
The Constancy of Love (The Permanence Of These Three)

Defining Love

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Sermon: Defining Love: The Constancy of Love (The Permanence Of These Three)

Lesson Text

1 Corinthians 13:8–13 (KJV)⁸ Charity (LOVE) 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. ⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 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. 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. ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity (LOVE), these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity (LOVE).

Introduction

Today we will conclude this 3-part miniseries on defining love by looking at the last sections on what is universally known as the “Love Chapter” – the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians.

It defines God’s Love in three sections:

- The Contrast of Love: What Love is Greater Than (Tongues, Gifts, and Sacrifice)
- The Character of Love: What Love Looks Like (Grace, Goodness, and Endurance)
- The Constancy of Love: What Love Never Does (It Never Fails)

Constancy means consistency, reliability, dependability, and permanence.

We all have experienced the failures of life. Emotional failure from people and relationships (broken marriages, families, and friendships). Physical failure from your body (sickness, chronic illness, and even emotional stresses). Financial failures (loss of a job, failure of a career of business, unfair treatment).

But what do you do when you experience Spiritual Failure?

- How many of you have received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, but still fell to sin?
- How many of you have received a word of prophesy and it didn’t come to pass?
- How many of you have received divine impartation, the understanding of the word became clear, and yet you still screwed it up?

You accepted Christ, stepped out on faith, felt the presence of God, received the Spirit of God, studied the Word of God, and yet it didn’t work out – you failed!

The reason for these failures is because we are standing on foundations that fail us. We’ve built our lives on gifts and talents (natural and spiritual), but ultimately they will fail us.

Ephesians 4: ¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the**

fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Our gifts are good, but they are not perfect, they will fail us. And although we must not allow perfect to be the enemy of good, we need good; but our ultimate aim is to strive for perfect.

In this last section on Love, Paul opens up by telling us what will never fail, God's Agape Love.

He then tells us what will fail – our prophecy will fail, our tongues will cease, and our knowledge will vanish away. And if we are depending on these things, we will fail.

He then concludes by saying, actually three things will never: 1 Corinthians 13: ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

If we want to live a life that is not constantly failing, up and down, in and out, tossed to and fro, we must build it on the foundation of these three things - Faith in God, Hope in Christ, and Love from the Holy Spirit.

Series and Sermon: Defining Love: The Constancy of Love (The Permanence Of These Three)

(The Perfection Faith, The Maturity of Hope, The Permanency of Love)

I. The Perfection of Faith vs. The Imperfection of Prophecy

1 Corinthians 13: ⁸ ... but whether there be **prophecies, they shall fail;** ¹³ And now abideth **faith,**

To understand the perfection of faith, we must first understand the imperfection of prophecy.

How many of you have ever felt that you received a prophecy that didn't come to pass?

Now that doesn't mean that the prophecy was false, or that the prophet got it wrong, it simply could mean that they only saw it in part.

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

The truth is the gift of prophecy in part. We may see the vision but not know the time. Know the time but not have the right person. We may have the vision, but not know the place.

But more importantly, prophecy will fail because it's temporary.

Faith in God overcomes the imperfection of prophecy!

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

Prophecy is a temporary gift given to us to increase our faith in God, but once God shows us, we will no longer need prophecy to tell us he's coming.

Matthew 17: ¹⁹ Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

²⁰ And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith**

as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Prophecy tells you about God because you're imperfect, but Faith brings you to God, because He perfects you!

Hebrews 11: ⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Psalms 138: ⁸ The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

II. The Maturity of Hope vs. The Immaturity of Tongues

1 Corinthians 13: ⁸ ... whether *there be tongues, they shall cease*; ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope,

To understand the maturity of hope, we must understand the immaturity of tongues.

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.

Have you ever noticed that the language of a child is flawed? They don't get the diction right, their structure is off, they put the adjectives and the pronouns in the wrong place. Why? Because they are children. And many times, we don't quite understand what they are saying.

Just as the 13th Chapter of 1st Corinthians was about the constancy and maturity of God, the 14th chapter was about the immaturity of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14: ²³ If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

1 Corinthians 14: ²⁷ If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Hope in Christ overcomes the immaturity of tongues!

1 Corinthians 13: ¹¹ but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

People say they have the Holy Ghost because they speak in tongues, and yet they are still immature, they get attitudes, still quit and give up. But it's time to put away childish things.

Hebrews 11: ¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

I no longer need tongues to prove I have the Holy Ghost, my Hope lets me know I have him.

Romans 4: ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

1 Corinthians 13: ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“My Hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness. On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand, all others are sinking sand!”

III. The Permanency of Love vs. The Vanishing of Knowledge

1 Corinthians 13: ⁸ ... whether *there be **knowledge, it shall vanish away.*** ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, ***charity (LOVE)***, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity (LOVE).

The Constancy of Love:

- Faith in God overcomes the imperfection of prophecy!
- Hope in Christ overcomes the immaturity of tongues!
- The unfailing power of God’s Love overcomes the vanishing of man’s knowledge!

No matter how much human knowledge and understanding we have, at the end of the day it will eventually vanish away because it is limited.

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.

We may understand all mysteries and comprehend all knowledge, but we didn’t write the mysteries, and we didn’t create the knowledge. We may know the way, but God created the path. Maybe you can see some things, but God created your eyes to see, ears to hear.

Isaiah 55: ⁸ For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalms 146: ³ Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help.

Proverbs 3: ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Jeremiah 29: ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

And when the little knowledge and understanding we do have vanish away, God’s love will still be standing.

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

“I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the Master of the sea, heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me—Now safe am I.

Love lifted me, love lifted me, when nothing else would help, Love lifted me!”

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Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: The Constancy of Love (The Permanence Of These Three))

Lesson Text

- 1 Corinthians 13:8–13

Sermon Outline

- I. *The Perfection of Faith vs. The Imperfection of Prophecy*
- II. *The Maturity of Hope vs. The Immaturity of Tongues*
- III. *The Permanency of Love vs. The Vanishing of Knowledge*

Questions: (What was your main takeaway from this message?)

I. Getting to Know “Me”

1. When you travel, where do you like to stay? a) with family b) at an AirBNB c) hotel or resort d) bed & breakfast
2. What streaming services do you use most? (E.g., Netflix, Hulu, Prime, etc.)

II. Into The Bible

1. Answer the following questions according to 1 John 4:7-19:
 - i) What does it mean to be perfected in love when we struggle with imperfection?
 - ii) If loving God is the ultimate evidence of being born of God, how can spiritual maturity be measured by love rather than gifts?
 - iii) How does understanding that perfect love cast out fear change the believer’s reliance on spiritual gifts for assurance of one’s salvation?

II. Life Application

1. Paul explains that spiritual gifts and knowledge are temporary, but faith, hope, and love remain... and love is the greatest. In a world that often values achievements, influence, or being “right”, what does it look like in everyday life to prioritize love above everything else? Where might God be inviting you to shift your focus from temporary things to what will truly last?
2. In verse 11, Paul connects spiritual growth to maturity...putting away childish ways of thinking and responding. As we grow in faith and hope, how should that maturity show up in the way we love others? Is there a situation in your life right now where responding with Christ-like love would require a more mature response than what comes naturally?