

Sermon Series: ***From Willingness to Giftedness***

Sermon title: **The Pursuit of the Gifts**

Scripture: **1 Corinthians 13**

**July 29, 2018**

**Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church**

**Pastor, S.C. Brown**

**Intro:** We are in a series on Spiritual Gifts titled “From Willingness to Giftedness” and we are going through 1 Corinthians 12,13 &14.

It is our hope and prayer that every person at CBIBC will have a willingness to serve where God would have them and specifically that everyone will serve in their area of giftedness.

The first week, we looked at the fact that **God is the giver of the gifts**. He gives to everyone and determines which gifts we have.

Then we looked at the **purpose of the gifts**. God gives them to us to build up the church. Along our journey through life, we are to help others (through the gifts we have)...know God better.

The Corinthian church was a gifted church and ‘eager for manifestations of the gifts’. But they were a divided church. Part of their disunity was because of their mindset regarding spiritual gifts.

We saw in **chapter 12:14-20** there was a group of people who felt **inferior** and were saying, *“I don’t belong cause I don’t have these extraordinary gifts. I am nothing special so what use am I to the body.”*

Then in **12:21-30** we saw this group that felt **superior** and was saying, *“You don’t belong because you don’t have these great gifts. You need to be more like us.”*

Today we come to chapter 13.

One of the most famous chapters in the Bible.

It’s read at weddings. It is quoted often. It’s the most beautiful words ever written about love.

But it is often taken out of context. This is not about romantic love, though it surely applies to it. Neither is it about our love for God.

Chapter 13 is the meat that is sandwiched between chapters 12 and 14. The context is spiritual gifts and is about the love we should have for one another.

So, let’s dive in and see what God has to say to us today. But before we do.....

**Let’s pray and ask God for help.**

Let’s read **1 Corinthians 13 verses 1-3.**

**If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging**

cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Paul starts out here simply listing some of these great gifts that the church has and pointing out that they are nothing in and of themselves.

**Tongues?** Nothing without love.

**Prophecy?** Nothing without love.

**Knowledge?**

**Faith?** Great Faith! Faith that can move mountains or even be willing to be martyred. Without love...nothing.

**Generous giving?** Nothing without love.

There's nothing to boast about. It's not about the gifts you have, it's about what's in your heart Corinthians. Do you love one another? They were struggling to do that.

-----  
Next, Paul is speaking straight at the Corinthian church's problem and pointing out what their love is like and what it *should* be like.

verses 4-7

**4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with**

**the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**He's saying to the inferior group:**

don't be envious. v4.

don't be irritable or resentful v5.

**He's saying to the superior group:**

don't boast. v4.

don't be arrogant. v4.

don't be rude. v5.

don't insist on your own way. v5.

**And it is as if he says to all:**

Be patient.

Be kind.

Bear as long as you need to bear with one another.

Believe the best about one another.

Hope for the best in one another.

Endure whatever you have to endure with one another.

**You want to know if you have the Spirit of God? It's not by the manifestations that you are so focused on or the amazing experiences you have....but whether or not you love one another.**

***Or maybe he would say to us today....to the modern 21st century church, "You think you have a great worship set! You feel the power of God in your services? You seeing tons of people flock to your***

*church? You guys doing soup kitchens? Mission trips? What about this...You love one another?"*

Now, I must admit something to you. When I first started to study this passage, some of the words jumped off the page to me....and God's word was screaming at some areas where my love for you is lacking. You see, it's not about whether we can read this text and find something cool in it. It's not about whether we can have a great sermon today that inspires us.

It's about whether we are obeying this or not.

My love is often irritable and not kind.

I sometimes insist on my own way.

I'm not very patient sometimes.

**I am sorry for that.**

Pray for me that God will cause me to pursue love.

What about you? When you read over these verses...do you love the body like this? Read it over this week.

Wrestle with it. Ask God to work in your heart and my heart.

---

Let's continue with the chapter and we will summarize everything at the end.

**8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 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. 12 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. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Paul is driving his point home here by going a little deeper.

**He says 2 things about Spiritual Gifts:**

1. Their duration is temporary. They won't last forever.
2. Their function is limited. They help us know Christ now....but not as clear as we will someday.

Again, he's giving us some gifts...prophecy, tongues and knowledge.

He makes the point that they will someday 'be destroyed' or pass away.

There will come a day when we won't need these spiritual gifts anymore.

**When is that?**

Look in **verses 9 & 10**. These verses can be a little confusing but I think in the context it is clear what he means.

**9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.**

What's the **partial** here?  
What's the **perfect** here?

He says the partial will 'pass away' and before he said the gifts would 'pass away'. So, the partial is referring to the gifts. The gifts are given to help us build up the body of Christ....to know Christ...to see Christ.

What's the perfect? He says that when the perfect comes...the partial will pass away...the gifts won't be needed.

Look at **verse 12**.

**12 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.**

We know in part....We see Christ in a mirror dimly.  
But **THEN** I shall know fully.

When is the **THEN**? It is the same thing as 'when **the perfect** comes'.

The perfect is the same thing as seeing 'face to face' and 'knowing fully'.

**[slowly]**

**This is the return of Christ and all it brings and means.** This is the completion of our sanctification.  
Our glorification. **[pause]**

Let me summarize for us what God is saying to us in 1 Corinthians 12 and 13, so far.

- We all have a gift or gifts from God.
- All the gifts are needed and none are greater than the others.
- Their purpose is to build up the church...to cause others to know God more...and see him.
- We use the gifts until Jesus comes. When we see him face to face and are made perfect....when we have a new body...we won't need the gifts anymore.
- **But for now**....we are to pursue love above everything.....because love is something that will go on into eternity...the gifts won't. Our faith will someday become sight. Our hope will someday be realized. But we will love one another and love our God forever and ever. Love will go on and on.

So, the next verse...in **Chapter 14 verse 1** says...

**“PURSUE LOVE.”**

Pursue...it. This word is used for persecution. To chase someone. Here is it used positively. Pursue love. Seek it. Chase it down. It's a command.

**Did you know that in all of the lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible that it says something about love, either before or after the lists?**

**1 Corinthians 12-14**....a whole chapter about love.

**Romans 12** says, “Let love be genuine” and “Love one another with brotherly affection.”



**Ephesians 4** says that the body, “when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

**1 Peter 4** says, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

**Galatians 5:22**...in the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ list....which one is mentioned first? LOVE.

---

**Well, how do I do this?**

How do I just make myself be more loving?

How do I become less irritable?

Less envious?

Less arrogant?

More patient?

More kind?

How do I bear more? Believe the best in others more?

Hope for the best in people more?

Can I just...work it up? In my own strength just say to myself...."**PURSUE LOVE.**"

“Stop being this way and be that way!”

I wonder if the answer is not in **Ephesians 4:15-16.**

It says, **“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,**

**when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”**

Here's what I think it means.

I need to be more loving, kind, patient. You may have some of that. I may have something else you need.

As we journey on the path called LOVE...I with my gifts and you with yours....we share with one another and I actually become more like Christ...**not in my own strength...but through your strength.**

Until that day when....we reach the place called Perfection and we won't need the gifts anymore. We will see Christ face to face. We will be changed then. But love never ends. We will keep loving one another in Christ for all eternity.