

## The Greatest of These is Love

In the NEWSLETTER last week, we looked at the chapters leading up to **1 Corinthians 13**. In chapters **1-11**, there is a lot of evidence that points to problems within the church that met at Corinth. Division, discord, sexual immorality, propriety in worship, misinterpreting their freedom in Christ, and other issues were addressed by the apostle Paul. Beginning in **chapter 12**, however, we see a totally different problem, that of lack of humility.

The Corinthian church had been given many spiritual gifts by God, some that would be considered ordinary and others that could be described as miraculous and supernatural. Paul had told them in **1 Corinthians 1:7** that **“you do not lack any spiritual gift,”** and that their gifts were to confirm Paul’s testimony about Jesus Christ. In **Chapter 12**, we see the gifts: **wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophesy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues**. These gifts, Paul says in **chapter 12, verse 7**, are given to them for **“the common good.”**

But somehow, some considered their gift more important than the others. They considered themselves indispensable and those with “lesser gifts” relatively useless. Paul emphasizes the importance of all members of the church working together just as all parts of the body form one unit and work in concert with one another. That’s the only way the church can be completely effective. **“Eagerly desire the greater gifts,”** Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12:31**, and in **13:1**, **“...and I will show you the most excellent way.”**

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul explains all of their problems as a church could be solved if they only held on to the spiritual gifts of faith, hope, and love. Forget speaking in tongues, gifts of healing, and the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit that caused them to inflate their importance and look down on the less “gifted.” Love, Christian love, is the greatest gift God has given to us. It will heal all of the wounds in the Corinthian church and cause it to be the force God intended it to be. What does God’s love look like? It is **patient and kind**. It is **not envious, proud, or boastful**. It is **not rude or self-seeking**. It is **not easily angered and is forgetful of the wrongs others have done**. It **hates evil and delights in the truth**. **“It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”**

That message, that love conquers all, is still true today. Paul says in Colossians **3:12-14** that the Christian characteristics of **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness** are all bound together with **love**. Have love in your hearts for your fellow man, and you will display to others what being a Christian is all about. You won’t act as the Corinthians did toward one another and will be effective in

impacting those around you with your example. Eagerly desire God's greatest gift, love, and be the change you want to see in the world.