

1 Corinthians 13

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[0 : 00] Where does time go? Pronos. Here we are again at the last learner's exchange for this season.

It does seem like we just did this. Last year's ended and time flies. Everything passes. What is man that you are mindful of?

Her. What is man that you are mindful of? Him. Life is brief. And the scriptures tell us this frequently. In fact, they even intensify the issue, don't they?

By telling us that we are consumed in our short little lives by God's wrath. Psalm 90. He returns us to the dust. He doesn't wait a long time to do it.

We are consumed by your anger. Psalm 90 says. Life is short and often troubled. However, today we are going to look at 1 Corinthians 13. We will have it up here in a moment.

[1 : 00] You have got it in front of you. Our passage today says famously that some things. And this is sort of counter. This sort of art. This sort of scripture sometimes will create a theme.

And then create a counter theme. Everything returns to dust. Everything is breathed. Nothing lasts. But then you come across 1 Corinthians 13. And you are told that some things resist this.

They remain. They endure somehow. Love never ends. Love never ends. Verse 8 of this chapter. Love never ends.

Paul says. That's a remarkable statement. If you really take this seriously. Try to take it seriously. After all, love appears as passing as all other things.

You hardly need to note this, do you? Love between friends withers. We've all had that sad experience. Love in families tragically becomes anything but love at times.

[2 : 02] Erotic love ends and becomes a form of hatred at times. Love forms and unforms all the time. But, however, Paul does say in verse 8.

You see it right there. I'm not making it up. Paul says love never ends. So, what's going on here? Our love, again, our love is passing.

It is more or less a form of mere natural life, it appears. It is as reliable and as good as ourselves. Or, therefore, not too reliable.

Not all that good, frequently, sadly. But, of course, Paul, of all people, knows this. Especially as he writes to the Corinthians. He knows this.

This love that 1 Corinthians unfolds, this love we want to look at today, is apparently a different kind of love. I know as I talk about this, that I'm talking to people who know what I know about this and much more.

[3 : 03] So, just a time of sharing together and looking at this. It is, this love is not a mere nature, apparently. Crucially, I think we can say right off the bat, by way of introduction, we know this from the Greek, and I've heard this so many times before.

This love that Paul is talking about, apparently is not dependent. Somehow it always perseveres, he says here. This is a crucial observation.

There is a love which is apparently not dependent. A love which is self-sustaining. Not dependent. This love is not dependent on what it loves, its object.

That's what seems to often defeat love. What you love, you don't want to love it anymore. It doesn't somehow deserve it anymore. It doesn't warrant it.

God is love, famously, we are told in Holy Scripture, aren't we? 1 John 4, 8. And 1 John 4, 16.

Famous, famous, wonderful words in Scripture.

[4 : 12] God is love. God does not need to practice love. God does not need to learn love. God is, is love.

Think about that. God is love. Everything not of this love, I think we can safely say, therefore is alien to our God.

God is love. Love, I won't spend too much time on this kind of thing, but love is, therefore, a something. Love is. Love is a power. Perhaps it is the power.

Love is. Love is a thing. In the study of what's called ontology, you know, it studies not just what things, what qualities a thing possesses, not just what a thing is able to do, so to speak, but ontology is about what a thing is.

Love is a something. Love does act, of course, and it does possess qualities. We'll see them here in 1 Corinthians 13. But it's interesting to note in passing, and scripture doesn't disagree with this, it seems to me.

[5 : 24] Love is a something. God is. God is love. It's a wonderful thing to contemplate. Make this theme, I take it no one would disagree, make this theme a study, maybe over the summer, and you are on the way to wisdom, I would take it.

This is the high road to, this is the high road of good theology. What themes this, therefore, would encompass as you meditate upon it? God's love is holy, because God is holy.

God's love is infinite. It's always realized perfectly. It's stronger than all other things love. God is, and I think this, this is a bit of a leap, but I think there's a logic inside this leap.

The scriptures, for some, scandalously make this point. God is, we're told in the Bible, jealous. Love is jealous, capable of jealousy.

There's a holy jealousy. God, the Trinity, is love. God is an infinite, giving love. God is apparently, infinitely, receiving love.

[6 : 37] love. And this love is infinitely, again, realized. And in that, we recognize God as giving love, Father.

God is infinitely, receiving love, Son. And love, infinitely realized, Spirit. God, the Trinity, is love. love. The, the Christian, the holy Catholic Church, knows no God, prior to, or other than, this infinite, holy, Trinity love.

The gospel reveals this God of love. And to think about this God, I take it, we're all agreed, in this room, to think about this God, is a good thing. As we said to begin with, we are passing, cells.

We just, pass out of this world, very, very swiftly. And when we do, this God, this God who is love, is the God that we will meet.

So, it's the witness of, the Christian faith. So, in looking at, 1 Corinthians 13, we peer into this mystery, this revealed mystery of love. It is, it is in a sense, perhaps, presumptuous to do this.

[7 : 57] But Paul, I take it, the apostle, invites us to do it. And because it might be a bit presumptuous, it might be a very good idea to stop right now and pray.

So, before we look into the mystery of love, let's pray. God, our Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, you've revealed yourself to us as, as love.

The mystery of, this mysterious power, that you are. This mystery of love. Help us to, as distant as we feel ourselves to be from it, help us today to catch a glimpse of it, and to wonder at it, and to, by your grace and mercy, become participants in this great, eternal glory, which is your love.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So, again, you have this in front of you. Always wonder if this overhead is effective.

But there it is. And I will show you a still more excellent way, Paul says, jump right into it, to this difficult, ridiculously difficult, strange bunch of mixed up Christians at Corinth.

[9 : 11] And I will show you a still more excellent way, does that. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, he famously starts this passage, but have not love, I am a noisy gong, a flaming cymbal.

If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, deliver my body to be burned, and have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude.

Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away, as for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect, our prophecy is imperfect, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect, it will pass away.

[10 : 24] When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now, we've seen a mere dimly, but then, face to face. Now I know in part, then, I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So, faith, hope, love, abide, these three.

The greatest of these, is love. Does that start to come off here, as you read, you say, yeah, I know this. I hardly, I don't have to look down at these words.

I don't have to read. They're there. We've heard them so often. As we all know, in antiquity, in the time when the Christian faith began its journey, rhetoric, oratory, formerly it was called rhetoric, was highly valued, wasn't it?

Rhetoric is the ability to persuade. That's an obvious statement. Conrad Blatt, in the next couple of weeks, is hoping that some persuasive rhetoricians on his team, will convince a jury not to send him to jail.

[11 : 39] Rhetoric is the ability to persuade. To say beautifully, is the gift of rhetoric as well. Reading was not, in the ancient world, the first access, if you will, to language.

Hearing speech, or hearing something read, was first. The wealthy, often had slaves, read for them. Not a bad job, to be a slave of a rich person, just read to them all day.

Reading was invariably, reading aloud. If you want more on that, there's a lovely little book called, The Natural History of Latin, by a Torre Johnson, I think he pronounced his name. Lovely. But the status of rhetoric in the ancient world, how it worked.

The gospel, we may safely say, is a form of rhetoric. It is a spoken drama. Augustine understood this, as profoundly as anyone has ever understood it.

He was once in his life, you'll recall, a professor of rhetoric. And as such, he appreciated this art very much. Although we should remember, that after he became a Christian, he referred to his former office, as being a professor of lies.

[12 : 49] So, something about the content, of what he had rhetorized about, he saw differently as a Christian, than he had as a pagan. But the gospel, as a high rhetoric, the gospel is a kind of high rhetoric.

It is a very true idea, it seems to me. And sometimes we experience that, when we read things in scripture. Just think about that. The next time you read, perhaps you should read it aloud, Philippians chapter 3, and though he was in the form of God, he emptied himself.

You know, it's a very lovely rhetorical passage. And in that regard, you'll see that there's a rhetorical drama, to the presentation of the gospel.

It is powerful, the gospel, as a kind of spoken drama. Paul, and I think he was being perhaps, somewhat counter-cultural, as he says this.

You'll recall, in the Corinthian correspondence, talks about the foolishness, the foolishness of preaching. It's almost as if Paul thought that preaching was a rather weak medium, for a divine message, but God uses weak things, one of Paul's great themes, to accomplish his purposes.

[14 : 03] Therefore, as a Christian, I think at times we've all, especially when we're in conversation with someone, we yearn in our own way to be a poet, to speak effectively to another person.

To speak in the tongues of men, and more, of angels, is surely a great thing. Wouldn't it be great, to have this gift? It may have been, to speak the many languages, of the world.

How impressive that gift is. You meet people who are multilingual, it seems like a, a lovely gift to possess, a lovely art, a lovely power. Couldn't help but throw in this, Tolkien, you know, the famous author, of the Lord of the Rings, he invented a language, virtually, and then wrote a story, to live out the language.

That's how much some people love language. That's genius for sure. But, famously, and I'm again and again, looking at 1 Corinthians 13, I'm pointing out the obvious.

Paul says, that without love, this mysterious power, that we just referred to, this high gift of rhetoric, even if it's the rhetoric of angels, and beautifully speechifying, humans, Paul says, it's just a bunch of noise, empty, loud noise, if it is without love.

[15 : 25] A noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. Miss A won't take offense of that, that's just music, that hasn't happened yet, properly. You know, there it is.

Without love, a great ability to speak, is nothing. In antiquity, people like today, wanted, as well, moving on, as to what Paul deals with here, early on, they wanted to know the future.

There were a lot of futurists around, in the ancient world. As there are today, Tom can tell us about corporations, seeking out the futures, to tell them, what they should do, to anticipate future market conditions.

It's all, all kind of, magical and superstitious, it almost seems to me. Paul says, if I have the gift of prophecy, and I can fathom all mysteries, and all knowledge.

Imagine, before we go on to say, what he says about this, imagine that, have the gift of prophecy. Many Christians, yearn for that gift. And to see, into all mysteries, to figure out, say, what's in the mind, of a bunch of Canadian bishops.

[16:31] You want to get really mysterious. To have all knowledge. Imagine that. There are layers here. Layers are here. Paul, as a Jew, certainly revered the prophet, certainly the office of prophet.

But here, I suspect, it kind of shades off, into the prophet, as a mere pagan soothsayer, perhaps, as he speaks to these, just out of paganism, new Christians at Corinth.

And worse, the religious vanity salesmen, and our world is filled with them these days, who do sell mysteries. And they claim to sell to you, in the name of religion, all knowledge.

Even, Paul says, even if I possess these things, this gift of prophecy, to see deeply into mysteries, if I have those gifts, Paul says, without love, they are, he says, they just leave you as nothing.

You're just nothing, if you have these gifts. But if you're without love, this mysterious power, you're just nothing.

[17:42] It's a hard word for, for certain Christians to hear. It must have been hard for the Christians at Corinth, to hear that. But moving right along, Paul says next year, in Mark 11, there is a story of, there's a number of events, described for us in the life of Jesus.

Mark 11 starts off, with the triumphal entry. Then, we hear the strange story, of the cursing of the fig tree, you'll recall. Then, Jesus, gets a rope, or a whip, and he goes into the temple, and he clears it out, of the money changers.

Then, Peter notices, that the fig tree, has withered, at the command of Jesus. Then, this is my point, Jesus says to Peter, I tell you this truth, Peter, our Lord, just talking to his friend, disciple Peter, like this, Peter, I tell you the truth, if anyone says, to this mountain, go throw yourself, into the sea, not doubting, but believing, it will be done for him.

Imagine that. If you command Peter, a mountain, to jump into the sea, it will. If you believe it, as you say it. In this context, the mountain, probably does refer, to the temple mount, and its current office holders, that our Lord, was about to do, battle with him.

He was going to say, to that mountain, be gone, into the sea, your time is up. But the image, isn't it powerful? This image of a mountain, being thrown into the sea.

[19:25] I wonder if it was common, in first century Israel, I don't know. Paul says, Paul says, here's where scripture again is, you can find a theme, a word, of teaching in scripture, and then find something, which mysteriously, enriches it, by seeming to counter it.

Paul says, that if you have, the gift, of being able to say, to a mountain, go into the sea, if you exercise, that kind of faith, but if you do it, without love, you are doing, nothing of value.

You are still, far, far, far away, from the kingdom, if you will, far, from knowing, the God, of, of the kingdom.

Isn't that amazing? To have the gift, of faith, that Jesus commends, to Peter. Paul says, well, you can have, that gift, of faith, and command, mountains, to go into the sea, but if you do it, without love, it means, absolutely, nothing.

If I have, all faith, so as, to remove, mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. Verse 2. Faith.

[20:44] Faith meant, so much, to the people of Israel. Abraham was, the man of faith. He believed, that he and Sarah, would have a baby, when they're around a hundred. Having faith, was exalted, in Israel.

But, Paul says, without love, it means, nothing. Then, Paul moves on, famously, to, these next words, about, if I give away, all I have, and deliver my body, to be burned, and have not love, I gain nothing.

If I serve the poor, to the last limit, of my concern. If I die, a martyr's death, but I die, a martyr's death, without love. Paul says, well, it means, nothing.

It means, nothing. Imagine that. heroic, believing, great religious service, without love. Again, I'm just, pointing out, what's on the surface here.

It's so profound. If I have all of that, without love, it's nothing. Again, faith in Israel, was highly exalted. But, without love, Paul says here, it just amounts, to absolutely nothing.

[21 : 55] Nothing. Imagine if, Bill was talking about, you know, we'll be back together again, after a swift summer, I'm sure. We'll be back in September.

We could announce, that at Learners Exchange, maybe we should make this announcement, our first speaker, I don't know who this would be, will speak as an angel. This speaker will reveal, fathomless mysteries.

And, unfortunately, will die a martyr's death, that same day. And, you'll make us all happy, by giving away, all of this person's possessions. But, Paul says, and I believe, properly understood, Paul says this, rhetorically, that is, to teach, and persuade, memorably.

He says, in effect, about our, this wondrous speaker, in September, so what? Really? What? Who cares? You haven't really, gone to the heart of things.

What about, love? What about, love? What about, the mystery of love? All ministries, minus love, equal a kind of, in the eyes of heaven, it's a kind of garbage, we can say.

[23 : 10] Paul liked extreme language. Sometimes we can echo, his extreme language. All ministries, in our lives, in the life of the church, if they have, if they don't have love, as their, as their motivation, as their controlling power, all these ministries, amount to nothing.

There you go. Paul talks about love, contrasts it with a number of, high and beautiful things, and says, well, without love, these high and beautiful things, are nothing.

Then, Paul, of course, maybe it's a little bit, lighter, in its own way, isn't it? At verse 4, he begins to give a brief, description of love.

I take it, I think this isn't, an exhaustive description of love. Who would ever claim, to give an exhaustive description of love? But Paul, perhaps, maybe goes to what he considers, the heart of love, by describing it.

In describing love, I think, in the discussion time, I'd like to hear your comments, about all of these things, I think he purposely begins, by, asserting, love's humility, in a sense.

[24 : 26] I'm not sure if you agree. Love, he says, right off the bat, when he describes, when he wants to describe love, positively, he's described it contrastively, now, he wants to describe it positively, he says, love is patient.

I wonder if that's a bit, a bit of a letdown. Love is a soaring glory. Love moves the sun, and the other stars, Dante said.

Which is true, I take. But, Paul says, love is patient. Patience is a kind of little, invisible, what, someone would call, I believe, a white martyrdom.

When you're patient with someone, you die a little death. You're waiting upon them, even if they're bothering you. A little, invisible death. It is strong, to endure life, in our fallen, alienated, rude, and stupid world.

Isn't it often like that? Sometimes the church, can be, an alienating place, rude, and stupid. When Paul remembers, his hardships, in his apostolic work, 2 Corinthians 6, he speaks of patience, in much patience, he lived out his life, as an apostle.

[25 : 51] He speaks of patience, in kindness, in much patience, in much long suffering, he lived out his life. Love, love, love is patient and kind, kindness in a moment.

Patience, when divinely present, do you believe this, is very powerful. Patience, said Soren Kierkegaard, I think this is wonderful. Patience, he said, is a mighty warrior.

It will fight for you, along life's way. It will make you strong, patient. patience. Paul starts describing love, by saying, love is patient.

It will make you strong, patience. And when you are strong, as such, you may then afford, to be kind, I take it. I think patience, is the, is the, is the ground floor, of a kindness, that you can then afford, to show the world, to show the other.

It was John Henry Newman, who says that kindness, makes the Christian, look suspicious, in the eyes of the world.

[27 : 03] Kindness creates suspicion. He saw this, he thought an agenda, the worldly person thinks, an agenda, something suspicious, must be at work here.

When you're kind, the world will sometimes say, well, what are you after? And maybe sometimes, the world has learned, to be that way, for good reasons. But when we show kindness, I think we get, we surprise the world, and we get its attention.

Show kindness, just because you're commanded, to show kindness. When the loving kindness, of God our Savior, appeared, Paul says to Titus, the whole mystery, of the gospel, the incarnation, can be summed up, as God's kindness.

We reflect God, when we're kind. Patience and love, patience and kindness, they are closely aligned, apparently. But I think also, if I leave that point, I wonder if sometimes, we're suspicious, of God's kindness.

We think he has an agenda. He's being nice to me, for a reason, trying to, get me, trip me up here, or something. But I don't think, we're supposed to be, suspicious of God's, God's kindness.

[28 : 18] There's no catch, attached to God's kindness. He just loves, as love, God just shows kindness. God is love. And therefore, the attribute of kindness, is something that God loves, to show you.

It would be that interesting, to think over the summer, what are the kindnesses, I've been receiving from God, and I haven't been mindful of them. Envy, Paul moves on here, and talks about, love is not jealous, or boastful, it's not arrogant, or rude.

These kinds of things. Envy, I take it, this is obvious, envy, boasting, and pride, they go together.

Verse 4, love is not jealous, or boastful, it's not arrogant, and rude.

Pride makes me envy, envy, your good qualities, and the things you have. It makes me boast, of my own, usually imaginary, good qualities. And therefore, it alienates, and makes people, impatient, and unkind, to one another.

Which we're supposed to be, Paul has just told us. It's so simple, to see the way, the world works, in such a simple world, verbose, of simple words.

[29 : 34] Pride, C.S. Lewis says somewhere, he thought of this recently, pride is the completely, anti-God, state of mind, Lewis says. If you want to be, completely anti-God, be proud of it.

Lift yourself up, exalt yourself. You will be, on a collision course, with God. Pride is the, completely anti-God, state of mind.

It is love, in verse 5, Paul says, love is not rude. It is not arrogant, or rude.

It is, therefore, I take it, on the positive side there, I take it, love is courteous. Do you think, at learn, as exchange, generally, do you meet courteous people? I think I do.

I think, I think, at St. John's, you meet, a fair amount of courtesy. I hope it's, a love-rooted courtesy.

Love, courtesy is, Edmund Burke says somewhere, courtesy is, love in little things.

[30 : 39] I love that from Burke. Love in little things. It's good to be courteous. Sometimes, when you show, courtesy in the world, again, it gets the world's attention.

Why is this person, showing me courtesy? No one else does that. Especially lonely people. When, if you show them courtesy, it gets their attention. Is that a person, who believes in God?

Is that one of those, Jesus people? Is that why they're being, nice to me? It's, it's good to be courteous, to remember that. The highly gifted, and those who speak, angelically, and those who know, greatly, and those who do, great things, begin to expect, deference, from others, I think.

That's why we dress up, high-ranking Anglicans, in robes, and, and funny hats, and, they carry around staves, and, it's sort of, treat me, with deference.

A lot of them are in Winnipeg, right now. Why am I making these, shnerky remarks about Winnipeg? And mere courtesy, mere courtesy, may appear unimportant, but Paul says, love is not rude.

[31 : 58] I take it, love regards, the lowly other, especially, it loves to regard, the lowly other. Jesus, I think, especially like, lowly ones, the nobodies, he loved them.

Love, love is not, self-seeking, Paul says. Love is that, different. The others, just reward, is somehow, invisible, and we don't care, what the other person, really deserves, we just give them love, because our God is love.

Love is not, easily, where does it say here, I don't know, what the verse, love is not, angry. Where does, Paul say that? Love is not irritable, right?

Love is not irritable, love is not, therefore, angry. Love is, anger, and irritability, is usually, present in our lives, easily, isn't it?

But, a man's wisdom, says Proverbs, gives him patience, and it is the glory, to overlook, someone's offense.

[33 : 11] Irritability, is present with us, easily, and Paul says, it should not be so, in the life, of a, of a Christian. Love, famously, Paul says, keeps no record, of wrongs, a little, more flowing, modern

translation, and in fact, it is, it's almost fun, I find, find in life, to remember, other people's sins, and how they've slighted me.

We do that all the time. We, in fact, as Paul says, we do delight in evil. We like to delight in evil. But, Paul says, it isn't that way, with love.

It isn't that way, with love. I think, irritability, and therefore, irritability, which forms itself, into anger, is very, is treated, with balance, in the Bible, isn't it?

You know, be angry, but don't sin, Paul says, in another place. Our Lord did, make up a whip, with ropes, and go into the temple, go into maybe, a house of bishops, and clean the place up, because they're so far, from his will.

He got angry. I love the story, I wonder if it's apocryphal, William Barclay, tells it, when young man, Abraham Lincoln, saw a slave trade, marketplace, he got angry, and he said, if I ever get the chance, to smash that, I will.

[34 : 37] His righteousness, his anger, was righteous. There's a time, for anger, but it must not, get the better of us. We must, remember that, love is greater, than even our, righteous anger.

Verse 7, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love bears all things. Other translations, have that as, love protects.

What does, what does love bear? What does it protect? I take it, again in the, in the conversation time, you can tell me your ideas here, I take it that, it bears with other people's, poor behavior, and will even protect, their reputation.

Won't gossip, about their bad behavior. Love wants to protect, again, the other's reputation, the other's honor. Again, one of, I quote him so often, he's one of my favorites, so in Kierkegaard, says somewhere that, we should minimize, we should minimize, the other's faults.

Do not minimize, he says, your own. Think up excuses, he says, for the other person's, disappointing behavior, but allow none, for your own.

[35 : 50] In other words, just turn around, the habitual way, you think about it. We rationalize away, our own pathetic behavior, behavior. And we always hold up, the other person, to a relentless standard.

Kierkegaard says, just reverse that. Make up excuses, bear the other person. Make up excuses, for their bad behavior. But don't allow, any for your own. Turn things, on their head.

Love will do that. Trust, therefore, that the other, whose behavior, is something, you merely have to bear. The other's behavior, will change.

God's grace, is always at work. Hope, for the other's, well being. Persevere, therefore, in this kind of love. Love bears.

Love goes on believing. Love goes on hoping. Love endures. What a, how different that is, from me. But you, no, you don't, I don't have to tell you that, do I?

[36 : 48] Love bears. Love believes. Love hopes. Love endures. That's how God, I take it, is dealing with each of us, every day. He puts up with us, every day.

That's his grace. He just goes on enduring, bearing, waiting. His grace is at work. He wants to change us. Love protects, the other person. Love's an amazing thing, isn't it?

And then, verse 8. In a sense, in this lyrical passage, I take it that, in a sense, the whole thing turns on this assertion.

That's why I wanted to begin with it, in the introduction. Love never ends. NIV translates that, love never fails. Love never ends.

Again, that's, what kind of love are we looking at here? Our love, of course, as we said in the introduction, again, it's worth repeating, our love fails.

[37 : 48] It falters, it wanes, it proves unreliable, again and again. The great Puritan, John Owen, who's my elder uncle right now, our love, says John Owen, I think this is one of his most amazing, simple statements.

He says, our love is like ourselves. Christ's love is like Jesus Christ. See the difference? Your love is just probably like you are. Just think about it.

It's appalling. It's amazing. This passage is a mirror. We look into the mirror of the world, the word, and we, it's not flattering all the time. But it endures.

Sometimes, people, outside the faith, see things that we're perhaps, we're prone to forget, or we become too habituated to them.

This love, there's a love which never fails, a love which never ends. Walter Kaufman, a man I used to read a lot of, a Princeton philosopher, a very clever chap, he died a decade or so ago now, a great translator of Nietzsche, a no friend of the Christian faith, by any means.

[39 : 05] But I remember once, in one of his books, he just says in passing, that when he reads in the gospel, words like, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing, he said that he was silenced by such words.

He had the moral maturity, to see their great beauty. There's a love that endures. Father, forgive them. He endured them on a cross, in love.

There is love. His love, even for his enemies, endured. It never ended. It never failed. There's a brief description from Paul, about the way, how love looks.

Funny that, it's not as well known as this passage is, it's not noticed that Paul hasn't forgotten the Corinthians, and what they really need to hear. He comes back to these themes now, of the gift of speech, and prophecy, and seeing great mysteries.

The following assertions are much quieter, aren't they? Prophecies cease. Prophecies cease. He's back on this topic again. Our knowledge, he says, will, prophecy cease, tongues are still, knowledge passes away.

[40 : 23] This might be heard as endorsing a kind of philosophical futility, but Paul, it is safe to say, means nothing like that. Remember, he does talk about the contingency of these things.

Prophecies, ah, they go away. They cease. Tongues, they're impressive, but they're still.

Knowledge, ah, knowledge, what is it worth? It just passes away. Creatures, Paul knows, are always to know as creatures.

We are not gods. The Bible tries to convince us of this. It is our glory. This is sort of ironical, isn't it? It is our glory to know this, that we are creatures.

It is the glory of God. I love this word from Proverbs. It is the glory of God to hide a matter. It is the glory, apparently the translation is the glory of kings, but I think we're all included here.

The glory of man to seek it out. That tone, I just love the tone of that word in Proverbs. God hides things. We're creatures. We're meant to know tentatively and growingly.

[41 : 24] We don't know absolutely the way God knows. Our knowledge is contingent. For people who like philosophical moments, here's one. Why is all human knowledge contingent?

I think I know something, but when I think I know something, I can ask this question. I learned this from, amongst other people, Nicholas Waltersdorf, a Christian philosopher at Yale.

Do I have, have I identified everything which might challenge what I think I know and exhaustively answer the challenge? No human being could ever do that.

It would involve you in what's sometimes called an infinite chain of reasoning. Therefore, even what we think we're absolutely certain of, we can always be humble about. Maybe there's a defeater to my argument that I know this, which I haven't, I just haven't realized yet.

Our knowledge, and that doesn't make you a relativist, it makes you humble. We know as creatures, our knowledge remains contingent. It's better to say, I am warranted, warranted in believing these things.

[42 : 32] Proof is for the mind of God, it seems to me. God has proofs in his mind, I don't know. Soon, after all, we have to remember that Paul will rehearse the elemental truths of the apostolic witness.

Two chapters away from 1 Corinthians 13 is the more famous, or if that's right to say, 1 Corinthians 15. Now, it rehearses the certainties of the Christian religion.

Of these things, we are to be certain, but certain in a kind of loving humility. This is not after all, our knowledge, it is a revealed knowledge, it is a revealed glory, and is to be known as such, in a deep humility.

Verse 10, yes, as we draw to a close here, is kind of a word of great hope, isn't it? It's our hope as Christians. When perfection comes, when the perfect comes, Paul says, when the perfect comes, what does he mean here?

Is that a reference to the second coming? I don't really know if it specifically is, but it is as good as. Paul thought much, and knew much here, about the mystery of power.

[43 : 52] My power, he said, is made perfect in weakness, when perfection comes. A bit of an obscure statement here. Verse 11, when I was a child, that passage, I'm guessing, it may be yet another rebuke to the Corinthians.

When I was a child, I talked like a child. You Corinthians are like children. I thought, I reasoned like a child, but when I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

We have to remember that Paul thought of these people in Corinth, he told them as much, that they were babies in Christ. But there is a promise in these verses.

Love prepares us for a meeting with perfection. Love matures us out of our childhood into adulthood. After all, Paul in 2 Corinthians, you'll recall, prayed, he says, I pray for your perfecting, that you will grow into a fullness of Christ, he means there.

And verse 12 is both an encouragement and a comfort, if you see it there. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

[45 : 05] What famous words these are. Again, an encouragement and a comfort. One longs to see more clearly. Is that why we come to Learner's Exchange? that we long to see just a bit more clearly what's going on here in the Gospel.

Maybe that's a good reason to come. A longing to see more clearly. The Apostle says that we do see, I take it he has in mind here what we would call spiritual truth, things which are spiritually discerned, and is anything more difficult.

But he says, we do see them, we see them, but dimly or darkly. We are apparently, and the Gospel makes this clear in different ways, the New Testament does, we are apparently not ready just yet for a full, open, clear seeing of our Lord.

He went into heaven for a reason, I take it. The Father hid him from the church for a while, in a sense. He's with the church. We see him by faith.

We're not ready yet for an open, clear seeing. Have you ever read Lewis's, over the summer, if you get a copy of Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, it's a very interesting novel.

[46 : 22] It's as if, I love that title, in our sinful state, we're just not ready yet to behold the perfection that we are called to meet.

But God is preparing us as we move out of our childhood into adulthood. He's preparing us for a meeting when we already mentioned perfection, which is on its way.

Are you ready to meet perfect? Someday we're all going to meet, apparently what Paul here calls, when the perfect comes. We're going to meet the perfect someday.

I'm going to quote him one more time, Soren Trigard. He says, it is a profound thing to be a human being. Someday we're all going to meet the perfect one. That's it.

Meeting the Queen is nothing compared with this. We're going to meet the perfect one. This is important enough, as we draw to a close here, for Paul to repeat, and repeat in another key.

[47 : 26] Famously he says, now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. We live here, don't we?

In living here, we are obedient to the apostolic witness. It's always, it's always we live in the tension between now and then. Sometimes in the church there are intimations of then, but they are rather infrequent.

There is a lot of now now, and it makes us yearn for a then. A day comes, a day comes. This is a theme that Paul works on, doesn't he, in the Corinthian correspondence.

We're at 2 Corinthians 3 recently. There comes a day when our faces will be unveiled. They are now, in a sense, unveiled, unlike Moses. We behold the glory of the Lord.

That's a theme for another day. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says something about then, which is haunting, which is forceful, which is worth a summertime of meditation.

[48 : 36] He says, then I shall know even as I am fully known. What is the divine that we see so darkly? Precisely, the divine is not the angelic whose tongues men try and speak in.

Because angels are created. There are things that they don't know. the uncreated, which is unthinkable for us, the everlasting holy presence where we live, how we are to know it is that it knows us exhaustively.

We're in the presence right now of our divine Lord. And what defines his divineness here for Paul is that our Lord knows us all perfectly, exhaustively.

then we're going to know as we are known. Something to meditate on. I can't get very far with that. What do I do with the fact that I'm fully known?

It's as if God is the only one able to introduce you. This is an Augustinian theme. God is able to introduce you to yourself. You haven't really met yourself yet.

[49 : 47] God is going to show you someday who you really are. In beholding Jesus Christ, we begin a journey into knowing God. I always think someone should write a book, that title.

And therefore, in some measure, in some measure as we do that, we get to know ourselves. Then we shall know even as we are known by God. There is no direct access into the divine.

We are called to know God through what one theologian I think happily calls secondary objectivities. We know God through the Bible, through the mystery of our baptism, through the Lord's Supper, through prayer, through obedience, through holy living, summed up as loving God and loving your neighbor.

In all of those obediences, you will get to know the divine mystery, which knows us perfectly and has revealed to us how to get to know its mystery through the gospel obediences.

promises. The last verse is a little bit surprising, perhaps. And now, verse 13 of chapter 13, So faith, hope, love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

[51 : 06] I take it, faith believes in God and God is love. Hope rests assured, or attempts to in God, and again, God is love. and love participates in its origins and as such is greater as it is an agent which perfects faith and hope.

It isn't quite clear to me, it isn't utterly transparent to me why faith, hope, and love abide. Okay, the greatest is love. Why is, love is greater than faith, love is greater than hope.

See, maybe it's love perfects faith. Love perfects hope. I think maybe that's it, but I don't know. In the discussion time, the saints can instruct me there. Again, that may be true how love perfects these things, but I don't know.

In eternity, is faith over? There are some hymns which think so. They tell us that faith is fulfilled in sight or words like that.

Hope is emptied in delight. But again, I don't know. Maybe in eternity we still live by faith in some mysterious way in the great eternal adventures that God has for us.

[52 : 21] There may be a living by faith. I don't know. Faith may still be operative. Again, again, I don't know, I don't know. Faith, hope, and love, they abide.

I think they abide. This echoes King James, doesn't it? They remain, the NIV says. Love, love is, as Paul said, at the end of 12, to introduce these words, it really is the most excellent way, isn't it?

Does anyone disagree? Hands up. Love is the most excellent way. Do you really believe that? I'm not too sure how often I think about love.

The Corinthians famously had a lot of problems, like some churches in modernity do. Paul sought by teaching, by counsel, by example, to help these people out of these difficulties, these problems, which were serious, and even, much more than serious, they were even deadly.

But God brings good out of trouble. That was a troubled community, but one of the things that God and his providence brought out of that mess was 1 Corinthians 13.

[53 : 35] We have benefited today from the Corinthian difficulties, because we have what Paul wrote to them, what we call 1 Corinthians 13. God brought a lot of good out of those troubles.

If nothing else, he gave us this wondrous description of what love is like. This is the answer to all of the Corinthian evils, of all the Anglican evils.

It's the answer to all of our problems. Our waywardness will be healed by love. So we want to learn, at Learner's Exchange, to be a people of love.

Maybe over the summer, some of us will grow a bit in becoming more and more people of love, which of course is impossible, but we try it. But our God works wonders.

He does the impossible. He takes people like us and makes us over into images of something like 1 Corinthians 13. This is how we're destined to be. We're destined to be.

[54 : 35] images of his love forever. What a destiny. What a profundity that is. Again, I'm so aware as I looked at this with you that I'm just a baby in these things.

And you know much more about these things than I do. It's just wonderful just to look at these words. They're just they call us into a new kind of life. I hope faith and hope we can get there into this love, this divine love which endures.

So let me say a word of prayer and then we can have some conversation. Lord, we thank you for this passage of the Bible. We thank you that it tells us more about the mystery of who you are because you are love.

Help us to participate in your love always and spend eternity exploring more and more in deep pleasure the beauty of your love.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Mr. Chandler.

[55 : 51] Would you say, Holly, friend, that one of the big errors in the church is to believe that the gifts as spelled out in and observing mercy, prophecy, talents, and understanding mysteries and all of things, yes, is a measure of spirituality.

It's not, is it? really, he's closed the door in a sense that if love is not around, he could be highly gifted and yet not be spiritual.

Oh, sure. Yeah. Thank you. So how do we appropriate this love? Ask the saints. But I like your point, yeah.

But isn't it a bit shocking, John? That's why I wanted to note that if I have all faith, at the end of verse 2, if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, stop for a moment, this is the faith that Jesus commended to Peter, that he live by and taking on the temple of the Lord.

If he's talking about the temple mountain, I'm going to throw that into the sea. Paul says, if I have such faith without love, I am nothing. So yes, you're right, we can have these amazing gifts, participate in the powers of the world to come even, but without love, God will not honor it.

[57 : 41] It's not of him. The Corinthian church loved these gifts. You can tell they loved these gifts. They gave them a sense of power, I guess, standing.

Paul had to correct them rather severely. It's lovely. Oh, please. You said that all ministries mean nothing without love, which got to me because I have several times in my life been involved in church government in a way that new ministries were being born or promoted or something like that.

Love is not just a warm, fuzzy feeling around the heart. Nobody knows it's there unless it's demonstrated in some way. It's made real by what we do, not by what we feel.

Even Jesus said, if you love me, you will do what I command you. So, can you comment on how we relate that kind of love to ministries within the church?

Yes. Yeah, well, at the first level, and I'm sure you agree, this is to be read, if you will, in the first person.

[59 : 02] I am challenged by this word, that I can do a ministry, but if it's without love. But when it comes to the other person doing a ministry, even if I sense it's without love, this passage doesn't warrant judging or being critical.

What happens is other things in this passage click in. My love will be patient. It will endure. I'll make up excuses for the seeming lack of love. I don't judge. This is for me to hear.

It's not a weapon to use against the other. Paul would say, that's what the Corinthians will probably do, but I've got to risk it. Sin will inevitably twist these things around. But that's the first level of answer.

I don't know, when you see a ministry which is loveless, how do you blow the whistle off? In a godly, loving way, I don't know. But I like what the ministry of rebuke is in the New Testament.

Like Jesus said to Peter, get behind me, Satan. He hadn't stopped loving Peter at that point. He loved Peter when he said that to him. But he was calling him up sharply.

[60 : 09] You're so far from the concerns of the kingdom, Peter. But I don't know how to rebuke and how to build. Bill asked the same question.

I don't know. How do you, by studying 1 Corinthians 13, there's an answer. What do you think? I'm inadequate here, but Sheila, I mean, well, I guess my hope and certainly my experience has been that if it is loveless, it is not really of God, and if it's a church-generated ministry of some kind, it will fail.

It will simply not get launched, or it will get launched, and it will not go anywhere. I guess it's just, if it's noted, maybe the spirit will note it for us, and then we can repent and seek out, injecting the mystery of love into our ministry.

I remember hearing a story, I'm sure it's happened many times, but a fellow, a Christian philosopher, who just, in a public debate, just danced around his opponent, and it was all wonderful that Christians won a big battle, and then a student, after he said to another student, who was a Christian, yeah, that Christian, he's brilliant, but I didn't sense that he loved his opponent.

The world will pick up on that. Yeah, I really danced around you, but is there courtesy there? Is there a concern for the other? Protecting, that protecting love, that protects the other's honour and reputation.

[61 : 46] That's hard work, you have to die to yourself all the time when you do this. It's hard work love.

Is that true? Is it hard work love? I just was reading this book, I picked up it with Pollyann, and it's one of those daily readers, and it's very good, I read it out to Tom, about controlling the emotions, and I wish it were a teenager, because it's saying that love really knows when to let your emotions go and when to hold them back, it's a self-control part of love.

I thought that's a hard thing, because extreme can lead to the same as reading, it can lead to being neurotic, it can lead to depression, it can lead to excesses of anything, if our emotions are out of control.

Very good. Lewis says somewhere, it's extremely, it's almost divine to practice, I suppose the kind of environment that a man like Lewis lived in, it was thought of as good, when you have a devastating counter word for someone in an argument, then as a Christian, you decide not to say it, because it might hurt the other.

You want to at least write it down, because it was so clever. Share it with someone later. I could have said this. It's really hard to defend the other's feelings, their reputation, their honor.

[63 : 24] And even as you rebuke, it's better, the rebuke of a wise man is better than the applause of the ungodly. Things like that are all over Proverbs. But to do it with love is really, I think Paul exhibits love here, by the way he talks about love.

It's almost kind of indirect. Corinthians, I'm going to hold up to a beautiful image of love. And did you see that that's better than what's going on there amongst yourselves?

try to do it. There's a book called Saint Saul, a chap who wrote a massive history of Irish civilization. His name is Aikenson. He's not a Christian.

He teaches at Belfast and Queens. And I was amazed when I read his book. He's not a Christian. But he's looking into, from outside the discipline, at the studies of the historical Jesus.

And he comes to, for a man who's not a Christian, he comes to the conclusion that the best way to understand Jesus is through Paul. And the best way to understand Jesus through Paul is to look at passages like 1 Corinthians 13.

[64 : 28] So he comes via a very pagan background to a conclusion that you'd often get in some preachers who say that 1 Corinthians 13 really could be read as a description of our Lord in the beauty of his love.

This guy Aikenson really comes in a roundabout way from man outside the faith to a very, I think a very profound conclusion about the New Testament.

I know I said it just in passage. Last time I came across a startling reference to 1 Corinthians 13 from someone outside the faith. Is it true, do you think so, that if you don't have love, you've got no hope, and you've got no faith?

Nobody loves me, and I've got no reason to live. I've got no hope in this life, but I'm next, and I've got no faith really, is huge coming. Is that one of it? I think so.

But then the corrective, the deep solution is that God loves you. Even when you're in despair and hopeless. Even when you're a supremely unattractive, God loves you.

[65 : 36] It doesn't depend, it's self-supporting love. It's something that we can hardly, just vaguely understand. That God just is love.

He just doesn't practice it, just is love. Holy love. That's what they need to hear in Winnipeg. God has deeply loved the wounded, mixed up people, and whatever mixed up sexual issues you've got in your life, or whatever other God's love for them is holy and wishes to heal, to forgive, to change, to make holy love.

There was thinking of love as having to be behind all of the ministries, that's incredibly important. And I personally tend to confuse the emotion, the feeling of love, with the genuine desire for the good of the other person, which the emotion will rest on.

If you really desire another person's very best, perhaps on my good days, I will feel the emotion that we call love and tend to confuse with that deeper love.

I think the deeper desire that endures on the good days and the bad days may be the real root of it.

[66 : 58] I think that there's no interest for that. Thank you. Yeah, I would, yes, I would take it that Walter Kaufman moment, which what he brings to our attention, this, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.

I would say that for all of us, that the consciousness of the person saying that in that condition is simply not understandable by us.

And maybe we shouldn't even try. But there is the divine love as it dies in agony, crying out for the forgiveness of those inflicting the agony.

Well, that's divine. Sir, you're talking to me. The Nazarene of me says, oh, I'm lost again.

Well, is there like a 12-step program, seven habits of highly effective lovers? Is this an attitude to be gifted with, something we can train ourselves to like we do at guitar?

[68 : 15] how do we give this? If this is so important for us, how do we obtain it? Well, I don't want to be trite, but the Pauline emphasis would be on, we'll just contemplate Christ crucified.

And the spirit will unfold that for you and in you appropriately. There is the divine glory. I do nothing amongst you except Christ crucified, Paul would say to his hearers who had heard him before.

That's my answer. The very tone of programs and take a course, seven steps to a highly effective love life, it's just absurd. No, somehow, it's those secondary objectivities.

Think about your baptism, think about the Lord's Supper, think about the scriptures, pray, love you, God, love me, God. That's my best answer, John, I know I'm letting you down there.

Keep loving me anyway, brother. Love is yours. Yeah, sorry. One more question.

[69 : 31] love is love is patient.

Does that make sense? Mrs. Stranger?

she's absolutely supernatural can we have it? can we have it? just a exercise C.S. Lewis's The Four Loves is a fun book to read and you'll get some just to begin with repentance confession, repentance that's your opinion any more?

one more question I just think it really introduces to self-love to rediscovering them on 11 and 12 where we are rediscovering ourselves in the God the love of God in ourselves as we sort of deem a light into the essence of our creation and it doesn't just talk about service and love but it also talks about self-care and self-love and discovery to that I'm ensuring of love is for us and I think it's alright to learn and to talk about that ultimately I know that we can prove well that can't help when I do take the time again because I know that crawling and when we I'm doing it and I don't know I don't see there's plenty of sure where we canieive in this I don't know