**PP Love Is…**

**Part 11-1 Corinthians 13:8-12 *Love* *Never Ends* 11/9-10/2024**

We come to the part in Paul’s teaching on love where many people start yawning

Countless weddings, sermons and songs tell us that *‘Love never ends’*

Goerge Strait sang a smash hit called, Love without End, Amen

Meatloaf, in Paradise By the Dashboard Lights promised to love his girl to the end of time, and

was so miserable in that marriage that he began praying for the end of time to come

Who could forget Whitney Houston singing to Kevin Costner in the Bodyguard movie’s remake

of Dolly Parton’s song, *I Will Always Love You*

The desire for a love that never ends exists in the hearts of every human being, put there by God

Who created us to be loved and love forever

**PP** C.S. Lewis, *‘You cannot love a fellow-creature fully till you love God.”*

We were made to be loved, and to love forever, but we have turned inward to ourselves, which is

a near-perfect definition of sin

Martin Luther captured it with a this Latin phrase: **PP** *Incurvatus in Se*, curved in on oneself

All people are radically self centered, curved inward, loving ourselves, and nothing but the

power of the life of Jesus working in us by the Holy Spirit can remedy it

The cure is the life of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, encouraged by fellow Christins,

resulting in a life of love

Paul gives us a song of love, tailored for a church located in the great city of Corinth, so let’s first

look at what the city itself was like

**PP** Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, *cosmo* meaning world, *politan* meaning people

The city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and populated with freed slaves and war veterans, who,

because of their military service was exempt from the portoria, property tax

People from around the world went there, 700,000 people, many of them slaves

This diversity brought a diversity of religion, and the city had 12 temples to various gods

Nearby Athens was the center of Greek philosophy, Corinth was a popular stop on the lecture

circuit

You didn’t go to Corinth to raise a family, you went there to make it, to get rich and find pleasure

**PP** Corinth was a commercial success, a word that means *an agreement to profit and trade*

Corinth was like the Lehigh Valley, full of warehouses for goods

The city sat on a 4 mile narrow land bridge that connected the Aegean and Adriatic Seas

Merchant ships docked in one port, offloaded their cargo and slaves carried the goods across the

isthmus to the other port 4 miles away, loading it on company ships, avoiding a hundred mile, dangerous voyage around the Peloponnese island

They could even haul smaller ships out of the water, and using rollers, drag it across the 4 miles

It made the city of Corinth wealthy, offering every convenience and pleasure which leads us to

the final description we’ll look at

The city was known throughout the ancient world for its pottery, brass and marble

**PP** Corinth was a celebrity city

The city hosted the Isthmian games, second only to the Olympics, where star athletes trained

in its warm climate all year round

Not only did famous athletes travel there to train and compete, but public speakers, lawyers,

poets and philosophers went to Corinth, and they were called Sophists

They were called the Sophists, traveling speakers for hire, and their influence was enormous

When a celebrity teacher was coming, there was advance publicity, amphitheaters were booked

They were polished speakers but in reality, they didn’t have much wisdom to give which is why

the Apostle Paul, repeatedly asked the Corinthians believers, ***‘Do you not know?’***

The orator would begin by flattering the city and its people, then begin speaking on a wide range

of subjects, often asking the crowd what they would like to hear

The Sophist would stir up the people until they received shouts of acclamation and applause

The first century world believed that some were especially close to the gods, which would be

manifested by all forms of bizarre behavior like ecstatic speech, trances and wisdom

Epilepsy was called the divine disease; the Oracle of gods were given drugs to provoke their

utterances while the famous Oracle of Delphi breathed volcanic fumes and her

unconscious mutterings were interpreted

It is little wonder then that Sophists were so influential and the gift of tongues so sought after

**PP** Corinth was a corrupt city

Looming over the city was the Acrocorinth, a 2,000 foot tall mountain from which, on a clear

day, you could see the Greek city of Athens 40 miles East

On that mountain was built a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of war and love

To the Romans she was Venus, to the Egyptians, Isis, to the Phoenicians, Astarte, to the

Caananites, Ishtar, and to Israel, she was Ashtaroth

Her myth was she was born from the Sea and her presence and influence overshadowed the city

Every day, late afternoon, her 1,000 priests and priestesses walked down the mountain into the

city to sell their bodies to the sailors in port, bringing revenue to the temple

Their sandals were apparently studded, leaving a print as they walked, reading *‘Follow Me’*

Where they headed were the taverns, the favorite place for every version of this pagan goddess

The taverns were built on the south side of the marketplace, where deep, wells cooled the wine

The city was full of drunks, rampant sexual diseases, and shrines to Aphrodite were everywhere

selling clay sculptures of human genitals

It was AD 51 when Paul planted a church in this city, and no NT church better relates to the

modern church in America more than the church at Corinth

It was a church divided, a church curved in on themselves, immoral, and through it all, unloving

Paul showed them ***‘a still more excellent way’***, a life of love that all Christians were saved for

Picture a pearl necklace of 15 pearls, 15 virtues, and the string that ties them altogether is love

Now, after showing us each pearl, he assures us this necklace is indestructible

**PP** ***“Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease;***

***as for knowledge, it will pass away.”* 1 Corinthians 13:8**

The word **PP *‘ends’*** has the meaning of *falling*, as a leaf falls to the ground, withers and decays

God is love meaning that no part of God, no attribute of His, no action He makes, is without love

Just as God is eternal, agape love is eternal as well, never decaying or withering, it is

death-proof, imperishable

Not so the three most coveted spiritual gifts of this church: prophecies, the preaching of God’s

Word and future events; speaking in tongues, a heavenly, unknown language or the ability

to understand human languages that you did not study; and knowledge, the grasping of

the mysteries of God

These will cease, pass away, ***when the perfect comes***, likely meaning our eternity with Jesus

In heaven, when we see Jesus face to face, we will have all knowledge, fathoming all mysteries

and living in the future that all prophecies unveiled, and understanding all languages

Spiritual gifts, coveted by the Corinthian believers, will cease in that glorious day, but love won’t

Love is eternal, God’s love for us, our love for God, and our love for each other

Spiritual gifts have a purpose: ultimately to *build up the church in love*

Paul explained to the church at Ephesus that Jesus provides leaders **PP** ***“to equip the saints for***

***the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity***

***of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the***

***measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children”***

**Ephesians 4:12-14a**

That we may no longer be children is similar to what he said to the Corinthian church

 **PP *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.***

***When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”***

**1 Corinthians 13:11-12**

Corinth was famous for their mirrors, made from highly polished bronze, but they only gave a

shadowy, dim reflection

Compared to when we will see Jesus face to face, we only see a dim reflection of Him now, and

understand His love only a fraction of what we one day will

Yet we can grow in that understanding of His love even now

Love fills life with lasting significance, saturating each moment with eternal importance, and this

is precisely what every person is longing for

700,000 residents in Corinth, some experts say, and why did they go there?

To make it big, to find fame in an audience, to win the coveted crown at the games, to find

pleasure in the arms of another, to discover the secrets to the mysteries of life

Every single person is searching for a love that will not end, that will not fail

The woman contemplating her 4th marriage is searching for a love that will not fail

The addict that just took another fentanyl pill is searching for love

The man looking at porn is looking for love

These are fruitless attempts to find love, what country singer Johnny Lee unwittingly discovered

**PP** *“I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places, Lookin' for love in too many faces*

 *Searchin' their eyes, Lookin' for traces of what I'm dreaming of…You came knockin' on*

*my heart's door, You're everything I've been looking for”* Johnny Lee

Christian, Jesus came knocking on the door of your heart, and when you opened it by faith, you

discovered that He is the one you had been looking for, He is fountain of all true love

In 1960, the Shirelles sang the song, *Will you Still Love me Tomorrow,* and one verse went like

this: **PP** *“I'd like to know that your love, Is a love I can be sure of, So tell me now, and I*

*won't ask again, Will you still love me tomorrow?”*

Their song ends this way: **PP** *“So tell me now, and I won't ask again, Will you still love me*

*tomorrow? Will you still love me tomorrow? Will you still love me?”*

They said they wouldn’t ask again, and yet they did 3 more times because all loves except for

God’s will leave you still looking, worrying that it will not last

Christian, you have found love, everything you were looking for, and it will not ever end

**PP *“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”* Song of Solomon 8:7**

The Christian life is about learning to live out this great love with each other

Love is how we help each other progress to maturity, building up the body of Christ

Without love we cannot help others grow mature, and the only kingdom we flourish is ours

Church, love is what we have been made for, but sin broke the vessels of our hearts

It is death of Jesus on that cross and His resurrection from that tomb that makes a way to gain a

new vessel, a new heart, and if you will but believe in Him for your salvation, He will out

His love into that heart, and you will find what it is you have always been looking for

You will discover ***‘a still more excellent way’***, the love of God, and that ***‘Love never ends.’***

Pray