

D) An Insight into the Qualities of Love Displayed in an
Exegetical Study of I Corinthians 13.⁴⁶

LOVE is obviously the central theme of I Corinthians 13.
An exegetical study of this chapter reveals beautifully the qualities
of the love which the Lord so clearly demonstrates in his Holy Word.

The context of chapter 13 in I Corinthians as well as the
immediate context in I Corinthians 12:27ff indicates that Paul is
here concerned with God's kind of love directed by his followers
toward their fellowmen here in time. As he speaks concerning the
worthlessness of everything without love (v.1-3), concerning the
characteristics of love (v.4-7) and concerning the enduring quality
of love (v.8-13), let us again be reminded that God's special kind
of ἀγάπη -love is that perfect love which is only present when the
Holy Spirit is creating and strengthening faith.

⁴⁶ Exegetical comments concerning various words in I Corinthians 13
are based primarily upon the personal research of the author of
this study in the light of Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon.

1) Love's Supreme Value: verses one through three

Verses one through three are bound together in content and purpose by a series of five conditional clauses each beginning with the form $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$ with a subjunctive. The purpose of these verses is to show by means of various highly treasured gifts of the Spirit the importance of the attitude of the heart when these gifts are used. No matter how great the spiritual gift might seem to be, it is worthless in that it serves no spiritually uplifting purpose if the Spirit-produced gift of love is not motivating its use toward others. Love is revealed as supreme and shows that supremacy not only in what it is and does itself, but also in its relation to other gifts. To quote I Corinthians 13:1-3, without love, "I have become a resounding gong or clashing cymbal" (v.1), "I am nothing" (v.2) and finally, "it profits me nothing" (v.3). Without Christian love proceeding from a heart filled with faith in Christ as one's Savior both motivating and directing the use of even the greatest of spiritual gifts, the gift, as well as the possessor of the gift has no value before the Lord!

A translation rendered in the light of the exegesis of the text is as follows:

v.1: IF ($\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$ +subjunctive followed by pres. ind. or its equivalent; present general conditional sentence) I SPEAK (1 person, sing; pres. subj. active of $\lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\omega$) WITH THE LANGUAGES

(dative, pl.; "tongues"-Acts 2) OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, BUT
HAVE NOT LOVE (acc., sing. of ἀγάπη), I HAVE BECOME (1 pers.,
 sing., perfect, indicative of γίνομαι) A RESOUNDING (nom.
 sing., pres. participle of ἤχέω; to ring) GONG (nom.;
 copper, bronze) OR CLASHING (nom., sing., pres. part. of ἀλαλάζω)
CYMBAL (nom.).

v.2: AND IF I HAVE ("the gift of"; supplied from context)
PROPHECY (Acc., sing.) AND I KNOW (2 perf. subjunctive of
 οἶδα) ALL MYSTERIES (Acc., pl.) AND ALL KNOWLEDGE (Acc.
 sing.; "high degree of understanding") AND IF I HAVE ALL
FAITH SO AS TO MOVE (pres. infinitive, act. of μεθίστημι)
MOUNTAINS (Acc. pl.), BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM NOTHING.

v.3: AND IF GIVE AWAY PIECE BY PIECE (1 pers., sing., I aorist,
 subjunctive of ψωμίσω) ALL MY POSSESSIONS AND IF I GIVE
 (1 pers., sing., 2 aorist subjunctive of παραδίδωμι) MY
BODY THAT I MAY BE CONSUMED IN THE FLAMES (1 pers., sing., fut.
 ind., passive of καίω)⁴⁷ BUT LOVE I HAVE NOT, I
PROFIT NOTHING. (1 pers. sing. pres. ind., pass. of ὠφελέω,
 "to benefit").

⁴⁷Textual variants list two possible readings in verse three, καυθήσωμαι
 (burn) or καυχῆσωμαι. The reading cited in this translation is
 the preferred reading of the NIV (footnotes "that I may boast"); the
 KJV; Good News; NASB (footnotes, "boast"); the New English Bible
 (footnotes: "glory by self-sacrifice"). See explanation in "Commen-
 tary: verse three."

a) Verse One: The Corinthian Christians were deeply impressed by the ability of some in their midst to communicate in tongues. Paul, therefore, begins with that gift as he speaks concerning love. The "tongues of men" of which Paul speaks are the other languages or dialects which were formerly unlearned, but which suddenly became a means of communication for the speaker. The events of Pentecost in Acts chapter two bear witness to that understanding of the "tongues of men" as does also Paul's discussion concerning this subject in I Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. However, Paul expands the discussion to include something which perhaps the Corinthians had never experienced.

Paul speaks concerning the "tongues of angels." When angels speak to men in Scripture, they most frequently use ordinary human forms of communication. However, Scripture does speak of "unutterable sounds" proclaimed in the glory of God's heaven. II Corinthians 12:4 speaks of the hearing of "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." It is impossible on the basis of the Greek to state conclusively whether Paul is describing words that are inexpressible due to divine command not to repeat what he heard, or inexpressible because it is impossible to understand or to communicate in human words the glories of heaven which he was permitted to see and hear. In Revelation, John has no difficulty understanding the words by means of which the angels communicated with him (ch. 17:1; etc.) although the meaning of the words, the subject matter, was frequently

above man's ability to comprehend unless it was revealed (7:14; etc.). However, Paul's immediate purpose here in I Corinthians 13 is not to enlighten us concerning "tongues" and their use, but merely to draw a firm conclusion concerning the attitude of the heart which uses these gifts. If the gift is not mixed with love, the gift is useless as far as God's purpose for bestowing it is concerned. Or as Paul says it, "I have become a resounding gong⁴⁸ or a clanging cymbal." ἤχων indicates a "resounding penetrating sound." ἀλαλάζον is a "clanging noise," the word being derived from a verb denoting a battle cry and more generally any loud cry of joy or pain. Just as the shrill blasts of a horn, or the harsh, cracking sounds of a cymbal unharnessed by a musical score produce anything but beautiful music, so even the greatest of spiritual gifts are worthless if they are not used in love to accomplish God's exalted purpose; that is, the ultimate salvation of man's soul. It is interesting to note as a passing thought from my experience that although the meaningless "noise" portrayed in this verse might be worthless before God, the outward "noise" surely attracts the attention of many in our world.

⁴⁸ "Gong" or (v.2) "Brass" - Brass suggests the metal, copper, and then any object made from it, such as a gong, possibly a trumpet. Historians make reference to the term "brass" as incorrect for an object coming down from antiquity. "Brass" signifies in modern terminology an alloy of copper and zinc which was used rarely. "Bronze," an alloy of copper and tin, was more widely used and is suggested, therefore, by some as a better translation.

b) Verse Two: Paul continues his discussion concerning the heart from which the gift proceeds. If (let's assume) one has the gift of prophecy and with that gift came also wisdom concerning ALL mysteries and ALL knowledge and also the faith which could move mountains and YET not LOVE as the motivation for the use of the gift, then Paul proclaims, "I am nothing!"

Again Paul strives for the superlative (which mere mortals could never achieve) as he speaks concerning yet another gift which can serve to edify the church. He speaks of a kind of prophecy which in addition to faithfully communicating what it is told, also possesses ALL the answers; a prophesying which knows (εἶδα) all the wondrous mysteries and knowledge which God alone possesses in his ultimate omniscience. Yet unless even the greatest wisdom proceeds from a heart filled with God's kind of love, it's all in vain!

Prophecy (προφητεία; spoken of also in 12:10,28) refers to the general great commission of proclaiming God's Word to others. It corresponds with the Old Testament words used to describe the work of the נָבִיא, a prophet or speaker who announces for God, of the רֹאֵה and חֹזֶה, a seer who saw frequently by means of visions that which the Lord desired to convey to His people. Here, however, he describes a prophet who possesses the greatest degree of knowledge, one like unto none other than Christ himself who understood ALL knowledge (γνώσις) and ALL mysteries (μυστήρια). God speaks of the great wonders of God, His "mysteries," which are revealed to the mind of man in part only by God's Word. The Bible speaks of the "mysteries" of the "kingdom of

heaven" (Matthew 13:11) and "of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:10). When speaking concerning the Gospel message, also called a mystery in Ephesians 6:19, Paul writes, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (I Corinthians 2:7). When speaking of the events of the end times, Paul begins by saying "Behold, I show you a mystery..." (I Corinthians 15:51). If one knew those kinds of things with God-like omniscience and had not God's kind of love, it would all be vain. Here we find also God's verdict concerning the value of learning, philosophy, science and the great achievements of man when they proceed from a heart void of God's kind of love. Concerning the kind of faith which can "transfer mountains" from one location to another, Paul also speaks. Jesus speaks of a similar manifestation of faith when He declared, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:21-22; see also Matthew 17:20). In addition to the many things which could be said on these passages in Matthew concerning an unwavering persistent faith which trusts in the omnipotence of God in keeping with his command and promise, the Lord does impress upon us the greatness of the workings which he is able to accomplish through his people here in time. The wonders of God through Moses at the Red Sea, through Joshua at Jericho, through the disciples in the book of Acts are but a few examples of God's power in keeping with his ability to move

mountains through his people if it be his will. But if that power is not harnessed by God's kind of love for God and for our fellowmen, the works profit nothing before God. And if a work does not glorify the Lord, it serves his enemy, the Devil, who by lying wonders can to a limited degree copy God's great works (Exodus 7:11; 8:7, 8:18).

c) Verse three: To these gifts and abilities, Paul now adds examples of voluntary deeds of apparent unselfishness and self-sacrifice. Again he begins with $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu$. If I should dole out piece by piece whatever I possess until nothing is left ($\psi\omega\mu\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$; literally, "to feed by placing morsels of food into the mouth," or in general, "to divide," "parcel out"), but it doesn't proceed from a heart motivated by love, my sacrifice profits nothing. On this point Luther writes: "To give is indeed a fruit of love though not yet love itself. Love is a spiritual gift which moves the heart and not only the hands. Love is the name, not for what the hand does, but for what the heart feels!"

Paul then proceeds to the very extreme, the giving of one's own life. He is speaking of the kind of God-pleasing self-sacrifice which is evident in the case of Daniel (Daniel 6), or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who willingly walked into the fiery furnace as they remained faithful to the Lord and his will (Daniel 3). He obviously is not speaking of the life-threatening stunts of careless people who are doing something far different from following the Lord as he leads them "through the valley of the shadow of death." If the God-pleasing "love" for the

Lord and his will isn't the reason for "putting one's life on the line," then the sacrifice attempted or completed is worthless before God and should be acclaimed as nothing less than insane foolishness also before men.

Textual variants offer two possibilities for the reading of the Greek in connection with this subject. The readings suggested are either, "If I deliver my body over in order that I may be burned" (καίω, "to be burned"), or, "If I deliver my body over in order that I may glory" (καυχάομαι, "to glory"). A number of ancient manuscripts (A, B, Aleph, p 46) record the latter reading. The United Bible Society's Greek N.T. uses that reading but offers it only a "C" rating when noting variants. The other option, "in order to be burned," is noted in the footnotes. Either choice could be defended from the textual evidence, as well as the context of the chapter, the former stressing the means by which the body is delivered over to make the sacrifice, while the latter stresses what would be the worthless motivation for such a sacrifice. That the motivation in either case is worthless before God because it isn't motivated by God's kind of love is evident when Paul offers his inspired evaluation, "yet without love, I profit nothing!"

One other minor textual note might be mentioned in passing. The various manuscripts are divided about equally on the reading καυθήσομαι or καυθήσωμαι. Grammarians note that both forms are future indicative with the "o" in either its short or long form used interchangeably by the Greeks on numerous occasions.

d) Summary thoughts on verses one through three:

While man's fallible vision can easily be deceived by the lying wonders of Satan, God's perfect vision can not be deceived! God tells us that the true greatness of man's accomplishments depends upon the spirit or motivation in which they are performed. They have no intrinsic value in themselves. It is love, which proceeds from a heart filled with faith in Christ as one's Savior, that makes them truly acceptable and valuable. Men may admire, honor, elevate and acclaim them, but if the inner essential of Christian love is missing, the whole project is "filthy rags" before God. This is yet another of the Lord's applications of his great truth: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart!" (I Samuel 16:7).

e) Introduction to verses four through seven:

Paul by inspiration has stressed the supreme value of love as the God-pleasing motivation for whatever man's undertakings might be. Having made the importance of love clearly evident, Paul now turns his attention to the characteristics of God's kind of Christian love as he speaks to us concerning living our love toward God and especially in the context of I Corinthians, toward one another.

2) The Qualities of Love: Verses four through seven

The Greek text is translated as follows:

- v.4: LOVE IS PATIENT (μακροθυμέω; 3 person, sing, present ind.); LOVE IS KIND (χρηστεύομαι; 3 person, sing., pres. ind.; "gentle"), NOT ENVIOUS (ζηλοῖ; "jealous"), NOT BRAGGING (περπερεύομαι; 3 per. sing., pres. ind.); NOT BECOMING CONCEITED (φυσιοῶ ; 3-per. sing., pres. ind. pass.; to become "puffed up");
- v.5: IT IS NOT CRUDE (ἀσχημονέω; ill-mannered), IT IS NOT SELFISH (ζητέω; 3 pers., sing., pres. ind. act.; "not seeking after only its own good"), IT IS NOT IRRITABLE (παροξύνω; 3 per., sing., pres., pass.; "not provoked to anger", root word is ὀξύνω, "to sharpen"), IT DOES NOT KEEP A RECORD OF WRONG (λογίζομαι; 3 per., pres. ind. act.: "to count" or "impute").
- v.6: IT DOES NOT REJOICE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (or "sin"; verb: χαίρω 3 per. sing., pres., ind.), BUT IT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH (συγχαίρω 3 per., sing., pres. ind.; root: χαίρω + σύν with σύν taking the dative to denote association).
- v.7: ALL THINGS IT ENDURES PATIENTLY (στέγω; 3 person sing., pres. ind.; "to cover (up), excuse," I Cor. 9:12; 13:7), ALL IT BELIEVES (πιστεύω; 3 per. sing., pres. ind.), ALL
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THINGS IT HOPES (ἐλπίζω ; 3 per., sing., pres., ind. act.), ALL THINGS IT STANDS ITS GROUND (ὑπομένω ; 3 per. sing., pres. ind.; "to persevere, endure, remain under.")

Verses one through three offered a comparison between the gifts which the Corinthian Christians highly treasured and the gift of love. It revealed that the greatest gifts evident on earth or in heaven are meaningless if they proceed from a heart where love is absent.

Upon that foundation, Paul now sets forth to describe the qualities or characteristics of God's kind of love. Personifying love, he tells us what love should and should not be doing when put into practice in the everyday lives of God's people. As Paul describes the perfect kind of love which our Lord would see in us, we have the opportunity to compare God's kind of perfect love with the love which we express in our daily living toward one another. That ideal love is described in the following terms:

a) Verses four through seven

- 1) Love suffers long : Paul begins with the word μακροθυμέω, a word used to describe God's patience with us. Peter writes: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but longsuffering (patient with us; μακροθυμέω) toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9; see also Luke 18:7). In spite of man's continued rebellion against God, God is patient. God desires to see that kind of patience reflected
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in the kindness of his people toward one another. Although our natural tendency is resentment, anger, bitter words and actions, love "suffers long"; it remains calm no matter how long the offense persists. It should be noted that there is a distinct difference between the unrighteous anger of a sinful heart and the righteous anger of the Lord who cleansed his temple in a forceful manner (Matthew 21:12ff.). Our sinless Savior clearly demonstrated his concern for those disregarding the will of his heavenly Father, as well as his concern for those faithful whose worship was being denied its proper opportunity in God's house.

- 2) Love is kind : Love reacts in "goodness" toward those who mistreat it. $\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ describes a loving helpfulness and concern which reaches out to all. A cognate form is used in Titus 3:4 when describing the "kindness ($\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\tau\eta\varsigma$) and love of God our Savior toward man." And again by Peter, who tells us that we have experienced that "the Lord is gracious" ($\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$; I Peter 2:3). It is a word which typifies Christ's entire public ministry and should also be expressed in our concern for those around us.

Continuing the description, Paul now attacks the subject from the negative point of view as he speaks concerning the evidence of lovelessness in thoughts, words and deeds.

- 3) Love is not envious : ζηλόω is from ζέω, "to desire earnestly". It is used in Scripture to describe a Christian as well as an unchristian emotion. The use of the word in a good sense is seen in I Corinthians 12:31, "Covet earnestly(ζηλοῦτε; eagerly desire) the best gifts; and now I will show you the most excellent way!" The negative emotion is seen in the verse under consideration. We are not to be jealous of another's blessings. Love never distracts from the praise of another in order to make one's self appear greater. It is rather satisfied with its own portion, content with its own lot in life, while rejoicing in the prosperity of others. Like Paul, we should be "jealous (ζηλω) ...with a godly jealousy (ζήλω)" (II Corinthians 11:2), or using other words, "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others!" (Philippians 2:3-4).
- 4) Love does not brag : Love never becomes a πέρπερος, a braggard, a "windbag." Behind a boastful, conceited spirit lives an overestimation of one's own importance, abilities and accomplishments. Concerning this kind of sin, Scripture reminds us that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased..." (Matt. 23:12ff.; Luke 14:11;18:14). Humility and modesty are the marks of the Christian who resists the parading of his
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real or imagined virtue in a pharisaical manner (Matt.6:1-5).

Christ-like humility is the mark of the Christian (Phil.2:5-8).

- 5) Love is not conceited : The word φουσιόω has been translated with words such as "inflated," "boastful" and "puffed up," It is a word which Paul uses to speak to the heart of one of the problems in Corinth using the word six times in I Corinthians (here; 4:6,18,19; 5:2, 8:1), but only once elsewhere (Col. 2:18). I Corinthians 4:6 puts the concept of the word in clearer perspective by offering an example to demonstrate it. There Paul warns against becoming "puffed up" in a way which favors one particular preacher over against another. Being "puffed up" goes beyond rejoicing in a God-pleasing manner for the pastor one has been given to the godless point of favoring one over against another. Applying the concept in the verse before us, one might cite Romans 12:3, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Verse five:

- 6) Love is not crude : Disgraceful, dishonorable, indecent, or "unseemly" (KJV) fit the kind of unbecoming behavior lacking in thoughtfulness and consideration which the Greek here pictures. To act ἀσχημονέω is to be contrary to the σχήμα, the acceptable form and fashion expected in this context of a
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child of God. The term is very general in its usage covering any kind of behavior with which it is improper for a Christian to be involved, as the example in I Corinthians 7:36 demonstrates when speaking concerning the conduct of the unmarried toward each other. "Crude" renders adequately the concept of the Greek in that it brings to mind what our behavior would be if God's purifying Spirit would not be working his wonders within us.

- 7) Love is not selfish : The Greek pictures a "self-seeking" spirit which is concerned above all with MY pleasure, MY profit, MY honor, ME-AND-MINE in spite of everyone and everything else. To this sinful attitude, the Ten Commandments speak with clarity and directness.
- 8) Love is not irritable : Love is not touchy, not ready to take offense, but rather ready to think the best of others putting the best construction on everything. Παροξύνω in the passive "to be irritated," "stirred up," or to be "provoked" is from the verb ὀξύω meaning "to sharpen." The word is also used to express the concerns of Paul when it tells us that Paul's "spirit was stirred (παρωξύνετο; "greatly distressed," NIV, Acts 17:16) in him, when he saw the city full of idols." The verse in Corinthians instructs us not to be constantly varying or fluctuating in our temperament, except for a reason such as presented in Acts 17:16 when God would desire
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us to be "greatly distressed." Even then we are to express it in God-pleasing words and actions. Titus 1:7 catches the spirit of $\pi\alpha\rho\omicron\xi\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ with the word $\delta\acute{\rho}\gamma\acute{\iota}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ which can be translated "not soon angry" (KJV) or not "quick-tempered" (NIV). Being "not irritable" is demonstrated by the Christian who "blesses them which persecute you" (Romans 12:14) and yet another, "avenging not yourself, but rather giving place unto wrath" (Romans 12:19). God expects us to react always in a God-pleasing, predictable, loving manner and not in a way that makes others fearfully uneasy around us because we might easily be moved to "explode." Again it is well to note that there is a distinct difference between the unrighteous anger of a sinful heart and the righteous anger of the Lord who cleansed his temple in a forceful manner (Matthew 21:12ff.). Our sinless Savior clearly demonstrated his concern for those disregarding the will of his heavenly Father, as well as his concern for those faithful whose worship was being denied its proper opportunity in God's house.

- 9) Love does not keep a record of wrong : Love keeps no mental record of wrong suffered which will only be balanced with "a-pound-of-flesh" gained in revenge. Love knows no grudges and never plans to hurt anyone. $\kappa\alpha\kappa\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ here refers to any evil act inflicted upon us by another. $\acute{\alpha}\delta\iota\kappa\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (verse 6) is a word quite similar to $\kappa\alpha\kappa\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ which reminds us that all evil
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acts are by their very nature contrary to God's standard of what is just and righteous, God's δίκη. Δογίζομαι is also the word used in Scripture to describe God's pardoning act in not imputing or reckoning to us our sin (Romans 4:8; II Corinthians 5:19), but rather imputing or charging to us righteousness for Christ's sake (Romans 4:6,8,9,10,11).

Verse six:

- 10) Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness : The ἐπί with the dative directs attention toward the object of the "not rejoicing." Love fails to rejoice in anything that is contrary to the perfect standard which God has established in connection with his righteousness and his justice.
- 11) Love rejoices with the truth : The truth is the opposite of the unrighteousness as Romans 2:8 indicates when it tells us that "they that disobey the truth (ἀληθεία) obey unrighteousness (ἀδικία)" (See also II Thess. 2:10-12). God's truth is that which God has seen fit to reveal to us in his Holy Word, which finds its foundation in him who is the Truth, Jesus Christ (John 8:56; John 14:6). Love shares truth's joy!

Following several negatives, Paul now concludes his description of love in verse seven with four powerful positive statements each beginning with the word πάντα for added emphasis.

Verse seven:

- 12) ALL things (love) bears : στεγῶ originally conveyed the meaning "to cover" or "to ward off" from which is derived here and in I Corinthians 9:12 the meaning "to endure" or "to suffer" (KJV). Love does not give up; it endures! It bears the burden of suffering that is part of the Christian's experience in a sin-sick world. Scripture's picture of Christ, the uncomplaining Lamb of God, sets before our eyes the ultimate example of "bearing up" under a load of suffering. The Christian is to emulate that example as he remembers the Lord's promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28) and that "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). Love doesn't complain; it just keeps on bearing!
- 13) ALL things (love) believes : Love expresses confidence in others. It refuses to yield to mere suspicions of doubt or mistrust toward others on the basis of unproven evidence. Rather it strives with God's help to put the very best construction on everything in keeping with the intent of the eighth commandment. It's always eager to believe the best. It willingly and gladly gives the benefit of the doubt.
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- 14) ALL things (love) hopes : ἐλπίζω directs our attention to the future, anticipated with joyful optimism in spite of our world's imperfections due to sin. It refuses to yield to pessimism, doubt and despair even when failure seems at hand or when passing through days lived in the shadows of the valley of death. Obviously the Lord is describing a loving trust or faith in God and toward one another lived in the light of God's promises that he will never leave us or forsake us (Romans 8:28; I Corinthians 10:13; a believing and hoping "auf Gott gerichtet und in ihm begründet"). Although mortals may disappoint our "believing and hoping," God will never be a disappointment to us!
- 15) ALL things (love) endures : ὑπομένω describes a brave perseverance or steadfastness. It pictures not a resigned, passive, "who-cares, we'll-lose-anyway" attitude, but rather an active, positive, "keep-on-fighting" spirit in spite of the disheartening situation in which one might be found. The Scriptures speak of this endurance most beautifully in Hebrews 12:1-2; "Seeing we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witness, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience (endurance: ὑπομονῆς) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured (ὑπέμεινε) the cross,
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despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". As Christ endured for us, so should we endure in our Christian love toward God and one another!

Or as the New English Bible translates these last words: "There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and its endurance."

b) Summary thoughts on verses four through seven:

Two important thoughts should be remembered as we hear this description of Christian love. We should not fail to remember that this kind of love does not have its source in the heart of man by nature. Man's heart is enmity against God which destroys by nature any hope of man loving God or his fellow man as God would have us love. The kind of love described is totally foreign to our hearts by nature and is only present in us this day as His people through the working of the Holy Spirit who has brought us to faith in Jesus as our Savior.

Secondly, we should note the context of Scripture when it tells us that true love suffers, believes, hopes and endures ALL things. Scripture also emphasizes that love is not blind to that which is sin. It is able to distinguish between that which is evil and that which is good (Romans 12:9). Christian love does not grant to us the liberty of approving, condoning, or ignoring that which is evil. But even then we are to speak and act in love toward those who have sinned remembering the guidelines which the Lord has set before us in his Word.

3). The Enduring Quality of Love: verses eight through thirteen

These concluding verses do not add anything to the description of love noted in the preceding verses. They merely emphasize the enduring quality of love.

The translation of the verses under consideration, is as follows:

- v.8: LOVE NEVER COMES TO AN END (πίπτω ; "to fall" hence, "to become invalid", "to fall"; 3 per. sing., pres. ind.); BUT IF (simple supposition introduced by εἰ+ pres. or past indic. in the protasis) ("YOU ARE SPEAKING OF", (supplied for thought) PROPHECIES, THEY SHALL BE DONE AWAY (καταργέω, "to cease" or "pass away"; 3 per., pl., fut. ind. pass.); AND IF TONGUES, THEY SHALL CEASE (παύω ; 3 per., pl., fut. ind. mid.); AND IF KNOWLEDGE, IT SHALL BE DONE AWAY (καταργέω; 3 per., sing., fut. ind. passive).
- v.9: FOR IN PART, WE KNOW (γινώσκω ; 1 per., pl., pres. act. ind.), AND IN PART, PROPHECY (προφητεύω ; 1st per. pl., pres. act. ind.).
- v.10: BUT WHEN THAT WHICH IS PERFECT (τέλειος, α, ον; "having attained the end or purpose", "complete", "perfect") SHALL
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COME (ἔρχομαι ; 3 per., sing., 2 aorist subj.), THE IN PART SHALL BE DONE AWAY (same as verse 8; καταργέω; 3 per., sing. fut. ind., passive).

- v.11: WHEN I WAS (εἶμι ; 1 per., sing., imperf.) A CHILD,
I SPOKE (λαλέω ; 1 per., s., imperf., act.) AS A CHILD,
I THOUGHT (φρονέω ; 1 per., sing., imperf.) AS A CHILD,
I REASONED (note verse 5; "to impute"; from λογίζομαι; 1 per., s., imperf.) AS A CHILD . WHEN I BECAME (γίνομαι; 1 per., sing., 2 perf. ind.) A MAN, I PUT AWAY THE THINGS OF A CHILD (καταργέω; 1 per., sing., perf., act. ind.).
- v.12: NOW WE SEE IN (δί᾽ + gen. of means, "by means of"; See I Peter 1:7) A MIRROR (ἑσόπτρον, οὐ τό ; James 1:23) WITHOUT CLARITY (αἰνίγμα , ατος, τό; literally, "a riddle" or "enigma", then an "indistinct image," "Obscureness").
BUT THEN FACE TO FACE. NOW I KNOW (γινώσκω , pres., ind. act., 1 per., s.) IN PART, BUT THEN I SHALL FULLY (ἐπί intensifies γινώσκω verb) KNOW (ἐπιγινώσκω 1 per., sing., fut. ind. middle.) AS I AM FULLY (ἐπί intensifies verb) KNOWN (ἐπιγινώσκω, 1 per., sing., I aorist, ind. pass.)
- v.13: SO, THEN, THERE REMAINS FAITH, HOPE, LOVE: THESE THREE, BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE!" (μένω; 3 per., sing., pres. ind.).
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a) Verse Eight:

Love possesses an enduring quality. It will outlive and therefore also outrank in greatness all the other gifts and qualities which the Corinthian Christians proclaim as great treasures, such as prophecy, tongues and knowledge. They will fail because they are limited in their scope and purpose. Luther called them "stueckwerk" or "patchwork." That the gifts of prophecy and knowledge fail to probe the depths of the mysteries of God is proven by the still unanswered question posed by Paul, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11:34). Although our knowing is "in part" this side of eternity, it is enough to "make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15) thereby fulfilling God's purpose in giving it. The gift of tongues was given in order to convey to others "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). It will also cease to exist when we stand in the presence of God where barriers such as languages shall no more hinder man's fellowship with the Lord!

By comparison, our text tells us that "love never comes to an end," that is, there will never be a time when love is not in operation. Love will never become extinct although it might seem to be on the "endangered species list" as "the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12) in these last days.

By comparison there are gifts which are intended by God to serve us only for a limited period of time. The Lord speaks concerning

three such gifts introducing each with an εἴτε . The Greek particle "τε" merely connects thoughts which are closely related in a discussion. The conditional particle "εἰ" introduces the three simple suppositions which might be translated, "if you are thinking or speaking of," in this case, prophesying, tongues and knowledge as they are revealed and used in the Word of God. The same verb is used when speaking of the "doing away" of prophecy and knowledge. καταργέω means to "put out of commission" or "put an end to." Παύω which describes the termination of tongues is related to our English word "to pause" picturing a lapse into silence. While prophecy, tongues and knowledge shall "pause," love shall never "collapse" or "suffer ruin" (πίπτω). We personally through faith in Christ will one day experience the eternal love of our Savior God in the glory of his Heaven (Rev. 7:9-17).

b) Verse Nine and Ten:

But WHEN will this occur? Paul speaks in the present tense of the "knowing" and the "prophesying" which was at that moment continuing according to God's plan and purpose among them. Paul describes that "knowledge" and the "prophesying" as "in part" (ἐκ μέρους). The same adverbial expression is used in I Corinthians 12:27, the preposition "ἐκ" + the genitive form of the noun μέρος(ους, τό) and is there translated, "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is A PART OF IT." Thus the phrase is translated in a way which conveys the "part-of-the-whole" concept which the Greek expression conveys, such as, "we know A PART or IN PART," namely, that part

which the Lord has revealed to us in his Word. That part is the knowing and the prophesying which we now preach in time according to God's will and purpose.

But there is a time when the "in-part" shall be done away; a time in the future when "that which is perfect or complete" shall come. Both the out-going "in-part" and the in-coming "complete" are described in the future tenses. Verse ten tells us that when that which is perfect comes, the "in-part" shall be done away.

τὸ τέλειον is a nominative singular neuter form of τέλειος, -εία, -ειον. It is a frequently used word which expresses the concept of being complete or entire as opposed to what is partial and limited. It is a word which God uses to describe himself, what he proclaims in his Word and what he desires his followers to grow toward in regard to their sanctified living. Concerning himself, he proclaims, "Be ye therefore perfect (τέλειος), even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect (τέλειος)" (Matthew 5:48). The term is used again concerning our Savior and his work when Hebrews declares, "When Christ came as High Priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect (τελειότερον) tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation" (Hebrews 9:11). As our perfect God, he supplies "every good and perfect (τέλειον) gift" (James 1:17) urging his followers to be faithful hearers of his Word which he describes with the term "the perfect (τέλειον) law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). As people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, the Word

speaks of the believers in Christ Jesus as "perfect" people, saints before God, as in I Corinthians 2:6 where Paul tells us, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect (τελειοις; see also Phil. 3:15)." Even though we are perfect before God through faith in Christ, our Lord exhorts us to grow in our sanctification, or grow toward perfection, reminding us of the sinful flesh which still battles within the saint. To that end, we are urged to grow in sanctification through the Word (Hebrews 5:13-6:1; Col. 1:28; 4:12), toward perfect patience (James 1:4), perfect love (I John 4:17-18), perfect understanding (I Corinthians 14:20), perfect unselfishness (Matthew 19:21), as well as perfection in the words which we speak (James 3:2). Although we strive in our living by the power of God to be the kind of complete, perfect people that God would have us be, the best of our efforts can only be described as "in-part," incomplete, or imperfect (Romans 3:23; James 2:10; Romans 6:23). But the "in-part" shall give way to the "complete" which is the goal of all ministerial work so beautifully held before our eyes in Ephesians 4:13, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature ("unto a perfect man," KJV, τελειον), attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of God." Paul is holding before our eyes the ideal, perfect goal; namely, the congregation of the elect assembled in its entirety before the throne of God in Heaven, all the elect attaining the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.

Thus the prophecies, tongues and knowledge shall one day be done away. For us as individuals, we leave the "in-part" and

enter the "complete" on that day when the Lord calls us from time into his Heaven. For our world, the "in-part" of which Paul speaks ends with the last day of history here in time. Until then God uses the prophecies, the tongues and the knowledge as he will to accomplish his purpose in his good time. As we continue to grow in God's "mysteries" toward perfection, we seek God's wisdom to discern correctly the lying wonders of Satan in the form of prophecy, tongues and knowledge from the true wonders of our gracious and powerful God in the form of prophecy, tongues and knowledge. The outer packaging many times looks the same, but the inner content is opposed to the other in each case (Genesis 3:15).

Two additional points should be made on the basis of these verses. First, let us remind ourselves quickly that although we are urged to strive toward perfection, we obviously in the light of God's Word will never come close to attaining that goal in time. The admonition of Paul is clear, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). The example of Abraham (Genesis 12-25) like the ups-and-downs of the stockmarket reveals the many peaks and valleys which our growth in faith experiences when beset by the daily difficulties of life, ups-and-downs which serve as a comfort when we fail, as well as a warning when we think more "highly of ourselves than we ought to think" (Romans 12:3). The striving toward perfection will end when our gracious Lord ends our striving and delivers us by his grace alone "into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Secondly, let us beware of making

these passages say more than they actually are saying. Scripture offers us no passage, including that in I Corinthians 13:9-10, which would make present-day "discerning of the spirits" (I Cor. 12:10), II Thess. 2:9, I Th. 4:1) in connection with prophecy, tongues and knowledge passe. They are tools which the Lord and Satan can still use to accomplish their very different purposes. The "in-part" vs. "complete" in the context of Scripture does not refer to any pre-vs.-post-conversion condition, or any kind of "in-part" vs. "complete" situation in which Christians found themselves either before or after the completion in time of God's inspired, written record by John's penning of Revelation.⁴⁹

c) Verses Eleven and Twelve:

The inspired writer uses two brief pictures to demonstrate the wondrous change in condition which the Christian experiences when called by God from time into the glory of God's perfect heaven. Verse eleven pictures that change by noting the contrast which is obvious when comparing the speaking ($\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$), the thinking ($\epsilon\phi\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$) and the reasoning ($\epsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\zeta\acute{\omicron}\mu\eta\nu$) of a child with that of a mature individual. Verse twelve pictures that change by noting the contrast which is again obvious when one sees a poor reflection of one's self in comparison with what one is in reality. Those

⁴⁹For this opinion: a) confer: "An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts", Douglas Judisch, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978; and, "What About Continuing Revelations in the Presbyterian Church?", Robert Reymond, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977.

b) A further study of this relatively new opinion is worthy of study since various scholars of standing in theological circles are espousing this position.

are Paul's comparisons of "in-part" vs. "complete."

Verse eleven contrasts the child who acts like a child and expresses his childish simplicity in his words and actions with the responsibilities of adult life which cause the adult to "put away childish things." An educated, maturing adult makes the determined effort to bring his words and actions into conformity with that which is expected of a mature individual. The necessity of depending upon one's self, the responsibilities of earning a living, and perhaps one's duties as husband and father make necessary the transition from "childish things" into the world of adult reality. The "in-part" of our present sinful world is here contrasted with the "complete" represented by the adult and his responsibilities.

Verse twelve draws the comparison by means of a mirror. Ἐσπίτρος means "mirror" ("glass," KJV), which in Paul's day was probably a very highly polished piece of metal. Among other things, Corinth was said to be famous for its mirrors which few Christians perhaps would have been able to afford. Beside the poorer quality of the mirror when compared with today's products, Paul writes that even then the quality of the reflection was merely a poor, clouded image of what one really was like when compared with the way others saw one face to face. Paul uses the words ἐν ἀνίσταρι to describe that poor, clouded image. From the Greek word is derived the word "enigma" which is a "riddle," something said with a hidden meaning. Since these words are added to complete the picture

of what a poor quality mirror reflects back at one, the translations render the words "darkly" (KJV), with footnote "in a riddle", "poor reflection" (NIV, translating "mirror" with the word "reflection"), "dim image" (Good News), "puzzling reflections" (New English Bible), "dimly" (NASB), and "now we see by a mirror and are puzzled" (Beck). The fact that the image in the mirror is "indistinct" is in every translation evident. On the basis of that fact, Paul draws the comparison. As the image in the mirror is "indistinct," so we presently see "in-part." But one day, the time described in verse nine and ten above, we shall see face to face, clearly and completely. Or in Paul's words, "Then I shall fully know, as I am now fully known..". What I now know "in-part" and believe by the Holy Spirit's working, I shall know "face-to-face" with "my own eyes beholding" (Job 19:27) when I stand with God in the glory of his Heaven!

Paul wrote, "I shall know, even as I AM NOW known!" The inspired writer used a present form, γινώσκω, when speaking concerning the knowing which he is doing now. When speaking of knowing in the future even as he is now known, he uses a compound verb form, ἐπι+ γινώσκω, which in Greek intensifies the verb and might here be rendered in English "to know MORE FULLY." The first form of the verb is a future, while the second is an aorist. The aorist is translated "even as I am now fully known." With this phrase, it would seem that the writer is speaking of the Lord's knowing him rather than a knowing of one that mortals might have for one another.

The kind of knowing which Paul tells us he "shall know" is a complete, full kind of knowing which would not be too aptly expressed when compared to the incomplete knowing which even earthly friends have for one another. For it is painfully obvious from experience that the friends whom we think we know best sometimes seem to be the "friends" that we know the least. But God's kind of complete knowing of us, that is the supreme kind of knowing with which the writer wants to compare the "complete" experience which will be ours in eternity. This interpretation also fits Paul's use of the aorist. Paul uses the aorist to describe that kind of knowing because God's knowing is not something growing and becoming more and more perfect, but rather a knowing that has always been from eternity thorough and complete (see also John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice and I KNOW (γινώσκω) them...").

Two additional thoughts might be noted. Even though we speak of the "complete" experience which will be ours in Heaven, we note Scripture's clear reference to the angels not knowing everything that there is to know (Matthew 24:36: "Of that day and hour knoweth..."). We will be the children of God living in the perfection and completeness of Heaven, but we will never be omniscient as God is! Secondly, Luther's German translation touches the heart of the comparison which Scripture is presenting with the mirror and the "enigma" when He translates, "Wir sehen jetzt durch einen

Spiegel in einem dunkeln Wort." As already noted, Luther translates the "in-part" with "Stueckwerk" and "stueckweise" and the "complete" experience of Heaven with the term "das Vollkommene," the term expressing an experience such as a puzzle with thousands of pieces finally all coming together to form one grand and united picture. Living in heaven will be the culmination of many spiritual bits and pieces finally gloriously coming together!

d) Verse Thirteen:

Having drawn the picture most clearly in words and by means of pictures, Paul pens his final inspired words concerning the love which he has so beautifully described. $\nu\nu\nu\acute{\iota}$ is a adverb of time. The addition of "ι" to $\nu\nu\nu$ creates an emphatic form which brings us back in time from the exalted thoughts just expressed concerning the wonders of Heaven to the present "in-part" reality of the here and now. It also serves to announce the end of the subject being discussed with an emphatic "so then" or "now in conclusion."

Prophecy, tongues and knowledge will one day cease and be done away. Concerning faith, hope and love, God proclaims $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\iota\ldots$ $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\alpha$; "these three remain." The verb form is singular in spite of the fact that it expresses a fact concerning all three subjects. Grammatically, a neuter substantive in the plural, such as $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\alpha$, regularly takes a verb in the singular. These three are not spoken of as part of the "in-part" that shall pass

away. They remain, God declares, in spite of the fact that one might speak of them as being somewhat different in comparison with the manner in which we describe them presently in time. Faith will no longer be based upon "sightlessness" (Hebrews 11:1), "the evidence of things not seen"), but trust in the Lord which includes seeing and experiencing personally with our senses what God always told us in His Word was really so. Hope as far as our present "looking forward to being with Jesus" will be fulfilled, but all hoping in regard to experiencing yet another facet of God's infinite glory in His perfect Heaven will never end. Scripture indicates this when it doesn't speak of angels who have become dulled and weary and bored before God's glory, but rather angels who ever sing new songs of praise. Love also remains, no longer viewed through the Word of our God and experienced amid the problems of an imperfect, "in-part" world, but experienced in all its beauty and glory amid the perfection of God's "complete" Heaven. Although the characteristics will change, the nature of faith, hope and love will never change because they are forever built on the changeless foundation of our changeless God! These three are emphatically proclaimed as one united whole, remaining throughout all eternity! Paul's inspired sentence is so constructed that if one declares that faith and hope are to cease at the moment of one's entry into Heaven, then love must also cease. But, Paul declares, all three remain!

But "the GREATEST of these three is love!" Μεῖζων is comparative. Grammarians explain at this point that the use of the comparative and superlative as separate forms in precisely defined usages began to disappear by Paul's time. Be that fact or fiction, pure logic tells us that Paul is comparing love on one hand with faith and hope on the other. Of these two, the "greater" might in English also be rendered as the "greatest." That is the fact with which the chapter ends.

Human reason quickly asks, however, WHY is love spoken of as the greatest? Above all let us note that Paul does not supply the answer. This chapter simply ends with the declaration. Without here debating their case or even their correctness scripturally, commentators suggest, "Love is necessary for both faith and hope," "Love believes and hopes," "Love has superior usefulness," "Love is God's greatest gift," "Love is activity, productivity, collaboration with God," "It is the light of our spirit's understanding of God" and "Love is concerned with both God and the whole world." Lenski offers the reason, "Love brings us into the fullest union and communion with God" (I John 4:7,12,16). Another thought which could be added is that God never refers to himself in the Word as Faith or Hope, but he does call himself "Love" (I John 4:16, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in the love dwelleth in God and God in him").

In the light of God's Word, God's love is the foundation for our salvation. God's love for us moved him to elect us from all eternity to be his own, unworthy though we be. God's love for us moved him to send his Son into the world to be our Savior. God's love called us in time to be his people. God's love for us moved us rebellious though we be to love him who first loved us. God's love for us will keep us as his own and will finally deliver us by his grace into the glorious liberty of the children of God where we shall taste of the eternal fruit of his victory in our behalf throughout all eternity. Because his love is alive and well and active in us through his Word and sacraments, Paul can speak in I Corinthians 13 concerning what our love for him and for one another should be. Our faith, our hope, yea, everything we are and will ever be as the children of God, rests on the foundation of his great and gracious love for us. There would be no faith and no hope if it wasn't for his love. But there is no need for further discussion in the light of God's Word when we hear our God triumphantly and absolutely proclaim, "but the greatest of these is love!"

A final thought on this verse of I Corinthians might be added to note its importance as far as our Confessions are concerned. The Confessions record a discussion on the basis of these verses in connection with the subject of love's "greatest" position over even faith (v.13). The debated question upon which the Confessions speak is recorded in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article three titled "Love and the Fulfilling of the Law." The text states:

But they (our opponents) object that love is preferred to faith and hope. For Paul says (I Cor.13:13): "The greatest of these is charity." Now it is reasonable that the greatest and chief virtue should justify, although Paul, in this passage, properly speaks of love toward one's neighbor and indicates that love is the greatest, because it has most fruits. Faith and hope have to do only with God, but love has infinite offices externally toward men. (Love goes forth upon earth among the people and does much good, by consoling, teaching, instructing, helping, counseling privately and publicly). Nevertheless, let us indeed grant to the adversaries that love toward God and our neighbor is the greatest virtue, because the chief commandment is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Matt. 22:37). But how will they infer thence that love justifies? The greatest virtue, they say justifies. By no means. (It would be true if we had a gracious God because of our virtue. Now, it was proved above that we are accepted and justified, for Christ's sake, not because of our virtue; for our virtue is impure.) For just as even the greatest or first Law does not justify, so also the greatest virtue of the Law does not justify. (For, as the Law and virtue is higher and our ability to do the same proportionately lower, we are not righteous because of love.) But that virtue justifies which apprehends Christ, which communicates to us as Christ's merits, by which we receive grace and peace from God. But this virtue is faith. For as it has been often said, faith is not only knowledge, but much rather willingly to receive or apprehend these things which are offered in the promise concerning Christ.⁵⁰

In the context of the above statement and Luther's own writings concerning man's salvation through faith in Christ alone, one can correctly understand how Luther could write the following often quoted words:

⁵⁰Apology, Article III, Concordia Triglotta, pg. 183.

Thus I may say that Christianity is greater on earth than Christ. This does not mean that Christianity is in itself better and more honorable than Christ, but that it is spread out broader and wider on earth than Christ was, who was at one little place for only three years, while Christianity existed from the beginning, as wide as the world. Thus love is longer and wider than faith and hope."

e) Summary thoughts on verses eight through thirteen:

After describing the supreme qualities of love, as well as describing God's kind of love as it exists in the daily lives of his people, God now declares that love is eternal! God's love will never waver in degree and it will never end. As our God is, so will be his love for us, eternal, without end!

Summary thoughts concerning I Corinthians 13:

The message of I Corinthians 13 concerning God's kind of perfect love is truly a beautiful and a powerful one. It is a message which in itself displays the failings of our present, imperfect world compared to the perfect, complete glory of heaven toward which we strive. We fail to appreciate to the fullest the significance which God's love has had and will have upon us in the glorious eternity awaiting us through faith in Christ. We have difficulty truly appreciating the glory of God displayed in his Word, not because the Word is dark and unclear, but

because our fallible, finite understanding is not sufficient to grasp the wonders of his infallible, infinite substance and qualities. As Luther aptly pictures the problem: "I shall know him then in the clearest possible manner, without covering; for the covering was not taken from him, but from me, for he has none before him!"⁵¹

⁵¹ Like many other Luther quotations this quote was credited to Luther. However, like many other "Luther" quotations credited to Luther, the source and context of the statement's original writing is unknown.

E) Thoughts Concerning the Relevance of this Study to the Homiletical Treatment of Scripture

Numerous are the portions of Scripture which touch upon the soul-comforting, soul-saving message of God's great love for sinners. Just as numerous are the scores of texts which speak of the love that the children of God should be emulating in the light of our God's love for us. Regardless of the particular pericope series which one might choose, God's love is most likely to make its presence known in one form or another. A glance at the 1982-83 pericope series of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship bears witness to that fact. In spite of the fact that Luke used the forms in question relatively few times in his writings and in spite of the fact that gospel readings from Luke appear in forty-six of the sixty occasions noted, the words ἀγάπη and ἀγαπᾶω appear in nine of the gospel readings. Those same words appear fourteen times in the epistle readings listed. Those numbers would be greatly increased if the series of gospel readings had concentrated on the Gospel of John rather than Luke, or if more of John's epistles had been represented in the epistle readings. The ILCW-B Scripture Readings for the 1983-84 year suggest a greater number of readings from the

writings of John, 21 in the gospels and 6 in the epistles.

It is obvious that a clear understanding of the words ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω will do much to enhance one's preaching following almost any pericope which might be suggested. While much could be said at this point concerning the basics of homiletics, one might simply say that the task of the preacher is to present in clear understandable terms in the context of the text as well as Scripture at large the wondrous message which God has seen fit to place into the inspired message of his Word as well as applying that message to the daily lives of God's people. That obviously also holds true in connection with the beautiful and powerful message which God builds into the words ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω. The following texts offer but a few examples concerning the homiletical treatment of these terms in the context of Scripture.

1. John 13:31-35

The ILCW-Series C suggests as the Gospel reading for the fifth Sunday of Easter the text recorded in John 13:31-35. In verse thirty-four and thirty-five of that text, the word ἀγαπάω appears four times as Jesus tells his disciples, "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." When writing an exposition of these words, one preacher wrote:

The separation of Jesus from his disciples would bring sorrow to them. But the glorified Savior would give his disciples a "new commandment." From him they would learn the meaning of brotherly love. The commandment to love, of course, was nothing new. But this new kind of love would come out of knowing Jesus and what he did for them. The law of God could not work this love. This love was a fruit of faith. Only disciples of Jesus could appreciate this love. This "love" (ἀγάπη) would therefore be a sign of true discipleship. Where love exists, it also shows itself.

The early Christians had a reputation for being united in brotherly love (Acts 4:32, 33). In his epistles John repeatedly stresses the importance of this brotherly love (I John 3:14). In Revelation John speaks of the Ephesians having forsaken their "first love." This is the love which fills the heart of a Christian who is thankful that Jesus died for him. It is often more apparent in new converts than in those who have been Christians for a long time and whose love has grown cold (Revelation 2:4).

The words of Jesus state a condition: "If you love one another" (ἀλλήλους). They invite a test of faith. Where this love is present, there is true discipleship. How is it with us? Do we pass the test of love? Everyone must examine his own heart. ⁵²

The text offers the preacher an opportunity to speak concerning the love which our Savior has for us. It was a love which moved our God to conceive in eternity a plan to rescue us from our sin. It was a love which caused our heavenly Father to offer his Son as the sacrifice for sin in spite of man's rebellion against God and without the slightest degree of worthiness or merit within man. He in love sought us when we were sheep having gone astray. He offered the sacrifice which washed away our sin. He worked that saving faith within our hearts through his Word and sacraments

⁵² E.H. Wendland, ed., Sermon Studies on the Gospel (ILCW Series C), p 191-192.

that we might be his own for time and eternity. That is the kind of self-sacrificing love which the Lord would have us emulate in our love for him and one another as we live our life to his glory by his strength. Bearing those thoughts in mind, the preacher could expound upon the text in the following manner.

Christ's New Command: Love one Another!

1. The love upon which this commandment is based (vv.31-33)
2. The love which shows itself to others (vv.34,35)

In part one we can show how the glorification of the Son of Man includes his suffering and death which lie immediately before him. Judas has just gone out. "I will be with you only a little longer," Jesus says knowingly. "Where I am going, you cannot come." Having said this, Jesus gives his "new command." He has every right to say this and to expect that it will be followed. He has shown the way.

Part two then gives the practical import of this "new commandment." This love is not a matter of empty words. It shows itself. "All men will know that you are my disciples." They know what they observe.

Another wording for the same approach would be:

Christ's Commandment of Love

1. Its motivation
2. Its demonstration

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The full impact of both the law and gospel are offered the preacher in this text. We see God's perfect love casting light on our kind of imperfect love. We see Christ's example of love set before us as a pattern guiding us in our loving. Jesus offers us the opportunity to examine his love that we might grow in our appreciation for him and then by his power show that same kind of love in our love for him and for one another.

⁵³Ibid., p 193.

2. I John 3:13-18

Another text offering the same opportunity is recorded in I John 3:13-18 offered as the epistle selection in the historic pericope of the ancient church. Luther set the context of this first epistle of John in clear terms when he wrote:

This is an outstanding epistle. It can buoy up afflicted hearts. Furthermore, it has John's style and manner of expression, so beautifully and gently does it picture Christ to us. It came to be written because at that time heretics and sluggish Christians had rushed in, which invariably happens when the Word has been revived. Then the devil harries us constantly and seeks in every way to cast us down, in order that we may give up preaching and good works. In John's time there were the Cerinthians, who denied the divinity of Christ; and there were sluggish Christians, who thought that they had heard Christ's Word enough and that it was not necessary to forsake the world and to do good to their neighbors. Here the apostle attacks both evils and urges us to guard the Word and to love one another. Thus we shall never learn so much and be so perfect that the need for the Word of God will not remain. For the devil never rests. Thus exhortation and the use of God's Word are needed everywhere. It is a living and powerful Word. But we snore and are lazy. It is the Word of life. But we are in death every day. And because we are never without sins and the danger of death, we should never cease to ruminate on the Word. And this epistle is in the nature of an exhortation. In short, in this epistle the apostle wants to teach faith in opposition to the heretics and true love in opposition to those who are wicked. ⁵⁴

It is not unexpected therefore that John should begin teaching true love by pointing his hearers directly to the example of Christ. He writes in the opening words of his gospel:

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our

⁵⁴ Martin Luther, Luther's Work, Vol. 30, p 219.

sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness... behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. ⁵⁵

Those words lay the introduction for the words of I John 3:13-18.

In this text the writer reminds us of God's love for us writing, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (verse sixteen). With those words John speaks to his hearers concerning the true meaning of love in its most perfect form. In like manner we are to love one another. Or letting John speak, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren... whose hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (verses fourteen and seventeen). To make that fact crystal clear, John says the same thing from the negative point of view with the words, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (verses fourteen and fifteen). As we live that love in this imperfect world, John reminds us of an important fact concerning our world and concerning ourselves. He writes, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you... My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (verses thirteen and eighteen).

⁵⁵ I John 1:7-9;3:1.

The text offers a meaningful opportunity to speak concerning the meaning of the word love. It holds before our eyes the true meaning of love by directing the readers attention to God's great expression of love as found in Christ. The reader is reminded that this is not a characteristic which lives in man's heart by nature. Rather God's law reveals in this regard only man's sin and need for the Savior as man's hatred (verses thirteen through fifteen), selfishness (verse seventeen) and hypocrisy (verse eighteen) are revealed. Christ's love in rescuing us from our sin serves as the gospel message of peace as it extends to the penitent the message of pardon as well as the motivation for Christian living more to the glory of God (verse sixteen). It is in that same example of God's love for unworthy sinners that the Christian finds the example of Christian love worthy of emulating in his own daily life. A workable homiletical outline for this text would be the following:

God's Love is Unique!

1. His love provided for our salvation; (vv.16)
2. His love is foreign to man's human nature; and (vv.13-15)
3. His love demonstrates itself as a fruit of faith. (vv.17-18)

Part one of the exposition would serve as an opportunity to speak concerning God's love in comparison with the world's kind of shallow and selfish love which demonstrates no real commitment or wholesome purpose. By contrast God's love had a soul-saving purpose which was extended without any merit or worthiness in those who received its soul-comforting warmth. Of that kind of love the second article of the Apostles' Creed speaks when in Luther's explanation we read:

I believe that Jesus Christ...has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and his innocent sufferings and death; that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness; even as He is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity.

Part two speaks concerning the condition of man's heart by nature.

As Jesus described man's heart before the Holy Spirit touches the heart through Word and Sacrament:

Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies... (Matthew 15:19).

Concerning that same kind of heart Paul wrote by the Spirit's guidance,

"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"

(Ephesians 2:1). Should we therefore be amazed that the world hates

us, a matter concerning which Christ speaks at length in John 15:18-

21? Should we be amazed that our own heart isn't what it should be

in regard to the emotions which so easily spill forth in the form of

angry and careless thoughts, words and actions directed toward those

around us? Surely this is offering each Christian the opportunity

to reflect upon his own life as he looks at himself in the light of

God's Word. Truly we are being offered the opportunity to repent of

our sin and find comfort in the forgiving arms of our gracious

Savior! Part three offers us several examples of the kind of fruits

of faith which the Lord is seeking and producing in the lives of his

people. God is looking for a kind of love which reaches out to those

who physically as well as spiritually are in need of our love. It

is further to be a love which not only expresses itself in words but

also in the form of actions. Our faith is to demonstrate itself in love for our God as well as for one another. Again the Christian must be reminded that love is a fruit of faith which grows and matures as that faith is strengthened through Word and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit produces within us the power to live our faith in Christ as well as the ability to note and use the opportunities for Christian service which are evident in the world around us. Although we are to be concerned also with the physical plight of our "sin-sick world, we must remember constantly that the greatest gift which we can impart to another is that which is found spiritually in the message of man's salvation through faith in Christ alone. To that end, Lord help us!

3. Ephesians 5:22-33

Ephesians 5:22-33 further touches upon this message of living our lives to the glory of God. In a more specific application of God's will for our lives, Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians concerning their responsibilities in marriage. He was moved by the Holy Spirit to introduce this portion of the epistle with the words:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour...Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:1,2,21)

To the wife within the marriage union, he says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (verse twenty-two). The word Paul uses literally means "to station oneself under." Paul begins by calling for loving and willing submission on

the part of the wife unto her husband (I Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18). The reason given in Scripture for this submission is that the husband is to be the head of the wife. That is what God clearly stated when he instituted marriage. God stated, "I will make a help" who is "meet" (Genesis 2:18), a helper who is suitable for man. Then God proceeded to create woman from a rib of the man. The kind of submission and the kind of headship that is meant becomes clear from the comparison which Paul uses in the text. The text continues by comparing the submission of the wife to the husband with the Church's being subject unto Christ. This is not a master-slave relationship. The Church which is composed of all believers in Christ is called Christ's bride. She submits herself to Christ, her bridegroom. This is a submission that flows out of the knowledge of the love which Christ has for his Church. It is a submission born out of confidence and trust and love for him. In the same way the wife should be subject unto her husband not because he daily quotes this passage to her, but rather because she truly loves and respects the man she married.

Paul by God's guidance then turns his attention to the husband. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Paul's word to the husband is "love." Paul is not speaking merely of a sexual type of love, that kind of love which the world tries to pass off as true love. Nor is he merely speaking about the type of love which friends have for one another. Rather he is speaking of love such as Christ had for his bride the Church. He is speaking of that self-sacrificing kind of love

which Christ expressed willingly and freely without any merit in those who were the recipients of it when Christ laid down His life for the sins of the entire world. Christ thought not of himself, but of those for whom he was laying down his life. He gave of himself that we might through faith in Christ possess heaven as his free gift. Of this type of love Scripture states, "Greater love hath no man than this" (John 15:13). In order to point to this fact even more clearly, Paul then states that the husband is to love his wife even "as he loves his own body" (verses twenty-eight through thirty-one). Scripture states that the husband and wife become one flesh in marriage. The wife or husband actually becomes an extension of one's own body. Human reason further tells us that only a fool neglects the needs of his body. Hence, Paul's advice is clear and to the point, "Husband, take care of your wife as you take care of your own body!"

Summarizing his discussion of this matter, Paul concludes the matter with the words, "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (verse thirty-three). There is the danger for the wife to look at the husband's responsibilities and to point these out while she overlooks her own God-given responsibilities while he reacts in a similar manner. It should be noted that Paul does not say to the wife, "Submit yourself IF your husband truly loves you." Nor does he say to the husbands, "Love your wife IF she is submissive." The last verse clearly urges each of the partners of the marriage union to meet his responsibilities before God completely apart from the consideration

of the other's action. The last verse obviously does not deal in this context with the question of divorce, a matter which is dealt with in other portions of Scripture.

A homiletical treatment of this text should include obviously thoughts concerning the Christ-centered attitude of the husband and the wife within marriage. Dividing the text in an obvious manner one could use as his theme and parts:

CHRIST-CENTERED ATTITUDES WITHIN MARRIAGE

1. Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands,
as unto the Lord. (vv.22-24)
2. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ
also loved the Church. (vv.25-32)

Using the above presentation, a fitting introduction to the theme could include a brief discussion concerning the ideals of the world concerning marriage in comparison to the ideals of Christ. The parts would be a clear discussion of the Christ-centered attitudes within marriage. The parts would obviously reflect the information noted in the verses listed under each part, an indication of which was given in the preceeding paragraphs. A fitting conclusion to the text would be verse thirty-three especially in light of the elbow nudging which probably will take place in the pews on the part of husbands and wives as witnessed from the pulpit as the text is expounded.

Yet another way of treating the matter might be as follows:

A Husband and Wife Living Together Under Christ

1. A Christ-centered attitude CONCERNING marriage; and
 2. A Christ-centered attitude WITHIN marriage.
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Much can be said for a truly meaningful exposition of what the words of that specific text present without dragging in every other portion of Scripture relating to the matter at hand. However, on occasion one might see fit for various reasons to wander a bit from the usual method of presentation. If one chose to use the outline just noted, one could present some of the general thoughts concerning marriage indicated within Scripture. One might touch upon the fact that marriage was instituted by God, that marriage serves as a means of blessing to those who enter into it and the well needed reminder that marriage is to be a life-long union and not merely a "few-month-commitment" to see if the couple is compatible. Although it could serve to inform the congregation in this important area of Christian living, it would be only part two of the outline that would touch directly upon the thoughts of the text under consideration. The preacher would need great care in treating the subjects in part one and the text in part two in something other than merely a passing and superficial manner in light of the fact that part one is a topical presentation while part two is a textual presentation. The clock could serve as one's greatest enemy in this presentation.

Regardless of which outline was chosen, the matter of Christ's ἀγάπη love can be meaningfully treated without necessarily having the word "love" as a striking part of the theme in every text where the term appears. Christ's love which caused him to extend himself that we might be his own in time and eternity is the selfless love which the Lord would also see in his people within marriage. Just as Christ

reached out toward mankind that he might bless, so the husband and wife within marriage are to reach out in love toward one another in order to be a blessing to each other in keeping with God's will and purpose.

4. I Corinthians 12:27-13:13

One other obvious example could also be noted at this point. The ILCW-Series C offers as its suggestion for January 30 in the Epiphany season the reading found in I Corinthians 12:27-13:13. Bearing in mind the exposition of the text noted earlier in this study, one might present the text following this outline:

CHRIST-LIKE LOVE!

1. The importance of love; (I Cor. 12:27-13:3)
2. The characteristics of love; and (vv.4-7)
3. The enduring quality of love. (vv.8-13)

Again it is well to note that the clock will serve as a difficulty in treating the text as fully as one might desire in light of its content. A portion of the text might suit itself well for use as a wedding sermonette. Verses four through seven presented in light of Christ's love for us could serve as a meaningful presentation of the gospel message to the wedding couple and their guests as well as offering a wholesome presentation concerning the kind of loving which Christ would see lived within their marriage.

Whichever text one would happen upon in the course of one's years as the Word is presented to God's people from the pulpits of our churches, it must be the prayer of every preacher that God would impress upon us to an ever greater degree the greatness of his kind

of perfect love for us. For only then by his grace will we better love him and our neighbor in keeping with his desires. Only then will we one day by His grace enjoy the unclouded, perfect revelation of His love throughout all eternity!

Summary and Conclusion

Somewhere during the passing of my years, I happened upon a thought which has never been forgotten. Speaking by God's guidance the inspired writer reminds us in Ecclesiastes 12:12 that "of the making of many books there is no end." That could also be true concerning the subject before us, but it is not simply because man's opinions have changed and been altered through the passing of time. It is rather that God's truly unique love for mankind is so immense and wondrous that man fails to capture in human words all its beautiful soul-saving, soul-comforting qualities. When attempting to express those thoughts in words, one begins to experience personally the feeling that must have flooded the heart of the Apostle John on that day when he concluded his inspired writing with the words:

There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25).

Like the facets of a priceless gem displaying its captivating beauty as it sparkles and shines in the eyes of the beholder, so is the precious message of God's great love. It is a love so simply and clearly expressed in all its beauty for the world's salvation as John writes:

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

A love expressed for a wonderous purpose again proclaimed by John so powerfully under the Spirit's guidance when he wrote:

Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

There is therefore no end of writing which could be done concerning God's ἀγάπη love. Scripture beautifully paints before our eyes the wonder of that gracious love as it speaks of the various thoughts and actions of God toward mankind. But the concept which each of those pictures reveals concerning God's love is truly a simple and a clear picture. It presents the emotions, the feelings of our God toward mankind. Man was lost in sin, completely unworthy of God's consideration. Yet God reached out in eternity conceiving a plan for our salvation and displayed in time the wonders of that plan as he offered his own Son. The purpose of that love shines forth page after page in his Word as he reminds us that all this took place for us and for our salvation. It is that same emotion that God would see demonstrated in the lives of his people. He creates that love as a fruit of faith in hearts that by nature know nothing of his love. As the Holy Spirit kindles that faith through Word and Sacraments that love begins to grow and express

itself. Its purpose is to uplift and build those with whom it has contact. It is a love which in man is in continual need of strengthening since it exists in a world which by nature seeks to destroy that love. God's kind of love in man displays itself in all its beauty when it motivates man to share with another for his salvation the wondrous message of God's love revealed in Jesus our Savior from sin. That's the kind of love concerning which Scripture writes and that's the kind of love which our Savior would see emulated by his power and grace in the lives of his people!

It must continually be the prayer of God's people that he would impress upon us to an ever greater degree the greatness of his perfect love for us, that we by his grace may better love him and our neighbor as he desires us to love and that we one day by his grace enjoy the unclouded, perfect revelation of his love throughout all eternity! In his Name, may that be our prayer!

God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (I John 4:8-11).

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