

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 232 – August 20th – 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Verse 27

Ἑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους.

μερος, ους n part, in part, partly

ἐκ μέρους 'part by part.'

Verse 28

καὶ οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεῦτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

ἔθετο see v.18

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

"On 'apostles' see the extended discussion under 1:1. In this context Dunn helpfully notes that Paul alludes to a 'limited circle of individuals (though much wider than 'the twelve')' who are 'apostles of Christ rather than delegates of a church ... commissioned personally by the risen Christ ... missionaries and church founders ... Theirs was a distinctively and decisively eschatological role (Rom 11:13ff; 15:15-16; 1 Cor 4:9; 15:8; Eph 3:5).' *'Eschatological apostles'* (Dunn's italics) had no successors, and Paul uses the term in this sense in 12:28." Thistleton

δευτερος, α, ον second; (το) δ. in the second place, secondly

On prophets, see notes on 12:10; 14:3.

τρίτος, η, ον third; τρίτον or το τ. adv. the third time, in the third place, third

FF Bruce argues that first ... second ... third "mark these out as exercising, in Paul's estimation, the three most important ministries. In Eph 4:11 these are also enumerated, together with evangelists, in the order (a) apostles, (b) prophets, (c) evangelists, (d) pastors and teachers, as given by the ascended Lord to equip his people '... for building up the body of Christ.'"

Chrysostom asserts, "Because they thought highly of themselves in respect of the tongue, he [Paul] sets it last everywhere. For the terms 'first' and 'secondly' are not used by him at random, but in order by enumeration to point out the more honourable and inferior."

διδασκαλος, ου m teacher

"Presumably they [teachers] were mature Christians who instructed others in the meaning and moral implications of the Christian faith (cf. Gal. 6:6); possibly (as some think) they expounded the Christian meaning of the OT." Barrett

ἔπειτα then, afterwards

On δυνάμεις and χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων see 12:9

χαρισμα see v.9

ιαμα see v.9

ἀντιλημψις, εως f ability to help, helper

The general function of assisting those in need – see Acts 20:35. Some suggest it covers the work of deacons. Thistleton suggests probably 'kinds of administrative support.'

κυβερνησις, εως f ability to lead

A word originally denoting the steering of a ship. It could refer to the work of elders. Thistleton thinks it refers to leadership, or ability to formulate strategy.

"The expressions are the reminder of the immense amount about the life of the apostolic Church of which we are ignorant." Morris

γένη see v.10

Verse 29

μη πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μη πάντες προφῆται; μη πάντες διδασκαλοι; μη πάντες δυνάμεις;

The questions are introduced with μη indicating the expectation of a negative answer.

Verse 30

μη πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μη πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μη πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν;

λαλεω speak, talk

διερμηνευω interpret, explain, translate

Verse 31

ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι.

"Although commentators traditionally link either the whole of v.31 or at least v.31b with ch 13 rather than with ch 12, I have become convinced that to do this is to deprive the verse of its integral rhetorical and logical force with the argument which Paul has steadily built up from 12:19-30 and prepared for in 12:12-18. We have seen that there was a *zealous concern*, even a *striving*, for the gifts of the Spirit that were deemed to be 'greatest' in the sense of their supposedly constituting a mark of *high social and/or spiritual status*. Once again Paul uses redefinition... Paul rejects their view of 'high status' gifts utterly. But, he argues, tongue-in-cheek (Smit, with 'sharp irony'), *do not stop being 'zealously concerned about the "greatest" gifts,' provided that you follow me in transposing and subverting your understanding of what counts as 'the greatest.'* The 'greatest' are not those that minister to status or to self, but those which *serve* the good of others and *build* the community. 'I now show you' that what is 'an even greater way still' is the way of *love*." Thistleton

ζηλωω be jealous of, be very concerned about

The verb here is very strong, speaking of a driving passion. This form may be either indicative or imperative. Here it is clearly imperative.

μειζων, ον and μειζοτερος, α, ον (comp of μεγας) greater, greatest

ἔτι still, yet, moreover

ὑπερβολη, ης f surpassing, beyond measure

Thistleton prefers to translate, 'an even greater way still' to make this a comparative with respect to μειζονα.

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

The love that Paul describes in the following verses is to determine the path for our actions, rather than pursuit of more showy gifts.

δεικνυμι show, point out, reveal

1 Corinthians 13:1

Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἢ ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.

It is often commented that the noun *ἀγαπη* is rare in Greek literature outside of the NT – though the verb is more frequently used. Nygren and Moffatt argue that Paul is concerned to disengage 'love' in his own theology from Greek and other pagan ideas. Nygren writes, "Agape comes to us as quite a new creation of Christianity ... Without it nothing that is Christian would be Christian." Or, in the words of Jonathan Edwards, "All the virtue that is saving and that distinguishes true Christians from others is summed up in Christian love."

This love is "the power of the new age" breaking into the present, "the only vital force which has a future." Stauffer. It is the love which God displayed in Christ and particularly his dying love. "Moltmann and Jungel rightly relate this to the *self-giving grace of the cruciform, Christomorphic God*." Thistleton. It is love which is not dependent upon the worthiness of its object but springs from the character of the lover: love which "seeks nothing for itself but only the good of the loved one." Morris

ἐὰν if, even if, though

λαλεω speak, talk

Paul begins with "values that are significant to the community at Corinth." Conzelmann. It may have been that some at Corinth considered tongues to be a 'language of heaven' or Paul could merely be using a hypothetical superlative, 'even if these tongues were to be angelic language itself ...'

γένονα Verb, perf act indic, 1 s γινομαι χαλκος, ου m copper, bronze, gong

A resounding bronze vessel.

ἤχεω be noisy, sound producing

ἢ or

κύμβαλον, ου n cymbal

ἀλαλάζω wail loudly; clang

"The man who is taken up with saying rather than doing has become nothing more than sound." Morris

Verse 2

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν, καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάνα, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθέν εἰμι.

προφητεια, ας f prophecy, the gift of prophecy

εἶδῶ Verb, perf act subj, 1 s οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery (of something formerly unknown but now revealed)

'Depths too profound for human discovery'
Thistleton

γνωσις, εως f knowledge, understanding

"In 1 Cor 13 there is a definite opposition, a contrast, between two different 'ways,' two different kinds of fellowship with God: on the one side, the Gnostic-mystical 'vision of God' typical of Hellenism; and on the other, the primitive-Christian and Pauline way of Agape ... 'Gnosis puffs up, Agape builds up.'" Nygren

ὅστε so that, with the result that
ὄρος, ους n mountain, hill

See Mark 11:22f. The 'faith' spoken of here is not saving faith. "An especially robust, infectious, bold, trustful faith may well be a special gift that performs a special task within a community faced with seemingly insuperable problems." Thistleton

μεθιστημι remove, mislead, bring

"The Corinthians clearly thought that the possessors of certain gifts were extremely important persons. Paul stoutly maintains that if they have even the highest of gifts, and that in full amount, but lack love, not only are they unimportant, but they are actually *nothing*." Morris

Verse 3

καὶ ἐὰν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου, καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου, ἵνα καυθήσομαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι.

καν (καὶ ἐὰν) even if, and if
ψωμιζω feed, give food to, give away

"The verb is in the aorist tense, pointing to a once-for-all action of a man who, in one grand sweeping gesture, sells all that he has and gives it away." Morris

ὑπαρχω be at one's disposal (τα ὑ. possessions).

παραδίδωμι hand or give over, deliver up

Could mean sell oneself into slavery (and so feed the poor with the proceeds).

σωμα, τος n body

καυχασμαι boast, boast about

Textual variants read either, καυχησωμαι (so that I might boast), or variants of καυθησωμαι (so that I might be burnt). The evidence is finely balanced and it is difficult to determine which is the original reading. The UBS text and Thistleton favour καυχησωμαι.

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing;
οὐδεν not at all

ὠφελεω gain, profit, achieve, benefit

'It counts for nothing'. "These wondrous gifts and triumphant victories all amount to 'nothing,' unless 'love' directs them, with its Christlike concern and regard for 'the other.'" Thistleton

Verse 4

Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται,

μακροθυμεω be patient, wait patiently

Note the way in which Paul uses verbs to describe the *activity* of love rather than adjectives to describe its character.

χρηστευομαι be kind

ζηλωω be jealous of

'Burn with envy.'

περπερευομαι be conceited, brag

φυσιοω pass be conceited/arrogant

'Be puffed up, inflated.'

Verse 5

οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογιζεται τὸ κακόν,

ἀσχημονεω behave improperly

"The adjective ἀσχημων occurs in the NT only at 12:23, where Paul alludes to 'unpresentable' parts of the body, i.e., those which good taste and public respect expect to be clothed. In all three contexts the contrast defines the opposition between one side *courtesy, good taste, good public 'manners'*, and 'propriety', and on the other side thoughtless pursuit of the immediate wishes of the self regardless of the conventions and courtesies of interpersonal life. Thus 'Agape is not ill mannered' (Spicq). Love does not act in ways which are 'contrary to the requirements of propriety and good order, committed by some ill-mannered members' (Hering)." Thistleton

ζητεω seek, search for, look for

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

'not preoccupied with the issues of self' cf. Rom 15:3; 1 Cor 10:24; Phil 2:4,21.

παροξυνομαι be irritable, be greatly upset

'provoked to anger.' "not touchy" Phillips, Barrett.

λογιζομαι reckon, count, credit, suppose

Either, 'does not keep a record of wrongs', or, 'does not think evil' — i.e. always imputes best motives. Bruce thinks the reference is to determination to pay someone back in their own coin.

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

Verse 6

οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·

χαίρω rejoice, be glad
ἀδικία, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin, injustice
συγχαίρω rejoice with, rejoice together

'joyfully celebrate'

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ᾧ. truly

"Genuine love, as I argue as my main thesis in *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, alone decentres the power of 'interests' of the self and of its peer group, and in recentring them in the Other (primarily in God, but also in the other person) disengages from self-interest. Only now can truth emerge as disengaged from a power agenda. True disinterested integrity is free to seek truth, without anxiety about what it helps or hinders in one's personal agenda. Love, Paul says, has discovered *integrity*: As Nygren constantly declares, because it is disinterested and creative of value. It delights in truth... As Karl Rahner observes, the person who has placed everything in the hands of God has no need to fear, or to hide from, the truth. For God already knows it and has accepted the believer as he or she is." Thistleton

Verse 7

πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει.

'There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance.' REB
"Love never tires of support, never loses faith, never exhausts hope, never gives up."
Thistleton

στεγῶ endure, put up with
πιστεύω have faith, have confidence in
ἐλπίζω hope, hope for, hope in, expect

"a refusal to take failure as finite" Morris

ὑπομένω endure, remain behind

"Like Christ on the cross, love endures scorn, failure, ingratitude ... At the end shines out the light of Easter. For *love never ends*." Deluz

Verse 8

Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει. εἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλώσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνώσις, καταργηθήσεται.

What applies at a personal level ('love never gives up', v.7) is now applied at a deeper, cosmic level.

οὐδέποτε never
πιπτῶ fall, fall down, collapse

εἴτε if, whether
προφητεῖα, ας f prophecy, preaching, the gift of prophecy
καταργῶ render ineffective, cancel, do away with

Cf. the use of this verb in 1:28. "The future passive does not suggest simply that prophecies melt away of their own accord as they are fulfilled, but that a cosmic, eschatological, public deed of divine judgment 'brings them to an end.' How can preachers and prophets have anything to say when the last judgment not only reveals, but evaluates and pronounces judgment upon, everything. The sermons of prophets and the 'knowledge' of the theologians *are rendered redundant*, while the character and fruit of 'love does not fall apart.' To prophesy would be like switching on a torch in the full light of the noonday sun." Thistleton

γλώσσα see 12:10

παύω stop; midd stop, cease

"This must surely call into question the notion that 'tongues' are either, in Paul's view, a language of heaven, or a paradigmatic way of expressing exalted intimacy with God. If this were so, why should they cease at the *eschaton*? Rather, it confirms Theissen's view (see above on 12:10) that 'tongues' primarily (although perhaps not exclusively) serve to express inarticulate preconscious longings, yearnings, and wellings up of praise prompted by the activity of the Spirit (Rom 8:26), but as yet 'raw' and in need of communicative, intelligible, conscious communication. 'Tongues' will evaporate as readily as tears when a resurrection *σωμα* allows the believer to come face to face with God without the limitations and hidden conflicts of the mode of this present life in its earthly *σωμα*. There is no need for them to be 'brought to an end'; their cause will have disappeared." Thistleton

γνώσις see 12:8

Verse 9

ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν·

μερος, ους n part, piece, in part, partly

"We prophesy in part ... probably means that God does not reveal everything so that the prophet, no less than the sage, gives but a partial glimpse of the truth." Morris

Thistleton suggests ἐκ μερους means 'piece by piece' or 'bit by bit' and says, "Paul shares the view explored in the Hegelian tradition that piece-by-piece knowledge may lead to partial and mistaken judgments which set in motion endless processes of correction and re-correction." He continues, "In Paul's view any 'absolute' of revelation is anchored in the cross and in the resurrection within the framework of OT revelation and further disclosures as anticipation of the End when the whole picture becomes unveiled at the last judgment. Only then does 'knowledge' become definitive, unrevisable, and no longer corrigible."

Verse 10

ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μερους καταργηθήσεται.

ὅταν when, whenever
τελειος, α, ον complete, whole, perfect, mature

Suggests both completeness and goal.

Verse 11

ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος, ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐλογιζόμην ὡς νήπιος· ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.

ὅτε conj when
ἤμην Verb, imperf act indic, 1s εἰμι
νηπιος, α, ον baby, infant, child

Cf. 3:1.

λαλεω speak, talk
φρονεω think, have in mind

Thistleton suggests 'I had childish interests and concerns'

λογιζομαι reckon, count, reason
γέγονα Verb, perf act indic, 1s γινομαι

The perfect here stands in contrast with previous imperfects. There is no going back to previous patterns of conduct.

ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρος m man, husband
κατήργηκα Verb, perf act indic, 1s
καταργεω

'I am done with childish ways' Moffatt

Paul's analogy here applies to the Corinthians' views of special gifts (cf. 3:1 on the issue of childishness versus maturity). "Paul is alluding not simply to the *experience* of spiritual gifts, but to how they are *expressed* (λαλεῖν), what 'opinions' are held about them (φρονεῖν), and how they are 'valued' or *evaluated* (λογιζεσθαι)." Thistleton

Verse 12

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἑσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μερους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.

βλεπω see, look, be able to see
ἄρτι now, at the present
ἑσοπτρον, ου n mirror

A 'mirror' in NT times would have been made from polished metal. Corinth was famous for its mirrors. Fee suggests that Paul's use of the metaphor of a mirror emphasises the *indirect* character of our present knowledge.

αἰνίγμα, τος n dim or obscure image, puzzle

τοτε then, at that time

μερος see v.9

ἐπιγινωσκω perceive, understand

ἐπεγνώσθην Verb, aor pass indic, 1s

ἐπιγινωσκω

"I am known is in the aorist tense. The knowledge God has of Paul is not something growing and becoming more and more perfect... God's knowledge of his servant is complete." Morris

Verse 13

νοῦν δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη· τὰ τρία ταῦτα, μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.

νοῦν (originally an emphatic form of νοῦν)
now

Not intended to be taken in a temporal sense, but in a logical sense, 'now in conclusion'

μενω remain, stay, abide

ἐλπίς, ιδος f hope, ground of hope, what is hoped for

τρεις, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three

For the linking of faith, hope and love, see Rom.5:2-5; Gal 5:5f; Col 1:4f; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; Heb 6:10-12; 1 Peter 1:21f.

μείζων, ον and μείζοτερος, α, ον (comp of μεγας) greater, greatest

Tertullian comments "Rightly [is love the greatest]. For faith departs when we are convinced by vision, by seeing God. And hope vanishes when the things hoped for come about. But love both comes to completion and grows more when the perfect has been given."

By way of contrast, Thistleton, citing Barrett, writes, "Barrett assists us here. 'Faith' ceases, he argues, if the context is that of what he calls 'miracle-working faith' in 13:2. But in the sense used when Paul asserts 'whatever is not of faith is sin' (1 Cor 14:23), 'the life of the age to come will rest on faith as completely as does the Christian life now.' Similarly, unless we conceive of heaven as a 'closed' or static state, the openness of the heavenly life towards the future maintains the relevance of hope." Thistleton favours the 'middle view' of Barth, writing, "Barth concludes his study of these verses by taking up a closely related theme. Love is 'the future eternal light shining in the present. It therefore needs no change of form.' In one sense faith and hope abide also, but in forms in which faith becomes assimilated into sight, and hope absorbed into the perfect, even though this is an active perfection. Thus in a subtle sense love alone abides forever in the form in which Christ and the cross has revealed it: 'it is that which continues.' Thus, if there is any heavenly counterpart to the qualities and dispositions of the earthly life of the church, its worship, its understanding, its faith, and its hope will all undergo modification under new conditions. The teacher, theologian, pastor, and evangelist become redundant in the sense in which their work is currently carried out. But learning to love, to have respect and concern for the Other above the self, is grounded in the nature of God as revealed in Christ, and this will never become redundant, obsolete, or irrelevant. The future thus provides the model for the present in working out priorities at Corinth and in the church at large. *Agape* is much more than a 'moral virtue.'"