

A More Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 13

Sermon Six: A More Excellent Way is Dependable [Conclusion]

March 28, 2021

Opening ILL: Obsolete electronics. How many things can you think of that were really really cool in their day, but now just seem kinda...unnecessary? How many of you used to cruise the roads, listening to 8-track tapes? How many of you used to walk the streets with a big boom box, or perhaps even better, a Walkman? How many of you spend your days surfing the web with a dial-up modem (remember “handshaking”) on your Gateway 2000 or Apple IIe computer? As great as these things were in the past, would you not agree that they are just obsolete now?

I. Introduction/Review

- A. A More Excellent Way Defended.**
- B. A More Excellent Way Defined.**
- C. A More Excellent Way Described.**
- D. A More Excellent Way Displayed.**

II. An Exposition of this More Excellent Way is Dependable [1 Corinthians 13:8-13]

A. Love is Permanent (v. 8)

1. Love never fails (falls—piptw)
 - a. A billion years from now, if years still exist, love will never be obsolete. It will just as relevant as it is today.
2. Miraculous gifts are, by their very nature, temporary.
 - a. Gifts of prophecy—Temporary. Why?
 - i. Prophecy foretells future events. In the Eternal state, there will be no future events.
 - ii. You will notice that, in the Bible, times of prophetic activity are often (always?) followed by extended times of prophetic silence.
 - b. Gifts of tongues—Temporary. Why?
 - i. There will be no confusion of language in Heaven.
 - ii. There will be less and less need for this gift as the message of the gospel is translated into the languages of the world and missionaries are sent to reach the world.
 - iii. Notice that a different verb is used for what happens to tongues than what happens to knowledge and prophecy.
 - a) This might simply be a stylistic variation.
 - b) On the other hand, it might set tongues apart from the other two gifts. Notice that in v. 9 knowledge and prophecy are mentioned, but not tongues.
 - c. Gifts of Knowledge—Temporary. Why?
 - i. Now bear in mind here that this is spiritual (miraculous) gift of knowledge, not knowledge itself.
 - ii. It is impossible for knowledge to cease. A supernatural gift of knowledge, however, can be temporary.
 - iii. The gift of knowledge is temporary, because we will one know like we ourselves are known.
 - a) See v. 12
3. When do gifts go away?
 - a. In General-- When God deems that they are no longer necessary.
 - b. When the perfect comes (v. 10)
 - i. In this context, the “perfect” is probably referring to return of Christ.
 - ii. Secondly, though, I think this sets up for us this idea that gifts function until something better comes along (we will deal with this in the coming verses).
4. Don't miss the point!
 - a. Do you see how easy it is to miss the central point here?
 - i. As soon as we look at this passage, we start wondering when the gifts cease. That is a secondary question. The primary question is this, “How is love better than these gifts?”

- ii. If we are not careful, we can fall into the same trap the Corinthians did...focusing on the gifts rather than focusing on love.

B. Gifts are Partial (vv, 9-10, 12)

1. What is Paul's argument here?
 - a. Even the gift of knowledge has not led the church to perfect knowledge.
 - b. Even the gift of prophecy has not led the church to perfect understanding.
2. We will surpass these gifts. They are incomplete. Love is not.
3. We will outlast these gifts. They are disposable. Love is not.
4. We will outgrow these gifts. We will never outgrow love.

C. Gifts are Preparatory (v. 11)

1. Childhood is, by nature, temporary.
 - a. A four-year-old who watches cartoons and has tea parties with her stuffed animals is cute. A forty-year-old that does the same thing...is...not so much.

ILL: The great toys I had as a kid. Wouldn't it be a little weird if I bought them on Ebay, not as momentos or for the purpose of collecting them as a hobby...but to play with? How would you respond if you dropped by my office and I was playing with Star Wars action figures?

2. Childhood serves a purpose.
 - a. The things that children do prepare them to be adults.
 - b. Once adulthood

D. Love is Paramount (v. 13)

1. Love is the most important command to be obeyed.
 - a. **Matthew 27:37-38** And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."³⁸ "This is the great and foremost commandment.
 - b. It is higher in quality than the spiritual gifts that so enamored the Corinthians.
 - c. It is permanent in duration.
2. Love is the highest human virtue.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**

III. A More Excellent Way Concluded [1 John 4:11]

A. Why should we love one another?

1. Because it is commanded.
 - a. **John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
 - b. **John 15:12** This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
 - c. **1 Peter 1:22** Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,
2. Because it is commended.
 - a. **1 John 4:11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

B. If love is so important, why don't we emphasize it?

1. Because it is hard.
2. Because it is humbling.

C. How shall I conclude this study?

1. On a personal note
 - a. This study has been very exposing to me. It has revealed my:
 - i. Tendency to minimize love.

- ii. Stubbornness to repent and to recognize my lack of love.
- 2. On a pastoral note
 - a. I honestly think that this church will stand or fall on this:
 - i. Do we love God?
 - ii. Do we love each other?
 - iii. Do we love the lost?
 - iv. Do we love...at all??
 - b. Beloved, please don't let this topic just slip from your mind. Pursue love.
- 3. On a praising note
 - a. Oh how he loves you and me!
 - b. Please, Lord Jesus, never let us tire of this them, this tremendous reality!

Quote: "Love" from the Valley of Vision

To the Praise of Your Glory,

Amen