

Love Keeps No Record of Wrong (1 Cor 13:5)

Background

Paul has been writing about spiritual gifts, telling the Corinthians that the Spirit “distributes them to each one just as he determines,” equipping each person as part of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:1-26). He has also told them that they should “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (1 Cor 12:27-31).

Questions

In verses 1 to 3, and again in verses 8 to 13, Paul speaks about the pre-eminence of love over other spiritual gifts. In verses 4 to 7, he describes love in more detail:

- How does Paul describe love positively? How does he describe it negatively?
- Which of these characteristics do you find most difficult?

Love “thinks no evil” is more literally “does not reckon evil” (using “reckon” in the sense of “establish by calculation”). This does not mean that love is blind to right and wrong, as Paul explains in verse 6; it means that love does not keep track of the times that we have been hurt by others; rather it is quick to forgive and forget.

- How is this characteristic of love exemplified in our Saviour? See, for example, Psalm 103:1-5, 12; Isa 43:25; and John 21:15-17.
- How would this transform our relationships, if we increasingly put this into practice? See also Rom 12:17; 1 Thess 5:15 and 1 Pet 3:8-9.

Application

Above all spiritual gifts, we should pursue love. An essential characteristic of love is that it keeps no record of wrong.

1 Corinthians 13

And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not **love**, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not **love**, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not **love**, it profits me nothing.

4 **Love** suffers long and is kind; **love** does not envy; **love** does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 **Love** never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 13 And now abide faith, hope, **love**, these three; but the greatest of these is **love**.