

“Love lasts forever”

 Welcome and Opening Scripture

Hymn: MP 560 Praise my soul the king of heaven

Bible Reading: Ps 136 Alternate sides respond

Prayer of adoration and praise.

Children’s talk What would you like in your house?

Open prayer / Chorus time.

Missionary focus

Notices Harvest next Sunday 26th Sept, Playgroup.

Main reading: 1 Cor 13:1-13 (page 1154) Rev 2:1-7 (p1234)

Hymn: MP 672 Oh how I love the Saviour’s Name

Sermon “Love lasts forever”

Hymn MP 296 I stand amazed in the presence

Close -----

Listen to today’s sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org.

The audio file is [21_09_19.mp3](#).

*Welcome and pray*

Living in a rented property is different from having your own house.

Enhance your rented property by adding a porch, or extension or garage, or new drive and the day will come when you will have to leave it all behind.

... It would have been better to invest in things you can take with you.

So in this life. Here all is temporary – and short – the big bit – eternity is to come – and it will. Then many of those things you have built here will be of no value. That is unless it is something you can take with you.

✚ Love is something you can take with you. x2

The various gifts you have been given, different gifts as God has determined to each of you, they are for this life, this life.

But not love. That done in love has an eternal value. It will not be forgotten.

It has been a while since we looked at this 1 Cor 13 passage on love. We have picked our way through the characteristics of love in some detail. They are found in verses 4-7. This section is the kernel. Now we stand back a bit and see it in a wider context. As we look at the passage the message of the front section 1-3 is picked up again and continues from v8 onwards. If the whole chapter is a car - then v4-7 is the engine. We saw what love is, and that is essential, now like a precious stone it is set within the silver of the whole chapter. This says that love must be seen in its eternal context.

We have dug into the detail, - now we must not miss the greater view.

Why it is so important? It is very easy to do two things:

1. It is very easy to get mixed up between using our gifts as we should - and acting in love as we must.
2. Secondly - It is very easy to miss the long view. Think short term not long term

Let me explain....

At the beginning **tongues, prophecy and knowledge** are all mentioned.

The Corinthian Christians in being given gifts became proud and patted themselves on the back. God says, yes but where is love? x2. My Church is not to be run as a business, it is to be a loving family!

The point being is that love is far more important than the use of your gifts. It’s no good being a good speaker, organiser, pray’er if you don’t have love. If that is you then you are only a **resounding gong or a clanging cymbal**. to have **Knowledge and faith but have not love, I am nothing**. And whatever I try to do if **I have not love, I gain nothing.**”

The message is clear. Take the most impressive gift, you name it, but to have no love will count for nothing and leave you bankrupt.

In our next section from 8 onwards the point is that these gifts are temporary **“Prophecies, they will cease; tongues, they will be stilled; knowledge, it will pass away.** Again in v9 **For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.**

In other words, these gifts are temporary.

■ Like the scaffolding, it is only there to see the building take shape.

It is important – but these gifts like scaffolding – are temporary - they have a limited function. Once the work is completed they are removed.

What has God given you? Are you good at practical things? maybe gifted with music, maybe good socially? Maybe good at leading a Bible Study, or maybe good at looking after money, or a good administrator, or children, perhaps you are a highly organised person. To each is given gifts as God determines. And why – they are for the common good.

In other words the gifts are to be used to build up x2 the church. But when the church is completed they, like the scaffolding is no longer needed.

So use your gifts in this world for the purposes for which they are given.

So let us look at what those gifts Paul mentioned are for.

Paul spoke about Tongue speaking

This is a sign gift, or a sign-post gift, it is a sign for unbelievers: **Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers;** 1Co 14:22.

At Pentecost the great day of the Gospel for all nations had arrived. The gentile age is started. Now there will be those who through the gospel have lips loosed to praise God from every nation under heaven.

We heard them “(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Ac 2:11

They are there from every point of the compass. It is Babel in reversal, Christ is building - from every nation - a united people fit for heaven.

Hearing them speak the wonders of God in their own language was a sign that they were now included in God’s eternal plan.

But once the Gospel started to spread and it became common place then the supernatural sign was no longer needed. So **tongues, they will be stilled;**

✚ So sign gifts have an even more temporary function.

Prophecy

Prophecy is speaking God’s word. It is often seen as predicting the future. That is far too narrow. Prophecy is to speak God’s word. **prophecy is for believers.** 1Co 14:22. To build up the church. That’s what the prophets did, that’s what teachers do – that is what every believer is to do.

We also all have a prophetic role – that is to speak the truth of God to those around, let us realise that – and do it. The world will only hear the truth of God from you. God has entrusted his truth to you. Now in these day you and I must speak out. Yes it does include speaking of what is to come – and because we know what is to come - that should be a great motivation for us to warn. If we don’t then you and I will be held responsible before God.

The GOSPEL of Jesus Christ is the urgently needed remedy for everyone.

But when all the church is gathered in, when the final trumpet is sounded then. The end will come and **Prophecies will cease; For we know in part and we prophesy in part 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.**

■ When a rocket heads for space most of it is booster fuel to get it there.

Prophecy, the speaking of God’s word is given by God to his people for to call the lost to repentance and build up the church but they’re temporary, - and will cease the day we are made perfect.

Knowledge

By this we do not mean having ‘a word of knowledge’ that is knowing some secret insight into the life of another member of the church, or outsider, something made known only to you! No, when Paul uses the word knowledge he means knowledge of truth. The word ‘knowledge is used as the general knowledge of the Christian faith. It is used of knowing things lawful and unlawful for Christians and it applies to moral wisdom as is seen in right living.

✚ If you profess Christ, you should know / have knowledge of the faith you confess - and know the Lord you love.

The problem is that at the moment **we know in part.**

This is something we have to strive for.

We hope and long for the day that all will be clear but now, in these days **We live by faith not by sight.** 2 Co 5:7 Here we are constantly striving to know more. The day will come when there will be no more memorising, studying weighing up a passage’s intent or wrestling with a difficult Scriptures.

We all have a limited knowledge of the things of God, we do not as yet enjoy a distinct view of God and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. That means we are continually learning. To express this, Paul uses a metaphor **12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.**

Why a mirror?

■ Polished copper and brass for a mirror, blurred

Firstly, the mirror is not clear. The angels see God and have no need to investigate. But we stare into his word and find the view obscured, blurred. We, who have not as yet reached that great height, see but the image of God as it is presented before us in His word. For God, who is invisible, has appointed these means for us to discover himself.

Creation is the manifestation of his Glory to shines forth and reveal his invisible majesty. This too like the mirror is not clear either. Also Christians In the OT it was even harder **the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow** 1 Pet 1:10,11

Our faith, therefore, at present looks at God as it were from afar. We do not see his face, but rely on the image in the *mirror*; but when we shall have left the world, and gone to him, I will see him both clear and near. **12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.**

In the meantime, this study of the word requires effort as you and I would strain to make out the shape and detail in a mirror. Don't we pray Lord reveal your Glory, As I open my Bible "*Lord make yourself clear and known*". While we cannot now see clearly we have to wrestle with the meaning - His word is indeed certain and true, we do have in the word a naked and open revelation of God, it has nothing in it that is contradictory or dark. It is however for us *obscure* - for the infinite God cannot be clearly seen with the limitations of language, through our fallen, corrupted minds.

So we continue with Bible teaching which keeps us on the straight and narrow. When perfection comes we will not need it as I will then see clearly. When perfect comes there will be no need for tongue speaking, or prophecy. **For we know in part and we prophesy in part 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.**

So how to live in love

The Lord has given you all have different gifts. What has he given you? Is it communication, or being practical, or being good with children, or good with finance. You should use the gifts God has given you. But how do you use them? Are you using them for yourself? Or do you use them for the good of others? It is easy to use them to puff myself up. That is not to use them as God intends them to be used. That is not acting in love. The Lord gave you those gifts and is looking to see how you will use them.

■ Like giving a child some money, how will she spend it?

If someone gave everyone here in the room £1,000 how would you use it?

As you think what you would spend it on - realise that what you chose is based on your motive? Is it a selfish inclination - or a loving inclination?

It is possible to do nothing with it – Jesus said to do that is from a hard and hateful heart – not recognising the giver. What would you think as a parent?

So when we in the church are given gifts

3. It is very easy to be business-like with each other. Where is the love?
4. It is easy to be more concerned for the job than the person. The person is more important than the job. After all we are, especially men, keen to get the job done, and the manner in which it is 'done' can often become lost if you are a task driven person. Also that great bear called pride is hard to get round.
5. The Ephesian church was organised, careful about teaching, had so much going for it – yet Jesus says "you have forsaken love". Love for Christ is our first love – and from that should then flow love for each other.
6. The point of a bible study is not to gain knowledge alone but to enable you to love and trust Christ more and love his people more. That's long term purpose
7. We live in an age when everyone wants to be professional in what we do. But is that professional and cold, efficient but unfeeling, proficient but unloving?
8. What do you do to serve? Are you on the door? Do people feel welcomed?
9. Do you clean, make drinks, help with finance, work on the building, is it done begrudgingly or lovingly. How do you do what you do.

✚ If you feel you are you doing something well - but are indifferent, and cold towards others, then it is not done well.

Are you drawn to the gifted? Do they impress? The Lord is pleased with those like His Son, those who act in love

✚ It is the attitude that impresses God - or not - as the case may be.

“I do not have much in the way of gifts” I hear you say, you have more than you think, whatever you have whether little or much – use them for the benefit of others desiring the best for them and therefore use them in love.

God is love - before anything – and after everything – there is love in God.

Love is wise, for love is to store up treasures in heaven, **Love never fails.**

So there are two temptations:

1. To confuse gifts with love - Tongues, prophecy, knowledge, are gifts to be used in love.

■ It is easy to think of the outer layer as permanent - cover for Selfridges

2. To confuse time with eternity - The temporary verse the permanent the short v long term Tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith and hope are all temporary

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1Co 13:13 **Hope** will be realized **faith** will end, **then we shall see God** — not his image, but God himself!!

When perfection comes

10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

■ "When the goal has been reached, then the helps in the race will be done away." When you reach the finish line then you no longer need those oars, those running shoes etc.

Childhood

Paul says while here on this earth we are as it were growing up.

11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

That is why like a child we spend so much time learning

■ Romantic view of childhood, but Peter Pan, and never growing up

For there are many things that are suitable to children, which are afterwards done away on arriving at maturity. For example, education is necessary, indeed the main ingredient of childhood. Not so with adult life.

So we have to study and learn, that is part of growing up to maturity - Paul says that when we have good knowledge of God and His word **Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching** Eph 4:14

John says in his Epistle, regarding love: **“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that**

when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” 1Jo 3:2-3

■ We are clearing out the draws cupboards at WHR. I struggle but Samuel and Vanessa are much more clear headed than I am. All those toys, things they had when they were young are gone. I say well that's worth keeping” you could show your children... it's no argument. The truth is that they will never be used again. Time to bin it.

✚ Give thanks to the Lord - his love endures forever.

When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Look back down the tunnel of time and it is probably those you have loved and those who have loved you that stand tall in your memory. Your memories of a church will be with those who have given you time, been patient, forgiven your failings and acted in love. Will that be how people will see you?

So one day all that temporary will give way to all that is eternal.

■ Are you into investments? What would you go for? a short investment seeking a quick return? Love is never a short investment. It is the longest - and the best. It is the best choice you could ever make. Long term investments are often painful, firstly you have to wait, - none of us like that.

■ Premium bonds were laid up for me when I was young. Ernie (that is the name given to the random selecting machine). I was gradually aware that not only did my older brothers and sister have them but I did also. The only problem I couldn't touch them until I was sixteen. That was frustrating. Immediately I was sixteen I took out everything and bought a motorbike. A foolish short term result I have nothing now to show for it.

■ The next thing about long term investments is that they can go down before they go up, you can think “I have made a bad choice” and consider cashing them in. It requires not only patience but trust.

But is we have taken the way of love then we will find it has built up for you a treasure in heaven that will far outweigh every cost in this life.

Yes **God is Love - Dear friends, says John since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.** 1 John 4:11,12

✚ Give thanks to the Lord - his love endures forever. ___END