

## 1 Corinthians 13: The Greatest Thing

Many people may recognise this popular reading from weddings but may not know or understand its background.

The 1<sup>st</sup> century church in Corinth had some eloquent preachers and also those with a gift for 'speaking in tongues', a kind of heavenly, angelic language. Yet for all their gifts, Pastor Paul has had to spend a number of earlier chapters challenging them about their *immaturity*. There is pride, jealousy and division spoiling this fellowship, so much so that their worship services are chaotic and their observance of communion a travesty.

Paul has used dramatic terms in ch 12 to try and help members to value each other, with ultimate reverence for their Lord. 'You are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it,' He has argued. God gives us various individual gifts to be used *harmoniously* as members of the team for the common good. In ch 13 he speaks of the 'greatest' thing, the essential ingredient, the 'fruit of the Spirit' we all must have – love.

So what if we can preach and pray like angels? Without love in our fellowship it's just empty noise!

What do our knowledge, faith and charity achieve if not moved and shaped by our Master's love?

Time to grow up! Time to recognize the limitations of the present and start living in anticipation of our heavenly future, when all will be made perfect *in love*.

We can, and should get in some practise now.

We *do*, as we learn to love one another with patience, kindness.....