

Paul puts the Corinthians on notice that something completely new is coming. The manifestations of the Spirit are going to pass away, but a new spiritual world order is going to manifest itself in the body of Christ in which spiritual gifts will not be a part. In 12:28-29, Paul listed some of the manifestations of the Spirit in descending order with apostles and prophets at the top and tongues at the bottom. In chapter 13 he ascends from tongues to knowledge and faith. It's important to note that at least five years later, when Paul wrote Ephesians there were no gifts of healings, miracles, or tongues. Paul was leading them to maturity, away from the manifestations which would not be needed once the church was complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). He is going to show them a more excellent way to Christian maturity, and that is what he begins to do in chapter 13.

### What about Charity? | 1 Corinthians 13:1

In 12:31 Paul says he will *show unto you a more excellent way*. Why do the Corinthians need a more excellent way? Because there is coming a time when the *manifestations of the Spirit* will no longer be given.

Verse 1—

Even **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels**. There are a couple of possibilities when it comes to the **tongues...of angels**. The most popular view is that there is some sort of heavenly angelic language. This interpretation is popular among Charismatics today in that they teach *speaking in tongues* as some kind of supernatural spiritual language.

Another view, the one which I hold, is that is that the **tongues of men and of angels** is the same known language. Whenever an angel speaks in Scripture, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the hearer always heard him in his own language, perhaps Hebrew, or maybe Aramaic. This makes common sense since the first use of tongues in Acts, we find that when the disciples spoke with *other tongues* (Acts 2:4), those nearby *heard them speak in his own language*. In fact, the *other tongues* that were spoken at Pentecost, in Acts 2, were known languages.

Acts 2:6: "Every man heard them speak in his own *language* (Greek: *dialektos*).

Acts 2:8: "And how hear we every man in our own *tongue* (Greek: *dialektos*).

Paul, as he does often, is speaking with a lot of hyperbole in this chapter. Regardless of which view one holds, it is impossible to develop a doctrine or conclusion based on three words, **and of angels**. The tongues of men and of angels is not Paul's point—either way there is something that surpasses tongues, it is **charity**.

Without **charity**, regardless of how one speaks, he will have **become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal**. Paul could have a brass instrument in mind, or he could be thinking of the clanging of metal objects. The word for **brass** is translated *money* two times in the N.T. In Mark 12:41 it's used of money being cast into the treasury. But Paul could mean a trumpet or musical instrument that isn't played properly (See 14:8). The word **tinkling** is translated one other time as *wailed*. **Cymbal** is only used here and it is from the root word *kuma* which could mean to swell, or bend, or curve. The idea might be the rising and falling of someone wailing. In both cases he seems to be referring to meaningless sound if there is no Charity. We will see more on *tongues* when we get to chapter 14.

Why does the KJV use the word **Charity**? The Greek word is *agape* and it is translated **love** 92 times in other passages. No other translation, old or modern, uses the word **Charity** (the only exception is the Wycliffe translation of the late 1300's in Latin, the word is *caritas*). Some believe the KJV translators used **Charity** to show the context is dealing with a *believer's love toward another believer*. Whatever their reasoning, and whether you use the word **charity** or love, it is *agape*, and it doesn't change Paul's reason for using the word *agape*. If you don't have it, you're just a noise maker.

Verse 2—

Moving from tongues, the last of the spiritual manifestations, he addresses several of the greater manifestations, prophecy, wisdom (Greek: **σοφία** \ *Sophia*, but he uses the word **οἶδα** \ *eido*, *understanding* here), knowledge, and faith (a supernatural faith). Without love Paul says, **I am nothing**.

Verse 3—

Social justice by itself is no profit for Christian love. Even **though I bestow all my goods to feed** (Literally: If I could put a little crumb in everyone's mouth—nourish everyone). **Give my body to be burned** that is, to die even under torture for religion. For example a

Jihadist who only dies for his cause and for selfish gain of paradise, but has no love for his fellow man--there is no profit in that. Sacrifice without love amounts to **οὐδείς / oo-dice, it profiteth me nothing.**

Verses 4-7

Instead of personal endurance and longsuffering, we are to allow love to do it all for us in thirteen ways. 1) patience | **suffereth long.** 2) kindness | **is kind.** 3) Pursue its own good | **envieth not.** 4) humility | **vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.** 5) Behaves | **doth not behave itself unseemly.** 6) Unselfish | **seeketh not her own** (see, 10:25). 7) Good natured | **not easily provoked.** 8) Pure thoughts | **thinketh no evil.** 9) Just | **Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in truth.** 10) Strong | **bears all things** 11) Trusting | **believeth all things.** 12) Optimistic | **hopeth all things.** 13) Untiring | **endureth all things.**

Verses 8—

The manifestations of the Spirit without love are simply put, annoying. The bottom line is that **Charity never fails**, but the manifestations of the Spirit will. Paul says, **prophecies, they shall fail...tongues, they shall cease, knowledge, it shall vanish away.**

Verse 9-10—

**We know in part, and we prophesy in part.** The manifestations are just a part of the Corinth church—they do not make up the whole of the church. They were partly useful for the Corinth church. These things that are just parts, **when that which is perfect is come...the part shall be done away.**

If you are a *continuationist* you believe the manifestations continue and are still operating today. If you are a *cessationist* like me, you believe they have ceased and are no longer operational. Therefore, we know it will happen. The question is when?

The timing (or the key) has to do when **that which is perfect is come.** At that time **then that which is in part shall be done away.**

There are three thoughts (I hold to the third) of what Paul means by **that which is perfect is come.** Has the perfect come?

1. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ (or more precise, during the millennium). That fits with verse 12, we shall see **face to face.** But in the millennium there is not full perfection. And Paul says they will cease when **that which is perfect is come.**
2. The eternal age (after the millennium). But in eternity, all of the old things have passed away, not just the manifestations of the Spirit.
3. The completion of the Scriptures (the Bible). The gifts were always used as a mouthpiece for God (the context has been the revelation from God). They were the vehicle through which God communicated to man before the completion of the Word of God. After Revelation 22:21 there was no more revelation from God. Why would we need manifestations of the Spirit if we are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)? We do not need a new revelation from God. This is really the only solution that fits the context.

Verse 11—

**When I was a child, I spake as a child.** Tongues were not for the mature, rather they were the elementary way of communication until the perfect came. Like a child communicating with rudimentary words. **I understood as a child** (elementary prophecies/wisdom). **I thought as a child** (basic knowledge of the mysteries of God). **Became a man...put away childish things.**

Verse 12—

The Corinthians did not have a full understanding of the completeness of God and therefore Paul said, **we see** (he is speaking to the Corinthians) **through a glass, darkly, but then** (we today) **face to face.** Today, if we *study word* (2 Timothy 2:15), and rightly divide God's Word, we will come to understand more and more, **face to face.** The completed word of God helps us in all aspects of our Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16).

Verse 13—

What is the opposite of the manifestation of the Spirit? **Abide** (dwell on) **Faith, hope, and charity.** And the greatest? **Charity (Love).** We place our faith in the truth of the Scriptures, our hope is in the blood of Jesus Christ and His coming for His church, and charity is the full expression of Christian love until Jesus comes.