

Studies in First Corinthians

Lesson 39: The Future of Love

TEXT: 1 COR. 13:8–13 (NASV)

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; **10** but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. **11** When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. According to verse 8, what exactly is it that will “cease” and “be done away” with?
2. When does verse 10 say “the partial” gifts of knowledge and prophecy will be done away with? Is Paul referring to all spiritual gifts or just the miraculous sign gifts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Hebrews 2:2-4)?

3. There are at least three major theological views on what “the perfect” refers to:
 - i. The Second Coming of Christ
 - ii. Heaven
 - iii. The completion of the canon of Scripture

Let’s try substituting each of these three concepts in place of “the perfect” (vs. 10) and see which one makes the most sense in the larger context of the passage.

13:9 ΕΚ ΜΕΡΟΥΣ ΓΑΡ ΓΙΝΩΣΚΟΜΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΚ ΜΕΡΟΥΣ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΥΟΜΕΝ
 ek meros gar ginOskO kai ek meros prophEteuO
 Prep n_ Gen Sg n Conj vi Pres Act 1 Pl Conj Prep n_ Gen Sg n vi Pres Act 1 Pl
 OUT OF-PART for WE-ARE-KNOWING AND OUT OF-PART WE-ARE-BEFORE-AVERRING
 of-instalment of-instalment we-are-prophesying

13:10 ΟΤΑΝ ΔΕ ΕΛΘΗ ΤΟ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ ΤΟ ΕΚ ΜΕΡΟΥΣ
 hotan de erchomai ho teleios ho ek meros
 Conj Conj vs 2Aor Act 3 Sg t_ Acc Sg n a_ Acc Sg n t_ Nom Sg n Prep n_ Gen Sg n
 when-EVER YET MAY-BE-COMING THE mature THE OUT OF-PART
 whenever maturity of-instalment

ΚΑΤΑΡΓΗΘΗΣΕΤΑΙ
 katargeO
 vi Fut Pas 3 Sg
 SHALL-BE-BEING-DOWN-UN-ACTED
 shall-be-being-discarded

4. Paul uses the analogy of a child growing into adulthood in verse 11. What three childish things does the mature man put away?
5. Is Paul speaking of individual Christian maturity in verse 11 or is he referring *metaphorically* to the maturation of the church? What is it that brings about this maturity? (Read: 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14)
6. What could the first part of verse 12 be referring to when it talks about seeing “in a mirror dimly” and later seeing “face to face”? Does the second part of verse 12 give us any clues? When is “then”?