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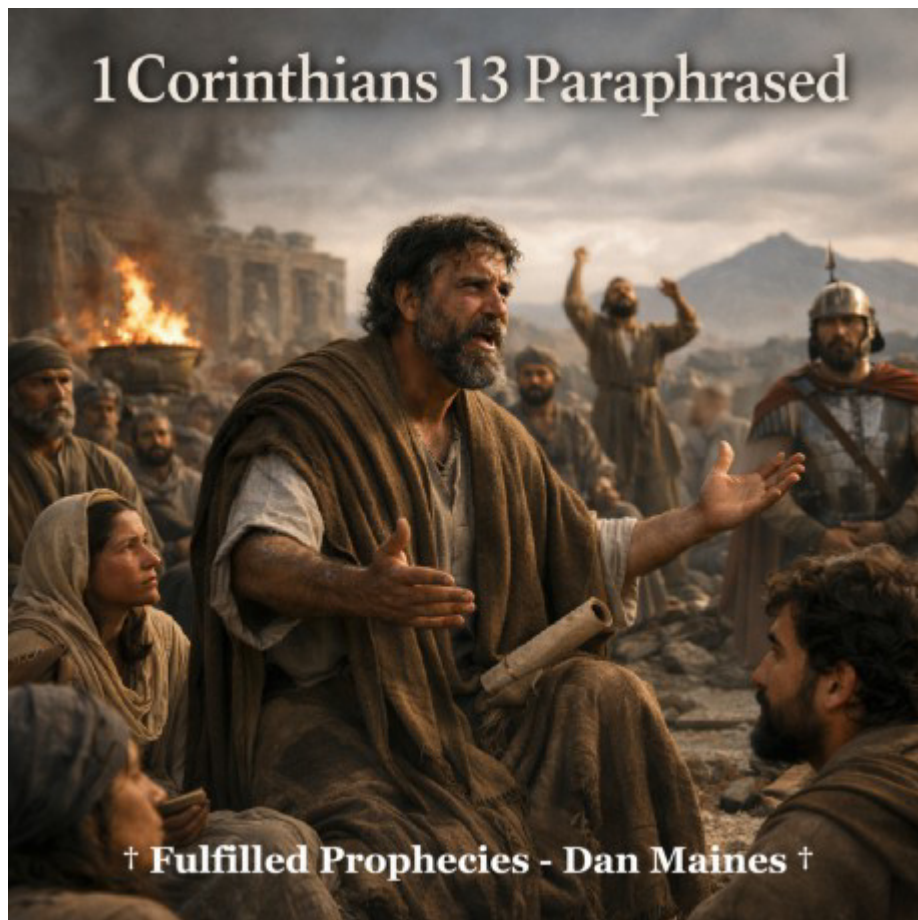
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1 Corinthians 13 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 13 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul now explains the foundation that must guide every believer's life, love. Without love, even the greatest spiritual actions are empty.

† This chapter sits directly between Paul's discussion of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and their proper use in 1 Corinthians 14, showing that love must govern everything.

† Clement of Alexandria taught that true Christian maturity is measured by love, not by knowledge or outward ability

(Clement of Alexandria, Stromata).

Scripture

1 Corinthians 13:1

If I could speak in every human language and even the language of angels, but I don't have love, my words are nothing more than empty noise like a clanging instrument.

† Paul begins by showing that even the most impressive abilities mean nothing without love (1 Corinthians 8:1).

† Love is the motive that gives value to every act of service in the kingdom (John 13:34-35).

† Tertullian wrote that outsiders recognized Christians by their love for one another, not by their speech or knowledge (Tertullian, Apology).

1 Corinthians 13:2

If I had the gift of prophecy, understood every mystery, and possessed all knowledge, and if I had faith strong enough to move mountains, but I don't have love, then I am nothing.

† Paul shows that knowledge, prophecy, and faith still fall short if love isn't present (Matthew 17:20).

† The Corinthians valued spiritual abilities, but Paul redirects them to what truly matters.

† Irenaeus emphasized that knowledge without love only produces pride (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 13:3

Even if I gave away everything I owned and even allowed my body to suffer for others, but I don't have love, it gains me nothing.

† Outward sacrifice alone doesn't prove true devotion if love isn't the motive (Matthew 6:1-2).

† Love is what transforms sacrifice into genuine obedience.

† Early Christian writers often warned that outward acts of religion without love become empty rituals (Barnabas, Epistle of

Barnabas).

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient and kind. Love isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, and it isn't proud.

† Paul now defines what real love looks like in daily life (Colossians 3:12).

† Patience and kindness reflect the character of God Himself.

† Clement of Alexandria taught that love imitates the character of Christ in every relationship (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata).

1 Corinthians 13:5

Love doesn't act rudely, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't easily angered, and it doesn't keep a record of wrongs.

† Love refuses to live in constant offense or resentment (Ephesians 4:31-32).

† Forgiveness is one of the strongest evidences of genuine love.

† Tertullian noted that Christians were known for forgiving injuries rather than seeking revenge (Tertullian, Apology).

1 Corinthians 13:6

Love doesn't celebrate wrongdoing, but it rejoices when truth wins.

† Love stands firmly with truth rather than compromising with sin (Psalm 119:163).

† True love never supports evil, even when culture celebrates it.

† Irenaeus warned that false teachers claimed knowledge but abandoned truth and love (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 13:7

Love patiently carries burdens, keeps trusting, remains hopeful, and endures through every hardship.

† Love continues even when circumstances become difficult (Galatians 6:2).

† This endurance reflects the perseverance Christ showed

toward His people.

† Early Christians endured persecution while continuing to love both believers and enemies (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

1 Corinthians 13:8

Love never fails. Prophecies will eventually stop, languages will cease, and knowledge will reach its end.

† Temporary spiritual functions would pass away when their purpose was fulfilled (1 Corinthians 13:10).

† Love alone remains permanent because it reflects God's eternal nature (1 John 4:8).

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that love is the eternal mark of the perfected believer (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata).

1 Corinthians 13:9

Right now our knowledge is incomplete and our prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture.

† The early church was still receiving revelation during the apostolic period (Ephesians 3:5).

† Paul reminds them that their understanding wasn't yet complete.

† Eusebius records how the early church recognized the gradual completion of apostolic teaching (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

1 Corinthians 13:10

But when the complete comes, what is partial will no longer be needed.

† Paul contrasts temporary revelation with the coming completion of God's revealed truth (James 1:25).

† The church would eventually move from partial understanding to mature clarity.

† Early writers often connected maturity with the fullness of Christ's completed work (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and

reasoned like a child, but when I became a man I left childish things behind.

† Paul uses growth as an illustration of moving from partial to mature understanding (Hebrews 5:13-14).

† The church was transitioning from the early apostolic stage into maturity.

† Clement of Alexandria often described spiritual maturity as moving beyond elementary understanding (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata).

1 Corinthians 13:12

Right now we see things dimly like a reflection in a mirror, but then we will see clearly. Right now I understand only in part, but then I will understand fully just as I have been fully known.

† Ancient mirrors gave unclear reflections, illustrating incomplete understanding.

† Paul anticipates a time when God's plan would be seen clearly.

† Early Christian writers often spoke of the clarity that came as the gospel spread and matured throughout the church (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

1 Corinthians 13:13

Three things remain, faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

† Faith trusts God, hope expects His promises, but love expresses His nature.

† Love stands above the others because it reflects God's character directly (1 John 4:16).

† Irenaeus wrote that love is the highest expression of life in Christ (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

Historical References

† Clement of Alexandria taught that the mature Christian life is defined by love expressed in action (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata).

† Tertullian recorded that the Roman world noticed Christians

saying, see how they love one another (Tertullian, Apology).

† Irenaeus emphasized that knowledge without love leads to pride and division (Irenaeus, Against Heresies).

† Eusebius described how early believers endured persecution while continuing to show love and unity (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

How it applies to us today

† Love must remain the foundation of every believer's life, doctrine without love becomes empty religion.

† Churches can focus on knowledge, debate, or influence, but love is still the true measure of spiritual maturity.

† Our relationships with other believers must reflect patience, forgiveness, and humility.

† The fulfilled kingdom Christ established is built on love, not power or status.

† When believers walk in love, they reflect the character of Christ to the world.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why does Paul place love above spiritual abilities?

A: Because spiritual abilities have value only when motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Q: What does Paul mean when he says love never fails?

A: Love reflects God's eternal nature and continues even when temporary functions pass away (1 John 4:8).

Q: What were the temporary things Paul mentioned?

A: Prophecy, languages, and partial knowledge were temporary tools used during the early church period (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

Q: Why does Paul compare maturity to growing from childhood?

A: He shows that the church was moving from partial

understanding to full maturity (Hebrews 5:13-14).

Q: Why is love greater than faith and hope?

A: Because love reflects God's character and continues even when faith becomes sight and hope is fulfilled (1 John 4:16).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Corinthians 13

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Tertullian, Apology

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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