used in Heb.12v2., to describe how Jesus endured the cross with triumphant fortitude. Love does not allow trials to break or mar its spirit; it goes through trials with perfect confidence in God. Love endures all things so that the God of love may manifest His power and love through the lovely gifts that He has given. 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. God's love, imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, enables Christians to always face life's problems and evil people with triumphant fortitude. Rom.5v1-5.

3. THE ETERNAL NATURE OF LOVE, AND OUR GIFTS AND KNOWLEDGE. 1Cor.13v8-13.

a. Paul tells us that our temporary gifts and knowledge are a partial experience of Heaven.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are a temporary and partial use of "the powers of the age to come." Heb.6v5. The gifts of the 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 and limited manifestations of the Holy Spirit and partial revelations of God, are swallowed up in the continuous, complete and eternal enjoyment 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, and superseded by, the infinite knowledge of the kingdom of God. Our present Scriptures are but a minute fragment of God's unlimited all-knowledge and Divine truth; its moral truths will never pass away, but it is only a very small partial revelation of God's eternal plans. The gifts of the Spirit, which are a partial and limited use of "the powers of the age to come," will continue, like our present limited knowledge, until our dear Lord Jesus comes again.

b. God uses spiritual gifts, and our experiences of life, to produce love in us.

God uses life, with all its trials and difficulties, mixed with His grace and gifts, to conform us to the image of Christ and form love in us. Rom.8v14-18,28-39. Our experience of life, and the proper use of our temporary spiritual gifts and partial knowledge produce eternal "agape" love in us, and prepare us for the permanent, unlimited, and eternal manifestations of the knowledge and powers of the heavenly kingdom, so they are vitally important.

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

Paul compares a baby with a full-grown man.

Paul tells us that all our knowledge and most wonderful Christian experiences in this world, when compared with the knowledge and glory of God's heavenly kingdom, are like the first broken and hardly intelligible words and thought of a child, compared with the greater knowledge and speech of a keen and well-informed man. 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 heaven.

Paul compares a shadowy image through an obscure mirror with face-to-face vision.

"Darkly" means literally "an enigma, or riddle," and then, "an obscure intimation." The revelations that we receive are sometimes very trying and puzzling until they come to pass. 1Pet.1v10-12. Even the Scriptures can only give us a limited idea of the glory of God's heavenly kingdom, for no language can describe or convey an experience that is so sublime and glorious. Rev.21 and 22. 2Cor.12v1-4. Compare 2Pet.1v19. with Mal.4v2. 2Cor.4v17. 1Jn.2v27,28.

d. The perfect day and kingdom of love for which God is preparing us. "to telion."v10.

God's aim in Christian service is to produce love in us, as well as to meet people's needs. The quality, not quantity, of our Christian work is the thing that matters in God's eyes. 1 Cor.3v11-17. God is trying to conform us to the image of His Son; He is trying to get us ready to rule with Christ. Heavenly powers demand heavenly love. Rom.8v29. Eph.1v5,6,17-23. 2v6,7.

When Christ comes we shall be known perfectly, and know others perfectly.

We shall "fully know as we are fully known." "Fully know," is "epiginosko," which speaks of full knowledge. Our abilities and personality will no longer hide the secret state of our heart. We shall see and know each other as He knows us, nothing will be hidden, and everything about us will be made known. For the pure in heart this will be a day of great joy, for others it can be a day of shame. Mal.1v1-3. 1Jn.2v28. 1Cor.3v10-15.

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

We shall see our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus face to face, and see how glorious and wonderful they are and experience the most wonderful fellowship with them, and rejoice in their plans for us. Even if our works have been "burned up," at His "kind but searching" examination of our lives at His judgement throne, we will enjoy the blessings of His eternal kingdom.

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

Love is supreme in heaven and earth, and love with faith and hope will eternally abide. God is love, and love is the supreme quality of character. It is love that makes heaven, heaven. In heaven, faith and hope will never be disappointed, heaven will be a place of eternal expansion, joy, peace and variety, because of the universal rule of love, and the infinite kindness, love and affection of the lovely God of love. Until that perfect day and kingdom come, let us obey God's command through Paul to pursue and follow after love, and earnestly desire and be full of zeal for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's lovely gifts. 1Cor.14v1.

APPENDIX.

We read in 1Cor.12v31. "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way." (NKJ)

1Cor.12v31. "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (RSV)

A.T. Robertson writes on 1Cor.12v31. "The greater gifts," ta charismata ta meizona." Paul unhesitatingly ranks some spiritual gifts above others. "Zêloô" here has good sense, not that of envy as in Acts.7v9; 1Cor.13v4.. "And a still more excellent way," "kai eti kath' huperbolên hodon." In order to gain the greater gifts. "I show you a way par excellence," beyond all comparison (superlative idea in this adjunct, not comparative), like "kath' huperbolên eis huperbolên" 2Cor.4v17., "Huperbolê" is old word from "huperballô," to throw beyond, to surpass, to excel 2Cor3v10., Eph.1v19.. "I show you a supremely excellent way." Chapter 1Cor.13. is this way, the way of love already laid down in 8:1. concerning the question of meats offered to idols (cf. 1John.4:7.. Poor division of chapters here. This verse belongs with chapter 1Cor.13.." End of quote.

A.T. Robertson writes on 1John.4v8,13-16. "He that loveth not," "ho mê agapôn." Present active articular participle of "agapaô" "keeps on not loving." {Knoweth not God} "ouk egnô ton theon." Timeless aorist active indicative of "ginôskô," has no acquaintance with God, never did get acquainted with him. {God is love} "ho theos agapê estin." Anarthrous predicate, not "hê agapê." John does not say that love is God, but only that God is love. The two terms are not interchangeable. God is also light (1:5.) and spirit (Joh.4:24.).

4:13 {Hereby know we} "en toutôi ginôskomen." The Christian's consciousness of the fact of God dwelling in him is due to the Spirit of God whom God has given "dedôken," perfect active indicative here, though the aorist "edôken" in 3:24.). This gift of God is proof of our fellowship with God.

4:14 {We have beheld} "tetheâmetha." Perfect middle of "theaomai" as in verse 12., though the aorist in 1:1; Joh.1:14. "etheâsametha." John is qualified to bear witness "martuoumen" as in 1:2.) as Jesus had charged the disciples to do (Ac.1:8.). {Hath sent} "apestalken." As in verse 9., though "apesteilen" in verse 10. {To be the Saviour of the world} "sôtêra tou kosmou." Predicate accusative of "sôtêr" (Saviour), like "hilasmon" in verse 10. This very phrase occurs elsewhere only in Joh.4:42. as the confession of the Samaritans, but the idea is in Joh.3:17..

[1 Jn.4:15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. (KJV)

1 Jn.4:15. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (NKJ)

4:15 {Whosoever shall confess} "hos ean homologêsêi." Indefinite relative clause with modal "ean" (=an) and the first aorist active subjunctive, "whoever confesses." See 2:23; 4:2f.. for "homologeô." {That} "hoti." Object clause (indirect assertion) after "homologeô." This confession of the deity of Jesus Christ implies surrender and obedience also, not mere lip service (cf. 1Co.12:3; Ro.10:6-12.). This confession is proof (if genuine) of the fellowship with God (1:3f.; 3:24.).

1John.4v16. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love; and he who dwells and abides in love dwells and abides in God, and God in him.

4:16 {We know} "egnôkamen." Perfect active indicative, "we have come to know and still know" as in Joh.6:9., only there order is changed "pepisteukamen" coming before "egnôkamen." Confession "homologeô" follows experimental knowledge "ginôskô" and confident trust "pisteuô." Believers are the sphere "en hêmin," in our case) in which the love of God operates (Westcott). See Joh.3:35. for "having love."

{God is love} "ho theos agapê estin." Repeated from verse 8.. So he gathers up the whole argument that one who is abiding in love is abiding in God and shows that God is abiding in him. Thoroughly Johannine style.

[God is love] [ho (grk 3588) Theos (grk 2316) agapee (grk 26) estin (grk 1510)]. Repeated from <1 John.4:8>. So he gathers up the whole argument that one who is abiding in love is abiding in God and shows that God is abiding in him. Thoroughly Johannine style. (from Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament).

3306 meno (men'-o. a primary verb; to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy):

KJV-- abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own.

NOTE:

This and other studies can be found at:

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