



THAT WHICH IS PERFECT

FIRST CORINTHIANS 13 exalts LOVE from beginning to end, the topic being introduced in chapter 12 verse 31: *But covet earnestly the best gifts and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.* Paul very definitely speaks of the superlative: the best way contrasted with the best gifts. Then a more excellent way is revealed: LOVE. Another emphasis appears in the last verse of chapter 13: the greatest of these is love. Paul keynotes the superlative in verse 10 when he uses the word 'perfect.' As the Companion Bible points out, 'perfect' means 'nothing beyond.'

Our Lord Jesus Christ was asked, *What is the greatest commandment?* His answer: LOVE. The apostle Paul affirms with a similar description in Romans 13:8: *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* Fulfilling the Law by love substantiates the superlative idea of *That which is perfect.* Colossians 3:14 also develops the superlative: *Above all these things, put on love which is the bond of perfectness.* Here two phrases mark the superlative: above all these things and the bond of perfection. After the list of several admonitions in verses 12 and 13 (all important steps for the believers walk), the climax is highlighted in verse 14 with the most important part of that walk: LOVE which is perfection. LOVE tops all = That which is Perfect.

The word 'perfect' (Gr. teleios) is found in Colossians 1:28 where it speaks of the maturing Christian: *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* How does such maturity come? Colossians 3:14: *And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.* Love is the bond of perfection. There can be no spiritual perfection without 'agape' love.

Paul again uses the word 'perfect' in Colossians 4:12: *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* What was Epaphras's desire? That the Colossians would stand in the condition of spiritual maturity.

Spiritual Maturity

First Corinthians 13:10 speaks of perfection as spiritual maturity. In 13:11 Paul compares a child (immaturity) with a man (maturity). Without 'agape' love men are spiritually immature as was the case with the Corinthians. They had all the gifts, but they did not have the first fruit of the Spirit: LOVE. In 13:12 Paul speaks of looking in a mirror darkly, not seeing a clear reflection, but when the spiritual maturity of perfection comes, he sees face to face. The love of Christ is then clearly reflected.

Chapter 13 divides into three sections: verses 1-3, verses 4-7, verses 8-13. The word 'Love' appears three times in each section. Three things will fail: prophecies, tongues and knowledge; three things will endure: faith, hope and love, but the superlative is love. LOVE NEVER FAILS. It is perfect, spiritual maturity. In fact, there is no perfection or maturity without love. There is nothing beyond love for God is love.

Verses 4-7 of First Corinthians 13 personify love with 15 characteristics. Love is recorded three times and understood as love 12 other times. Christ easily fits these 15 characteristics, and one who desires to be like Christ should

replace the word 'love' these 15 times with his/her own name to see how spiritually perfect he/she truly is.

Recently in Cauayan, Isabela, northern Philippines, I chose to speak on the Love Chapter of the Bible, considered among believers to be 1 Corinthians 13. This famous chapter can be compared with many other passages on Love, and always brings renewed and fresh blessings. However, the next morning while riding in a member's pickup, a tape was slipped into the tape player. The speaker was immediately recognized as one who writes that the King James Version of the Bible is the inspired translation of the Word of God, equal to the original writings, that the KJV is preserved word-for-word for twentieth century readers to understand. No word of the KJV may be changed or modified as such retranslation would be perversion. He began his introduction of 1 Corinthians 13 by declaring that although most believe the theme of this chapter is 'Love' they are wrong--- because the theme is 'Gifts.' All of us listened in amazement.

Gifts or Love?

Actually the word 'gift' is found but one time in 1 Corinthians 13, printed in italics in the KJV because it is supplied by the translators, not in the original Greek. In contrast the word 'love' (charity in KJV) translated from the Greek word 'agape,' meaning the highest form of love, is found nine times in these 13 verses! It is understood as 'love' 12 more times making 21 references to love (all the elements of a number of perfection: $3 \times 7 = 21$).

As we motored on, we expected to hear a thorough exposition of 'Gifts' as the theme of 1 Corinthians 13. Not so. The first seven verses were skipped over, and more troubling, the strongest emphasis of verse 8 was overlooked: **LOVE NEVER FAILS**. The main emphasis of chapter 13 and *especially* verse 8 is **LOVE NEVER FAILS**. Is Paul emphasizing what fails?... or **LOVE** which never fails?

The KJV use of 'charity' needs further comment. The word 'love' rather than 'charity' is found in most translations, also Scofield Bible, Companion Bible, Vine's Expository Dictionary, and Strong's Concordance. The point is, if the KJV is truly the inspired, inerrant and preserved translation of the Word of God, than no change can be allowed. However, 'charity' as we know it today definitely carries an idea of almsgiving or clemency toward the needy. Is this the context of chapter 13? Is 'charity' really the best translation for today for the Greek word 'agape'? Charity falls short in a treatise dealing with God's ultimate love.

What Remains

The taped speaker elaborated on verses 9-12, but completely omitted verse 13 which wraps up the content of the chapter: *And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.* Of particular note was verse 10 (*When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*) wherein the speaker commented that 'perfect' would mean sinless perfection, forcing him to change the word 'perfect' into something else. (Is this not changing the KJV?) Leaving the word 'perfect' as it is, then the conclusion would be that when sinless perfection comes, *then that which is in part shall be done away.* But because sinless perfection does not conform with his teaching, the speaker retranslated the word saying that 'perfect' refers to when Paul completes his last epistle. The statement was made that 2nd Timothy is the last book in the Bible. Neither KJV nor other translations agree with this assumption. The word 'perfect' (Gr. teleios) also found in 1 Corinthians 2:6 and Philippians 3:12 and 15, speaks of the spiritual state of believers.

The same men who label as perversions any change of a word in KJV, conveniently change words in KJV to fit their personal interpretations. One example where King James English (1611) needs clarifying is 'prevent' in

1 Thessalonians 4:15 because 'prevent' has a very different meaning today. "Shall not precede" agrees with the context. Incongruously KJV promoters take rights to retranslate the KJV but others who do the same are "perverting the Word of God." Studying Scofield Bible or Companion Bible notes, Strong's Concordance and other commentaries is discouraged, while studying and accepting KJV promoters' notes is highly touted as finding the *real truth*. If only the words of KJV are preserved, no changes allowed, then it means a preacher would stand up, read the KJV...and without comment, sit down.

The statement was made that 'perfect' in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is the same as 'fulfill' in Colossians 1:25, where Paul says it was given to him to *fulfill the Word of God*. The speaker declared that the 'perfection' of 1 Corinthians 13:10 came when Paul wrote his last epistle, 2nd Timothy. If such were the case, why does Paul not use the same word in both passages to teach the same truth? He does not. In Colossians 1:25 the Greek word 'pleroo' is used, but in 1 Corinthians 13:10 and Colossians 1:28 Paul uses 'teleios.'

Love Surpasseth Knowledge

Remembering the "Love Never Fails" theme of 1 Corinthians 13, what is our conclusion about 'perfect' in verse 10? Paul uses 'perfect' as the most excellent state of a believer. Verse 11 speaks of an individual: *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things*. The personal 'I' appears six times. In verse 12 'we' appears once and 'I' three more times, pointing to the spiritual state of individuals in all these verses, in fact, throughout the chapter. In Ephesians 3:17 Paul exhorts: *being rooted and grounded in love* and again in verse 19: *and to know the love of Christ which surpasseth knowledge* = the superlative again. Ephesians 4:16: *maketh increase of the body unto the*

edifying of itself in love. Love is repeated 21 times in the six chapters of Ephesians.

Paul speaks of knowing in part in the Corinthian passage, but that spiritual maturity/perfection comes *when I shall know as I am known.* Ephesians 3:18,19 enhances this idea: *Able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.* Full perfection, the fullness of God, comes when we comprehend all the dimensions of the love of Christ. Only then can we reflect His love and His light. Only then do we have full knowledge.

In Ephesians 3:17 we are grounded in love. In Ephesians 3:19 we have the knowledge of love, and in Ephesians 4:16 we are edified in love. In chapter 5 verse 2 we are to walk in love as Christ loved us. Ephesians 4:2: forbearing one another in love.

Unquestionably, as clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Tongues, Prophecy, Understanding all Mysteries, all Knowledge, all Faith, all Giving...all are in vain without LOVE. Love is the more excellent way, the greatest, the most important, the PERFECTION of the saints!

VERNON AND DARLENE ANDERSON
THINGS TO COME MISSION
2200 ENGLISH AVENUE
INDIANAPOLIS IN 46201