

IN RESPONSE - WHEN I WAS A CHILD, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:11, LESSON VII

by Dennis Prutow
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We turn to 1 Corinthians 13:11 in our exposition of love.

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. Paul is now illustrating the “partial” which is “done away” as well as the “perfect.” He does this by way of comparison. He compares the childish and the mature. Paul has already identified the partial which is to be done away.

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 (1 Corinthians 13:8). Love is that which remains, which endures, which never fails.

Love, as it is expounded in the completed and perfect Word of God is the *normative sign* of the presence of the Holy Spirit in human lives. And my argument is that tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge are no longer the *normative signs* of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Biblical tongues, as a *normative sign*, have ceased.

Let me bring this down to a very personal level. After I was converted to faith in Christ in the land of Korea, I was in a shower room early one morning and I heard an audible voice say to me, “Denny, you are going to seminary.” This incident occurred. I cannot deny it. As one seminary professor said, “If you had audiometer there, it is likely there were no actual sound waves.” I agree. Yet there was a voice which spoke to me. In the providence of God I did attend seminary.

Now was the fact I heard this voice, what some would call a word of knowledge, evidence I was filled with the Spirit. My answer is no! At one time tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge were the *evidences* of the presence of the Spirit. Upon the completion of the Scriptures, love became the *normative evidence*.

We are talking about love as described and exemplified in the Scriptures. And Paul is emphatic, you can possess “all knowledge” and be without the es-

sential ingredient, love (1 Corinthians 13:2).

I have spoken in tongues. I qualified to serve in the ministry of the Assembly of God Church. Does this fact I spoke in tongues indicate I was filled with the Spirit. No! Speaking in tongues is no longer the *normative sign* of the presence of the Holy Spirit. “If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Love is the essential and *normative sign* of the presence of the Spirit.

Interestingly enough, Paul says, “When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.” Paul says tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge are childish. The mature way is love. Then why do we want to major in childish Christianity? Why don’t we place more emphasis on the maturity of love?

One answer is that evangelical Christianity is very feeling oriented. It is very subjective. For example, when people say, “God *spoke* to me about doing such and such,” or God *told* me to go such and such a place,” what do they mean by God speaking? Did God *speak* to them in an *audible* voice? Probably not. It is more than likely these people had what they called “peace” about something. I know a young lady who interviewed for a job. When asked later if she was taking the job, she responded that she had prayed about it and had peace, it was God’s will. Two days later she left the job because it was incompatible with other employment she had to keep. Further investigation would have saved her trauma along with the disappointed employer. We are too prone to such childish Christianity.

There is another course open to us. Compare Psalm 34:8. “O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” What is the “taste” the psalmist is talking about. If you have a taste for something, you enjoy it. People who have a taste for chocolate not only enjoy chocolate, they crave it. They love chocolate. A taste and desire for God is essential to the Chris-

tian life. We see a similar thing in Psalm 19:7-10.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

We desire what we have a taste for. The person who has a taste for the Word of God desires it. This person finds the Word to be sweet. We are to have a “sweet tooth” for the Law of God and for the Word of God.

But remember how we defined love? “And this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). Love is defined in terms of God’s commandments. See the complete explanation in lesson III. The full orb ed exposition of love is given to us in the completed and *perfect* Word of God. Living this life of love is mature Christianity. It is the Christianity for which Paul is vying in 1 Corinthians 13:11. This love is regulative. It is the governing and guiding principle of the faith. The possession of this love is the *normative sign* of the presence of the Holy Spirit in this present age.

Do tongues exist today? Yes they do. And I think a case can be made that modern tongues are a psychological phenomenon. Modern tongues are also not the biblical tongues or languages used in the early church as normative evidence of the presence of the Spirit. I side with Paul here. Tongues are childish. We need to press on to maturity, the maturity of love. Love is the *normative sign* of the presence of the Spirit.

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IN RESPONSE - SEEING FACE TO FACE, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12a, LESSON VIII

by Dennis Prutow

As we continue our exposition of love, we turn to 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." The standard argument would be that during this present age we see things dimly. When we reach heaven, we will see Christ face to face. This would seem to contradict the interpretation I have been following. I have maintained the *perfect* to which Paul refers in verse 10 is the completion of the Bible. When we have the complete and perfect Word of God, prophecy, tongues, and special knowledge cease to be normative signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Does verse 12 bear out this interpretation?

Getting the context, what is the import of verse 11? Verse 11 illustrates the truth in verses 9-10. Tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge are to be put away in favor of love just as childish ways are put away when we grow up. Verse 12 illustrates the truth in a similar way. During the time of tongues, prophecy, and special knowledge, we are seeing in a mirror dimly. The time comes when the mirror is put away. We see face to face. When is this time? When do we see face to face?

First of all, what do we see in a mirror? Do we see the real thing? When I look into a mirror, am I in the mirror? No I am standing in front of the mirror. I am not in the mirror. There is a reflection in the mirror, an image.

To compound the difficulty, the famous Corinthian mirrors were polished metal. And although they were highly polished and the Corinthians were very famous for their craftsmanship, their mirrors still presented an imperfect image. Paul says the mirror actually presents a "riddle" or an "enigma." Again we can look at 1 Peter 1:10-11.

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. Those old prophets were presented with a enigma or a riddle.

The point is that the time of prophecy, special knowledge, and tongues is a time of less sure knowledge rather than more. The time of the mirror, where we see only a dim and imperfect image, is the time of less sure knowledge rather than more. It is a time when faith is grounded more in subjective experience rather than when faith is grounded more in objective truth. The one does not replace the other. But objective truth carries the greatest weight. The balance of power shifts. Our faith becomes more fully grounded in objective truth. This is the mature route.

Verse 12 goes on to say, "...but then face to face." The imperfect image is replaced by a face to face encounter. Certainly we will see Christ face to face when we enter His presence in heaven (1 John 3:2). But is this what Paul is talking about? We look at 2 Corinthians 4:6 to get some help.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

According to Paul, can unbelievers see the gospel when they read the Bible? Be careful. Paul says they cannot see "the light of the gospel." The gospel is not hidden from them. Rather the glory of the gospel is hidden. This is the purpose of the veil. When Moses came down from the mountain, the people could plainly see Moses. But because of the veil, the glory of His face was hidden. In a similar way, the devil casts a veil across the hearts of the unbelieving so they cannot see the light, they miss the glory of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:6 goes on to say,

For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Where do we see the face of Jesus Christ? We can see the face of Jesus Christ in the Bible, especially in the gospels. When we read the gospel stories we

meet the Savior. If we do not see Jesus face to face, we cannot be saved from our sins.

Not only so, we have "the knowledge of the glory of God" when we see Jesus face to face. The problem is that veil. Because of the veiling of our minds by the devil, we cannot see the glory of the gospel. God must come along and shine in our hearts. Without the light of God, our hearts are desperately black and dark. Light is needed.

Verse 6 may be translated like this, "God has shone in our hearts *for illumination of the knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The italics are added to emphasize the fact that God illumines the knowledge gained by seeing Christ face to face. When this illumination takes place, we see the glory of Christ.

Where do we see Christ face to face? We see Him face to face in the Bible. Where do we get the knowledge of Christ? We get that knowledge from the Bible. We believe in the priority of the intellect, the mind, in the sense that we must get the information concerning the gospel in our heads by reading the Bible. We hold to the priority of the heart in the sense that the Holy Spirit must enter our hearts and illumine the information gleaned from the Bible before we see the glory of the gospel.

Going back to 1 Corinthians 13:12, we affirm that we do see Christ face to face in the Bible. We must see Him face to face in the Bible if we are going to be rescued by Him from the consequences of our sins. Through prophecy, knowledge and tongues we see dimly as in the polished metal mirrors made by the Corinthians. Through the Bible we see Christ face to face. In the Bible we have all the information needed to learn what the face of love really looks like. With the illumination of the Holy Spirit we see the glory of love exemplified by Christ in life and in death. And we have confirmation of the interpretation we have been following.

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IN RESPONSE - NO FULL KNOWLEDGE #1, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12b, LESSON IX

by Dennis Prutow

We come now to the most important phase of our study. How can the end of verse 12 support the interpretation we have been expounding? The text says, "Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). The standard interpretation says we will have the type of knowledge concerning which Paul speaks when we reach heaven. Now I have only partial knowledge. Then, in heaven, I will know fully.

In point of fact, creatures of God, even perfected creatures of God, will never have full and comprehensive knowledge. Only God knows all. And although believers will be transported into glory where our knowledge of God and His creation will be vastly expanded, we will never have the full knowledge of creation or ourselves which God has. We will remain creatures; He will remain God. And so to begin, we know there is something amiss in the translation of our text. It cannot mean we will know fully as God knows fully.

But before we press the point further, let's compare verse 9 with the end of verse 12. Verse 9 says, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part." To what does this partial knowledge refer? As mentioned in earlier lessons, this partial knowledge refers to what is derived from tongues, special knowledge, and prophecy. Again, verse 12 says, "Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I have been fully known." Partial knowledge comes from these special gifts. But when the perfect comes, my knowledge will be changed. I am saying the perfect is the perfection of Scripture. When Scripture is complete, tongues, special knowledge, and prophecy are no longer needed as signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Now let's do a little word study to determine what the word translated "know fully" and "fully known" actually means. First, let's look at Paul's use of the word. We find Paul using our word seven times outside of our text.

[1] 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." Here our word

is translated "recognize." And the interesting point is that Paul wants the Corinthians to know or recognize certain things from what he has written. He wants them to recognize the Lord's commandment. The word Paul uses means to have a *more exact knowledge*. It does not refer to full or comprehensive knowledge. The word is often translated recognize. And as in this case, it is used with reference to knowledge possessed in this world.

[2] 1 Corinthians 16:18, "For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men." The word translated "acknowledge" is our word. Here the Corinthians are to recognize the labors of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as fruitful. These men are then to be acknowledge through subjection. (1 Corinthians 16:15-17). Again the word has to do with a more exact knowledge of people and knowledge in this world and life.

[3] 2 Corinthians 1:13, "For I write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end." The word "understand" is our word. In this case, the Corinthians are to read the letter Paul writes and gain understanding. They are to gain a more exact knowledge of the various subjects he addresses. Once again we have earthly knowledge rather than heavenly knowledge.

[4] 2 Corinthians 6:9, "...as unknown, yet well known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death..." Paul was "well known." He was not fully known by his enemies. But they recognized him, despised him, fought him. He was known very well; that is, known exactly. Here is exact knowledge exercised by enemies of the cross. It is not the knowledge received only in heaven.

[5] 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?" Again our word is translated "recognize." Believers in this life are to put themselves to the test. Their lives are to reflect the love of God. Specific outward manifestations are to be present. They stem

from the life of Christ residing within. See Lesson III. Because of the criterion set forth by the apostle Paul and by the apostle John (see 1 John) believers should recognize, have a more exact knowledge about, themselves. Need I mention this is knowledge possessed by the believer in this life?

[6] Colossians 1:6, "...which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth." Again, our word is "understood." Reference is to knowledge of the gospel. The NASV margin translates the word, "came really to know." When the Colossians gained a more exact knowledge of the gospel and understood it, that same gospel bore fruit in their midst.

[7] 1 Timothy 4:3. "...men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." We are to "know" the truth. We are to have an exact knowledge of the truth. This is not comprehensive knowledge but it is correct knowledge. And it is knowledge we are to possess now. It does not wait until heaven.

Given what we have learned so far, allow me to suggest a couple of alternative translations to 1 Corinthians 13:12. "Then I shall know exactly just as I have been exactly known." Or perhaps: "then I shall recognize [others] just as I have been recognized [by others, or by Scripture]." Have I taken too much liberty with the text? I do not think so. Paul's use of the word with which we are concerned in other passages leads us to the suggested translation. Furthermore, if the suggested translation is accurate, 1 Corinthians 13:12 does not refer to knowledge in heaven. And we have here another confirmation of the interpretation I am suggesting.

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IN RESPONSE - NO FULL KNOWLEDGE #2, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12b, LESSON X

by Dennis Prutow

Because of the importance of 1 Corinthians 13:12, I am devoting another lesson to this part of our study. "Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known." Verse 12 can support the interpretation we have been expounding only if the word translated "know fully" or "fully known" has another meaning. Otherwise, we must follow the standard interpretation. Now we have partial knowledge. Then, in heaven, we will know fully.

I am attempting to show that the word used by Paul does not refer to the knowledge obtained in heaven but in point of fact is knowledge gained in this world. We have already looked at other uses of the word under consideration by the apostle Paul. Now we turn our attention to the book of Acts and Paul's companion, Dr. Luke.

[1] Acts 3:10, "And they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple...." After Peter healed the lame man, the people of the city "were taking note" of him. From previous encounters, they recognized him.

[2] Acts 4:13, "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus." Our word is translated "recognize." When Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish elders knew more keenly these men had been with Jesus. This is more exact knowledge gained by unbelievers.

[3] Acts 9:30, "But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus." When the disciples "learned," this is our word, of the death threats against Paul, they rescued him. Here again is an exact knowledge of a situation which is learned, not heavenly knowledge which is imparted.

[4] Acts 12:14, "And when she recognized Peter's voice...." When Peter was released from prison by an angel, he went to a meeting place of the disciples. Rhoda went to the door. Upon hearing Peter she "recognized" his voice. From previous experience, she had an exact

knowledge of who was behind the door. Once again we have human knowledge gained through reflection.

[5] Acts 19:34, "But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all for about two hours, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.'" In Ephesus, the people, through observation, "recognized" Paul to be Jewish.

[6] Acts 22:24, "The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason they were shouting against him that way." Our word is translated "find out." The Roman commander wanted to know exactly why the Jews were in such an uproar. This is very human knowledge gained by examination.

[7] Acts 22:29, "Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains." Paul informed the centurion that he, Paul, was a Roman citizen. When the commander "found out" [our word again] and he had a more exact knowledge of who Paul was, he was afraid.

[8] Acts 23:28, "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council." Our word is "ascertain." Claudias writes to Governor Felix. He tells Felix he wanted to have a better knowledge, a more exact knowledge of the charges against Paul. Here is human understanding gained through examination.

[9] Acts 24:8, "And by examining him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him." Same as Acts 23:28. Here is more exact knowledge by examination.

[10] Acts 24:11, "...since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship." Defending himself, Paul tells Felix he can examine the facts and gain an exact knowledge of his, Paul's, activities.

[11] Acts 25:10, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to

be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know." Paul appeals to Caesar. He tells Festus, "You 'know' I am innocent."

[12] Acts 27:39, "And when day came, they could not recognize land...." Before wrecking on Malta, the sailors looked, but could not "recognize" the island.

[13] Acts 28:1, "And when they had been brought safely through, then we found out the island was called Malta." Once on the island, the crew "found out," they gained the exact knowledge of, where they were.

In every case in the book of Acts, the word in question has to do with a more exact knowledge gained through ordinary means. This use of the word is confirmed by Luke 1:4. Why did Luke write his gospel account? "So that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." Luke wanted people like us to have an *exact knowledge* of Christ.

Now we look at Matthew 7:16 and 20. "You will know them by their fruits." And, "So then, you will know them by their fruits." How are believers and unbelievers to be known more exactly? We examine their fruit. This is exactly the point in 1 Corinthians 13:12. How was Paul known? He was known by his fruit. How did he know others more exactly? He knew others by their fruit. He recognized other Christians by their fruit. The primary fruit is love. When we have a more exact understanding of love through the *perfect* Word of God, we can recognize the fullness of the Spirit. We can know just as we are known. We can recognize just as we are recognized. The proposed interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:12 is therefore justified.

The other New Testament references are: Matthew 11:27, 14:35, 17:12; Mark 2:8, 5:30, 6:33, 6:54; Luke 1:22, 5:22, 7:37, 24:16, 24:31.

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