SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

1 Corinthians 13

The More Excellent Way — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-15 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Without love, everything I do for God — every gift, every sacrifice — adds up to nothing. Love is not a feeling I wait for but fifteen things I do, first done to me in Christ, and it is the one thing I will still be doing when every gift is gone and I see Him face to face.

00 The Text

1 CORINTHIANS 13 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

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

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

3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

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

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

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

Marked in the text

- **v1** "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" — Sin / warning
- **v2** "I am nothing" — Sin / warning
- **v3** "it profits me nothing" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "is patient" — Command / instruction
- **v4** "is kind" — Command / instruction
- **v4** "is not jealous" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "does not brag" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "is not arrogant" — Sin / warning

- **v5** “does not act unbecomingly” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “does not seek its own” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “is not provoked” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “does not take into account a wrong suffered” — Command / instruction
- **v6** “does not rejoice in unrighteousness” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “rejoices with the truth” — Command / instruction
- **v7** “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” — Command / instruction
- **v8** “never fails” — Promise / blessing
- **v8** “they will be done away” — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** “they will cease” — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** “it will be done away” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “when the perfect comes” — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** “I did away with childish things” — Time / place / contrast
- **v12** “in a mirror dimly” — Time / place / contrast
- **v12** “face to face” — Promise / blessing
- **v12** “I will know fully just as I also have been fully known” — Promise / blessing
- **v13** “faith, hope, love, abide these three” — Promise / blessing
- **v13** “the greatest of these is love” — God — His character & actions
- **v1** “love” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v9** “in part” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:2

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

Setting. Chapter 13 stands between two sentences about gifts: "But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way" (12:31) and "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts" (14:1). Paul is writing to a church that had every gift (1:7) and was known for its quarrels (1:11), jealousy (3:3), arrogance (4:18; 5:2), lawsuits (6:1–8) and a divided Lord's Supper (11:17–22). Chapter 13 is not a wedding poem; it is the cure for a church fight.

Structure:

- vv1–3 — **without love, nothing:** five "if I" clauses — tongues of men and angels; prophecy, all mysteries and all knowledge; all faith to remove mountains; all my possessions; my body to be burned — each with "but do not have love." Three verdicts: a noisy gong (v1), I am nothing (v2), it profits me nothing (v3).
- vv4–7 — **love described:** fifteen verbs. Two positives (patient, kind), eight refusals (not jealous … does not rejoice in unrighteousness), one positive joy (rejoices with the truth), then four "all things" (bears, believes, hopes, endures).
- vv8–12 — **love never fails:** prophecy and knowledge done away, tongues cease (v8); we know and prophesy in part (v9); when the perfect comes, the partial is done away (v10); two pictures — the child become a man (v11), the mirror become a face (v12).
- v13 — **the greatest:** faith, hope, love abide; the greatest of these is love.

Repeated words, with counts:

- "love" ×9 — vv1, 2, 3, 4 (×3), 8, 13 (×2) (Greek *agapē*; KJV "charity" ×9).
- "but do not have love" ×3 — vv1, 2, 3; "if I" ×5 — vv1, 2 (×2), 3 (×2).
- "I" ×14 — vv1 (×2), 2 (×3), 3 (×2), 11 (×4), 12 (×3); plus "my / me" ×3 in v3. Paul puts himself under the test first.
- "not / never" ×12 — vv1, 2, 3, 4 (×3), 5 (×4), 6, 8 ("never fails"). Most of the portrait is what love refuses.
- "all" ×8 — v2 (×3: all mysteries, all knowledge, all faith), v3 (all my possessions), v7 (×4: "all things").
- "in part / partial" ×4 — vv9 (×2), 10, 12 (Greek *ek merous* each time).
- "done away / did away" ×4 — vv8 (×2), 10, 11 (Greek *katargeō* each time).
- "child / childish" ×5 — all in v11.
- "know / known / knowledge" ×7 — know vv2, 9, 12 (×2: "I know," "I will know fully"); known v12; knowledge vv2, 8.
- "prophecy / prophesy" ×3 — vv2, 8, 9; "tongues" ×2 — vv1, 8.
- "now" ×3 — vv12 (×2), 13; "then" ×2 — v12; "face" ×2 — v12.

- “nothing” ×2 — vv2, 3.

Contrasts: gifts ⟷ love; something ⟷ nothing; love that never fails ⟷ gifts that are done away (v8); in part ⟷ the perfect (vv9–10); child ⟷ man (v11); a mirror dimly ⟷ face to face (v12); now ⟷ then (v12); I know in part ⟷ I will know fully, as I have been fully known (v12); unrighteousness ⟷ truth (v6); faith and hope ⟷ the greatest, love (v13).

Commands: none in the chapter itself — it describes rather than commands. The command comes in 14:1: “Pursue love.”

Shape of the chapter: a subtraction (1–3), a portrait (4–7), a timeline (8–12), a ranking (13). It moves from what I have, to what love does, to what lasts, to what is greatest.

Chapter theme (my words): No gift or sacrifice counts without love, because love is the life of God Himself; it is seen in fifteen plain behaviors, it outlasts every gift of this partial age, and it is the greatest thing there is.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

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

FIGURE · LOVE IN FIFTEEN VERBS

	LOVE … (NASB 1995)	GREEK VERB	WHERE CORINTH FELL SHORT
1	is patient	*makrothymei*	11:33 — "wait for one another"
2	is kind	*chrēsteuetai*	8:11–12 — the weak brother wounded
3	is not jealous	*ou zēloi*	3:3 — "jealousy and strife"
4	does not brag	*ou perpereuetai*	4:7 — boasting of what was given
5	is not arrogant	*ou physioutai*	4:18; 5:2; 8:1 — puffed up
6	does not act unbecomingly	*ouk aschēmonei*	11:21 — drunk at the Supper
7	does not seek its own	*ou zētei ta heautēs*	10:24 — seek the other's good
8	is not provoked	*ou paroxynetai*	1:11–12 — quarrels and parties
9	does not take into account a wrong	*ou logizetai*	6:7 — "why not rather be wronged?"
10	does not rejoice in unrighteousness	*ou chairei epi*	5:2, 6 — boasting over sin
11	rejoices with the truth	*synchairei*	12:26 — rejoice with the member
12	bears all things	*stegei*	
13	believes all things	*pisteuei*	
14	hopes all things	*elpizei*	
15	endures all things	*hypomenei*	

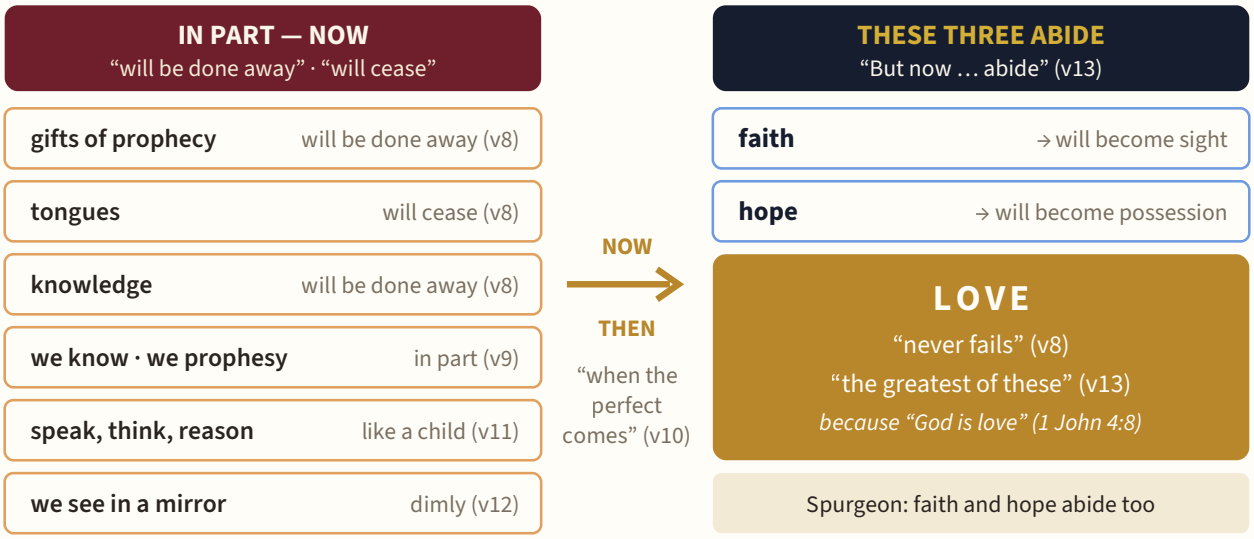
FOUR "ALL THINGS" (v7)
covers · trusts · expects · stays
9:12 — Paul: "we endure all things"
(the same verb *stegō*)

what love does · what love refuses

All fifteen are verbs — love is what it does.

Every description of love in vv. 4–7 is a verb, and almost every refusal names a failure Paul has already confronted in this letter.

FIGURE · WHAT ENDS AND WHAT ABIDES

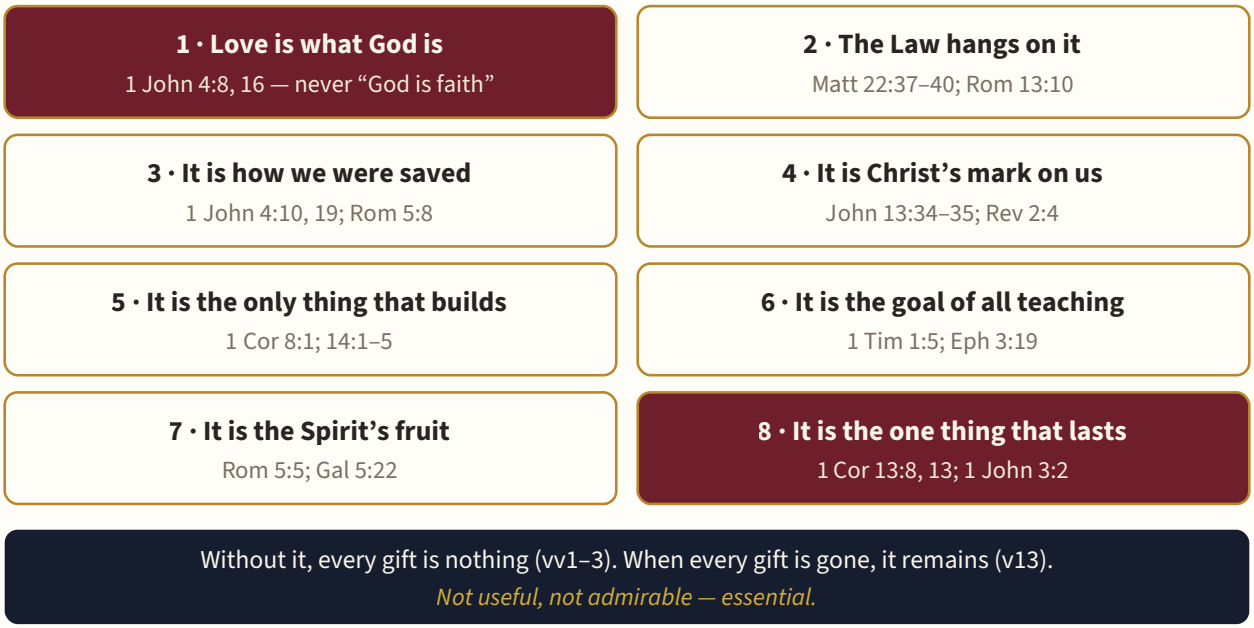


WHAT IS "THE PERFECT" (v10)? — WHERE THE TEACHERS LAND

Guzik: Christ's presence — His return or our going to Him; not the finished New Testament.
Henry: the perfect state above; yet the extraordinary gifts were "but for a time."
All agree: whatever ends and whenever, love does not — it outlasts every gift.

Everything in the left column belongs to the partial "now" and will be done away; of the three that abide, love is the greatest — and teachers who differ on "the perfect" agree on that.

FIGURE · WHY LOVE IS ESSENTIAL



Paul assumes in chapter 13 what the whole Bible argues: love is God's nature, the Law's summary, the gospel's shape, the church's mark, and the one thing that lasts.

Why tongues first? Corinth prized tongues most — Henry says "hereupon the Corinthians seemed chiefly to value themselves and despise their brethren." Their religious instincts were formed in pagan worship where being "led astray" (12:2) looked like the presence of a god, and a gift that was audible, public and unverifiable made a perfect badge. Paul had already listed tongues last and asked, "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" (12:28–30). A gift the Spirit does not give to everyone cannot be the badge of the Spirit. Guzik quotes Fee: "Possession of the charismata is not the sign of the Spirit; Christian love is."

Gifts minus love = nothing — not less. Paul imagines each gift at full strength (*all* mysteries, *all* knowledge, *all* faith, *all* my possessions) and subtracts love: the result is zero. And the verdict falls on the *person* — "I am nothing." Sproul: these things are not bad, but every one of them can be done without love, so none of them proves the heart — "A person can even be a martyr for the wrong reasons." Spurgeon's example is Judas, who "had, no doubt, faith in God's miracles, but yet he was not saved." Henry draws the line exactly: "Saving faith is ever in conjunction with charity, but the faith of miracles may be without it." Guzik guards the other side: "It isn't an issue of love versus the gifts."

Love is a verb (vv4–7). All fifteen descriptions are verbs; Guzik: "True love is always demonstrated by action." That matters for my men: love is not a mood I wait for but a set of things I do. Read the list against Corinth and every line is a rebuke (see the figure); read it against Christ and every line is a description; read it with my own name and it is my assignment.

The ledger word (v5). "Does not take into account a wrong suffered" is *logizomai*, the bookkeeper's verb — the same word for God "not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor 5:19) and for righteousness credited to Abraham (Rom 4:3). Guzik: love "does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received." Sproul:

"Longsuffering love does not keep a scorecard." The KJV's "thinketh no evil" (and Henry) take the verb the other way — love does not imagine evil motives. Both are true of love.

Bears and believes all things — not gullibility (v7). *Stegō* means to cover as a roof covers (1 Pet 4:8; Prov 10:12). Spurgeon: "Love stands in the presence of a fault, with a finger on her lip." But Henry: "Wisdom may dwell with love, and charity be cautious." Love believes the best until the facts forbid it; when it cannot believe, it still hopes ("Love never despairs"), and it stays. Sproul calls this the judgment of charity — giving others the best-case reading we naturally reserve for ourselves.

What is "the perfect" (v10), and do the gifts continue? Here our teachers differ, and I want my men to know it. Guzik rejects the view that the perfect is the completed New Testament; it is the presence of Christ — His return or our going to Him — and he holds the gifts continue until then; he also rejects the argument that the middle voice of "will cease" means tongues stopped on their own. Henry places the perfect in "the perfect state above," yet says the extraordinary gifts were given "but for a time, not during its whole continuance in this world" — a cessationist lean. Verse 12 points to the end: "face to face" and "know fully" are the language of seeing Christ (1 John 3:2). Whatever ends, and whenever, love does not — every teacher agrees on that.

The child and the mirror (vv11–12). Childish speech is right for a child and set aside by the man; Paul is not calling the gifts childish but saying they belong to this age. Corinth's bronze mirrors showed a true but blurred face; "dimly" is *en ainigmati*, "in a riddle," the word of Numbers 12:8. And the comfort is folded in: "I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." God's knowledge of me is already complete. Spurgeon: "We shall never be omniscient—we cannot be," but we will see Him.

Do faith and hope abide in heaven (v13)? Guzik and Henry say faith becomes sight and hope becomes possession, and love alone continues. Spurgeon dissents: Paul calls all three abiding, and the saints will still trust and still look forward. They agree on the point of the verse — love is greatest.

Why love is essential — eight reasons from the whole Bible.

1. **Love is what God is.** Every other virtue is something God does; love is something God is (1 John 4:8, 16). Scripture never says God is faith or God is hope. Before the world was, the Father loved the Son (John 17:24). Guzik: love "is an attribute of God." To lack it is to lack the family likeness.
2. **The whole Law hangs on it.** Both great commandments are love (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37–40); "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14). A loveless gift is not merely unimpressive — it is lawless.
3. **It is how we were saved, and how we know we are.** "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10; Rom 5:8). Everything in vv4–7 was first done to us — God was patient (2 Pet 3:9), kind (Luke 6:35), kept no account of our wrongs (2 Cor 5:19). We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and the one who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar (1 John 4:20).
4. **It is Christ's mark on His church.** "By this all men will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:35) — not by gifts or doctrine. Corinth had every gift; Ephesus had sound doctrine and left its first love (Rev 2:4). Henry: "Blessed Jesus! how few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!"
5. **It is the only thing that builds.** "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies" (8:1). Chapter 14 measures every gift by one test — does it build up the church? — and that test is love applied. Gifts are power; love is direction.
6. **It is the goal of all teaching.** "The goal of our instruction is love" (1 Tim 1:5); the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3:19). The man who studies his way to all mysteries and not to love has stopped short of the destination.

7. **It is the Spirit's fruit, not my achievement.** The Spirit who gives the gifts (12:11) pours out God's love in our hearts (Rom 5:5), and love heads His fruit — followed by patience and kindness, the first two words of v4 (Gal 5:22). Manufactured love is the Corinthian imitation: performance.
8. **It is the one thing that lasts.** Prophecy, tongues and knowledge end; faith becomes sight; love walks through the door of eternity unchanged. Henry: "When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame."

Word study (Greek):

- **love — *agapē* (G26):** self-giving love of the will; nine times here; KJV "charity."
- **tongues — *glōssa* (G1100):** tongue, language; "of men and of angels" (v1).
- **noisy gong — *chalkos ēchōn* (G5475, G2278):** sounding bronze; resonance without content.
- **clanging cymbal — *kymbalon alalazon* (G2950, G214):** a struck bronze basin, only here; *alalazō* is loud wailing (Mark 5:38).
- **prophecy — *prophēteia* (G4394):** Spirit-given speech; "in part" (v9) and done away (v8).
- **mysteries — *mystērion* (G3466):** God's purposes once hidden, now revealed (2:7; 15:51).
- **knowledge — *gnōsis* (G1108):** the Corinthian boast (8:1); "done away" (v8).
- **nothing — *oudeis / outhen* (G3762):** "I am nothing" — the person, not the gift.
- **feed — *psōmizō* (G5595):** to dole out in morsels (Rom 12:20).
- **be burned / boast — *kaiō* (G2545) / *kauchaomai* (G2744):** NASB and KJV follow "burned"; many manuscripts and the SBLGNT read "that I may boast."
- **profits — *ōpheleō* (G5623):** to be of use, gain.
- **is patient — *makrothymeō* (G3114):** long-tempered with people; God's patience (2 Pet 3:9).
- **is kind — *chrēsteuomai* (G5541):** only here; active, useful goodness (Luke 6:35).
- **is jealous — *zēloō* (G2206):** the same verb as "earnestly desire" (12:31; 14:1) — zeal aimed wrong is envy.
- **brag — *perpereuomai* (G4068):** to parade oneself, only here.
- **is arrogant — *physioō* (G5448):** puffed up; six of its seven NT uses are in 1 Corinthians.
- **act unbecomingly — *aschēmoneō* (G807):** to act without proper form; only here and 7:36.
- **seek — *zēteō* (G2212):** "does not seek its own" — compare 10:24, 33.
- **is provoked — *paroxynō* (G3947):** to be sharpened, exasperated; Acts 17:16; our "paroxysm." (KJV adds "easily.")
- **take into account — *logizomai* (G3049):** to reckon, impute (Rom 4:3; 2 Cor 5:19); again in v11, "reason."
- **unrighteousness — *adikia* (G93):** wrongdoing; love takes no pleasure in it.
- **rejoices with — *synchairō* (G4796):** to rejoice together (12:26; Luke 15:6, 9).
- **truth — *alētheia* (G225):** love and truth are allies.
- **bears — *stegō* (G4722):** to roof over, cover, bear up (9:12; 1 Thess 3:1, 5).
- **believes — *pisteuō* (G4100):** extends trust; the charitable reading.
- **hopes — *elpizō* (G1679):** refuses to write anyone off.
- **endures — *hypomenō* (G5278):** to remain under; to hold one's ground.
- **fails — *piptō* (G4098):** to fall; love never falls.

- **done away — *katargeō* (G2673):** to make inoperative (vv8, 10, 11; 15:24, 26).
- **cease — *pauō* (G3973):** to stop, come to an end.
- **in part — *meros* (G3313):** *ek merous*, partial (vv9, 10, 12).
- **perfect — *teleios* (G5046):** complete, the goal reached.
- **child — *nēpios* (G3516):** an infant (3:1, "infants in Christ").
- **mirror — *esoptron* (G2072):** polished metal mirror (James 1:23).
- **dimly — *ainigma* (G135):** a riddle, only here (Num 12:8).
- **know fully — *epiginōskō* (G1921):** to know thoroughly; "just as I also have been fully known."
- **abide — *menō* (G3306):** to remain, dwell (John 15).
- **greatest — *meizōn* (G3187):** "greater," as in "the greater gifts" (12:31).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **This is a chapter for a church fight, not a wedding** — between 12:31 and 14:1.
2. **Love is subtracted, not compared** — gifts without love equal nothing, and "I am nothing."
3. **Not love versus gifts** (Guzik) — love is what the gifts are for.
4. **Agapē is a verb** — all fifteen descriptions are behaviors that can be commanded and obeyed.
5. **Every refusal names a Corinthian sin** — the portrait is a mirror held up to the letter.
6. **The ledger closes in both directions** — *logizomai*, as God does not count our trespasses (2 Cor 5:19).
7. **Longsuffering love does not keep a scorecard** (Sproul).
8. **Love stands with a finger on her lip** (Spurgeon) — it covers, and it never despairs.
9. **Gifts are for now; love is for ever** — "one language in heaven" (Henry).
10. **Love is greatest because God is love** — faith becomes sight, hope becomes possession, love goes on.

Cross-references: Gen 4:3–8; 37:11; Exod 33:11; Lev 19:18; Num 12:8; 20:2–13; Deut 6:5; Ps 36:9; Prov 10:12; 14:15; Matt 7:22–23; 17:20; 22:37–40; 27:18; Mark 5:38; 11:23; Luke 6:35; 15:6; John 3:16; 13:34–35; 15:4–13; 17:24; Acts 17:16; Rom 4:3; 5:5, 8; 12:10, 20; 13:8–10; 1 Cor 1:7, 11; 3:1–3; 4:6–7, 18–19; 5:2, 6; 6:7; 8:1; 9:12; 10:24; 11:21, 33; 12:26, 31; 14:1; 15:24–26; 16:14; 2 Cor 5:19; Gal 5:6, 14, 22; Eph 3:19; 5:2; Phil 2:3–4; Col 1:4–5; 3:14; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5; James 1:23; 1 Pet 1:21–22; 4:8; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 John 3:2; 4:7–12, 16, 19–20; Rev 2:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,"

FIGURE · GIFTS MINUS LOVE

SUBTRACT LOVE FROM THE GREATEST GIFTS · 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–3

"IF I …"	"BUT DO NOT HAVE"	THE VERDICT
speak with the tongues of men and of angels (v1)	– LOVE	**a noisy gong or** a clanging cymbal
have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries (v2)	– LOVE	**I am nothing** the person, not just the gift
know all knowledge; have all faith to remove mountains	– LOVE	
give all my possessions to feed the poor (v3)	– LOVE	**it profits me nothing** even the sacrifice gains nothing
surrender my body to be burned (v3)	– LOVE	

I **sound** empty (v1) · I **am** nothing (v2) · I **gain** nothing (v3) — gift × 0 = 0

Read each row left to right: Paul imagines every gift Corinth prized at full strength, takes away love, and the verdict grows from empty noise to "I am nothing" to "it profits me nothing."

Example to follow — Christ in the portrait. I read verses 4–7 with Jesus' name in place of "love," and every line is true: Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not take into account a wrong suffered. Then I read it with my own name, and I usually don't make it past the first line. That is not where the gospel leaves me. Every one of those fifteen verbs was first done *to* me — He was patient with me, kind to me when I was ungrateful, and He closed the books on my wrongs. I love because He first loved me.

Sin to confess — gifts without love. I can teach on Thursday night, know the Greek, give my money and my time, and still be a noisy gong. I confess the times I have used what God gave me to be seen, to win an argument, or to feel above the man across the table. Paul doesn't say my gift shrinks without love; he says *I am nothing*. I would rather hear that from God now than at the end.

Command to obey — "Pursue love" (14:1). The chapter describes; the next verse commands. For the men I walk with — in recovery, in prison, in marriages hanging by a thread — love is not a feeling we wait for. It is patience with the man who relapsed again, kindness to the guard or the boss who is hard on us, refusing to brag about our

clean time, refusing to keep the ledger. This week I will name one person I have been keeping books on, and I will close the account before God and, if it is safe and wise, tell him.

Promise to trust — "then face to face." I see dimly now — my own heart, God's ways, the reasons for the pain. But I am already "fully known," and one day I will see Him face to face. So I will hold my opinions of other men loosely and my love for them tightly, because we are all looking in the same blurry mirror.

Truth to live in — love never fails. Everything I'm proud of in ministry is "in part" and will be done away. The only thing I am building that will still be standing face to face is love. That changes what I spend my Thursday nights on.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul takes the gifts Corinth bragged about and subtracts love. What would I list in verses 1–3 if Paul wrote them about me — and what is left if love is missing? (13:1–3; 12:31) *Not "my gift is diminished" but "I am nothing."*
2. Read verses 4–7 with your own name in place of "love." Where is the first line you cannot honestly say? (13:4–7) *Guzik's test: first Jesus' name (every line fits), then mine (the work begins).*
3. Whose wrong am I still carrying on the books? What would it take to close that account this week? (13:5; 2 Cor 5:19) *Logizomai — the same verb as God "not counting their trespasses."*
4. Do I believe the best about the men at this table — or save best-case thinking for my own motives? (13:7; 1 Pet 4:8) *Sproul: we reserve best-case analysis for ourselves; love extends it.*
5. Everything I am proud of in ministry is "in part." What am I building that will still be standing face to face? (13:8–12; 1 John 3:2) *Gifts are containers; love is the work itself.*
6. Why is love greater than faith and hope — and what does that say about what our church should be known for? (13:13; John 13:35; 1 John 4:8) *God is love; the world knows Christ's disciples by their love.*

Worship. God does not merely have love; He is love. Before there was a world to be patient with, the Father loved the Son. He was patient with me, kind to me, and kept no record of my wrongs because Christ carried them. Faith will become sight and hope will become possession, but His love — and ours for Him and for one another — will burn for ever.

Prayer. Father, You are love. Forgive me for every gift I have used without it — every word that was only noise. Pour Your love into my heart by Your Spirit, and make me patient and kind with the men You have given me. Help me close the books on the wrongs I keep, as You closed the books on mine in Christ. When I see dimly, keep me humble; and keep me, and these brothers, until we see You face to face and know as we are fully known. Amen.

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