

1 Corinthians 13:7-8 Commentary

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1 Corinthians 13:7 [bears all things](#), [believes all things](#), [hopes all things](#), [endures all things](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [panta stegei](#), (3SPA1) [panta pisteuei](#), (3SPA1) [panta elpizei](#), (3SPA1) [panta hupomenei](#), (3SPA1)

Amplified: Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

NIV: It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, bears up under all things. ([Erdmans](#))

Young's Literal: all things it beareth, all it believeth, all it hopeth, all it endureth.

It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. (NJB)

She knows how to be silent. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of patient endurance. (Weymouth)

If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. (TLB)

Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. (CEV)

Love has the power of undergoing all things, having faith in all things, hoping all things. (BBE)

Love enables us to endure everything; it enables us in every circumstance to keep on believing, to keep our confidence in God, and to remain patient no matter what happens to us. (UBS)

(Love) never gives up (GNB)

BEARS ALL THINGS: panta stegei, (3SPA1):

- 1Cor 13:4; Numbers 11:12, 13, 14; Deuteronomy 1:9; Proverbs 10:12; Song 8:6,7; Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews

13:13; 1Peter 2:24; 4:8

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Paul's flow of thought

The Primacy of Love	1 Corinthians 13:1-3
The Perfection of Love	1 Corinthians 13:4-7
The Permanence of Love	1 Corinthians 13:8-13

As discussed below the verb **stego** has two shades of meaning and thus this verse could mean that love bears all things in the sense that it patiently endures all things or (the meaning I favor for Paul has "endures" at the end of this verse which would be repetitious) that it hides or conceals the faults of others.

Note that all four of the main verbs in this verse are **present tense** indicating these attitudes/actions are to be one's lifestyle, and thus represent a continuous choice we must make. Note however that to make such a choice is **impossible** for our fallen nature inherited from Adam, but only **Him-possible**, that is by the strengthening and enablement of Holy Spirit Who indwells every believer. Believers can love only "according to His power which mightily works within us". Amen!

Note also that the phrase "**all things**" is repeated four times for emphasis. In this verse Paul lists four aspects of love, which when taken together, teach us that no matter how desperate our circumstances may be, love never gives up.

Lenski adds that...After the negative Paul now makes some positive statements. Yet these negatives and these positives are not merely grammatical. They are more. The former declare: "**Nothing of this—nothing of this, etc.**"; then the latter exclaim: "**All of this—all of this, etc.**" Thus Paul completes "the golden chain" of his praise of love, each jewel matches the next until the characterization is complete. (Lenski, R. C. H. The interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second epistle to the Corinthians. Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House)

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

Bears (4722) (**stego** from **stege** = a thatch or roof or covering of a building) derives its first meaning from **stege** and thus means to cover closely, to protect by covering and then, to conceal and then, by covering, to bear up under. Note that at the core of its meaning **stego** denotes an activity or state which **blocks entry from without** or exit from within.

From this definition we see the picture of love as that which protects the beloved by covering them over, concealing them from that which would be injurious (eg, words, actions, etc).

W E Vine states that...the verb **stego**, to bear, signifies that what is mentioned either supports what is placed upon it, or covers what is placed underneath it. The former idea is prominent in 1Co 9:12; 1Th 3:1-note; 1Th 3:5-note. The present statement (1Co 13:7) may convey both ideas, for love acts in both ways in bearing all things. That which covers both **protects** what is covered, by keeping off all that is hostile, and in doing so **endures** the hostility (cp. 1Co 9:12). ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#))

Moffatt translates **stego** as "**slow to expose**" and notice that Paul uses the **present tense** which calls for this to be love's habitual response, not a "hit or miss" action (cp "**all things**"). Husbands need to be especially attentive to this quality of love (after 42 years of marriage to the same woman I can personally attest to the power of this quality or conversely to the destructive nature of it's absence!) (**See the OT example of Boaz**)

BDAG notes that **stego** in the Greek papyri was used frequently...in the sense of covering or enclosing in such a way as to keep something undesirable from coming in, as water into a ship.

Friberg adds that **stego** means...strictly put a roof on; hence cover, keep silent about, keep confidential

Love is that beautiful virtue that throws a cloak of silence over what is displeasing in another person. From this meaning one derives the picture of **covering things** with the cloak of love. In addition, in favor of the intended meaning as **covers over**, **protects**, etc is the fact that this translation would eliminate redundancy for the last clause also reads **endures all things**.

F F Bruce comments that...Love **covers** unworthy things rather than bringing them to the light and magnifying them. It puts up with everything. It is always eager to believe the best and to "put the most favorable construction on ambiguous actions." (Bruce, F. F. 1 and 2 Corinthians. New Century Bible Series. 1971)

Stego occurs in the apocryphal book Sirach 8:17 describing the fool who will not be able to **conceal** the matter.

Vincent writes that **stego** "keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out the water, or the roof the rain.

Robertson and Plummer offer the caveat that even though agape love covers others faults and sins this does not mean...that a Christian is to allow himself to be fooled by every rogue, or to pretend that he believes that white is black. But in doubtful cases he will prefer being too generous in his conclusions to suspecting another unjustly. ([1Corinthians 13-Critical and Exegetical Commentary](#))

Stego is used only 4 times in the NT...

1 Corinthians 9:12+ If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we **endure** all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

1 Corinthians 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Thessalonians 3:1+ Therefore when we could **endure** (stego) it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone.

1 Thessalonians 3:5+ For this reason, when I could **endure** (stego) it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. (note)

Comment: As explained above, this does not appear to be Paul's primary intended meaning here in 1 Corinthians 13:7

Spirit controlled and empowered believers love as a lifestyle by choosing as an act of their will (even that choice enabled by the Spirit Ezekiel 36:27, Php 2:13-note) to cover over in silence, to "hide" the faults of others, to bear with or endure. Love doesn't broadcast another's problems to everyone. Love doesn't run down others with jokes, sarcasm or put-downs. Love defends the character of the other person as much as possible within the limits of truth. Love won't lie about weaknesses, but neither will it deliberately expose and emphasize them. Love protects.

And so instead of becoming embittered (Col 3:19-note) the Spirit filled (Ep 5:18-note) husband "covers" his wife's faults and frailties. This does not mean one turns grace into licentiousness but that he lives with his wife in an understanding way (1Pe 3:7-note)... he gets to know her... he loves her sacrificially and selflessly as Christ loved the church (Ep 5:25-note).

Authentic Agape Love continually seeks to cover and protect (**1Co 13:7NIV** "*love always protects*") the object that is loved and for husbands this applies especially to our wives! Love protects other people. It doesn't broadcast bad news. It goes the second mile to protect another person's reputation. Love doesn't point out every flaw of the ones you love. Love doesn't criticize in public.

Wesley writes that...Whatever evil the lover of mankind sees, hears, or knows of any one, he mentions it to none; it never goes out of his lips, unless where absolute duty constrains to speak. (Wesley's Notes: First Corinthians)

MacDonald adds that...Love does not needlessly publicize the failures of others, though it must be firm in giving godly discipline when necessary. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Peter made a similar statement in his first epistle exhorting his readers...

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers** (kalupto = throws a veil over - continually = present tense) a multitude of sins. (1Pe 4:8-note)

John MacArthur adds that the verb **stego**...basically means to cover or to support and therefore to protect. Love **bears all things** by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm. Genuine love does not gossip or listen to gossip. Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person. Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner. Fallen human nature has the opposite inclination. There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone's faults and failures. As already mentioned, that is what makes gossip appealing. The Corinthians cared little for the feelings or welfare of fellow believers. It was every person for himself. Like the Pharisees, they paid little attention to others, except when those others were failing or sinning. Man's depravity causes him to rejoice in the depravity of others. It is that depraved pleasure that sells magazines and newspapers that cater to exposes, "true confessions," and the like. It is the same sort of pleasure that makes children tattle on brothers and sisters. Whether to feel self-righteous by exposing another's sin or to enjoy that sin vicariously, we all are tempted to take a certain kind of pleasure in the sins of others. Love has no part in that. It does not expose or exploit, gloat or condemn. It

bears; it does not bare. ([MacArthur, J: 1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

BELIEVES ALL THINGS: panta pisteuei, (3SPA1):

- Ps 119:66
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Believes (4100) (pisteuo [word study] from pistis = faith, trust, belief) in context implies that love sees the best in others or gives the other person the benefit of the doubt, choosing to believe the best about them not the worst!

Augustine said it well that this quality of love is “believing the best” about all people.

Paul is not saying that love is gullible and believes everything and does not exercise qualities such as wisdom and discernment. What he is saying is that love will **believe** well of others unless convinced otherwise. It seeks to put the best possible construction on another's words, actions, etc.

Husbands, does this describe one of the qualities of your love for your wife?

Vine explains the phrase **love believes all things**...does not mean that it accepts as true all that is stated. Love is never taken in thus. It is, however, ready to impute the best motives even to one whose act is unkind or detrimental. In bearing with evil conduct, it seeks to avoid undue suspicion. Where there is any element of doubt as to the real intention, love decides to regard it as good and honest. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

Jamieson says that this love...unsuspiciously believes all that is not palpably false, all that it can with a good conscience believe to the credit of another.

Lenski...Love “believes all things” and refuses to yield to suspicions of doubt. The flesh is ready to believe all things about a brother and a fellow man in an evil sense. Love does the opposite, it is confident to the last. Here and in the next statement *panta* is to be understood in the good sense: “all that is best,” while in the first and in the final statement “all” is to be taken in the bad sense: “all that is worst.” (Ibid)

Paul's letter to the Philippians he prays for a love that is discerning, asking that their...

love may **abound** (excel) still more and more in real knowledge (see study of epignosis) and all discernment (see study of aisthesis) so that you may approve (see study of dokimazo) the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere (see study of eilikrines) and blameless (see study of aproskopos) until the day of Christ (Php 1:9,10-note)

The love that **believes** has faith in God, Who will work out His divine plans even when all the indicators seem to point in different directions. To "believe all things" means that love believes the best that is possible as long as that can be done. Love gives the benefit of the doubt. It takes people at their highest and best-not at their lowest and worst.

Calvin writes that Paul is not saying...that a Christian...strips himself of wisdom and discernment...not that he has forgotten how to distinguish black from white!"

Pfeiffer writes that this aspect of love is not a sanction to...does not include gullibility. It means, rather, that the believer is not to be suspicious. If, however, sin is evident, the believer must judge it and support its discipline. From this description of love, it is evident that Moffatt is right in saying, “The lyric is thus a lancet.” ([Pfeiffer, C F: Wycliffe Bible Commentary. 1981. Moody](#))

The **Pulpit Commentary** says that the one who believes all things...Takes the best and kindest views of all men and all circumstances, as long as it is possible to do so. It is the opposite to the common spirit, which drags everything in deteriorem partem, paints it in the darkest colours, and makes the worst of it. Love is entirely alien from the spirit of the cynic, the pessimist, the ecclesiastical rival, the anonymous slanderer, the secret detractor. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Robertson and Plummer write that...This does not mean, as Calvin points out, that a Christian is to allow himself to be fooled by every rogue, or to pretend that he believes that white is black. But in doubtful cases he will prefer being too generous in his conclusions to suspecting another unjustly. While he is patient with (stelei) the mischief which his neighbour undoubtedly does, he credits him with good intentions, which he perhaps does not possess. This characteristic, with the next pair, forms a climax. When Love has no evidence, it believes the best. When the evidence is adverse, it hopes for the best. And when hopes are repeatedly disappointed, it still courageously waits. ([1Corinthians 13-Critical and Exegetical Commentary](#))

Barnes writes that **believes all things**...cannot mean that the man who is under the influence of love is a man of universal credulity; that he makes no discrimination in regard to things to be believed; and is as prone to believe a falsehood as the truth; or that he is at no pains to inquire what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. But it must mean, that in regard to the conduct of others, there is a disposition to put the best construction on it; to believe that they may be actuated by good motives, and that they intend no injury; and that there is a willingness to suppose, as far as can be, that what is done is done consistently with friendship, good feeling, and virtue. Love produces this, because it rejoices in the happiness and virtue of others, and will not believe the contrary except on irrefragable evidence. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Pastor Steven Cole explains **love believes all things** this way writing that...love believes the other person is innocent until proven guilty, not guilty until proven innocent. If there is a problem, love doesn't jump immediately to blame the other person. In the family, trust shows itself by not grilling the other person about every detail of his story, like an attorney cross-examining a defendant. It means believing in your kids, expressing confidence in them. I'm thankful that my parents trusted me as a teenager; it made me want to live up to that trust. One of my friends had parents who did not trust him, and he lived up to their distrust! Some-times you will get ripped off when you trust, but love persists in trusting. ([What Love Looks Like 1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#))

Barclay writes that...This characteristic has a twofold aspect. (i) In relation to God it means that love takes God at his word, and can take every promise which begins "Whosoever" and say, "That means me." (ii) In relation to our fellow men it means that love always believes the best about other people. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

HOPES ALL THINGS: panta elpizei, (3SPAI):

- Luke 7:37, 38, 39,44, 45, 46; 19:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; Romans 8:24
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Hopes (1679) (**elpizo** from **elpis** = hope, conveying as the main element a sense of confidence) (see in depth study of the believer's hope - **The Blessed Hope**) means to look forward w confidence to that which is good and beneficial. In the present context of interpersonal relationships, it means that the one who loves, looks at the bright side of things and does not despair (and certainly does not convey a sense of despair to the other person). Love is not pessimistic but shows a godly optimism. Supernatural love does not have a negative and critical spirit, but is always positive and hopeful. This love hopes for what is good for another, even when others have ceased to hope.

The **present tense** again speaks of love's continual direction toward hope.

Elpizo - 31x in 31v in the **NAS** expect(1), expected(1), fix their hope(1), fix your hope(1), fixed her hope(1), fixed our hope(1), hope(14), hoped(3), hopes(1), hoping(4), set our hope(1), set your hope(1), trust(1).- Mt 12:21; Lk. 6:34; 23:8; 24:21; Jn 5:45; Acts 24:26; 26:7; Ro 8:24, 25; 15:12, 24; 1Co 13:7; 15:19; 16:7; 2Co 1:10, 13; 5:11; 8:5; 13:6; Php 2:19, 23; 1Ti 3:14; 4:10; 5:5; 6:17; Philemon 1:22; He 11:1; 1Pe 1:13; 3:5; 2Jn 1:12; 3 Jn. 1:14

This aspect of agape love manifests a **'Romans 8:28 attitude'** in the sense that it earnestly desires that all things work out for the best.

Kistemaker has an interesting note writing about the Christian triad of faith, hope and love explaining that...Of these three virtues, **hope** is often the neglected member overshadowed by faith. Nevertheless, when a tripod loses one of its legs, its fall is inevitable. When a Christian nurtures love and faith but neglects **hope**, he fails and falters in his spiritual life. Paul frequently writes the verb to **hope**, which appears in his epistles nineteen times out of a total of thirty-one occurrences in the New Testament. Hope is patient, waiting for positive results that eventually may be realized. Hope is the converse of pessimism and the essence of healthy optimism. Hope is never focused on oneself but always on God in Christ Jesus. ([Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. NT Commentary Set. Baker Book](#))

The Pulpit Comment laments that...Christians seem to have lost sight altogether of the truth that hope is something more than the result of a sanguine temperament, that it is a gift and a grace. Hope is averse to sourness and gloom. It takes sunny and cheerful views of man, of the world, and of God because it is a sister of love. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Barnes explains **hopes all things**...Hopes that all will turn out well. This must also refer to the conduct of others; and it means, that however dark may be appearances; how much soever there may be to produce the fear that others are actuated by improper motives or are bad men, yet that there is a hope that matters may be explained and made clear; that the difficulties may be made to vanish; and that the conduct of others may be made to appear to be fair and pure. Love will hold on to this hope until all possibility

of such a result has vanished, and it is compelled to believe that the conduct is not susceptible of a fair explanation. This hope will extend to all things--to words, and actions, and plans; to public and to private intercourse; to what is said and done in our own presence, and to what is said and done in our absence. Love will do this, because it delights in the virtue and happiness of others, and will not credit anything to the contrary unless compelled to do so. ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

Vine explains the phrase **love hopes all things** as

love delights to entertain the best expectations. If there is absence of anything to prompt them, the hope is there; if conditions are adverse, love still hopes for the best. Even if the hope meets with repeated disappointment, love waits on expectantly and perseveringly. This is part of love's endurance. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

MacArthur writes...I heard the story of a dog who stayed at the airport of a large city for over five years waiting for his master to return. Employees and others fed the dog and took care of him, but he would not leave the spot where he last saw his master. He would not give up hope that someday they would be reunited. If a dog's love for his master can produce that kind of hope, how much longer should our love make hope last? ([MacArthur, J: 1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

ENDURES ALL THINGS: panta hupomenei. (3SPA1):

- 1Cor 9:18, 19, 20, 21, 22; Genesis 29:20; Job 13:15; Matthew 10:22; 2Corinthians 11:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 2The 1:4; 2Ti 2:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,24; 3:11; 4:5; Jas 1:12
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Endures ([5278](#)) (**hupomeno** from **hupo** = under + **meno** = abide, remain) literally means to remain or abide under and figuratively refers to abiding under not simply with stoical resignation, but with a vibrant hope. It describes is not the spirit which can passively bear things, but the spirit which, in bearing them, can conquer and transmute them. The idea is to continue in an activity despite resistance and opposition. **Hupomeno** (present tense) speaks of perseverance and tenacity in all circumstances. It means to endure in times of pain, suffering, deprivation, hatred, loss, and loneliness.

To reiterate, this attribute of love means the believer endures patiently and triumphantly and is not passively putting up with the deluge of difficulties. Obviously a love that supernaturally endures like this can only be carried out by a believer who is filled with and strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Ep 3:16-note;Ep 5:18-note). The suffering which the apostles and early Christians had to endure for the sake of the gospel is eloquent testimony of their authentic, fervent love for God.

Hupomeno - 17x in 16v in the **NAS** endure(3), endure with patience(1), endured(5), endures(3), patiently endure(1),perseveres(1), persevering(1), remained(1), stayed behind(1). - Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mk. 13:13; Lk. 2:43; Acts 17:14; Rom. 12:12; 1 Co. 13:7; 2 Tim. 2:10, 12; Heb. 10:32; 12:2f, 7; Jas. 1:12; 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:20

In secular Greek **hupomeno** was a military term used of an army's holding a vital position at all costs. Every hardship and every suffering was to be endured in order to hold fast. As applied to agape love, Paul is saying that this supernatural love is able to sustain the assaults of an enemy. This love is enabled by the Holy Spirit to endure persecutions in a patient and loving spirit with no desire to retaliate or reject. It remains steadfast in the face of unpleasant circumstances.

As discussed earlier (1Co 13:4+), **hupomeno** refers to one's response toward circumstances, denoting perseverance in the face of difficulties whereas the closely related verb **makrothumeo** refers to one's response toward people, denoting a patient endurance of the faults and even provocations of others without retaliating.)

Barnes explains that agape love...Bears up under, sustains, and does not murmur. Bears up under all persecutions at the hand of man; all efforts to injure the person, property, or reputation; and bears all that may be laid upon us in the providence and by the direct agency of God. Comp. Job 13:15. The connexion requires us to understand it principally of our treatment at the hands of our fellow-men. ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

The Pulpit Commentary comments on what is to be endured writing...Whether the "seventy times seven" offences of a brother (Luke 17:4+), or the wrongs of patient merit (2 Ti 2:24+), or the sufferings and self denials and persecutions of the life spent in doing good (2 Ti 2:10+). The reader need hardly be reminded that in these verses he has a picture of the life and character of Christ. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Thiselton writes that this...refers to an endurance of setbacks and rebuffs which never gives up on people, whatever they do. ([1 Corinthians - NIGTC](#))

Robertson and Plummer write that **endures all things**...is that cheerful and loyal fortitude which, having done all without apparent success, still stands and endures, whether the ingratitude of friends or the persecution of foes. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Ray Pritchard gets to the heart of the matter asking...

How can we live this way? How can we truly love without envy, without a quick temper, without seeking our own interests, and without thinking evil of others? The answer is, we can't. In ourselves we have no power to live this way. That's why it doesn't work to say, "Let's give it the old college try and really go out there and love everyone we meet." We will never talk ourselves into loving like this, and the sooner we admit that fact, the better off we'll be. This isn't some kind of rah-rah competition where we try to prove our love by our enthusiasm.

Sooner or later we have to get down to the bottom of things and admit the truth. "O God, I hate my husband. I hate my wife. I can't stand my children. My parents are driving me nuts. I hate the people I work with and I don't like the folks at church. I don't love my neighbors and I can barely stand to see my own family. O God, help me. I don't love anyone right now. And even though no one else knows it or sees it, I'm an angry person, filled with bad thoughts and completely lacking in any kind of love. If you don't help me, I will never love anyone because I know I can't change the way I am. Lord God, please help me. Change me. Let your love flow through me. If you want me to love others, you're going to have to do it through me because I can't do it myself." That's the kind of prayer God loves to answer.

I also think it helps to replace "love" with "Jesus" in this passage: "Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not envy, Jesus thinks no evil, Jesus is not quick-tempered, Jesus does not rejoice in what is evil." If we want to love, we need more of Jesus in our lives. Run to the Cross. Stand there and behold the One who died for you. Look to Jesus. Stand next to Him. Let His love fill your heart. If you will come close to Jesus, His love will begin to fill your heart and you will find yourself filled with supernatural love for others. Your life will begin to change as Jesus becomes preeminent in your heart.

Now as we come to the end, I'd like to give you some homework. Take some time this week to consider the eleven qualities of love in this passage. Think about them one by one. How do you measure up? Where are you strong and where are you weak? Which three qualities stand out as the greatest need in your life right now? Circle those three and begin to pray about them. Write down one practical step you can take in each of those areas this week. And ask God to help you grow strong in love.

There is a second part of this assignment. During December we are slowly climbing toward Bethlehem. On December 25 we will celebrate the supreme expression of God's love—the birth of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like to challenge you to read I Corinthians 13 every day this month. December is a wonderful month to learn about love. If you read these 13 verses 31 times, Paul's words will be tattooed on your soul. And as these words become part of your life, you will find love becoming a daily reality. May God help us to live in love this week. Amen. ([Love has a bad Memory](#))

Barclay summarizes this section writing that... One thing remains to be said—when we think of the qualities of this love as Paul portrays them we can see them realized in the life of Jesus himself. ([The Daily Study Bible](#))

Chafin sums up this description of agape love writing...When I hold this list of the characteristics of love up before my life like a mirror, I am immediately shaken by the many ways in which I fall short of the perfect love that Christ modeled for me. But I also know that nothing will be more important to my life than letting God perfect the gift of love in me, not in some abstract theological way but by helping me learn to truly love every person as God loves me. These fifteen characteristics of God's kind of love would make a good outline for prayer, meditation, and study as we attempt to live the Christian life. (Chafin, K. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 30:1,2 Corinthians*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc)

Lenski sums up this last description of love noting that...In these four statements the inner power of love is revealed: her head is held high, her eye is bright and shining, her hand steady and true, her heart strong with strength from above. This love has rightly been called "the greatest thing in the world." Paul does not describe love in its greatest works, sacrifices, martyrdoms, triumphs; he goes into the ordinary circumstances of life as we meet them day by day and shows us the picture of love as it must be under these. We find ready excuses when great things are made the goal of our attainment; Paul cuts off all such excuses. Be a true, everyday Christian in the exercise of love, then all great triumphs of love will take care of themselves. He who fails in the ordinary works of love will not even have an opportunity when the supreme moment for the performance of the extraordinary arrives. ([Commentary](#))

1Corinthians 13:8 [Love never fails](#); but **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](#). (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [E agape oudepote piptei. \(3SPAI\) eite de propheteiai, katargethesontai: \(3PFPI\) eite glossai, pausontai: \(3PFMI\) eite gnosis, katargethesetai. \(3SFPI\)](#)

Amplified: Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]. As for prophecy (the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose), it will be fulfilled and pass away; as for tongues, they will be destroyed and cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away [it will lose its value and be superseded by truth]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

NLT: Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. For if there are prophecies they will be fulfilled and done with, if there are "tongues" the need for them will disappear, if there is knowledge it will be swallowed up in truth. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Love never fails. But whether there are utterances given by a person consisting of divine revelations he has received, they shall cease; whether languages, they shall stop, whether knowledge, it shall be done away ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: The love doth never fail; and whether there be prophecies, they shall become useless; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall become useless;

LOVE NEVER FAILS: E agape oudepote piptei. (3SPAI):

- 1Cor 13:10,13; Luke 22:32; Galatians 5:6
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Though the prophet's word may come to an end, tongues come to nothing, and knowledge have no more value, love has no end. (BBE)

Love (26) (agape [word study]) (for more discussion see notes on **1Co 13:4**) in the NT usually refers to unconditional (as in this verse), sacrificial, supernatural love, that quality of love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that love which God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and (to praise of the glory of His amazing grace - Ep 1:6-note) that quality of love that God's Spirit enables us as His children (Jn 1:12, Ro 8:16, 17-note) to manifest (see fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22-note). Do not "try" to "manufacture" this love, but instead learn daily (even moment by moment) to "die" ("to self", cp Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23, Ro 6:11-note, Ro 6:12, 13-note, Ro 6:14-note Ro 7:5, 6-note, Col 3:5-note, Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note, Ezekiel 36:27 = a promise associated with the New Covenant) that you might manifest this supernatural Christ-like love (cp Ep 5:1,2-note) to a lost, dying world (Eph 2:1, 2:2-note, Ep 2:3-note) in which even natural love is growing cold (cp "unloving" in 2Ti 3:3-note, Ro 1:31-note, cp Jesus' admonition regarding love in the last of the last days = Mt 24:12). (See **John Piper's** related sermon = [The Greatest of These Is Love - Dying As a Means of Loving](#))

Never (3763) (oudepote from oude = not even + poté = ever) means (absolutely and objectively) not even at any time, never at all, neither at any time, never, nothing at any time. Observe in the following NT passages some things which can never, ever happen (interesting)!

Oudepote - 16x in 15v in the **NAS** - Mt 7:23; 9:33; 21:16, 42; 26:33; Mk. 2:12, 25; Lk. 15:29; Jn. 7:46; Acts 10:14; 11:8; 14:8; 1Co 13:8; Heb 10:1-note, He 10:11-note. **NAS** = ever(1), never(14), nothing(1), nothing... ever(1).

Matthew 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I **never** knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Matthew 9:33 After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, **Nothing** like this has **ever** been seen in Israel."

Matthew 21:16 and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you **never** read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF?'"

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you **never** read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES '?"

Matthew 26:33 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will **never** fall away."

Mark 2:12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have **never** seen anything like this."... 25 And He said to them, "Have you **never** read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry;

Luke 15:29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have **never** neglected a command of yours; and yet you have **never** given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

John 7:46 The officers answered, "**Never** has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

Acts 10:14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have **never** eaten anything unholy and unclean."

Acts 11:8 "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for **nothing** unholy or unclean has **ever** entered my mouth.'

Acts 14:8 At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had **never** walked.

1 Corinthians 13:8 Love **never** fails; but 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.

Hebrews 10:1-note For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, came **never**, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 10:11-note Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can **never** take away sins;

Oudepote - 2x in the **Septuagint** - Ex 10:6, 1Ki 1:6

1 Kings 1:6 His father had **never** (**Lxx = oudepote**) crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom.

Robertson and Plummer point out that...Having shown the worthlessness of supernatural gifts, if love is absent, and the supreme excellence of a character in which love is dominant, St Paul now shows that **love** is superior to all the gifts, because they are for this world only, whereas **love** is for both time and eternity. "This is the crowning glory of love, that it is imperishable" (Stanley); it abides until and beyond the supreme crisis of the Last Day (Cp 1Co 13:13). ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Fails ([4098](#)) (**pipto**) means to fall, fall down, under judgment, under condemnation, be prostrated or fall prostrate, to fall into ruin, to perish, lose authority, no longer have force.

Agape love never falls into ruin.

Metaphorically as used in this verse **pipto** means to fall away, to fail or to be without effect. **Pipto** usually denotes to fall and that which falls ceases its activity and that is what supernatural agape love never does beloved! Why? Because, the Fountain head, the Well spring, the "Head waters", the Source of this supernatural love is the supernatural God and thus the Source is inexhaustibly infinite and eternal. Our continual charge and challenge is to "tap in" to the Source. Our love as human beings does fail far too often (especially when tested by oppositional people or adverse circumstances - as someone well said "I could live this Christian life if it weren't for people!"), but as we progressively grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (that's called progressive [Think - "Making progress", **not** an "arrival" in this present life] "sanctification" or growth in holiness, cp Jesus' prayer for us Jn 17:17 and Peter's prayer 2Pe 3:18-note where "**grow**" is a present imperative = calling for continual, daily growth in Christ-likeness), we will find that more and more this quality of "unfailing love" is manifest to and through us (we serve as "conduits" as it were of this unfailing love flowing from the Throne of Grace) to our spouses, our families, our neighbors, our co-workers, and the list goes on. **How are you doing?** May we not fall into the trap of "trying" to manifest this love in our own strength or power. It is **impossible** (cp Mk 10:27, Mt 19:26, Lk 18:27, Ge 18:14, Nu 11:23 - as an aside - **What's the "impossibility" right now in your life beloved? Forgiveness to someone who's offended you? Loving someone "unlovable"?**). But as you and I learn to abide in the Vine (Jn 15:5) we come to learn that what with men is impossible, with Christ is ever "**Him-possible**"!

Paul's point is that through all the ages to come, love will go on in that we will still love the Lord and love one another. Unlike the leaf on a tree, love never falls off but will abide forever. Paul strengthens his point on the permanence of love by comparing it to the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians so highly prized, all these spiritual gifts eventually coming to an end.

Note that the **Textus Receptus** (used to translate the KJV) has the verb **ekpipto** rather than **pipto** which is favored by most modern manuscripts. The Pulpit Commentary has this note regarding **ekpipto**...

The word "faileth" (ekpiptei) has two technical meanings between which it is not easy to decide. 1. It means, technically, "is never hissed off the stage like a bad actor," i.e. it has its part to play even on the stage of eternity. This is its meaning in classic Greek. 2. It means "falls away" like the petals of a withered flower (as in Jas 1:11-note; comp. Isa. 28:4). Here, perhaps, the meaning is not technical, but general, as in Ro 9:6-note and in the LXX. (Job 21:43). But the reading may be simply piptei (falleth), as in κ , A, B, C. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Barnes comments that...Paul here proceeds to illustrate the value of love, from its permanency as compared with other valued endowments. It is valuable, and is to be sought, because it will always abide; may be always exercised; is adapted to all circumstances, and to all worlds in which we may be placed, or in which we may dwell. The word rendered faileth (ekpiptei - **Ed**: see preceding note) denotes, properly, to fall out of, to fall from or off; and may be applied to the stars of heaven falling, (Mk 13:25,) or to flowers that fall or fade, (Jas 1:11-note; 1Pe 1:24-note) or to chains falling from the hands, etc., Ac 12:7. Here it means to fall away, to fail; to be without effect, to cease to be in existence. The expression may mean that it will be adapted to all the situations of life, and is of a nature to be always exercised; or it may mean that it will continue to all eternity, and be exercised in heaven for ever. The connexion demands that the latter should be regarded as the true interpretation. 1Co 13:13. The sense is, that while other endowments of the Holy Spirit must soon cease and be valueless, LOVE would abide, and would always exist. The argument is, that we ought to Seek that which is of enduring value; and that, therefore, love should be preferred to those endowments of the Spirit on which so high a value had been set by the Corinthians. ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

BUT IF THERE ARE GIFTS OF PROPHECY, THEY WILL BE DONE AWAY: eite de propheteiai, katargethesontai; (3PFPI):

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

David Guzik comments that...Paul is addressing the over-emphasis the Corinthian Christians had on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He shows they should emphasize love more than the gifts, because the gifts are temporary "containers" of God's work; love is the work itself. Therefore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are appropriate for the present time, but they are not permanent. They are imperfect gifts for an imperfect time. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Prophecy (4394) (**propheteia** from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) has the literal meaning of speaking forth, with no connotation of prediction or other supernatural or mystical significance. The gift of prophecy is simply the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God. God used many Old and New Testament prophets to foretell future events, but that was never an indispensable part of prophetic ministry. Paul gives perhaps the best definition of the prophetic gift in (1Co 14:3).

Prophecy refers to messages from God, but when we stand before Him and hear His voice there will be no more need for prophets to relay His words to us.

Barnes explains...That is, the gift of prophecy, or the power of speaking as a prophet; that is, of delivering the truth of God in an intelligible manner under the influence of inspiration; the gift of being a public speaker; of instructing and edifying the church, and foretelling future events... The gift shall cease to be exercised; shall be abolished, come to naught. There shall be no further use for this gift in the light and glory of the world above, and it shall cease. God shall be the teacher there. And as there will be no need of confirming the truth of religion by the prediction of future events, and no need of warning against impending dangers there, the gift of foretelling future events will be of course unknown. In heaven, also, there will be no need that the faith of God's people shall be encouraged, or their devotions excited, by such exhortations and instructions as are needful now; and the endowment of prophecy will be, therefore, unknown. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Shall be done away with - shall be terminated.

Done away (2673) (**katargeo [word study]** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = be idle from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. The idea is to make the power or force of something ineffective and so to render powerless, reduce to inactivity. To do away with. To put out of use. To cause to be idle or useless. To render entirely idle, inoperative or ineffective. Cause something to come to an end or cause it to cease to happen. To abolish or cause not to function. To free or release from an earlier obligation or relationship. To no longer take place.

Katargeo - 27x in 26v in the NAS - Lk. 13:7; Rom. 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6; 1 Co. 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, 10f; 15:24, 26; 2 Co. 3:7, 11,

13f; Gal. 3:17; 5:4, 11; Eph. 2:15; 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14 and is rendered in the NAS as abolished(4), abolishing(1), bring to an end(1), did away(1), do away(1), done away(4), fades away(1), fading(1), fading away(1), nullified(1), nullify(4), passing away(1), released from(2), removed(1), render powerless(1), severed from(1), use up(1).

These gifts will no longer be necessary, for when we stand before God there will be no need to **speak** in other languages since we will all understand God when He speaks. **Prophecies** will disappear when the reality comes. The **knowledge** that is so important to us now will be irrelevant then because when we are in God's presence we will know perfectly. Praise the Lord!

Radmacher writes that...This uncompromising affirmation contrasts with grace-gifts, which are transitory at best. One day all the gifts will be needed no longer, but **love** will continue forever. ([Nelson Study Bible: NKJV. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

IF THERE ARE TONGUES, THEY WILL CEASE: eite glossai, pausontai; (3PFMI):

- 1Cor 13:1; 12:10,28, 29, 30; 14:39; Acts 2:4; 19:6
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Tongues in the NT is used literally to refer to the tongue as a part of the body, and figuratively to refer to speech (1Jn 3:18, in Lxx of Pr 25:25, Pr 31:26) particular languages or dialect as spoken by people group (Acts 2:11 referring to the language of Cretans and Arabs, in Lxx of Ge 11:7 where God confused man's language at Babel because they had the same language Ge 11:6 and self-centered motives Ge 11:4).

Tongues (see another similar discussion of glossa)([1100](#))(**glossa**) has several meanings: (1) Literally as an organ of speech and taste -- Mk 7:33, 35; Lk 16:24; 1 Cor 14:9 ; Rev 16:10 Study the 4 uses in James for an important description of the tongue as used in speech - Jas. 1:26+; Jas. 3:5-6,8+; (2) **Glossa** can refer to language Acts 2:11+; Phil 2:11; Rev 5:9. Related to this meaning is **glossa** as a technical term for **glossalalia** or speaking in tongues. Sub-definitions vary and include speaking in unintelligible utterance (1Co 14.2), speaking in a so-called "**heavenly language**" (1Cor 13.1), or speaking foreign languages not learned through natural means by the speaker (Acts 2.4); (3) by **metonymy glossa** refers to people that speak a common language ("every tribe, every **tongue**..." = Rev 5.9+); (4) In Acts 2:3+ glossa refers to the shape of fire = "there appeared to them **tongues** as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them."

Glossa - 50x in 47v in the NAS - Mk. 7:33, 35; 16:17; Lk. 1:64; 16:24; Acts 2:3f, 11, 26; 10:46; 19:6; Rom. 3:13; 14:11; 1 Co. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39; Phil. 2:11; Jas. 1:26; 3:5f, 8; 1 Pet. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:18; Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 16:10; 17:15. **NAS** = tongue(25), tongues(25).

Cease ([3973](#)) (**pauo** from which we get English "pause") means to cause something or someone to cease from some activity or state and so to come to an end. Paul's point is that all three of these supernatural gifts (and perhaps other supernatural gifts as well) will eventually become unnecessary, the timing of this cessation being one which is quite controversial (See notes below by David Guzik and the link to John MacArthur which seem to be at opposite ends of the interpretative spectrum regarding cessation of tongues).

Tongues (with the same figurative meaning) are mentioned again in the next chapter 15x in 14verses (1 Cor 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39)

David Guzik comments on this somewhat controversial section discussing first that...

That which is perfect (in 1Co 13:10) - Paul says when **that which is perfect** has come, then the gifts will be "discontinued." But what is that which is **perfect**? Though some who believe the miraculous gifts ceased with the apostles say it refers to the completion of the New Testament, they are wrong. Virtually all commentators are agreed that which is **perfect** is when we are in the eternal presence of the Perfect One, when we are with the Lord forever either through the return of Christ or graduation to the eternal. The Greek word for **perfect** is telos. Considering the way the New Testament uses telos in other passages, it certainly seems to be speaking about the coming of Jesus (1Co 1:8; 15:24; James 5:11; Rev 20:5, 7; 21:6; 22:13).

Many who believe the miraculous gifts ended with the apostles (such as **John MacArthur** - For Dr MacArthur's view see his series of sermons on the miraculous gifts) claim since the verb **will cease** is not in the **passive**, but in the **middle** voice, it could be translated, tongues will stop by themselves. Their analysis sounds scholarly, but is disregarded by virtually all Greek scholars.

Even if this translation is correct, it does nothing to suggest when tongues **will cease**. **John MacArthur** claims, “*tongues ceased in the apostolic age and that when they stopped, they stopped for good*” But this passage doesn’t tell us “*tongues will stop by themselves,*” and it tells us tongues **will cease** only when that which is perfect has come.

John Calvin was one who thought the **will cease** spoke of the eternal state. “*But when will that perfection come? It begins, indeed, at death, because then we put off many weaknesses along with the body.*” (Calvin)

In his use of **will fail** and **will cease** and **will vanish away**, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not trying to say that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge have different fates. He is simply writing well, saying the same thing in three different ways. They will end, but love never fails.

“*There is virtually no distinction between the two Greek verbs that describe the termination of both prophecies and tongues. True, the verb with prophecies is in the passive voice (believers are the implied agents), while the verb with tongues is interpreted as the active voice. The difference is only a stylistic change and nothing more.*” (Kistemaker) ([David Guzik. The Enduring Word Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13](#))

IF THERE IS KNOWLEDGE, IT WILL BE DONE AWAY: eite gnosis, katargethsetai. (3SFPI):

- Jeremiah 49:7; Hebrews 8:13
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Knowledge (1108) (**gnosis** from **ginosko** = to know especially experientially) in simple terms is the possession of information of what is known. **Gnosis** describes the comprehension or intellectual grasp of something. **Gnosis** refers to knowledge gained by experience in contrast to intuitive knowledge. Stated another way **gnosis** is experientially known, functional (“working”) knowledge gleaned from first-hand/personal experience which in turn connects theory to application. E.g., [the Gnostics](#) boasted of their “applied knowledge” gained by their personal spiritual experiences – which was (is) disastrous! Thus **Gnosis** was not simply an intellectual (head) knowledge of Christ, but referred to a more intimate, experiential, personal knowledge.

Louw-Nida says **gnosis** means “acquaintance with,” which in the English dictionary refers to “personal knowledge” with synonyms such as familiarity with, knowledge of, experience with/of, awareness of, understanding of, comprehension of, grasp of.

The English dictionary definition states that **knowledge** is the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association. It describes an acquaintance with or understanding of something (the NT uses of **gnosis** most often referring to spiritual/divine knowledge). Knowledge is the clear and certain perception of that which exists. Knowledge describes information and/or skills acquired through experience. Knowledge is that which is or can be known and applies to facts or ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation, or experience.

Gnosis can also stand for the content of what is known or what one knows (as in Ro 2:20, Ro 15:14, 1Co 1:5, 8:1, 7, 10, 11, 2Co 11:6). Some say that **gnosis** is “fragmentary knowledge” as contrasted with **epignosis** [word study] (which reflects a fuller participation of the learner in acquiring and “experiencing” the knowledge or gnosis).

The Greek root word is reflected in the basic English word “**know**” (which is an English form of the root word, **gnos**). More clearly this root **gnos** is seen in such words as “**ignorance**” (of knowing), “**agnostic**” (one who claims that God is unknowable), and the word **Gnosticism** which **Webster** defines as “the the thought and practice especially of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis.” The current “New Age Movement” manifests many of the characteristics of ancient Gnosticism.

The difference between knowledge and wisdom is said to be that **knowledge** is the understanding of truth, whereas **wisdom** is the ability to apply what truth has been learned.

The Homan Treasury of Key Bible Words has an insightful comment on the difference between **oida** (eido) knowledge and **gnosis** (and the corresponding verb **ginosko**) knowledge noting that...The Greeks had two words for **knowing**, **oida** and **ginosko** (the noun form of which is **gnosis**). **Oida**, related to the Greek word for “seeing,” denotes “perception” and “absolute knowledge.” Once something is known, it is known for good—nothing can be added to it. **ginosko** (gnosis) denotes “inceptive and ongoing knowledge.” It designates ongoing, personal knowledge, which implies a relationship between the person who knows and the person who is known (**Ed**: Which is why many definitions of gnosis refer to it as “experiential” knowledge). (Gnosis) knowledge can grow and mature. By way of illustration, we can “**know**” (**oida**) someone’s name immediately, but it will take a lifetime to really “**know**” (**ginosko/gnosis**) that person. (Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and

Explained)

Hiebert in his comments on 2Peter says that **gnosis** "speaks of a practical **knowledge** that admits of expansion and enables its possessor to discern between right and wrong in facing the duties of life. In order to maintain a balance, practical intelligence and moral insight must govern a resolute and aggressive faith. This **knowledge** stands over against the spurious "knowledge" of the false teachers (described in 2Peter). The cure for false knowledge is not less knowledge but a **knowledge** characterized by moral insight. The operation of such **knowledge** distinguishes the believer's conduct from his former life in spiritual ignorance (1Pe 1:14-note).

Some scholars state that **gnosis** is a knowledge which may be concerned with the intellect without affecting the character. Wayne Barber offers a parallel thought in his discussion of the two varieties of **gnosis** in Scripture, **human** and **spiritual gnosis**.

(1) HUMAN GNOSIS (cp Gnosticism) = These men were in the church but as 1Jn 2:19 teaches "They went out from us, but they were not really of us". The Gnostics claimed one could find knowledge apart from God. (and they were right...just check out any encyclopedia.) But the **gnosis** that directs a believer's life is found only in God's Word. This is not to say that we don't need human **gnosis** (e.g., instruction on how to drive a car or program your VCR!) but the believer puts a priority on the Biblical variety of knowledge in order to live that they might be equipped to live the Christian life. We need Spiritual Gnosis and/or spiritual revelation from God in order to live this supernatural "Christ" life (Shift the letters in Christian and you have "A" " " "Christ" "In"!). Human gnosis allowed the people to go to church, to not feel bad about sin, not to even have to obey and yet to still be called "religious"! We see this "human gnosis" in many churches today. Another synonym for gnosis is humanism, an ancient "-ism" that has not changed much since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Remember that whatever gnosis you are inputting into your mind, will determine the quality of your behavior and conduct. What you believe will show itself in how you behave.

(2) SPIRITUAL GNOSIS = that which comes from knowing and experiencing Christ through obedience to His Word. Remember that the only way you will receive this spiritual gnosis is by being sold out to Him. In John 7:17 Jesus declared that...

If any man is willing (thelema [word study]) to **do** His will, he shall **know** (ginosko - know by experience) of the teaching (doctrine = didache [word study]), whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

This verse teaches a powerful principle: if you "**do**" (obey) the teaching, then (and only then) will you really "**know**" the teaching! How many people do you know that really have spiritual "**gnosis**"? Be careful! Don't look at how much a person knows about the Bible. Look at their walk and it won't take you thirty seconds to determine whether or not they have true **spiritual knowledge** or whether they are walking in human wisdom.

Here is a Scriptural Example that helps us understand the difference between **human** and **spiritual gnosis**. In Philippians 3 Paul had just given his "pedigree" and warned the Philippians to beware of the dogs, etc and that he put no confidence in the **flesh** (), although Paul had a right to "brag" humanly speaking in his fleshly achievements.

Phil 3:8 "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing** (KJV = of the knowledge or gnosis) [Paul is not talking about knowing Him in the sense of experience. He's talking about the "finished product" of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul was no slouch but he was still willing to discount it all for this great value!] Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ... "

What is the principle? Paul counted them lost before he lost them. This is part of the call to be a disciple...they were willing to leave everything to follow Jesus (see Mt 4:20,22, 10:37, Lk 14:27, 14:33) Paul put aside everything in his life for the gnosis or knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. How was he going to get it? By counting everything as loss, by losing it. Then selling out totally to this knowledge, he experienced it as he walked in absolute obedience to Christ. This is a beautiful picture of how you get gnosis... this is something that only comes when you're walking in the light (the "FM frequency" of Christianity). How many people do you know who are living on the "AM Band"?(Adapted from notes from a lecture by Dr Wayne Barber)

Renn summarizes **gnosis** as a word that is...concerned primarily with human knowledge. Lk 1:77; 11:52; Ro 15:14; 1Co 8:7; 12:8 express the **knowledge of salvation**. Ro 2:20 refers to **knowledge** gained from the **law**. Ro 11:33; 2Co 4:6; 10:5 mention human **knowledge of God**; and 2Co 2:14; Php 3:8; 2Pe 3:18 speak of the **knowledge of Christ**. A number of references point to knowledge in an unspecified way (e.g., Ro 15:14; 1Co. 13:2, 8; 2Co 6:6; 8:7; Ep 3:19; 2Pe 1:5, 6). 1Co 14:6 speaks of spiritual truth, and Col 2:3 cites knowledge that is derived from Christ. (Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts)

Vincent (commenting on 1Ti 6:20) states that "**Gnosis** (knowledge) was the characteristic word of the Gnostic school, the most formidable enemy of the Church of the second century. The Gnostics claimed a superior knowledge peculiar to an intellectual caste. According to them, it was by this philosophic insight, as opposed to faith, that humanity was to be regenerated. Faith was suited only to the rude masses, the animal-men. The intellectual questions which occupied these teachers were two; to explain the work of creation, and to account for the existence of evil. Their ethical problem was how to develop the higher nature in the environment of matter which was essentially evil. In morals they ran to two opposite extremes—asceticism and licentiousness. The principal representatives of the school were Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion. Although Gnosticism as a distinct system did not reach its full development until about the middle of the second century, foreshadowings of it appear in the heresy at which Paul's Colossian letter was aimed. It is not strange if we find in the Pastoral Epistles, allusions pointing to Gnostic errors; but, as already remarked, it is impossible to refer these allusions to any one definite system of error" (Word Studies)

Gnosis - 29x in 28v in the **NAS** (Notice where the majority of uses of **gnosis** are found! 16x in letters to one church!) - Lk. 1:77; 11:52; Ro 2:20; 11:33; 15:14; 1Co 1:5; 8:1, 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6; 2Co 2:14; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6; Ep 3:19; Php 3:8; Col 2:3; 1Ti 6:20; 1Pe 3:7; 2Pe 1:5, 6; 3:18 and is rendered in the **NAS** as knowing(1), knowledge(27), understanding way(1).

Luke 1:77 To give to His people the **knowledge** of salvation by the forgiveness (**aphesis**) of their sins,

Comment: This context refers to **spiritual gnosis** regarding salvation, specifically revealing that forgiveness of sins is the heart of salvation. God saves sinner from separation from Him and from eternal hell only by atoning for and forgiving their sins. {For more on forgiveness see studies of the main words - **Forgive** (grant, freely give, bestow) ([5483](#)) **charizomai** ; **Forgive** ([863](#)) **aphiemi**; **Forgiveness** ([859](#)) **aphesis**}

Luke 11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key (the correct interpretation of God's word) **oknowledge**; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered (koluo [word study] = cut off, restrained, prevented) those who were entering."

Comment: This context also refers to **spiritual gnosis** regarding salvation. Legalistic teaching always takes away the key to this vital **gnosis**. Not only does legalism keep one from (to extend the metaphor of a "key") opening the door of salvation initially (Jn 10:9) but also hinders the proper use of the gnosis which is vital to daily living of the supernatural in Christ (2Co 5:7, Gal 5:7, 3:1, 2, 3)

Leon Morris adds that "Instead of opening up the treasures of knowledge, the lawyers closed them fast. They turned the Bible into a book of obscurities, a bundle of riddles which only the experts could understand. And the experts were so pleased and preoccupied with the mysteries they had manufactured that they missed the wonderful thing that God was saying. They neither entered themselves nor allowed others to enter. There were ordinary people on their way to the knowledge of God until these teachers turned them away." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)

Romans 2:20-note a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment (morphosis [word study] = an outline or sketch) of **knowledge** and of the truth

Comment: Here **gnosis** refers to "divine" (spiritual) gnosis, knowledge of God's desire for man as laid out in His law which is "holy and righteous and good." (Ro 7:12-note)

Romans 11:33-note Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and **knowledge** of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Romans 15:14-note And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all **knowledge** and able also to admonish one another.

MacArthur comments: He is not, of course, speaking of broad human knowledge but of the deep knowledge of God's truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Believers in this church were doctrinally sound. They were well on their way to "attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2, 3). Virtue and truth, here referred to as goodness and knowledge, are inseparable. ([MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos or Wordsearch](#))

1 Corinthians 1:5 that in everything you were enriched (ploutos = wealth, richness, possessions and gives us our English *plutocrat*, "a very wealthy person!") in Him (**in Christ**), in all speech and all (all that was necessary to live this Christian life = nothing lacking) **knowledge**,

Comment: Speech refers to outward expression and **gnosis** refers to inward comprehension. As **Albert Barnes** says this **gnosis** refers to "the knowledge of Divine truth. They had understood the doctrines which they had heard, and had intelligently

embraced them." In short, they had apprehended the gnosis which related to "the great and deep things of God". And since they had "all speech", they had the ability which God had given them to communicate this spiritual **gnosis** to others. This reference to speech and knowledge also alludes to the spiritual gifts with which the Corinthians were so richly endowed (cp 1Co 1:7, 2Co 8:7).

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have **knowledge**. **Knowledge** (in context this spiritual gnosis refers to an understanding of the true nature of idol worship) makes arrogant (literally "blows up" or puffs up, inflates obviously speaking of one's pride! The corresponding noun refers to a pair of bellows!), but love edifies... 7 However not all men have this **knowledge**; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled... 10 For if someone sees you, who have **knowledge**, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your **knowledge** he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

Comment: We often hear the aphorism "A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing." True but here Paul says that an abundance of "**spiritual gnosis**" can also be a dangerous thing, for it creates in the "gnosis bearer" a sense of superiority in spiritual matters. To have love without knowledge is not good, but **spiritual gnosis** without love is equally tragic for it makes one proud and self-satisfied.

John MacArthur has a helpful, pithy comment on the self "inflating" effect of **gnosis** - The truly well-rounded Christian thinks and acts in two ways: conceptually and relationally. He has the ability to understand biblical truths (**Ed: "spiritual gnosis"**) and the ability to relate them to people, to himself, and to others. He has **knowledge** plus love, because love is the medium through which truth is to be communicated. "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ep 4:15-note). **Knowledge** by itself brings arrogance, not maturity. Division in the church may be caused by problems of behavior as well as problems of doctrine. When some believers insist on exercising their liberty without regard for the feelings and standards of fellow believers, the church is weakened and frequently divided.

1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit;

1 Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all **knowledge**; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing... 8 Love never fails; but 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 14:6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of **knowledge** or of prophecy or of teaching?

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the **knowledge** (spiritual gnosis, gnosis of the gospel, the way of salvation) of Him in every place.

2 Corinthians 4:6 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** (spiritual gnosis brings supernatural light into a lost person's soul so that in this context the **gnosis** alludes to the Good News of Christ, the light of the world Jn 8:12, cp Paul's experience Acts 8:3, 4, 5, 6) of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 6:6 in purity, in **knowledge**, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

2 Corinthians 8:7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and **knowledge** and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

2 Corinthians 10:5-note We are destroying (kathaireo [word study]) speculations (logismos [word study]) and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge** of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Comment: This is a key verse with which all believers should be fully conversant. The key aspect of this passage is found in the phrase "against the knowledge of God". Spiritual warfare is not an ethereal battle with unseen demons per se (i.e., not a power struggle), but instead is a truth struggle, a battle over **gnosis**, the **spiritual gnosis** of God (as found in the Scriptures) versus the **false, lying gnosis** (including human gnosis as described above) of the evil one (cp Jn 8:44). Logically, it follows that the "battlefield" for this spiritual warfare is our mind! **MacArthur** given an added description of specious gnosis noting that "In 1Cor 3:20, he (Paul) called them the useless reasonings of the worldly wise—all the anti-biblical ideologies, false religions, and pseudo gospels spawned by Satan. Paul knew those fortresses well, having lived his entire life before his conversion in one of them. He was a zealous follower of the Judaism of his day, which had turned from its Old Testament roots and become a ritualistic system of works-righteousness." (2Corinthians Commentary)

2 Corinthians 11:6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so **in knowledge**; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.

Ephesians 3:19-note and to know the love of Christ which surpasses **knowledge**, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Wuest comments on the "experiential" aspect of **gnosis** in the context of this verse writing that... "This love surpasses knowledge, **gnosis**, "experiential knowledge."

That is, no matter how much the saint experiences of the love of Christ, yet there are oceans of love in the great heart of God that have not been touched by his experience.

One is reminded of the words of that saint of old who penned the following lines on the walls of his cell regarding the love of God;

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky. (AMEN!)

[\(Revel in the words of this great hymn = The Love of God by Frederick Lehman\)](#)

(Here is another song by Jewish believer Marty Goetz - [The Love of God](#) - you will be moved!

The saints are to have an **experiential knowledge** (gnosis) of the love of God "in order that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

Philippians 3:8-note More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Colossians 2:3-note in whom are hidden (Apokruphos means hidden from the common gaze, and therefore secret.) all (no exceptions!) the treasures of wisdom (sophia [word study]) and **knowledge**.

Comment: The word **hidden** is **apokruphos** which means hidden from the common gaze, and therefore secret. The Gnostics (or similar false teachers) in Colossae believed that a great mass of elaborate knowledge was necessary for salvation. That knowledge they set down in their books which they called **apokruphos** (our English *apocrypha*) because this **gnosis** was barred from "ordinary" men. Paul is saying,

*"You Gnostics have your gnosis hidden from ordinary people, but Christians also have our **gnosis**, the difference being that our **gnosis** is not hidden in unintelligible books but is hidden in Christ and therefore open to all men by grace through faith"*

The truth of Christianity is not a secret **gnosis** which is hidden but, praise the Lord, a "secret gnosis" which is revealed.

1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "**knowledge**" (false or "anti-God" gnosis)--

1 Peter 3:7-note You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an **understanding** way (According to **gnosis** = With an intelligent recognition of the nature of the marriage relation), as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

2 Peter 1:5-note Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**, 6 and in your **knowledge**, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 3:18-note but **grow** (present imperative = make it the habitual practice of your life to keep on growing) in the grace and **knowledge** (gnosis) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (cp Col 2:3). To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Gnosis - 42x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - 1Sa 2:3; 1 hr 4:10; Esth 4:17; Ps 19:2; 73:11; 94:10; 119:66; 139:6; Prov 2:6; 8:9f, 12; 9:6; 13:16, 19; 16:7; 19:23; 21:11; 22:20f; 27:21; 29:7; 30:3; Eccl 1:16, 17, 18; 2:21, 26; 7:12; 8:6; 9:10; 12:9; Isa 11:2; Jer

10:14; 40:14; 51:17; Dan 2:30; Hos 4:6; 10:12; Mal 2:7

The use of **gnosis** in Hosea presents an immutable principle highlighting the importance of genuine, Biblical spiritual gnosis...

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis). Because you have rejected **knowledge** (Lxx = epignosis), I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Here is another Lxx use of gnosis which presents an immutable, vitally important principle (one that all pastors would do well to carefully heed)...

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest should preserve (Lxx = phulasso [word study] = to guard as does a military sentry!) **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis), and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Compare - Ecclesiastes 12:9 In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis); and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.

Here are some other uses of **gnosis** in the Lxx...

1Sa 2:3 "Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis), And with Him actions are weighed.

Psalms 119:66 Teach me good discernment and **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis), For I believe in Your commandments.

Spurgeon: Teach me good judgment and knowledge. Again he begs for teaching, as in verse 64, and again he uses God's mercy as an argument. Since God had dealt well with him, he is encouraged to pray for judgment to appreciate the Lord's goodness. Good judgment is the form of goodness which the godly man most needs and most desires, and it is one which the Lord is most ready to bestow. David felt that he had frequently failed in judgment in the matter of the Lord's dealings with him: from want of knowledge he had misjudged the chastening hand of the heavenly Father, and therefore he now asks to be better instructed, since he perceives the injustice which he had done to the Lord by his hasty conclusions. He means to say -- Lord, thou didst deal well with me when I thought thee hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord.

A sight of our errors and a sense of our ignorance should make us teachable. We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect; if the Lord teaches us **knowledge** we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise. **The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance: let us ardently long for His teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.**

For I have believed thy commandments. His heart was right, and therefore he hoped his head would be made right. He had faith, and therefore he hoped to receive wisdom. His mind had been settled in the conviction that the precepts of the word were from the Lord, and were therefore just, wise, kind, and profitable; he believed in holiness, and as that belief is no mean work of grace upon the soul, he looked for yet further operations of divine grace. He who believes the commands is the man to **know** and understand the doctrines and the promises. If in looking back upon our mistakes and ignorance we can yet see that we heartily loved the precepts of the divine will, we have good reason to hope that we are Christ's disciples, and that he will teach us and make us men of good judgment and sound **knowledge**. A man who has learned discernment by experience, and has thus become a man of sound judgment, is a valuable member of a church, and the means of much edification to others. Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse:

**"Teach me good judgment
and knowledge. "**

Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis) and understanding.

Proverbs 8:10 "Take my instruction and not silver, and **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis) rather than choicest gold.

Proverbs 21:11 When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; But when the wise is instructed, he receives **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis).

Charles Bridges comments: The wise, though already taught of God; through his daily teaching thankfully receives increasing knowledge (gnosis). (Pr 1:5.) Among his most fruitful lessons are the instructions of the rod--instructions (mark the difference of the term)--not punishment. Often does the teaching rod seal the teaching law (**Ed**: the spiritual gnosis). (Bridges, C. Commentary on Proverbs)

Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and **knowledge** and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Comment: Divine gnosis is a gift of God, bestowed on those who are good, not because they merit it but because God is gracious to give good gifts to His children. The unrighteous "worldly wise" person is devoid of divine spiritual gnosis.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or **knowledge** or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of **knowledge** and the fear of the LORD.

Jeremiah 10:14 Every man is stupid, devoid of **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis); Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

Jeremiah 51:17 All mankind is stupid, devoid of **knowledge** (Lxx = gnosis); Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

Pulpit Commentary notes that this **knowledge**...shall be only annulled in the sense of earthly knowledge, which shall be a star disappearing in the light of that heavenly knowledge which shall gradually broaden into the perfect day. ([1 Corinthians 13 Commentary](#))

Done away (2673) (**katargeo** - see above) means that it will be abolished. This however is not knowledge in general (which will become perfect) but the gift of knowledge.