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## 1 Corinthians 13

*Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal (v. 1).*

See how St. Paul begins, from that which was marvelous in their eyes: the gift of tongues. He does not just bring the gift forward, but he mentions far more. He didn't say, "If I speak in tongues," but, "If I speak in the tongues of men." What does St. Paul mean when he says, "of me"? Surely he means: of all nations in every part of the world. But St. Paul is not content with this amplification, because he then uses another, which is much greater, adding the words, "If I speak in the tongues ... of angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

Can you see what point he is making when he begins by exalting the gift of tongues, and then to what extent afterward he lowers and casts it down? For St. Paul doesn't simply say, "I am nothing," but instead he says, "I have come a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal," a senseless and inanimate thing. What does he mean by a "clanging cymbal"? He emits a sound, but at random and in vain, and for no good purpose. Beautiful speech that profits nothing also counts you as one giving impertinent trouble, an annoying and even wearisome kind of person. Do you see how a person who is void of love is similar to things that are inanimate and senseless?

In order that his discourse may be acceptable, St. Paul doesn't stop with the gift of tongues, but proceeds also to the remaining gifts. And having depreciated all of them when expressed without love, he then depicts love's image. And because he prefers to advance his argument by amplification, he begins from the less and ascends to the greater. When he first indicated their order in the previous chapter of First Corinthians, he placed the gift of tongues last (see 1 Corinthians 12 and the list of gifts)

*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (v. 2)*

This gift of prophecy, like tongues, is also expressed as a gift that could potentially be excellent. Just as when St. Paul mentioned tongues, he didn't mention the ordinary tongues of all humankind— instead, he described an outstanding use of that gift, like those of angels, but then signified that the gift was nothing without love.

Consider again how St. Paul lowers the dignity of the gift of tongues. In regard to prophecy, he mentions the great advantages arising from it, understanding mysteries and having all knowledge; in regard to faith, no trifling work, he signifies even the moving of mountains; but with respect to tongues, on the other hand, having named the gift itself only, he leaves it.

I pray that you will consider this as well: see how succinctly St. Paul sums up all of the gifts when he names prophecy and faith— for miracles are either in words or deeds. How does Christ say it: that with the least degree of faith, one can move a mountain.

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have love not love, it profits me nothing. (v. 3)*

What a wonderful amplification this is! For even these new things that St. Paul adds—"If I give away all my goods, and if I give my body to be burned"—he adds another layer of teaching. He doesn't say, "If I give to the poor half of my goods, or two or three parts," but, "If I give all of my goods." And he doesn't say "give," but "distribute it in morsels," to indicate the adding of expense of time and resources to the giving through careful administration.

From teachings such as these, it is evident that even before God, love is the greatest commandment of all. But, St. Paul declares, even if we should lay down our life for God's sake, and not merely lay it down but hand our bodies over to be burned, we gain no great advantage if we don't also love our neighbor.

What makes the intensity of St. Paul's expression so clear and causes us to be awe is not that the gifts should require love (this is no surprise), but our entire life should amount to nothing without love. This is especially so, because Christ appears to provide His great rewards both to those who give up their possessions and to those who face the perils of martyrdom.

For great indeed is the labor of this achievement, and it surpasses nature by itself, all of which is well known to those who have had these crowns given to them. Language cannot describe the nobility of the soul that these deeds belong to, and how exceedingly wonderful their achievement is. Nevertheless, St. Paul says that this very wonderful thing is of no great profit without love—even if it includes giving up one's possessions.

Let us ask how it is possible that one who gives all his goods to feed the poor can be somehow lacking in love. I grant that, in contrast, the person who is ready to be burned alive for his or her faith, and has the spiritual gifts, may perhaps possibly not have love. I can imagine that that could be true. But the person who not only gives his goods but even distributes them to the needy, how can it be that he does not love?

Is it possible that St. Paul is supposing a hypothetical case, offering it as real, as if to propose something in excess? For example, in the book of Galatians he says, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!" (Gal. 1:8). And yet neither St. Paul nor an angel was about to do what he describes as possible. But to indicate that he means to carry the matter as far as possible, St. Paul proposes even that which could never by any means happen.

Christ Himself says, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Mt. 12:7), echoing Hosea 6:6, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Because it is common for men to love those who benefited from them, and for those who receive benefits to be kinder toward their benefactors, Jesus made this law, constituting it as a bond of friendship. But still, how is it that after Christ said that both of these belong

to perfection, St. Paul affirms that without charity they are still imperfect? St. Paul is not contradicting Him, God forbid, but harmonizing with Him.

Consider, for instance, the case of the rich man in the Gospels. Christ did not merely say to him to sell his goods and give to the poor, but he added, come and follow him. Following Christ does not prove one to be a true disciple, but rather completely loving one another. For Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:35). And He also says, “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Mt. 10:39).

The love that He requires is intense. He didn’t even stop at requiring love, but added, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28), pointing out that we ought to love even to the point of being killed for our beloved. For this above all is to love Him. In the same way, He also says to St. Peter, “If you love me, then feed My sheep” (Jn. 21:16).

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Let’s sketch out what this virtue of love really is, since it can be so difficult to actually see in the world. Let’s consider how great the benefits would be if it were everywhere in abundance—how there would be no need for laws or tribunals or punishments or avenging or any other of those sorts of things, since if all loved and were beloved, no human being would injure another.

Again, what is the distinctively marvelous part of love? All other good things have evils yoked with them. For example, those who give up their possessions are often prideful on account of it. The eloquent person is affected with a wild passion for glory, whereas the humble-minded person, on this very ground, seldom thinks highly of himself in his conscience. Love frees one from such mischief—for no one could be lifted up against the person whom he loves. Do not, I pray, suppose that this sort of love means loving one person only, but instead it is a love for all alike. Then you will see its virtue.

This is the profile of one who has love. In contrast, he who works miracles and has perfect knowledge, without love, even though he may raise ten thousand from the dead, will not profit much by it if he is broken off from all others and not endeavoring to mix himself up with any of his fellow servants. For no other cause than this did Christ say that the sign of perfect love toward Himself is loving one’s neighbors. As Jesus said to Simon Peter, if you love me, “Feed my lambs” and “Tend my sheep” (Jn. 21:15–16).

For if a father had a beloved child on whose behalf he would even give up his life, but if someone were to love the father and completely ignore the son, he would infuriate the father. He wouldn’t experience any love himself because of the overlooking of his son. Now, if this could happen with a father and a son, how much more with God and each of us? Since surely God is more loving than any parent.

Concerning God, Christ says, love with all your heart. And concerning your neighbor, love as yourself— which is tantamount to with all your heart! Listen: if this were truly observed there would be neither slave nor free, neither ruler nor ruled, neither rich nor poor, neither small nor great. And no devil would ever have to become known. Only Satan would have been known and whatever other evil spirits there are, even if they numbered in the hundreds, thousands, or to ten thousand, they would have no power while love ruled. For grass would more easily endure a scorching fire than the devil the flame of love (cf. Jms. 1:11).

Love is stronger than any wall, and is firmer than any rock. If you can name any material stronger than walls and rocks, the firmness of love transcends them all. Neither wealth nor poverty overcomes love. The truth is, there would be no poverty, no unbounded wealth, if there were love (cf. Mt. 6:31–34). There would only be the virtuous qualities, without the bad, that stem from each state, poverty and wealth. We would only reap the abundance from wealth, and from poverty we would only have its freedom from care; no one would have to undergo the anxieties of riches or the dread of poverty.

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Other virtues each have different troubles yoked with them. Fasting, temperance, and watching, for instance, have envy, lust, and contempt. But love has great pleasure, together with the gain in virtue, and no accompanying trouble.

Think of love like an industrious bee, gathering the sweets from every flower and depositing them in the soul of the person who loves. This is true even to the point where, even though one may be a slave, love renders slavery sweeter than freedom. For the person who loves rejoices not so much in commanding as in being commanded (although to command is sweet). But love changes the nature of things and presents herself with all blessings in her hands, gentler than any mother, wealthier than any queen, and makes difficulties light and easy, causing even our virtues to seem facile, and vice itself becomes very bitter to us.

To speak evil of someone can feel good to us at that very moment, but love shows us the true bitterness of it, and causes speaking well, instead, to be the most pleasant of all. For nothing is so sweet to us as praising one whom we love.

And if one's love beholds another in error, love mourns and is in pain; yet even this pain itself brings pleasure. For the very tears and the grief of love are sweeter than any mirth and joy. I compare it to this: they who laugh are not as refreshed as they who weep for their friends. And if you doubt it, stop their tears and they will complain about it like a person who has been abused intolerably.

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have love not love, it profits me nothing. (v. 3)*

Don't talk to me of this ordinary, vulgar, low-minded sort of love; it is a disease rather than love. It is just this disease in our lives that St. Paul seeks to correct, and which he considers the profit of those who are loved.

You'll never see a father as affectionate as a father who loves with the purest of intentions. Just as they who love money cannot endure to spend it but would rather be in trouble than see their wealth diminishing, so too he who is kindly disposed toward any person in pure love would choose to suffer ten thousand evils than see his beloved one injured.

I have heard someone object to this by saying, "Didn't the Egyptian woman, Potiphar's wife, who loved Joseph, also wish to injure him?" (cf. Gen. 39). Consider then how great a love Joseph's words were tokens of, and the action that Potiphar's wife was speaking of. Insult me and make me an adulteress, and wrong my husband, and overthrow all my house, and throw away your confidence in God: these were all expressions of one who was far from loving God. In fact, these were the words of someone who did not even love herself. But because Joseph truly loved, he sought to turn her away from all of these suggestions.

Do you see what Joseph says? (*read Genesis 39 and see what Joseph says to Potiphar's wife*) Is it enough that your husband is not present, or that he would never know that he was wronged? God will see it. Potiphar's wife benefited nothing from Joseph's advice, and she still sought to attract him. She did these things out of desire to satiate her own frenzy, not through any love for Joseph... Do you see how Joseph cares for her? Potiphar's wife did not have love for him, but evil intent. It wasn't Joseph that she loved, but she sought to fulfill her own lust. And the very words too, if one examines them accurately, are accompanied with wrath and great bloodthirstiness. For what does she say? "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us!" She upbraids her husband for the kindness, and she exhibits Joseph's garments, having become herself more savage than any wild beast. But Joseph is not savage. Now why am I speaking so much about Joseph's goodwill toward his accuser in this story? He shows the same goodwill and love toward his brothers, later in the story, who had once wanted to kill him; and then too he never says one harsh thing of them.

St. Paul says that the love that we are speaking of is the mother of all good things, and it is preferred even to miracles and all other gifts. When the diadem of love is on our head, it is enough, on its own, to point out the genuine disciple of Christ—not to ourselves only, but also to unbelievers. As Christ says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35).

It is because of St. Paul's love that we admire him, and for the dead whom he raised, or for the lepers he cleansed, but because St. Paul said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant?" (2 Cor. 11:29). For even if you have ten thousand miracles to compare with this, you will have nothing equal to it. St. Paul himself says that a great reward is laid up for him, not because he wrought miracles, but because to the weak he became as weak.

What is then worthy compared with him, compared with St. Paul who neither condemned wealth for its own sake nor gave up the superfluities of other goods? For St. Paul gave up both soul and body so that they who stoned and beat him with rods might still obtain the kingdom. For this, he says, is what Christ has taught him about how to love. It is Christ who left behind the new commandment concerning love, which he himself also fulfilled in deed. Being Lord of all, and of that blessed dual nature, distinct from other men, whom He created out of nothing and on whom He bestowed innumerable benefits—these same men took to insulting and spitting on Him. But Jesus Christ didn't turn away; He even became human for their sakes, and conversed with prostitutes and tax collectors —those people who were most despised in those days —and He healed demons, and promised heaven.

*Love is patient and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (v. 4)*

Patience is the root of all self-denial. In this regard, a wise man once said, “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly” (Prov. 14:29). And then this wise man compares patience with a strong city, saying that patience is even more secure than that—for patience is both an invincible weapon and a sort of impregnable tower, easily defeating all attackers. As a spark falling into the deep does not injure it but is easily quenched, so on a patient soul whatever unexpected thing falls, it vanishes rapidly; the soul is not disturbed. The patient person enjoys a profound calm, like a boat settled quickly in a harbor. Even if you surround him with turmoil and trouble, you will not move the rock. Even if you hurl insults at him, you haven’t shaken the tower. And even if you bruise him with words, you haven’t wounded the strong man. This sort of person is called long-suffering, because he has a kind of a great love. This patient excellence is born out of love; whoever possesses it and enjoys it owes it all to love.

St. Paul does not stop with patience, but adds the other high achievement of love that love is also kind. There are some who practice long-suffering not for their own self-denial, but to punish those who have provoked them, to make them burst with wrath. But to them, St. Paul says that love does not—or cannot—have this defect. To be loving is not only to endure nobly, but also to soothe and comfort; by doing so, we cure the sore and heal the wound of passion.

St. Paul also says that love does not envy. For it is possible to be both long-suffering and envious, thereby spoiling any excellence. Love avoids this as well.

Love is not puffed up. But we see many people who think highly of themselves regarding these virtues of those who truly love: not being envious, not grudging, not being mean-spirited, not rash.

You should also consider: a patient person is not necessarily also kind. And if that person is not kind, the love itself becomes a vice, and that person is in danger of falling into malice. Therefore love supplies a medicine, which St. Paul calls kindness, and it is this that preserves the virtue of love.

He says that love brings in virtue as well as eliminates vice—in fact, she makes it so that vice will not spring up at all in the first place. St. Paul doesn’t say, “Love envies,” but, “Love overcomes envy.” He doesn’t say, “Love is arrogant,” but, “Love chastises that passion.” Love does not envy, does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, all of which are qualities to be most truly admired. She accomplishes her good things without toil, and without conflict and battle her trophy is won. Love does not permit the one who possesses her to attain the crown by toiling. She brings him to the prize without this sort of labor. These passions are not needed to contend against sober reason.

Love does not behave inappropriately. Why does St. Paul say that love is not puffed up? She is so far from being puffed up that in suffering the most shameful things for him who truly loves, she does not even consider the shameful thing inappropriate.

However, so that we cannot be accused of basing our teaching on a base example alone, let's examine this same statement in its application to Christ. Then we will see the force of what has been said. For our Lord Jesus Christ was both spit upon and beaten with rods by pitiful slaves; and not only did He not consider it shameful, but He exulted and called the thing glory. He brought a robber and murderer with Himself before the rest into paradise; He conversed with a prostitute—all while bystanders accused Him. Jesus didn't consider these things disgraceful, but allowed the prostitute to kiss His feet, her tears to wet His body, allowed her to wipe them away with her hair—all of this amid spectators both foe and enemy. Love does nothing shamefully...

In the same way, a father who is a first-rate philosopher and orator is not ashamed to talk in a childlike manner with his children; and none who see him doing so find fault with him; instead, they consider it good and right. This is love's wonderful quality: it doesn't leave one feeling injured or grieving or galled, but it disposes him to rejoice! For love doesn't know what shame is. Instead, love glories in those things at which another is embarrassed. The shame comes only in not knowing how to love—not, when you love, in face danger and enduring all for the beloved.

Now when I say all, you shouldn't suppose that I mean things that are also injurious; for example, assisting a youth in a love affair or whatever hurtful thing anyone may convince another person to do for him. Such people do not love. I have shown you this in the earlier example of the Egyptian woman, Potiphar's wife. Truthfully, a lover is simply the one who seeks what is profitable for the beloved: so that if any are not pursuing this—that which is right and good—even if he makes ten thousand professions of his love, he is actually more hostile than any enemy.

*...does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil (v. 5)*

Having said that love is patient and kind, St. Paul then shows something of the frame of mind of the one who exhibits this sort of love. What is that temperament like? In brief, it is this: "Love does not insist on its own way."

The beloved is everything to the one who loves, and the one who loves only behaves inappropriately if unable to free the beloved from such circumstances. So if it's possible to benefit his beloved by his own inappropriateness, he doesn't actually consider it inappropriate. You are this other party when you love, since this is friendship: that the lover and the beloved are no longer two divided persons, but in a way, one single person. This is a miraculous thing that can only take place when and where there is love.

Don't seek your own good, that you may find your own good. For the one who seeks his own good doesn't find it. Consider this: if somebody had his own gold buried in his neighbor's house but refused to go there and dig it up, he would never actually seek it; likewise in the case of this teaching from St. Paul, whoever doesn't seek his own profit in the advantage of his neighbor will not acquire the crowns due to him. God Himself designed it this way in order that we would be mutually bound together.

Imagine that you are waking up a sleeping child to follow his brother, your other son. If that sleeping child were unwilling to wake up and follow, you might place his hand in his brother's hand, so that the one would necessarily follow the other and what he desires and longs for. Through the desire of obtaining whatever the brother seeks, the younger one may follow him who holds his hand in safety and comfort. And so it takes place here: each person's profit has been given to his neighbor, so that we may run after each other and not be hurt in the process. If you will, look at this also through my own example, I who am addressing you. For my profit depends on you, and your advantage on me. Thus, on the one hand it profits you to be taught the things that please God, but I have been entrusted with teaching you—that you might receive it from me—and therefore might be compelled to come and listen to me. On the other hand, I profit from your being made better Christians: the reward I will receive for this in heaven will be great; but again this lies in you. And therefore I am compelled to seek your betterment so that I may receive my profit from you. In this regard, St. Paul also says, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not you?" (1 Thess. 2:19). The joy of St. Paul was the disciples, and they had much joy from him. Therefore he even wept when he saw them perishing.

It is possible to see this in worldly things. For example, the wife, says St. Paul, doesn't have power over her own body, nor the husband over his—but the wife over the husband's, and the husband over the wife's (cf. 1 Cor. 7:4). We also do this when we wish to bind any people together. We leave neither of those bound in their own power but, extending a chain between them, the one becomes bound to the other. I hope that you will also see this in the case of worldly leaders. A judge doesn't make judgments simply for himself but seeks the profit of his neighbors. The governed, on the other hand, seek the profit of their rulers by their attendance,

by their ministry, and by all kinds of other things. Soldiers take up arms for us, for on our account they put themselves in danger. We are in trouble and they help us; they rely on us, for it is from us that they receive their supplies. The soldier fights for the people who support him and, on the other hand, unless they nourish the soldier, those who support him have nothing to arm themselves with. If you say that each person seeks his own way, I will add this: only by the good of another is one's own won. Do you see that love extends everywhere and manages all things?

*...does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth (v. 6);*

Love doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing, and does not feel pleasure over those who suffer. But not only this; much greater is the fact that love rejoices in the truth. She feels pleasure, as St. Paul says, with those who are described in ways like this: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). This means that not only does love not envy, but she also is not puffed up, because, in fact, she accounts the good things of others as her own.

*...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (v. 7).*

Even if things become burdensome or grievous or you endure insults, or even injuries or a martyr's death, or whatever else may come, we can still see a love that "bears all things," in the case of blessed David. For what could be more intolerable for a father than to see his son rising up against him, as King David does, and aiming at the usurpation of his father's throne, even thirsting for his father's blood? Yet David endures this, and loves Absalom in spite of it. We don't see David throwing out one single bitter expression against the parricide; but, when he leaves all the rest to his captains, he gives a strong injunction respecting his son's safety. The foundation of his love is strong. In this way, love bears all things.

And there is the fact that love "believes all things," for it does not merely hope, says St. Paul, but also believes out of its great affection. And even if these good things should not turn out according to expectation, but the other person should prove yet even more intolerable, love bears even this. For, St. Paul says, love endures all things.

*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away (v. 8).*

For that which is true does not fail. Real love cannot be severed and is not dissolved by endurance. It puts up with everything: since, come what may, he who loves can never hate. This then is the greatest of its virtues.

[T]o St. Timothy he gave a charge, saying, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

You might object, saying, "What if they are enemies or unbelievers, should I hate them then?"

One mustn't hate them, but their doctrine; not the person but the wicked conduct, the corrupt mind. For the person is God's work, but the deceit is the devil's work. Don't therefore confuse the things of God and the things of the devil.

The Jews were both blasphemers and persecutors, abusive to the followers of Christ, and they spoke ten thousand evil things of Christ Himself. Did St. Paul hate them, he who of all men loved Christ the most? Not at all. He loved them and did everything for their sake. On one occasion St. Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1), and on another, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). And Moses says, "But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written" (Ex. 32:32).

Consider the case of that time when the disciples wanted fire to come down on those that had insulted Jesus. "On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But He turned and rebuked them" (Lk. 9:52–55). In those days, it was not only the ungodly who easily hated others, and friendships might have given rise to occasions of transgression for even the disciples of Christ. It was for this reason that He severed their connections, both blood and marriage, and He fenced them off on every side.

And now, because Jesus Christ has brought us to a more entire command of ourselves and set us apart from that sort of mischief, He asks us instead to admit and soothe them. For we receive no harm from them, but they receive good from us. What then does Christ say? We must not hate, but pity, because if we hate, how will we convert the one who is in error? How will we pray for the unbeliever? One ought to pray for the strength to do this. Hear what St. Paul says: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone" (1 Tim. 2:1).

I suppose it is evident to everyone that all were not believers at that time. And remember that kings and those in high places were usually ungodly transgressors. Mentioning the reason for the prayer, St. Paul adds that "this is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3). For if we hate the ungodly and the lawless, we will hate sinners as well; and thus, by simple deduction, you will see that you have become broken off from everyone, even your closest brothers, or rather, from all. For there is not one, no, not one, without sin. If it is our duty to hate the enemies of God, one must not hate only the ungodly, but sinners: and thus we will become worse than wild beasts, shunning all, and puffed up with pride just like a Pharisee.

St. Paul asks us to hate the deed that is evil and not the person. For it is the work of the devil to tear us apart from one another, and the devil always uses great diligence to take away love so that he may cut off the way of correction and keep us in error and at enmity. By doing these things, he bricks up the way to our salvation. For when the physician hates the sick man and flees from him, and then the sick man turns away from his physician, when will the illness be restored? Never, unless the one calls in the other's aid, or one goes to the other.

So consider for yourselves: have you ever turned away from your brother to avoid him because he is ungodly? Truly, for this cause, above all others, you should welcome the other and attend to his needs, so that you may raise him up in his sickness. If he proves to be incurably sick, you have still been called to do your part. Judas too was incurably diseased, and yet God did not stop attending to him. In this same way, you shouldn't grow weary. For even if after much labor you fail to deliver your brother from his ungodliness, you will still receive the deliverer's reward, and cause him to wonder at your gentleness, and so this praise will pass on to God your Father.

There is nothing that has such power to allure unbelievers as real love. Signs and wonders may make them jealous of you, but if you love them, they will both admire you and love you back. And if they love, they will also lay hold of the truth in Jesus Christ in due time. If, however, your unbeliever does not become a believer right away, don't wonder or hurry it along, and don't start to feel that all things are required to happen at once, but be patient with him for the time being to praise, and love, and in due course—he will come.

So, in summary, let us deal with unbelievers with humility and with love. For love is a great teacher, and able to withdraw people from their errors, and to reform their character, and to lead them by the hand into self-denial, and out of stones to make men.

If you want to discover the power of love, bring me a person who is timid and fearful of every sound, and trembles at shadows; or one who is passionate, and sometimes harsh, and more of a wild beast than a man; or one who is undisciplined and lustful; or one who has given himself over almost completely to wickedness. Deliver such a person into the hands of love, introduce him into this school, and you will quickly see the cowardly and timid creature made brave and magnanimous, venturing into all things with a new cheerfulness. The wonderful thing is that this change does not result from any change in nature, but in the coward's soul itself where love begins to manifest her peculiar power.

Consider Jacob, a plain man (cf. Gen. 25:27), dwelling in a house, untested in toil and danger, living a kind of simple and easy life. Like a virgin in her chamber, he is compelled to basically stay inside and keep the house, withdrawn from the city and all the tumults of the city, and from all such things, in a life of continuing ease and quietness. What happens then? The torch of love sets him on fire. Observe how love makes this plain and homemaking man strong enough to endure, and actually fond of toil and difficulty. To truly hear this, don't just listen to what I say, but to what the patriarch himself says. Finding fault with his kinsman, Laban, Jacob's words are, "These twenty years I have been with you" (Gen. 31:38). And how were those

twenty years (because he also goes on to say this)? “It was like this with me: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes” (Gen. 31:40). Thus speaks a plain man who kept himself at home, living the easy life. It’s evident that he is timid, and in his timidity, expecting to see his brother Esau, whom he dreads. But notice again how this timid man becomes bolder than a lion under the influence of love. Putting himself forward like a champion, he is ready to be first in receiving that savage and slaughter-breathing brother (as he supposes him to be), and to purchase the safety of his wives with his own body. Jacob desires to be the first to encounter the very person he shudders at and fears. For his fear was not as strong as his affection for his wives. Do you see how, initially timid, he becomes suddenly adventurous, not by changing his character but by being invigorated by love? He is timid again after this, which is evident from his moving from place to place.

What about Moses? Doesn’t he, through fear of a single Egyptian, run and away go into banishment? Nevertheless, this fugitive who could not endure the sight of a single man, after he tastes the honey of love, nobly and without compulsion from any man, is prepared to die together with those he loves. “If you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written,” he says (Ex. 32:32). Love makes the fierce— moderate and undisciplined —chaste. We don’t need any more examples: this should now be evident to all.

Now, as a helpful moderation, chastity is an ordinary effect of love. If a man loves his own wife as he ought to love her, he will not endure to look upon another woman, on account of his affection for her. “For love,” Song of Solomon 8:6 says, “is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.” Lustful behavior arises only from a lack of real love.

*For we know in part and we prophesy in part (v. 9).*

St. Paul has shown all of the virtues of love as being necessary both to the spiritual gifts and to the virtues of life. Now, he again points out love’s worth out of a desire to persuade those who seemed to be considered inferior for possessing certain gifts rather than others, that they will be no worse off than the possessors of “greater” gifts if they have love. Indeed, if they have love, they are much better off. Further, with regard to those who have those “greater” gifts in the first place, and are naturally lifted up by those things, St. Paul wants to bring them down and show that they have nothing unless they have love.

Therefore, St. Paul put forward innumerable reasons that might comfort us who are in need. The Holy Spirit is the giver: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:11– 12). You who receive little, you equally contribute to the body, and you enjoy much honor. “On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable

members do not need this” (1 Cor. 12:22–24). Love is the greatest gift, and the more excellent way.

He who is led captive by love is freed from contentiousness. Each one of the things St. Paul mentioned was a sufficient medicine to heal their wounds. Therefore he said love “is patient” to those who are at strife with one another; he said “is kind” to those that stand aloof from those they may dislike, or to whom they bear a secret grudge; he said “is not envious” to those who look grudgingly on their superiors; he said “is not irritable or resentful” to those who are separated; he said “does not parade itself” to those who put themselves above others; he said “does not behave rudely” to those who don’t think it their duty to listen; he said “does not seek its own” to those who stand above the rest; he said “it is not irritable or resentful” to those who are insolent; he said “does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth” to those again who are envious; he said “bears all things” to those who can be treacherous; he said “hopes all things” to those who tend to despair; and he said “endures all things” to all of us who easily separate ourselves from other people.

But whether or not there are to be prophecies, they will one day be done away with. Whether or not there are to be tongues, they will one day cease. Both of these gifts are superfluous to faith compared with loving one another, which must and will never cease. In fact, love will even advance further, both here and in the hereafter, and more there than even now. For here there are many things that weaken our love— wealth, business, passions of the body, disorders of the soul—but there and then, none of these.

We know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. It is therefore not knowledge itself that is done away with, but the circumstances of our desiring for knowledge. We will not only know as much then but even a great deal more. In fact, let me make it plainer by example: we know that God is everywhere, but we don’t know how this works. We know that God created out of nothing and chaos, but we don’t know how this worked. We are ignorant of these things. We know that God was born of a virgin, but how, we are clueless. In the world to come, we will know about these things more clearly.

*But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (v 10-12).*

St. Paul’s next step is to point out how great the distance is between the now and what is to come, saying that our deficiencies are not small, like a child growing into an adult. He manifests the same idea—that we have much to overcome—when he says, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.” “For now we see in a mirror,” he says. And the glass doesn’t simply place the object before us; he adds “dimly” to show very strongly that the present knowledge we may possess is at most partial. But then, “face to face.” It’s not as though God has a face, but St. Paul is expressing the notion of greater clarity and perspicuity.

“Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Do you see how he pulls down our pride in two ways? Our knowledge is only partial, and even this we didn’t get on our own. St. Paul didn’t have knowledge of God, but God made Himself known to St. Paul: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15– 16). St. Paul is saying: just as God first knew me, and came to find me, so I will hurry toward God much more than now.

So if someone sits in darkness, he doesn’t hurry to meet the beauty of the sun’s light when he doesn’t see it. That beauty shows itself as soon as the sun has begun to shine. When the one who sits in darkness perceives its brightness, then he will pursue its light: this is the meaning of St. Paul’s expression, “even as I also have been known by God our Father.” Not that we will know him as He is, but that as God hurries toward us now, we will cling to Him and then know many of the things that are now secret, enjoying that most blessed society of wisdom.

I’d like to try to open up to you some small part of this difference between what we know now and what we will know then, to try to impart some faint ray of this thought to your soul. Recall to your mind things as they were in the law of the Old Testament, the law before the grace that shone forth in the New. For the things of the law that came before grace had a certain great and marvelous appearance in those days.

Let’s remember Passover: the Jewish people indeed celebrated it, but they celebrated it as in a dim mirror. They did not conceive the hidden mysteries in their minds, or what the things of the Passover celebration prefigured. They saw a lamb slain, and the blood of a beast, and doorposts sprinkled with blood, but they did not see that the Son of God incarnate would be slain, and would set the whole world free, and grant to all a taste of this Blood, opening heaven to all, offering what is there to the whole human race. They did not foreknow or conceive of how God’s bloodstained flesh would exalt It above the heavens and, in a word, above all the hosts on high, of the angels and archangels and all the other powers, causing It to shine in unspeakable glory—to sit down upon the throne itself of the King, on the right hand of the Father.

We know that God is, and what God is, but regarding God’s essence, we don’t yet know. St. Paul says, “now I know only in part,” but hear what follows: but “then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” His wasn’t a knowledge of accelerating degrees, but of being known by God. You shouldn’t consider this to be a small or simple issue—boasting of what one knows of God. What a great impiety it is to talk of knowing those things that belong to the Spirit alone, and to the Only Begotten Son of God. But also, when St. Paul couldn’t acquire even the knowledge of that which is partial without revelation from above, there are those who say that they have obtained the whole thing from their own reasoning alone. Remember that such people are unable to point to the Scriptures as having taught them these things.

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (v. 13).*

When the good things we have believed and hoped for have finally come, faith and hope will cease. To demonstrate this, St. Paul has said, “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?” (Rom. 8:24). Again, he says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Faith and hope will cease when the future one Day appears, but love will remain the most elevated and become even more vehement.

St. Paul says, “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” How is love the greater? In that those others will pass away. If the virtue of love is great now, St. Paul has all the more reason to add, follow after love. We need to follow, with a kind of vehement pursuit of her. It may seem that she flees from us—there are so many things that trip us up in that direction. Therefore we have a continually increasing need to be earnest in order to catch her. To point this out, St. Paul doesn’t say, “follow love,” but, “pursue her,” stirring us up and inflaming us to lay hold of her.

From the beginning, God contrived ten thousand ways for implanting love in us. First, God granted one head to all, Adam. Otherwise, why didn’t we all just spring out of the earth full grown, as he was? We didn’t so that both birth and bringing up children, and being born of another might bind us mutually together. For this reason, neither did God make woman out of the earth. She was of the same substance as the man, but that wasn’t enough to shame us into unanimity with each other; we needed to have the same progenitor. We may feel essentially separated from one another by place, or consider ourselves alien from each other due to race. For these reasons, he bound together the whole body of the human race, all from the same head.

From the beginning, Adam and Eve seemed to be in a way two rather than one, but see how he fastens them together again, and gathers them into one by marriage. In this way, God says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). God didn’t say that the woman clings but that the man does, because desire is stronger in him. God made it stronger in him so that it would bow the stronger one to the absolute sway of this passion and subjugate him to the weaker one. And since marriage also needed to be introduced, God made him her husband, from whom she sprang. For all things in the eye of God are second to love. In the beginning, if the first man had become frantic as a result of the devil’s sowing bickering and envy between them, what would Adam have done—if they hadn’t sprung from the same root?

Further, for the sake of orderliness and rule (for equality sometimes leads to easy strife), God wanted the first marriage not to be a democracy but a monarchy. As in an army, this order should exist in every family: in the rank of monarch, for instance, the husband; but in the rank of lieutenant and general, the wife; and the children also have their places, a third station in command.

Similarly, God has made governments everywhere at small distances, which interwork together, so that all might live in harmony and good order. Therefore even before the first two humans turned into a multitude, when they were the only ones, God asked the man to govern, and her to obey. But so that no one would see her as inferior, God wanted all people to be able to see how she was to be honored, and God made them into one, which was foretold in the way of her creation. "God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image.... I will make him a helper as his partner'" (Gen. 1:26; 2:18), implying that she was made for his need, and thereby drawing him to her who was made for his sake, since we are benevolently disposed to all those things that are done for our sake. On the other hand, so that she would not be too elated and set apart from him, God made her out of his side, signifying that she is a part of the whole body. And in order that he too would not be too elated, God soon brought in the procreation of children, so that the man wouldn't feel too much honor, as if everything only belonged to him.

God also devised another foundation for us to have loving relationships with each other. Having forbidden the marriage of kindred, God led us to seek out strangers, again drawing strangers toward us. Since we were not designed to be connected in certain ways with our natural kindred, God connects us anew by marriage, uniting together whole families by a single person, the bride, and mingling entire peoples and races.

God has bound us together in many ways. Nevertheless, not even this was enough, and so God made us to need one another, because necessities create friendships. God made sure that everything couldn't be produced in every place for just this reason, so that He might compel us to mix with one another. Having created us to need each other, God then made communication easy. If this were not the case, the matter would have turned out painful and difficult some other way.

And as He never willed that we should fall from paradise (for had He willed it, God wouldn't have placed us there in the first place; disobedience was the cause), so it wasn't God's will that human beings should speak in various languages; if it were, God would've made it that way from the beginning. "Now the whole earth had one language and the same words" (Gen. 11:1).

From the beginning, God made one orderly line only, placing the man over the woman. But after that, our race ran headlong into extreme disorder. God appointed other sovereignties also, such as masters and governors, and this He also did for love's sake. Since vice could, on its own, grow to dissolve and subvert our race, God appointed those who administer justice in our cities as a kind of physician, driving away vice as if it were a plague to love, that they might gather together all in one.

Not only in cities, but also in each family there might be great unanimity. God honored the man with rule and superiority; the woman on the other hand He armed with passion. The gift of having children, God committed in common to both of them and furnished other things as well to facilitate love: not entrusting everything to the man or everything to the woman, but dividing these things to each. To her, God entrusted the house, and to him the market. To him, the work of providing and feeding, because he works the ground, and to her, providing

and making clothing. It is God who gave to women the skill for weaving work. Beware of covetousness, which can cause this distinctiveness to disappear; a general effeminacy has gone so far as to introduce our men to the looms and put shuttles into their hands, and the woof, and threads.

It has been said that riches and poverty are from the Lord (cf. Prov. 30:8). Let us then ask: are all riches and poverty from the Lord? No, who would say this? For we see that people gather great wealth by stealth, wicked theft, evil, and by other devices, and the possessors are not worthy even to live. Why then, tell me, do we say that this wealth is from God? Far from it. From where then is it? From sin. The prostitute may grow rich by doing indignity to her own body, and a handsome youth sometimes disgracefully sells himself to bring himself gold; the thief may break open people's tombs to gather unjust wealth, and the robber by digging through walls. All wealth therefore is not from God.

What then should we say of this expression, that all riches and poverty are from God? Acquaint yourself with a kind of poverty that doesn't proceed from God, and then we will proceed to the saying itself. I mean, any dissolute youth can spend his wealth on prostitutes or fortunetellers, or on any other evil desires, and may become poor. But such poverty doesn't come from God. Also, if anyone becomes poor because of idleness or is brought to the point of begging for bread through folly or by taking on perilous and unlawful practices—isn't it evident that none of these have been brought down to their poverty by God? Do the Scriptures speak falsely then? God forbid! But those people who neglect to examine all things written there with diligence are foolish. For if we acknowledge that the Scriptures cannot lie, and it can be proved that not all wealth is from God, then it's the weakness of inconsiderate readers that causes the difficulty.

We must examine to whom these words were spoken, and when. God does not speak to all people in the same way, just as we don't deal in the same way with both children and adults. When then were these things spoken, and by whom, and to whom? It was Solomon who spoke Proverbs 30:8, in the Old Testament, to the Jewish people, and this was the wisdom of those days; by such wisdom they proved the power of God. These were the same people who could say that God filled their bellies: "Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of rage ... because they had no faith in God, and did not trust His saving power. Yet He commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven; He rained down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven" (Ps. 78:21–24; cf. Jn. 6:31). Since they were proving God by these sorts of things, God also tells them that it's possible with God to make both rich and poor; not of course that it is God Himself who makes them, but that He can, when He wills it. Just as when God says, "He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and He dries up all the rivers" (Nah. 1:4), and yet this was never done. Why then does the prophet say so? Not as though it were something that often happened, but as something that was possible for God to do.

What kind of poverty then does God give, and what kind of wealth? Remember the patriarch, and you will know the kind of wealth that is given by God. For God made both Abraham and Job rich. Job himself says, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?"

(Job 2:10). Similarly, the wealth of Jacob has its beginning in good things given to him by God. There is also a poverty that comes from God, which is sometimes commended, as for instance in the case of that rich man to whom Jesus Christ says, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mt. 19:21). And to the disciples Jesus says, "Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey" (Mt. 10:9–10). Don't say then that all wealth is God's gift: seeing that cases have been pointed out of its being collected by murderers, by plunder, and by ten thousand other devices.

The rich who are always trying to make themselves rich are not useful; but those who have become rich and are devoted to God are useful in the highest degree. Abraham possessed wealth for all strangers, and for all in need. Remember, it is Abraham who, on the approach of three strange men, sacrifices a calf and kneads three measures of fine flour, and all while sitting in his door in the heat of the day. Consider the freedom and readiness with which he spends his substance on all, giving, along with his goods, the service of his body, and at such an advanced age. Abraham was a harbor to strangers, to all who came to him in any kind of want. He possessed nothing as his own, not even his own son, since at God's command he actually offered even him. Along with his son, Abraham also gave up himself and all his house when he rescued his brother's son out of danger, and he did this not for the sake of financial gain, but out of mere humanity.

Consider for a moment those who have become rich, but not for God. Look at that rich man in the parable of Lazarus, and how he imparted not so much as a share of his crumbs (Lk. 16:19–31). Look at King Ahab, how not even the vineyard is free from his extortion (cf. 1 Kings 21). Look at Gehazi (cf. 2 Kings 5:20–27). Look at all of these and more. On the one hand they appear to have acquired their wealth fairly, as if it were received from God, but those who offend God in the act of acquiring offend him in the expending as well, using it up on wasted things or hoarding it, doing nothing for those in need.