

1Corinthians 18-08-26b

Let's continue our study now in 1 Corinthians, we're at chapter 13. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, of course this indicates that they are intelligible to somebody. It's another insight into the temporary and miraculous gift of tongues.

You see this first in Acts chapter 2, when strangers who are visiting Jerusalem hear the Word of God being preached in their own language. And it means something. It is one thing for there to be a demonstration that indicates the presence and the power of God is at work, but you will notice throughout the Bible that when that happens, it accomplishes a goal.

When there is a miracle, one of the definitions of a miracle is not just, wow, looky there, that's supernatural, that's abnormal, that defies the known laws of nature or whatever, but it accomplishes something. If the Lord Jesus raises someone from the dead, that person is now alive back with their family, whether it's Lazarus or the little girl in the upper room or the man being carried out to the graveyard, the only support for his mother, he is restored. And he can fulfill a function.

Lazarus fulfills a function and is important in prefiguring the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a reason for the miraculous intervention in Egypt, the nine plagues plus one. There is a reason when God parts the Red Sea, the Reed Sea, or when He parts the Jordan.

There is a reason for manna to rain down supernaturally from heaven. There is a reason for fire and hail to rain down for Joshua. There is a reason when Elijah does his miraculous work.

These things accomplish something useful in the immediate context as well as creating a larger demonstration and a proof of God's hand in something. The one thing about gibberish in terms of calling it tongues, it accomplishes nothing, and it is easily faked. And God showed us that the easily faked is not where He's going to conclude.

What's the most memorable faked miracle you can think of in Scripture? Where somebody else did what God did. We're back in Egypt, right? The rods are cast down and they turn into snakes, and so then Pharaoh's magicians throw their rods down. I think they had snakes that they had wrapped in paper and stiffened them out.

So they threw it down. The paper broke and the snakes wriggled away. And they said, see, our rods can turn into snakes also.

Well, their rods always were snakes. But what they did not do, Moses' snake turns back into a rod again. Try that.

Excuse me for a moment. Let me go back to the paper-wrapping department, and I'll be back with my rod in an hour. But the miraculous interventions of God are not only demonstrations of His presence and power, but they do something in the immediate context.

They accomplish something meaningful. And someone is healed. Someone is restored.

Something good, some benefit happens. Or someone's judgment is immediate and visible. Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead.

That was a miraculous judgment. And there are judgments that happen, and they serve a purpose. Gibberish is easily falsified because it doesn't do anything.

It doesn't leave a permanent result. There's no proof that God was in it, as are the quote-unquote healings that people perpetrate in the modern day. I had a pain in my back, and now I don't.

Well, it's unverifiable. Somebody that is cold and stiff and dead, and then they come back to life, nobody thinks that didn't happen. We know what death looks like.

We know what death smells like. We know the clammy feel of death. And you know if it has been reversed, something supernatural has happened.

And it is true with the miracles of God. So when Paul says here, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, these are tongues that men understand, and they are tongues that angels understand. Now keep in mind the dual-purpose word, angelos, in Greek, because it is not a unique noun describing a different civilization outside our dimensions.

It is used for that, but it's a functional description. Angelos means messenger. So there's a sense in which you say, give me a Kleenex, do you mean any old facial tissue, or do you mean the actual brand, capital K-L-E-N-E-X, Kleenex, made by the Kleenex company from which it's derived.

So the reason they were called angels is they were messengers from God. They were divine messengers, and so they're described in terms of their function. And many times in Scripture, in the New Testament, angelos is used for a messenger that is not from heaven.

The girl, when Peter is released out of prison, I've talked about it many times, she thought it was his messenger, not the actual Peter, because they all knew he was locked up in prison with no hope of release, and somebody says through the thick locked door, you know, Shimon or Petras, or whatever it is he said, announcing himself, somebody is coming in his name, somebody is coming with a message from him, an angelos. So speaking with the tongue of angels, almost by definition, when you say messenger, there's going to be a message. The message conveys meaning, import, content.

There's something being said. And so speaking in these tongues, something is being said. There is content.

It is not all form and no content. Can you imagine God doing anything that is just mere sham, just mere form for its own sake, with no content? Paul has just said, at the end of chapter 12, I

want to show you what is greater in the sense of effectiveness. Well, gibbering is ineffective.

It just makes an issue out of the gibberer, which is, and it could have been going on in Corinth, it certainly goes on today, in tongue speaking congregations, there's a lot of gibbering, but nobody knows what's being said, or somebody will stand up and claim to interpret, but who's to say they're not making up the interpretation, just like the person is making up the gibberish? How could you prove them wrong? Record the gibbering, take it to somebody else, let them interpret it, and get the same message. Now, maybe I'll believe the gibbering is real. But you can fake that whole thing.

And it's impossible to verify. God doesn't operate that way. When God does something, it's like, Jake has a gospel song, he sings, Who do you think gave sight to the blind? Who do you think stilled the waters? Who do you think raised the dead? I know it was Jesus.

I know it was the Lord. That's how the concluding phrase of the song goes. When God does a thing, you know it was the Lord.

There's no question. Who but God can give sight to the blind? Somebody from God had to do this. John chapter 9. So, speaking with the tongues of men and angels, and also notice a shift in person here.

Paul is so masterful in his communication. It's part of his apostolic gift. And God gave him the training and the sensitivity.

He's talking about sensitivity to fellow believers in the function of your gift. He is an apostle exercising his gift. But I want you to notice the sensitivity.

You can come with a comforting cool cloth to soothe a fevered brow. Or you can come with a hammer. As an apostle, you've got the full panoply of ways to approach the people to whom you are apostolizing.

Well, what does Paul do here? He has just talked in chapter 12 about how important it is for the body to be sensitive to its fellow members. But when he comes here to chapter 13, he's been talking in sort of the third person. Verse 28 of the previous chapter.

God has appointed these in the church. Apostles, prophets, those apostles, those prophets. He doesn't say, God has appointed me an apostle.

He says, God has in the third person. There are apostles, there are prophets, there are miracle workers, there are healers, there are speakers of tongues, and those who interpret. Then he says, you, in verse 31, you all desire the more effective gifts.

Desire them, focus on them. The word desire, I didn't talk about it, but it is from zelao. It is have a zeal for, be zealous.

Christ has a people peculiar to himself, zealous of good works. Watching out for a way to be a

part of them, and to support them, and encourage them, and perpetrate them, and benefit from them. The whole realm of zeal, Israel had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

It's not enough to have a zeal, you've got to have knowledge to go with it. So he says, you need to be zealous for these more effective gifts. Here's how to manifest that zeal, and fulfill that zeal.

What happens, he goes from the third person in 28, 29, and 30, all of these out here, do they all have this gift, or that gift, or the other gift? You all, second person, be zealous for these more effective gifts. Now what's the person in chapter 13, verse 1? Though I speak. You think about different ways he could have done this.

He could have been finger wagging at them. Though you speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, you are ineffective. You're a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Though you have the gift of prophecy, you are nothing. Though you bestow all your goods on the poor, it profits you nothing. It could have been very didactic and preaching, but notice how much easier it is to accept when Paul says it of himself.

He says, I'm going to show you a superior way. Though I speak. And he makes the issue, because guess what, as an apostle, remember he said in the previous chapter, thank God I've spoken in tongues more than you all.

So he did speak with the tongues of men and angels. He probably had both diversities, both kinds. But he says, I could do it all the time, but if there's not love, I have become contentless.

The speaking, even if you understand the words, if it's not in love, it's not effective. It doesn't effectively communicate. The purpose of tongues is to communicate.

The purpose of language is to convey ideas, to convey propositional truth, to convey feeling, to convey perception, to convey history, to convey whatever it is, but it has content. And sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, notice that this is a range. Why did he pick those two things? Why didn't he say wood thumping on wood or water splashing into a creek? Why does he use these? It's dynamic range.

I have a little thing that I got years and years ago back in the 80s when everybody was all obsessed with stereo gear, and it's called a DBX. And it used to be when they would put a recording onto a vinyl album, you know, it's wiggles, basically. They're up and down and sideways.

But you can only wiggle the needle so far or there's not enough room for the groove. And if it goes too far sideways, it'll mistrack. The needle will jump out of the groove.

So what they had to do was, in order to get a recording, especially orchestral music, classical music, they would have to make the soft sounds louder and the loud sounds softer. They would

compress the music. And it still happens today.

If you listen to FM radio, you're listening to compressed music. If you're listening to an MP3, you're listening to compressed music. Soft sounds are made louder.

Loud sounds are made softer. Well, if you want to have the presence, especially with headphones, of shutting your eyes and feeling like you are actually there in the moment when the chamber orchestra or the full orchestra or some other band or a combo or whatever is playing, you want the range you would hear if you were there, which is all the way down to silence, up to the crashing of the loudest brass, the gongs, you know, the big... And this is what the dynamic range is here. He says, I don't care how softly you speak or how loudly you speak.

It's just dynamic range, but it doesn't have content. Sounding brass was about the biggest noise they could make in the ancient world. Louder than flutes, louder than trumpets.

You hit that great big brass, and it's... You've heard that. Oriental things are noted. They'll bang a gong at Benihana or Genghis Khan or something when they, I don't know why, but, you know, boong, and you hear that.

It's a very loud, penetrating, traveling sound. Tinkling cymbals are the little crystalline noises, little tiny wind chime noises. He says, all I am is variations in loudness.

I'm not saying anything. So the idea here is that you have... Paul is going to demonstrate, as he said at the end of the previous chapter, this better way. And he says, here's what the better way is not.

So he shifts person to the first person, which makes it non-threatening. He's sort of using himself as the object lesson. And he says, I'm going to show you a more excellent way, but first of all, I'm going to show you the not-more-excellent way.

If I do this thing you are so interested in, and by the way, this is the first time that he's put tongues first in the list. It was last in the preceding two or three lists. Now he puts it up first.

But he says, here's the way it's not going to work. What has he already told them in the preceding chapters? What is absent from their supper? What is absent from their fellowship, in the sense of having divisions and so on? Love is absent. And he says, you're striving for this tongues gift.

It's splashy, it's memorable. Everybody's talking about it. But if you lack love, which this is sort of an if and it's true, but he doesn't apply it to them.

He applies it to himself. And so he slips it under their guard. He takes away their defensiveness because he doesn't initially say, I'm talking about you.

And it's genius communication. It is sensitivity to his audience, ensuring that they get the content of his message. He is doing what he's talking about right here.

He is making sure that he's not just a voice saying words, but that they get the meaning. That there's love. That there's sensitivity.

That the gift functions effectively. And there's nothing more effective in terms of focusing the attention of the body of Christ on love than this chapter. And he is, even as he talks about it, he is doing it.

It's a double whammy. He's getting both things done at once. I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have prophecy. Though I have prophecy. And he doesn't even say that it is a gift here.

This is, I have, echo, to have or to hold, prophecy, profitean. And he says, though I have it. And the echo here is a subjunctive.

It's in the subjunctive form. The subjunctive is the mood of potential. And so, though I were to have.

Now he actually does have this prophetic gift as a part of his apostleship. But he puts it in the subjunctive. Though I were to have.

Though I would have prophecy. And the subjunctive is always a softer tone. He doesn't say, even though I am a prophet.

Even though I am an apostle. Even though I, and sort of clobber them with his status. It's gentle.

This is powerful writing, but it's in a very gentle form. Because he wants them to get it. So, though I were to have prophecy.

And then understand is the word that means to know. And though I were to know all mysteries. It's just oida, O-I-D-A.

And it's in the subjunctive. Understand all mysteries. This is the hidden things.

And all knowledge. This is what's attainable. This is gnosis.

G-N-O-S-I-S. And though I have. Once again, echo in the subjunctive.

All faith. This is pistis. P-I-S-T-I-S.

Though I have. Though I were to have. Now notice he is ticking down elements in the list that he already gave.

He starts with tongues. Prophecy is a gift. Knowing mysteries.

That's your wisdom. Gift of wisdom. We don't know what to do.

We don't know which way to go. What path would be the better path? It's a mystery. It's inscrutable.

You can't know the future. Well, somebody who has the gift of wisdom can discern the better path. So, that's wisdom.

So, I could know all knowledge. I could oida all gnosis. That's the gift of knowledge that he mentioned earlier.

Though I have the gift of faith. And what does the gift of faith do? So that I could remove mountains. And this, of course, harks back.

It reminds us that Paul does know the teachings of Jesus from decades earlier. And where has he picked this up? I think in his 14-year absence. When he went down to Sinai and came back.

And he spent time with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus gave him the same words that he gave the other 11 apostles. And I don't think this is derivative from Peter or John.

Paul has had practically no contact with those guys. And hasn't gotten his content from them. I think he got it just like they did.

First hand, from the Lord Jesus. We just saw that in the preceding chapter. I pass on to you what I received from the Lord.

Not from the apostles who were in the upper room. The Lord Jesus, the night he was betrayed. None of the apostles told Paul that.

Jesus told him that. Well, if he told him that, he probably told him a whole lot of other stuff, including this. And what I wonder is, the reason Jesus said, O ye of little faith.

And if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could do this, that, and the other. But it was usually at points of failure. And so you wonder about that time that Paul spent with the Lord Jesus.

Did he have his ups and downs? Was he like Elijah? Up one day and down the next. And I have to believe that he was. Because Jesus used those points of failure as teaching opportunities.

That's a great parenting observation. That points of failure are great teaching opportunities if you don't clobber the victim. As Paul is doing here.

He's being gentle. He's using the first person. He's slipping this content past their defenses by using the first person, by using the subjunctive.

It's very easy to take in. It's very easy to digest. And there's a time to come down with both feet, like a sergeant major in the Marine Corps, and rant and rave and get somebody cowering at a

submission.

Boy, I'm never going to make that mistake again. There's other times where it needs to focus on, how did this happen? Why did it happen? How can you do it better the next time? In a soft and gentle, yet effective manner. And the trick, of course, is knowing which is which.

So, though I have prophecy, though I know mysteries, though I know knowledge, though I have faith, so that I can remove mountains. And by the way, you remember early in the letter when he said, some say, I am of Cephas, you know, I'm of Peter. When he says, though I have faith so as to move mountains, he's talking to the I love Peter crowd.

Because Peter has told that story. Peter has communicated that truth. And this is a sideways glance at those who are dividing, because, well, I've got the teaching of Christ through Peter.

Peter was with the Lord. And when Paul says, I have faith so as to move mountains, they know Paul hasn't spent any time with Peter. And yet he's reciting the words of the Lord.

And this is a very, very subtle, but effective way of saying, any content you got from Peter, you can get from me. Apostles are apostles. And all of us were trained by the Lord.

And you don't have to divide up and say, well, this one's got a unique feature, or that one's got a unique feature. Anybody who's communicating the word of the Lord can be beneficial. But it's so subtle.

Notice how he just slipped that in. Why did he say, he hasn't given examples of any of the others. He doesn't say, I'm a tinkling cymbal on the battlefield, or I'm, you know, Joshua trying to call the troops, and I'm a sounding brass.

But here, for faith, so as to move mountains. That, just like for us, when you see that, you say, wait a minute, I've seen that connection before. But have not love, I am nothing.

It's been often observed, and you can observe it for yourself here, that in the first verse, he says, basically, sounding brass or clanging cymbal, I have become ineffective. In what way ineffective? Content-less. It's noise without content.

But it's, I am ineffective. If you wanted to substitute a single word, verse one, without love, I am ineffective. Though I have these wonderful gifts, but have not love, in verse two, I am nothing.

We've talked about the quality of love that defines God in his character, in his essence, in his being. Just on his throne, God is love. Before he says a word or lifts a finger, God is love.

What you are. Paul says, without love, I am nothing. It's what he is.

In the first verse, he is ineffectual. He can be talking, talking, talking, but he's not saying anything. And so, I have no effect.

I have no worth or value in and of myself. I am nothing. Now, verse three, though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, we'll talk about that, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Three different negative results. I accomplish nothing, I am nothing, and I gain nothing. Profit is a description of growth.

If it's financial, your portfolio grows. If you learn something and become deeper, wiser, and a more wonderful person to be around, you've gained something in your inner being. To do a thing and have no benefit from it.

You're no better. You've not really accomplished anything. You've gained nothing.

Profit, nothing. This is a third aspect. So, you're ineffectual in what you do.

You yourself are nothing, and there's no movement. You gain nothing. You don't advance.

You don't grow. You have no profit. So, that's a three-fold, and it's great that they divided the verses the way they did, because each verse ends with one aspect.

And if you think about those aspects, I mean, just to me, loosely speaking, the Holy Spirit is in verse one. The God the Father is in verse two, and the Lord Jesus Christ is in verse three. Because this is how the Trinity has divided itself.

God the Father is the defining central person. It's His plan. It's His design.

It's His purpose. It's His intentionality that is reflected by the other two. God the Holy Spirit is the one who makes things effectual.

It is His working and His energy that makes things happen. And the profit and the benefit and the action in terms of benefiting those who need food and self-sacrifice, and here giving body to be burned, there's debate about what exactly that means, but you certainly see that there is some sort of self-sacrifice involved in giving your body. That's what the Lord Jesus did.

And so love is here expanded and reflected in the role and the work of each of the members of the Trinity, in my view. Right in the center is God the Father. When you talk about communication, understanding, knowledge, and the purpose, belief in the purpose, and faith in the content of the plan and purpose of God, well, that's God Himself.

God the Father. So Holy Spirit, verse 1. God the Father, verse 2. The Lord Jesus giving everything of Himself, both what He possesses and His own body on behalf of others. But if God was not love, and if God had done what He did, and there's many people who have a view, they think there's a God, but they don't think He's a loving God.

They think He's a judgmental Richard Dawkins kind of God. And it would be true that if love was not the motivating factor for the Father, the Spirit, and the Son, it would be a whole different

universe. Then He begins in verse 4 with the description of love.

And you think, okay, how do I start? I mean, anybody that tackles this chapter says, well, where do I begin? It's the love chapter. What do I want to say about love? Where does Paul begin? Well, first of all, he says, if you don't have love, what you are, what you do, and what you pursue are all of no effect and no worth. What does love do? The very first attribute of love is macrothumia.

Macrothumia. And this is from the verb macrothumeo, and it is translated in the fruit of the Spirit, Ephesians 5, 22 and 23, longsuffering. Longsuffering.

But macro, we have macroeconomics and microeconomics. Macro is the big picture. Micro is the small picture.

And so you don't have an idea of length or duration so much as scope. Macroeconomics is economics on a global scale, the grand scope of things. And thumia is feeling.

It is passion. So this is not so much durability or bearing up under. We've got a different word for that.

This is a caring, an investment, a personal commitment that is huge. And you're willing to endure a lot because you have this macro feeling, this macro care for a thing. So love is invested in a big way in the benefit to a thing, in the well-being of a thing.

This is mother for her children. This is the Lord Jesus for us. It is a personal investment in the well-being of a thing.

But thumos is a passion. It is a big passion, is probably the most literal translation I can give you. It's macro passion.

Well, that kind of passion can be obsession. It can be detrimental. It can be negative.

It can be, what do they call the two people that are obsessed with each other, the arrogant and the inadequate. What's the name of that? Codependent. You can create a destructive sort of, I just saw where there are stalkers that go after people and they friend them on Facebook and next thing you know, they're sitting in a parked car outside the house peeking through the window shades.

There's an unhealthy kind of macro passion. And that's why he immediately follows with this next word, which is crestuitai, C-H-R-E-S-T-E-U, crestuitai, then E-T-A-I. So crestuitai.

Christos, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S, is so close to Christos that over in Peter, it has been swapped. And in Paul, it has been swapped. There's two places in the New Testament where somebody heard Christos instead of crestos, put it down, and who's going to change Christ back to anything else? So you remember some people's life verse, and I apologize as I have done in the past, but when you say, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain, I firmly believe, and I will walk right up

to the Apostle Paul and ask him, for me to live is Christos, Christos.

It's a benefit. It's a kindness. It's a good thing.

And to die is a gain. Living is good. Dying is even better.

But living is good. Living is Christos. For me to live is good.

To die is gain. And you look at it in the context, it will make a lot more sense. The same thing when Peter says, taste and see that the Lord is Christ, and even most versions have now changed that to say, taste and see that the Lord is good, that the Lord is kind, that the Lord is beneficial.

You can't taste and see that the Lord is Christ, really. I mean, that's just extremely awkward. But a lot of Bibles still read that way.

But it's this word, Christos. This is crestuitai. And this is the balancing point.

You have a big passion for a thing, but it is all for the good. It is for the betterment. It is a kind disposition.

And it is often associated with this macro thumia. If you look at Luke 6, verse 37, Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your bosom.

For with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. But that disposition for benefit is everything that's lacking. You remember in Corinthians with the meals, and one is getting drunk and another is going hungry, and divisions, and looking down on one another, and despising different parts of the body.

This is exactly what is lacking. You could stop right here. Paul could have stopped right here.

Love has a big passion for the benefit of others. That's the definition of agape, as opposed to philos, and some of the other eros, and some of the other words for love. But suffers long doesn't quite get it.

It just means it's big. It is strong in its passion. You don't have to suffer to love, although you will, and willingly, because of love.

But it's not intrinsic to love that there be suffering involved. It's willing to suffer. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friend.

Well, you can only do that once. But if you're characterized by love, that's your attitude at all times. You are willing to do it, but you're not necessarily doing that every moment.

You can't. So, krestos. Very meaningful word.

And then, love does not envy, is our next statement. And it's an irony in Greek that you miss in English, because it says, Agape ou zeloi. Zelo.

Zeal. What did he just say at the end of chapter 12? He said, earnestly desire. Zelos.

Same word in the verbal form. He says, but desire. Zelao.

The effective gifts. And then he says, love does not zeal. Is not zealous.

Love is not zealous. So, how can you be zealous for a more effective gift, and yet not be zealous? But that's what it says. Love is not zealous in what way? It says here, does not envy, but if you are desiring, earnestly desiring is not a bad translation, earnestly desiring gifts, what's the purpose of the gift? It doesn't benefit self, it benefits others.

So, earnestly desire the benefit of others is okay, if you are just earnestly desiring for your own sake, it's not okay. So, you can have a zeal for God, and it can be a bad zeal, like Israel had. Paul tells them, you have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Interestingly, he didn't say a zeal for God, but not according to love. In that case, it was a misinformed zeal. Here, it is a loveless zeal.

If you love, you're not going to zeal, and the implied finish of that is for yourself. You're not building yourself up, you want to build others up. And the context tells us this.

If you have a big passion that is kindly disposed, that is looking for the benefit of others, then you're not going to zeal for yourself. You're not going to be ambitious and self-centered. Love does not parade itself, is the next word here.

And this is perperuatai. Sounds like perpetrate. But it has the idea of asserting yourself, exaggerating, making much of yourself.

There are synonyms like being talkative, exaggerating, asserting yourself, attacking with words, being loquacious, doing a lot of talking that makes you the center and the focus. It's not a parade in the sense of marching the troops, but it is making an issue of yourself, I think is probably a good... It does not make an issue of itself. And that's tricky, because sometimes even when you don't make an issue out of yourself, by not making an issue out of yourself, you make an issue out of yourself.

There's a balance point in there. But love, because it is looking out for the well-being of others, doesn't... There's a time that you just need to say thank you and move on. You don't err too much in the aw shucks mode, nor do you... Well, thank you, have you got any more? You're just in the middle.

You just want to blend and not have yourself be an issue, either in the positive or in the

negative sense. And it's really tricky sometimes. But the key is, if you are motivated by the love of God, this becomes natural.

It becomes second nature. You instinctively know when to protest and when to be quiet, when to say and when to not say, when to do and when to not do, when to do and when to let someone else do. It becomes instinctive because it is the motivation of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

And the great thing is we can just relax. We are not ourselves in our degenerated sense. We are ourselves in our body of Christ function sense.

And we know there's a time to flex. This is the first thing they teach you in self-defense. Take a comfortable stance with your knees.

Your feet shoulder width apart and your knees slightly bent. Well, you don't really bend them or you fall down. But you don't stiffen them rigid, just like when you're at parade rest or you're standing in a formation.

You keep your knees slightly bent and flexible. And within your trousers, you can actually move them a little bit so that you don't lock up and fall over. So there's a middle ground between stiffness and complete flexibility that you find.

And it makes you most effective. You can take a blow with your knees flexed and your feet shoulder width apart that you cannot take if your knees are locked and you've got your feet close together. You're going to stumble if you get any kind of sideways impact.

Well, this is the idea of these words. You find a balance where you are not an issue because you fell over or because you are standing stiff and tall and you're inflexible. There is medium flexibility.

You're not rigid and you're not just completely wet noodle. So, is not puffed up. And this is Fusiao.

P-H-U-S-I. And it's actually Fusiao but it comes from Fusiao which is a verb. And it means to literally in the first definition in the lexicon it says to make natural.

To cause a thing to pass into nature. Which is odd. But this is where we get words like physical, physics.

It comes from Fusiao. We turn the U to a Y and it's Fusiao. It's what is physical or what is physics.

And to inflate, blow up or cause to swell up. To be proud, to be puffed up. And really where they got this secondary and more prevalent definition is if something dies and it's going to go back to nature it bloats.

And so the drift into the semantic realm that's not physics is it's not bloated. And I like that translation better than puffed up. There's some things you want to puff up.

Your air mattress when you're going to sleep at night. Your tire. Sometimes puffed up is a good thing.

Bloated, I can't think of a time when somebody says oh I sure wish I was bloated or that was bloated. And that's really the meaning here. Love is not bloated.

And then our last verse for this morning is verse five. Does not behave rudely. And this is have you ever heard of ischemia? A-S-C-H-E ischemia.

Ischemia. This is the Greek word behind that. This is a-schema-ni.

From a-schema-ne-o. And the idea of this word is there's the scheme and then you've got an alpha privative in front. You're outside the scheme.

It came to mean to behave inappropriately. You're not blending with what's going on. You stick out.

You're outside the lines. You're over the boundary. It's unbecoming.

It's unfitting. You're wearing stripes with plaid. You're sticking out.

You've got a bright green tie with a purple shirt. I don't know. Anything goes now with wardrobe.

But you don't match. You don't fit. You're the odd part.

You have made yourself an issue in the way that you're not harmonious. It's disharmony might be a good... Because the scheme, the schematic is the harmony of all of the parts. You're inharmonious.

Now, if you find yourself in a situation, maybe you're at a church that does speak in tongues and roll in the aisles and all that and you feel yourself out of harmony, what is the better part of love? What's the loving thing to do? Well, if I'm going to be in Christian love, I'm going to stick it out here because I want to try to love these people. Love doesn't force you to be in a situation where you are inharmonious. The better part of love, if you want to really love those people, let them do their thing and go elsewhere so that you don't create an issue out of yourself or make an issue out of them or they come up and say, well, how come you're not rolling? Come right down here.

There's a nice soft spot. I've softened this up. I roll here every week.

You roll right over here and I'll roll right next to you. They're trying to be harmonious. Love is not a schematic.

It is not inharmonious. You find places where you are in harmony, in sympathy, where you blend, where you're a part of a unified whole. And this is how people know it's time to leave a church is if you find yourself just out of sorts, out of harmony, out of fitting.

We've all been through this at different times where churches divide and you have to pick which half to go with. At least I've been in that and I've observed it even more times than I've been a part of it. Well, where do I blend better? Where am I going to be the least aschematic? That's what love does.

Then, does not seek its own. And this is really kind of the centerpiece of this whole section. Doesn't seek its own.

All of these things are true. Isn't ambitious for self. Is a part of not parading itself.

But this is just simply the word for seek, zeteo, and self. Heioto is your own self. Doesn't make itself number one.

And then, finally, is not provoked in this verse. And this is paroxune, paroxuno. You've heard of a paroxysm, where it's like a fit, it's a tantrum.

Isn't set off. Stirred to anger is a good lexical definition for this. Incensed is a translation of it.

But I'm looking at the passage in Acts, chapter 17, verse 16. While Paul was waiting for some of his companions at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. This is what happens when you see political news or some new insult that the government perpetrates or whatever.

To be provoked is to be... There's an impulsive aspect to it. You hear about a thing, you see a thing. This is what happens with trending hashtags and such on the Internet.

Somebody hears an abbreviated and incomplete version of a story. Oh, white cop shoots black man. Everybody is immediately provoked.

They don't bother to get all the details. They just go off. Love does not go off.

You can go off in a healthy way once in a while, but you'd better be the Apostle Paul looking at idolatry in Athens or it would be a caution. But the impulsive nature of reaction, does not overreact, might be another good translation. So what are we seeing? What is the summation of all of this this morning? Paul says you're making an issue out of gifts, your gift which makes you make an issue of yourself.

And you're saying, how can I be more, do more, be better appreciated? It's me, myself, and I. And he says there is a trinity of virtues in love. And he begins his response to that situation delicately, sensitively, and yet forcefully. And he gives an example in those first three verses of the nature of God's love, God is love.

And so it needs to be and be centered in that quality of character. It needs to ensure that what it does is effective from the standpoint of God's plan and purpose. Is what I'm doing part of the eternal plan? Am I aschematic in terms of God's plan? And it is self-sacrificial in an effective way.

You can be self-sacrificial. I think there are people who have heard a stirring message from a missionary and decided that untold millions are still untold. Untold millions are outside the fold.

Who will tell them of Jesus' love and the heavenly mansions waiting above? That was a song they taught us when I was little. And so you say, boy, somebody needs to go. And you get all stirred up and you go, well, I'm going to go.

Well, that's not their calling. But it makes them feel special. I'm going to walk down.

I'm going to raise my hand. I'll go to the foreign mission field. I'll raise support.

Everybody's going to know that I'm sacrificing myself. But if that's not your role, plenty of people have done that, and God bless them. They're right in the very center of God's will, and God has used them powerfully and beautifully and magnificently.

And untold numbers have come to Christ through them. But if you want to try to do that and you are not that, it's not your function. And people have gone.

They've sacrificed their families. They've sacrificed their marriage. They've sacrificed the upbringing of their children, sacrificed their finances.

They've gone over there, done nothing of any significance, and then died or come back broken and disillusioned and completely unhappy with Christianity, God, and everything else because their selfless willingness to sacrifice and go wasn't rewarded with success. We have to be seeking the good of others after we have sought God, after we are connected with God, and let Him define us. Let Him assign us our place and be seeking the good.

All things work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to what? His purpose. And it isn't God's will for me that I be Billy Graham. It isn't God's will for me, Sam, that I be a megachurch pastor.

Nothing wrong with megachurch pastors in and of itself. Certainly nothing wrong with being Billy Graham in and of itself. That's not my calling.

And if I ever had grandiose ambitions of being a TV star and having vast stadium seats filled, all coming to hear me opine, that's not my assignment, even if I thought that was a great thing, which I don't necessarily. It's not what my assignment is. And if you love God, you want to be wherever He wants to put you.

Sometimes you've got to be in right field. Sooner or later somebody is going to pop a fly out there, and you may stand there for 90% of the game, but if the fly comes to right field, you are the guy. And the game may depend on you catching that ball.

And, yes, you're there 90% of the time. The right and left fielders, especially the right field, just the nature of a right-handed batter is such that you're going to send the ball either to center or to left field. But right field, it's pretty hard for a good, strong batter to send a ball.

That's what they would like to do because it's like the Spanish Inquisition. Nobody expects it over there. And if you want to catch a ball and take it home for a souvenir, you don't sit in the right field stands.

You want to sit in the left field stands. That's where a right-handed batter is going to typically anticipate the ball and send it that way. Statistics will bear me out.

But if you want to be where God wants you, doing what God wants you to do, ministering to and being a blessing to God's people in the most effective way, this is what's going to pertain. And our ambition, our zeal, and our passion, our big passion, ought to be to be exactly where God wants us to be, doing exactly what God wants us to do regardless of the visibility, regardless of the tangible or visible results. I am where I am.

I often think about insurance. You rent a trailer and you buy insurance. I've bought that insurance every time I rent a trailer.

I've never wrecked a trailer, never bent a trailer, never had anything happen to a trailer, and I buy the insurance every single time. The one time I don't buy the insurance is going to be the time that that trailer gets destroyed and I'm going to be out \$6,000. The insurance did nothing except take 10 extra dollars out of my pocket.

But it's critical. It has to be there when you need it. You can't just gamble that you're never going to need the insurance.

You need the insurance. It needs to be there. And then when you do need it, it steps up and does its job.

Many times our spiritual gift seems like that. It doesn't seem to be doing anything effective, but it is there in the gap when the gap needs to be filled. And what we're going to find out in glory is that our gifts and our opportunities have functioned far more than we had any awareness of.

You think about believers that you have known that have no idea how significant your observation of them is in your own life, in your thought life. You think, I remember so-and-so in such-and-such a situation. They have no idea that I saw, that I observed, that I was benefited, that I realized here is the traction, here is the actual application of the truth of God.

There's a person getting it done. And it's an inspiration, and it's a strength, and it's a connection to the rest of the body of Christ. They have no idea.

And even telling them would spoil it. I don't want to make them self-conscious about what they unconsciously do so beautifully. I'm not going to say, I just want you to know.

No, you just enjoy the blessing that God gives you, and they'll find out in glory that God used them for you and countless others in ways that they are completely unaware of. We don't need to know. We need to focus on these three things, being what we are supposed to be, doing what we are supposed to do, and seeking what we are supposed to seek.

And it's those three aspects of the Trinity that define love, and it is what Paul is going to talk about all through this chapter. So, it's a fun area to reflect on and to look at ourselves and see if there are ways that we have not yet fully attained. The Apostle Paul said, I don't count myself as having fully attained, but I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And his example is a perfect one for looking at the outworking of this idea of love. Well, we'll pick up here in the middle of chapter 13 next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you for the supernatural life that you have given to us, that you have entered us into, and that we are learning to live and to exploit. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate example, both in his person and in his work, of these truths. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make them real and meaningful to us as we work through the circumstances of our day and our week and our relationships with one another, that we will be encouraged, that we will be mindful and be sensitive and aware of where we can improve, where we can more fully take advantage of the opportunity we have to function as the body of Christ until the day that he returns and takes us to himself and brings us into your presence.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.