

## Spiritual Gifts, Part 5 (1 Corinthians 13:1–13)

### The Superiority of Love, Continued

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (12/9/2018)

#### Introduction

1. We are commanded to “*pursue higher gifts*” (12:31), and the way of this seeking is to be governed by love, making Chapter 13 of great importance to the believer’s conduct in the body of Christ.
2. Paul lays out this regulating principle—*agape/love*—before discussing the main issue, the abuse of the gift of tongues.
3. Our last message and this one considers the qualities of *agape*, which is the essential of spiritual life and maturity. In fact, if a believer is not loving, he simply has a false profession (1 John 4:20, 21).
  - a. The divinely appointed agent in the believer’s sanctification and maturing process is the Holy Spirit, whose first evidence of holy living is *love* (Galatians 5:22).
  - b. Verses 4 and 5a (the last message) involves three pairs of characteristics, the passive and active aspects.
  - c. The first pair (*patience* and *kindness*) are the primary qualities, affecting the believer’s response in every situation.
  - d. The second and third pairs address how love affects these personal situations when they are either disappointing (not *envious* or *boastful*) or elevating (not *arrogant* or *rude*).
4. We conclude this descriptive of love today by covering the remaining characteristics.

#### IV. Love’s Behavior (v. 5b, 6)

1. Love is not *selfish* (v. 5; Romans 12:9, 10; Philippians 2:4).
  - a. The Greek original states that love does not seek the things pertaining to the self-life—is not selfish.
  - b. Love is personified in Jesus, being others-, not self-focused.
2. Love is not *irritable* or *resentful* (5b).
  - a. The Greek for *irritable* means to “make sharp” or to be aroused to anger. Love does not allow hurts to fester, making us touchy and ready to lash out. Love is the natural response to selflessness.
  - b. The Greek for *resentful* is an accounting term. Love does “not keep a record of wrongs done to it.” Love does not hold grudges.
  - c. Moses was denied access to the Promised Land because he became resentful of the people, having stored up all their wrongs committed so that he angrily responded to their complaint about no water (Numbers 20:2–11).
  - d. However, there is a good righteous anger that focuses on the wrong done, not the person doing it. Love reacts to the danger under which a wrongdoer unwittingly places himself.
3. Love does not rejoice (*chario*, the standard greeting or *farewell*) at a wrongdoer’s failings, but love rejoices (*sugchairo*, to take part in another’s joy) or celebrates triumphs of right (v. 6).

- a. At issue here is the perverse aspect of human nature that triumphs in the downfall of those who have wronged them.
- b. On the other hand, love celebrates with others when right and truth prevail.

## V. Love's Endurance (v. 7)

### 1. Love *bears* all things.

- a. The Greek means to *protect* something by keeping it *covered*. It bears in the sense that it wards off what threatens.
- b. Jesus is our example here, for He endured the shame heaped upon Him—the spitting, cursing, whipping, blasphemy and crucifixion—by praying, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

### 2. Love *believes* all things.

- a. This does not mean that love is gullible, accepting anything as true. It means that love understands that everything is moving toward the goal of the kingdom of Heaven in the sense expressed in Romans 8:28–30.
- b. Love expects the best in us because that is the goal. This is why—

### 3. Love never ceases to *hope*.

Love never gives up on people, which is why—

### 4. Love *endures* all things.

This verb is different from “*bearing all things*” above. This is a military term, meaning “to sustain the assault of the enemy.” Love never retreats; it just keeps on keeping on.

## What Can We Take Away?

- 1. Beware of the tendency to see love as a thing in itself. Love is Jesus’ living in us by His Spirit.
- 2. Keep in mind the context of this chapter—that Paul was addressing the many failings in the church, one of which was the envy and selfish desire to speak in tongues. Paul insists that we must consider others before ourselves.

Envy over tongues was not their only failing. They were impatient in the public meetings. Love would make them long-suffering. They were “puffed up” with pride in their knowledge and wisdom. Love removes pride and self-vaunting, replacing it with promoting others.

At the Lord’s Table, the Corinthians were behaving in an unseemly manner. Love would have their behavior pleasing the Lord. The Corinthians were pridefully protecting sin in their midst, but love does not rejoice in iniquity.

The Corinthians were counting up wrongs. Love wipes the record clean, never holding things against others. Warren Wiersbe wrote, “One of the most miserable men I ever met was a professed Christian who actually kept in a notebook a list of the wrongs he felt others had committed against him.”

- 3. Love edifies and releases the power of the Spirit in our lives and churches. Manifest the fruit of the Spirit—love.