8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 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. 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.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.  
  
 At the beginning of the chapter Paul showed how love was the necessary foundation for our lives. He then examined what love is and is not. Through this we can identify love and also seek to emulate it with our lives. We saw how it is not primarily an emotional connection, but instead actions and how we relate to one another. Now, Paul will conclude the chapter on agape love by further showing why living in love is so pivotal from an eschatological perspective.  
 Verse 8 starts with love never ends or another expression in the Greek would be it never falls apart. This is the main focus for the rest of the conclusion of the chapter. Love itself will not be talked about again until the final verse, but the necessity for love to be recognized as never falling apart. In either case of eternality or falling apart the point is that it lasts, it persists, it will continue on forever.  
 But if that is the case, what will not persist? What will not last? Paul reflects back onto the beginning of the chapter when he focused on prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. There he showed that even if we were to have these gifts, if we did not practice love, live in love, then we were nothing despite having all these things.  
 Yet, as he now shows, prophecies will pass away. At the end of time all prophecies will be fulfilled, and when the consummation of the kingdom comes such use for prophecies will be unnecessary. The same is true of tongues, no matter the way we understand it in that time such a gift will be unnecessary since we will experience God and each other, in a new cosmic way. Finally knowledge, knowledge does not mean here basic knowledge, but instead the knowledge that some are given as a gift to share with the congregation. At the end, all will be given the same knowledge of God in eternity.  
 This is established in verse 9. In this life we know and prophecy in part. There is still the potential for us to get it wrong, to not understand fully. Being limited and finite we are not given everything currently, we are unable to grasp the whole picture. Instead, we see little pieces, we get part by part. This is our lives currently. Buit will it always be?  
 The answer is no, as Paul continues with verse 10 when the perfect comes the partial will pass away. The pieces will, when eternity comes, be replaced by the whole. There will be no need for such gifts of the Spirit when we will experience it at fully when all is consummated at the end.  
 Verse 11 is quite famous. But what does he mean that when he was a child he spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child? What does it mean that when he became a man he gave up childish ways? This may reflect back onto the Corinthians themselves. They are, like children, reflecting on their various spiritual gifts with awe and wonder. Indeed, some of them have even come to the belief that they have received everything already, that the Kingdom has already come.  
 This, however, is short sighted. It is like a child who sees what is in front of them, or desires only what they want in the now, not realizing the repercussions or the long term. When it comes to Spiritual gifts, these things are good for the present, they are necessary for us here and now, but let us not assume that this is how it will always be. Likewise, let us not have a self-centered childish view of our gifts, where the gifts are for the person rather than the whole. But if that is the case, what is the necessary component for us to then practice even our gifts with each other? Paul has already given the answer, and that is love.  
 Verse 12 further reflects on the transit nature of this life. It is possible that Paul is using an analogy of a mirror for their own benefit. Corinth was known for their bronze mirrors. The question we want to know, however, is what does Paul mean? Does Paul mean that we only see a reflection of what we know, rather than the actual thing itself? This would be similar to Plato’s cave, in a way. In this when we stand in front of a mirror we do are not seeing ourselves, but a reflection of the self, or each other.  
 Conversely it could also mean that we only know what is distorted. While the mirrors of the past were good, they often had a convex and concave expression to them. Because of this it caused distortions in the image.  
 Ultimately it seems to me that the former is closer to the point Paul is trying to make. In particular with his statement, “face to face.” It isn’t that we cannot know now, it isn’t that all we get is distortions, it is that what we do know is like a reflection. We have accurate glimpses, but there will be a time when we experience the truth not through a mirror, but face to face. When we will experience it as it truly is.  
 Paul is then showing us the difference between here and now. Now, in this life, we know in part. When all is complete, however, we show know fully. The last line is a key. Being fully known know implies that God does not see things as we do as in a mirror. He is not finite. He sees all things exactly as they are. At the end we too will have this knowledge without filters.  
 The chapter concludes by reflecting on faith, hope, and love with the greatest of these being love. The real question is whether or not Paul is meaning that faith hope and love remain into eternity. If that is the case, then he is meaning that while everything else will pass away, faith, hope, and love will be what remain with love being the greater of the three.  
 Another understanding, however, is that when it comes to the Christian life there are three essentials, faith, hope, and love. Faith in Christ, hope in what He will accomplish, and the relational love between us all and Christ currently. However, out of these three only love will continue into eternity. For that which we have faith in will be revealed in full, and that which we hope in will be accomplished. Thus, it is possible that even if faith and hope remain in the new world it will be transformed. Love, however, will never end in it’s present form, it continues and endures through all eternity.  
 Ultimately, whichever view one holds it will make little difference in the here and now. We are a people of faith in Christ, we are a people who hope in Christ, and we are a people who love in Christ. We are called to these things, to trust in God and that which He promises He will deliver. Likewise we are called to love, and this love is the foundational relational principle to our lives.  
  
Main Point: The main point of these verses are for Paul to conclude the chapter on love. Here he focuses in on the eschatological understanding of love. While we currently have various manifestations of the Holy Spirit through miracles and knowledge, and wisdom, in the end love will remain even when the need for these manifestations ends. As such, to promote love, to live in love, is to carry with one something that will last for eternity, and if we are to seek anything it should be this.  
  
Application Points  
1). Love goes on, and on, and on: Oftentimes we can focus on the end times. It is interesting to speculate the when’s and the how’s, which prophecies might be fulfilled already, and which ones haven’t. Trying to grasp the specifics. I know I have delved into the riddle, wanting to know exactly how things are going to occur. The more I think about it, the more I think there is nothing wrong with it as long as we do not become over obsessed with it and allow it to be the only thing in our lives.  
 Indeed, considering such things and how they will be is just a natural response to our finiteness. We do not know, and we are a curious people. We often enjoy the pursuit of knowledge and how things were, are, and will be.  
 There is something about these things, however, and that is there will come a time when these things are fully revealed to us. When the riddle of the cosmos is finally shown. When we who were once unable to know fully do know fully. When all the pieces of the puzzle are put into place and we are able to see the whole picture, the final tapestry placed in this grand design.  
 The knowledge of these things, of these great mysteries, will come to an end because they will be fulfilled and we will be given the knowledge we once lacked. This does not mean we should not pursue the knowledge now, or seek understanding now, we always can and at times should do these things since they can help guide us in the world we are living in today. Yet, these things will eventually fade, they will pass, love, however, will remain.  
 As we continue focusing on the here and now it is impossible for us to not to notice our finiteness. The reason we do not know all things now is because we are finite. We are limited in our understanding based upon our current natures. At times we lament this, but God knows our finiteness. He knows our inabilities and knows our limitations.  
 It is no wonder, then, that Jesus in John 16:7 says, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” The Holy Spirit, the Helper. He convicts the world in regards to sin and righteousness and judgment, He bears witness to the greatness of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and all that will be accomplished. Thus, the infinite God has given us the Holy Spirit as a helper in this time of finiteness. The infinite dwelling among the finite as a helper.  
 Thus we see how we can receive glimpses of what we cannot know in our finiteness because of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit among us to give us wisdom and knowledge. Yet our finiteness does not end with our limitations in these things. We are often in need in other places in our lives. We need help in all manners of personal and corporate faithfulness as our physical limitations take hold.  
 Yet, to reveal His power to the world the Helper is not limited to the ethereal but can impact the physical world through various manifestations. Indeed, much of what Paul has been showing us, in regards to various miracles, healings, and even guiding us through particular kinds of leadership within the congregation.  
 These are all wonderful things for us to consider in this finite time. We are not alone, we are given help, and we are given information which finite beings would be unable to grasp apart from an infinite source. But what will happen when all is consummated? Will we need these kinds of manifestations? The answer is, no.  
 In other words, these are for a time, for a purpose, to help us get through. But these are not the end of all things. Even in time the manifestations of the Spirit will cease because our limitations will be changed and transformed. Into what? I can only speculate, but the transformation will occur and when it does that which did cause our limitations will be stripped away.  
 But will not fail? Love. For love is transcendent beyond the finite period. It continues into eternity. Not the mere emotional connection of love, but the relational aspect of patience, kindness, rejecting evil and rejoicing in the truth. This is what love does, and as we progress into the infinite with our God this love will continue among each of us.  
 Now I want to be painstakingly sure that we are not missing the point Paul is making in this. He is not saying that this is a love versus knowledge, or love versus wisdom, or love versus spiritual manifestations. Instead, he is placing everything in their proper contexts. The truth is we currently need wisdom, we currently need knowledge, we currently need manifestations of the Spirit amongst us to show us the power of our God and to guide us in this life. Right now, these things are necessary.  
 However, what Paul is reminding us is to emphasize love. We cannot let these things which are necessary for now overwhelm us completely to the point of a lack of love. Instead, in all things we must constantly seek love as the way. Love as the goal for each of us and our relationships with each other and the foundation on which our relationships are established as people and as a congregation.  
 Again, without love we personally gain nothing. Without love even manifestations of the Spirit will do us no good personally. We must be diligent to seek this love, to practice this love, to experience this love. Better to do little with love than a lot without love.  
 Thus by practicing love we are preparing ourselves for the future. We are practicing the infinite. We are familiarizing ourselves with what it means to go into eternity. It won’t be through things which will cease, but only through that which last. As we see today, love will last, it will continue, it will persist, it is the greatest because it has no limits, it has no ends.  
 This is the point of the chapter on love. This is the point of what Paul has been saying. We rejoice in the manifestation of the Spirit within and among us. We rejoice that we have been given the Helper to help us in our finiteness, in our inabilities, to give us strength in our weakness. Yet, we also acknowledge our finiteness will pass away into something glorious, and when it does that which remains from this time will be love.  
 As such, we must be resist the belief that we have already attained this glory. We must be on guard against the belief that we are already there. We are not there yet, but that is where we are going. Not to the grave, but to life, forever if we are in Christ Jesus.  
 There is no excuse for us, then. We must be faithful and obedient in the greatest of ways by seeking to love and love well. Not defining love as something it is not, but by seeing that love is the foundation for our relationships. That we are to be patient and kind with each other just as God is patient and kind with us, that we are to reject evil not rejoicing in it but rejoicing in the truth.  
 Let us rejoice, then, in the infinite. Let us rejoice that we can prepare ourselves for the future by loving God and loving each other and even ourselves. Let us rejoice in knowing that we do not need to wait for the end for us to practice such love, but that we can do so now amongst each other. That this love, which is the greatest of ways, which is above all gifts, can be applied and practiced by each of us equally and without hesitation.  
 Our great God has shown us the greatest love by redeeming us from our sins. Let us not delay in being faithful to love, knowing that as we persist, so too will love. Indeed, out of all these wonderful things we experience in this world, we can know that love will go on and on and on.