

Chapter Thirteen

In Chapter Thirteen Paul pauses the gifts, ministries, and effects development to emphasize the “more excellent (hyperballistic) way” of ἀγάπη love (1st Cor. 13:1-8a). ἀγάπη love never fails, but certain spiritual gifts will fail (1st Cor. 13:8b,c,d). The cessation of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge forms the outline for the remainder of chapter thirteen, and all of chapter fourteen. Prophecy & Tongues are dealt with in chapter fourteen (1st Cor. 14:1), while the principles of cessationism and the nature of Knowledge in the Church Dispensation are dealt with in the last half of chapter thirteen (1st Cor. 13:9-13).

Love

1. The “more excellent way” to employ gifts, ministries, and effects is to do so through the operational function of ἀγάπη love.
 - a. This love is spoken of three times as a present continuing possession or a non-present continuing possession (1st Cor. 13:1,2,3).
 - b. ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω. to have; to experience something: of all conditions of body and soul; gener. of conditions, characteristics, capabilities, emotions, inner possession.
 - 1) Connections with ἀγάπη throughout the NT (Jn. 5:42; 13:35; 15:13; 1st Jn. 4:16; 1st Cor. 13:1ff.; 2nd Cor. 2:4; Phil. 2:2; 1st Pet. 4:8).
 - 2) A positive subjunctive verb followed by a negative subjunctive (μὴ + act.subj.) demonstrates the coinciding actions of each hypothetical activity in the absence of love. “Not having love” demonstrates the absence of the operational function of ἀγάπη love in the application of a spiritual gift, ministry or effect.
 - c. ἀγάπη ^{#26}: God’s absolute sacrificial unconditional integrity love. ἀγαπάω ^{#25} (verb) ἀγαπητός ^{#27} (adj.). Must be distinguished from all other forms of “love.”
 - 1) φιλία ^{#5373}, φιλέω ^{#5368}: rapport fellowship love.
 - 2) στοργή, στέργω: natural familial love.
 - 3) ἔρωσ (ἔρος), ἐράω: erotic sexual love.
2. Three Conditional clauses introduces the hyperballistic operational function of ἀγάπη love.
 - a. Five protases (vv.1,2,3,3₂) lead to three apodoses (vv.1,2,3).
 - b. εἰάν ^{#1437} + subjunctive indicates 3rd class conditional clause.
 - c. Tongues was the number one gift being abused in Corinth and so it leads off Paul’s diatribe.
 - 1) Pres.act.subj. λαλέω ^{#2980} + dat.pl. (instrumental) γλωσσοῦ ^{#1100}.
 - 2) The tongues of angels is nowhere else attested. “Even of angels” carries the gift to an extreme ([Bullinger: Hyperbole, p.427](#), also [Hyperbaton p.692](#)).
 - d. Prophecy, Knowledge, and Faith are also carried to extremes.
 - 1) No prophet reaches omniscience.
 - 2) Faith can move mountains (Matt. 17:20), or cast them into the sea (Matt. 21:21) but to completely remove them?
 - 3) The hyperbole illustrates that even a gift as powerful as that is “useless” (hyperbole again) without ἀγάπη love.
 - e. Fritter away my livelihood and deliver my body. These are not specific spiritual gifts but rather possible ministries or effects that could be accomplished.
 - 1) Give all (ψομίζω ^{#5595}: to give away in installments, *dole out, fritter away*) my possessions (ὑπάρχω ^{#5224}: to really be there, to be at one’s disposal; *property, possessions, means* Lk. 8:3; 12:15,33; 14:33; 19:8; Acts 4:32,34,37; Heb. 10:34).
 - 2) Deliver (παραδίδωμι ^{#3860}: *deliver, betray* Matt. 14:10,11; Acts 8:3; 15:26; 1st Cor. 15:24; 2nd Cor. 4:11; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 5:25) my body.
 - 3) That I may boast? That I may burn? Great [text crit.](#) exercise in v.3.
 - 4) There is no greater love (Jn. 15:13), but what if the self-sacrifice is absent love?

- f. I have become worse than not having a gift, I am nothing, I profit nothing.
- 1) I have become. γέγονα perf.act.ind. γίνομαι ^{#1096}: *to come into being; become.* (cf. 1st Cor. 9:22; 13:1,11; 2nd Cor. 12:11; Gal. 4:16).
 - 2) I am. εἰμί ^{#1510}: pres.act.ind. (cf. 1st Cor. 15:10; 2nd Cor. 12:11; 1st Tim. 1:15).
 - 3) I am profitted nothing. ὠφελοῦμαι pres.pass.ind. ὠφελέω ^{#5623}: *to be useful, to profit* (Matt. 15:5; 16:26; 27:24; Jn. 6:63; 12:19; 1st Cor. 13:3; 14:6; Heb. 4:2; 13:9). Also ὠφέλιμος ^{#5624}: *profitable* (1st Tim. 4:8ab; 2nd Tim. 3:16; Tit. 3:8).
3. Following the conditional clauses, Paul delivers a 16–faceted exposition of what ἀγάπη love is and is not, by describing what ἀγάπη love does and does not do.
- a. Love.
 - 1) Nom.sing.fem. Ἡ ἀγάπη ^{#26}: God’s absolute sacrificial unconditional integrity love.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ἀγαπάω ^{#25}, ἀγαπητός ^{#27}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 320x (112x (35%) by John (17.8% NT); 136x (42.5%) by Paul (25.7% NT).
 - b. Love suffers long. Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ.
 - 1) Pres.act.ind. μακροθυμέω ^{#3114}: to remain tranquil while waiting, *have patience, wait*, to bear up under provocation without complaint, *be patient*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: μακροθυμία ^{#3115}, μακρόθυμος, μακροθύμως ^{#3116}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 25x (Matt. 18:26,29; Acts 26:3; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1st Cor. 13:4; 2nd Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 1st Thess. 5:14; 1st Tim. 1:16; 2nd Tim. 3:10; 4:2; Heb. 6:12,15; Jas. 5:7,8,10; 1st Pet. 3:20; 2nd Pet. 3:9,15).
 - c. Love is kind. χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη.
 - 1) Pres.mid.ind. χρηστεύομαι ^{#5541} ^{Hapax}: *be kind, loving, merciful; show kindness.* Early Church Fathers: 1st Clement 13:2; 14:3.
 - 2) Cognate terms: χρηστός ^{#5543}, χρηστότης ^{#5544}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 18x (Lk. 6:35; Rom. 2:4; Rom. 3:12; 11:22; 1st Cor. 13:4; 15:33; 2nd Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:7; 4:32; Col. 3:12; Tit. 3:4; 1st Pet. 2:3).
 - d. Is not jealous. οὐ ζηλοῖ.
 - 1) Pres.act.ind. ζηλόω ^{#2206}: to have intense negative feelings over another’s achievements or success, *be filled with jealousy, envy*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ζήλος ^{#2205}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 27x (Acts 5:17; 7:9; 13:45; 17:5; Rom. 13:13; 1st Cor. 3:3; 13:4; 2nd Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Jas. 3:14,16; 4:2).
 - e. Does not brag. οὐ περπερεύεται.
 - 1) Pres.mid.ind. περπερεύομαι ^{#4068}: behave as a braggart; *boast brag*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: none. Secular usage: late & rare. Polybius calls the grammarian Isocrates and Aulus Postomius πέρπερος.
 - f. Is not arrogant. οὐ φυσιοῦται.
 - 1) Pres.pass.ind. φυσιώω ^{#5448}: fr. φῦσα (a pair of bellows) cause to have an exaggerated self-conception, *puff up, make proud*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: φυσίωσις ^{#5450}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 8x (1st Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; 2nd Cor. 12:20; Col. 2:18).
 - g. Does not act unbecomingly. οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ.
 - 1) Pres.act.ind. ἀσχημονέω ^{#807}: *behave disgracefully, dishonorably, indecently*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ἀσχημοσύνη ^{#808}, ἀσχήμων ^{#809}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 5x (Rom. 1:27; 1st Cor. 7:36; 12:23; 13:5; Rev. 16:15).
 - h. Does not seek its own. οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς.
 - 1) Pres.act.ind. ζητέω ^{#2212}: *seek, look for; wish for, aim at*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ζήτησις ^{#2214}, ἐκζητέω ^{#1567}, ἐπιζητέω ^{#1934}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 144x (Jn. 5:30; 1st Cor. 10:24,33; 13:5; Phil. 2:21).
 - i. Is not provoked. οὐ παροξύνεται.
 - 1) Pres.pass.ind. παροξύνω ^{#3947}: *urge on, stimulate, provoke*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: παροξυσμός ^{#3948}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 4x (Acts 15:39; 17:16; 1st Cor. 13:5; Heb. 10:24).
 - j. Does not take into account a wrong. οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν.
 - 1) Pres.mid.ind. λογίζομαι ^{#3049}: *to reckon, calculate*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: λογισμός ^{#3053}.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 40x (Rom. 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11; 1st Cor. 4:1; 13:5,11; 2nd Cor. 3:5; 5:19; 10:2,7,11; 11:5; 12:6; Phil. 3:13; 4:8; 2nd Tim. 4:16).

- k. Does not rejoice in unrighteousness. οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. χαίρω #5463: *to rejoice, be glad*. The obj. of or reason for the joy is denoted in various ways. Prep. ἐπί τινι rejoice over someone or something.
 - 2) Cognate terms: χαρά #5479, συγχαίρω #4796.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 140x (Mt. 18:13; Lk. 1:14; 13:17; Jn. 16:20,21,22,24; Acts 15:31; Rom. 16:19; 1st Cor. 13:6; 16:17; 2nd Cor. 7:4,7,9,13,16; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:4,18,25; 2:2,17,18,28,29; 3:1; 4:1,4,10; Rv. 11:10).
- l. Rejoices with the Truth. συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. συγχαίρω #4796: *rejoice together with* someone.
 - 2) Cognate terms: see above.
 - 3) Scripture examples: see above.
- m. Bears all things. πάντα στέγει.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. στέγω #4722: *to keep confidential, cover, pass over in silence* (Sir. 8:17; Joseph. Vi. 1.225); *to bear up against difficulties, bear, stand, endure*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: στέγη #4721: *roof* (Mt. 8:8; Mk. 2:4; Lk. 7:6).
 - 3) Scripture examples: 4x (1st Cor. 9:12; 13:7; 1st Thess. 3:1,5).
- n. Believes all things. πάντα πιστεύει.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. πιστεύω #4100: *to place confidence in; believe*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: πίστις #4102, πιστός #4103, ἄπιστος #571, ἀπιστέω #569, ἀπιστία #570, ὀλιγόπιστος & ὀλιγοπιστία #3640.
4. Other operational functions include faith and hope (1st Cor. 13:13).
- a. Both faith (Matt. 17:20; 21:21; Acts 14:9; Rom. 14:22; 1st Cor. 13:2; 1st Tim. 1:19) and hope (Acts 24:15; Rom. 15:4; 2nd Cor. 3:12; 10:15; Eph. 2:12; 1st Jn. 3:3) can be present continuing possessions.
 - b. Love believes and hopes (1st Cor. 13:7), so the operational function of love includes the operational functions of faith and hope.
 - c. Love also “endures all things” (1st Cor. 13:7) but endurance is not an operational function. Endurance is an operational mandate for all believers in the Christian Way of Life (Jer. 12:5; 1st Cor. 10:13; Heb. 10:36; 12:1; Jas. 5:7-11).
- 3) Scripture examples: 599x (100x in John (128x by John); 252x by Paul; 41x in Heb.).
- o. Hopes all things. πάντα ἐλπίζει.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. ἐλπίζω #1679: *to look forward to something with confidence, to hope*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ἐλπίς #1680, ἀπελπίζω #560, προελπίζω #4276.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 86x (Rom. 4:18; 5:2,4,5; 8:20,24,25; 12:12; 15:4,12,13,24; 1st Cor. 9:10; 13:7,13; 15:19; 16:7; 2nd Cor. 1:7,10,13; 3:12; 5:11; 8:5; 10:15; 13:6).
- p. Endures all things. πάντα ὑπομένει.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. ὑπομένω #5278: *to remain, stay, stand one’s ground, endure*.
 - 2) Cognate terms: ὑπομονή #5281.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 49x (Mt. 10:22; 24:13; Rom. 5:3,4; 8:25; 1st Cor. 13:7; 2nd Tim. 3:10; Heb. 10:36; 12:1,2,3,7; Jas. 1:3,4,12; 5:11; 2nd Pet. 1:6).
- q. Love never fails. Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει.
- 1) Pres.act.ind. πίπτω #4098: *to fall* (stupid [BDAG](#) def). Of things, esp. structures: *fall, fall to pieces, collapse, go down* (Josh. 6:5,20; Job 1:19; Rev. 11:13; 16:19; Matt. 7:25,27; Heb. 11:30); Fig. *become invalid, come to an end, fail* (Lk. 16:17; 1st Cor. 13:8).
 - 2) Cognate terms: ἐκπίπτω #1601, καταπίπτω #2667, παραπίπτω #3895, περιπίπτω #4045, συμπίπτω #4098, πτώσις #4431.
 - 3) Scripture examples: 107x (20x Matt; 36x Luke & Acts; 1st Cor. 10:8,12; 13:8; 14:25; 23x Rev.).

Gift Cessation

1. ἀγάπη never fails, but certain gifts and ministries will do so (from the Corinthians' perspective) and have done so (from Austin Bible Church's perspective).
 - a. ἀγάπη is the more excellent way by which gifts, ministries, and effects can be utilized by Members of the Church for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ (1st Cor. 12:31).
 - b. ἀγάπη is a permanent and eternal operational function, but certain gifts were not so designed (1st Cor. 13:8a,13).
 - c. Important note: it is not all χαρίσματα (spiritual gifts) that are done away, but only certain gifts. Spiritual gifting itself continues throughout the Dispensation of the Church.
2. Verse 8 contains three more “ifs” (like and unlike the three “ifs” from vv.1–3).
 - a. εἴτε #1535 conj. used 65x. “Whether . . . or”; “if . . . if” (Rom. 12:6,7,8; 1st Cor. 3:22,8; 8:5,2; 10:31,3; 12:13,4,26,2; 13:8,3; 14:7,2,27 (cf. δεῖ 14:29); 15:11,2; 2nd Cor. 1:6,2; 5:9,2,10,2,13,2; 8:23,2; 12:2,2,3,2; Eph. 6:8,2; Phil. 1:18,2,20,2,27,2; Col. 1:16,4,20,2; 1st Thess. 5:10,2; 2nd Thess. 2:15,2; 1st Pet. 2:13,14; LXX: Josh. 24:15).
 - b. The “whether, or, or” construction of this passage establishes that there were gifts present in certain Corinthian believers but not present in others because they have other gifts.
 - c. Prophecy and knowledge will be “done away” but tongues will “cease.”
 - 1) Done away. Fut.pass. καταργέω #2673; to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, *abolish, wipe out, set aside* (Rom. 6:6; 1st Cor. 2:6; 6:13; 13:8,10,11; 15:24,26; 2nd Cor. 3:7,11,13,14; Gal. 5:11; 2nd Thess. 2:8; 2nd Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14).
 - 2) Cease. Fut.mid. παύω #3973; (mid.) *to pause, stop, cease*.
It is important to note that it is a different verb for the ending of tongues than the verb used for the ending of prophecy and knowledge. The situational conditions for the end of tongues is different than the situational condition for the end of the other temporary gifts.
3. Verses 9&10 describe the in-part (imperfect) nature of the apostolic age of the Church, followed by the perfect nature of the post-apostolic age of the Church.
 - a. ἐκ μέρους describes the “in-part” conditions present in the Dispensation of the Church: Age of the Apostles. μέρος #3313; *part* (previously used in 1st Cor. 12:27).
 - 1) Knowing is a partial feature supplemented by the partial feature of prophesying.
 - 2) A series of imperfect (in-part) messages is designed to give way to a perfect message (Heb. 1:1-2).
 - 3) An obsolete feature of any age must be designed to disappear (Heb. 8:13).
 - b. τὸ τέλειον describes the “perfect” or “complete” condition present in the Dispensation of the Church: Age of the Local Church. Neut.sing. τέλειος #5046 *perfect, complete, mature, adult*.
 - 1) The neuter “perfect thing” will come at an unspecified time, but the Apostle Paul anticipated it in his lifetime.
 - 2) The neuter “perfect thing” is a benefit to the Church because it is superior to the “in-part” conditions that preceded it. Not every gift is made obsolete as a result, and the ongoing use of gifts in the ongoing Dispensation of the Church is expected.
 - c. The most common misinterpretation for “the perfect” is to apply it to Christ and specifically to His 2nd Advent.
 - 1) This leads to an awkward terminology for Jesus Christ in the neuter gender.
 - 2) This defies the promise of Joel 2:28 which states that the 2nd Advent of Jesus Christ will launch the beginning of prophecy.
 - a) The same event cannot mark both the end and the beginning of prophecy!
 - b) For a glimpse into the prophetic role of Israel to the Gentiles in the Millennium see also Num. 11:29; Zech. 8:20–23; Isa. 60:3; Zeph. 3:19 cf. 1st Cor. 14:25.
 - d. Another common misinterpretation for “the perfect” is to apply it to eternity in heaven.
 - 1) This relates the “face to face” illustration (1st Cor. 13:12) with the “face to face” reality of heaven (2nd Cor. 5:6,8).
 - 2) This fails to retain the context for the illustration (1st Cor. 13:12) as the same context for that which is being illustrated (1st Cor. 13:10).

- e. A verbose over-translation for this passage actually helps to keep the context fixed:
 - 1) 1 Cor. 13:8 In explaining the hyperballistic nature of agape love as an operational function throughout the entirety of the Dispensation of the Church it is helpful to draw a direct contrast with certain spiritual gifts which will not continue to be manifested throughout the entirety of the Dispensation of the Church; namely the spiritual gifts of Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge.
 - 2) 1 Cor. 13:9 The explanation for the spiritual gifts of Prophecy and Knowledge being abolished rests in the nature of those in-part gifts and the way in which they combine and coordinate for the resultant edification of Church Members in the only way possible prior to the revelation and provision of mystery doctrine in the written New Testament Scriptures.
 - 3) 1 Cor. 13:10 In contrast to this, a perfect situation is coming in which the combination and coordination of those in-part revelatory gifts will no longer be needed or even appropriate as the edification of Church Members will from that time on be accomplished by faithfully teaching the once and for all delivered mystery doctrine and associated written New Testament Scriptures.
- 4. The transition from the Church's imperfect age (in-part) to the Church's perfect age is one of maturity (1st Cor. 13:11).
 - a. This verse (v.11) is an illustration for the contrast of in-part (v.9) versus complete (v.10). Paul presents a 1st person singular illustration from temporal life to teach these concepts.
 - b. Speaking, thinking, and reasoning "like a child" demonstrates that the in-part conditions of the Church's edification through revelatory gifts is foundational & preparational, but not complete.
 - c. Becoming an adult demonstrates the perfect condition of the Church's edification through a complete written revelation.
- 5. The transition from the Church's imperfect age to the Church's perfect age is one of clarity (1st Cor. 13:12).
 - a. This verse (v.12) is an illustration for the contrast of in-part (v.9) versus complete (v.10). Paul presents a 1st person plural metaphor to teach these concepts.
 - b. "Up until this very time" (ἄρτι) we are seeing through a mirror (ἕσπετρον) in a riddle (αἰνιγμα). Note the metaphoric nature of this illustration!
 - c. The perfect nature of written revelation for the Church allows us to see "face to face" (πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον). This is not a literal condition of being in heaven but continues to metaphor in describing the clarity of our spiritual vision.
 - d. "Face to face" with God in both literal and metaphoric usage is an expression for direct dealings with God here in an earthly setting and never for a heavenly setting in glory (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10; Jdg. 6:22; Ezek. 20:35).