

I. Context

- Historical
- Literary

- a. Love's importance, vv. 1-3
- b. Love's posture vv. 4-7
- c. Love's endurance, vv. 8-13

This third study on spiritual gifts brings us to the heart of Paul's understanding in 1 Corinthians 12-14, that of the significance of love as the foundation of religious devotion and service. No matter the giftedness of the individual, without love the use of those gifts turns into worthless service before God. In a day of high tensions inside church life and among Christians, this message of Paul needs to be heard again. The Corinthians were experiencing much of what typifies modern Christianity with pride, lack of positive, healthy relationships, completely false beliefs, immoral behavior, exclusive attitudes even toward fellow believers etc. The gap between "then" and "now" situationally is very small indeed! No wonder that chapter thirteen is perhaps the most quoted part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Yet, it is at the same time one of the most misunderstood and misused texts of this letter, largely by being lifted out of its context.

The background materials from [the previous lesson](#) on 12:27-31 will be summarized here, since the two texts share virtually the same background. For greater details, the reader is referred to that study.

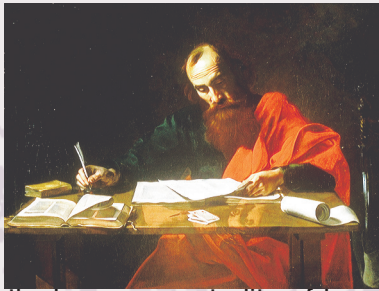
External History. As was discussed in the study on 12:27-31, the circumstances that produced this letter to the Corinthians came from two separate sources: the members of the household of Chloe and a group of members from Corinth. Both came to the apostle while he was in the early stages of his lengthy ministry in the city of Ephesus in the mid 50s. This letter is essentially a response to issues posed by these two groups of people. Thus, the occasional nature of Paul's letters is highlighted in this writing. The document was produced entirely as the apostle's response to specific problems existing in the community of house church groups in Corinth at that point in time. When one attempts to generalize relevant concepts from the letter, the interpreter must never

loose sight of the original historical setting that produced Paul's thoughts. That setting has to shape and control how his words are understood.

Internal History. From inside 13:1-13, one can-



not infer many details about the presence or absence of love among the Corinthians at the time of the writing of this letter. The reason for this is the language that Paul uses in these verses. Not once does Paul as second person “you” reference. Instead, the entire passage is couched in “I,” “we,” and “it” frames of reference. Thus the language is that of basic principles, not the language of historical description.



The very historical oriented discussions in chapters twelve and fourteen have tucked between them this lofty poetic colloquy of praise to love. Thus, Paul seeks to inspire more than to inform in this centerpiece of his treatment on spiritual gifts, especially that of tongues. Only from the introductory statement in 12:31b which links chapter thirteen back to chapter twelve can one infer the insight, from the diviseness described there, that love was evidently missing in the congregation at Corinth. Additionally, the discussion in chapter fourteen begins with an admonition to “passionately pursue love” (διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην). Thus our assumptions about the details of the situation at Corinth regarding love must be cautious and tentative. We can only infer from the contextual setting (chaps 12-14) some generalized perspectives about the historical situation at

Corinth in this matter of love. How much they understood what love should mean, we cannot say. How much they applied love in their living, we can only infer generally from the context rather than the text itself.

Yet, we can assert confidently that the apostle’s emphasis upon the centrality of love grew out of and was shaped by the misuse of spiritual gifts at Corinth. And more particularly, the abuse of glossolalia. Paul saw Christian love as the main corrective to this problem at Corinth. It wasn’t his solution for the many other problems at Corinth. The discussion about love in this chapter wasn’t -- and shouldn’t be -- understood as a timeless sonnet on the grand theme of love. [Augustine](#)’s treatment of this some centuries afterward in such a manner, that attempted to make love the central point of Christian faith, distorted Paul severely. Neither can a vibrant, spiritually healthy Christianity be built today with just this one emphasis upon love. Yet, we find efforts to do just this in our world. And we also find weak, impotent forms of Christianity in dying churches wondering why fewer and fewer people are interested in their message.

If the situation at Corinth teaches us anything, it reminds us that love is *a part of a solution* to problems, but never the exclusive solution.

b. Literary

Genre. Even from the limitations of a translation of the Greek text, one can readily observe that the grammar of Paul is noticeably difference in 13:1-13 from the material on either side in chapter twelve or chapter fourteen. The sentences are shorter, and are made up mostly of independent clauses. In the vast majority of the Pauline corpus of writing, Paul’s mind never functions this simply. A comparison of the [Block Diagram](#) of chapter thirteen to other Pauline texts dramatically illustrates in visual manner this reality.

What is taking place then? Although different readings of Paul at this point have been given, my hunch is that the apostle adopted this very eloquent style, not because he was attempting to sing poetic truth, but because he knew that you can’t really teach love. You have to inspire people to love. Already in the letter (2:1-5) he had distanced himself vigorously from the empty, eloquent rhetoric of the itinerant [Sophist](#) philosophers who traveled the country side seeking to make money from succoring people into paying to listen to their “secrets for successful liv-

ing” lectures. His eloquence in chapter thirteen is not a denial of his early statement of how simply he preached to gospel to the Corinthians. Rather, it is eloquence with substance seeking to motivate readers to become loving Christians. At Corinth, it was to adopt the priority of love as a solution to the diviseness over spiritual gifts.

This type of written expression in the ancient world was labeled an encomium, as J. Paul Sampley (*New Interpreter’s Bible*, iPreach) explains:

By the first century, an encomium was a well-established rhetorical device for praising an individual or a virtue. Typically, encomia praise in two ways: by reference to actions as a clue to character (ethos) and by comparison and contrast with other virtues or other praiseworthy persons. Usually, encomia open with a prologue and close with an appeal for emulation. Paul’s panegyric on love meets all these criteria.

Paul thus praised the value of love with these beautiful words, hoping that the Corinthians would take them to heart. If they adopted love as a posture for Christian relationships, then the problems with spiritual gifts would find resolution in a healthy manner.

One interesting side note. In following the usual pattern of preparing these Bible studies, I did the typical internet search for graphic art pictures that could relate to themes, individuals etc. in the scripture passage. Quite a large number of paintings down through the centuries have been created related to the theme of love/charity in 1 Corinthians 13. In trying to capture in visual art what Paul stresses about love, most all the artists for the past ten or more centuries have focused on one symbol -- that of a mother with exposed breasts nursing a small baby. Usually three children are in the scene representing faith, hope, and love. The child nursing at its mother's breast is love, and is usually the youngest of the three children. Occasionally more children are present. In this case, then love is the mother and the children are Christians who find nourishment from love. This symbol of love communicates a powerful image of the apostle's discussion in chapter thirteen.



Literary setting. The context of chapter thirteen is very clear. The new topic indicator in 12:1, *Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν* (and now concerning spiritual things [gifts]), introduces the issue of spiritual gifts. This discussion will continue until 15:1 where Paul uses another of his signals of a new topic, *Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί...* (And I want you, brothers, to know...). As the previous study in 12:27-31, emphasized, chapters 12, 13, 14 form a chiasm with an

aBa' sequence. This places chapter 13 in the center spotlight. The discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter twelve leads up to chapter thirteen; chapter thirteen then lays the foundation for the discussion in chapter fourteen on spiritual gifts. Paul's thought pattern stresses that genuine Christian love stands as the solution to the problems the Corinthians were experiencing with spiritual gifts.

In part this grows out of what Paul had already said as axiomatic principle in 8:1 regarding eating food offered to idols: "**Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up**" (*ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ*). This is also related to one of his final admonitions in 16:14: "**Let all that you do be done in love.**" (*πάντα ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ γινέσθω*).

A tendency in modern commentaries is to stretch the literary structure so that the next larger unit of material is 11:2-12:40. Usually this is placed under a label indicating matters of worship. Then chaps 12-14 becomes the third item of this discussion. Note Sampley's treatment as cone example (*NIB*, iP-reach):

Text on Paul's agenda in this letter are three items, each of which, taking its cue from 10:14-22, involves the worship practices of the community (women's head covering, 11:2-16; the Lord's supper, 11:17-34; and the use of spiritual gifts, chaps. 12—14).

Although this is possible logically in modern patterns of reasoning, the Greek text of 1 Corinthians provides no signals that such reasoning is present in the scripture text itself. Paul, instead, is merely responding to issues raised by the list of questions from the delegation at Corinth who visited him in Ephesus.

II. Message

Literary structure. Several approaches to the internal organization of thought structure are possible. The introductory statement in 12:31b sets up the discussion, with the discussion following in 13:1-13. Then the admonition to love in 14:1 applies the discussion. The formal encomium perspective tends to see 13:1-3 as the introduction of words of praise; 13:4-13, the heart of praise; 14:1 the conclusion of praise. Clearly, as the [block diagram](#), the [semantic diagram](#), and the [exegetical outline](#) in the larger internet version of the study assert, the thought flow inside chapter thirteen moves in three blocks: vv. 1-3; vv. 4-7; vv. 8-13. We will organize our study around these three blocks.

a Love's importance, vv. 1-3

Greek NT

Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι. 13:1 Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων,

NASB

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

NRSV

1 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cym-

NLT

1 If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth F63 but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless

ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἢ ἥων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. 13:2 καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὅρη μεθιστάναι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθέν εἰμι. 13:3 κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχήσωμαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι.

Notes:

The introductory statement setting up this discussion in 12:31b is important background: “[And I will show you a still far better path](#)” (Καὶ ἔτι καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι). This defines the contextual setting for chapter thirteen. Love is seen as a much superior way to how the Corinthians were handling spiritual gifts. Their use of gifts, especially the speaking in tongues, had encouraged elitism and arrogance. Along with this had come divisiveness and tensions. Paul knew that correct understanding of both spiritual gifts and how they were to be used would not be sufficient to solve the problems at Corinth. The informational aspect is, to be sure, set forth here: Christian love is the only workable solution. But knowing it and applying it are two different things.

Thus he chose to adopt a commonly used strategy of Greek and Roman rhetoric in that era: the [encomium](#) (ἐγκώμιον). The shape of such was rather fluid but typically focused on praising a person or some positive trait in a person’s life. The individual speaker/writer’s own creativity and the specific circumstance determined the precise form used. The intent was to not just inform, but, more importantly, to inspire commitment either to the example of the virtuous person or to the virtue being praised. The words of praise needed to inform as the basis of inspiration, but eloquence of presentation of thought played a very significant role in creating the desired inspiration.

His beginning strategy is to focus attention on himself as the negative example. He earlier encouraged the Corinthians ([11:1](#)), “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, καθὼς καὶ γὼ

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.

bal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand 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 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

Χριστοῦ). See [4:16](#) for a similar admonition (παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε). As an unusually gifted Christian Paul sets himself up as a role model. In chapter 13, all this talent would have no value without love.

Thus the beginning words of the encomium in vv. 1-13 raise three “what if” situations that would be viewed as reflecting wonderful levels of virtue and religious achievement. The first two especially relate to the Corinthians’ situation on spiritual gifts: **1)** tongues; **2)** preaching and faith; **3)** sacrificial self-giving to the point of martyrdom.

One note of importance. Most English translations rendered the Greek conjunction introducing each clause ἐὰν as “if.” There existed different kinds of “ifs” in ancient Greek. This particular pattern (called third class conditional protasis) doesn’t assume that Paul is going to do this, or that the “what ifs” are going to happen in his regard. Instead, he sets up hypothetical possibilities, primarily for illustrative purposes.

1) “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, ...” In this context, Paul begins with the spiritual gift that the Corinthians had elevated to the top of the list in importance: glossolalia. That Paul means “tongues” rather than intelligible language is confirmed by the similar expression in 14:18-19, “[18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; 19 nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.](#)” The combination “of mor-

tals and of angels” is best understood as a twofold description of one activity: angels speaking through human voices.

2) “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,...” The second “what if” situation goes back to preaching and prophecy, which Paul in chapter fourteen will rate as the number one spiritual gift in his list. The ability to speak God’s words through a human voice to others in order to inform them about God’s will and intention is προφητεία (prophecy). It relates to deep understanding of things not understood by average people (τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν). This then is closely connected to unreserved commitment to Christ (πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναι). This depiction is of an individual extraordinarily gifted for ministry to others in preaching the Gospel.

3) “If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, ...” The third depiction is of way above average commitment to Christ and ministry at two levels: a) ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου (I give away all my possessions) and b) παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχῶμαι (I hand over my body so that I may boast).

This last phrase is uncertain in the Greek. An alternative reading, with some variations, is ἵνα καιθήσωμαι / καιθήσομαι (“so that I might / will be burned”). Just two letters make the difference in the spelling of the verb: -υχ- or -ιθ-. So it’s not hard to see why the variations surfaced in the process of copying the biblical text. The surface level meaning shifts from “bragging” to “martyrdom.” In the patristic era of copying (first 8 centuries) the tendency was to favor the latter reading because of severe persecution of Christians. But both the external and internal evidence slightly favors the first reading: “so that I might brag (about my superior gifts).” This certainly fits the context of the arrogance of the Corinthians about their gifts.

The picture painted here is of unselfish generosity and self-sacrifice in ministry to others. Paul’s life certainly did exemplify such a model. Eventually, even the martyrdom reading would prove accurate when about a decade after writing this the apostle would be executed by the Roman government because of his Christian commitment.

In each of these three scenarios Paul paints a “what if” picture of extraordinary Christian commitment and ministry.

The one exactly repeated phrase in all three scenarios is ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, (“but I do not have love”). Thus Paul dramatically sets up the negative zinger



in these “what if” situations. Extraordinary giftedness for ministry without Christian love means the giftedness is worthless and useless. The ἀγάπη kind of love Paul stresses here denotes self-sacrificial commitment both to Jesus and to others. Its ultimate example for Paul is Christ’s giving of himself to

the church (Eph. 4:25-27):

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind? yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

Not only husbands, but all believers find proper definition of love in the example set by Christ in his death on the cross.

What happens when love is missing? The main clauses, drawing a conclusion from each of these three “what if” sentences spell it out clearly:

1) γέγονα χαλκὸς ἢ ἡχῶν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον (I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal). The heavenly speech focus in the first situation has biting tones. To speak the language of angels without love is to reduce Christian worship to the noisy, empty worship of the pagan cults that functioned in and around Corinth. The loud, emotionally charged style of worship typified most of the mystery religions, and often the more traditional religions of both the Greeks and Romans. With their strong emphasis upon glossolalia as well, their worship became a combination of using loud noise making musical instruments to whip everyone into a frenzied state so that they could speak the language of the gods. Paul declares that tongues speaking without love turns Christian worship into paganism. This had sharp tones of condemnation of the practices in the Christian communities at Corinth.

2) οὐθέν εἰμι (I am nothing). To possess such extraordinary spiritual insight would and could lead to the conclusion that this person is unusually special and distinct from everyone else in the spiritual community. But Paul’s conclusion is the opposite.

Without love all this spiritual giftedness for preaching God's word reduces the individual down to a position "lower than a snake's belly."

3) οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι (*I gain nothing*). Despite unbelievable generosity and self-sacrifice, without love the individual has achieved absolutely nothing spiritually. He may have his name on university buildings, placards on stained glass windows at church, and be known for his self-giving. But without Christian love, such a person has achieved absolutely nothing before God.

What a way to introduce the importance of love!

And it should have the same impact upon us as twenty-first century readers!

Greek NT

13:4 Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ, [ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται, 13:5 οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, 13:6 οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· 13:7 πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει.

NASB

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.

NRSV

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

NLT

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. 6 It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

b. Love's stance, vv. 4-7

Notes:

This second block of material has three subsections: **1)** positive traits (v.4a); **2)** absence of negative traits (vv. 4b-6); **3)** positive traits (v. 7). Tucked between 2) and 3) is an antithetical parallelism, using joy as the common link: "not joy in this but joy in that." This sets up the transition from the negative list 2 to the positive list 3. The first two traits in v. 4a are attitudes or stances with implied action. These are followed by two lists that have strong action orientation (vv. 4b-6 and v. 7). In so structuring these traits Paul goes from positive to negative and back to positive. Also, he stresses love as both posture and actions. In all of them, relationship with others is foundational. Grasping this is important to understanding what Paul means by love.

The *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* also
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calls attention to how these traits relate to stated problems in the church that surface in this letter:

Note how these descriptions relate to the Corinthians' problems: jealousy (3:3); bragging (4:7); arrogance (4:6); seeking their own (10:24); taking wrong into account (6:7); rejoicing in unrighteousness (5:2).

Thus the apostle doesn't just pick traits out of thin air to catalogue here. There is intentional application to the situation of his initial readers.

1) Paul begins with the two positive traits: Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη. Two word groups in ancient Greek are usually associated with the English idea of patience: a) μακροθυμία (μακροθυμέω, μακροθύμως) and b) ὑπομονή (ὑπομένω). Other Greek expressions relate but these are the two primary ones. The μακροθυμ- word group connotes patience with the sense of long-suffering or willingness to put up with a lot of stuff before tak-

ing action. The second word group ὑπομον- high- lights patience in the sense of holding up under the burden of stuff being dumped on you. Paul here uses the verb from the first word group μακροθυμία giving love the character of being willing to put up with a lot of stuff.

James 5:7-8 helps define and illustrate this concept through the use of the same word group:

7 Be patient [μακροθυμήσατε], **therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient** [μακροθυμῶν with it until it receives the early and the late rains. **8 You also must be patient** [μακροθυμήσατε]. **Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.**

Paul makes love a “person” in his treatment: “love is patient,” making it a model to be followed. Love is like this; so if we possess love, we will strive to be this way.

Paul will link the idea of patience to both words with the verbs from each word group in this section (μακροθυμεῖ in v. 4, and ὑπομένει in v. 7), and they are the only uses of either word group in the entire letter. The use of these two verbs serve literarily as boundary markers, being the first and last assertions of the section.

The second positive trait is χρηστεύεται. This Greek verb ascribes to love the quality of gentleness and kindness. This is the only use of this verb in the entire NT, although the adjective and noun forms are relatively common (some 17 times) in the NT, as A. C. Thiselton (*New International Greek Testament Commentary*) explains:

The cognate noun χρηστότης, *kindness, generosity, uprightness*, however, occurs regularly along with the adjective in Hellenistic literature. Hence (a) there is no doubt about the meaning of the verb; and (b) the choice of the dynamic verbal form is deliberate, even if only to play its part in a chain of active temporal processes. Spicq observes that the word “suggests the warm, generous welcome the Christian always gives his brothers ... does his utmost to be thoughtful, helpful and kind, always in a pleasant way ... , and confirms the element of magnanimity in *agape*.”¹⁰² In his commentary on this verse Origen expounds the verb as showing “sweetness to all persons” (γλυκτὸς πρὸς παντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους).¹⁰³ Chrysostom perceives **love** here as that which breaks the spiral of passion, anger, and resentment by **showing kindness**: “not only by enduring nobly, but also by soothing and comforting do they cure the sore and heal the wound of passion.”¹⁰⁴

This combination of qualities defines love in terms

of how it reacts positively to negative things thrown against it.

2) The next list (vv. 4b-5) of seven traits defines reactions that love will avoid making against negative things thrown against it.

These are a) envy, b) boasting, c) arrogance, d) rudeness, e) self-centeredness, f) irritability, g) resentment. These traits are structured in verb action moving the ideas from attitudes to concrete actions. Both the NRSV and the NLT mistakenly obscure this with their translations. The NASB retains the Greek text more accurately with “**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,..**” The second trait is more action ori-

Love is not an introvert that is incapable of decisive action in reaching out to others. For Paul, love is an extravert, always taking the initiative in building healthy relationships with others.

ented than even the NASB implies, and οὐ περπερεύεται could be better translated as “**Love doesn't strut,**” as the Mes-

sage renders it. In surveying a dozen or so English translations, most do a very poor job in preserving the action orientation of these seven negative qualities. By shifting these Greek expressions into passive traits (“X does not...” to “X is not...”) much of the forcefulness of Paul’s words is lost.

Also implied in Paul’s expression is that the positive side of these verbs does characterize love as an active action oriented quality. For example, love doesn’t brag about itself; rather, it heaps praise on others. It doesn’t swell up its head about itself; instead, it builds up others with a sense of their accomplishment et al.

As if to reinforce this picture, Paul sets up a summarizing parallel at the end, which transitions from this list to the next one around the idea of rejoicing: οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Opposites are set up: not this but that. The common action is to rejoice, to express joy and excitement. And this not in a momentary expression, but as an ongoing action (present tense in the Greek). The two opposite situations that occasion avoidance and expression of joy are ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ and τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Here is where the thoughts become more complex. Although ἀδικία can mean injustice or unrighteousness in a broad definition, the contextual limitations here strongly suggest that Paul primarily has in mind the wrongful actions already listed in the church at Corinth, the most grievous being the immoral actions of the man living in sexual relations with his birth mother (1 Cor. 5:1-13). The Greek

noun usually implies hurtful or destructive impact of an action, and it sometimes translated an “injury.” Putting all this together, it seems that Paul declares that love doesn’t gloat over other people’s wrong, hurtful actions.

The opposite side of this contrast is *συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*. Neither the NASB (“rejoices with the truth”) nor the NRSV (“rejoices in the truth”) fully capture the sense of this expression. Instead, the NLT comes closer with its “rejoices whenever the truth wins out.” How does truth “win out” in the contextual setting here? Quite clearly, the base line reference would be if the Corinthians took to heart the correctness of Paul’s admonitions and put them into practice. Their problems would find resolution and spiritual health would return to the communities of faith in Corinth. To take ἡ ἀλήθεια as some grand abstract concept is not what Paul intended. Rather, he has in mind the Gospel, at its implication for moral behavior, as the essence of that which is consistent with God’s character. Love will always celebrate when people’s lives start lining up with God’s character.

3) The third list (v. 7) returns to the positive emphasis, but retains the action orientation of verb expression: *πάντα* στέγει, *πάντα* πιστεύει, *πάντα* ἐλπίζει, *πάντα* ὑπομένει. Love does four things, as lined out here. a) It bears all things (*πάντα* στέγει). b) It believes all things (*πάντα* πιστεύει). c) It hopes all things (*πάντα* ἐλπίζει). d) It endures all things (*πάντα* ὑπομένει). The “all things” (*πάντα*) is set at the front of each statement for emphasis.

J. Paul Sampley (*NIB*, iPreach) effectively summarizes:

Then with considerable rhetorical flourish Paul concludes the characterization of love by a string of most sweeping claims about love, each beginning with the direct object (*πάντα* *panta*, “all things”), thereby emphasizing love’s all-encompassing scope. The “all things” list opens and closes with very nearly the same point about how love functions in the present, thus highlighting these two claims: “Love passes over all things in silence” (v. 7a) and “Love bears [or endures] all things” (v. 7d). On one level these assertions are positive counterparts to the disclaimer that love does not keep track of wrongs; they represent the necessary kind of “running forgiveness” that is ingredient to any sustained relationship. On another level they es-

tablish love as the context in which the difficulties and trials of life are met. How do they do so? Because love is never held alone in one’s self; love always involves another; love always links one’s self to another. This reciprocal character of love has already been acknowledged by Paul in 8:3: “If someone loves God, that person is known by God.” Love is a two-way street that provides a context of mutuality, understanding, and relatedness between each person and others, between God and believers, and between believers and believers. And that is the context in which love enables us, with the support of the others who are linked in love, to bear, to endure whatever comes along. This is the same point he already made in 10:13, but this time expressed in terms of love.

The other two claims of v. 7—“love believes all things; hopes all things”—tie faith and hope to love in anticipation of v. 13. It is not surprising that faith (the same Greek term for the verb “believe”) and hope should appear here together; they are inextricably tied in Paul’s thought (cf. Gal 5:5-6; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8). Faith, right relationship with God, is the basis on which one has hope regarding the future, because, through faith, one knows God’s redemption in the present, one can hope—that is, one can confidently look to the future in anticipation of God’s completing the work that God has already begun in the present (cf. Phil 2:12b-13).

Although Paul was addressing a particular situation at Corinth in the mid-first century, the connections of these words to us today is not complicated. Love is powerful, not weak. Love is action, not passive. Love focuses on others, not itself. Love functions in the context of a triad of commitment with faith and hope. Together they bring God’s powerful presence into the mixture invigorating love’s potency for good even in the midst of evil.

One of the most thought provoking representations of faith, hope and love, in the graphics search for this lesson, is the one on the right. These three qualities are represented by three young boys. Love is in the center feeding a fourth child. The theme is productivity with the harvest symbol in the background. It captures a major point of Paul’s emphasis here.



c. Love’s endurance, vv. 8-13

Greek NT

13:8 Ἡ ἀγάπη
οὐδέποτε πίπτει· εἴτε δὲ
προφητεῖαι,
καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε

NASB

8 Love never fails; but
if there are gifts of proph-
ecy, they will be done
away; if there are

NRSV

8 Love never ends. But
as for prophecies, they
will come to an end; as
for tongues, they will

NLT

8 Love will last forever,
but prophecy and speak-
ing in unknown lan-
guages and special

γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνῶσις, καταργηθήσεται. 13:9 ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκωμεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν· 13:10 ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται. 13:11 ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος, ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐλογιζόμην ὡς νήπιος· ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου. 13:12 βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην. 13:13 νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.

Notes:

This final section is focused on limitations -- in this life, over against eternity in Heaven with God. Love is the only thing to transcend both these realms. Faith and hope are limited to this life, but become unneeded in the eternal order. Communicating directly with God in tongues and communicating the truths of God to others have a role in this life, but become unnecessary in the eternal order. Our comprehension of things in this life, both spiritually and otherwise, is limited. But those limits are removed in the eternal order. This life is like childhood while the eternal order compares to adulthood. What we grasp in this life is like looking into an ancient mirror that reflects back a very low level image. In the eternal order, those limits are gone.

Paul's rhetorical structure changes in verses 8-12. Two sections [1 & 2] with two subsections surface. The subset [a & b] in each larger section is causal. That is, each subset provides a basis for preceding subset. This can be illustrated as:

- 1) First set of assertions (v. 8)
 - a) The basis for these (vv. 9-10)
- 2) Second set of assertions (v. 11)
 - b) The basis for these (v. 12)

Verse 13 is summary to the entire passage.

The second set (vv. 11-12) serves to reinforces

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.

cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

knowledge will all disappear. 9 Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! 10 But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear. 11 It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 12 Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now. 13 There are three things that will endure -- faith, hope, and love -- and the greatest of these is love.

the first set through analogy, rather than introduce a completely new idea about love. Its focus, instead, is on the limitations part in the first set of assertions.

1) Paul begins with "Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end." Thieselton (NIGTC) correctly calls attention to the weakness of most English translations of the first verb here, πίπτει:

Since Paul has consciously used images and metaphors of burning or boiling, inflating, bad manners, having a sharp point stuck into one, and reckoning up accounts, it seems a pity to reduce πίπτω, *to fall down, to fall to the ground, to collapse, to fall apart*, of its grounding in physical, pictorial imagery by the abstract *fails* (NIV) or *faileth* (AV/KJV, RV) or even *comes to an end* (REB, NJB) or *ends* (NRSV).

The powerful assertion is that love can weather every storm and won't collapse. The emphatic negative οὐδέποτε means "not ever at any moment in time." Love's strength and stamina is unmatched. This is placed in contrast to prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Both prophecies and knowledge will become irrelevant or rendered useless (καταργηθήσονται [plural] / καταργηθήσεται [singular]), while tongues will cease functioning (παύσονται). The precise meaning of the latter is

sometimes debated. Sometimes an anti-glossolalia stance reads into this a view that tongues speaking stopped with the end of the apostolic age. But the Pauline context here is clear. The termination point for all three is the transition from the earthly to the heavenly, not some earthly point beforehand, as he makes clear in the latter part of his rationale for these assertions in v. 10 below.

a) The reason for the limitation of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge is given in verses nine and ten: “**For** [γὰρ] **we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part, but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.**” Limitations are present on these gifts, the limitations that come from inside this life and from the fact that these gifts have value only in this life. Interestingly, limitations in the causal statement are not directly stated about tongues. That will come in his discussion in chapter 14, and the limitations are more severe than those on prophecies and knowledge. The shift point is the transition from the earthly to the heavenly in verse 10. The partial will be rendered irrelevant, just like the prophecies and knowledge above; note the very same verb καταργηθήσεται. What is the meaning of this shift? It is a movement from τὸ ἐκ μέρους (the partial) to τὸ τέλειον (the complete). The eschatological end of human history at the return of Christ is Paul’s point.

Paul’s primary point is that no such limitations are placed on love. It stands pat in that transition shift while the other gifts don’t survive it.

2) The second set of assertions is in verse eleven: “**When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.**” This set doesn’t add new information to the stress on love’s permanency. Instead, it reinforces one point of the first set through an analogy: the experience of limitations in childhood contrasted to the release from those limitations in adulthood. Notice also, that Paul returns to the first person “I” using himself as the example. This, as he did at the outset in vv. 1-3.

The areas of childhood limitations are identified as speaking (ἐλάλουν), thinking (ἐφρόνουν), and reasoning (ἐλογιζόμεν). Although three areas of limitations are mentioned here, along with three areas of limitation in the first set in verse eight (prophecies, tongues, and knowledge), I’m not sure these two sets of threes should be lined up in parallel to each other. But the temptation to do so is certainly present. Prophecies equals speaking; tongues equals thinking; and knowledge equals reasoning. The problem with this lineup seems to be associating tongues

with thinking. Tongues, as Paul views it, is taking leave of rational thought processes. Some biblical scholars want to reverse the sequence of the first two so that tongues is linked to speaking, and thinking is linked to prophecies. But both tongues and prophecies have more to do with speaking than with reasoning. The second (thinking) and third (reasoning) limitations in the childhood set both have to do with mental processes, and thus could more easily with linked to knowledge in the first set.

All to say, that trying to link each set of three limitations in a one-to-one connection just won’t work. Thus, it’s far better to see each set as self-contained. The childhood limitations are those most natural to childhood, not some kind of hidden symbol of the spiritual gifts issue in the first set of limitations.

The shift point in this second set of limitations in verse 11 is the move into adulthood. Here τὰ τοῦ νηπίου (the things of childhood) means κατήργηκα (I put an end to) when γέγονα ἀνὴρ (I became an adult). Several issues arise from English translation patterns. The shift point translation of γέγονα ἀνὴρ is not handled very well by any of the three translations: “when I became a man” (NASB); “when I became an adult” (NRSV); “when I grew up” (NLT). The use of the perfect tense in the Greek expression conveys the idea of “when I settled into manhood.” In the cultural context of Paul’s day, that had slightly different meanings. In the Jewish culture, it meant one’s 30th birthday and much celebration of arriving into adulthood, which was a synonym for “marriageability.” In the Greco-Roman culture, it meant the date predetermined by daddy, usually sometime in the late 20s. Similar celebrations and meanings were attached here. Basically, entrance into adulthood meant one was deemed to be ready for the responsibilities of establishing his own family.

The idea that this shift into adulthood meant “put away” can be misleading. This shift point κατήργηκα is defined by the exact same verb used in the first shift point (v. 10), καταργηθήσεται. The difference in the spellings is the difference between perfect tense - active voice here, and future tense - passive voice in the former. This is dictated by the nature of the two statements. The first one looks to the future when God will render these limitations irrelevant. This second one here looks to the past in Paul’s life in the analogy of his move into adulthood. Especially, troublesome is the inherently negative “childish ways” (NRSV) or “childish things” (NASB) translation of the Greek τὰ τοῦ νηπίου. This injects a pejorative tone into the analogy that isn’t present in the Greek, which

simply means “the things I did in childhood.” Paul’s point in the analogy is limitations period. Not necessarily “stupid things.” Speaking, thinking and reasoning -- the childhood things the reference goes back to -- are not inherently bad things. They are just subject to the limited ability of childhood. Keep in mind also, the term νήπιος technically means “the period before adulthood,” that is, being a minor. In Greek, “childhood” means either βρεφος or παιδιόθεν, not νήπιος from a technical standpoint. The English term “childhood” is probably used because our culture has childhood, youth, and adulthood phases, and the terms minor/adult wouldn’t sound as natural.

Paul then strengthens his first set of assertions about the contrast between love and other spiritual gifts at the point of limitations on the others. He does so by looking to the past and finding an analogy between childhood and adulthood with the shift point allowing for dramatic setting aside of limitations. For a somewhat similar analogy for faith and salvation as the shift point see [Galatians 6:1-7](#),

1 Let me show you the implications of this. As long as the heir is a minor [νήπιος], he has no advantage over the slave. Though legally he owns the entire inheritance, 2 he is subject to tutors and administrators until whatever date the father has set for emancipation. 3 That is the way it is with us: When we were minors [νήπιοι], we were just like slaves ordered around by simple instructions (the tutors and administrators of this world), with no say in the conduct of our own lives. 4 But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. 5 Thus we have been set free to experience our rightful heritage. 6 You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" 7 Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.

b) The rationale for this analogy to childhood is set forth in verse twelve: “**For** now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Two parallel statements form the basis for the emphasis on childhood limitations and what passage into adulthood implies: a) see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; b) now knowing only in part, but then will know fully. At first this doesn’t see to fit. But Paul does a frequent Pauline thing. His rationale here doesn’t point the appeal to childhood only. Rather it moves largely to justifying

the spiritual point of his appeal to childhood. His childhood analogy in the past pointed applicationally to an eschatological shift in the future. Note the repeated adverbs in both sets ἄρτι...τότε (now...then). More precisely, ἄρτι has the possible meaning of immediate past, and would fit better in such a contrast between childhood (ἄρτι) / adulthood (τότε) than the adverb νυνὶ used in verse 13, which is limited emphatically to present time. Thus, his expressed basis for the analogy picks up limited seeing and knowing in childhood to more complete seeing and knowing in adulthood. But the language of his rationale is much more influenced by the eschatological application of its point.

In part also, his rationale here becomes his elaboration of the shift point in the first rationale (v. 10): when that which is complete comes (ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον,...). There the emphasis was on rendering irrelevant the limitations of the earthly (τὸ ἐκ μέρους). Here the emphasis first is on “seeing.” Now it is limited seeing; then, it will be complete seeing. Second, the contrast is on limited knowing now over against fully knowing then. The ἐκ μέρους language is repeated with the knowing element.

The distance of the shift is the dramatically new element in this second rationale. Just the release from limitations was emphasized in the first rationale (τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται). Here the shift goes from *seeing* dimly in a mirror to *seeing* God face to face, and from *knowing* in part to *knowing* as fully as God knows us. Also, interesting is the sequencing of the two grounds for release from limitations. In the first it is knowing then prophesying; in the second it is seeing then knowing, thus creating a chiasmic abb’a’ sequence.

Verse 13 brings the entire passage to climax. The triad of faith, hope and love come together as the lasting elements of this earthly time (now; νυνὶ). But if one has to prioritize these three, love stands at the top of the list. One should not read into the verb μένει here the eschatological implication that these three entities survive for all eternity, in spite of Paul’s earlier contention that only love survives the shift point from this life to eternity. This is the mistake of the NASB and NRSV translations. The better understanding is that these three come to the top of the list in this present earthly situation. Love rises to the top of this short list because it alone continues into the heavenly life.

Wow! What a beautiful tribute to the gift of love. It was the solution to the problems at Corinth. It remains that anchor point solving our problems today, especially when linked to Christian faith and hope.

Greek NT

Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι. 13:1 Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἡχῶν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. 13:2 καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθέν εἰμι. 13:3 κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχῇσμαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐδὲν ὀφελοῦμαι.

13:4 Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ, [ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται, 13:5 οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἐαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, 13:6 οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· 13:7 πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει.

13:8 Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει· εἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνῶσις, καταργηθήσεται. 13:9 ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν· 13:10 ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται. 13:11 ὅτε ἡμην νήπιος, ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος,

NASB

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

NRSV

1 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand 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 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will

NLT

1 If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth F63 but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. 6 It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

8 Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. 9 Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! 10 But when the

ἐλογιζόμεν ὡς νήπιος·
ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ,
κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.
13:12 βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι
δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι,
τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς
πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω
ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ
ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ
ἐπεγνώσθην. 13:13 νυνὶ
δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς,
ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα·
μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ
ἀγάπη.

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.

see face to face. Now I
know only in part; then I
will know fully, even as I
have been fully known.
13 And now faith, hope,
and love abide, these
three; and the greatest of
these is love.

end comes, these special
gifts will all disappear.
11 It's like this: When I
was a child, I spoke and
thought and reasoned as
a child does. But when I
grew up, I put away child-
ish things. 12 Now we
see things imperfectly as
in a poor mirror, but then
we will see everything
with perfect clarity. All
that I know now is partial
and incomplete, but then
I will know everything
completely, just as God
knows me now. 13 There
are three things that will
endure – faith, hope, and
love – and the greatest of
these is love.

Greek NT

Καὶ

ἔτι

καθ' ὑπερβολὴν

1 ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι.

¹ Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ

καὶ

τῶν ἀγγέλων,

δὲ

ἀγάπην μὴ ἔχω,

2 γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχων

ἢ

κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.

²

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν

καὶ

εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα

καὶ

πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν

ὥστε ὅρη μεθιστάναι,

δὲ

ἀγάπην μὴ ἔχω,

3 οὐθέν εἰμι.

³

κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου

καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου

ἵνα καυχῆσωμαι,

δὲ

ἀγάπην μὴ ἔχω,

4 οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι.

5 ⁴ Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ,

6 χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη,

7 οὐ ζηλοῖ,

8 [ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται,


9 οὐ φυσιοῦται,

10 ⁵ οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ,

11 οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς,

12 οὐ παροξύνεται,

13 οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν,



14 ⁶ οὐ χαίρει
ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ,
δὲ
15 συγχαίρει
τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·
16 ⁷ πάντα στέγει,
17 πάντα πιστεύει,
18 πάντα ἐλπίζει,
19 πάντα ὑπομένει.
20 ⁸ Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει·
δὲ
εἴτε προφητεῖαι,
21 καταργηθήσονται·
εἴτε γλῶσσαι,
22 παύσονται·
εἴτε γνῶσις,
23 καταργηθήσεται.
⁹ γὰρ
ἐκ μέρους
24 γινώσκομεν
καὶ
ἐκ μέρους
25 προφητεύομεν·
¹⁰ δὲ
ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον,
26 τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται.
¹¹ ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος,
27 ἐλάλουν
ὡς νήπιος,
28 ἐφρόνουν
ὡς νήπιος,
29 ἐλογιζόμην
ὡς νήπιος·
ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ,
30 κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.
¹² γὰρ
31 βλέπομεν
ἄρτι
δι' ἐσόπτρου
ἐν αἰνίγματι,
δὲ
τότε

32 (βλέπομεν)
πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον·

33 ἄρτι
γινώσκω
ἐκ μέρους,
δὲ

34 τότε
ἐπιγνώσομαι
καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην·

13 δὲ
νυνὶ

35 μένει πίστις,
ἐλπίς,
ἀγάπη,
τὰ τρία ταῦτα·
δὲ

36 μείζων τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.

Summary of Rhetorical Structure displayed in Diagram:

Statement 1 stands as the introductory topic sentence, that both climaxes the preceding discussion and sets the stage for the following discussion.

Statements 2-4 are linked by two features: 1) the negating core clause, and 2) the common ἀγάπην μὴ ἔχω dependent clause.

Statements 5-6 are linked by the common ἡ ἀγάπη verb subject placed in pre and post positions in relation to their verbs.

Statements 7-13 are linked by a string of οὐ negatives. Statements 14-15 are linked by the οὐ . . . δὲ contrast, and by the two modifies.

Statements 16-19 are connected by the repetition of πάντα in the sentence pre-field.

Statements 20-23 are linked through a complex structure that begins with the οὐ . . . δὲ contrast but then the positive side (21-23) are bundled into a single group through the repetition of the subordinate conjunction εἴτε.

Statements 24-26 are grouped through the repetition of ἐκ μέρους, and then are linked back to 20-23 through the coordinate causal conjunction γὰρ.

Statements 27-30 are linked through the repetition of νήπιος, but 27-29 are set in contrast to statement 30 by the temporal dependent clauses introduced by ὅτε and then contrasted by νήπιος / ἀνὴρ.

Statements 31-34 are set up as two sets of twos. 31 and 32 are contrasted internally by the temporal adverbs ἄρτι / τότε, and the common verb βλέπομεν. Then statements 33-34 are set up by the same contrastive temporal adverbs ἄρτι / τότε. The play on verbs (γινώσκω / ἐπιγνώσομαι) highlights the contrast even more. Additionally the present / future verb tense in both pairs stresses this contrast. Then both pairs (31-32 & 33-34) are linked by to 27-30 via the causal coordinate conjunction γὰρ.

Statements 35-36 move toward a conclusion with a climatic effect with the triadic reference to faith, hope and love (35) and the declaration of the superiority of love (statement 36).

This will lead to the Semantic Diagram visualization of this structure that follows:

Semantic Diagram

I-----		Καὶ	1	Pres	Dep	Ind	1	S	δείκνυμι	(ἐγώ)
		δε	2	Perf	Act	Ind	1	S	γέγονα	(ἐγώ)
1-----		δε	3	Pres	---	Ind	1	S	εἰμι	(ἐγώ)
A-2-----		δε	4	Pres	Dep	Ind	1	S	ὠφελοῦμαι	(ἐγώ)
3-----										
a-----			5+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	μακροθυμεῖ	ἀγάπη
1--										
b-----			6+	Pres	Dep	Ind	3	S	χρηστεύεται	ἀγάπη
i-----			7-	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	ζηλοῖ	[ἀγάπη]
ii-----			8-	Pres	Dep	Ind	3	S	περπερεύεται	Ἡ ἀγάπη
iii-----			9-	Pres	Dep	Ind	3	S	φυσιοῦται	[ἀγάπη]
B-----										
a-iv-----			10-	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	ἀσχημονεῖ	[ἀγάπη]
v-----			11-	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	ζητεῖ	[ἀγάπη]
vi-----			12-	Pres	Dep	Ind	3	S	παροξύνεται	[ἀγάπη]
vii-----			13-	Pres	Dep	Ind	3	S	λογίζεται	[ἀγάπη]
i-----			14 -	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	χαίρει	[ἀγάπη]
2-b-----			δε							
ii-----			15+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	συγχαίρει	[ἀγάπη]
i-----			16+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	στέγει πάν.	[ἀγάπη]
II-----										
ii-----			17+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	πιστευει πάν.	[ἀγάπη]
iii-----			18+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	ἐλπίζει πάν.	[ἀγάπη]
iv-----			19+	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	ὑπμέμενει πάν.	[ἀγάπη]
c-----										

1	20	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	πίπτει	Ἡ ἀγάπη
							δε	
a)	21	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	P	καταργηθήσονται	προφητεῖαι
i-b)	22	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	P	παύσονται	γλῶσσαι
c)	23	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	S	καταργηθήσεται	γνώσις
a--							γὰρ	
1)	24	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	γινώσκωμεν	[ἡμεῖς]
a)-							καὶ	
ii- 2)	25	Impf	Act	Ind	1	S	ἐφρόνουν	[ἐγώ]
b)-	26	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	S	καταργηθήσονται	τὸ ἐκ μέ.
							δε	
1)	27	Impf	Act	Ind	1	S	ἐλάλουν	[ἐγώ]
a)- 2)	28	Impf	Act	Ind	1	S	ἐφρόνουν	[ἐγώ]
3)	29	Impf	Act	Ind	1	S	ἐλογιζόμην	[ἐγώ]
b)-	30	2 Aor	Acts	Ind	3	S	κατήργηκα	τὰ τοῦ νηπίου
							γὰρ	
1)	31	Pres	Act	Ind	1	P	βλέπομεν	[ἡμεῖς]
a)- 2)	32	[Fut	Act	Ind	1	P	βλέπομεν	ἡμεῖς]
ii- 1)	33	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	γινώσκω	[ἐγώ]
b)- 2)	34	Fut	Pass	Ind	1	S	ἐπιγινώσκω	[ἐγώ]
							δε	
i-	35	Pres	Act	Ind	3	S	μένει	πισ, ἐλ. ἀγ
c- ii-	36	(Pres	---	Ind	3	S	ἐστίν)	ἀγάπη

Exegetical Outline

- I. (1) Paul promised to show the Corinthians a better way
- II. (2-36) Paul claimed that love stands as the chief trait of religious commitment
 - A. (2-4) Paul asserted the futility of religious service without love
 1. (2) Paul declared the emptiness of speaking with tongues but without love
 2. (3) Paul declared the worthlessness of speaking words and possessing faith but without love
 3. (4) Paul declared the nothingness of extreme personal sacrifice but without love
 - B. (5-19) Paul affirmed that love pulls the individual to "supra" human levels of relationships
 1. (5-6) Paul asserted the gracious tenacity of love
 - a. (5) Paul declared that love endures
 - b. (6) Paul declared that love shows graciousness
 2. (7-19) Paul claimed that love rises above the suspicious, negative human patterns
 - a. (7-13) Paul asserted that love doesn't possess typical negative human qualities.
 - i. (7) Paul declared that love doesn't show jealousy
 - ii. (8) Paul declared that love doesn't brag

- iii. (9) Paul declared that love doesn't puff itself up in pride
- iv. (10) Paul declared that love doesn't behave itself in unseemly fashion
- v. (11) Paul declared that love doesn't seek things for itself
- vi. (12) Paul declared that love doesn't try to start a fight
- vii. (13) Paul declared that love doesn't keep no record of wrong doings
- b. (14-15) Paul asserted that love finds joy in the positive rather than the negative
 - i. (14) Paul declared that love doesn't rejoice in evil
 - ii. (15) Paul declared that instead love rejoices with the truth
- c. (16-19) Paul asserted that nothing shakes the stability of love
 - i. (16) Paul declared that love throws a cloak of silence over all negative things in others
 - ii. (17) Paul declared that love exhibits a basic trust in all things
 - iii. (18) Paul declared that love puts its basic confidence in all things
 - iv. (19) Paul declared that love holds up under the weight of all things.
- C. (20-36) Paul declared that love is the most stabilizing aspect of religious life.
 - 1. (20) Paul declared that love never collapses at any point
 - 2. (21-36) Paul expounded on his contention of the stability of love.
 - a. (21-26) Paul asserted that present the loss of perceptive speaking and understanding is grounded in our limitation
 - i. (21-23) Paul declared that essential speaking will eventually lose its meaning
 - a) (21) Paul declared that prophecies will become void of meaning
 - b) (22) Paul declared that tongues will come to a halt
 - c) (23) Paul declared that knowledge will become void of meaning
 - ii. (24-26) Paul declared that the reason for loss is the present limitation
 - a) (24-25) Paul asserted that our understanding and speaking is very limited
 - 1) (24) Paul declared that we only know partially
 - 2) (25) Paul declared that we only prophecy out of limited knowledge
 - b) (26) Paul asserted that the arrival of completeness will do away with limitations
 - b. (27-34) Paul affirmed that "adulthood" coming in the future would replace the limitations of "childhood" in the present.
 - i. (27-30) Paul contrasted the limitations of childhood over against adulthood
 - a) (27-29) Paul affirmed that in childhood he functioned with childhood limitations
 - 1) (27) Paul declared that as a child he spoke as a child
 - 2) (28) Paul declared that as a child he determined things as a child
 - 3) (29) Paul declared that as a child he reasoned as a child
 - b) (30) Paul affirmed that adulthood meant the termination of childhood limitations
 - ii. (31-34) Paul based the limitations of "childhood" on the limitations of the present, while the future means "adulthood."
 - a) (31-32) Paul used the contrast of the present and future to assert future clarity
 - 1) (31) Paul declared that at present we see ourselves in a mirror very dimly
 - 2) (32) Paul declared that in the future we will see ourselves clearly
 - b) (33-34) Paul used the contrast of the present and future to assert future full understanding
 - 1) (33) Paul declared that at present we know things only partially
 - 2) (34) Paul declared that in the future we will know things fully
 - c. (35-36) Paul affirmed that love rises above even faith and hope in religious experience
 - i. (35) Paul declared three great cornerstones of religious experience
 - ii. (36) Paul declared that the most important one of these is love.