

“Love Knows No Limits” (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

A *Peanuts* cartoon shows Lucy standing with her arms folded and a stern expression on her face. Charlie Brown pleads, “Lucy, you must be more loving. This world really needs love. You have to let yourself love to make this world a better place.” Lucy angrily whirls around and knocks Charlie Brown to the ground. She screams at him, “Look, Blockhead, the world I love. Its people I can’t stand.”

I’m sure we all feel that way from time to time, and some of us feel that way most of the time. Maybe you feel that way right now. Loving the world in general isn’t that difficult; loving the people around us can be a major challenge. In 1 Corinthians 13, we find one of the most beautiful and familiar chapters in the Bible. This chapter is typically read at weddings and anniversary celebrations. It has even been set to music. Yet, this was never the original intent. Instead, Paul was writing a rebuke to a dysfunctional church for their abuse of the spiritual gifts. Typically though, this understanding is often ignored. Consequently, I wonder if most Christians have truly pondered the deeper meaning of this passage. Have we heard this Scripture so often that we no longer think about what the words mean? I would suggest that if we ignore the context of this chapter we are in danger of missing its major impact.¹

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul will argue that *love is an action, not an emotion*. The kind of love Paul will talk about is seen, experienced, and demonstrated. This is contrary to our culture that honors personal feelings above almost everything. We do what we want when we want because we “feel” like it. And if we don’t “feel” like it, we don’t do it. But as I study this passage, I am struck by the complete absence of any stress on personal feelings. Hence, if *love is an action, not an emotion*, we need to study what God has to say about love. We need to know what love is and what it looks like when it is lived out in the church.² In these thirteen verses, Paul provides three distinctions of love.

1. Love is greater than any spiritual gift (13:1-3). In these three verses, Paul mentions six spiritual gifts: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, giving, and martyrdom. The first four gifts are listed in 12:8-10. The gift of giving is among those mentioned in Rom 12:8. Martyrdom does not occur anywhere else as a spiritual gift, but by its association with the other five gifts here, we can add it to the spiritual gifts God gives to His church.³ Paul kicks off 13:1 with the gift of tongues when he writes, **“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”** Some Bible students seem to have missed Paul’s point here and have interpreted him as speaking merely of eloquence in human speech, but clearly he is referring to the gift of tongues. After all, the last gifts mentioned in chapter 12 are tongues and the interpretation of tongues. And those same gifts are the main topic of chapter 14. It is quite logical, then, that Paul begins the intervening chapter by discussing tongues. The use of tongues that Paul is speaking of here is the gift of speaking a private prayer language.⁴ Paul says you can speak in tongues all you want, but if you don’t have love you are merely making a lot of noise.

In 13:2-3, Paul mentions five more spiritual gifts when he writes, **“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. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”** Prophecy refers to the ability to declare God’s truth in a powerful, life-changing way. Knowledge involves the deep understanding of the Word of God. Faith is the unique ability to trust God for great things. These three gifts are all from the Holy Spirit, and yet without love the person who has them is “nothing.” Verse 3 poses a problem because it asks us to ponder activities that we automatically consider noble. Giving to the poor is a good thing to do. And dying for your faith in Christ is the ultimate sacrifice. But as good as these things are, without love they do you no good. Paul declares that the greatest expression of spirituality is love. We could summarize these three verses like this: Without love...I say nothing, I am nothing, and I gain nothing.

Clearly, we must have love when we are exercising our spiritual gifts. So stop for just a moment and reflect on your spiritual gifts and your ministry in the local church. Do you do what you do out of genuine love for people? Or do you serve out of a sense of obligation? Do you serve because of the satisfaction you derive from ministry? Do you minister because you like honing your skills? Although no one has perfectly pure motives, we ought to be seeking to grow in our love quotient. Paul says that *love is an action, not an emotion*; therefore, we need to put feet to our love.

[After talking about the importance of love, Paul now will discuss how love behaves.]

2. Love is expressed by supernatural responses (13:4-7). Love is a word that can only be properly defined in terms of action, attitude, and behavior. Paul has no room for abstract, theoretical definitions; instead, he wants us to know what love looks like when we see it. Thus, he paints fifteen separate portraits of love. Yes, that's right: in the space of four short verses Paul uses fifteen verbs, all of which have "love" as their subject. Our contemporary definition of love is that it is an emotion or a feeling—we love our jobs, we love football, we love pizza. In the biblical definition of *agape*, love acts, for *love is an action, not an emotion*.⁵ Verse 4 begins by summarizing the unselfish nature of love.

1) *Love is patient.* The Greek language has several words for "patience." One signifies patience with circumstances while another is used only in reference to patience with people.⁶ The Lord knows we need both kinds of patience, but it is this second word that is found here. The KJV renders this word "long-suffering." I like this! Paul seems to be saying that love doesn't have a short fuse. It doesn't lose its temper easily. A person who exercises *agape* love does not lose patience with people. Love never says, "I'll give you just one more chance." Love is patient.

The longer that I am in pastoral ministry, the easier it is for me to be patient with others. With every passing year, I recognize more fully that I sin against God and others. As God humbles me with my own sinful shortcomings, I find it easier to exercise greater patience with others. Loving people are willing to tolerate the shortcomings of others because they know they have faults too. As you mature do you feel more and more patient or do you feel you are growing more crotchety? God wants you and me to grow in patient love for those whom we minister to and with.

2) *Love is kind.*⁷ Patience must be accompanied by a positive reaction of goodness toward the other person. Kindness, however, is not to be equated with giving everyone what he or she wants. Sometimes love must be tough. In the context of the church, kindness may mean forcing an addict to go through the hell of withdrawal. Kindness may mean saying no to a spoiled child. Kindness may mean reporting a crime committed by a friend. Kindness means to withhold what harms, as well as give what heals. Love is kind, but often tough.⁸ Paul followed the two positive expressions of love with eight verbs that indicate how it does not behave.⁹

3) *Love is not jealous.*¹⁰ Jealousy implies being displeased with the success of others. Yet, true love desires the success of others. The best way to cure envy is to pray sincerely for the one of whom you are jealous. To pray for him or her is to demonstrate love, and jealousy and love cannot exist in the same heart.

4) *Love does not brag.* The root word for "brag" in Greek is very picturesque and is closest to our English word, "wind-bag."¹¹ Love is not an egotistical blowhard. Love is not big-headed but big-hearted. This means the more loving you become, the less boasting you need to do. The greater your spiritual gifts, the less prone you should be to brag. After all, the gifts you have been graciously given are from God. When you and I brag, we are demonstrating our insecurity and spiritual immaturity. Paul states that bragging is the converse of biblical love. Hence, we should pursue Christ so that we will be humble before Him and others.

5) Love is not arrogant.¹² The term “arrogant” refers to a grasping for power. It is more serious than bragging, which is only grasping for praise. Arrogant people push themselves into leadership, using people as stepping-stones, and always consider themselves exempt from the requirements on mere mortals. Arrogance disrespects others and carries a disdain for others. God calls us to serve others and be gracious toward them.

6) Love does not act unbecomingly.¹³ This word is best translated “rude.” There are some Christians who seem to take delight in being blunt, justifying it on the grounds of honesty. They will say, “I’m just telling it like it is.” But love doesn’t always tell it like it is; it doesn’t always verbalize all its thoughts, particularly if those thoughts don’t build others up. There is a graciousness in love which never forgets that courtesy, tact, and politeness are lovely things.

7) Love does not seek its own. Love is the very antithesis of insisting upon one’s own rights. Needless to say, this is a rare quality today. Ours is a society in which self-seeking is not only tolerated, it is even advocated. You can go to any bookstore and pick up titles like, *Winning Through Intimidation*, *Looking Out for Number One*, or *Creative Aggression*. But a self-absorbed narcissistic person cannot act in love. Love is not possessive, demanding, stubborn, or dominating. Love does not talk too much but listens as well. Love does not insist on its own way.¹⁴ It is always willing to defer to others.

8) Love is not provoked. Love is not given to emotional outbursts, is not exasperated by petty annoyances, and refuses to let someone else get under one’s skin. But, you say, when someone else provokes me, it’s not *my* fault. Yes it is. We don’t have to get irritated, and if we were exercising love, we wouldn’t. One English version translates this virtue, “Love is not touchy.” Do you know people who are so quick to take offense that you have to handle them with kid gloves? You try to avoid talking to them and when you can avoid it no longer, you carefully measure every word you say to make sure that you say exactly what you mean. But still the person seizes upon something and twists it to make you look bad. That kind of person knows nothing of *agape* love, for love is not touchy.

9) Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Paul uses the normal word here for bookkeeping. Love does not keep a ledger of evil deeds. It doesn’t write down each injury done and keep the account open to be settled someday. I know some people who are accomplished bookkeepers in regard to injuries sustained. Love doesn’t hang on to reminders of wrongs. Who are you keeping a book on? Are there some ledgers you need to go home and toss in the fireplace?

10) Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. One of the reasons I detest watching the news is that the bulk of stories concern people’s misfortunes and misdeeds. There is something in our human nature which causes our attention to be drawn to murder trials, FBI probes, natural disasters, and human tragedies. Love is not like that. Love takes no joy in evil of any kind. It takes no malicious pleasure when it hears about the inadequacies, mistakes, and sins of someone else. Love is righteous. Now, after eight sobering negatives come five glorious positives:

11) Love rejoices with the truth. When I was in seminary, I studied an ethical system Joseph Fletcher labeled Situation Ethics. Fletcher taught that any action—whether lying, adultery, or even murder—can be moral if it is done in love. However, I would argue that if an action does not conform to the truth of God’s Word, it *can’t* be done in love. Truth and love go together like hand in glove. Truth must make our love discriminating, and love must make our truth compassionate and forgiving. If our actions are in accord with *agape* love, we will always welcome biblical truth, never resist it.

12) Love bears all things. The phrase “bears all things” comes from a Greek word meaning to cover something. It is related to the word for roof—a covering that offers protection from the hostile elements. 1 Peter 4:8 says that love covers a multitude of sins. That is precisely the meaning here. Love protects other people. It doesn’t broadcast bad news. It goes the second mile to protect another person’s reputation.¹⁵

There are two very relevant applications: First, love doesn’t nitpick. It doesn’t point out every flaw of the ones you love. Second, love doesn’t criticize in public. This is perhaps Paul’s primary meaning. Love doesn’t do its dirty laundry for the entire world to see. That’s why I cringe whenever I hear a husband humiliating his wife in public or a wife making snide remarks about her husband. I always think, if they do that in public, what do they do in private? As a friend of mine once told me, “There are many times in my life when I’ve been sorry I opened my mouth. But there has never been a time I’ve been sorry I kept silent.” When it comes to needless criticism of other people, that’s excellent advice.

13) Love believes all things. Love is always ready to allow for extenuating circumstances, to give the other person the benefit of the doubt, to believe the best about people. Many of us have developed a certain distrust of people because of negative experiences. We have heard stories about how the person who stopped to help a motorist in distress was robbed or even murdered. We have been warned never to loan money to someone without a legal document guaranteeing repayment, even if the other guy is a Christian. But there are worse things than gullibility—namely suspicion and mistrust. Love always trusts. It is also useful to remember that even in a court of law the accused person is always “innocent until proven guilty.” Love says, “I am willing to wait for the evidence to come in before making my decision. I choose to give you the benefit of the doubt as long as there is reason to do so.” Some of us treat our loved ones in nearly the opposite way: “You are guilty until you prove you are innocent.”

I do not tire of repeating that people tend to become what we believe them to be. They either live up to or down to your expectations. If you treat a man as trustworthy, he will strive to prove himself worthy of your trust. If you tell a child, “Take a big swing. You can hit that ball,” he’ll go to the plate and swing like Babe Ruth. If you treat your wife as if she is the most beautiful woman in the world, she will be transformed before your very eyes. That’s what Jesus did. To vacillating Simon, He said, “You are a rock.” To a prostitute, He said, “Your sins are forgiven.” To a woman caught in adultery, He said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” It is the simple power of believing the best and not the worst about people.

14) Love hopes all things. The third phrase in 13:7 tells us that love “hopes all things.” This is simply a step beyond believing. The meaning is something like this: There are times in life when you face situations so difficult that faith is not possible. You would gladly give the benefit of the doubt but there is none to give. You search for the silver lining but the angry clouds overhead have no silver lining. Love has a positive forward look. Paul is not here advocating an unreasoning optimism, which fails to take account of reality. Nor is he just teaching the power of positive thinking. But he is suggesting that love refuses to take failure as final, either in oneself or in someone else. Love never gives up on people. And the reason the believer can take such an attitude is that God is in the business of taking human failures and producing spiritual giants out of them. And He can do it with you or your child or that impossible kid in your S.S. class. Of course, “always hoping” doesn’t mean that we sit back and just watch God do His thing. Rather it means that we get actively involved in the process as He molds the future according to His perfect plan. Love hopes and expects the best. Love never loses faith in other people and gives up on them but remain faithful to them, in spite of their shortcomings.

15) Love endures all things. The word “endures” is a military term that means to hold a position at all costs, even unto death, whatever it takes. The battle may be lost but the soldier keeps on fighting to the very end. The word pictures an army surrounded by superior forces, being attacked and slowly overwhelmed on every side. One by one your comrades fall at your side. Through the noise of battle comes one final command: “Stand your ground, men. And if necessary, die well.” So love holds fast to people it loves. It perseveres. It never gives up on anyone. Love won’t stop loving, even in the face of rejection. Love takes action to shake up an intolerable situation. Love looks beyond the present to the hope of what might be in the future.

No one can have a totally happy conscience after reading through these fifteen expressions of love.¹⁶ We are the opposite of 13:4-7 on every point.¹⁷ However, this love list defines God’s gift of Himself in Jesus Christ. If you go back through these verses and everywhere you find the word “love” substitute the word “Christ,” all these statements will still be true. The kind of love being described is love that has its source in God, and as we look at each of the phrases it becomes obvious that we’re defining a lifestyle that really is beyond our human reach. It is absolutely impossible unless we abide in Christ and ask Him to live His supernatural love in and through us. If you have never believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, will you do so today? Not only will He give you the gift of His eternal love, but He will allow you to love the way God intended.

[Love is greater than any spiritual gift and love is expressed by supernatural responses. Now we will see that...]

3. Love is an eternal gift (13:8-13). In these final six verses, Paul will discuss the temporary nature of the spiritual gifts and the eternal nature of love. In 13:8, Paul talks about the temporary nature of gifts when he writes, “**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.**”¹⁸ When Paul says, “Love never fails,” he means love never ends. The synonym for this expression is “love abides” in 13:13. These phrases serve to bookend this final section where Paul argues that the spiritual gifts will be done away with one day.

The reason that spiritual gifts like prophecy and tongues will come to an end is revealed in 13:9-10. Paul writes, “**For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.**” Paul explains that we are limited in our understanding, but this will not always be the case. A time of perfection is coming! The “perfect” refers to the returning of Christ.¹⁹ When we recall that 1:7 pointed out the ongoing role of the gifts until the return of Christ, there can be only one possible interpretation of “perfection”—it is the life in the world to come, after Jesus reappears on earth.

Paul explains himself further in 13:11-12: “**When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.**” Paul explains that our understanding of God is indirect in this life. He uses two analogies: childhood and a mirror.²⁰ In using the analogy of childhood, Paul is not suggesting that those who speak in tongues are childish and immature. Rather, he is adopting an eternal perspective and simply saying that there will come a time when the gifts of the Spirit will no longer be necessary.²¹

The analogy of the mirror implies that our visibility of Christ is indirect. In other words, Paul is comparing the nature of looking in a mirror to the relationship we will enjoy with Jesus when we see Him “face to face.”²² I enjoy looking at pictures of people, but if I had my choice I would prefer to spend time with the people that I am looking at in photo albums.

Paul concludes this chapter in 13:13 with these words: **“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”**²³ For all eternity, we will enjoy these three attributes. We will experience God’s incredible love, we will experience a deep love for God, and we will love one another with a perfect love. We will also continue to have “faith” in the Lord for all eternity. But what about “hope?” What could possibly be the meaning of hope when we are in an eternity that has no pain or tears or sorrow? Will we hope for better days? Obviously not! There is one nuance behind “hope” that is applicable here, namely, a meaning of hope that is synonymous with “trust.”²⁴ In eternity, we will continue to trust in God’s goodness in our lives and in His provisions for us. Hope in this sense “abides” or “remains,” as do faith and love. But the greatest of these is love, for love covers not only what we experience in our relations to others and to God, but what we experience *from* God Himself.

Today, how will you grow in your love for others? First, I would suggest that you cannot become the loving person you desire to be apart from a loving and vibrant relationship with God. This love relationship must be cultivated first and foremost. Second, you must love those nearest to you. This means that if you are married, you focus on your spouse. If you have children, you prioritize your children. If you are serving in a ministry, you love those children, teens, or adults. You strive to love your neighbors and coworkers. Once you have accomplished this, you will be able to better love the world around you. God has called us to love people. Jesus said that all people will know we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another (John 13:34-35).

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Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Galatians 5:22-23

Ephesians 4:26, 32

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Peter 3:8; 4:8

Luke 7:36-50

Luke 10:30-37

Study Questions

1. What are my motivations for doing the work of ministry (13:1-3)? Do I minister from a heart of love? How do I know that my ministry is built on love? Read John 13:34-35.
2. Would people describe me as a loving person (13:4-7)? Why or why not? What characteristics of love are presently true in my own life? What qualities are lacking? Read Galatians 5:22-23.
3. The love of God's people often seems so fickle; yet Paul says, "Love never ends" (13:8a). Why is it so easy to lack endurance in love (13:7)? How can I be a person who is known for perseverance in love?
4. When I am at church, how do I express love for my brothers and sisters in Christ? Read 1 John 3:18. How would I describe the culture of our church? Is it warm and welcoming? If so, what have I done to contribute to this? Today, what commitment will I make to exude greater love?
5. What will it be like to see Jesus face-to-face one day (13:10-12)? Am I looking forward to meeting Christ? Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Do I have harmonious relationships within the body of Christ? Is there any relational strife that I need to deal with before Jesus returns? Read Matthew 5:23-24.

Notes

¹ “To some extent the chapter can stand on its own, but its full richness comes out only when we interpret it in its biblical context.” Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

² Ray Pritchard, “Why Love Has a Bad Memory” (1 Cor 13:4-6): http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermons/read_sermon.asp?id=14.

³ Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

⁴ In Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost the gift of tongues was obviously the ability to speak in a human language which the speaker had never learned, and I believe that was true each time the gift of tongues was used in the book of Acts. But 1 Corinthians seems to be talking about an ecstatic prayer language. Look, for example, at 14:2: “For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.” We will be addressing that passage in more detail in January, but for now please note how perfectly 13:1 fits into this interpretation. If chapter 12 refers to the gift of speaking human languages one has never learned, and if chapter 14 refers to the gift of a heavenly language, then it only makes sense that right in the middle of those two chapters the Apostle would say, “If I speak in the tongues of men *and* of angels and have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

⁵ Certainly every expression in the Bible that refers to God’s love shows God in action; in love He sent His Son to be our Savior and our Redeemer (e.g., Rom 5:8).

⁶ The words are *hupomone* and *makrothumeo* respectively.

⁷ In Rom 2:4 Paul said it was the kindness of God exercised toward us that led us to salvation, and our love toward people will act just as purposefully and consistently.

⁸ Michael P. Andrus “What Is Greater than the Greatest of Spiritual Gifts?” (1 Cor 13:1-4): unpublished sermon.

⁹ The first five of these marked the Corinthians, as we have seen. They were envious (cf. 3:3; 4:18), boastful (ostentatious; 3:18; 8:2; 14:37), proud (4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1), rude (7:36; 11:2-16) and self-seeking (10:24, 33). Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2007 edition:

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 144.

¹⁰ The verb *zeloo* was used in a positive sense in 12:31a (“desire”), but it can also have a negative sense of being jealous and envious.

¹¹ This is the only location in the NT for the Greek word “brag” (*perpereuomai*).

¹² The verb for “arrogant” (*phusioo*) has been used several times in this letter as Paul chided the Corinthians for their arrogance (4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1).

¹³ The word group reflected in *aschemoneo* is used elsewhere in the NT with sexual overtones (Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 7:36; 12:23; Rev 16:15). In 1 Cor 14:40, Paul used an adjective derived from the same Greek root to appeal for proper behavior in the worship service.

¹⁴ Michael P. Andrus, “Love Never Fails” (1 Cor 13:6-13): unpublished sermon notes.

¹⁵ See BDAG s.v. *stego* 2 “to keep confidential, cover, pass over in silence.”

¹⁶ After writing a commentary on this incomparable chapter, Leon Morris observed that he sensed that “clumsy hands have touched a thing of exquisite beauty and holiness.” Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 90.

¹⁷ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 10-16* (Kent, England, 2000), 71.

¹⁸ The fact that 12:8 begins a new subsection within the paragraph, and does not go strictly speaking with 12:4-7, is indicated by the repetition of *he agape* (cf. *he agape* in 12:4).

¹⁹ Paul uses *teleios* to refer to this period (cf. 1 Cor 1:8; 15:24). Perhaps one problem with this view is the fact that the gifts of prophecy and knowledge do seem to continue into the millennium after Christ returns (cf. Isa 11:9). But, the “partial” is a focus on what the gifts produce, not the gifts themselves. In the Millennium, they probably function in a complete way, not partial, with the result that such an objection poses no real problem.

²⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*: The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 648.

²¹ See also David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 623.

²² The NET Study notes suggest, “The word ‘indirectly’ translates the Greek phrase *en ainigmati* (“in an obscure image”) which itself may reflect an allusion to Num 12:8 (LXX *ou di ainigmaton*), where God says that he speaks to Moses ‘mouth to mouth [= face to face]...and not in dark figures [of speech].’ Though this allusion to the OT is not explicitly developed here, it probably did not go unnoticed by the Corinthians who were apparently familiar with OT

traditions about Moses (cf. 1 Cor 10:2). Indeed, in 2 Cor 3:13-18 Paul had recourse with the Corinthians to contrast Moses' ministry under the old covenant with the hope afforded through apostolic ministry and the new covenant. Further, it is in this context, specifically in 2 Cor 3:18, that the apostle invokes the use of the mirror analogy again in order to unfold the nature of the Christian's progressive transformation by the Spirit."

²³ These three eternal elements: faith, hope and love are superior to all other desirable things, and they are very often linked together in the NT (Rom 5:2-5; Gal 5:5-6; Eph 4:2-5; Col 1:3-5; 1 Thess 1:3; cf. Heb 6:10-12; 1 Pet 1:21-22).

²⁴ Verbrugge writes, "For example, when Paul says in Acts 23:6, 'I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead,' he is speaking of a doctrine that he firmly adheres to and trusts in—that God is the sort of God who can raise the dead. Moreover, in Romans 5:5, 'hope' is the last element in a chain of developing Christian character, about which Paul concludes, 'And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.' The background to this verse is Psalm 22:5, where the psalmist David, in intense pain, is looking back at the history of Israel and remembering that 'they [their fathers] cried to you [God] and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.' The verb the NIV translates as "trusted" is *elpizom* (GK 1827) in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT; this verb is related to the noun *elpis*. There are, in fact, many references in the psalms that call believers to 'hope in God'—a call that is synonymous with 'trusting' in God—and the verb normally used is *elpizom* (see, e.g., Pss 42:5, 11; 43:5; 119:114; 130:5; 131:3). The noun *elpis* itself is used in the sense of 'trust' in Psalm 146:5. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians."