

1 Corinthians 13 for everyone (RSV)

original by the apostle Paul

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient

and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends;

as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; 10 but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

So faith, hope, love abide, these three;

but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13 for CPTers (and really for all who would work for peace)

paraphrase by Peter Haresnape

If I speak about courage and justice, and siding with the oppressed, and speaking truth to power no matter the cost, but do not speak about love... I am just a loudmouth orator, a white saviour, a shameless self-promoter.

If I am excellent at nonviolent communication, and I take great pictures, and I know all the latest anti-oppressive lingo, and I can analyse racist systems so as to dismantle them entirely, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I fully embrace the work of prophet and activist and martyr, and get dragged away by the riot police or bombed by the military of my own country, but have not love, that is no use to anyone.

Love is patient. Love survives evil, war, oppression. It remains when the teargas clears and the children go back to school. It is still there when the water is protected.

Love is kind, not arrogant, not insisting on its own way, but making space for joy and truth even in the hardest circumstance.

Whether it is love between two people, or love of a person for their community, or love of a community for its land, or love of justice and peace and equity, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Clever words will be forgotten. The most interesting facts are subject to revision. The best sermon you've ever heard – you will forget. Right now, everything we do is flawed and inaccurate. But. One day we'll experience Truth with a Capital T. And then all this will be unnecessary.

Before I was mature, I was immature. In becoming mature, I left behind ways of speaking, thinking and reasoning that were immature.

Right now we're hearing murmurs, reading translations, seeing shadows on the wall, but one day we'll see face-to-face.

Right now, I'm guessing half the time, but one day I will know beyond all doubt – and I will be fully known.

What remains when it is all stripped away is three things:
Faith that the flawed world as we see it is not all that there is;
Hope that the next generation will live in a better world;
and Love to give us the strength and motivation to build it.

The greatest of these is Love.