

1 Corinthians 13 (Conrad Bowman) (7-22-07)

Chapter's 12 and 14 have to do with the gifts of the Spirit in general. Right in the middle is Chapter 13 which deals with love as the fruit of the Spirit. I have a note right at the head of Chapter 13 that says:

Love through the Spirit is not a gift, it's a given for the believer

Which means every believer has it. This is not a *special* enablement of the Spirit or service. This is a quality that is attached to the believer in order *to enable us to live the Christian life*. Francis Schaeffer said that love is *the mark of the Christian* at the end of the twentieth century. He wrote a whole book on that, and it's very good. His theology is not very good, but the book is good. He's thoroughly reformed in his theology and you'll get some strange flavors from that, because he believes in infant baptism and several other things that we do not endorse; but what an exceptional man in terms of his relationship to the Lord, and he nailed that principle of Love; that love is the essential quality of life of the believer that sets him/her apart from the world.

Now, Chapter 13.

If I speak with tongues men and of angels – [is a first-class conditional clause] – since I speak with tongues of men and angels.

So we would say since I speak with tongues of men and of angels – an affirmative statement –

But do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

So if love does not mark your life, if that's not the motivator that drives your attitude and your actions toward other people, then all you are doing is making noise. You might as well be in a brass band, because that's as far as it goes, it's just racket.

And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and have all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.

Now, remember that when you look at the word “knowledge,” there are four words that we usually deal with in terms of *knowledge*, in the Greek, and that’s *óida* which means facts, raw data. The next is *gnossis* which is facts taken in and organized so that you can understand them in terms of structure and concepts. They are not necessarily tested in your experience yet, but they are organized in terms of tenets and precepts. So when the OT says you are to learn and you are to teach your children, line upon line and precept upon precept; that’s what it’s talking about. It’s talking about *gnossis*. You take the facts as you see them and you organize them into terms of precepts and tenets. Then you apply those principles in your experience to see if they are true. To indicate that level of knowledge, the Greeks would just take a little prefix, *epi* and add it to the word as a intensifying prefix; so we get *epignosis*, which is knowledge gained by testing, you know it’s true because you tested it. That’s the *oida* that you know and you’ve organized it into precepts, applied to your experience, and now that it has been applied in your experiences it becomes tested knowledge--things you know to be true because you’ve tried them and you’re personally involved with them.

Now you can borrow *epignosis* from one another. Daryl, my youngest brother in California likes to call that “*parable selling*.” And it’s also *parable teaching*. In other words, if we look at Paul’s example in his Epistles, and we trust him enough that his experience becomes our own; then we can borrow what he’s tested in his experience and knows to be true. We can accept that as true and act on it in similar circumstances, and that’s *parable teaching*; *parable learning*; or *parable selling*. So we borrow principles from one another. Our prayer life is a good example of that. The reason we pray with thanksgiving is that God’s answered prayer in my life becomes a testimony to you that the trust that I have for God in my life is something you can use in your own life as a basis for decisions. And sometimes that jump starts us to action. So, now, when we hear of God’s work in one another’s lives, what we do is take that experience and make it part of a collective body of experience – our *epignosis* grows. So I have one level of *epignosis* that’s my own, and I have another level of *epignosis* that we share. This becomes the things that Scripture says we “hold in common.” It’s the things we hold in common that become our testimony to one another. For instance, when we take the Lord’s Table, and we take the bread in our hand. That little scrap of bread means something to each one of us. It means and represents the body of Christ broken for us. And Christ said,

As often as you do it, do it in remembrance of me.

It calls to mind His body which was broken for us. So when we take that bread and we share it with one another, and everybody has it in their hand, then we are going to eat it together – that's a common testimony that raises our level of *epignosis*.

Now, the word for “brain” is “*nous*.” You’ve heard me say this before; the Christian life is a process of taking the *oida* as you see it around you, together organizing it into *gnossis*. Apply it in your life and it becomes *epignosis* and you stuff that in your *nous*. The fuller your *nous* is, the fuller your life is and the stronger your trust is. It’s not that complicated, is it? until you start getting kids, and cars, and taxes, and war, and all the rest of it, involved with it. All it takes to upset that process is some inane inconsequential act upsetting my routine! Isn’t that true? And all at once our focus is not on what we are learning and what God is doing; our focus is on that burning right here in the middle of our stomach. And, we’ve got to get rid of that. And Alka-Seltzer is the answer. Or is it? It’s not! Because the worry that drove that shot of acid to our stomach is nestled in a different place. It’s up here, in our *nous*, not down here. So, we borrow the advice of our Apostle Paul; we “make it our ambition to live a quiet life, tend to your own business, work with your own hands, just as I have commanded you, so you might not be in need and live at peace with all men” one of our most-often quoted verses. That’s Paul’s instruction to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. That’s his instructions for living the Christian life. See how it all flows together?

What I want you to see is as we finish this, (I’ve got 13 verses and I’m going to get there, we’re just at verse 2 so far, but I promise we’re going to get there) what I want to gift you with more than anything else is the view of a solid package of information that Paul is giving to the Church. He wrote 13 epistles. And in those thirteen letters he gave them everything that we would need in order to sustain the Church from the 1st century – 59 or 60 A.D. – to today; and beyond today to Christ’s return for us. Thirteen letters; can you imagine doing that? I’ve written about, 1,000 pages of commentary on those thirteen letters, just to get through this course we’re in. We’ve circulating about 1,000 pages of commentary just to look at what Paul was saying. Can there be any doubt—or let me put it another way, there is not doubt in my mind – I am rock solid convinced that God gave it to him word for word, and as He gave it to him that’s the way Paul delivered it to us. So it is no wonder that he said to Timothy,

Hold fast to the things I have given to you, and those things teach to others as well. [Remember that to the Galatians, he said], If I or

an angel from heaven should show up in front of you and teach you anything other than what you already have heard, let that man be accursed.

Let him be accursed, cut him off. Don't listen to him. That's how strong he was about the things he was teaching. Now, if, from time to time we who are privileged to stand in front of you seem to be insistent on what we're saying, that's the reason for it. We look at this and we see what Paul has been given by revelation of the Spirit, and why he gave it to those he taught, in the white hot presence of the Spirit that was his life, and residing inside of him, and that drove him in his ministry. We see that, and we can't back away from that body of truth anymore than Paul could.

Chapter 13, Verse 2.

If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries.

And this is important because if Paul says if I know all mysteries he is revealing to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians – he is revealing the mystery hid from the foundation of the world – that's what he said in Ephesians, and it's the mystery of the Church.

And if I have all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and don't have love, I am nothing.

Remember, Christ Himself said '*if you have faith the same as a mustard seed, you could say to the mountain, remove yourself to the sea,*' and that hill would be gone. "But if I don't have love," and love is *agape*, you remember, *agape* is source love – it's love that does not require a response; that's *agape*. Another word for love is *eros*, it's not used in Scripture, *eros* is 'if it feels good, do it;' that's *eros*. The third word is *phileo*, from which we get Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love; *phileo* is brotherly love; you love because you have shared and hold things in common. Now the Christian has all three types of love. He has *eros*, he has *phileo* love, or family love, also called *storge*, and he also has *agape* love.

Agape love can only come from the spirit. You are body, soul, and spirit. And out of your spirit comes *agape* love. The thing that drives *agape* love is your will, you "will" to love. That's the only way you can love something that's unlovely. This is what happens when you get in a moment of disorder, at home, between you and your wife – I understand those things happen. You still love one another –

you do not like one another at the moment – but you still love one another. Now, the only way to do that is to “will” to love. That’s the basis for all forgiveness and that’s the kind of love that Christ loved us so that while we were yet sinners He died for us, He gave Himself to die for us. It’s the only basis upon which you can forgive somebody from wronging you; it’s to dip into that well of *agape* love that’s the result of the act of the will. So, if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have *agape* love I’m nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if God delivers my body to be burned and do not have love, it profits me nothing. As an individual, I don’t grow one bit, because anything short of that, or anything in the place of *agape* love, is done for the purpose of personal gain – whether it’s emotional gain, whether it’s financial gain, or whether it’s a gain in our power, or authority, or whatever. But everything that you do other than *agape* type of love is done for the benefit it brings to you. Now, comments?

C.S. Lewis wrote a small book on the four loves; *agape*, *phileo*, *storge*, and *eros*. It is a grand study that we must do sometimes.

Now, love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous. Love does not brag, and is not arrogant.

I’m using the New American Standard, and that’s a very good rendering of that particular verse. Love is patient, love is kind – why do we find it easier to extend kindness to a stranger, or to a casual acquaintance than we do to the person we live with and spend 40 or 50 years with.

Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous, love does not brag, and is not arrogant.

My friend Charlie Jones, he’s now with the Lord, he used to say the Christian life consists of going through life bragging on Jesus. That’s it. Period. This kind of marked his life. He was right about that, especially in his case.

Love does not act unbecomingly.

And that word means, it does not draw attention to unattractive qualities in your life. It does not seek its own. This is consistent with what Paul told the Galatians in Chapter 6:

Let every man seek another's good, bear ye another's burdens, bear your own load but bear ye other's overload.

That's Galatians Chapter 6; two different words for burden, one for cargo and another for overload.

Love does not seek it's own. It is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things, so love never fails – it doesn't falter.

That can only be *agape*.

If there are gifts of prophecy, and there are, they **will** be done away – [and to be done away, means], they'll move themselves away.

This is a middle voice in the Greek, it doesn't mean it will be moved away by an external source, it means *they are going to move themselves away*, because the purpose for which they were given has passed. This is a real pivotal point, not just in the letter, but it's a pivotal point of Christian doctrine in the growth and maturity of the Church – remember at this time there is no [written] Scripture, the only Scripture they had that they could depend on was the OT Scripture, and primarily the first five books of the Bible written by Moses. That's what they're looking at when they talk about Scripture. So, when you look at this passage, the gifts of prophecy, etc.,

They **will** do away with themselves if there are tongues, they **will** stop themselves.

This is what the word "cease" says. Again, it's a middle voice, which means it acts on itself. So, it says,

Where there **will** be tongues, they **will** stop themselves. If there is knowledge, it also **will** stop itself, or place itself away.

So, you've got three demonstrations of gifts – tongues, knowledge, and prophecy. In this case, the word prophecy is always translated "forth-telling." It says, "if there are prophecies," and that's talking about the individual

pronouncements of God's will and intention. We always think of prophecy in terms of "foretelling" events to come – prophecy has more to do with speaking forth the will and intention of God, where it has not been spoken before, on any subject. That's what Paul is doing throughout all his thirteen letters. That is what James did, and Peter did, and John the apostle did in his general epistles, and that's what John did in Revelation. He was speaking forth the will and intention of the Father. In Revelation, you get a lot of "foretelling," but in the other ones you get "forth-telling" God's will, and that's the primary use of the word prophecy. So they, the sign gifts, are going to stop themselves. What was the gift of prophecy all about? Remember, when Jesus came and presented Himself, and with His miracles, it was in this sequence; He came first at the wedding at Cana in Galilee, and that was His first miracle; water turned to wine. That was the announcement of Himself as the Kinsman Redeemer, and it was authenticated by His works. "If you don't believe Me, believe My words, or believe Me for the works that I do." First He gave His word; then He gave His work to authenticate it. That was always the reason why miracles were performed. They weren't performed for the specific benefit of healing the individual. That was not the purpose. That was the occasion. When he told the man, take up your bed and walk. It wasn't in order to get the man on his feet, it was to demonstrate the power and authenticity of the One who declared, "Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk off." It authenticated His person. Now, Scripture says the Jew requires a sign, the Gentiles don't. Jews always required a sign. The reasons signs were given was in order to authenticate to the first crowd of believers, all Galileans that the Gentile crowd that was following them had been given exactly the same gifts, and touched by exactly the same Spirit, and were joined to the same body that they were in, so that there couldn't be any first and second class citizenship on earth or in heaven. That was the reason the miracles and the sign gifts, and the word of knowledge was given. It was given so that man could not say, "we've got something you don't have." Christ was a Jew Himself. All the prophesies of the OT were given to the Jewish patriarchs and the Jewish fathers and prophets? When that abruptly came to an end at Pentecost that end too was first to the Jew by means of the Holy Spirit being given to 120 Galilean Jews. Now, so there could be no misunderstanding of God's intention because over at Ephesus, when Paul finally got there, and wrote Ephesians, he wrote 'the mystery has been revealed.' That's why he mentions mystery (because the mystery is God's bringing out the church, which was according to His eternal purpose) in Ephesians Chapter 2. The revelation of the Church was always God's intention – the center-point of history, not the cross! Now listen carefully to this – the center-point of history was not the cross – the cross enabled the center-point of history, which was the revelation of the Church. That revelation

followed the act of Christ on the cross. The cross is the single most important event in the history of man, but it is not the center-point of history. The center-point of God's eternal purpose, as stated in Ephesians and elsewhere, was the revelation of the New Testament Church. Ephesians 2:10 says,

You are God's masterpiece, His masterwork, which is according to his eternal purpose.

That's you. How little we think of what the Church is. This magnificent organization, this magnificent body is God's masterwork. Masterwork! Does He have high expectations of you? Incredibly high! You couldn't imagine how high! So high He invested His own character in His own Spirit and put that Spirit within you! He is in every one of you! You have the same Holy Spirit within you that was in the Lord Jesus who took it to the cross. That's remarkable. That's staggering to think about it. That God loved us so much that He took His own character, and everything He is and poured it into us, so that we might take that and do what Paul has enjoined us to do. "Make it your ambition to live a quiet life." Can you imagine that? The power and character of God encased in your skin and bones with the intention of keeping you calm and living a quiet life so that you could watch that Spirit explode out of you at the most inordinate time and accomplish some incredible things. It's only if you're living quietly that you get to see that and give the proper credit where it's due. Otherwise, you start getting full of pride, and start patting yourself on the back about all the good things you have done for God. And, you get together with other people who are patting themselves on the back, and now you've got a church that's patting itself on the back. And, we start attacking the community around us with grand plans. That's not what accomplishes God's purpose. We live a quiet life, and the Spirit of God moves through that quietness and into everyone we touch, and lights the fire of His presence in them, and you can't hold them back. So they come to you, and now they're on fire with the same Spirit that's driving you and you have the privilege of growing together as you come to see and understand this marvelous Word that He has given us. It's incredible. It's an absolutely magnificent and incredible thing. And it can't be duplicated. It's the one thing that can't be duplicated by an enemy that is so shrewd, a master deceiver. He can take anything else and duplicate it and make it as phony as a three-dollar bill. But this he can't. Why? Because there is to be none of us and all of Him in our lives as we live it out day by day. Our life is not to go out searching for big things to do for God, our job is to go through life watching for those things that He is doing for Himself. Remember the end of Ephesians 2:10, and that is, before the foundation of the world, you were created as His masterpiece He created "for good works

prepared beforehand," and that word "beforehand" is all the way back "beforehand," that you should walk in them. We don't walk in our works. We are expected to walk in His works. We're to walk in His works. We are to go through life and watch where God is working, and then just step onto those squares, and revel in what He is doing in the lives of other people. Its His work. When you get to Revelation and John is looking to the end of all things and he writes his letter to the seven churches, everyone of them say,

I know your works, you're busy, busy, busy, etc. I know your works. And I'm not really happy about it.

That's what He says in so many words every time in those seven letters to the seven churches. Except you repent and return to my works, I'm going to have to come to you in judgment. You see that? But John is writing in about 100 A.D. Paul is writing in about 58 A.D., 59 A.D., somewhere in that neighborhood. So in 40 years we move from where Paul is writing these letters to where John is writing his recap, and by then the Church has already lost the battle. It's already begun to come apart. And it flies apart so far that the Dark Ages follow. Then we go into seventeen hundred years of darkness. And then in the 1800's (1830's, 1850's), things begin to re-awaken through the missionary efforts , the missionary work that was coming out of England, and all at once the gospel is just re-awakened, and there's a revival in Ireland, and there's a revival in the United States, and there's a revival in England, and there's a revival in Germany – the German philosophers begin to write, and very soon the intellectual part of the German philosophers begin to come in and God is dead. Well, it was a Frenchman named Roussier who took the work of the Englishmen Darby, writing in England in German, and this Frenchman translated the German into English so we could read it. Only God would arrange that. His name is Roussier. Darby wrote the Synopsis of the Bible, is a marvelous little five volume set of commentaries that I love. They were translated from German, into English by a Frenchman.

So, prophecies go away because the Jew is now convinced that the wall of separation between them and the Gentiles has been removed by Jesus on the Cross. The Book of Acts, in Acts 2, 8, and 10, record for us the movement of the Spirit out of the 120 Galileans into the Samaritans in Chapter 8 and then into the Gentiles in Chapter 10. That's 2, 8, and 10 of Acts. The reason it records that for us is because it's detailing to us that the gift of tongues was given to the Jew in order that they might see in the Samaritan and in the Gentile the same reaction of the Spirit when He filled those people. It authenticated to the Jew, who required

a sign, the fact that that same body was being constructed outside of national boundaries. And, this is very important to them because they have been the chosen nation since Exodus 19. They knew they were special. They needed the authenticating gifts in order that they might see that the chosen people now spread outside of Israel and included Samaritans, and Gentiles of every stripe. That was the reason for tongues. Once that authentication to the Jew had passed, the tongues had no further purpose. We're not testifying today, no one is even pretending to testify to Jewish unbelievers or skeptics for their own edification. It makes the tongue speaker feel good, and that's not building them up one bit, because the purpose is gone. The same thing was true of prophecies, and the same thing was true of knowledge. We don't need word of knowledge revelations anymore, what we need is "study to show you're approved unto God a workman that needs not be ashamed." We have the canon of Scripture, and we have the completed testimony of God; so we need to study, not to look for revelations in addition to this written Word. God is not in the business of revealing new truth today.

Now, we've said a lot about the transitional period of the Jew that was covered by James and 1st and 2nd Peter and Hebrews in the early part of the Church. Where that first generation Jew moved over into grace, and then began to assimilate into the Church.

When the perfect comes [that's what he is talking about, the completion of the written Word], the partial will be done away. When I was a child – [and he is talking to those who depended on those things] – I used to speak as a child, I used to think as a child, reason as a child. When I became a man I did away with childish things. [And then he is reinforcing that he did away with those things just like they do away with themselves] But now we see in the mirror dimly, then face to face with Christ. Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. But for now abides faith, hope, love; these three. But the greatest of these is *agape*.

Agape is the will to do because it benefits others; never to serve self, but always to serve those around you. That's the center of our life, and should be. That's Pauline.

Phil Richmond closed with a prayer. Father in heaven we thank you for this message, we thank you for this teaching, and it stirs us up and makes us think,

Lord, and I pray Lord that You give us those good questions to ask, Lord, that we might be able to answer those things. I pray for each and every one here, there are issues in your lives, I pray You strengthen them and comfort them and give them Your joy and Your peace and Your opportunities as they move around this day and this week, in Jesus name we pray. Amen.