

# 1 Corinthians 13 Commentary

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1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

FROM CHART: Note 2 major divisions:

- **FIRST DIVISION** - Chapters 1-6 = Problems of Congregation - Divisions & Depravities
- **SECOND DIVISION** - Chapters 7-16 = Personal Problems, Worship Problems

1 Corinthians 13:1 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. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

- **I speak:** 1Co 13:2,3 12:8,16,29,30 14:6 2Co 12:4 2Pe 2:18
- **do not have love:** 1Co 8:1 Mt 25:45 Ro 14:15 Ga 5:6,22 1Ti 1:5 1Pe 4:8
- **I have become:** 1Co 14:7,8
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Corinthians 8:1+ Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but **love** edifies.

1 John 4:16+. "God is **love**, and the one who (present tense - continually) abides in **love** (present tense - continually) abides in God, and God abides in him"

Mt 22:36-39 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" replied "'You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment." 39"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF' "

**THE WAY TO SPEAK  
AND SAY "NOTHING"**

**Technical note** - The five **"IF'S"** in 1 Cor 13:1-3 are each THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which describe potential actions.

**If I speak with the tongues (glossa) of men and of angels** - Paul has just mentioned **tongues** in 1 Cor 12:30+ "All do not have gifts of healings, do they? **All do not speak with tongues, do they?** All do not interpret, do they?" His mention of tongues (and not the other spiritual gifts) would suggest that this gift was a significant issue among the saints at Corinth. Of course because it is a speaking gift ("[sign gift](#)"), it is more "[showy](#)" than some of the other gifts.

**THOUGHT** - Notice that this **"IF"** introduces a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL statement which might be paraphrased "If we could continually speak in tongues of men or tongues of angels (in their angelic language)." Paul is not advocating or promoting angelic languages, but simply postulating, if that "higher" supernatural language **were even possible** for finite natural men, it would **still be worthless!** That's his main point. He is not saying it is possible for men to speak angelic languages. It is not even logical. Only angels can speak angelic language. It is very easy to misinterpret what Paul is saying, but one must always be cautious in applying isolated passages simply because they sound good and make us feel good. That is taking a text out of context and making it a [pretext](#) which is always a potentially dangerous practice (A **pretext** is an excuse to do something or say something that is not accurate. **Pretexts** may be based on a half-truth or developed from taking a passage out of context to suit one's own interest or purpose.). Be a Berean (Acts 17:11+)! For more discussion on the phrase **tongues...of angels** as possibly describing a so-called "heavenly language" see comments below from [Gotquestions.org](#).

**but** - Term of contrast. The dramatic turn is from speaking (regardless of source) to speaking without love.

**Do not** (present tense - continually) **have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal** - What is the key "ingredient" for all Christian ministry? **Love** is the test of one's speech and for that matter all of one's ministry and exercising of one's spiritual gifts. Paul's statement I think is sarcastic for **a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal** will drown out what one is saying! They can't even hear the speech because of the screech (so to speak)! Or to say it another way, they don't care what you say (how much you know) until they see how much you care. **Become** is in the perfect tense indicating that this is one's continuing state or condition (if they speak without love).

It is interesting that the same phrase **clanging cymbal** is found in Ps 150:5 "Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with **resounding** (Lxx uses related noun - alalagmos = a locu sound or noise) **cymbals**."

**Gilbrant on clanging cymbal** - Paul was familiar with cymbals used in ritual observances. They were simply metal basins which, when struck together, resulted in a shrill sound. "Such vessels were . . . used in the cultus" (Schmidt, "kumbalon," TDNT 3:1037). These would also be familiar to the Corinthians who had been pagans previous to salvation (TDNT 3:1038). [Charles Hodge](#) referred to this "tinkling cymbal" as the least expensive and lowest of all the musical instruments. Another possible interpretation is that Paul used kumbalon in the classical symbolic sense of a boastful or empty-headed orator. The passage emphasizes that the operation of the gifts of the Spirit should be governed by a demonstration of the Spirit's fruit.

**Speak** (2980) **laleo** is the Greek verb meaning to make a sound and then to utter words. **Laleo** originally meant just sounds like the chatter of birds or the the prattling of children..As a result it has a broad range of meaning and import (e.g., "to say, to chatter [especially of animals], to babble, to sound [a musical instrument]" or "to chirp" [of locusts]) In classical Greek the meanings "to babble" (as an infant) and "to croon" (as a nurse) (cf. English lullaby) or "to whisper" were common. **Laleo** later became significant in philosophical discussions. Most authorities agree that laleō points to the external sound more than to the content of what is said. The Gospels and Acts are responsible for about two-thirds of the occurrences in the New Testament. The emphasis of laleō upon the physical nature of speech is apparent in some texts (e.g., Matthew 15:31; Luke 1:20; 7:15; Acts 2:6,11; cf. above), but the message of what was spoken is more important (e.g., Luke 24:25; Acts 3:24; 9:6). **Vincent** contrasts laleo with the other Greek word for speak (lego) explaining that laleo "contemplates the fact rather than the substance of speech. Hence it is used of God (Heb 1:1), the point being, not what God said, but the fact that he spoke to men. On the contrary, **lego** refers to the matter ("content") of speech. The verb **lego** originally meant to pick out, and hence to use words selected as appropriate expressions of thought, and to put such words together in orderly discourse." Laleo in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 2:6; 1 Co. 2:7; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Co. 3:1; 1 Co. 9:8; 1 Co. 12:3; 1 Co. 12:30; 1 Co. 13:1; 1 Co. 13:11; 1 Co. 14:2; 1 Co. 14:3; 1 Co. 14:4; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:6; 1 Co. 14:9; 1 Co. 14:11; 1 Co. 14:13; 1 Co. 14:18; 1 Co. 14:19; 1 Co. 14:21; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:27; 1 Co. 14:28; 1 Co. 14:29; 1 Co. 14:34; 1 Co. 14:35; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Co. 15:34; 2 Co. 2:17; 2 Co. 4:13; 2 Co. 7:14; 2 Co. 11:17; 2 Co. 11:23; 2 Co. 12:4; 2 Co. 12:19; 2 Co. 13:3;

**Love** (charity)(26)([agape](#)) is that quality of love which is unconditional, sacrificial. Agape is what God is like (1Jn 4:8,16+), what God shows to those undeserving (Jn 3:16+, 1Jn 4:9+) and what God enables by His

Spirit in the heart of His surrendered saints (Ro 5:5+ Gal 5:22+). **Agape** does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Agape is self-sacrificial and seeks the benefit of the one loved (without expecting anything in return), a love which means death to self since the essence of self is selfishness, self-will and self-gratification. Agape is a love activated by personal choice of our will (enabled by God working within us - see Php 2:13NLT+) and is not based on our feelings toward the one loved. **Agape** may involve emotion, but it **must** always involve specific **actions** as Paul goes on to describe in 1Co 13:4-8 (which in itself is an excellent definition of love as "love in action").

**THOUGHT** - Do not "try" to "manufacture" this love, but instead learn daily (even moment by moment) to "die" ("to self", cp Mk 8:34+, Lk 9:23+, Ro 6:11+, Ro 6:12-13+, Ro 6:14+ Ro 7:5-6+, Col 3:5+, Php 2:12+, Php 2:13+, Ezekiel 36:27+) that you might manifest this supernatural Christ-like love (cp Ep 5:1,2+) to a lost, dying world (Eph 2:1-2+, Ep 2:3+) in which even natural love is growing cold (cp "unloving" in 2Ti 3:3+, Ro 1:31+, cp Jesus' admonition regarding love in the last of the last days = Mt 24:12).

**Agape** in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 8:1; 1 Co. 13:1; 1 Co. 13:2; 1 Co. 13:3; 1 Co. 13:4; 1 Co. 13:8; 1 Co. 13:13; 1 Co. 14:1; 1 Co. 16:14; 1 Co. 16:24; 2 Co. 2:4; 2 Co. 2:8; 2 Co. 5:14; 2 Co. 6:6; 2 Co. 8:7; 2 Co. 8:8; 2 Co. 8:24; 2 Co. 13:11; 2 Co. 13:14

**Noisy** (2278) (**echo** from **echos** = noise or sound) means to ring, peal (often of metal), make a loud sound. Only in 1 Cor 13:1. (But in Textus Receptus of Lk 21:25) Friberg - intransitively, as sounding or ringing out; (1) of brass gonglike instruments boom out, resound; metaphorically in 1 Cor 13.1 of helping no one by what one says resounding cymbal, clanging brass; (2) of the sea roar (Lk 21.25 in Textus Receptus) **Gilbrant** - This verb is related to the noun **echos** (a "noise" or "sound" of any sort). It was used by classical writers to denote "ringing noises" in the ears, the "clanging" of metal shields, and even the "chirp" of a grasshopper (cf. Liddell-Scott). **ēcheō** translates six Hebrew words in the Septuagint including words which denote the "blast" of a trumpet (Ex 19:16), the "roaring" of water (Ps 46:3), and the "tumult" of a city (Ps 83:2). In the New Testament it was used by Luke to describe the "roaring" of sea waves (Luke 21:25) and by Paul to illustrate that those who speak in tongues without love are like "sounding" brass (1 Cor 13:1). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary). Uses of **echo** in Septuagint - Ex. 19:16; Ruth 1:19; 1 Sam. 3:11; 1 Sam. 4:5; 1 Ki. 1:41; 1 Ki. 1:45; 2 Ki. 21:12; Job 30:4; Ps. 46:3; Ps. 83:2; Isa. 16:11; Isa. 17:12; Isa. 51:15; Jer. 5:22; Jer. 19:3; Jer. 50:42; Jer. 51:55; Hos. 5:8;

**Gong** (bronze, copper) (5475) **chalkos** Eng chalcography = art of engraving copper) refers to the metal itself such as copper, brass (alloy of copper and zinc - 1 Cor 13:1), bronze (alloy of copper and tin) (Rev 18:12). Chalkos was used of anything made of this metal, such as gong (1Cor 13.1), copper coins (Mt 10.9); more generally money (Mk 12.41) Moulton and Milligan speak of chalkos as a word meaning "bronze-money." From two quotations of the second and third centuries, it appears that the word was used of money in general. **Chalkos** - 5x - Matt. 10:9; Mk. 6:8; Mk. 12:41; 1 Co. 13:1; Rev. 18:12

**Clanging** (214) (**alalazo**) means clashing, to raise a war cry or loud sound. Gilbrant - In Classical Greek **Alalazō** was formed from the war cry alalai which in ancient times signified the start of the battle (TDNT 1:227). In classical Greek literature it generally means "to cry or shout aloud." **Alalazō** may also be used as an exclamation of joy and, although rarely, as a cry of pain or grief. In the Septuagint **alalazō** is used to translate rūa' which is "to raise an alarm." Terua is also used in regard to exalting God with instruments (cf. Ps 81:1,2). In the New Testament alalazō is used only twice. In Mark 5:38 alalazō is used as crying out or weeping loudly, lamenting over the death of Jairus' daughter. 1 Corinthians 13:1 finds alalazō used with kumbalon which is a cymbal. This is the same phrase used in Ps 150:5 in the Septuagint. The cymbals create a loud noise, thus a "clanging cymbal" (NIV). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary,)

**Alalazo** - 2x in NT - Mk. 5:38; 1 Co. 13:1 Uses in **Septuagint** - Jos. 6:20; Jdg. 15:14; 1 Sam. 17:52; Ps. 47:1; Ps. 66:1; Ps. 81:1; Ps. 95:1; Ps. 95:2; Ps. 98:4; Ps. 98:6; Ps. 100:1; Jer. 4:8; Jer. 25:34; Jer. 47:2; Jer. 49:3; Ezek. 27:30

**Cymbals** (2950) (**kumbalon**) is a shallow metal basin or disc producing a clanging sound when two are struck together. A **cymbal**. **Gilbrant** - This term is related to **kumbos**, "a hollow basin," and to **kumbē**, "a cup." The cymbal was made of two hollow basins which were struck together to create a musical sound. Cymbals were used in pagan worship as well as in the Jewish worship of the true God. Classical writers also used kumbalon symbolically to refer to a boastful, empty-headed orator. Kumbalon occurs frequently in the Septuagint where it is used of the musical cymbal (1 Kings 18:6; 1 Chr 13:8; 15:16,19,28). God's people are encouraged in their worship of God to "praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals" (Psalm 150:5 [LXX 149:5]). The verb form kumbalizō occurs in Nehemiah 12:27 where the cymbal was used with psalteries and harps to celebrate the completion of the wall in Jerusalem. The cymbal was used in the time of David (2 Sa 5:6; 1 Chr 13:8) and then by Asaph and his descendants (1 Chr 16:5; Ezra 3:10). It remained as a Levitical instrument of worship (1 Chronicles 5:12f.; 29:25; Neh 12:27). (See "Music," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 3:444.) **Kumbalon** is only used once in the New Testament where Paul said: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am

become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Paul was familiar with cymbals used in ritual observances. They were simply metal basins which, when struck together, resulted in a shrill sound. “Such vessels were . . . used in the cultus” (Schmidt, “kumbalon,” Kittel, 3:1037). These would also be familiar to the Corinthians who had been pagans previous to salvation (ibid., 3:1038). Charles Hodge referred to this “tinkling cymbal” as the least expensive and lowest of all the musical instruments ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#)). Another possible interpretation is that Paul used kumbalon in the classical symbolic sense of a boastful or empty-headed orator. The passage emphasizes that the operation of the gifts of the Spirit should be governed by a demonstration of the Spirit’s fruit. The exercise of spiritual gifts without love is justly characterized in the way described above.(Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

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**Question - [Is there a heavenly language? What language will we speak in heaven?](#)**

**Answer:** There is some conjecture as to whether there is such a thing as a “heavenly language.” Is there a language unknown on earth but spoken fluently in heaven? If so, is it possible for someone to learn to speak this esoteric language? Is it possibly a gift of the Holy Spirit?

First, we should point out that the expression “heavenly language” is nowhere found in Scripture. Also, the phrase “tongues of angels” is used only once, in 1 Corinthians 13:1, “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

Some have suggested that Paul’s reference to “tongues of angels” is proof that there is a heavenly language that only angels—and certain Spirit-filled believers—can speak. Let’s take a closer look at the verse and its context.

When Paul speaks of “tongues of men,” he is most likely referring to the gift given on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles were imbued by the Holy Spirit to speak languages virtually unknown to them (Acts 2:4-12). “Tongues of men” is a reference to the various human languages in use at the time. The Corinthian brethren so prized this miraculous gift that it became severely abused and counterfeited. Paul addressed this problem in his epistle. The Corinthians needed to know that God gave the ability to speak a foreign language as a sign, and the gift had some restrictions (1 Corinthians 14:1-33).

When Paul speaks of the “tongues of angels,” he isn’t speaking literally of a “heavenly language,” as some want to believe, but is using a hyperbolic expression. Hyperbole is an exaggeration to make a point. Paul is saying that, no matter how gifted one may be, whether in his own language, in foreign languages, or even in the hypothetical speech of angels, it’s all moot without love. In fact, without love, one’s speech is no better than the useless babble of the pagan religions. The pagan culture of Corinth honored their gods in ritualistic ceremonies accompanied by loud musical instruments such as gongs, cymbals, and trumpets. Their worship was a chaotic cacophony.

Speaking in “tongues of angels” is probably best understood as having the ability to speak with “divine eloquence.” As one well-known Bible scholar put it, “Paul is simply saying that, were he to have the ability to speak with the skill and eloquence of the greatest men, even with angelic eloquence, he would only become a noisy gong . . .”

The fact is that Paul used hyperbolic language elsewhere, including in the very next verse, with his mention of faith “to remove mountains.” His exaggerations serve to emphasize the necessity of love. Showing love is more important than the grandest, most miraculous action imaginable.

**To suggest that Paul implies that “tongues of angels” is a kind of “heavenly language” is to go beyond what Scripture actually teaches. It is taking the expression completely out of context in an attempt to teach something other than what Paul actually said. [GotQuestions.org](#)**

**1 Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**

- **I have the:** 1Co 12:8-10,28 14:1,6-9 Nu 24:15-24 Mt 7:22,23
- **know all mysteries:** 1Co 4:1 Mt 13:11 Ro 11:25 16:25 Eph 3:4 6:19 Col 1:26 1Ti 3:16
- **if I have all faith:** 1Co 12:9 Mt 17:20 21-21 Mk 11:22-23 Lu 17:5-6
- **do not have love,:** 1Co 13:1,3 16:22 Ga 5:16,22 1Jn 4:8,20,21
- **I am nothing:** 1Co 13:3 7:19 8:4 Mt 21:19 2Co 12:11 Ga 6:3
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Matthew 17:20; And He \*said to them, "Because of the **littleness of your faith**; for truly I say to you, if you have **faith** the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Mark 11:22-23 And Jesus \*answered saying to them, "Have **faith** in God. 23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and **does not doubt in his heart**, but **believes that what he says is going to happen**, it will be granted him.

Luke 17:5-6 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our **faith**!" 6 And the Lord said, "If you had **faith** like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

## THE WAY TO HAVE A "NOTHING" MINISTRY

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 ([agape](#)), I am **nothing** - Paul moves to the other "showy" gifts like prophecy, knowledge, faith and says in effect that all are absolutely nothing without love! The Greek word for **nothing** is [oudeis](#) (not [medeis](#) which means relatively nothing) which means **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING**! This the same word our Lord Jesus used when He declared "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do (ABSOLUTELY) **NOTHING** ([oudeis](#)) (NOTHING OF ETERNAL VALUE!)." (Jn 15:5, cf 1 Cor 2:11 = "the thoughts of God **no one** knows except the Spirit of God.")

**Nothing** ([3762](#)) ([oudeis](#) from **ou** = not + **dé** = but + **heis** = one) Literally "but absolutely not one" no one, nothing, none at all; emphasizes not even one, not the least. **Oudeis** is used as a negating adjective (not even one) to negate a noun, denying absolutely and objectively (e.g., Lk 4:24) Note that [oudeis](#) differs from [medeis](#) which also is often translated "no one" as the negative particle **o u** differs from **me**. Thus **o u** = absolutely NOT and is objective while **me** = conditionally NOT and is subjective. For example Paul uses [oudeis](#) twice in 1 Cor 12:3+ "Therefore I make known to you that **NO ONE** speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and **NO ONE** can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

**Friberg** - [oudeis](#) - (1) as an adjective, used to negate a noun no, not even one (Lk 4.24); (2) as a [substantive](#); (a) [oudeis](#) and [oudemia](#) -- no one, nobody, none (Mt 6.24); [ouden](#) -- nothing (Mt 5.13); (b) to refer to invalid concepts worthless, of no account, meaningless ( Mt 23.16); (c) [ouden](#) as an [accusative](#) of respect = in no way, in nothing at all (Gal 4.1) (Analytical Lexicon)

**All uses in 1-2 Corinthians**- 1 Co. 1:14; 1 Co. 2:8; **1 Co. 2:11** = "Even so the thoughts of God (ABSOLUTELY) **NO ONE** (OUDEIS) knows except the Spirit of God."; 1 Co. 2:15; 1 Co. 3:11; 1 Co. 4:4; 1 Co. 6:5; 1 Co. 7:19; 1 Co. 8:4; 1 Co. 9:15; 1 Co. 12:3; 1 Co. 13:2; 1 Co. 13:3; 1 Co. 14:2; 1 Co. 14:10; 2 Co. 5:16; 2 Co. 7:2; 2 Co. 7:5; 2 Co. 11:9; 2 Co. 12:11

Oudeis 212 v - all(1), any(7), anyone(9), anything(7), cannot\*(1), never\*(1), no(26), no...anything(1), no such thing(1), no man(3), no one(87), no one's(1), no respect(1), no\*(6), nobody(1), none(12), none\*(1), nothing(45), nothing at all(1), nothing nothing(1), nothing\*(7), one(10), one\*(3), useless\*(1), worthless(1). Matt. 5:13; Matt. 6:24; Matt. 8:10; Matt. 9:16; Matt. 10:26; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 17:8; Matt. 17:20; Matt. 20:7; Matt. 21:19; Matt. 22:16; Matt. 22:46; Matt. 23:16; Matt. 23:18; Matt. 24:36; Matt. 27:24; Mk. 2:21; Mk. 2:22; Mk. 3:27; Mk. 5:3; Mk. 5:4; Mk. 5:37; Mk. 6:5; Mk. 7:12; Mk. 7:15; Mk. 7:24; Mk. 9:8; Mk. 9:29; Mk. 9:39; Mk. 10:18; Mk. 10:29; Mk. 11:2; Mk. 11:13; Mk. 12:14; Mk. 12:34; Mk. 13:32; Mk. 15:5; Mk. 16:8; Lk. 1:61; Lk. 4:2; Lk. 4:24; Lk. 4:26; Lk. 4:27; Lk. 5:5; Lk. 5:36; Lk. 5:37; Lk. 5:39; Lk. 7:28; Lk. 8:16; Lk. 8:43; Lk. 9:36; Lk. 9:62; Lk. 10:19; Lk. 10:22; Lk. 11:33; Lk. 12:2; Lk. 14:24; Lk. 15:16; Lk. 16:13; Lk. 18:19; Lk. 18:29; Lk. 18:34; Lk. 19:30; Lk. 20:40; Lk. 22:35; Lk. 23:4; Lk. 23:9; Lk. 23:14; Lk. 23:15; Lk. 23:22; Lk. 23:41; Lk. 23:53; Jn. 1:18; Jn. 3:2; Jn. 3:13; Jn. 3:27; Jn. 3:32; Jn. 4:27; Jn. 5:19; Jn. 5:22; Jn. 5:30; Jn. 6:44; Jn. 6:63; Jn. 6:65; Jn. 7:4; Jn. 7:13; Jn. 7:19; Jn. 7:26; Jn. 7:27; Jn. 7:30; Jn. 7:44; Jn. 8:10; Jn. 8:11; Jn. 8:15; Jn. 8:20; Jn. 8:28; Jn. 8:33; Jn. 8:54; Jn. 9:4; Jn. 9:33; Jn. 10:18; Jn. 10:29; Jn. 10:41; Jn. 11:49; Jn. 12:19; Jn. 13:28; Jn. 14:6; Jn. 14:30; Jn. 15:5; Jn. 15:13; Jn. 15:24; Jn. 16:5; Jn. 16:22; Jn. 16:24; Jn. 17:12; Jn. 18:9; Jn. 18:20; Jn. 18:31; Jn. 18:38; Jn. 19:4; Jn. 19:11; Jn. 19:41; Jn. 21:3; Jn. 21:12; Acts 4:12; Acts 4:14; Acts 5:13; Acts 5:23; Acts 5:36; Acts 8:16; Acts 9:8; Acts 15:9; Acts 17:21; Acts 18:10; Acts 18:17; Acts 19:27; Acts 20:20; Acts 20:24; Acts 20:33; Acts 21:24; Acts 23:9; Acts 25:10; Acts 25:11; Acts 26:22; Acts 26:26; Acts 26:31; Acts 27:22; Acts 27:34; Acts 28:5; Acts 28:17; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 14:7; Rom. 14:14; 1 Co. 1:14; 1 Co. 2:8; 1 Co. 2:11; 1 Co. 2:15; 1 Co. 3:11; 1 Co. 4:4; 1 Co. 6:5; 1 Co. 7:19; 1 Co. 8:4; 1 Co. 9:15; 1 Co. 12:3; 1 Co. 13:2; 1 Co. 13:3; 1 Co. 14:2; 1 Co. 14:10; 2 Co. 5:16; 2 Co. 7:2; 2 Co. 7:5; 2 Co. 11:9; 2 Co. 12:11; Gal. 2:6; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:15; Gal. 4:12; Gal. 5:2; Gal. 5:10; Eph. 5:29; Phil. 1:20; Phil. 2:20; Phil. 4:15; 1 Tim. 4:4; 1 Tim. 6:7; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:14; 2 Tim. 4:16; Tit. 1:15; Phlm. 1:14; Heb. 2:8; Heb. 6:13; Heb. 7:13; Heb. 7:14; Heb. 7:19; Heb. 12:14; Jas. 1:13; Jas. 3:8; 1 Jn. 1:5; 1 Jn. 4:12; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:17; Rev. 5:3; Rev. 5:4; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 15:8; Rev. 18:11; Rev. 19:12

**1 Corinthians 13:3 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.**

- if I give all my possessions Mt 6:1-4 23:5 Lu 18:22,28 19:8 21:3,4 Joh 12:43 Ga 5:26 Php 1:15-18
- if I surrender my body to be burned Da 3:16-28 Mt 7:22,23 Joh 13:37 15:13 Ac 21:13 Php 1:20,21 2:3
- it profits me nothing Isa 57:12 Jer 7:8 Joh 6:63 1Ti 4:8 Heb 13:9 Jas 2:14-17
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## NON-PROFIT GIVING AND SACRIFICING

**And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor** - This is amazing and convicting! Giving can be totally selfish, even when one gives away everything! Giving like this is the absolute antithesis of giving motivated and energized by agape love, for this quality of giving is totally selfless and expects nothing in return, no plaudits or praise or applause! Are you as convicted as I am?

**Mattoon** - The efforts of a person that would give away his entire estate to care for others mouthful by mouthful are nothing and worthless if he gives to others out of duty instead of out of love. They profit nothing leaving the person empty of satisfaction and joy. God does not want us to give from a heart of drudgery, but from a heart of love. (See 2 Cor 9:7)

**Give** (5595) (**psomizo** from **psomion** = a morsel) means to feed with morsels. It means means to give away mouthful by mouthful or to feed by putting little bits of food into the mouth, like a bird feeding its babies. Used in Ro 12:20, 1 Cor 13:3

**And if I surrender ([paradidomi](#)) my body to be burned ([kaio](#))** - Paul links giving with burning. The former surrenders one's goods and resources, while the latter surrenders one's body and life.

**But** - Term of contrast. Paul [does a 180 again](#). As "**altruistic**" as the giving of one's possessions or one's person appear to others, Paul says they are in fact the opposite of what they seem to be!

**Do not** (present tense - continually) **have love ([agape](#))**, **it** (present tense - continually) **profits me nothing ([oudeis](#))** - **IT** refers to radical giving of one's possessions and one's person. This reminds me of Buddhist monks who are sadly so deceived by their false religion that they set their bodies aflame and die for a lie and without Spirit energized love! That is so tragic! But sadly that is what deception can do to a person. And it can happen to believers who give their possessions or their person if they do it without Spirit enabled love! Nothing as noted above means just that - absolutely nothing!

**Profits** (5623) (**opheleo** from **ophéllo** = heap up or from **opheleos** = increase, profit) means to provide assistance, with emphasis upon the resulting benefit. In 1 Cor 13:3 it is in the passive sense meaning to have benefit from or to be profitable.

### 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

Amplified: Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Phillips: - This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience - it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Love meekly and patiently bears ill treatment from others. Love is kind, gentle, benign, pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh and austere; is not envious. Love does not brag, nor does it show itself off, is not ostentatious, does not have an inflated ego, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:4 γ πη μακροθυμε , χρηστεται γ πη, ο ζηλο , [ γ πη] ο περπερε εται, ο φυσιουται,

Greek E agape makrothumei, (2SPA1) chresteuetai (3SPMI) e agape, ou zeloι, (3SPA1) [e agape] ou perpereuetai, (2SPMI) ou phusioutai, (3SPPI)

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:4 The love is long-suffering, it is kind, the love doth not envy, the love doth not vaunt



itself, is not puffed up,

ASV 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

CSB 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited,

MIT 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and gracious. Love is not envious, braggadocian, or egotistical.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

NRS 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant

NAB 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated,

NJB 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited,

GWN 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient. Love is kind. Love isn't jealous. It doesn't sing its own praises. It isn't arrogant.

BBE 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is never tired of waiting; love is kind; love has no envy; love has no high opinion of itself, love has no pride;

- **patient:** Pr 10:12 2Co 6:6 Ga 5:22 Eph 4:2 Col 1:11 3:12 2Ti 2:25 3:10 2Ti 4:2 Jas 3:17 1Pe 4:8
- **kind:** Ne 9:17 Pr 19:22 31:20,26 Lu 6:35,36 Eph 4:32 Col 3:12 1Pe 3:8 2Pe 1:7 1Jn 3:16-18 4:11
- **not jealous:** 1Co 3:3 Ge 30:1 37:11 Mt 27:18 Ro 1:29 13:13 2Co 12:20 Ga 5:21,26 Php 1:15 1Ti 6:4 Tit 3:3 Jas 3:14-16 4:5 1Pe 2:1
- **does not brag and is not arrogant,** 1Sa 25:21,22,33,34 1Ki 20:10,11 Ps 10:5 Pr 13:10 17:14 25:8-10 Ec 7:8,9 10:4 Da 3:19-22
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

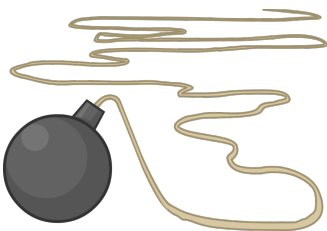
#### Related Passages (this list could be very much longer!):

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but **love** covers all transgressions.

1 Peter 4:8+ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love** covers a multitude of sins.

Ephesians 4:2+ with all humility and gentleness, with **patience** (makrothumia noun form of "patient" below), showing forbearance to one another in love

Colossians 3:12+ And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, **kindness** (chrestotes = gives us what we need & related to word for kindness below), humility, gentleness and **patience** (makrothumia = a "long fuse" before it "blows!")



A LONG FUSE

Paul's flow of thought in 1 Corinthians 13

<b>The Primacy of Love</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 13:1-3</b>
<b>The Perfection of Love</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 13:4-7</b>
<b>The Permanence of Love</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 13:8-13</b>

**LOVE HAS**

## A "LONG FUSE"

**For more in depth discussion see comments on** (There is some duplication but also more additional material)

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

### Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love

Remember the context of the preceding three verses of this "crown jewel" of Holy Scripture for there we learn that love is indispensable and is more important than eloquent communication, spiritual gifts, or personal sacrifice. We may have all the trappings of true religion but if we don't have love, we don't have anything at all. The Corinthians were impatient with each other, suing each other, tolerating sin in the church, and creating problems because they did not have love. Paul emphasizes that whatever gifts and/or qualities a believer may possess, they are nothing without love.

**Love** ([agape](#)) **is** (present tense - continually) **patient**, **love** ([agape](#)) **is** (present tense - continually) **kind** **and is** (present tense - continually) **not jealous** (envious); **love** ([agape](#)) **does** (present tense - continually) **not brag** ([braggadocio](#), [pompous](#)) **and is** (present tense - continually) **not arrogant** (puffed up, conceited, egotistical, inflated) - Are you convicted yet?

**Spurgeon** - Always try to put the best construction on other people's actions and work. Let gentleness triumph. Note that **agape** "**love**" is defined by verbs rather than adjectives--by what it does, instead of what it is. Note also that love is not a feeling and as you survey Paul's description of **agape** love, you note that there is not stress on personal feeling. The kind of love Paul is talking about is seen and experienced and demonstrated. Finally notice that Paul begins with 2 positive aspect of love **love is patient, love is kind**. The first is passive—not retaliating. The second is active—bestowing benefits. This twofold opening statement stands as a daily challenge to every Christian! But the "descriptive definition" does not stop here but is followed with a series of primarily negative aspects of love, each preceded by the negative particle in the Greek which conveys absolute negation—love **never** brags, is **never** arrogant, etc! In addition every verb is in the present tense calling for this to be our continual practice! This description of **agape** should drive every believer to the foot of the Cross and to a complete surrender to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the perfect fulfillment of **agape** and Who Alone by His Spirit's filling and control can enable us to work out this aspect of our salvation in fear and trembling to the glory of His Father. Amen!

**Paul** had given Timothy an example and encouraged him by saying...

you followed (like a disciple) my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, **patience** (makrothumia), love, perseverance (see **note** 2 Timothy 3:10)

**Paul** went on to tell Timothy to preach with patience writing...

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience (literally "all patience" makrothumia) and instruction. (see note 2 Timothy 4:2)

**A T Robertson** says that 1Corinthians 13:4-7 pictures "the character or conduct of love in marvellous rhapsody. [1 Corinthians 13](#))

**Chrysostom** adds that here Paul...makes an outline of love's matchless beauty, adorning its image with all aspects of virtue, as if with many colors brought together with precision.

**Phillips** has a pithy paraphrase...This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience - it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

**Pfeiffer** has an interesting comment writing that...One might almost say that love is personified here, since the description is practically a description of the life and character of Jesus Christ. However, the picture is directly related to the Corinthians. The observance of the truths of this chapter, as will be noted in the following remarks, would have solved their problems. ([Pfeiffer, C F: Wycliffe Bible Commentary. 1981. Moody](#))

**Hodge** introduces this famous passage noting that...Almost all the instructions of the New Testament are suggested by some occasion and are adapted to it. This chapter is not a methodical dissertation on Christian love, but shows that grace is contrasted with the extraordinary gifts that the Corinthians valued inordinately. Therefore, the traits of love that are mentioned are those that contrasted with the Corinthians' use of their gifts. They were impatient, discontented, envious, puffed up, selfish, indecorous, unmindful of the feelings or interests of others, suspicious, resentful, censorious. The apostle personifies love and places her before



them and lists her graces not in logical order but as they occurred to him in contrast to the deformities of character that the Corinthians displayed. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** suggest that the careful inductive student read 1Corinthians 13:4-7...and compare this with the fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note. You will see that all of the characteristics of love show up in that fruit. This is why love edifies: it releases the power of the Spirit in our lives and churches. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

I like the practical way **Joseph Beet** explains the "**patience**" demonstrated through a man or woman (husband or wife) who is filled with the Spirit (Ep 5:18-note compare filled with the Word in Col 3:16-note) that they might be enabled to exude the fragrant fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note), i.e., **agape** love which...**continues** in spite of **conduct** likely to **quench** it. This continuance often, but not always, shows itself in restraining anger. Hence, in the Bible, the word is often (Ro 2:4-note; Ro 9:22-note etc.) used in this connection. ([A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians](#))

Lord, teach us the secret of loving,  
The love You are asking today;  
Then help us to love one another;  
For this we most earnestly pray.  
—Anon.

**Love** ([26](#)) (**agape**) is unconditional, sacrificial love and a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and which God gives by means of His Spirit's production in the heart of a yielded saint, the constituent elements of this fruit being described by Paul in this famous section of Scripture. **Agape** is the caring, self-sacrificing commitment which shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. Jesus Christ, in His sacrificial death on the Cross, is clearly the epitome and embodiment of agape love. **Agape** is a love which impels the one loving to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the person loved. God's love must be seen in full bloom in the life of every disciple of Christ. **Agape love** is the love of choice, the love of serving with humility, the highest kind of love, the noblest kind of devotion, the love of the will (intentional, a conscious choice) which is not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship. **Agape** is not based on pleasant emotions or good feelings that might result from a physical attraction or a familial bond. **Agape** chooses as an act of self-sacrifice to serve the recipient. From all of the descriptions of **agape** love, it is clear that true **agape** love is a sure mark of salvation and in fact is impossible to carry out unless one is genuinely born again. **Agape** love does not depend on the world's criteria for "love". Nevertheless, believers can fall into the trap of blindly following the world's demand that a lover **feel** positive toward the beloved. This is not **agape** love, but is a love based on impulse. **Impulsive love** characterizes the spouse who announces to the other spouse that they are planning to divorce their mate. Why? They reason "I can't help it. I fell in love with another person!" Christians must understand that this type of impulsive love is completely contrary to God's **decisive love**, which is decisive because He is in control and has a purpose in mind. There are many reasons a proper understanding of the truth of God's word (and of the world's lie) is critical and one of the foremost is Jesus' declaration that

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** (agape) for one another. (John 13:35). (**Comment:** Agape is the badge of discipleship and the landmark of heaven! (Jn 13:35). )

**Agape** in the Greek classics spoke of a love called out of one's heart by the preciousness of the object loved. This is the idea inherent in the Father's proclamation "This is My **beloved** Son... " **Agape** is the love that was shown at Calvary. Thus **agape** is God's love, and is the love that God is. It is not human affection but is a divine love, commanded by God, produced as fruit in the heart of a surrendered saint by the Holy Spirit (God Who is at work in us to will and to work to His good pleasure) (Ro 5:5-note; Gal 5:22-note), self-sacrificial in nature seeking the benefit of the one who is loved, a love which means death to self and defeat for sin since the essence of sin is self-will and self-gratification, a love activated by personal choice of our will (working out our salvation in fear and trembling) not based on our feelings toward the object of our love and manifested by specific actions as described in this section of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 where we see "love in action."

**Bible.org** - The Greek word agape (love) seems to have been virtually a Christian invention—a new word for a new thing (apart from about twenty occurrences in the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is almost non-existent before the New Testament). Agape draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is not a form of natural affection, however, intense, but a supernatural fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a matter of will rather than feeling (for Christians must love even those they dislike—Matt. 5:44-48). It is the basic element in Christlikeness. ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

**Agape** may involve emotion, but it **must** always involve **action**. **Agape** is unrestricted, unrestrained, and unconditional. **Agape** love is the virtue that surpasses all others and in fact is the prerequisite for all the others. Jesus when asked

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" replied "You shall **love** (agapao - related verb) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the great and foremost commandment." (Mt 22:36-38)

**John MacArthur** explains that " **Agape** love is the greatest virtue of the Christian life. Yet that type of love was rare in pagan Greek literature. That's because the traits **agape** portrays—unselfishness, self-giving, willful devotion, concern for the welfare of others—were mostly disdained in ancient Greek culture as signs of weakness. However, the New Testament declares agape to be the character trait around which all others revolve. The apostle John writes, "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16). (MacArthur, J. The Power of Integrity : Building a Life Without Compromise, page 133. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books) (Bolding added)

**F B Meyer** wrote the following regarding agape **love**...

Wherever there is true love, there must be giving, and giving to the point of sacrifice. Love is not satisfied with giving trinkets; it must give at the cost of sacrifice: it must give blood, life, all. And it was so with the love of God. "He so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son." "Christ also loved and gave Himself up, an offering and a sacrifice to God." (See **note** Ephesians 5:2)

We are to imitate God's love in Christ. The love that gives, that counts no cost too great, and, in sacrificing itself for others, offers all to God, and does all for His sake. Such was the love of Jesus--sweet to God, as the scent of fields of new-mown grass in June; and this must be our model.

Not to those who love us, but who hate; not to those who are pleasant and agreeable, but who repel; not because our natural feelings are excited, but because we will to minister, even to the point of the cross, must our love go out. And every time we thus sacrifice ourselves to another for the sake of the love of God, we enter into some of the meaning of the sacrifice of Calvary, and there is wafted up to God the odour of a sweet smell. ([Devotional Commentary on Ephesians](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** describes **agape** love noting that...

**Agape** is a love that impels one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the object loved... (it) speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in the object loved, an apprehension of its preciousness.

**Wuest** explains that **phileo** love is "an unimpassioned love, a friendly love. It is a love that is called out of one's heart as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person or object. It is based upon an inner community between the person loving and the person or object loved. That is, both have things in common with one another. The one loving finds a reflection of his own nature in the person or thing loved. It is a love of liking, an affection for someone or something that is the outgoing of one's heart in delight to that which affords pleasure. The Greeks made much of friendship, and this word was used by them to designate this form of mutual attraction."... "We gather, therefore, that **agape** is a love of devotion (Ed note: and volition), while **phileō** is a love of emotion. There is another distinction we must be careful to note, and that is that **agape** is love that has ethical qualities about it, obligations, responsibilities, where **phileō** is a non-ethical love, making no ethical demands upon the person loving.

In contrasting **phileo** and **agape** love, we might say that the former is a love of pleasure, the latter a love of preciousness; the former a love of delight, the latter a love of esteem; the former a love called out of the heart by the apprehension of pleasurable qualities in the object loved, the latter a love called out of the heart by the apprehension of valuable qualities in the object loved; the former takes pleasure in, the latter ascribes value to; the former is a love of liking, the latter a love of prizing.

(**Agape** is) a love that denies self for the benefit of the object loved.

(**Agape** describes the) love of the Spirit-filled husband, purified and made heavenly in character.

(**Agape** is) the love which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in the heart of the yielded believer (see **note** Romans 5:5)

The saint is to order his behavior or manner of life within the sphere of this divine, supernatural (**agape**) love produced in his heart by the Holy Spirit. When this love becomes the deciding factor in his choices and the motivating power in his actions, he will be walking in love. He will be exemplifying in his life the self-sacrificial love shown at Calvary and the Christian graces mentioned in 1Co 13:4-8." (It is) a love that is willing to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of that brother, a love that causes one to be long suffering toward him, a love that makes one treat him kindly, a love that so causes one to rejoice in the welfare of another that there is no room for envy in the heart, a love that is not jealous, a love that keeps one from boasting of one's self, a love that keeps one from bearing one's self in a lofty manner, a love that keeps one from acting unbecomingly, a love that keeps one from seeking one's own rights, a love that keeps one from becoming angry, a love that does not impute evil, a love that does not rejoice in iniquity but in the truth, a love that bears up against all

things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. That is the kind of love which God says one Christian should have for another."

(**Agape love**) speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved. (In Jn 3:16) God's love for a sinful and lost race springs from His heart in response to the high value He places upon each human soul. Every sinner is exceedingly precious in His sight. "Phileo" which is another word for love, a love which is the response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable, will not do here, for there is nothing in a lost sinner that the heart of God can find pleasure in, but on the contrary, everything that His holiness rebels against. But each sinner is most precious to God, first, because he bears the image of his Creator even though that image be marred by sin, and second, because through redemption, that sinner can be conformed into the very image of God's dear Son. This preciousness of each member of the human race to the heart of God is the constituent element of the love that gave His Son to die on the Cross. The degree of the preciousness is measured by the infinite sacrifice which God made. The love in Jn 3:16 therefore is a love whose essence is that of self-sacrifice for the benefit of the one loved, this love based upon an evaluation of the preciousness of the one loved. (All of the preceding quotes are compiled from various discussions in [Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#)) (Bolding added)

**John MacArthur** has numerous excellent comments regarding **agape** love...

We have no capacity to generate (**agape love**) on our own. The Greek word for that kind of love is agape, and it is characterized by humility, obedience to God, and self-sacrifice. ([MacArthur, J. Drawing near: August 3, 2002. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books](#))

Biblical **agapē love** is not an emotion but a disposition of the heart to seek the welfare and meet the needs of others. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends," Jesus said ([John 15:13](#)). And that is exactly what Jesus Himself did on behalf of those God has chosen to be saved. In the ultimate divine act of love, God determined before the foundation of the earth that He would give His only Son to save us." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

(**Agape**) **Love** is an attitude of selflessness. Biblical agape love is a matter of the will and not a matter of feeling or emotion, though deep feelings and emotions almost always accompany love. God's loving the world was not a matter simply of feeling; it resulted in His sending His only Son to redeem the world ([Jn 3:16](#)). Love is self-less giving, always self-less and always giving. It is the very nature and substance of love to deny self and to give to others... We can only have such love when Christ is free to work His own love through us. We cannot fulfill any of Christ's commands without Christ Himself, least of all His command to love. We can only love as Christ loves when He has free reign in our hearts... When the Spirit empowers our lives and Christ is obeyed as the Lord of our hearts, our sins and weaknesses are dealt with and we find ourselves wanting to serve others, wanting to sacrifice for them and serve them—because Christ's loving nature has truly become our own. Loving is the supernatural attitude of the Christian, because love is the nature of Christ. When a Christian does not love he has to do so intentionally and with effort—just as he must do to hold his breath. To become habitually unloving he must habitually resist Christ as the Lord of his heart. To continue the analogy to breathing, when Christ has his proper place in our hearts, we do not have to be told to love—just as we do not have to be told to breathe. Eventually it must happen, because loving is as natural to the spiritual person as breathing is to the natural person. Though it is unnatural for the Christian to be unloving, it is still possible to be disobedient in regard to love. Just as loving is determined by the will and not by circumstances or other people, so is not loving. If a husband fails in his love for his wife, or she for him, it is never because of the other person, regardless of what the other person may have done. You do not fall either into or out of **agape love**, because it is controlled by the will. Romantic love can be beautiful and meaningful, and we find many favorable accounts of it in Scripture. But it is **agape love** that God commands husbands and wives to have for each other (Ep 5:25, 28, 33—see notes Ephesians 5:25; 28; 33 cf. Titus 2:4—note; etc.)—the love that each person controls by his own act of will. Strained relations between husbands and wives, between fellow workers, between brothers and sisters, or between any others is never a matter of incompatibility or personality conflict but is always a matter of sin... Loving others is an act of obedience, and not loving them is an act of disobedience. ([Ibid](#))

"The absence of (**agape**) **love** is the presence of sin. The absence of love has nothing at all to do with what is happening to us, but everything to do with what is happening in us. Sin and love are enemies, because sin and God are enemies. They cannot coexist. Where one is, the other is not. The loveless life is the ungodly life; and

the godly life is the serving, caring, tenderhearted, affectionate, self-giving, self-sacrificing life of Christ's love working through the believer. ([Ibid](#))

**Agape love** centers on the needs and welfare of the one loved and will pay whatever personal price is necessary to meet those needs and foster that welfare." ([MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press; MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Agape** is the love that **gives**. There's **no taking involved**. It is completely unselfish. It seeks the highest good for another no matter what the cost, demonstrated supremely by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf." ([MacArthur, J. Saved Without A Doubt. Wheaton, Ill.: May, 2006. Victor Books](#))

Forbearing love could only be **agape love**, because only **agape love** gives continuously and unconditionally. Eros love is essentially self-love, because it cares for others only because of what it can get from them. It is the love that takes and never gives. Philia love is primarily reciprocal love, love that gives as long as it receives. But **agape love** is unqualified and unselfish love, love that willingly gives whether it receives in return or not. It is unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodness—love that goes out even to enemies and prays for its persecutors (Mt 5:43-note; Mt 5:44-note). That is why the forbearance of which Paul speaks here could only be expressed in **agape love**." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Giving of oneself to others is the epitome of **agape love**. Biblical love is not a pleasant emotion or good feeling about someone, but the giving of oneself for his welfare (cf. 1 John 3:16). Divine love is unconditional love, love that depends entirely on the one who loves and not on the merit, attractiveness, or response of the one loved. Christ did not simply have a deep feeling and emotional concern for mankind. Nor did He sacrifice Himself for us because we were deserving. God's love, and all love that is like His, loves for the sake of giving, not getting. With conditional love, if the conditions are not met there is no obligation to love. If we do not get, we do not give. But God's makes no conditions for His love to us and commands that we love others without conditions. There is no way to earn God's love or to deserve it by reason of human goodness. Romantic, emotional love between husband and wife ebbs and flows, and sometimes disappears altogether. But loss of romantic love is never an appropriate excuse for dissolving a marriage, because the love that God specifically commands husbands to have for their wives is **agape love** (see notes Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 3:19; cf. notes Titus 2:4; etc.)—love like His own undeserved love for us, love that is based on willful choice in behalf of the one loved, regardless of emotions, attraction, or deserving. Romantic love enhances and beautifies the relationship between husband and wife, but the binding force of a Christian marriage is God's own kind of love, the love that loves because it is the divine nature to love. It is the love of giving, not of getting; and even when it ceases to get, it continues to give. Where there is the sacrificial love of willful choice, there is also likely to be the love of intimacy, feeling, and friendship (philia)... Those who are given God's nature through Jesus Christ are commanded to love as God loves. In Christ, it is now our nature to love just as it is God's nature to love—because His nature is now our nature. For a Christian not to love is for him to live against his own nature as well as against God's. Lovelessness is therefore more than a failure or shortcoming. It is sin, willful disobedience of God's command and disregard of His example." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Agape** is impossible for unconverted to manifest this divine love & in fact it is impossible even for a believer to demonstrate it in his own strength. It can only be exhibited by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. A believer has this love (divine nature) within (Col 1:27+) and it is progressively manifest more and more as fruit by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22+) as we obey God's truth. **Agape** love willingly engages in self-sacrificing action to procure the loved one's highest good.

Love's perfect expression on earth is the Lord Jesus Christ and He defines this **sacrificial love** for He left heaven, came to earth, took on a human form, was spit on and mocked, was crowned with a crown of thorns, nailed to a cross, abused, and had a spear thrust into His side. He loved the church enough to die for her. **That's sacrificial love.**

**Donald W. Burdick** gives the following excellent summary of *agape love*:

**It is spontaneous.** There was nothing of value in the persons loved that called forth such sacrificial love. God of His own free will set His love on us in spite of our enmity and sin. **[Agape] is love that is initiated by the lover** because he wills to love, not because of the value or loveliness of the person loved. **[Agape] is self-giving**, and is not interested in what it can gain, but in what it can give. It is not bent on satisfying the lover, but on helping the one loved whatever the cost. **[Agape]** is active and is not mere sentiment cherished in the heart. Nor is it mere words however eloquent. It does involve feeling and may express itself in words, but it is primarily an attitude toward another that moves the will to act in helping to meet the need of the one loved. (Burdick, D W: The Letters of John the Apostle (Chicago: Moody, 1985, page 351)

As noted below Barclay has labeled **agape** as **unconquerable benevolence** for nothing the other person can do will make us seek anything but their highest good and to never feel bitterness or desire for revenge. Though the one loved even injure us and insult us, **agape** will never feel anything but kindness towards him. **Agape** gives & gives & gives. **Agape** takes slaps in the face and still gives even as Jesus did saying Father forgive them. **Agape** is not withheld. That clearly means that this Christian love is not an emotional or sentimental thing. It is the ability to retain unconquerable goodwill to the unlovely and the unlovable, towards those who do not love us, and even towards those whom we do not like.

**William Barclay** notes that **agape** indicates an...

unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodwill... If we regard a person with **agape**, it means that no matter what that person does to us, no matter how he treats us, no matter if he insults us or injures us or grieves us, we will never allow any bitterness against him to invade our hearts, but will regard him with that unconquerable benevolence and goodwill which will seek nothing but his highest good."... In the case of our nearest and our dearest we cannot help loving them; we speak of falling in love; it is something which comes to us quite unsought; it is something which is born of the emotions of the heart. But in the case of our enemies, (**agape**) **love** is not only something of the **heart**; it is also something of the **will**. It is not something which we cannot help; it is something which we have to will ourselves into doing (**Ed note**: enabled by the Spirit Whose "fruit" in yielded believers is "agape love"). It is in fact a victory over that which comes instinctively to the natural man. **Agape** does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help, and which comes unbidden and unsought; it means a determination of the mind, whereby we achieve this unconquerable goodwill even to those who hurt and injure us. **Agape**, someone has said, is the power to love those whom we do not like and who may not like us. **In point of fact we can only have agape when Jesus Christ enables us to conquer our natural tendency to anger and to bitterness, and to achieve this invincible goodwill to all men.**

**Agape**, is that unconquerable benevolence, that undefeatable good-will, which will never seek anything but the highest good of others, no matter what they do to us, and no matter how they treat us. That love can come to us only when Christ, Who is that love, comes to dwell within our hearts... "

(**Agape**) ... will never dream of revenge, but will meet all injuries and rebuffs with undefeatable good will. **Agape** is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek the highest good of every man no matter what he may be. If a man has **agape**, no matter what other people do to him or say of him, he will seek nothing but their good. He will never be bitter, never resentful, never vengeful; he will never allow himself to hate; he will never refuse to forgive.

Love, **agape**, is the virtue of the man who, even if he tried, could not forget what God has done for him nor the love of God to men.

**Agape** is the word for Christian love. **Agape** is not passion with its ebb and flow, its flicker and its flame; nor is it an easy-going and indulgent sentimentalism. And it is not an easy thing to acquire or a light thing to exercise. **Agape** is undefeatable goodwill; it is the attitude towards others which, no matter what they do, will never feel bitterness and will always seek their highest good. There is a love which seeks to possess; there is a love which softens and enervates; there is a love which withdraws a man from the battle; there is a love which shuts its eyes to faults and to ways which end in ruin. But Christian love will always seek the highest good of others and will accept all the difficulties, all the problems and all the toil which search involves. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

**F. E. Marsh** writes that...Love has not an irritating thorn in its hand, nor a jealous look in its eye, nor depreciating words on its lips, nor sore feelings in its heart. Love sees the best in others, and the worst in itself. Love will wash another's feet, and think it is honored by so doing

A Peanuts cartoon shows Lucy standing with her arms folded and a stern expression on her face. Charlie Brown pleads, "Lucy, you must be more loving. This world really needs love. You have to let yourself love to make this world a better place." Lucy angrily whirls around and knocks Charlie Brown to the ground. She screams at him, "Look, Blockhead, the world I love. It's people I can't stand."

**Tertullian** the early disciple wrote, "It is our care for the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Look!' they say, 'How they love one another!' Look how they are prepared to die for one another." People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Here is a hymn by [Christopher Wordsworth](#), a paraphrase of part of 1 Corinthians 13 entitled [Gracious Holy Ghost](#) (1862)...

[Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost,](#)  
taught by Thee, we covet most  
of Thy gifts at Pentecost,



holy, heavenly love.

Love is kind, and suffers long,  
love is meek, and thinks no wrong,  
love than death itself more strong;  
**therefore give us love.**

Prophecy will fade away,  
melting in the light of day;  
love will ever with us stay;  
**therefore give us love.**

Faith will vanish into sight;  
hope be emptied in delight;  
love in heaven will shine more bright;  
**therefore give us love.**

Faith and hope and love we see  
joining hand in hand agree;  
but the greatest of the three,  
and the best, is love.

From the overshadowing  
of thy gold and silver wing  
shed on us, who to thee sing,  
holy, heavenly love.

## LOVE IS PATIENT

**Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love**

**Is patient** (3114) (**makrothumeo** from **makros** = long, distant, far off, large + **thumos** = temper, passion, emotion or **thumoomai** = to be furious or burn with intense anger) (See study of related word **makrothumia**) literally describes prolonged restraint of **thumos**, of emotion, anger or agitation. It means one's temper is long (as opposed to "short tempered") and does not give way to a short or quick temper toward those who fail. It describes holding out of the mind for a long time before it gives room to action or passion. The picture of this word is that of a person in whom it takes a long time before fuming and breaking into flames! **Trench** adds that this word refers to one who has the power to avenge himself and yet refrains from exercising this power. **Makrothumeo** describes manifesting a state of emotional calm or quietness in the face of provocation, misfortune or unfavorable circumstances. Love never says, "I've had enough." It suffers indefinitely. It is longsuffering and continues in spite of conduct likely to quench it. This continuance often, but not always, shows itself in restraining anger. **Makrothumeo** describes especially patience towards **people** who act unjustly toward us. Another verb meaning to be patient is **hupomeno** which describes patience under **circumstances**, although there can be some overlap for circumstances often involve people. In other words the emphasis of makrothumeo is not so much a call to patience with circumstances as to patience with people. The action indicated by both verbs is essential to development of our Christian character, for patience with people is just as important as patience with circumstances. Patience is the righteous standard God expects all believers to conform to no matter what person he places (or allows) into your life or whatever trying circumstance you might face.

**NIDNTT** has an interesting note on the noun **makrothymia**..."Positively it expresses persistence, or an unswerving willingness to await events rather than trying to force them. Although perseverance and persistence were familiar to the Stoics, and were, in fact, highly valued by them, makrothymia does not figure in their vocabulary. This was possibly because of the widespread though erroneous belief that its basic idea was one of passive resignation. It must be said that in ancient Greece makrothymia is concerned primarily with the moulding of a man's own character; it is not a virtue exercised towards one's fellows. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

**Vine** has this note on **makrothumeo** writing that "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate nor promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy, and is used of God, Exodus 34:6, LXX; Romans 2:4 (note); 1 Peter 3:20 (note). ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))



**Richards** adds that the word group makrothumeo and makrothumia "focuses our attention on restraint: that capacity for self-control despite circumstances that might arouse the passions or cause agitation. In personal relationships, patience is forbearance. This is not so much a trait as a way of life. We keep on loving or forgiving despite provocation, as illustrated in Jesus' pointed stories in Mt 18. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

**Makrothumeo** is found 2 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Job 7:16, Proverbs 19:11) and times in the NT...

**Pr 19:11** A man's discretion makes him slow to anger (LXX = A merciful man is long-suffering), And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

**Matthew 18:26** "The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, **Have patience** (aorist imperative) with me, and I will repay you everything.' **29** "So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, '**Have patience** (aorist imperative) with me and I will repay you.'

**Luke 18:7** now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will **Hedelay** long over them?

**1 Corinthians 13:4** Love is **patient**, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant (**Comment:** Patience with an element of constraint and thus forbearing).

**1Thessalonians 5:14** (note) And we urge you, brethren, **admonish** (present imperative) the unruly, **encourage** (present imperative) the fainthearted, **help** (present imperative) the weak, **be patient** (present imperative) (makrothumeo) with all men.

**Hebrews 6:15** (note) And thus, **having patiently waited**, he obtained the promise.

**James 5:7** **Be patient**, (aorist imperative) therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, **being patient** (present tense) about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too **be patient**, (aorist imperative); strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (**Comment:** In this context makrothumeo includes not just being patient but with an element of expectancy. The idea is to remain tranquil while waiting.).

**2 Peter 3:9** (note) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

**Hodge** writes that love is "slow to be roused to resentment. It patiently bears with provocation and is not quick to assert its rights or to resent an injury. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Makrothumeo** means to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish, exhibiting the element of restraint, forbearing and not seeking to retaliate. It is the ability to be inconvenienced or taken advantage of by a person over and over again and yet not be upset or angry! It demonstrates a willingness to take someone's unpleasant character traits in stride and to exhibit enduring patience. As God is forbearing with us (see **note** Romans 2:4), so we must tolerate our fellow man. Writing to the saints at Ephesus Paul exhorted them...

Therefore (because God in Christ also has forgiven you) be imitators of God, as beloved children and **walk in love**, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (See **notes** Ephesians 5:1; 5:2)

It is fascinating to note that in the Greek world self-sacrificing love and non-avenging patience were considered weaknesses, unworthy of the noble man or woman. Aristotle, for example, taught that the great Greek virtue was refusal to tolerate insult or injury and to strike back in retaliation for the slightest offense. Vengeance was actually considered a virtue! The world has always tended to make heroes of those who fight back, who stand up for their welfare and rights above all else.

**Lenski** notes that "Only "longsuffering," makrothumia and never hupomone is naturally ascribed also to God. Men may resist and antagonize God and thus arouse him to anger. When he withholds his anger he "suffers long." Mere things cannot arouse God; trials, tribulations, persecutions do not apply to God, hence he cannot manifest hupomone, literally, "remaining under." When Paul thus names the ability to suffer long as the first feature of love, we should note that this is a Godlike feature. The world is full of evil men, and even in our brethren much evil meets us. When this evil strikes us, and our natural reaction would be resentment, indignation, anger, bitter words, blows perhaps, then love steps in, "suffers long," keeps calm, endures, and does this continually no matter how long the offense may persist. ([Commentary](#))

**Barnett** notes that **makrothumeo** "is a metaphorical word, literally 'long burning', as of a decent log burning for many hours in an open fire, as contrasted with light pine kindling that fizzes and sputters, sending showers of sparks in all directions. (Barnett, P. W. Focus on the Bible: 1 Corinthians)

**Makrothumeo** focuses our attention on the idea of restraint or the capacity for self-control (Spirit control for believer) despite circumstances that might arouse the passions or cause agitation. In personal relationships, patience is forbearance. This is a way of life especially as highlighted by Paul's use of the **present tense** (calls for continuous action) a characteristic action made possible by the Spirit for...

the fruit of the Spirit is (present tense) **love** (agape), joy, peace, **patience** (related noun makrothumia), **kindness** (chrestotes), goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

**Pritchard** explains that selfless love that is always patient "describes the person who has been wronged, who has it within his power to get even, but chooses not to use that power. During the early days of the Civil War, Edwin Stanton was outspoken in his criticism of Abraham Lincoln. He held Lincoln in utter contempt, calling him a gorilla and a cunning clown. Although he knew about the slanders, Lincoln never retaliated. And when the time came to choose someone to oversee the war effort, Lincoln chose Stanton. When asked why, he simply replied, "Because he is the best man for the job." After the president was assassinated in April 1865, Stanton stood weeping over Lincoln's body and declared: "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." Patient love won in the end! ([Why Love Has a Bad Memory](#))

An early church father, **Chrysostom** said that **makrothumeo** "is a word which is used of the man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself but will never do it.

**Makrothumeo** expresses the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate. It is the ability to hold one's feeling in restraint or bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating. It is manifest by the quality of forbearance under provocation. The related noun makrothumia is used of God's patience toward sinful men (see note Romans 2:4) and of the attitude which Christians are to display.

Patience, long-suffering or being slow to anger is an attribute of God (Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; see Ro 2:4-note; 1Pe 3:20-note). In many places, God's people are called upon to be patient (see notes Eph 4:2-note; Col 3:12-note; 1Th 5:14-note).

The person exhibits **makrothumeo** who bears with annoyances or inconveniences without complaint and does not lose its temper when provoked but instead steadily perseveres.

Regarding the character of love that "Suffereth long, and is kind" the **Pulpit Commentary** writes that "Passively it endures; actively it does good. It endures evils; it confers blessings. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**J Vernon McGee** writes that the idea is "'long-burning"—it burns a long time. We shouldn't have a short fuse with our friends and Christian brethren. We shouldn't make snap judgments." ([Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Evans** writes that this word group (makrothumeo, makrothumia) "could be translated "large emotions," signifying wells of endurance that will not dry up, no matter how much is drawn from them. The Christian with this patience will have refreshing water to sustain continual effectiveness even in the face of unrelenting pressures. Those with such patience and faith are those who receive or "inherit the promises." ([Briscoe, D. S., & Ogilvie, L. J. The Preacher's Commentary Series](#))

**Matthew Henry** describes the **makrothumeo** of love noting that "It can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience, that shall rather wait and wish for the reformation of a brother than fly out in resentment of his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

**Wesley** - The love of God, and of our neighbour for God's sake, is patient toward, all men. It, suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, and infirmities of the children of God; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world: and all this, not only for a time, but to the end. And in every step toward overcoming evil with good, it is kind, soft, mild, benign. It inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection. ( Wesley, J. Wesley's Notes)

**Pastor Steven Cole** writes that in this section Paul teaches us that "Selfless love is the priority for every Christian. These verses are the most eloquent and profound words ever written on the subject of love. To comment on its parts is a bit like giving a botany lecture on a beautiful flower—if you're not careful you lose the beauty and impact of it. In verses 1-3 he shows the **preeminence** of love, that love is greater than all spiritual gifts because without love, gifts are empty. In verses 4-7 he shows the **practice** of love, how love is greater than all spiritual gifts because of its selfless characteristics. In verses 8-13 he shows the **permanence** of love, that love is greater than all spiritual gifts because it outlasts them... While in English most of these words are predicate adjectives, in Greek they are verbs. **Love is not talk; it is action.** We're all prone to apply verses like these to others: "My mate and my kids could sure use a lesson in love. But me? I'm basically a loving person. I'm really easy to get along with." But I ask each of you to forget about everybody else and ask God to apply these verses to you. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)) (Bolding added)

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**Question:** [What does it mean that love is patient?](#)

- [Play associated video](#)

**Answer:** First Corinthians 13 is the most beloved chapter in the Bible on [love](#). Often recited at weddings, this chapter serves as a pattern for the ideal marriage. Yet many have not reflected on the larger context and its implications for today. In verse 4 we read, “Love is patient.” Three words fraught with meaning. After making the point that love is a necessary ingredient in all ministry (verses 1-3), the apostle Paul begins to describe love. “Patient” is at the top of the list—“long” patience or “endurance,” according to some other translations. Godly love and a patient spirit go hand in hand.

Patience is noted as part of the [fruit of the Spirit](#) in Galatians 5:22-23. Love is also mentioned there, revealing the close connection between these two attributes. Both love and patience are products of the Spirit’s presence in one’s life.

Since God is love (1 John 4:8), He is necessarily patient. “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6; see also Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). Even in judgment, God’s patience is evident: “God’s patience waited in the days of Noah” (1 Peter 3:20).

The Corinthians needed patience. Their sin of improperly taking the Lord’s Supper, for example, was partly the result of impatience and refusing to wait for others (chapter 11). Arguments regarding spiritual gifts (chapters 12 and 14) were likewise partly attributable to a lack of patience.

An insistence on one’s own schedule is selfish, and it is opposed to godly love. Patient endurance and long-suffering are hallmarks of a loving character. Love melts away the impatience and frustration that so often hamper one’s dealings with others. When the object of one’s love fails or disappoints in some way, what is the proper response? According to 1 Corinthians 13:4, the *loving* response is patience. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**George Herbert** (1593–1633) captures the notion of love as waiting patiently for the understanding of the beloved

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,  
    Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-ey’d Love, observing me grow slack  
    From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning  
    If I lack’d any thing.  
‘A guest,’ I answered, ‘worthy to be here.’  
    Love said, ‘You shall be he.’  
‘I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah my dear,  
    I cannot look on thee.’  
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,  
    ‘Who made the eyes, but I?’ ”

(Herbert, Love, stanzas 1 and 2)

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**Illustration of Love is patient** - Paul Tan (Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations) illustrates this trait writing that during the late 1500’s, Dr. Thomas Cooper edited a dictionary with the addition of 33,000 words and many other improvements. He had already been collecting materials for eight years when his wife, a rather difficult woman, went into his study one day while he was gone and burned all of his notes under the pretense of fearing that he would kill himself with study. Eight years of work, a pile of ashes! Dr. Cooper came home, saw the destruction, and asked who had done it. His wife told him boldly that she had done it. The patient man heaved a deep sigh and said, “Oh Dinah, Dinah, thou hast given a world of trouble!” Then he quietly sat down to another eight years of hard labor, to replace the notes which she had destroyed. Next time you think you’ve arrived at being patient, Dr Cooper’s example will give you something to imitate!

**LOVE IS KIND**

**Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love**

**Love is kind** - The idea is that the kind person is disposed to be useful or helpful, even seeking out the needs of the other person in order to selflessly meet those needs without expectation of being repaid in kind! This quality of love inclines one to be of good service to others. The **present tense** calls for this component of love to be a believer's lifestyle, one that is only possible as we yield our rights to the Spirit Who controls us and brings forth this fruit.

**Matthew Henry** describes this kindness as "benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. The law of kindness is in her lips; her heart is large, and her hand open. She is ready to show favours and to do good. She seeks to be useful; and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is her general character. She is patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all the good offices in her power. And under these two generals all the particulars of the character may be reduced.

**Is kind** (5541) (**chresteuomai** from **chrestós** = useful, gracious, kind and is related in turn to **chráomai** = to furnish what is needed) means to provide something beneficial for someone as an act of kindness. To be kind and gracious. It is an attitude of being willing to help or assist rendering gracious, well-disposed service to others. It is active goodwill. It not only feels generous, it is generous. It describes one's "gentle in behavior" (A T Robertson) Such a person not only has the attitude of generosity but manifests it in their actions. He or she not only desires others' welfare, but works for it. In the second century the example of Christian love was so stunning to the pagans that they referred to Christians not as "christiani" but "chrestinai", those made up of mildness or kindness. Would it be that such a name would be given to Christians in our day.

**Lenski**...Trench remarks that this *benignitas* was predominantly the character of Christ's ministry, which dispensed deeds of gentle kindness among all the lowly and the needy with whom he came in contact. Thus to Godlike "longsuffering" there is added Christlike "benignity." Paul does not describe love to us in the role of performing great, wonderful, and astounding deeds; he prefers to show us how the inner heart of love looks when it is placed among sinful men and weak and needy brethren. He does not picture love in ideal surroundings of friendship and affection where each individual embraces and kisses the other but in the hard surroundings of a bad world and a faulty church where distressing influences bring out the positive power and value of love. ([Commentary](#))

Although this is the sole NT use of **chresteuomai**, it is interesting to see a use by Clement of Rome who wrote an epistle to the Corinthian church in which he quotes a saying of Jesus "As you are kind, so will you be shown kindness." (1Clement 14:3)

**Hodge** comments that love is "inclined to perform good deeds; it is good-natured. The root of the Greek verb means "useful," and hence its primary sense is "disposed to be useful." The excellence indicated here is the positive side of that already mentioned. Love is not quick to resent evil but is disposed to do good. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

When Jesus commanded His disciples (that includes all believers beloved!), to love their enemies, He did not simply mean to **feel** kindly about them but to **be** kind to them or **show** kindness toward them, declaring...

And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. (Mt 5:40-41+).

The hard environment of an evil world gives love almost unlimited opportunity to exercise that sort of kindness! **How are you doing in this area?**

Even the English dictionary definition of **kind** is convicting where kind is described as affectionate, loving, of a sympathetic or helpful nature, of a forbearing nature, gentle, arising from or characterized by sympathy or forbearance or of a kind to give pleasure or relief!

**Chresteuomai** is not merely passive but it is actively engaged in doing good to others. It's the picture of a person who spontaneously seeks the good for others and shows it with friendly acts. It is considerate and helpful to others, is gentle and mild and always ready to show compassion.

**Spicq** observes that **chresteuomai** "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. (Agape in the NT, St. Louis and London: Herder, 1965)

**Chrysostom** sees this aspect of **love** as that which breaks the spiral of passion, anger, and resentment by showing kindness explaining that those who love this way do so "not only by enduring nobly, but also by soothing and comforting do they cure the sore and heal the wound of passion. ( 1Cor. Homily, 33:1)

**Ray Pritchard** has the following thoughts on a selfless love that is always kind writing that **chresteuomai** means "something like "sweet usefulness." Love is quick to help others and eager to reach out to those in need. Perhaps you've seen this famous quote: "I

shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it, or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." Mark Twain called kindness "a language that the deaf can hear and the blind can read." He was absolutely right. Everyone can understand the language of love. It is truly the universal language, comprehended by people from every nation, by the rich and the poor, by the old and the young, by both male and female. Kindness is a universal language for it does not speak to the intellect, but directly to the heart. In one of his news reports, Paul Harvey told about a man named Carl Coleman who was driving to work when a woman motorist, passing too close, snagged his fender with hers. Both cars stopped. The young woman surveying the damage was in tears. It was her fault, she admitted. But it was a new car... less than two days from the showroom. How was she ever going to face her husband? Mr. Coleman was sympathetic but explained they must note each other's license number and automobile registration. The woman reached into the glove compartment of her car to retrieve the documents in an envelope. And on the first paper to tumble out, in a heavy masculine scrawl, were these words: "In case of accident, remember, Honey, it's you I love, not the car." ([Why Love Has a Bad Memory](#))

**Cole** writes that **chresteuomai** was used to describe "mellow wine, and suggests a person who is gentle, who has an ability to soothe hurt feelings, to calm an upset person, to help quietly in practical ways. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

**MacArthur** - The first test of Christian kindness, and the test of every aspect of love, is the home. The Christian husband who acts like a Christian is kind to his wife and children. Christian brothers and sisters are kind to each other and to their parents. They have more than kind feelings toward each other; they do kind, helpful things for each other—to the point of loving self-sacrifice, when necessary. For the Corinthians, kindness meant giving up their selfish, jealous, spiteful, and proud attitudes and adopting the spirit of loving-kindness. ([1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

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**Dress For Success** - In 1975, John Molloy wrote a book called Dress For Success, which became the fashion guidebook for many people trying to climb the corporate ladder. Molloy's advice centered on a basic premise--always dress like your boss. Every day, for work, school, or recreation, we all have to decide what to wear. And even in the dress-down 90's, people strive for the right look. But we must also make choices about another wardrobe--our attitudes and actions. If we claim to be followers of Christ, our spiritual apparel is of far greater significance than our physical clothing. Take a look at God's dress code for us. As His chosen people, we are to clothe ourselves with "**kindness**, humility, meekness, longsuffering" (see note Colossians 3:12). We are to demonstrate patience and forgiveness (see note Colossians 3:13). And above all, we must "put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (see note Colossians 3:14). Do I begin each day by acknowledging Christ as the Person in charge, the One for whom I work? Do I take time to clothe myself with attitudes that please Him? Am I wearing what people are most longing to see--compassion, **kindness**, humility, gentleness, patience, and love? If so, I'll be dressed for success in God's service. --DCM ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O to be like Him, tender and kind,  
Gentle in spirit, lowly in mind;  
More like Jesus, day after day,  
Filled with His Spirit, now and alway. --Ellsworth

**Kindness is Christianity with its working clothes on.**

## LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS

love

**What Love is Not!**

**Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love**

**And is not jealous** Now Paul begins a series of 8 **negative definitions** that do not spring from love, for love and jealousy are mutually exclusive. Where one is, the other cannot be.

Shakespeare called **jealousy** the "green sickness." And even today we hear someone say "So and so is green with envy"! Love is the best antidote for jealousy in that it "does not envy".

**Lenski** - When love sees another prosperous, rich, high, gifted it is pleased and glad of his advantages. Love never detracts from the praise that is due another nor tries to make him seem less and self seem more by comparison. The practice of the world is the

opposite. he negatives used in Paul's description suggest corresponding positives. Instead of being envious love is satisfied with its own portion and glad of another's greater portion. ([Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** -How do you react when other Christians receive blessings or benefits that we lack? Do you allow the sparks of envy to burn and then come to a full flame?

Is...**jealous** (2206) (**zeloo** from **zelos** = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; source of our English word "zeal") properly, to bubble over from getting so hot (boiling) and figuratively to burn with zeal (or intensity), to be fervent, to "boil" with envy, to be jealous. It can be used commendably to refer to a striving for something or showing zeal. Zeloo is (an onomatopoeic word imitating the sound of boiling water! The idea is to be deeply committed to something, with the implication of accompanying desire – 'to be earnest, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon'

**Thiselton** adds that **zeloo** "applies the notion of burning or boiling metaphorically to burning or boiling emotions, stance, or will for earnest striving, for passionate zeal, or for burning envy. Whether it is constructive zeal or destructive envy depends on the context... The envy which is carried over from a status-seeking, non-Christian Corinthian culture into the Christian church is not "of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 3:1–3), and is deemed to be incompatible with love, which does not begrudge the status and honor of another, but delights in it for the sake of the other. (Thiselton, A. C. The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans)

**Zeloo** takes the notion of burning or boiling and applies it metaphorically to burning or boiling emotions, stance, or will for earnest striving, for passionate zeal, or for burning envy. Thus Williams translates this passage "*Love never boils with jealousy.*" People who are filled with the Spirit and have learned to love don't begrudge others their earthly goods, their positions, or their spiritual gifts.

Whether **zeloo** is constructive zeal or destructive envy depends on the **context**. In 1Corinthians 13:4 **zeloo** clearly is used in a bad sense of a hostile emotion based on resentment which is "heated or boiling" with envy, hatred or anger.

**Zeloo** in the bad sense can be manifest in two forms, one in which the person sets their heart on something that belongs to someone else or a second form in which one has intense negative feelings over another's achievements or success.

**Zeloo** is used 28 times in the **Septuagint (LXX)** Gen. 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Num. 5:14, 30; 11:29; 25:11, 13; Deut. 32:19; Jos. 24:19; 2 Sam. 21:2; 1 Ki. 19:10, 14; 2 Ki. 10:16; Ps. 37:1; 73:3; Prov. 3:31; 4:14; 6:6; 23:17; 24:1, 19; Isa. 11:11, 13; Ezek. 31:9; 39:25; Joel 2:18; Zech. 1:14; 8:2)

Zeloo 11 times in the **NT** - am jealous(1), becoming jealous(1), desire earnestly(2), eagerly seek(1), eagerly sought(1), earnestly desire(1), envious(1), jealous(2), seek(1).

**Acts 7:9** "And the patriarchs **became jealous** of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. And yet God was with him,

**Acts 17:5** But the Jews, **becoming jealous** and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

**1 Corinthians 12:31** But **earnestly desire** the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

**Comment:** Because **zeloo** often has the negative connotation of coveting jealously or enviously and because the Greek indicative and imperative forms are identical, the verse could be translated, "*But you earnestly desire the greater gifts*" a rendering which seems much more appropriate to the context and is consistent with the tone of the letter and the sin of the Corinthians who clearly prized the showier gifts, the seemingly greater gifts. Thus it would seem foolish of Paul to command them to do what they already were eagerly doing.)

**1 Corinthians 13:4** Love is patient, love is kind, and is not **jealous**; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

**1 Corinthians 14:1** Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly** spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. **39** Therefore, my brethren, **desire earnestly** to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

**Earnestly desire** (2206) (**zeloo** from **zelos** = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; source of our English word "zeal") properly, to bubble over from getting so hot (boiling) and figuratively to burn with zeal (or intensity), to be fervent. Zeloo is an onomatopoeic word imitating the



sound of boiling water! The idea is to be deeply committed to something, with the implication of accompanying desire – and in this context to be earnest, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon. **Does that describe your approach toward spiritual gifts?** First keep on pursuing love (something that you can only do supernaturally as you rely on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit - [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands.](#)). But don't stop there! Be continually burning with zeal to know and use your spiritual gift or gifts (And as an aside to continually desire spiritual gifts also necessitates continual reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit!). Now tying the two clauses together (**pursue...desire earnestly**), it is clear that Paul wants **love** to be the motivation behind one's being fervent for spiritual gifts! If you reverse the order (and even leave out love), you have become like "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1)!!!

**Desire earnestly** - Beloved do you **desire earnestly** to know your spiritual gift and to use your spiritual gift for the glory of God? Then first pursue love. And then ponder the following note...

**Gary Hill** on **desire earnestly** (zeloo) - zēloō is used of earnestly desiring spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 14:1 literally commands, "Constantly boil over (i.e. 'with red-hot intensity') for spirituals" (= spiritual gifts)! We should literally "boil over (in intensity) about desiring spirituals" (pneumatikós; plural, ta pneumatika). This means earnestly seeking God's grace-endowments as we are convinced we should experience the Lord's fullness. **Clair D. Hutchins**, "Many Christians do not experience spiritual gifts ('spirituals') today. **Why?** Because **they lack red-hot zeal** which God requires in properly pursuing them. Rather we should be like a pro-golfer – playing at least 18 holes a day to 'keep their swing in shape.' How much more important is it to move in spiritual gifts? This will happen as we burn (boil with intensity) with desire to see 'the demonstration of the Spirit and power' (1 Cor 2:4)!"

**2 Corinthians 11:2** For I am **jealous** for you with a godly jealousy (noun - zelos); for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

**Galatians 4:17+** They **eagerly seek** you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them. 18 But it is good always to be **eagerly sought** in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

**James 4:2** You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you **are envious** and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

**The Pulpit Commentary** writes regarding jealous that "Its negative characteristics are part of its positive perfection. Envy—"one shape of many names"—includes malice, grudge, jealousy, pique, an evil eye, etc., with all their base and numerous manifestations. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Augustine** wrote that "The reason why love does not envy is because it is not puffed up. For where puffing up precedes, envy follows, because pride is the mother of envy.

**Johnson** - How miserable is that envy which is made unhappy by the good fortune of another. Cain is an example. Love excludes it. A mother does not envy her child. (The People's New Testament : With Explanatory Notes).

**Matthew Henry** - Charity suppresses envy: It envieth not; it is not grieved at the good of others; neither at their gifts nor at their good qualities, their honours not their estates. If we love our neighbour we shall be so far from envying his welfare, or being displeased with it, that we shall share in it and rejoice at it. His bliss and sanctification will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. This is the proper effect of kindness and benevolence: envy is the effect of ill-will. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well can never grieve us; and the mind which is bent on doing good to all can never with ill to any.

**MacArthur** - The second sort of jealousy is more than selfish; it is desiring evil for someone else. It is jealousy on the deepest, most

corrupt, and destructive level. That is the jealousy Solomon uncovered in the woman who pretended to be a child's mother. When her own infant son died, she secretly exchanged him for the baby of a friend who was staying with her. The true mother discovered what had happened and, when their dispute was taken before the king, he ordered the baby to be cut in half, a half to be given to each woman. The true mother pleaded for the baby to be spared, even if it meant losing possession of him. The false mother, however, would rather have had the baby killed than for the true mother to have him (1 Kings 3:16-27). ([MacArthur, J: 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Barclay** phrases it this way writing that "There are two kinds of envy. The one covets the possessions of other people; and such envy is very difficult to avoid because it is a very human thing. The other is worse—it grudges the very fact that others should have what it has not; it does not so much want things for itself as wish that others had not got them. Meanness of soul can sink no further than that. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

How significant is the sin of **jealousy**? Proverbs explains that...

Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy? (Proverbs 27:4)

It is therefore not surprising to observe that the Bible is filled with illustrations that portray the disastrous effect jealousy has on personal relationships, beginning with Cain's envy of Abel resulting in his murder of his own brother! (Ge. 4:3-8).

Moses records the jealousy of Joseph's brothers writing...

And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind... 20 "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"... 27 "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. (Genesis 37:11, 20, 27)

In the NT Luke records other jealousy motivated acts (in Acts) writing that...

the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were **filled with jealousy** and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail. (Acts 5:17-18)

But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were **filled with jealousy**, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. (Acts 13:45)

What you are filled with clearly will control you. When one is filled with jealousy, their actions are controlled by that green monster. Not surprisingly we see that the divine antidote for one filled with jealousy is to continually be being filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul instructing the saints at Ephesus...

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (See **notes** Ephesians 5:18; 5:19; 5:20; 5:21)

Spirit borne Christian love does not manifest this attitude, again the **present tense** signifying this negative trait is never to be a part of the Christian's "wardrobe". Love does not desire for itself the possessions of or control over people. A loving person is never jealous but is glad for the success of others, even if their success works against his own.

**Prichard** writes that **jealous**... This is the sin of those who think others have too much and they have too little. By contrast, love is generous. It does not begrudge others their gifts. How do you respond to the good fortune of others? If they do better than you, if they prosper when you don't, if their family seems happy while yours is torn apart, how will you react? If they achieve what you cannot, if they gain what you lack, if they win where you lose, then the truth will come out. Can you lose gracefully? Can you walk away from the contest without bitterness? If you live long enough, you'll probably find someone who does what you do better than you can do it. You'll meet people with your talents and your gifts—only much more of them. You'll find people who surpass you in every way. What will you do then? This is one test of love. And if you live long enough, you are certain to encounter people who are less talented and less gifted than you in every way, yet they seem to catch all the breaks and end up ahead of you in the great game of life. How will you respond when an inferior person passes you by? This is an even sterner test of love. ([Why Love Has a Bad Memory](#))

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No one is more miserable than someone filled with jealousy or envy. They rob us of happiness and make our good accomplishments seem bad. Furthermore, they exact their own punishment.

On the wall of a chapel in Padua, an old city in northeastern Italy, hangs a painting by the Renaissance artist Giotto. The painter

depicted envy with long ears that could hear every bit of news of another's success. He also gave to Envy the tongue of a serpent to poison the reputation of the one being envied. But if you could look at the painting carefully, you would notice that the tongue coils back and stings the eyes of the figure itself. Not only did Giotto picture Envy as being blind, but also as destroying itself with its own venomous evil.

Jealousy was one of the sins hurting the church at Corinth. The people had divided into factions because they were jealous of one another's gifts. Each believer strove for preeminence. Paul therefore instructed them to follow the "more excellent way" of love (1Cor 12:31), telling them that "love does not envy" (1Cor. 13:4).

If we resent the success and accomplishments of others and find ourselves striking out at them with damaging words or insidious innuendoes, we have a problem with jealousy. But God wants to administer the antidote of love. That alone will keep us from becoming jealousy's victim. —D. C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**If we shoot arrows of jealousy at others,  
we wound ourselves.**

## LOVE DOES NOT BRAG

**Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love**

**Love does not brag** - Selfless, sacrificial love does not brag. Other versions - (love) is not pompous (NAB), It doesn't sing its own praises (GWT), (Love) makes no parade (Moffatt), (Love does not) play the braggart (Moulton and Milligan) Love is not a windbag or an exhaustively talkative person who constantly talks about themselves. Love does not parade before others any supposed superiority of our own. When one boast of superiority, the result is separation, whereas the result of selfless love is unity!

In the context of spiritual gifts being discussed in this section of the letter, **love** does not vaunt itself even regarding the gifts which it really possesses. Paul is issuing an indirect (perhaps direct) rebuke of those believers in Corinth who were prone to use their spiritual gifts for display or self-aggrandizement. In stark contrast to self-aggrandizement, Spirit empowered Christian love produces a genuine self-effacing stance (attitude) and not a "stifling" air of supposed superiority. **Beloved, do you ever catch yourself, vaunting yourself, in a sense reaching around to "pat yourself on your back"?** It can happen very subtly and suddenly, for though the old tyrant, **Sin**, is in fact dethroned and "defanged" as it were, it is nevertheless, ever crouching at the door of our heart ready to pounce (cp Ge 4:7, **fallen flesh**) (I know - I'm confessing that to you as you read this note).

**Lenski** rightly comments that love "never becomes a perperos, a braggart. The very idea is foreign to its humble nature. ([Commentary](#))

**Thiselton** - Again the verb underlines the issue of status seeking and triumphalism at Corinth. Even believers seemed to come to act the part of braggarts, which was at odds with cruciform, Christlike love. (Ibid)

**The Pulpit Commentary** - The meaning would probably be most nearly expressed by the colloquialism, does not show off. It does not, for instance, "do its alms before men to be seen of them" (see **note** Matthew 6:1). The Latin *perperus*, which is from the same root as this word, means "a braggart," or "swaggerer." Cicero, speaking of a grand oratorical display of his own before Pompey, says to Atticus, "Good heavens! how I showed myself off (eneperpereusamen) before my new hearer, Pompeius!" ('Ad. Att.,' i. 14). ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Barclay** - There is a self-effacing quality in love. True love will always be far more impressed with its own unworthiness than its own merit. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Thiselton** - Again the verb underlines the issue of status seeking and triumphalism at Corinth. Even believers seemed to come to act the part of braggarts, which was at odds with cruciform, Christlike love. ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

**Kistemaker** - Such a person parades his embellished rhetoric to gain recognition. His behavior is marked by egotism, subservience toward superiors, and condescension toward subordinates. A braggart exhibits pride in himself and his accomplishments. But such bragging is devoid of love to God and to one's fellow man, and is a blatant sin. Further, bragging and arrogance go hand in hand. ([Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. NT Commentary Set. Baker Book](#))

**MacArthur** has an interesting note explaining that "Bragging is the other side of jealousy. Jealousy is wanting what someone else has. Bragging is trying to make others jealous of what we have. Jealousy puts others down; bragging builds us up. It is ironic that, as much as most of us dislike bragging in others, we are so inclined to brag ourselves... C. S. Lewis called bragging the "utmost evil." It

is the epitome of pride, which is the root sin of all sins. Bragging puts ourselves first. Everyone else, including God, must therefore be of less importance to us. It is impossible to build ourselves up without putting others down. When we brag, we can be “up” only if others are down. ([MacArthur, J: 1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Does** (not) **brag** (4068) (**perpereuomai** from a word not in the NT = **perperos** = vainglorious, braggart) means to talk with conceit or to behave as a braggart or windbag, exhibiting self display and employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively. Love doesn't try to prove itself and say, “Watch how loving I can be” but instead works behind the scenes. Love does not parade its accomplishments. Christian love does not vaunt (is derived from Latin *vanus* = vain and means to make a vain display of one's own worth or attainments) oneself so as to parade one's imagined superiority over others. **BDAG** says this word means “to heap praise on oneself, behave as a *perperos* (‘braggart, windbag)’” ([BDAG](#)) Ostentation is the chief idea and ostentatious boasting leads easily to the next point (arrogance).

## LOVE IS NOT ARROGANT

### Click for another Descriptive Definition of Love

**And is not arrogant** - IS NOT...pompous, is not inflated (NAB), gives itself no airs (Moffatt, Goodspeed), (does not) cherish inflated ideas of its own importance (Phillips), inflating its own importance. It is difficult to surpass the vivid picture drawn by the **KJV's** rendering that love is “*not puffed up*” with the implicit emphasis on its own importance.

**Love** “yea, humbles the soul to the dust.”-- Wesley

**Thiselton** - Paul hammers home the incompatibility of love as respect and concern for the welfare of the other and obsessions about the status and attention accorded to the self. How much behavior among believers and even ministers is actually “attention seeking” designed to impress others with one's own supposed importance? Some “spiritual songs” may appear to encourage, rather than discourage, this preoccupation with the self rather than with others and with God. ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

**Matthew Henry** adds that those who exhibit agape - will do nothing out of a spirit of contention or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves, Phil. 2:3 (see note). True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, and raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves, and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, nor a diffusive benevolence.

**Lenski** - Behind boastful bragging there lies conceit, an overestimation of one's own importance, abilities, or achievements. Hence the next step: “is not puffed up.” From envy to boasting, from boasting to puffing oneself up is a natural sequence in the psychology of love-lessness. He that exalteth himself shall be abased; he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Thus in this case the positive virtue is Christian humility and lowliness of mind. ([Commentary](#))

**Hodge** explains that **arrogance** “is the root of boasting. Anyone who has a high opinion of himself is apt to be boastful and to desire praise. Love, on the other hand, is modest and humble—modest because humble. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Barclay** illustrates the complete opposite of arrogant writing that “Napoleon always advocated the sanctity of the home and the obligation of public worship—for others. Of himself he said, “I am not a man like other men. The laws of morality do not apply to me.” The really great man never thinks of his own importance. Carey, who began life as a cobbler, was one of the greatest missionaries and certainly one of the greatest linguists the world has ever seen. He translated at least parts of the Bible into no fewer than thirty-four Indian languages. When he came to India, he was regarded with dislike and contempt. At a dinner party a snob, with the idea of humiliating him, said in a tone that everyone could hear, “I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once worked as a shoe-maker.” “No, your lordship,” answered Carey, “not a shoe-maker, only a cobbler.” He did not even claim to make shoes—only to mend them. No one likes the “important” person. Man “dressed in a little brief authority” can be a sorry sight. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Arrogant** (5448) (**phusioo** from **phusáo** = breathe, blow, inflate from **phusa** = bellows) means literally to puff up (like a pair of bellows) and is used figuratively to describe one who becomes “inflated”, proud, haughty or puffed up with pride. It means to cause one to have an exaggerated self-conception. In the **passive voice** as in this verse **phusioo** means to become conceited or proud. Love protects us from having an inflated view of our own importance. This ugly trait of puffing one's self up, of overestimating or of flaunting one's self was clearly a problem in Corinth. **Love** however is free of this vice which characterized the Corinthian Church a vice Paul repeatedly alludes to...

1Cor 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that

in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you **might become arrogant** in behalf of one against the other.

1Cor 4:18 Now some **have become arrogant**, as though I were not coming to you.

1Cor 5:2 And you **have become arrogant**, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.

**1 Cor 8:1** Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge **makes arrogant** (phusioo), but love edifies.

**Comment:** Kistemaker concludes that "Without love knowledge degenerates into obnoxious arrogance; with love it is a valuable asset. Arrogance is inflated selfishness, while love is genuine humility. Arrogance is devoid of love and love is devoid of arrogance; indeed both are mutually exclusive." - [Ibid](#)

Colossians 2:18 (note) Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, **inflated** without cause by his fleshly mind,

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**THE CRY FOR LOVE** - A father sat at his desk poring over his monthly bills when his young son rushed in and announced, "Dad, because this is your birthday and you're 55 years old, I'm going to give you 55 kisses, one for each year!" When the boy started making good on his word, the father exclaimed, "Oh, Andrew, don't do it now; I'm too busy!"

The youngster immediately fell silent as tears welled up in his big blue eyes. Apologetically the father said, "You can finish later." The boy said nothing but quietly walked away, disappointment written all over his face. That evening the father said, "Come and finish the kisses now, Andrew." But the boy didn't respond.

A short time after this incident the boy drowned. His heartbroken father wrote, "If only I could tell him how much I regret my thoughtless words, and could be assured that he knows how much my heart is aching."

Love is a two-way street. Any loving act must be warmly accepted or it will be taken as rejection and can leave a scar. If we are too busy to give and receive love, we are too busy. Nothing is more important than responding with love to the cry for love from those who are near and precious to us. Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, teach us the secret of loving,  
The love You are asking today;  
Then help us to love one another -  
For this we most earnestly pray. - Anon.

Nothing is more costly than loving -except not loving.

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**LEARNING HOW TO LOVE** - Tracey Morrow, who goes by the name of Ice-T, delights in his role as a controversial rap singer whose lyrics are blasphemous and obscene. Yet, inspired by a truce between two violent gangs in Los Angeles, the Crips and the Bloods, he wrote a surprisingly sentimental song, "Gotta Lotta Love."

Orphaned when young, and brought up by relatives who considered him a burden, Ice-T never experienced loving care. "I first found the word love in a gang," he told an interviewer. "I learned how to love in a gang, not in a family atmosphere."

No matter how little or how warped the love we may have known in childhood, it is never too late for any of us to learn how to love. In God's sovereignty we may catch a glimpse of love through some individual or a support group (even a gang!). But to learn the full meaning and reality of true love, because [Jesus] laid down His life for us" (1John 3:16). The death of Jesus, in all of its sacrificial unselfishness, discloses the heights and depths of love.

We will know better how to show love when we think of how much Christ loves us, and when we trust Him as our Savior and Lord. - Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Unfailing is Christ's matchless love,  
So kind, so pure, so true;  
And those who come to know that love

Show love in all they do.- Dennis J. De Haan

**We learn the true meaning of love  
when we look at how much Christ loved us.**

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**THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT** - A third-grade science teacher asked one of her students to describe salt. "Well, um, it's...," he started, then stopped. He tried again. "Salt is, you know, it's..." Finally he said, "Salt is what makes French fries taste bad when you don't sprinkle it on." Many foods are like that -- incomplete without a key ingredient. Imagine pizza without cheese, strudel without apples, a banana split without bananas.

The Christian life also has an essential element: love. Paul emphasized its value as he wrote his letter to the Corinthians. Right in the middle of a section about spiritual gifts, he paused to say that even if we have gifts of service, speech, and self-sacrifice but don't have love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). We've missed the "more excellent way" (12:31). A follower of Jesus should love his family, his friends, his fellow believers, those who don't know Christ, and even his enemies (Lk. 6:27-31). A true Christian is known by his love.

Doctrinal purity is important. Faith is a magnificent quality, as are actions of obedient service to the Lord. But without love, we're about as bland as French fries without salt.

Ask God to help you grow in love until it flows from your heart to others. That's the essential ingredient. -- David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant me a loving heart,  
A will to give and share,  
A whispered prayer upon my lips  
To show I really care.-- Brandt

**As Christ's love grows in us His love flows through us.**

---

**When To Speak Up** - Good communication is essential for a happy marriage. Poet Ogden Nash seems to have hit on a formula to help us remember how to communicate effectively. Nash, in his witty style, wrote:

If you want your marriage to sizzle  
With love in the loving cup,  
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;  
Whenever you're right, shut up!

There's some immensely helpful truth in that four-liner--truth that is supported by Scripture.

Let's look at the two major points. First, if we are wrong we need to admit it. Not only marriage, but all relationships benefit from this kind of honesty (Pr 12:22). Protecting ourselves when we're wrong makes resolution impossible.

On the other hand, we can be equally hard to live with if we insist that we're always right--and afraid to let our spouse know that we are fallible. According to 1 Corinthians 13:4, "[Love] does not parade itself, is not puffed up." No one likes to be around someone who always seems to be patting himself on the back.

Two simple guidelines for a marriage that pleases God: Admit wrong and keep quiet about being right. It's a good way to keep the relationship strong. --J D Brannon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Button up your lip securely  
'Gainst the words that bring a tear,  
But be swift with words of comfort,  
Words of praise, and words of cheer. -Loucks

**Let your speech be better than silence; otherwise be silent.**

---

**CONCRETE LOVE** - The story is told of a child psychologist who spent many hours constructing a new driveway at his home. Just



after he smoothed the surface of the freshly poured concrete, his small children chased a ball across the driveway, leaving deep footprints. The man yelled after them with a torrent of angry words. His shocked wife said, "You're a psychologist who's supposed to love children." The fuming man shouted, "I love children in the abstract, not in the concrete!"

I chuckled at the alleged incident and groaned at the play on words, but the story rang true for me. While I agree in principle with the concept of self-giving love, I find myself failing to express it to the people I live and work with each day.

First Corinthians 13 describes Christian love in terms of its tangible expression: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil" (1Corinthians 13:4, 5).

As a theory, love isn't worth much; as a practice, it is the world's greatest treasure. When footprints are in the driveway, people discover whether our love exists in the abstract or in the concrete. --D C McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Follow with reverent steps the great example  
Of Him whose holy work was doing good;  
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,  
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude. --Whittier

### Love is an active verb!

**ILLUSTRATION** - A man selling individual books of the Bible was stopped and robbed one night as he passed through a forest in Sicily and was ordered to burn his wares. After lighting a fire, he asked if he might read aloud a brief portion from each before surrendering them to the flames. Given permission, he read from one the twenty-third Psalm, from another the Sermon on the Mount, from another the parable of the Good Samaritan, and from another Paul's hymn of love in **1 Corinthians 13**. After each excerpt the outlaw exclaimed, "That's a good book. We won't burn that, give it to me." So none were destroyed but all were taken by the thief. Some years later the robber appeared again, but now as an ordained minister. Reading the Bible had accomplished the miracle.

**1 Corinthians 13:5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,**

- **does not act unbecoming:** 1Co 7:36 \*Gr: 1Co 11:13-16,18,21,22 14:33-40 Isa 3:5 Php 4:8 2Th 3:7
- **does not seek its own:** 1Co 10:24,33 12:25 Ro 14:12-15 15:1,2 Ga 5:13 6:1,2 Php 2:3-5,21 2Ti 2:10 1Jn 3:16,17
- **is not provoked:** Nu 12:3 16:15 20:10-12 Ps 106:32,33 Pr 14:17 Mt 5:22 Mk 3:5 Jas 1:19
- **does not take into account a wrong suffered** 2Sa 10:3 Job 21:27 Jer 11:19 18:18-20 40:13-16 Mt 9:4 Lu 7:39
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For more in depth discussion** see related commentary on

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

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

Selfless love never rude, does not offend but always has good manners and tactfully shows courtesy, politeness and sensitivity to other's feelings.

it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury (NAB)

She does not behave unbecomingly, nor seek to aggrandize herself, nor blaze out in passionate anger, nor brood over wrongs. (Weymouth)

It isn't rude. It doesn't think about itself. It isn't irritable. It doesn't keep track of wrongs. (GWT)

Love's ways are ever fair, it takes no thought for itself; it is not quickly made angry, it takes no account of evil (BBE)

Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others. (The Message)

it does not behave with ill-mannered impropriety (Thiselton)

Love does not act in ways which are "contrary to the requirements of propriety and good order, committed by some ill-mannered members" (Héring)

## DON'T BECOME UNBECOMING!

**Unbecoming** in English describes behavior which is unseemly, unsuitable, inappropriate or unflattering or not attractive (certainly not attractive in a person who claims to know **the Gospel of Jesus Christ** (Mk 1:1) which is the very essence of divine love (cf Jn 3:16, Ro 5:8)! And remember both believers and unbelievers are watching you responses...all the time!)

**Not** (3756) (**ou/ouk**) is the strongest Greek particle for negation, signifying direct and full negation, independently and absolutely, and hence, objectively.

**Act unbecomingly** ("unseemly" KJV) (807) (**aschemoneo** from **aschemon** = uncomely, indecent from **a** = without + **schema** = outward shape, external form) is literally contrary to schema or form, fashion, or manner of what is proper. The idea is to behave in an ugly, indecent, unseemly or unbecoming manner. To be ill-mannered or rude. Love does none of these things. Of course, our flesh is the antithesis of unbecoming behavior, so it is clear that we cannot rely on our natural "power" to act unbecomingly. The only way is to jettison our self reliance and rely wholly on the Holy Spirit who will give us the heart desire to not act in this manner and will also empower us supernaturally to carry through. See the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible' \(100/100\)](#)" and the related topic regarding our continual [Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#), realizing that this is not a command per se, but it is an instruction in the present tense which calls for this to be a lifestyle or our habitual behavior, which is "impossible" and only "Him-possible!").

**Aschemoneo** speaks of an act in defiance of social and moral standards, with resulting disgrace, embarrassment, and shame. It describes one who acts improperly or with rudeness. It means to behave unmannerly, disgracefully or dishonorably.

Love is tactful, and does nothing that would raise a blush. **R C H Lenski** reasons that "When pride puffs up the heart, unseemly bearing and conduct naturally follow. Tactlessness forgets its own place and fails to accord to others their proper dues of respect, honor, or consideration. Love is forgetful of self and thoughtful toward others. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**G. G. Findlay** alluding to **aschemoneo** writes that "Love imparts a delicacy of feeling beyond the rules of politeness

The only other NT use of **aschemoneo** is found in...

**1 Corinthians 7:36** But if any man thinks that he is **acting unbecomingly** toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. (Comment: Here **aschemoneo** means to defy moral standards act disgracefully, behave improperly)

Paul uses the opposite word (**euschemon** = "appropriate") in 1Cor 7:35 which speaks of that which has an attractive form and is comely or befitting of proper behavior. And it is worth noting that such decent behavior does not stop with words and attitude but also pertains to one's apparel and appearance. True love strives to conduct itself in conduct in harmony with the established norms of decency in every aspect of life.

Paul is saying that true Christian love never behaves in an ugly, indecent, unseemly or unbecoming manner. And remember that although we have the idea that these passages are standard fare in the marriage ceremony (where they certainly are applicable), the truth is that the Corinthian church was manifesting rudeness Rudeness found in the problem of women in worship (1Cor 11:2-16), in regard to the disorders surrounding the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:17-22), and in regard to the general organization of worship (1Cor 14:26-33).

The principle has to do with poor manners and thus with acting rudely. It describes the person who does not care enough for those it is around to act becomingly or politely. It cares nothing for their feelings or sensitivities. This loveless person is careless, overbearing, and often crude. The Corinthian church was a model of unbecoming behavior and acting unseemly was almost their "trademark". Nearly everything the Corinthian church did was rude and unloving, even their celebration of the Lord's Supper...

for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. (1Cor 11:21)

During worship services each one of the Corinthians tried to outdo the other in speaking in tongues. Everyone talked at once and tried to be the most dramatic and prominent. The church did everything improperly and in disorder.

**Thiselton** does not hold back commenting that...

Love does not elbow its way into conversations, worship services, or public institutions in a disruptive, discourteous, attention-seeking way... The background here may allude to the intrusion of tongues or prophecies at inappropriate moments (cf. 1Cor 14). But today it may also include any kind of monopolizing of a congregation's time and attention in the service of the self: in the tone, style, and vocabulary adopted in notices or sermons, or, worst of all, the minister as over familiar chat-show host or "prophet" of ill-mannered rebuke. ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

**Steven Cole** relates a tragic **illustration** -

I read of a man who was generally lacking in manners. He never opened the car door for his wife. "She doesn't have two broken arms," he would say. After many years of marriage, his wife died. At the funeral, as the pallbearers brought her casket out to the hearse, the husband was standing by the car door. The funeral director, who knew the husband by name, called out to him and said, "Open the door for her, will you?" He reached for the car door and then, for one second, froze. He realized that he had never opened the door for her in life; now, in her death, it would be the first, last, and only time. A lifetime of regret came crashing down around him. Love is not rude. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

**Zodhiates** - The Greek word **schema** means "shape or plan," as reflected in our English words "scheme, schematic." It refers not to the substance of a thing or person but to its outward appearance, the shape it takes before others. Paul is concerned not only with the Christian's character but also with the way he expresses this character outwardly. Some Christians think it makes no difference whether they speak bluntly or tactfully, as long as they speak the truth. Paul says the manner of our speech and actions does make a difference. "**Seemliness** suggests the ideas of tact and delicacy, judgment and propriety... It relates to shape rather than substance. It is the pattern and not the fabric" (Ainsworth, *The Silences of Jesus and St. Paul's Hymn to Love*, 157, 158). When we buy clothing, we are concerned not only with getting the best quality of cloth but the most becoming suit or dress. We are interested in how our clothes make us look. God is interested not only in our possessing the divine fabric of love but also in the attractiveness of the pattern love takes in our lives—not only in our being right but in our doing rightly. Much Christian behavior is shapeless, even ugly. But those who come before the Lord must have not only a pure heart but clean hands. Their behavior is to be as graceful and unoffending as their principles are true. Some people even boast about their bluntness, as though it were a virtue to "slap people in the face" with the truth. Their friends defend them by saying, "They mean well." That is not enough, Paul tells us. We must not only mean well but appear well. We must grace the gospel of love that we are so zealous to propagate. No man has a right to be blunt in his speech and shapeless and ugly in his behavior, no matter how right his beliefs may be. When unseemly behavior arises from envy, when pride makes us self-assertive, when our lust for praise leads us to trample on others that we may display ourselves, we are behaving "unseemly." The person in the church of Corinth who caused public disturbance by speaking in an unknown tongue without any useful purpose is a good example of what Paul is warning about here. **Seemliness** "is, if you like, the etiquette of the Christian life" (Ibid., 158). The social world has its heroes and role models. We Christians have Christ speaking through the apostle Paul to guide us to life's higher goals. So often we do good badly. We blunder and stumble along in the right direction. We practice one virtue at the expense of another. Our honesty flouts our charity. Our candor outstrips our sympathy. Our earnestness threatens our patience... Unseemliness is often the result of imbalance in our inner life. We need something to co-ordinate for us all the forms of good and all the forces of right. And only love is equal to that task... love confers upon [the Christian] powers of insight and feeling... that teach him to utter the truth wisely and to do good in the best way. Thus love and seemliness are inseparable.

Love has no unloveliness. And since there are so many unlovely things in the fashion of our daily service, we can but judge that we know not love yet as we should know it, that we love not yet as we ought to love... But for each of us each hour there is but one best way; and it is because, whilst holding to the principle, we so often miss the best way of obeying it, that our lives are often ungracious and even ineffective... There is so much awkward piety, so much blundering goodwill, so much unattractive sanctity, so much unlovely religion (Ibid., 161-64). Love has an instinctive power of self-adjustment to every situation. But remember that it is the highest and holiest adjustment. There is a false seemliness that is secured by a tactful but immoral acceptance of things as we find them. It is not of this that Paul speaks. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" may make your lot easier in Rome, but the wrong application of the principle behind it is a cloak for half the sin of the world. The world says that the thing that is outwardly seemly is the thing that is always right. This is the reverse of what Paul says. He tells us that the right must find a way of being seemly without sacrificing its essential rightness.

John Wesley once had for a traveling companion an officer who was intelligent and agreeable in conversation;

but there was one serious drawback—his profanity. When they changed vehicles, Wesley took the officer aside and, after expressing the pleasure he had enjoyed in his company, said he had a great favor to ask him. The young officer replied, "I will take great pleasure in obliging you, for I am sure you will not make an unreasonable request." "Then," said Wesley, "as we have to travel together some distance, I beg that, if I should so far forget myself as to swear, you will kindly reprove me." The officer immediately saw the motive and felt the force of the request and smiling said. "None but Mr. Wesley could have conceived a reproof in such a manner." It worked like a charm.

Love does not say that the end justifies the means, but since the end is love the means should also be lovely and loving. It does not do to separate between the fashion of life and the spirit of it, or to say of a man who continually offends others that he means well. Love does not blunder in its treatment of others. Love is not tactless. Love says the proper thing at the proper time, in the loving way. Some Christians mean well, but they fail to put themselves in the other person's place. As a consequence, they affect people like a red-hot iron. When you are in their company, you tremble; you never know what they will say next. Have you done anything indiscreet? Then be certain that they will find and publish it. No doubt they mean well. If they are our friends, we apologize for them and say, "It's just their way." But if that is all we can say for a man, then it is not much. To a person who says, "I always pride myself on saying just what I think," we might recount the story of the man who said to his pastor, "My talent is to speak my mind." Replied the preacher, "That is a good talent to bury." (An Exegetical Commentary on First Corinthians)

## LOVE DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN

(love) does not insist on its own way (NRSV),

(love) never seeks its own advantage (NJB)

It does not insist on its own way (ESV)

Selfless love is not selfish and never demands its "rights".

(love) is never selfish (Moffatt)

(love never) seeks its own advantage

(love) is not preoccupied with the interests of the self (Thiselton)

- 1Cor 10:24,33; 12:25; Ro 14:12, 13, 15; 15:1,2; Gal 5:13; 6:1,2; Phil 2:3, 4, 5,21; 2Ti 2:10; 1Jn 3:16,17
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

It (absolutely) **does not** (present tense - continually) **seek its own** - **Seek its own** means that the loveless person desires to have his or her own way (self, self, self, etc); in other words selfish "love" (oxymoron) says "It's my way or the highway!" Selfishness seeks the things that belong to oneself, one's own pleasure, profit, honor, etc, whereas genuine agape love is always (emphasize always) unselfish. Beloved, if you are not convicted, you can be assure this writer certainly is, for it is easy to talk about this quality of agape love, but oh so difficult to live it out (which of course reminds us again that "we can't produce" such beautiful fruit without the motivation and power of the indwelling Spirit, to whom we need to constantly surrender our "rights").

**Lenski** rightly notes that "Selfishness lies at the root of a thousand evils and sins in the world and in the church: between rich and poor, capital and labor, nation and nation, man and man, church member and church member. Cure selfishness, and you plant a Garden of Eden. As when one draws a beautiful face and makes one feature after another stand out until the eyes at last light up the whole and give it complete expression, so in this portrait of love the inspired artist paints the eyes full of unselfishness, seeking in every glance not their own but that which is another's. Yes, this is love: no envy, no boasting, no pride, no unseemliness because it is altogether unselfish. Not for self (negative) = for others (positive). ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

Such selfish behavior is the polar opposite of sacrificial love. And the church at Corinth was rife with this sin for they were selfish in the extreme not sharing their food at love feasts, protecting their "rights" (a slave of Christ has no "rights"! ) even suing fellow believers in a non-Christian setting and using their spiritual gifts not to benefit others but their own advantage. They did not use their gifts to edify or build up the church but to try to build themselves up and thus Paul was forced to exhort them...

Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification (building up) of the church (1Corinthians 14:12)

It is sad that this church as in such a dismal state for Paul had himself shown the Corinthians the **example** of selfless love as he served them as their "pastor" for a year and a half! Good, godly examples don't necessarily guarantee good, godly imitators!

**Alan Redpath** strikes a painful chord to most of us who have been married for any length of time writing that "The secret of every discord in Christian homes, communities and churches is that we **seek our own way** and **our own glory**. (Woe! Too close to home!)

**Thiselton** adds that...Agape spells judgment on the life that centres round the ego and its interests [my italics]... For when God's Agape is shed abroad in a man's heart through the Holy Spirit (Ro 5:5-note) his life thereby gains a new centre. The emphasis is transferred from his own ego to Christ."...The coupling of behaving with ill-mannered impropriety and not pre-occupied with the interests of the self alludes to such conduct at Corinth as (i) insisting on one's way about idol food (1Cor 10:24, 33); (ii) rushing ahead with the Lord's Supper in a "better" room (the triclinium) while the latecomers are squeezed into the atrium (1Cor 11:21-22); (iii) interrupting speakers with supposed "instant revelations" during worship, or alternatively carrying on at an inordinate length when someone else has an important contribution to make (1Cor 14:29-33); and imposing unintelligible tongues into a sequence of worship when the utterance cannot be communicated but remains a purely individual welling up of pre-cognitive expression (1Cor 14:27-28). ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

**Lenski** spoke to the foundation nature of this sin of **self seeking** when he wrote "Cure selfishness and you have just replanted the garden of Eden. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Paul** addressed this same issue in his letter to Philippi...

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (see **notes** Philippians 2:3; 2:4; 2:5)

**Jesus** is thus our **example** of not seeking our own, **Matthew** recording Jesus' declaration that...

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mt 20:28)

Elisabeth Elliot was once speaking on the subject of selfless love to an audience that included some young children who were sitting right in front of her. As she spoke, she wondered how she could make this plain to them, so that they could apply it. Later, she got a letter from one of those children, a six-year-old boy, who wrote, "I am learning to lay down my life for my little sister. She has to take a nap in the afternoon. I don't have to take a nap. But she can't go to sleep unless I come and lay down beside her. So I lay down with my little sister." That boy is learning to love! If husbands and wives, as well as children, would apply this verse as that little boy did, our homes would be free of conflict.

**Vance Havner** - The word "seeketh" is the Greek word *zeteo*, which means to seek. However, it was also used to depict a person who is so upset about not getting what he wanted that he turns to the court system to sue or to demand what he is striving to obtain. Instead of taking no for an answer, this person is so intent on getting his own way that he will search, seek, and investigate, never giving up in his pursuit to get what he wants. In fact, he's so bent on getting his way that he'll twist the facts; look for loopholes; put words in other people's mouths; try to hold others accountable for promises they never made; leap on administrative mistakes as opportunities to twist someone's arm; or seek various other methods to turn situations to his benefit. This is manipulation! There is no doubt that Paul had the image of a manipulating, scheming person in his mind when he wrote this verse. Have you ever met such a person? Have you ever encountered a man or woman who schemed and manipulated all the time to get what he or she wanted?

**Not** ([3756](#)) (**ou**) is the strongest Greek particle for negation, signifying direct and full negation, independently and absolutely, and hence, objectively.

**Seek** ([2212](#)) (**zeteo**) means to try to learn the location of something often by movement from place to place in process of searching. It is an attempt to learn something by careful investigation or searching. Paul uses *zeteo* seven times in this letter - 1 Cor 1:22; 4:2; 7:27; 10:24, 33; 13:5; 1Cor 14:12.

## LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED

Love is not roused to a spirit of anger or bitterness by injuries, actual or imagined. (Vine)

Love is not irritable (NLT)

- Numbers 12:3; 16:15; 20:10, 11, 12; Psalms 106:32,33; Proverbs 14:17; Matthew 5:22; Mark 3:5; James 1:19
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Is** (absolutely) **not** (present tense - continually) **provoked** - **Not** (3756) (**ou**) is the strongest Greek particle for negation, signifying direct and full negation, independently and absolutely, and hence, objectively. The KJV misses the idea here with the translation "*not easily provoked*". There is no basis in the Greek for the modifier **easily**. It has been suggested that it was added because King James had such a violent temper! Paul says it is **never** provoked or exasperated, even if you are the king! Just try carrying out this aspect of love in your own fleshly strength. It is again a call for us [to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)

**Vincent** comments that "*Easily* is superfluous, and gives a wrong coloring to the statement, which is absolute."

**Provoked** (3947) (**paroxuno** from **pará** = at point of, implying movement toward a certain point + **oxúno** = sharpen, incite, irritate) means to sharpen (this literal meaning is found in Lxx of Dt 32:41).

This Greek verb gives us our English word **paroxysm** which is defined as a fit, attack, or sudden increase or recurrence of symptoms (as of a disease), a convulsion (like paroxysm of coughing) or a sudden violent emotion or action, and so an outburst (a paroxysm of rage). Moses lost control and had a "paroxysm" which cost him dearly (Study Nu 20:10, 11, 12, cp Mt 5:22-note).

**Proverbs** warns us that...

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. (Proverbs 14:17)

Figuratively **paroxuno** came to mean to spur on, to cause to be upset, to stimulate and as used in this verse to arouse or stir someone to anger. To be incensed which is frequently the meaning in the 45 uses in the LXX. usually reflecting God's reaction to sin of His people Israel. Clearly God's provocation is righteous anger, but in the present verse Paul is referring to sinful anger that is never provoked in one who is living out selfless, supernatural love. They are willing to endure slights and insults even as did the One Who is the essence of these attributes of agape love. And it is His life in us as the Spirit of Christ that enables us to manifest this love, which is not possible in our own strength.

Paul gave an exhortation in Romans 12 which is the corollary of non-provocation...

**Bless** (present imperative = charge for bestowing blessings to be the believer's lifestyle! **How are you doing, beloved? Have you blessed anyone today?... this week?**) those who persecute you; **ble**ss and **do** not curse. (Ro 12:14-note).

**Never take your own revenge** (Love does not seek to give out a proverbial "eye for an eye" response, a tit for a tat!), beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. (Ro 12:19-note) and

**Thiselton** notes that...

The heart of the word (paroxuno) conveys the semantic force of to exasperate, to irritate, as metaphorical extensions of to make sharp, to make pointed, to make acid... Virtually every lexicon and primary source indicates the notion of reaching a level of **exasperation**. But how does this express itself? The English **pique** combines the same range of nuances as the Greek: something between irritation and anger which takes offense because one's self-regard has been dented, wounded, or punctured by some sharp point. Love, Paul urges, does not become exasperated into pique (a transient feeling of wounded vanity), partly because patience delays exasperation and partly because lack of self-interest diverts a sense of self-importance away from reacting on the grounds of wounded pride: "it is not embittered by injuries, whether real or supposed." ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

As noted above the derived English word **paroxysm** describes a convulsion or sudden outburst of emotion or action. Love guards against being sharply irritated (and irritable), upset, or angered by things said or done against it. Note the relation of this trait to the former (a spirit of selfishness) for the one who is intent on having his or her own way is generally the same one who is easily provoked or angered.

The only other NT use of **paroxuno** is a "positive" usage in Acts 17 where Luke records that...

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit **was being provoked** (imperfect tense = over and over, again and again) within him as he was beholding the city full of idols. (See notes Acts 17:16)

On the other hand there are **45 uses** of **paroxuno** in the Septuagint (LXX)

Nu 14:11, 23; 15:30; 16:30; 20:24; Deut. 1:34; 9:7f, 18f, 22; 31:20; 32:16, 19, 41; 2 Sam. 12:14; Ezra 9:14; Ps.



10:3; 13; 74:10; 18; 78:41; 106:29; 107:11; Prov. 6:3; 14:31; 17:5; 20:2; 27:17; Isa. 5:24-25; 14:16; 23:11; 37:23; 47:6; 60:14; 63:10; 65:3; Jer. 22:15; 50:34; Lam. 2:6; Dan. 11:10; Hos. 8:5; Zech. 10:3; Mal. 2:17)

Here are some representative uses...

**Deuteronomy 9:7** "Remember, do not forget how you **provoked** (paroxuno) the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

**Deuteronomy 9:18** "And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to **provoke** (paroxuno) Him to anger.

**Deuteronomy 9:22** "Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you **provoked** (paroxuno) the LORD to wrath.

**Psalms 106:29** Thus they **provoked** (paroxuno) Him to anger with their deeds; And the plague broke out among them.

**Isaiah 65:3** A people who continually **provoke** (paroxuno) Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks

As one reads this letter is clear that the church at Corinth had to deal with numerous situations which could easily provoke and in fact did produce provocation -- factions, immorality, lawsuits, friction in or disputes about marriage, and eating food offered to an idol. The result was that disagreements were common and disrupted relationships.

**J B Phillips** paraphrases it well writing that love "is not touchy" which conveys the readiness to overreact on one's own behalf.

**Robertson and Plummer** render it...

Not merely 'does not fly into a rage' but 'does not yield to provocation'; it is not embittered by injuries, whether real or supposed.

**Henry Drummond** in "The Greatest Thing in the World" wrote the following about this negative trait noting that...

the peculiarity of ill temper is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. You know men who are all but perfect, and women who would be entirely perfect, but for an easily ruffled, quick-tempered, or "touchy" disposition.

**Pritchard** adds...

I know that some people excuse their bad temper by saying, "Sure, I lose my temper a lot, but it's all over in a few minutes." So is a nuclear bomb. A great deal of damage can be done in a very short time. Even small temper "bombs" can leave behind a lot of hurt, especially when they explode on a regular basis. Your temper is a sign of what is in your heart. A bad temper is a symptom of a terrible disease within the soul. It is an escaping bubble that reveals a fetid pit within.

The perfect example of this "negative attribute" of love is our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter writes...

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an **example** for you to follow **in His steps**, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (See **notes** 1 Peter 2:21; 2:22; 2:23)

**Cole** writes that selfless love...does not have a hair-trigger temper. Some people make everyone around them walk on eggshells. They're easily offended. One little thing that doesn't go their way and "KABOOM!" They use their temper to intimidate and to punish. When you confront them, they say, "Sure, I have a bad temper. But I get it all out and it's over in a few minutes." So is a bomb. But look at the devastation it leaves behind! When you're angry, usually you're not loving. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

**Walvoord** writes that this trait was manifest in the church at Corinth for "People who are not easily angered usually do not start lawsuits (cf 1Cor 6:1-11). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** has some pithy thoughts regarding the individual who is **easily provoked** writing...

The great colonial preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards had a daughter with an uncontrollable temper. When a young man fell in love with her and asked her father for her hand in marriage, Dr. Edwards replied,

"You can't have her." "But I love her and she loves me," he protested. "It doesn't matter," the father insisted. Asked why, he said, "Because she is not worthy of you." "But she is a Christian isn't she?" "Yes," said Edwards, "but the grace of God can live with some people with whom no one else could ever live."

Surely the number one reason both for mental and physical illness in our society today is the overwhelming preoccupation with our rights and the consequent lovelessness. When everyone is fighting for his own rights, no one can really succeed or be happy. Everyone grabs, no one gives, and everyone loses—even when one gets what he wants. Lovelessness can never win in any meaningful or lasting way. It always costs more than it gains.

We get angry when another person gains a privilege or recognition we want for ourselves, because it is our "right." But to put our rights before our duty and before loving concern for others comes from self-centeredness and lovelessness. The loving person is more concerned about doing what he should and helping where he can than in having what he thinks are his rights and his due. Love considers nothing its right and everything its obligation.

Telling our wives or husbands that we love them is not convincing if we continually get upset and angry at what they say and do. Telling our children that we love them is not convincing if we often yell at them for doing things that irritate us and interfere with our own plans. It does no good to protest, "I lose my temper a lot, but it's all over in a few minutes." So is a nuclear bomb. A great deal of damage can be done in a very short time. Temper is always destructive, and even small temper "bombs" can leave much hurt and damage, especially when they explode on a regular basis. Lovelessness is the cause of temper, and love is the only cure.

Love that takes a person outside of himself and centers his attention on the well-being of others is the only cure for self-centeredness. ([1Corinthians](#))

## LOVE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED

- 2Sa 10:3; Job 21:27; Jer 11:19; 18:18, 19, 20; 40:13, 14, 15, 16; Mt 9:4; Lk 7:39
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

it does not brood over injury (NAB)

(it does not) store up grievances (NJB)

Love does not count up wrongs that have been done. (New Century Version)

**For more in depth discussion see related commentary on**

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

## STOP "KEEPING SCORE!"

**Not** ([3756](#)) (**ou**) is the strongest Greek particle for negation, signifying direct and full negation, independently and absolutely, and hence, objectively.

**Stop "keeping score"** is the idea and those of us who are guilty of this sin know exactly what this entails! We may not write it on a notepad, but we keep a mental checklist that's just as effective and perhaps even more destructive!

**Take into account** ([3049](#)) (**logizomai** from **logos** = reason) means to think about something in a detailed and logical manner. The idea is to put together with one's mind or to occupy oneself with reckonings (in this case of wrongs done to oneself). Love never takes (or keeps) an inventory or an accounting of the wrongs done. **Logizomai** gives a verbal portrait of a bookkeeper who flips the pages of his ledger to reveal what has been received and spent. He is able to give an exact account and provide an itemized list. That is good practice in accounting but not in interpersonal relationships! To do so does not reflect Spirit filled love.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved believer, are you keeping a mental list of those who have wronged you? Be careful as unforgiveness breeds bitterness and ultimately the Spirit is grieved and you will be unable to partake of the truth that the joy of the Lord is your strength (Neh 8:10, Gal 5:22, Ro 15:13).

Here is an example of a secular use of **logizomai**...

put down to one's account, let my revenues be placed on deposit at the storehouse; I now give orders generally with regard to all payments actually made or credited to the government.

**Logizomai** is a picturesque verb to use in this context for in secular Greek it was **accountkeeping term**. It described making an entry in the account book, calculating or reckoning, as when figuring an entry in a ledger. The purpose of the entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed. In business that practice is necessary, but in personal matters it is not only unnecessary but harmful. Keeping track of things done against us is a sure way to unhappiness—our own and that of those on whom we keep records. How is your "ledger" in regard to wrongs you have suffered? (see Eph 4:32 if you need some motivation to forgive!)

**Wrong** (suffered) (2556) (**kakos**) means evil, bad, destructive, damaging, unjust. **Kakos** basically denotes a lack of something so that something is not as it ought to be. Morally, **kakos** describes a person characterized by godlessness. It pictures the moral conduct, attitudes and plans of godless men. **Kakos** describes circumstances and conditions that come upon a person and are harmful, evil or injurious.

Paul is saying that love never records a wrong or injury to the account of the one who inflicts it, so that he can later look back at the record so as to pay it back. The implication is that love always forgives. It does not just "forgive and forget" but even more supernatural it "remembers and forgives"!

**Robertson and Plummer** add that "When there is no question that it has received an injury, Love 'doth not register the evil'; it stores up no resentment, and bears no malice. (Robertson, A., & Plummer, A. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. New York: C. Scribner's Sons. 1911)

**Barclay** makes a good point observing that "One of the great arts in life is to learn what to forget." ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Walvoord** adds that...Love does not record wrongs, though there was ample opportunity for doing so in Corinth (e.g., 1Cor 6:8; 7:5; 8:11). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Ray Pritchard** wrote that...**Warren Wiersbe** said he once knew a man who actually kept a written list of the rotten things people had done to him. He also said that man was one of the most miserable people he had ever known. Many people keep mental lists of the slights they have suffered. They never get over what happened in the past. They dwell on it, they live in it, they ferment in it, and as a result, they let the past shape their present and their future. But true love has a bad memory of wrongs done to it. Love is quick to hit the Delete key. Love is always ready to say, "I'm putting that in the past and I'm not going to bring it up again." ([Why Love Has a Bad Memory](#))

#### **Related Resources:**

- List of links related to forgiveness/unforgiveness
- Multiple illustrations and quotes related to forgiveness/unforgiveness
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Ephesians 4:32
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Colossians 3:13
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:12 and Matthew 6:14-15

Be careful if you say you love others and yet find yourself feeling resentment, keeping score and waiting for just the moment to "get even".

**Lenski** - Love keeps no account book for the entry of wrongs on the debit side which are eventually to be balanced on the credit side with payments received when satisfaction is obtained for these wrongs. Love forgets to charge any wrong done to itself. It is neither enraged at the moment, nor does it hold a grudge in vindictiveness afterward. Chrysostom has well said: "As a spark falls into the sea and does not harm the sea, so harm may be done to a loving soul and is soon quenched without disturbing the soul." We ought to note that "ou logizomai" is the very verb used to describe the pardoning act of God: he does not impute to us our guilt, Ps 32:2-note; Ro. 4:8-note; 2Co 5:19; but imputes to us righteousness for Christ's sake, Ro 4:6-11-note; Ro 4:22, 23, 24, 25-note; Jas 2:23-note. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Godet** - Love, instead of entering evil as a debt in its account-book, voluntarily passes the sponge over what it endures

**Cole** relates the following story - One married man said to his friend, "You know, every time my wife and I get into a conflict, she gets historical." His friend said, "Historical? Don't you mean hysterical?" "No, I mean historical. She rehearses everything I've ever done wrong in the whole history of our marriage." That's keeping score! That's not love. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

## 1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

Greek: ou chairei (3SPAI) epi te adikia, sugchairei (3SPAI) de te aletheia

Amplified: It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Phillips: (does not) gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. (NJB)

It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth (NET)

She finds no pleasure in injustice done to others, but joyfully sides with the truth. (Weymouth)

It isn't happy when injustice is done, but it is happy with the truth. (GWT)

It takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, but has joy in what is true (BBE)

Love is never glad when others go wrong. (Moffatt)

Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth. (The Message)

Love does not find joy over the wrongdoing of others (Vine)

- **Not rejoice:** 1Sa 23:19-21 2Sa 4:10-12 Ps 10:3 119:136 Pr 14:9 Jer 9:1 13:17 Jer 20:10 Ho 4:8 7:3 Mic 7:8 Lu 19:41,42 22:5 Ro 1:32 Php 3:18
- **rejoices:** Ex 18:9; Joshua 22:22-33; Ro 12:9; 2 Cor 7:9-16; Philippians 1:4,18; 2:17,18; 1 Th 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 10; 2 Jn 1:4; 3 Jn 1:3
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For more in depth discussion see related commentary on

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

## LOVE KNOWS WHEN TO REJOICE

**Does not rejoice in unrighteousness:** Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles (Pr 24:17)

Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Ro 1:32-note)

**Rejoice** (5463) (**chairō**) be "cheer" full, calmly happy be glad.

Selfless love does not take delight in that which is offensive to God. It does not rejoice when trouble or problems befall another even when they are the result of the person's own foolishness or iniquity.

**Unrighteousness** (93) (**adikia** from **a** = negates + **dike** = right) is literally the condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness, or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience. In general **adikia** speaks of a disregard for that which is right (especially right before God's eyes) and thus is a disregard for God's laws and the obedience due Him, this disregard and disobedience (wrong-doing) being referred to as **unrighteousness**. **Adikia** is an

act that violates standards of right conduct and thus is reflected in wrongdoing. Adikia can also refer to the quality of injustice. In 1John 5:17 it is defined as "sin". The root word **dike** is the basis of ethical conduct which in turn rests on the nature of God and our attitude toward Him, otherwise we must resort to the law of the jungle or to the philosophy of godless men like Nietzsche who claimed that "might makes right".

**Adikia** - 25x in 24v - **NAS** = doing wrong(1), evildoers(1), iniquities(1), iniquity(2), injustice(1), unrighteous(2), unrighteousness(12), wickedness(4), wrong(1). Luke 13:27; 16:8f; 18:6; John 7:18; Acts 1:18; 8:23; Ro 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14; 1 Cor 13:6; 2Co 12:13; 2Th 2:10, 12; 2Ti 2:19; Heb 8:12; Jas 3:6; 2Pe 2:13, 15; 1 John 1:9; 5:17.

To **rejoice in unrighteousness** is to justify it and make wrong appear to be right even as Israel turned God's righteousness upside down in Isaiah's day...

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)

**Paul** writes of this same malevolent spirit in the NT...

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but **took pleasure in wickedness**. (2Thes 2:11-12)

**Lenski** - Anything that is wrong in God's sight grieves a heart that is full of love, not merely because the wrong hurts the one to whom it is done, but especially because God is displeased with the wrong and must punish the wrongdoer. Instead of rejoicing over the wrong (negative) love grieves over the wrong (positive). ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**MacDonald** has a convicting comment noting that "There is a certain mean streak in human nature which takes pleasure in what is unrighteous, especially if an unrighteous act seems to benefit one's self. This is not the spirit of love. Love rejoices with every triumph of the truth. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Pulpit commentary** notes that "The rejoicing at sin, the taking pleasure in them that commit sin, the exultation over the fall of others into sin, are among the worst forms of malignity (Rom. 1:32; 2 Thess. 2:12). The Greeks had a word, epichairo (to rejoice over, exult over, mostly of malignant joy) kakia ["evil"], to describe "rejoicing at the evil" (whether sin or misfortune) of others (Pr 24:17); Schadenfreude, "malignant joy" (Arist., 'Eth.,' ii. 7, 15). It is the detestable feeling indicated by the remark of La Rochefoucauld, "that there is something not altogether disagreeable to us in the misfortunes of our best friends." (The Pulpit Commentary: New Testament)

**Robertson and Plummer** write that "Love cannot share the glee of the successful transgressor. (Robertson, A T and Plummer, A. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. International Critical Commentary series. Second ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963)

**Pritchard** writes that "love does not delight in evil. It takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, is not glad about injustice, and is not happy when evil triumphs. And it takes no joy in hearing evil openly discussed. Love is never glad to hear bad news about another person. Love never says, "Well, they finally got what they deserved." Love is never happy to hear that a brother or sister fell into sin. Love does not enjoy passing along bad news. This certainly goes against the grain of modern life. We all know that "Bad news sells" and that good news goes on page 75. That's why they put those supermarket tabloids right by the checkout counter. We all want to hear the latest juicy gossip about our favorite celebrities. True love isn't like that. It turns away from cheap gossip and unsubstantiated rumors. And even when the rumor turns out to be true, love takes no pleasure in the misfortunes of others.

**Barnes** has a thoughtful comment writing that "Does not rejoice over the vices of other men; does not take delight when they are guilty of crime, or when, in any manner, they fall into sin. It does not find pleasure in hearing others accused of sin, and in having it proved that they have committed it. It does not find a malicious pleasure in the report that they have done wrong; or in following up that report, and finding it established. Wicked men often find pleasure in this, (see **note** Romans 1:32) and rejoice when others have fallen into sin, and have disgraced and ruined themselves. Men of the world often find a malignant pleasure in the report and in the evidence that a member of the church has brought dishonour on his profession. A man often rejoices when an enemy, a persecutor, or a slanderer, has committed some crime, and when he has shown an improper spirit, uttered a rash expression, or taken some step which shall involve him in ignominy. But love does none of these things. It does not desire that an enemy, a persecutor, or a slanderer should do evil, or should disgrace and ruin himself. It does not rejoice, but grieves, when a professor of religion, or an enemy of religion, when a personal friend or foe, has done anything wrong. It neither loves the wrong, nor the fact that it has been done. And perhaps there is no greater triumph of the gospel than in its enabling a man to rejoice that even his enemy and persecutor

in any respect does well; or to rejoice that he is in any way honoured and respected among men. Human nature, without the gospel, manifests a different feeling; and it is only as the heart is subdued by the gospel, and filled with universal benevolence, that it is brought to rejoice when all men do well. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Bur** (present tense - continually) **rejoices with the truth**: To **rejoice with the truth** means to be glad about behavior in agreement with the truth of God's Word. So if someone falls into sin, don't gloat, grieve, because that is God's attitude toward over sin. And if they repent, love rejoices.

**Rejoices with** (4796) (**sugchairo** from **sun/syn** = with, speaks of an intimate union + **chairō** = to rejoice, be glad) means literally to rejoice with, to take part in joy, to feel (and express) joy with, to share joy with (Lk 1:58+, Php 2:17+) **Sugchairo** describes a deep mutuality of purpose and feeling. In 1 Cor 12:26 **sugchairo** reflects the ideal unity of the Body of Christ to rejoice with one another. "To express pleasure over another's good fortune, congratulate." (BDAG) **Sugchairo** is used twice in the form of commands in Jesus' stories of the man who rejoiced over finding his lost sheep (Luke 15:6+) and of the woman who, rejoiced over finding her lost coin, both of these individual desiring that others share in their joy (Luke 15:9+).

**Robertson** writes that "Joy demands fellowship."

**Vine** observes that "All unrighteousness is the negation of truth. Love expresses itself in truth, and all conduct that satisfies holy love satisfies truth. Truth and righteousness are associated in Eph 5:9 (note).

**The truth** (225) (**aletheia** from **a** = without + **lêthō** = that which is hidden or concealed, the combination meaning out in open) is the the unconcealed reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. The basic understanding of **aletheia** is that it is the manifestation of a hidden reality. For example, when you are a witness in a trial, the attendant says "Raise your right hand. Do you swear that you will tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?" And you say, "I do" and you sit down. The question is asking "Are you willing to come into this courtroom and manifest something that is hidden to us that only you know so that you will bear evidence to that?" And when you do speak the truth, you are manifesting a hidden reality. **Truth** then is the correspondence between a reality and a declaration which professes to set it forth. To say it another way, words are true when they correspond with objective reality. Persons and things are true when they correspond with their profession. Hence a truth is a declaration which has corresponding reality, or a reality which is correctly set forth. Since God is Himself the great reality, that which correctly sets forth His nature is pre-eminently the Truth. **Truth** is the property of being in accord with fact or reality as defined by God. Whatever God says is Truth. Truth is a person, Jesus. **Aletheia** in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Cor 5:8; 13:6; 2 Cor 4:2; 6:7; 7:14; 11:10; 12:6; 13:8;

**Lenski** - Where unrighteousness prevails truth is of necessity absent. Unrighteousness prevails where the heart has pleasure in it, loves it, and thus rejoices in it. There the love that Paul describes is absent. But where the heart "rejoices with the truth," embraces it gladly, finds pleasure in possessing it, there unrighteousness is driven out. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Barclay** writes that "Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it is brave enough to face the truth; it has nothing to conceal and so is glad when the truth prevails. ([The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

**Pritchard** writes that "Love takes joy in what is true and good and right and holy and pure. Love cheers whenever the truth wins out. It is glad to know that suspicions were unfounded. Love believes the best and is glad when the verdict is "Not guilty."

**Cole** explains this attribute writing that "There is a fine balance to love. Although love is kind and overlooks the faults of others, it does not compromise the truth or take a soft view of sin. To allow another person to go on in sin, whether it is known sin or a blind spot, is not to seek his best; it is not love. Love will sensitively confront and correct precisely be-cause it cares deeply and knows that sin destroys. Love rejoices with the truth. Love gets excited when it hears of spiritual victories. Love encourages by expressing joy over little evidences of growth. John, the apostle of love, wrote, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4). ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

**Barnes** has a lengthy comment - The word truth here stands opposed to iniquity, and means virtue, piety, goodness. It does not rejoice in the vices, but in the virtues of others. It is pleased, it rejoices when they do well. It is pleased when those who differ from us conduct [themselves] in any manner in such a way as to please God, and to advance their own reputation and happiness. They who are under the influence of that love rejoice that good is done, and the truth defended and advanced, whoever may be the instrument; rejoice that others are successful in their plans of doing good, though they do not act with us; rejoice that other men have a reputation well earned for virtue and purity of life, though they may differ from us in opinion, and may be connected with a different denomination. They do not rejoice when other denominations of Christians fall into error; or when their plans are blasted; or



when they are calumniated, and oppressed, and reviled. By whomsoever good is done, or wheresoever, it is to them a matter of rejoicing; and by whomsoever evil is done, or wheresoever, it is to them a matter of grief. See **notes** Philippians 1:14;1:15; 1:16; 1:17 1:18. The reason of this is, that all sin, error, and vice, will ultimately ruin the happiness of any one; and as love desires their happiness, it desires that they should walk in the ways of virtue, and is grieved when they do not. What a change would the prevalence of this feeling produce in the conduct and happiness of mankind! How much ill-natured joy would it repress at the faults of others! How much would it do to repress the pains which a man often takes to circulate reports disadvantageous to his adversary; to find out and establish some flaw in his character; to prove that he has said or done something disgraceful and evil! And how much would it do even among Christians, in restraining them from rejoicing at the errors, mistakes, and improprieties of the friends of revivals of religion, and in leading them to mourn over their errors in secret, instead of taking a malicious pleasure in promulgating them to the world! This would be a very different world if there were none to rejoice in iniquity; and the church would be a different church if there were none in its bosom but those who rejoiced in the truth, and in the efforts of humble and self-denying piety: (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Kistemaker** comments that "Love takes notice of the evil in this world but never gloats over it. Instead it grieves over the sins that human beings commit against one another. These wrongdoings may appear in numerous forms: intentional and unintentional evils, sins of commission and omission, harsh persecution and mild neglect, and last, national conflicts and personal controversies. On the other hand, one of the characteristics of love is the constant attempt to discover good and praiseworthy words, thoughts, and deeds in a person. Love searches out the truth and rejoices when that truth is triumphing over wrong. Love and truth are inseparable partners residing in God himself. God shares these characteristics with his people. He endowed them with love and truth, which, though tainted by sin, are renewed in Christ Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. ([Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. NT Commentary Set. Baker Book](#))

**1 Corinthians 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**Amplified:** Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Phillips:** Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

- **bears all things:** 1Co 13:4 Nu 11:12-14 De 1:9 Pr 10:12 Song 8:6,7 Ro 15:1 Ga 6:2 Heb 13:13 1Pe 2:24 4:8
- **believes all things:** Ps 119:66
- **hopes all things:** Lu 7:37-39,44-46 19:4-10 Ro 8:24
- **endures all things:** 1Co 9:18-22 Ge 29:20 Job 13:15 Mt 10:22 2Co 11:8-12 2Th 1:4 2Ti 2:3-10,24 3:11 4:5 Jas 1:12
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For more in depth discussion see related commentary on

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

## LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

(Present tense - continually) **bears all things**, (present tense - continually) **believes all things**, (present tense - continually) **hopes all things**, (present tense - continually) **endures all things**.

**Bears all things** - The idea is also "endure, bear up," or "resist"; thus, "love resists all attempts against it" or "endures all onslaughts." **Stego** has two shades of meaning and thus this verse could mean that love bears all things in the sense that it patiently endures all things or that it hides or conceals the faults of others (the meaning I favor for Paul has "endures" at the end of this verse which would be repetitious).

It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. (NJB)

If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. (TLB)

Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. (CEV)

Love has the power of undergoing all things, having faith in all things, hoping all things. (BBE)

Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end. (The Message)

Love enables us to endure everything; it enables us in every circumstance to keep on believing, to keep our confidence in God, and to remain patient no matter what happens to us. (UBS)

(Love) never gives up (GNB)

Note that all four of the main verbs in this verse are **present tense** indicating these attitudes/actions are to be one's lifestyle, and thus represent a continuous choice we must make. Note however that to make such a choice is **impossible** for our fallen nature inherited from Adam, but only **Him-possible**, that is by the strengthening and enablement of Holy Spirit Who indwells every believer. Believers can love only "according to His power which mightily works within us". Amen!

Note also that the phrase "**all things**" is repeated four times for emphasis. In this verse Paul lists four aspects of love, which when taken together, teach us that no matter how desperate our circumstances may be, love never gives up.

**Lenski** - After the negative Paul now makes some positive statements. Yet these negatives and these positives are not merely grammatical. They are more. The former declare: "**Nothing of this—nothing of this, etc.**"; then the latter exclaim: "**All of this—all of this, etc.**" Thus Paul completes "the golden chain" of his praise of love, each jewel matches the next until the characterization is complete. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

## LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

From the definition of bears (see below) we see the picture of love as that which protects the beloved by covering them over, concealing them from that which would be injurious (eg, words, actions, etc).

**Bears** ([4722](#)) (**stego** from **stege** = a thatch or roof or covering of a building) derives its first meaning from **stege** and thus means to cover closely, to protect by covering and then, to conceal and then, by covering, to bear up under. Note that at the core of its meaning **stego** denotes an activity or state which **blocks entry from without** or exit from within. **BDAG** notes that **stego** in the Greek papyri was used frequently "in the sense of covering or enclosing in such a way as to keep something undesirable from coming in, as water into a ship." **Friberg** adds that **stego** means "strictly put a roof on; hence cover, keep silent about, keep confidential." **Complete Biblical Library** says **stego** describes "the act of "covering closely" in order to keep a liquid within a container or from coming into a container; hence, "watertight, repel"; and in later Greek, "to ward off, to bear up, sustain," and thence "to endure" or "to resist" (*Liddell-Scott*).

**Vine** - the verb **stego**, to bear, signifies that what is mentioned either supports what is placed upon it, or covers what is placed underneath it. The former idea is prominent in 1Co 9:12; 1Th 3:1-note; 1Th 3:5-note. The present statement (1Cor 13:7) may convey both ideas, for love acts in both ways in bearing all things. That which covers both **protects** what is covered, by keeping off all that is hostile, and in doing so **endures** the hostility (cp. 1Co 9:12)." **Stego** occurs in the apocryphal book Sirach 8:17 describing the fool who will not be able to **conceal** the matter.

**John MacArthur** adds that the verb **stego** - basically means to cover or to support and therefore to protect. Love **bears all things** by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm. Genuine love does not gossip or listen to gossip. Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person. Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner. Fallen human nature has the opposite inclination. There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone's faults and failures. As already mentioned, that is what makes gossip appealing. The Corinthians cared little for the feelings or welfare of fellow believers. It was every person for himself. Like the Pharisees, they paid little attention to others, except when those others were failing or sinning. Man's depravity causes him to rejoice in the depravity of others. It is that depraved pleasure that sells magazines and newspapers that cater to exposes, "true confessions," and the like. It is the same sort of pleasure that makes children tattle on brothers and sisters. Whether to feel self-righteous by exposing another's sin or to enjoy that sin vicariously, we all are tempted to take a certain kind of pleasure in the sins of others. Love has no part in that. It does not expose or exploit, gloat or condemn. It **bears**; it does not **bare**. ([1Corinthians](#))

**Moffatt** translates **stego** as "**slow to expose**" and notice that Paul uses the **present tense** which calls for this to be love's habitual response, not a "hit or miss" action (cp "**all things**"). Husbands need to be especially attentive to this quality of love (after 42 years of marriage to the same woman I can personally attest to the power of this quality or conversely to the destructive nature of it's absence!) (See the OT example of Boaz)

**Love** is that beautiful virtue that throws a cloak of silence over what is displeasing in another person. From this meaning one derives the picture of **covering things** with the cloak of love. In addition, in favor of the intended meaning **as covers over**, **protects**, etc is the fact that this translation would eliminate redundancy for the last clause also reads **endures all things**.

**F F Bruce** - Love **covers** unworthy things rather than bringing them to the light and magnifying them. It puts up with everything. It is always eager to believe the best and to "put the most favorable construction on ambiguous actions." (Bruce, F. F. 1 and 2 Corinthians. New Century Bible Series. 1971)

**Vincent** writes that **stego** "keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out the water, or the roof the rain.

**Robertson and Plummer** offer the caveat that even though agape love covers others faults and sins this does not mean..."that a Christian is to allow himself to be fooled by every rogue, or to pretend that he believes that white is black. But in doubtful cases he will prefer being too generous in his conclusions to suspecting another unjustly. ([Critical and Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Stego** is used only 4 times in the NT...

**1 Corinthians 9:12** If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we **endure** all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 13:7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

**1 Thessalonians 3:1** Therefore when we could **endure** (stego) it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone. (See **note** 1Thessalonians 3:1)

**1 Thessalonians 3:5** For this reason, when I could **endure** (stego) it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. (note) (**Comment:** As explained above, this does not appear to be Paul's primary intended meaning here in 1Corinthians 13:7)

Spirit controlled and empowered believers love as a lifestyle by choosing as an act of their will (even that choice enabled by the Spirit Ezekiel 36:27, Php 2:13-note) to cover over in silence, to "hide" the faults of others, to bear with or endure. Love doesn't broadcast another's problems to everyone. Love doesn't run down others with jokes, sarcasm or put-downs. Love defends the character of the other person as much as possible within the limits of truth. Love won't lie about weaknesses, but neither will it deliberately expose and emphasize them. Love protects.

And so instead of becoming embittered (Col 3:19-note) the Spirit filled (Ep 5:18-note) husband "covers" his wife's faults and frailties. This does not mean one turns grace into licentiousness but that he lives with his wife in an understanding way (1Pe 3:7-note)... he gets to know her... he loves her sacrificially and selflessly as Christ loved the church (Ep 5:25-note).

Authentic Agape Love continually seeks to cover and protect (**1Co 13:7NIV** "*love always protects*") the object that is loved and for husbands this applies especially to our wives! Love protects other people. It doesn't broadcast bad news. It goes the second mile to protect another person's reputation. Love doesn't point out every flaw of the ones you love. Love doesn't criticize in public.

**Wesley** - Whatever evil the lover of mankind sees, hears, or knows of any one, he mentions it to none; it never goes out of his lips, unless where absolute duty constrains to speak. (Wesley's Notes: First Corinthians)

**MacDonald** - Love does not needlessly publicize the failures of others, though it must be firm in giving godly discipline when necessary. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Peter made a similar statement in his first epistle exhorting his readers...

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers** (kalupto = throws a veil over - continually = present tense) a multitude of sins. (1Pe 4:8-note)

## **BELIEVES ALL THINGS**

**Believes all things** - **Augustine** said it well that this quality of love is "believing the best" about **all** people. Love seeks to believe the best or as the Amplified says is "ever ready to believe the best," especially about other people.

**Believes** (4100) (**pisteuo** from **pistis** = faith, trust, belief) in context implies that love sees the best in others or gives the other person the benefit of the doubt, choosing to believe the best about them not the worst!

Paul is not saying that love is gullible and believes everything and does not exercise qualities such as wisdom and discernment. What he is saying is that love will **believe** well of others unless convinced otherwise. It seeks to put the best possible construction on another's words, actions, etc.

**THOUGHT** Husbands, does this describe one of the qualities of your love for your wife?

**Vine** explains the phrase **love believes all things**..."does not mean that it accepts as true all that is stated. Love is never taken in thus. It is, however, ready to impute the best motives even to one whose act is unkind or detrimental. In bearing with evil conduct, it seeks to avoid undue suspicion. Where there is any element of doubt as to the real intention, love decides to regard it as good and honest. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Jamieson** says that this love "unsuspiciously believes all that is not palpably false, all that it can with a good conscience believe to the credit of another.

**Lenski** - Love "believes all things" and refuses to yield to suspicions of doubt. The flesh is ready to believe all things about a brother and a fellow man in an evil sense. Love does the opposite, it is confident to the last. Here and in the next statement *panta* is to be understood in the good sense: "all that is best," while in the first and in the final statement "all" is to be taken in the bad sense: "all that is worst."([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

Paul's letter to the Philippians he prays for a **love** that is discerning, asking that their...

**love** may **abound** (**excel**) still more and more in real knowledge (see study of epignosis) and all discernment (see study of aisthesis) so that you may approve (see study of dokimazo) the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere (see study of eilikrines) and blameless (see study of aproskopos) until the day of Christ (Php 1:9,10+)

The love that **believes** has faith in God, Who will work out His divine plans even when all the indicators seem to point in different directions. To "believe all things" means that love believes the best that is possible as long as that can be done. Love gives the benefit of the doubt. It takes people at their highest and best-not at their lowest and worst.

**Calvin** writes that Paul is not saying "that a Christian...strips himself of wisdom and discernment...not that he has forgotten how to distinguish black from white!"

**Pfeiffer** writes that this aspect of love is not a sanction to "does not include gullibility. It means, rather, that the believer is not to be suspicious. If, however, sin is evident, the believer must judge it and support its discipline. From this description of love, it is evident that Moffatt is right in saying, "The lyric is thus a lancet." ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

The **Pulpit Commentary** says that the one who believes all things "Takes the best and kindest views of all men and all circumstances, as long as it is possible to do so. It is the opposite to the common spirit, which drags everything in deteriore partem, paints it in the darkest colours, and makes the worst of it. Love is entirely alien from the spirit of the cynic, the pessimist, the ecclesiastical rival, the anonymous slanderer, the secret detractor. ([Pulpit Commentary](#))

**Robertson and Plummer** write that "This does not mean, as Calvin points out, that a Christian is to allow himself to be fooled by every rogue, or to pretend that he believes that white is black. But in doubtful cases he will prefer being too generous in his conclusions to suspecting another unjustly. While he is patient with (stelei) the mischief which his neighbour undoubtedly does, he credits him with good intentions, which he perhaps does not possess. This characteristic, with the next pair, forms a climax. When Love has no evidence, it believes the best. When the evidence is adverse, it hopes for the best. And when hopes are repeatedly disappointed, it still courageously waits. ([1Corinthians 13-Critical and Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Barnes** writes that **believes all things** "cannot mean that the man who is under the influence of love is a man of universal credulity; that he makes no discrimination in regard to things to be believed; and is as prone to believe a falsehood as the truth; or that he is at no pains to inquire what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. But it must mean, that in regard to the conduct of others, there is a disposition to put the best construction on it; to believe that they may be actuated by good motives, and that they intend no injury; and that there is a willingness to suppose, as far as can be, that what is done is done consistently with friendship, good feeling, and virtue. Love produces this, because it rejoices in the happiness and virtue of others, and will not believe the contrary except on irrefragable evidence. ([Barnes NT Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole** explains **love believes all things** this way writing that "love believes the other person is innocent until proven guilty, not guilty until proven innocent. If there is a problem, love doesn't jump immediately to blame the other person. In the family, trust shows itself by not grilling the other person about every detail of his story, like an attorney cross-examining a defendant. It means

believing in your kids, expressing confidence in them. I'm thankful that my parents trusted me as a teenager; it made me want to live up to that trust. One of my friends had parents who did not trust him, and he lived up to their distrust! Some-times you will get ripped off when you trust, but love persists in trusting. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

**Barclay** writes that "This characteristic has a twofold aspect. (i) In relation to God it means that love takes God at his word, and can take every promise which begins "Whosoever" and say, "That means me." (ii) In relation to our fellow men it means that love always believes the best about other people. ([The Daily Study Bible](#))

## LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

**Hopes all things** - The present tense again speaks of love's continual direction toward hope. This aspect of agape love manifests a "**Romans 8:28 attitude**" in the sense that it earnestly desires that all things work out for the best. Love expects that good (God) will eventually triumph and win the victory over evil. It continually looks for the good no matter the situation.

**Kistemaker** has an interesting note writing about the Christian triad of faith, hope and love explaining that "Of these three virtues, **hope** is often the neglected member overshadowed by faith. Nevertheless, when a tripod loses one of its legs, its fall is inevitable. When a Christian nurtures love and faith but neglects **hope**, he fails and falters in his spiritual life. Paul frequently writes the verb to **hope**, which appears in his epistles nineteen times out of a total of thirty-one occurrences in the New Testament. Hope is patient, waiting for positive results that eventually may be realized. Hope is the converse of pessimism and the essence of healthy optimism. Hope is never focused on oneself but always on God in Christ Jesus. ([NT Commentary](#))

**The Pulpit Commentary** laments that "Christians seem to have lost sight altogether of the truth that **hope** is something more than the result of a sanguine temperament, that it is a gift and a grace. **Hope** is averse to sourness and gloom. It takes sunny and cheerful views of man, of the world, and of God because it is a sister of love. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Barnes** explains **hopes all things** "**Hopes** that all will turn out well. This must also refer to the conduct of others; and it means, that however dark may be appearances; how much soever there may be to produce the fear that others are actuated by improper motives or are bad men, yet that there is a hope that matters may be explained and made clear; that the difficulties may be made to vanish; and that the conduct of others may be made to appear to be fair and pure. Love will hold on to this hope until all possibility of such a result has vanished, and it is compelled to believe that the conduct is not susceptible of a fair explanation. This hope will extend to all things--to words, and actions, and plans; to public and to private intercourse; to what is said and done in our own presence, and to what is said and done in our absence. Love will do this, because it delights in the virtue and happiness of others, and will not credit anything to the contrary unless compelled to do so. ([Barnes NT Commentary](#))

**Vine** explains the phrase **love hopes all things** as "love delights to entertain the best expectations. If there is absence of anything to prompt them, the hope is there; if conditions are adverse, love still hopes for the best. Even if the hope meets with repeated disappointment, love waits on expectantly and perseveringly. This is part of love's endurance. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**MacArthur** - I heard the story of a dog who stayed at the airport of a large city for over five years waiting for his master to return. Employees and others fed the dog and took care of him, but he would not leave the spot where he last saw his master. He would not give up hope that someday they would be reunited. If a dog's love for his master can produce that kind of hope, how much longer should our love make hope last? ([1 Corinthians](#))

**Hopes** ([1679](#)) (**elpizo** from **elpis** = hope, conveying as the main element a sense of confidence) (see in depth study of the believer's hope - The Blessed Hope) means to look forward w confidence to that which is good and beneficial. In the present context of interpersonal relationships, it means that the one who loves, looks at the bright side of things and does not despair (and certainly does not convey a sense of despair to the other person). Love is not pessimistic but shows a godly optimism. Supernatural love does not have a negative and critical spirit, but is always positive and hopeful. This love hopes for what is good for another, even when others have ceased to hope.

**Elpizo** - 31x in 31v in the **NAS** - Mt 12:21; Lk. 6:34; 23:8; 24:21; Jn 5:45; Acts 24:26; 26:7; Ro 8:24, 25; 15:12, 24; 1Co 13:7; 15:19; 16:7; 2Co 1:10, 13; 5:11; 8:5; 13:6; Php 2:19, 23; 1Ti 3:14; 4:10; 5:5; 6:17; Philemon 1:22; He 11:1; 1Pe 1:13; 3:5; 2Jn 1:12; 3 Jn. 1:14

## LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS



**Endures all things** - Means one remains under the load, whatever that load is, doing so only by the enabling power of the Spirit.

In secular Greek **hupomeno** was a military term used of an army's holding a vital position at all costs. Every hardship and every suffering was to be endured in order to hold fast. As applied to agape love, Paul is saying that this supernatural love is able to sustain the assaults of an enemy. This love is enabled by the Holy Spirit to endure persecutions in a patient and loving spirit with no desire to retaliate or reject. It remains steadfast in the face of unpleasant circumstances.

As discussed earlier (1Co 13:4-note), **hupomeno** refers to one's response toward circumstances, denoting perseverance in the face of difficulties whereas the closely related verb **makrothumeo** refers to one's response toward people, denoting a patient endurance of the faults and even provocations of others without retaliating.)

**Barnes** explains that agape love "Bears up under, sustains, and does not murmur. Bears up under all persecutions at the hand of man; all efforts to injure the person, property, or reputation; and bears all that may be laid upon us in the providence and by the direct agency of God. Comp. Job 13:15. The connexion requires us to understand it principally of our treatment at the hands of our fellow-men. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Pulpit Commentary** comments on what is to be endured - Whether the "seventy times seven" offences of a brother (Luke 17:4), or the wrongs of patient merit (see note 2 Timothy 2:24), or the sufferings and self denials and persecutions of the life spent in doing good (see note 2 Timothy 2:10). The reader need hardly be reminded that in these verses he has a picture of the life and character of Christ. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Thiselton** writes that this "refers to an endurance of setbacks and rebuffs which never gives up on people, whatever they do. (Thiselton, A. C. The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans)

**Robertson and Plummer** write that **endures all things**..."is that cheerful and loyal fortitude which, having done all without apparent success, still stands and endures, whether the ingratitude of friends or the persecution of foes."

**Ray Pritchard** gets to the heart of the matter asking...

How can we live this way? How can we truly love without envy, without a quick temper, without seeking our own interests, and without thinking evil of others? The answer is, we can't. In ourselves we have no power to live this way. That's why it doesn't work to say, "Let's give it the old college try and really go out there and love everyone we meet." We will never talk ourselves into loving like this, and the sooner we admit that fact, the better off we'll be. This isn't some kind of rah-rah competition where we try to prove our love by our enthusiasm.

Sooner or later we have to get down to the bottom of things and admit the truth. "O God, I hate my husband. I hate my wife. I can't stand my children. My parents are driving me nuts. I hate the people I work with and I don't like the folks at church. I don't love my neighbors and I can barely stand to see my own family. O God, help me. I don't love anyone right now. And even though no one else knows it or sees it, I'm an angry person, filled with bad thoughts and completely lacking in any kind of love. If you don't help me, I will never love anyone because I know I can't change the way I am. Lord God, please help me. Change me. Let your love flow through me. If you want me to love others, you're going to have to do it through me because I can't do it myself." That's the kind of prayer God loves to answer.

I also think it helps to replace "love" with "Jesus" in this passage: "Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not envy, Jesus thinks no evil, Jesus is not quick-tempered, Jesus does not rejoice in what is evil." If we want to love, we need more of Jesus in our lives. Run to the Cross. Stand there and behold the One who died for you. Look to Jesus. Stand next to Him. Let His love fill your heart. If you will come close to Jesus, His love will begin to fill your heart and you will find yourself filled with supernatural love for others. Your life will begin to change as Jesus becomes preeminent in your heart.

Now as we come to the end, I'd like to give you some homework. Take some time this week to consider the eleven qualities of love in this passage. Think about them one by one. How do you measure up? Where are you strong and where are you weak? Which three qualities stand out as the greatest need in your life right now? Circle those three and begin to pray about them. Write down one practical step you can take in each of those areas this week. And ask God to help you grow strong in love.

There is a second part of this assignment. During December we are slowly climbing toward Bethlehem. On December 25 we will celebrate the supreme expression of God's love-the birth of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like to challenge you to read I Corinthians 13 every day this month. December is a wonderful month to learn about love. If you read these 13 verses 31 times, Paul's words will be tattooed on your soul. And as



these words become part of your life, you will find love becoming a daily reality. May God help us to live in love this week. Amen. ([Why Love Has a Bad Memory](#))

**Barclay** summarizes this section writing that "One thing remains to be said—when we think of the qualities of this love as Paul portrays them we can see them realized in the life of Jesus himself. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

**Chafin** sums up this description of agape love writing "When I hold this list of the characteristics of love up before my life like a mirror, I am immediately shaken by the many ways in which I fall short of the perfect love that Christ modeled for me. But I also know that nothing will be more important to my life than letting God perfect the gift of love in me, not in some abstract theological way but by helping me learn to truly love every person as God loves me. These fifteen characteristics of God's kind of love would make a good outline for prayer, meditation, and study as we attempt to live the Christian life. (Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 30:1,2 Corinthians. Nashville, )

**Lenski** sums up this last description of love noting that "In these four statements the inner power of love is revealed: her head is held high, her eye is bright and shining, her hand steady and true, her heart strong with strength from above. This love has rightly been called "the greatest thing in the world." Paul does not describe love in its greatest works, sacrifices, martyrdoms, triumphs; he goes into the ordinary circumstances of life as we meet them day by day and shows us the picture of love as it must be under these. We find ready excuses when great things are made the goal of our attainment; Paul cuts off all such excuses. Be a true, everyday Christian in the exercise of love, then all great triumphs of love will take care of themselves. He who fails in the ordinary works of love will not even have an opportunity when the supreme moment for the performance of the extraordinary arrives. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Endures** ([5278](#)) (**hupomeno** from **hupo** = under + **meno** = abide, remain) literally means to remain or abide under and figuratively refers to abiding under not simply with stoical resignation, but with a vibrant hope. It describes is not the spirit which can passively bear things, but the spirit which, in bearing them, can conquer and transmute them. The idea is to continue in an activity despite resistance and opposition. **Hupomeno** (present tense) speaks of perseverance and tenacity in all circumstances. It means to endure in times of pain, suffering, deprivation, hatred, loss, and loneliness. To reiterate, this attribute of love means the believer endures patiently and triumphantly and is not passively putting up with the deluge of difficulties. Obviously a love that supernaturally endures like this can only be carried out by a believer who is filled with and strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Ep 3:16-note; Ep 5:18-note). The suffering which the apostles and early Christians had to endure for the sake of the gospel is eloquent testimony of their authentic, fervent love for God. **Hupomeno** - 17x in 16v in the **NAS** - Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mk. 13:13; Lk. 2:43; Acts 17:14; Rom. 12:12; 1 Co. 13:7; 2 Tim. 2:10, 12; Heb. 10:32; 12:2f, 7; Jas. 1:12; 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:20

**1 Corinthians 13:8 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.**

**Greek:** E agape oude pote pipetei. (3SPA1) eite de propheteiai, katargethesontai; (3PFPI) eite glossai, pausontai; (3PFMI) eite gnosis, katargethesetai. (3SFPI)

Amplified: Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]. As for prophecy (the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose), it will be fulfilled and pass away; as for tongues, they will be destroyed and cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away [it will lose its value and be superseded by truth]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Phillips - It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. For if there are prophecies they will be fulfilled and done with, if there are "tongues" the need for them will disappear, if there is knowledge it will be swallowed up in truth. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never ends. But if there are prophecies, they will be set aside; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be set aside.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are

tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:8 γὰρ πῶς οὐ ποτε πίπτει· ἐπεὶ δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθῶσονται· ἐπεὶ γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· ἐπεὶ γνώσεις, καταργηθήσονται.

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:8 The love doth never fail; and whether there be prophecies, they shall become useless; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall become useless;

ASV 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.

CSB 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for languages, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.

MIT 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never comes to an end. As for prophecies, the time will arrive when they will no longer be utilized. As for tongues, they will become still. As for knowledge, it will be set aside.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

NRS 1 Corinthians 13:8 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.

NAB 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing.

NJB 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with.

GWN 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never comes to an end. There is the gift of speaking what God has revealed, but it will no longer be used. There is the gift of speaking in other languages, but it will stop by itself. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will no longer be used.

BBE 1 Corinthians 13:8 Though the prophet's word may come to an end, tongues come to nothing, and knowledge have no more value, love has no end.

- **Love never fails:** 1Co 13:10,13 Lu 22:32 Ga 5:6
- **tongues:** 1Co 13:1 12:10,28-30 14:39 Ac 2:4 19:6
- **they will cease:** Jer 49:7 Heb 8:13
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For more in depth discussion see related commentary on

- [1 Corinthians 13:4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:6](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)

## LOVE NEVER FAILS

**Kistemaker** - "Love never fails." This clause supports the message of the preceding verse and forms a concise summary of the previous passage (vv. 4–7). At the same time the clause is introductory to the verses that ensue (vv. 9–13). Notice that the word love occurs at the beginning of this verse and reappears twice in verse 13. Between these two occurrences, Paul describes the temporary character of the spiritual gifts (vv. 8–10) and gives three illustrations to illustrate that which is immature and imperfect—a child, a reflection, and knowledge (vv. 11–12). In this segment, Paul stresses immaturity, imperfection, and temporality. ([1 Corinthians Commentary](#))

**Robertson** - Having shown the worthlessness of supernatural gifts, if **love** is absent, and the supreme excellence of a character in which **love** is dominant, St Paul now shows that **love is superior to all the gifts, because they are for this world only, whereas**

**love is for both time and eternity.** "This is the crowning glory of love, that it is imperishable" (Stanley); it abides until and beyond the supreme crisis of the Last Day.

The last attribute of **love** in verse 7 was **endures** which makes a good transition to that which does not fall (pipto). As **Robertson** says " From πομένει (endures) to ο δέποτε πίπτει (never fails) is an easy transition. That which withstands all assaults and is not crushed by either the shortcomings of comrades or the violence of opponents, will stand firm and unshaken."

**Love** ([agape](#)) **never fails** - **Love** will never end but will last forever and ever. Amen. Agape love never falls into ruin. Paul's point is that through all the ages to come, love will go on in that we will still love the Lord and love one another. Unlike the leaf on a tree, love never falls off but will abide forever. Paul strengthens his point on the permanence of love by comparing it to the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians so highly prized, all these spiritual gifts eventually coming to an end. **Love** never fails because it is an **attribute of God** (See [Love](#)) as John teaches in 1 Jn 4:8, 16 ("God is love.")

**Never** ([3763](#)) (**oudepote** from **oude** = not even + **poté** = ever) means (absolutely and objectively) not even at any time, never at all, neither at any time, never, nothing at any time. Observe in the following NT passages some things which can never, ever happen (interesting)!

**Fails** ([4098](#)) (**pipto**) means to fall, fall down, under judgment, under condemnation, be prostrated or fall prostrate, to fall into ruin, to perish, lose authority, no longer have force. Metaphorically as used in this verse **pipto** means to to fall away, to fail or to be without effect.

**Pipto** usually denotes to fall and that which falls ceases its activity and that is what supernatural agape love never does beloved! Why? Because, the Fountain head, the Well spring, the "Head waters", the Source of this supernatural love is the supernatural God and thus the Source is inexhaustibly infinite and eternal. Our continual charge and challenge is to "tap in" to the Source. Our love as human beings does fail far too often (especially when tested by oppositional people or adverse circumstances - as someone well said "I could live this Christian life if it weren't for people!"), but as we progressively grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (that's called progressive [Think - "Making progress", not an "arrival" in this present life] "sanctification" or growth in holiness, cp Jesus' prayer for us Jn 17:17 and Peter's prayer 2Pe 3:18-note where "grow" is a present imperative = calling for continual, daily growth in Christ-likeness), we will find that more and more this quality of "unfailing love" is manifest to and through us (we serve as "conduits" as it were of this unfailing love flowing from the Throne of Grace) to our spouses, our families, our neighbors, our co-workers, and the list goes on. How are you doing? May we not fall into the trap of "trying" to manifest this love in our own strength or power. It is impossible (cp Mk 10:27, Mt 19:26, Lk 18:27, Ge 18:14, Nu 11:23 - as an aside - What's the "impossibility" right now in your life beloved? Forgiveness to someone who's offended you? Loving someone "unlovable"?). But as you and I learn to abide in the Vine (Jn 15:5) we come to learn that what with men is impossible, with Christ is ever "Him-possible"!

**Barnes** - Paul here proceeds to illustrate the value of love, from its permanency as compared with other valued endowments. It is valuable, and is to be sought, because it will always abide; may be always exercised; is adapted to all circumstances, and to all worlds in which we may be placed, or in which we may dwell. The word rendered faileth (ekpiptei - **Ed**: see preceding note) denotes, properly, to fall out of, to fall from or off; and may be applied to the stars of heaven falling, (Mk 13:25,) or to flowers that fall or fade, (Jas 1:11-note; 1Pe 1:24-note) or to chains falling from the hands, etc., Ac 12:7. Here it means to fall away, to fail; to be without effect, to cease to be in existence. The expression may mean that it will be adapted to all the situations of life, and is of a nature to be always exercised; or it may mean that it will continue to all eternity, and be exercised in heaven for ever. The connexion demands that the latter should be regarded as the true interpretation. 1Co 13:13. The sense is, that while other endowments of the Holy Spirit must soon cease and be valueless, LOVE would abide, and would always exist. The argument is, that we ought to Seek that which is of enduring value; and that, therefore, love should be preferred to those endowments of the Spirit on which so high a value had been set by the Corinthians. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Robertson** points out that "Three prominent charismata (9 were mentioned in chapter 12) are taken in illustration of the transitory character of the gifts: to have gone through all would have been tedious."

**But** - Term of contrast.

**If there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away** - The gifts of prophecy will be put aside. There is no need for prophecy when we see the One about Whom all Scripture has prophesied! Prophecies will disappear when the reality comes. The knowledge that is so important to us now will be irrelevant then because when we are in God's presence we will know perfectly. Praise the Lord!

**Done away** (2673) (**katargeo** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = be idle from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. The idea is to make the power or force of something ineffective and so to render powerless, reduce to inactivity. To do away with. To put out of use. To cause to be idle or useless. To render entirely idle, inoperative or ineffective. Cause something to come to an end or cause it to cease to happen. To abolish or cause not to function. To free or release from an earlier obligation or relationship. To no longer take place. **Katargeo** - in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 1:28; 1 Co. 2:6; 1 Co. 6:13; 1 Co. 13:8; 1 Co. 13:10; 1 Co. 13:11; 1 Co. 15:24; 1 Co. 15:26; 2 Co. 3:7; 2 Co. 3:11; 2 Co. 3:13; 2 Co. 3:14;

**if there are tongues, they will cease - Amplified** = "as for tongues, they will be destroyed and cease." **BBE** = "tongues come to nothing." Tongues will terminate! These gifts will no longer be necessary, for when we stand before God there will be no need to **speak** in other languages since we will all understand God when He speaks.

**Tongues** (1100) (glossa see also glossa) in the NT is used literally to refer to the tongue as a part of the body, and figuratively to refer to speech (1Jn 3:18, in Lxx of Pr 25:25, Pr 31:26) particular languages or dialect as spoken by people group (Acts 2:11 referring to the language of Cretans and Arabs, in Lxx of Ge 11:7 where God confused man's language at Babel because they had the same language Ge 11:6 and self-centered motives Ge 11:4). **Glossa** - 1 Co. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39;

**Cease** (3973) (**pauo** from which we get English "pause") means to cause something or someone to cease from some activity or state and so to come to an end. Paul's point is that all three of these supernatural gifts (and perhaps other supernatural gifts as well) will eventually become unnecessary, the timing of this cessation being one which is quite controversial (See notes below by David Guzik and the link to John MacArthur which seem to be at opposite ends of the interpretative spectrum regarding cessation of tongues).

#### Related Resources:

- See [John MacArthur's sermon - The Permanence of Love, Part 1](#) that discusses his 6 reasons for believing the gift of tongues as ceased.

**if there is knowledge, it will be done away** Paul says that **knowledge** will be abolished, not knowledge in general (which will become perfect) but the spiritual gift of knowledge, for there will be no need for this spiritual gift when we are glorified.

**Pulpit Commentary** notes that this **knowledge** "shall be only annulled in the sense of earthly knowledge, which shall be a star disappearing in the light of that heavenly knowledge which shall gradually broaden into the perfect day."

**Knowledge** (1108) (**gnosis** from **ginosko** = to know especially experientially) in simple terms is the possession of information of what is known. **Gnosis** describes the comprehension or intellectual grasp of something. **Gnosis** refers to knowledge gained by experience in contrast to intuitive knowledge. **Gnosis** is an "experiential knowledge," and not a mere passing acquaintance. Gnosis is not simply an intellectual (head) knowledge of Christ, but refers to a more intimate, experiential knowledge. **Louw-Nida** says **gnosis** means "acquaintance with," which in the English dictionary refers to "personal knowledge" with synonyms such as familiarity with, knowledge of, experience with/of, awareness of, understanding of, comprehension of, grasp of. **Gnosis** - 29x in 28v in the **NAS** (Notice where the majority of uses of **gnosis** are found! 16x in letters to one church!) - Lk. 1:77; 11:52; Ro 2:20; 11:33; 15:14; 1Co 1:5; 8:1, 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6; 2Co 2:14; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6; Ep 3:19; Php 3:8; Col 2:3; 1Ti 6:20; 1Pe 3:7; 2Pe 1:5, 6; 3:18

**Guzik** - Paul is addressing the over-emphasis the Corinthian Christians had on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He shows they should emphasize love more than the gifts, because the gifts are temporary "containers" of God's work; love is the work itself. Therefore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are appropriate for the present time, but they are not permanent. They are imperfect gifts for an imperfect time. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Radmacher** - This uncompromising affirmation contrasts with grace-gifts, which are transitory at best. One day all the gifts will be needed no longer, but **love** will continue forever. ([Nelson Study Bible: NKJV](#).)

**Barnes** - That is, the gift of prophecy, or the power of speaking as a prophet; that is, of delivering the truth of God in an intelligible manner under the influence of inspiration; the gift of being a public speaker; of instructing and edifying the church, and foretelling future events... The gift shall cease to be exercised; shall be abolished, come to naught. There shall be no further use for this gift in the light and glory of the world above, and it shall cease. God shall be the teacher there. And as there will be no need of confirming the truth of religion by the prediction of future events, and no need of warning against impending dangers there, the gift of foretelling

future events will be of course unknown. In heaven, also, there will be no need that the faith of God's people shall be encouraged, or their devotions excited, by such exhortations and instructions as are needful now; and the endowment of prophecy will be, therefore, unknown. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Prophecy** (4394) ([propheteia](#) from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) has the literal meaning of speaking forth, with no connotation of prediction or other supernatural or mystical significance. The gift of prophecy is simply the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God. God used many Old and New Testament prophets to foretell future events, but that was never an indispensable part of prophetic ministry. Paul gives perhaps the best definition of the prophetic gift in (1Co 14:3). Prophecy refers to messages from God, but when we stand before Him and hear His voice there will be no more need for prophets to relay His words to us.

**David Guzik** comments on this controversial section **That which is perfect** (in 1Co 13:10) - Paul says when **that which is perfect** has come, then the gifts will be "discontinued." But what is that which is **perfect**? Though some who believe the miraculous gifts ceased with the apostles say it refers to the completion of the New Testament, they are wrong. Virtually all commentators are agreed that which is **perfect** is when we are in the eternal presence of the Perfect One, when we are with the Lord forever either through the return of Christ or graduation to the eternal. The Greek word for **perfect** is *telos*. Considering the way the New Testament uses *telos* in other passages, it certainly seems to be speaking about the coming of Jesus (1Co 1:8; 15:24; James 5:11; Rev 20:5, 7; 21:6; 22:13). Many who believe the miraculous gifts ended with the apostles (such as **John MacArthur** - For Dr MacArthur's view see his series of sermons on the miraculous gifts) claim since the verb **will cease** is not in the **passive**, but in the **middle** voice, it could be translated, tongues will stop by themselves. Their analysis sounds scholarly, but is disregarded by virtually all Greek scholars. Even if this translation is correct, it does nothing to suggest when tongues **will cease**. **John MacArthur** claims, "*tongues ceased in the apostolic age and that when they stopped, they stopped for good*" But this passage doesn't tell us "*tongues will stop by themselves*," and it tells us tongues **will cease** only when that which is perfect has come. **John Calvin** was one who thought the **will cease** spoke of the eternal state. "*But when will that perfection come? It begins, indeed, at death, because then we put off many weaknesses along with the body.*" (Calvin) In his use of **will fail** and **will cease** and **will vanish away**, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not trying to say that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge have different fates. He is simply writing well, saying the same thing in three different ways. They will end, but love never fails. "There is virtually no distinction between the two Greek verbs that describe the termination of both prophecies and tongues. True, the verb with prophecies is in the passive voice (believers are the implied agents), while the verb with tongues is interpreted as the active voice. The difference is only a stylistic change and nothing more." (Kistemaker) ([Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [What is continuationism? What is a continuationist? | GotQuestions.org](#) - detailed discussion
- [What is glossolalia? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is speaking in tongues evidence for having the Holy Spirit? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the spiritual gift of interpreting tongues? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Question:** [What does it mean that tongues will cease?](#)

**Answer:** First Corinthians 13:8–10: "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears." In the KJV, the tongues "will cease." In other words, at some point after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the gift of tongues would no longer be in use.

1 Corinthians 12–14 is all about the proper use of [spiritual gifts](#). Paul writes to the Corinthian church to correct the improper use of some gifts and the improper emphasis they put on certain of the more "spectacular" gifts. Right in the middle of his discussion, he speaks about the superior quality of love. Even though the Corinthian church was very gifted, they were not using their gifts in love for each other. Paul goes on to say that all of the various gifts will one day cease to function, but love will never fail. The question that many struggle with is just when these gifts will cease. Paul gives the answer in the text: "when completeness comes" (1 Corinthians 13:10).

The next question, of course, is what is the "**completeness**" or "**the perfect**" (NASB)? Essentially, there are two views:

One view, often called the "[cessationist](#)" view, is that the sign gifts were only in operation during the apostolic era to give special revelation until the completion of the New Testament. Before early Christians had the whole New Testament, they had to rely on words of knowledge, prophecy, and tongues to give them the full revelation of God. Once the church had possession of the full New Testament (the completeness), these gifts faded away as unnecessary. Faith, hope, and love continue to be in operation. Often, the



cessationist view will point out that the words used for the cessation of knowledge and prophecy are in the passive voice, indicating that they will be stopped by an outside force. However, the verb used for the cessation of tongues is in the middle voice, which indicates that they will cease “of themselves.” This is usually seen as further proof that tongues were temporary and would eventually pass away on their own. Regardless of the strength of this argument, the grammatical analysis leaves something out. Some verbs normally take the middle voice, and the verb translated “be stilled” in the NIV is one of them; therefore, there is no particular significance to the change from passive to middle voice in this passage. In Luke 8:24 the storm is “stilled” (same word and voice); however, it is clear that Jesus actively stilled the storm.

Cessationists also point out that, if tongues, prophecy, and knowledge continue, this continuing revelation would in effect be adding to Scripture. However, most [continuationists](#) (who hold to the current exercise of these gifts) do not view their revelations as being on par with Scripture but more like the “leading of the Spirit.” Many cessationists feel God led them to do something or “told” them to do something. They would maintain that this was some sort of communication from God but would never place it on par with Scripture.

**The other primary view is that the “completeness” is the eternal state** At that time there will be no more need for the miraculous gifts such as tongues because we will know everything fully. This view points to verse 12 as further describing the “completeness”: “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” This can hardly refer to the completion of the New Testament canon. Paul’s point seems to be that tongues, prophecy, and words of knowledge will be unnecessary when we enter the eternal state.

The continuationist position does not preclude the possibility that the need for the more miraculous gifts might ebb and flow according to the need or wane with the completion of the canon; rather, it simply does not clearly state that these gifts will stop when the canon is complete. There are good historical and theological arguments for the cessationist position, but they are not necessarily supported by 1 Corinthians 13:8. Likewise, the verse cannot be used as an endorsement of any and all claims of continuationists today. Paul spends three chapters on the misuse of the sign gifts, and many of the same abuses are committed today by those who claim to exercise tongues. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

Amplified - For our knowledge is fragmentary (incomplete and imperfect), and our prophecy (our teaching) is fragmentary (incomplete and imperfect).

Phillips For our knowledge is always incomplete and our prophecy is always incomplete, and when the complete comes, that is the end of the incomplete.

ISV For what we know is incomplete and what we prophesy is incomplete

NET 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part,

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:9 κ μ ρους γ ρ γιν σκομεν κα κ μ ρους προφητε ομεν·

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:9 for in part we know, and in part we prophecy;

ASV 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;

CSB 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

MIT 1 Corinthians 13:9 For our knowledge is incomplete, and so, too, our prophesying.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

NRS 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;

NAB 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know partially and we prophesy partially,

NJB 1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly;



GWN 1 Corinthians 13:9 Our knowledge is incomplete and our ability to speak what God has revealed is incomplete.

BBE 1 Corinthians 13:9 For our knowledge is only in part, and the prophet's word gives only a part of what is true:

- 1Co 13:12 2:9 8:2 Job 11:7,8 26:14 Ps 40:5 139:6 Pr 30:4 Mt 11:27 Ro 11:34 Eph 3:8,18,19 Col 2:2,3 1Pe 1:10-12 1Jn 3:2
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

1 Corinthians 8:2+ If anyone supposes that **he knows anything**, he has not yet known as he ought to know;

Romans 11:33-34+ Oh, the **depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** How **unsearchable** are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?**

**For (gar)** Term of explanation. Paul explains why the gifts of **prophecy** and **knowledge** will not endure (note that the explanation continues into the next verse). He does not mention tongues in this passage.

**Charles Hodge** - This is the reason why **knowledge** and **prophecy** are to cease. They are partial of imperfect, and therefore suited only to an imperfect state of existence. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**Lenski** - Tongues and languages in general as we know them here are evidently not to endure eternally. The penalty inflicted at Babel is not to be carried over into the other world. ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Robertson** - Obviously, they will be 'rendered idle.' **Tongues** were a rapturous mode of addressing God; and no such rapture would be needed when the spirit was in His immediate presence.

**Godet - Prophecy** lifts on each occasion only a corner of the veil which covers the plan of God and its final accomplishment. Similarly the isolated acts of spiritual **knowledge** grasp the truth of salvation only in fragments, and consequently every particular point of the great fact. Even to possess the complete knowledge of one point, the whole would require to be known distinctly. Now this full and only true knowledge is not granted us in the present economy. As to **tongues**, the apostle does not think it necessary to justify their disappearance. The reason for it is too evident: it is their ecstatic character. The only ground for ecstatic transport is that we are not yet living fully in the reality of the Divine. When we live in God, we are in Him without going out of ourselves. This is why there is no ecstasy in the life of Jesus, at least after His baptism.

**We** (present tense - continually) **know in part** - **Moffatt** "we only know bit by bit." Amplified - "For our knowledge is fragmentary (incomplete and imperfect)." **Part** (first for emphasis - meros from meirōmai = receive one's portion) means a share or portion as distinct from the whole. The NLT is a good paraphrase rendering it "Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete."

What does Paul mean by the phrases **know** and **prophecy in part**? I like **A T Robertson's** explanation - Both will be done away, for it is from a **part** only, and not from the whole, that we get to know anything of the truth, and from **apart** only that we prophesy. We cannot know, and therefore cannot preach, the whole truth, but only fragments. Knowledge and prophecy are useful as lamps in the darkness, but they will be useless when the eternal Day has dawned; γρ μέλλον βίος τούτων νενδής. In both clauses κ μέρους is emphatic. Bishop Butler has shown that here complete knowledge even of a part is impossible, for we cannot have this until we know its full relation to the whole; and, in order to do that, we must have full knowledge of the whole, which is impossible." ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

**MacArthur on know in part** - Through God's Word and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we can have "a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself," but **even our true knowledge is still imperfect knowledge** because only in Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). God has provided all the truth we need to know "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:20). God's "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2 Pet. 1:3). The Lord has provided all the knowledge we need in order to know and serve Him—more, in fact, than any man could ever comprehend. Yet God's written Word does not exhaust truth about Him. ([MNTC- 1 Cor](#))

**And we** (present tense - continually) **prophecy (propheteuo) in part** - The prophet only gives a glimpse of the whole truth. **Fenton** "we teach with imperfection." **NLT** = "even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!"

**Charles Hodge** - This is the reason why knowledge and prophecy are to cease. They are partial of imperfect, and therefore suited

only to an imperfect state of existence. The revelations granted to the prophets imparted mere glimpses of the mysteries of God; when those mysteries stand disclosed in the full light of heaven, what need will there be of those glimpses? A skilful teacher may use diagrams and models to give us some knowledge of the mechanism of the universe, but if the eye is strengthened to take in the whole at a glance, what need is there of a planetarium or of a teacher? The apostle uses two illustrations to teach us the difference between the present and the future. One is derived from the difference between childhood and maturity; the other from the difference between seeing a thing by imperfect reflection, or through an obscure medium, and seeing it directly. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

As **Robertson** says "Knowledge and prophecy are useful as lamps in the darkness, but they will be useless when the eternal Day has dawned....Bishop Butler has shown that here complete knowledge even of a part is impossible, for we cannot have this until we know its full relation to the whole; and, in order to do that, we must have full knowledge of the whole, which is impossible.

**Lenski on know in part** - Our knowing is "in part," partial, and thus inadequate. We never know with full comprehension, full penetration, complete mastery. In all our knowing there is something left that we do not know, a beyond to which our little brain and our intellectual ability do not reach. Knowledge attains a depth of miles, and our mind is a line that is only a few fathoms long; how can we hope to sound it? This is also true with regard to prophesying. We constantly come to impassable barriers. Speculation tries to leap over them but fails to reach anything save uncertainties. Therefore, too, it is a prime theological and a Christian virtue to be satisfied with the limits which the Word sets for us, and never to try to go beyond them. Such a limitation seems humiliating to many, but their efforts to go beyond the limits set lead them only into bogs and swamps of error. Even many of the truths which the Scriptures present to us—how inadequately do we apprehend them intellectually: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the workings of providence, etc.! Ever we arrive where Paul arrived in Rom. 11:33. This is true in regard to even the far lower domain of nature: we know only in part. What are matter, life, light, electricity, and a thousand other things? We know not what they are; we know only this or that about them. In the words of a noted scientist: Ignoramus, ignorabimus; we do not know, we shall not know. The pride of so many scientists is pricked and deflated by this little phrase "in part."([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Know** (1097) ([ginosko](#)) conveys the basic meaning of taking in knowledge in regard to something or someone, knowledge that goes beyond the merely factual. In essence **ginosko** means involves experiential knowledge, knowledge personally experienced, not merely the accumulation of known facts. By extension, the term frequently was used of a special relationship between the person who knows and the object of the knowledge. It was often used of the intimate relationship between husband and wife and between God and His people. **Ginosko** in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 2:8; 1 Co. 2:11; 1 Co. 2:14; 1 Co. 2:16; 1 Co. 3:20; 1 Co. 4:19; 1 Co. 8:2; 1 Co. 8:3; 1 Co. 13:9; 1 Co. 13:12; 1 Co. 14:7; 1 Co. 14:9; 2 Co. 2:4; 2 Co. 2:9; 2 Co. 3:2; 2 Co. 5:16; 2 Co. 5:21; 2 Co. 8:9; 2 Co. 13:6;

**Prophecy** (4395) ([propheteuo](#) from **pró** = before or forth + **phemi** = tell) means literally to tell forth and can mean to speak forth God's message, (having been taught of God). The idea is speaking with the help of divine inspiration to proclaim what God wants to make known. In other contexts to prophesy means to speak under inspiration and foretell future events. Its most prominent use is in connection with the oracles at places like Delphi. Typically, a person would ask a question of the gods and receive a cryptic answer from the female mouthpiece of the deities. This answer would then be completed and interpreted by the men who specialized in that task. **Prophēteuō** in this context meant "explain a message from the gods in response to a client's question." **Propheteuo** - 27v - Matt. 7:22; Matt. 11:13; Matt. 15:7; Matt. 26:68; Mk. 7:6; Mk. 14:65; Lk. 1:67; Lk. 22:64; Jn. 11:51; Acts 2:17; Acts 2:18; Acts 19:6; Acts 21:9; 1 Co. 11:4; 1 Co. 11:5; 1 Co. 13:9; 1 Co. 14:1; 1 Co. 14:3; 1 Co. 14:4; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:24; 1 Co. 14:31; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Pet. 1:10; Jude 1:14; Rev. 10:11; Rev. 11:3

**1 Corinthians 13:10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.**

NET 1 Corinthians 13:10 but when what is perfect comes, the partial will be set aside.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:10 But when full understanding comes, these partial things will become useless.

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:10 τὰν ὁ λθ τ τ λειον, τ κ μ ρους καταργηθ σεται.

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:10 and when that which is perfect may come, then that which is in part shall become useless.

ASV 1 Corinthians 13:10 but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

CSB 1 Corinthians 13:10 But when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end.

MIT 1 Corinthians 13:10 When the perfect state arrives, that which is incomplete will be retired.

- 1Co 13:12 Isa 24:23 Isa 60:19,20 2Co 5:7,8 Rev 21:22,23 Rev 22:4,5
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE COMING OF THE PERFECT ELIMINATES NEED FOR THE PARTIAL

**but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away** ([katargeo](#)) - In this verse when **the perfect comes** is interpreted by some (Henry Morris) as a reference to the completion of the canon of Scripture (since this was one of the first NT books written), but others interpret it as a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, when the Perfect One comes to establish His kingdom. This interpretation is supported by Paul's phrase "face to face" in 1 Cor 13:12, which will come about when we see Jesus "face to face" (cf 1 Jn 3:2).

**Godet** on **when the perfect comes** says that the aorist tense "alludes to a fixed and positively expected moment, which can be no other than that of the Advent."

**Gordon Fee** also sees **the perfect comes** as the Second Coming writing - At the coming of Christ the final purpose of God's saving work in Christ will have been reached; at that point those gifts now necessary for the building up of the church in the present age will disappear, because "the complete" will have come. To cite Barth's marvelous imagery: "Because the sun rises all lights are extinguished." (NICNT-1 Cor)

**Lenski** agrees writing "The aorist subjunctive λθ marks the great future moment when the goal shall be reached, namely the Parousia of Christ. Then this entire state of imperfection which is now evident upon the earth will be abolished, for it will have served its purpose. An entirely new way of apprehending, of seeing, and of knowing shall take its place. Even then we shall not know all things—omniscience belongs to God alone, and even the angels do not know the deep things of God, which only the Spirit of God searches. In heaven we shall know in a heavenly manner." ([The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Lenski** has this note on **partial** - partial, able to convey to us only a part of the full reality which we shall at last come to know. Melancthon stimulated his love for dying by thinking about the joy of knowing the mysteries of the Holy Trinity no longer merely "in part" but in the complete heavenly manner.

**Believer's Study Bible** favors this as "a reference to Christ's second coming. Some understand this to refer to the completion of the canon of Scripture, but that would mean that we now see more clearly than Paul did."

**NIV Study Bible** - Verse 12 seems to indicate that Paul is here speaking of either Christ's second coming or a believer's death, when they will see Christ "face to face" (v. 12). Some interpreters translate this term "the perfect" and consider it to refer to the canon of Scripture, claiming tongues ceased when the canon was complete. This interpretation is unlikely, however, since the close of the canon did not result in perfect knowledge nor a face-to-face encounter with Christ (vv. 12–13). Cf. also 1:7, where believers have all the gifts until Christ returns.

**John MacArthur** does not believe this refers to the Second Coming writing that "By process of elimination, **the only possibility for the perfect is the eternal, heavenly state of believers**. Paul is saying that spiritual gifts are only for time, but that love will last for all eternity. The point is simple, not obscure." ([See his discussion of the eternal state in this sermon](#))

**Perfect** ([5046](#))([teleios](#) from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal) means complete, mature, fully developed, full grown, brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, in good working order. In all its meanings **teleios** carries the underlying idea is that a purpose has been achieved or that a thing or person has reached its intended goal or end. **Teleios** speaks of totality, as opposed to partial or limited and when used of things means in full measure, undivided, complete or entire. **Teleios** also speaks of that which is fully development as opposed to that which is immature. **Teleios** - 17v - Matt. 5:48; Matt. 19:21; Rom. 12:2; 1 Co. 2:6; 1 Co. 13:10; 1 Co. 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; Col. 4:12; Heb. 5:14; Heb. 9:11; Jas. 1:4; Jas. 1:17; Jas. 1:25; Jas. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:18

**1 Corinthians 13:11 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.**

Lenski - When I was a child I spoke as a child, I had the interests of a child, I reasoned as a child; now that I have become a man I have put away the things of the child.

Zodhiates "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

NET 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became an adult, I set aside childish ways.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:11 τε μην ν πιος, λ λουν ς ν πιος, φρ νουν ς ν πιος, λογιζ μην ς ν πιος· τε γ γονα ν ρ, κατ ργηκα τ το νηπ ου.

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a babe, as a babe I was speaking, as a babe I was thinking, as a babe I was reasoning, and when I have become a man, I have made useless the things of the babe;

- **I used to speak like** 1Co 3:1,2 14:20 Ec 11:10 Ga 4:1
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S CHILD TO ADULT ANALOGY

**When I was a child** ([nepios](#)), **I used to speak** ([laleo](#)) **like a child** ([nepios](#)), **think** ([phroneo](#)) **like a child** ([nepios](#)), **reason like a child** ([nepios](#)) - Paul illustrates the doing away with the "partial" described above by comparing it with what one did as a child and then what one did as an adult. Notice he is using himself as the example.

**When I became a man, I did away with childish** ([nepios](#)) **things** - **Did away with** is the same word [katargeo](#) used in 1 Cor 13:10 describing the **partial** done away with. Paul is not speaking about growing up and becoming spiritually mature but is expressing the difference between the present earthly state and the future heavenly state.

**Gordon Fee** explains that "The analogy, therefore, says that behavior from one period in one's life is not appropriate to the other; the one is "done away with" when the other comes. So shall it be at the Eschaton.

**Kistemaker** agree writing "The present verse is a comparison of the believer's earthly life and his subsequent perfection in the presence of the Lord."

**Zodhiates** - When the apostle Paul wanted to illustrate the state of perfection of the Christian in the world to come, he did so by contrasting the imperfect state of our present spiritual attainments with the perfection that will be ours when we finally go to be with the Lord.

As **MacArthur** says "In their earthly lives all Christians are children compared to what they will be when they are perfected in heaven. Perhaps Paul was comparing His present spiritual state to his boyhood, as a child. A Jewish male was considered a boy until his bar mitzvah ("son of the law"), after which he was considered a man. One moment he was a boy; the next he was a man. Our perfection in Christ will be a type of spiritual bar mitzvah, a coming into immediate, complete, and eternal spiritual adulthood and maturity. At that moment everything childish will be done away with. All immaturity, all childishness, all imperfection, and all limitations of knowledge and understanding will be forever gone."

**1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.**

NET 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror indirectly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy 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 now knows me completely.

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:12 βλ πομεν γ ρ ρτι δι σ πτρου ν α ν γματι, τ τε δ πρ σωπον πρ ς πρ σωπον· ρτι γιν σκω κ μ ρους, τ τε δ πινν σομαι καθ ς κα πεινν σθην.

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:12 for we see now through a mirror obscurely, and then face to face; now I know in part, and then I shall fully know, as also I was known;

- **we see in a mirror** , 2Co 3:18 5:7 Php 3:12 Jas 1:23
- **dimly**: Judges 14:12-19 Eze 17:2
- **face**: Ex 33:11 Nu 12:8 Mt 5:8 Mt 18:10 Ro 8:18 1Jn 3:2 Rev 22:4
- **now**: 1Co 13:9,10 Joh 10:15
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 33:11+ Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Romans 8:18+ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

1 John 3:2+ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. **We know that when He appears, we will be like Him (GLORIFIED), because we will see Him just as He is. (FACE TO FACE!!!)**

Revelation 22:3-4+ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; **they will see His face**, and His name will be on their foreheads.

mirror

#### Corinth Was Famous for Bronze Mirrors

### FACE TO FACE IN GLORY "HALLELUJAH!"

**Lenski** has an interesting observation - In v. 11 Paul uses the typical singular "I" when he is speaking about that which is true with respect to all of us. He individualizes and makes concrete the truth which he expounds. He might have continued to use "I" in v. 12. But with a masterly touch he inserts one clause which has the plural "we" in the verb and thereby shows that every "I" refers to all of us. ([Commentary](#))

**For (gar)** Term of explanation. Paul is explaining his illustration in 1 Cor 13:12.



#### Face to Face Before the Fall and After Redemption

(from [Steve Lewis](#))

**Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face ([prosopon](#)) to face ([prosopon](#))** - REB = "puzzling reflections." NET = "we see in a mirror indirectly." NIV = "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror." Corinth was famous as the producer of some of the finest [bronze mirrors](#) in antiquity but mirrors in Paul's day were not like modern mirrors but were made of polished bronze (or some other metal). They were inferior to our modern mirrors and gave only a dim reflection of the person's image. In secular Greek literature a mirror symbolized clarity and self-recognition.

Notice two uses of **Now...then** which is a contrast to highlight the difference in the Corinthians present temporal spiritual life and their future eternal spiritual life. Note that Paul uses the pronoun **we**, thus identifying himself with the Corinthians, even though he himself had experienced a face to face encounter with the risen Lord. In using the mirror as an illustration, Paul is in essence asking the Corinthians to imagine what it is like to see another person only in a mirror. Paul's point is that even if the mirror were perfect, it would still only be a reflection, and not the reality, face to face. How much clearer will we be able to see when we see the reality!

**Explore the Bible** ties this illustration together with spiritual gifts explaining that "The analogy was as follows: using gifts of the Spirit was like getting to know Christ by looking at Him through a **mirror**. When He returns, we will see Him in Person. Then the **mirror** (spiritual gifts) will no longer be needed."

**Gordon Fee** adds that "Our present 'vision' of God, as great as it is, is as nothing when compared to the real thing that is yet to be; it is like the difference between seeing a reflected image in a mirror and seeing a person **face to face**." In our own culture the comparable metaphor would be the difference between seeing a photograph and seeing someone in person. As good as a picture is, it is simply not the real thing." (NICNT-1 Cor)

As **Zodhiates** says "All our attempts to look at truth, as we see it reflected in creation, in history, in our own consciousness, and even in the Bible, can give us only a dim and imperfect idea of God and of heavenly realities, because of human finiteness and sin. Our perception of realities may be more or less the truth so far as our perception goes, but this is always dim and imperfect."

**Mirror** ([2072](#)) (**esoptron** from **eisópsomai** = to look into) a "looking glass" but actually a piece of flat metal, often bronze, sometimes silver (*P.Oxy.* 1449, 19) or even gold, with a handle of metal, ivory, or enamel, the metal being polished to reflect an image. Corinth was famous for manufacturing these "two part" instruments. Pliny mentions precious stone mirrors made of agate and emerald. Obviously the reflected image was not perfect compared to modern glass mirrors. Figuratively **esoptron** depicts the imperfect image believers have on earth of things in heaven, which can only be "seen" indirectly by faith as we look into God's word (1 Cor 13:12, cf 2 Cor 4:18). Only other use in James 1:23+ "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror."

**Vincent**, "The mirrors in NT times were usually so small as to be carried in the hand, though there are allusions to larger ones which reflected the entire person. The figure of the mirror, illustrating the partial vision of divine things, is frequent in the rabbinical writings, applied, for instance, to Moses and the prophets. Plato says: 'There is light in the earthly copies of justice or temperance or any of the higher qualities which are precious to souls: they are seen through a glass, dimly' (*Phaedrus*, 250). Compare *Republic*, vii, 516" (*WS*, 796).

**Dimly** ([135](#)) (**ainigma** from **ainissomai** = to speak in riddles) refers to a saying which is difficult to understand. **BDAG** - that which requires special acumen to understand because it is expressed in puzzling fashion, riddle (2) indirect mode of communication. In the context of mirror imagery **av.** signifies indirect image"

**Now I know ([ginosko](#)) in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known** - While we can know much about God, Christ and the Spirit, our knowledge is limited now. The phrase as I also have been fully known most likely reflects God's knowing of us, which is clearly full and complete. When we are in the eternal state we will have know God as fully as is possible.

**Lenski** says it this way "As God's direct and all-penetrating knowledge takes into account every one of his children already in eternity and, of course, through all of life, so we, too, shall at last know God directly and completely to the highest degree in which this is possible for his children." ([Commentary](#))

**Explore the Bible** - In summary Paul added one more contrast: life now means partial knowledge, even with the greatest outpouring of gifts; life then—when we see Christ—will mean we will know as fully as it is possible to know. Of course, we are all already fully known to Christ. How wonderful it will be when sin and its effects are finally removed!

**ILLUSTRATION** - A woman at a large social affair was descending a staircase when she saw what she thought was another woman descending the opposite stairs wearing the same style dress as herself. For a moment she stood transfixed with dismay, until she realized that she was actually facing a huge wall mirror.

**Know...known** (recognize, understand) ([1921](#)) **epiginosko** from **epí** means upon intensifies verb + **ginosko** =



to know) means to know fully, to know with certainty, to become thoroughly acquainted with or to know thoroughly, exactly, fully, or completely.

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

NET 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

NLT 1 Corinthians 13:13 Three things will last forever-- faith, hope, and love-- and the greatest of these is love.

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

NIV 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

GNT 1 Corinthians 13:13 νυν ὁ μὲν πίστις, ἡ ἀγάπη, τὸ ἄγαθόν· μεζών δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἡ ἀγάπη.

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

YLT 1 Corinthians 13:13 and now there doth remain faith, hope, love -- these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- **abide:** 1Co 3:14 1Pe 1:21 1Jn 2:14,24 3:9
- **faith:** Lu 8:13-15 22:32 Ga 5:6 Heb 10:35,39 11:1-7 1Jn 5:1-5
- **hope:** Ps 42:11 43:5 146:5 La 3:21-26 Ro 5:4,5 8:24,25 15:13 Col 1:5,27 1Th 5:8 Heb 6:11,19 1Pe 1:21 1Jn 3:3
- **love:** 1Co 13:1-8 8:1,3 2Co 5:10,15 Ga 5:6 1Jn 2:10 4:7-18
- **the greatest:** 1Co 13:8 14:1 16:14 Mk 12:29-31 Lu 10:27 Ga 5:13-22 Php 1:9 Col 3:14 1Ti 1:5 2Ti 1:7 1Jn 4:7-9 2Jn 1:4-6
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LOVE NEVER ENDS

In 1 Cor 13:8 Paul wrote **love never fails** and now he underscores that truth with the fact that love never ends.

**But now** - The understanding of the word "now" is crucial in how one interprets this passage.

**NAC** explains it this way - he words "**and now**" may carry temporal or logical force. If the sense of the construction is primarily temporal then Paul is referring to the experience of faith, hope, and love in the present life of the church. Even though love is forever, Paul ends his argument by emphasizing that love is for the present as well. In this reading, love is the greatest because only love carries into the future. Faith and hope are strictly for this present age. If, however, the sense of the words "and now" is logical, this opens the door for a different understanding. In other words, "now" refers to the conclusion of the argument, and the present tense verb "to remain" connotes something present that continues in the future. Already, Paul has included faith and hope in his definition of love (13:7, "always trusts, always hopes"), and the main thrust of the passage is the permanence of love over against the temporary spiritual gifts. In the age to come the people of God will continue to exercise faith in the sense of reliance on and trust in God, and they will continue to hope in the sense of expressing confidence in him. Paul does not say why love is the greatest. Perhaps it is because love is more than faith and hope (13:4-7) or that love is the very essence of God's character: 1 John 4:16, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." There is nothing greater than to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matt 22:36-40). (New American Commentary – Volume 28: 1 Corinthians)

**Explore the Bible** - Here, he commended these virtues as the engines that drive our lives forward as Christians now, in this lifetime. In one sense, when faith has become sight, no more faith will be needed; and when hope has been realized, it will not be necessary (Rom. 8:24; 2 Cor. 5:7). But in a greater sense, faith and hope will remain forever. As Paul had just stated in verse 7, love "believes all things" and "hopes all things." (Summer 2010).

**faith, hope, love, abide these three** Paul frequently links faith, hope and love - Rom. 5:1-5; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2-5; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8.

**but the greatest of these is love**- Paul began this chapter emphasizing the primacy of love, so it is only fitting to end on this same high note.

**Barclay** - "Faith without love is cold, and hope without love is grim. Love is the fire which kindles faith and it is the light which turns hope into certainty."

