

**EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)**

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**Sunday Worship 10:45 AM**

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**The Only Thing That Lasts**

Many of us are familiar with the rhyme: "Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." That little verse reminds us of some very great truths, doesn't it? Life on earth can't last forever, it says, therefore invest your life in what counts. As you make your decisions, evaluate them in light of what is passing and what is permanent.

With our nearsighted view of things we sometimes fail to tell the difference between the temporary and the eternal. For example, we easily fall into the trap of thinking that human beings are part of the passing. They live for less than a century and they are gone. What really matters, we suppose, are the causes to which they gave their lives. Civilizations, cultures, nations and governments were here when they arrived and they will go on when they die. In God's view of things, that kind of thinking is all mixed up. It is men, not causes, who will exist someplace forever. When the sun burns out and the mountains have eroded away, we will still be alive.

As C.S. Lewis observes in, *The Weight Of Glory*: "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendor." We must keep constantly before us the reality that God values people. It is people for whom Christ died. What is done for Christ is done for people.

In thinking about what's done for Christ, we may still be confused about what is permanent and what is passing. We need to be sure we are thinking in biblical categories about what is lasting. When we think of such things we might think of great preachers; someone who has had a deep personal experience with God or someone who is a respected Bible scholar. If we count such experiences and achievements as being of the greatest value in the Christian life we have again mixed up the permanent with the passing.

Paul's words in I Corinthians 13:8-10 challenge such notions. "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

These special skills we admire are actually only related to the present world. Only love is eternal; "Love never fails." Paul means that love will never cease. It will not fade; nothing can push it out or take its place. Love is indestructible.

The Corinthians made a great fuss about the gift of speaking in other languages, the gift of prophecy and the gift of knowledge. They valued the more showy gifts, the gifts that called attention to them. But Paul tells them that these gifts are nothing compared to love.

Paul is not degrading these other gifts. He valued the gift of prophecy very highly. He even told the Corinthians to, "Desire this gift," I Corinthians 14:39. Prophecy involved speaking under the inspiration of God. It involved foretelling but also forth telling. Prophets were like preachers in our day except that they were much more aware of God's control. Prophecy was a valuable gift from God to the Church. But when compared to love it falls into insignificance, "Whether there be prophecies they shall be done away," I Corinthians 13:8.

Prophecies are done away when they are fulfilled. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah were done away when Jesus came. As someone has said, "Having been fulfilled, their work is finished. They have nothing more to do now in the world except to feed a devout man's faith." Prophecy, in the sense of preaching will also be done away in the age to come, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. All shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." The prophet will be needed no longer and the preachers work will be completed.

The gifts listed in I Corinthians 13 serve God's purpose. Their fault is that they are temporary. They cannot last. Yet the Corinthians were centering their lives on them.

Dr. J.D. Jones said, "Nothing deserves the homage and devotion of the immortal soul except something which itself is immortal." That is why love is supreme above all the gifts. Love never fails, Love is imperishable. It is never outgrown. It is never done away with. It is as much at home in heaven, as it is here upon the earth. It is the only permanent and abiding wealth of life. Riches, fame, positions, knowledge, tongues, prophecy will all slip away, but the love we practice will be with us forever.