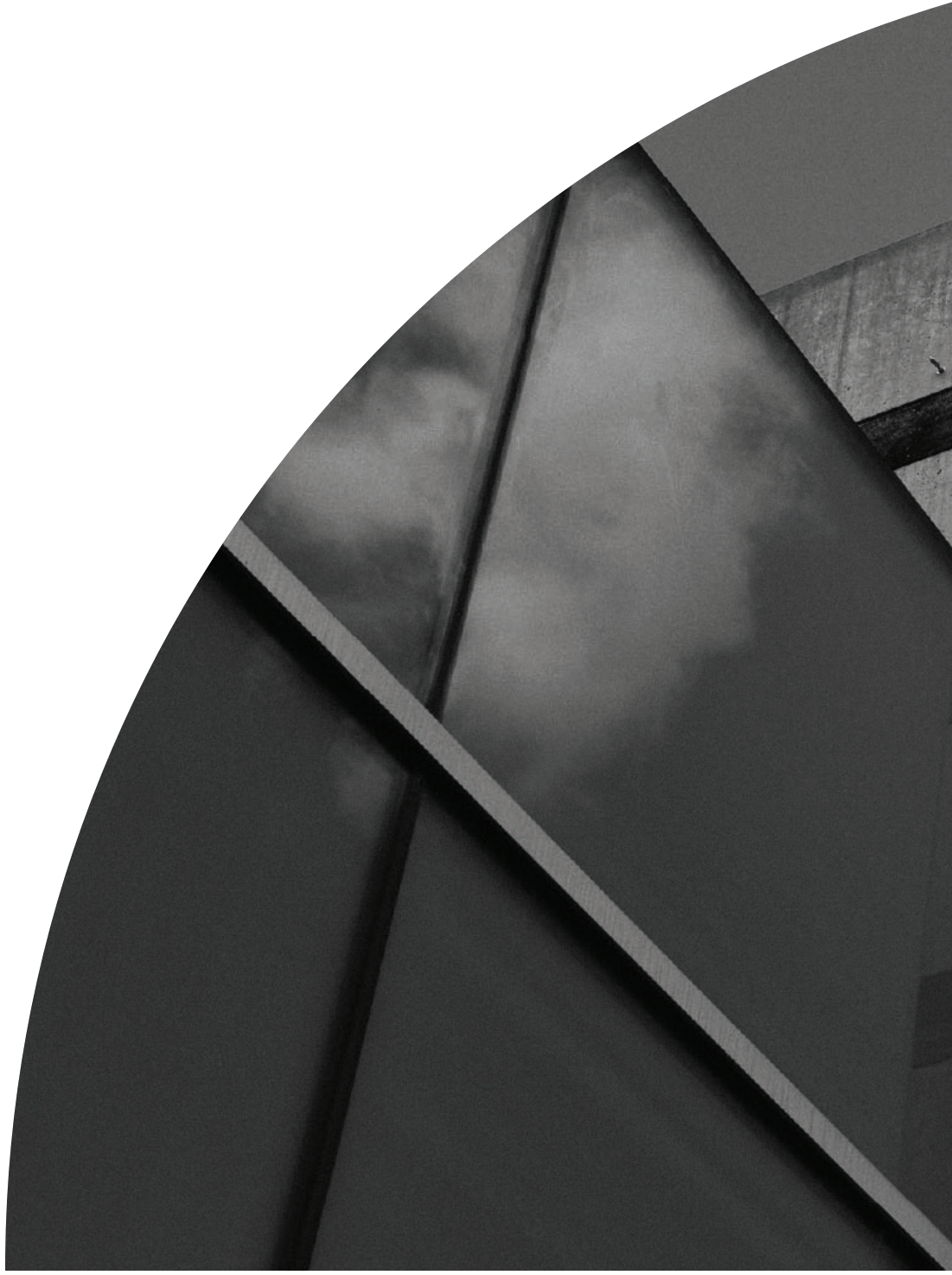


HOLINESS IN LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

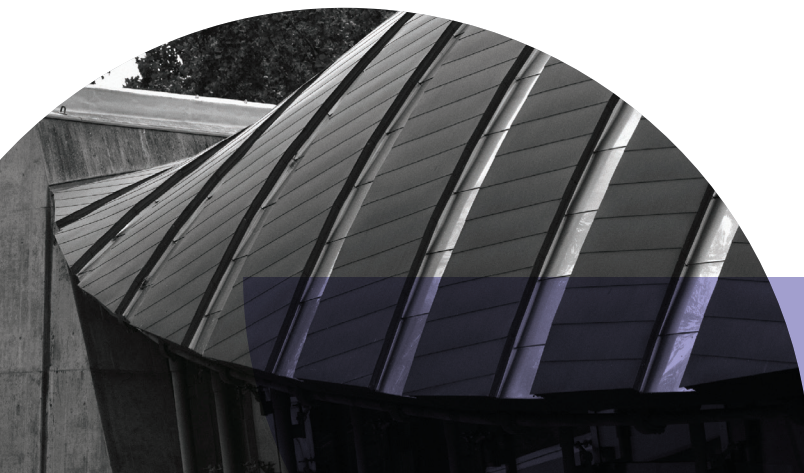


The image is a composite graphic design. On the left, a black and white photograph shows the corner of a concrete building with horizontal bands. To the right, a large, semi-transparent orange circle is superimposed over a background of a cloudy sky. Below the orange circle, a semi-transparent purple circle overlaps it. The number '08' is printed in a large, white, sans-serif font across the top of the orange circle.

08

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- 02 1 John 3:16
- 03 1 John 4:7-12
- 04 Galatians 5:13-14
- 05 Romans 5:1-5
- 06 Galatians 5:22-26
- 07 Romans 13:8-10



WEEK 08

Holiness In Love

Chapter 13 sits like a small refrain in the middle of Paul's extended teaching on proper worship. Paul has just finished challenging believers in Corinth not to treat those of different abilities as less essential to the church than themselves. This leads Paul to reflect on what quality must be cultivated in order for this unity to occur. In contrast to fueling division, "the most excellent way" to live is the way of love (12:31). This poetic description of love is organized around the importance (13:1-3), the characteristics (13:4-7), and the endurance (13:8-13) of love.

Paul has acknowledged the need for spiritual gifts and abilities in the church, but here he warns that the effectiveness of those gifts can be completely undermined without love. To make his point, Paul uses extreme examples which could lead to the following questions: What if a mere human could speak an angel's language? What if prophets could fathom *all* mysteries? People trust God for big things, but what if their faith could actually move mountains? These three examples all appear to be exaggerations. Paul does not appear to believe that anyone in Corinth spoke in angel's languages, understood all mysteries, or could move a mountain. He's simply saying, even if someone were gifted in these areas beyond anything we have ever seen, that incredible gift would mean nothing without love.

Paul then beautifully describes the characteristics of love in verses 4-7. He concludes by explaining that love is what lasts when everything else fades away. Our acts of service as the church have a purpose for a season, but everything we do now is "in part" (verse 12). We don't actually know everything (despite our often inflated view of ourselves), but when we ultimately see God face-to-face, we will "know fully" and find what remains is love. Therefore, love must characterize everything we do in this life.

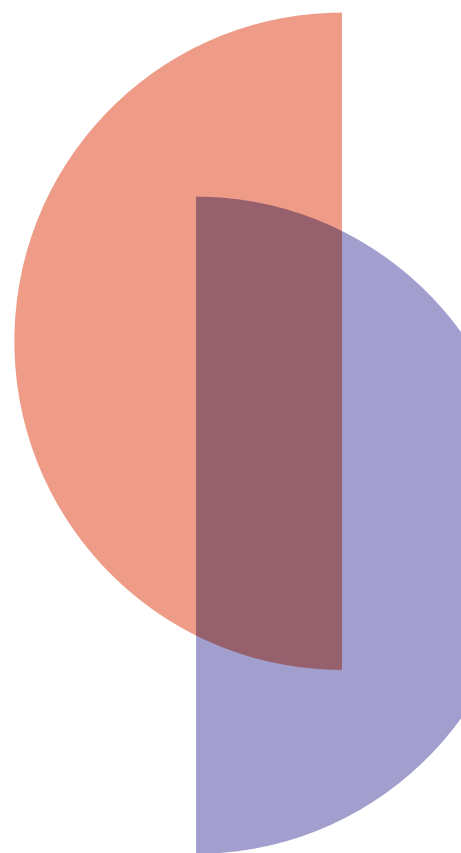
1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.



WARM UP

What was your favorite band or singer when you were in high school?

Do you remember having a favorite “love” song?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–13

How do you define love?

Why is love such an important companion to spiritual gifts?

List the characteristics of what love is in verses 4-7. What do these have in common?

How can recognizing these characteristics of what love *is* and *isn't* foster healthy relationships inside and outside the church?

How would focusing on love help the struggling Corinthian church address their issues?

There has been much debate among scholars about the intended meaning of the word “completeness,” or “perfection” in verse 10 (i.e., the end of the apostolic age, completion of the biblical canon, second coming of Christ...). Regardless of the view one holds, what do verses 8-13 tell us about which gift endures forever? Why is that important for us?

Read the following verses and consider the preeminence of love.

- John 3:16
- 1 John 3:16
- 1 John 4:7-12

APPLICATION

How might you express the love as described in 1 Corinthians to someone this week? Go ahead, step outside your comfort zone.

THINK

“Life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who are on this dark journey with us. Therefore, be swift to love, make haste to be kind—and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

- Huguenot Blessing

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group.

