

## CHAPTER 13



St. Paul begins 1 Corinthians 13 with the “more excellent way” he mentions in chapter 12 (12:31): the way of love. He states that, even if his spiritual achievements were of the very greatest sort, but he had no love for others, then those achievements would be worthless. As St. John Chrysostom concludes, “In other words, says, Paul, if I have no love I am not just useless but a positive nuisance.”

The apostle gives a definition in verses 4-8 of what constitutes true love: it is longsuffering and kind (13:4), it rejoices in truth (13:6); it is supremely patient, understanding, and hopeful (13:7); in a word, “Love never fails” (13:8).

We should note that St. Paul’s explanation says not only what love is (virtue), but also what love is not (vices). St. John Chrysostom points out, “He adorns love not only for what it has but also for what it has not. Love both elicits virtue and expels vice, not permitting it to spring up at all.”

The fact that love will never fail is significant, because it is the one thing listed in chapters twelve and thirteen that will not cease (13:8).

In fact, the gifts of prophecy and knowledge given now by the Holy Spirit are only partial: God has not yet revealed to us everything there is for us to know and speak (13:9). The things which Christians can know and speak are not erroneous, but there will come a day in which God perfects all things, and there will then be no need for individual Christians to possess limited gifts of knowledge or prophecy (13:10). As St. Basil the Great teaches:

Even though more knowledge is always being acquired by everyone, it will ever fall short in all things of its rightful completeness until the time when that which is perfect being comes, that which which is in part will be

done away.

St. Paul likens our situation to that of being an adult versus being a child (13:11). Similarly, seeing things in a dim mirror gives you a significantly inferior view to looking directly at the objects (13:12). These give us some idea of what St. Paul has taught us about the spiritual gifts: they are appropriate to our situation now, but in the future - after God perfects all things - we shall no longer need them.

What will continue into that day are faith, hope and love (13:13). The greatest of these is love, St. Cyprian of Carthage teaches, because “it excels both good works and suffering of the faith. As an eternal virtue, it will abide with us forever in the kingdom of heaven.”



## TODAY'S SPECIAL: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

The second commandment stated by our Lord in Matthew 22 is “love your neighbor as yourself.” There are many ways in which we can exhibit such love for all people. One way is to be concerned with the physical needs of others. We should also be willing to forgive those who have committed an offense against us.

One of the most significant ways in which we can show love for our neighbors is by sharing with them the good news of Christianity. Only through a relationship with God can the individual find forgiveness of sins and the joy of being adopted into the family of God and becoming a co-heir with Christ (see Romans 8:16-17).

Loving our neighbor becomes even more important when the individual in question is also a Christian. One of the central ways in which Holy Scripture tells us that we can demonstrate love for our fellow Christians is by being not only forgiving of the sins of others, but also repentant for our own transgressions.

Our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ must be unfailingly humble. Arrogance, and particularly hostility, toward our brothers will result in our condemnation. Our humility should be such that, not only should we avoid arrogance toward others, but we should not even demand love from them in return for our love.

