

I Cor. 13: 8-12; II Peter 3:14-18; The Perfection of Love I. Partial Knowledge II. Partial Reasoning III. Partial Reflection IV. Perfection Seen

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, things in this world are not as they once were- nor are they as they will be one day. Man was created with true knowledge, righteousness and holiness- with perfect love! And one day, we will have this perfect knowledge and love again! But currently, we live in the midst of half-truths, when you hear half the story because someone has forgotten or by outright deception. But even when it comes to our words and works within the church, we find that although good they are still marred by imperfection. Today we are going to contrast various aspect of our lives with the perfection that love will bring one day. Last week we saw that Love always does something – always protect, trusts, hope and endures. This is necessary because God is the God who does not change- so His love must be permanent. However, there are aspects of the ministry within the church that are not permanent. Certain things are good and necessary for this current life, good and needed for spiritual growth- but these will not remain in their current form in the life to come. So today we see that Jesus Christ reveals the perfections of love so that we learn to serve with humility. Our text is verses 8-12 and next week will be our final sermon on I Cor. 13 Lord willing.

### **I. Partial Knowledge**

We start then by considering the partial knowledge that we currently have. As v. 9 says- we know in part. The fact is, our current knowledge of God is not perfect- it is not all expansive nor is it without our own wrong ideas. This is not to excuse false thinking, but in reality, every Christian on Earth will have some deficiencies in their Theology. Added to this fact, God has not revealed everything about Himself to us! WE can never have an exhaustive knowledge of God- finite creature cannot fully grasp the infinite! Truly His ways are not our ways, they are beyond all tracing out. That being said, true love wants to get to know God more. We want to grow in our appreciating and understanding of Him who is all together lovely! Just as husbands and wives grow in their understanding of one another within

marriage- because true love moves us towards a depth in knowing. As we read in II Peter 3:18- grow in grace and knowledge of the truth. Love is what moves us to desire- to want to consider His handywork in creation and His every jot and tittle in His Word. But as good as this desire is- perfect knowledge of God will not be attained on this side of glory. Even if v. 2 were true of you- that you could fathom all mysteries and had all knowledge or understanding, this is nothing compared to the knowledge that is to come! In order to help us grow in knowledge, God has given us the offices of the church. As chapter 14 continues, our knowledge is not yet perfect! We should still desire prophecy- 14:1 says- desiring spiritual gifts so that we can grow in our knowledge and thus grow in our love for our God! And the greatest spiritual gifts are the ones that build up as 14:3 says- for the upbuilding, encouragement and consolation of the church. AS you know, some parts of Scripture are hard to understand- even as Peter said in II Peter 3:16- that is why we interpret the Bible in the context of the saints- and we continue to use the corporate means of grace so that we can continue to learn and grow. But on this side of glory there will always be mixed in a measure of errors in every person's interpretation. You and I have not yet arrived at perfection in knowledge! So we keep pursuing it- not just mastering the content but seeking an experiential relationship with our God! This keeps us humble- and keeps us going back to the source! And one day- as we will see in our last point- these public means of grace- these Spiritual gifts that the Corinthian church were arguing and boasting about- well- they will no longer be needed! For then we will know perfectly! Love for God is more permanent than our partial, imperfect knowledge. Because now we know in part! But not then!

## **II. Partial Reasoning**

Added to our partial knowledge- we also have partial and imperfect reasoning. As v. 11 says- my speech, thought and reasoning is not as it will be one day! This word- reasoning- is connected to our work Logic. We are all childish in some areas of life- we are not consistent in all parts! Sometimes we don't follow through- we squabble and bicker- even though we know better! To illustrate this point,

Paul sets a child in our midst. Once I was like a child- v. 11 starts. Children have a small and sheltered understanding of how this world works. If they are hungry, they go to the fridge and there is usually food there! They know nothing of how it got there- but they know it is there! They know that the sun shines- but they don't really care how it does. We expect different things from adults than from children. And that was a rebuke Heb. 5- by this time you ought to be teachers- but instead you are still immature! In a similar way, we are all childish in areas of our lives- immature and unwise. But true love seeks to grow up- to become mature! As I Cor. 2 says, we need the mind of Christ! True love craves the solid food of God's Word and the consistent life! The wise life of Proverbs- wisdom in deliberation, speech and action! The word in v. 11 for "reckon or reason" is the same one found in Rom. 6:11- reckon, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive unto God through Christ! We want to think deeply and rightly- following the outworking of our faith and coming to a good conclusion- mature in every part! But until we reach maturity, we seek to grow in this loving attribute! Our minds reason and apply things differently over time- but a time is coming when this change and development in thought will no longer be needed!

### **III. Partial Reflection**

There is yet one more partial thing that is passing away- that we see Jesus dimly- and we are only a partial reflection of Jesus Christ as we read in v. 12. Now we see dimly- as through a foggy glass. Have you ever looked outside through a smoking glass- or one covered with condensation? You can make things out but it is not clear. V. 12 says we see in a mirror dimly. The mirrors of this ancient world were usually made of polished brass- not the crystal-clear reflection we get in our mirrors today. Like looking at yourself on the surface of a lake that is rolling in waves. Well- now we reflect the image of Jesus like this dim mirror because we can only see Him dimly. The picture we give is a true picture- what is reflected in us is good- but it is still hazy and a little distorted. Because of indwelling sin and infirmities, we are not yet the perfect picture of Christ- which we will be one day! No- others see in us only a partial

picture- and you see only a partial reflection of Jesus in your fellow church members as well! True love seeks to grow in the image of Christ- as Rom. 8:29 says conformed to His image! We want to look more like Jesus in this life-to see Him more clearly and look like Him more and more. Our Christian love desires this to be seen in others as well! But we are not at perfection yet! No, true love acknowledges that these 3 points are partial for the time being. But one day- Oh that great and glorious day- the partial will pass away when the perfection comes! The fact is- we love too little today! We are satisfied with little love- and dim pictures. We set our hearts on what is passing- while ignoring what is truly beautiful! This truth should humble us- Lord created in me a desire to love you rightly! To know, reason like and reflect the object of my Christian love!

#### **IV. Perfection Seen**

As v. 10 says- when perfection comes the imperfect- the partial will pass away! The word, perfection, is the word TELOS- meaning the end, the full amount or the consummation. You and I know that in this life we struggle with imperfect love- but when the Perfect Love comes- when Jesus comes back- all imperfect love passes away! Currently, our knowledge is imperfect! But then our knowledge will be complete! Not that we will know everything, no- but what we know we will know perfectly! There will be no sin mixed in our understanding- and no need to unlearn and re-learn. And the spiritual gifts that impart knowledge- prophecy and tongues- you know the visible means of grace- will no longer function! As Heb. 8:11 says, there will be no need to teach your brother because they will all know Him! Knowledge of the Lord will fill us like water fills the sea! Added to this, when the perfect comes there will be no more growth in reasoning. When I became a man I put childish ways behind me. In a similar way, when Jesus comes back we will all be fully grown up- mature! We will fully think like Jesus- having His mind and Spirit filling us! Our thinking and actions will be completely consistent at all times. And when we see Him, we will be like Him as I John 3 says. Or consider what I Cor. 15:49 says, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven! We will see Him face to face- and we will look like Him! We will

perfectly reflect Him- having been glorified as His body! There will be a physical change- a change of mind, heart and soul. Whatever is imperfect in our love will cease- and we will abound in the joy of our salvation! This is what you have to look forward to! When you see Him who is all-together lovely- you will look like Him- reflecting the glory of His face! What is currently dim will then be bright, clear and true! This is good news that fills us with the joy of expectation- waiting for perfect love to be seen! Now we don't see Jesus perfectly- but one day we will see Him as He is! So true love desires to know Him more now- and true love delights in the promise of a future, perfect beatific vision!

To conclude- as our text began- love never fails. Love never ends- never ceases and is never done away with. In our present love, we have partial knowledge, partial reasoning and are a partial reflection. But when the perfect love comes- the imperfect will fade away to be replaced by full and complete! Even though these spiritual gifts will pass away- true love does not! Even in heaven, Love will fill us as it currently fills our God! The difference- the contrast between our current love and our future love is as stark as the different between a child and a grown up- between looking through a dim glass and seeing face to face! As Jesus promised- we will be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect- filled with perfect and enduring love! So eagerly desire the greater things- which is perfect love!