

# Face To Face

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 December 2013

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Let's open the Bible to 1 Corinthians 13 tonight. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I surrender all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

[1:03] It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 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 perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain. Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. For most of our engagement, my wife and I lived three hours apart.

[2:19] We wrote a lot of emails. We talked on the phone. But it was hard. We were glad to have the emails. We were glad to have the phone. But what we really wanted was to be with each other.

And it was frustrating. It was annoying. It seemed like it would take forever. But then it ended. And it was over.

And boy, were we glad that it was over. Long distance relationships can be hard. And in some ways, we are in the longest of long distance relationships with our Lord Jesus.

There are tokens of his love. We're indwelt by his spirit. And so in that way, we're not far. But, and we have a real relationship with him.

But we want to be with him. We want to be with him. And so now we see his glory by faith. That's what the series has been about.

[3:23] Seeing the glory of Christ. And by faith, we're able to, in some way, see the glory of his person and what he's done. But we want to see his glory in person.

We want to see him. Faith is good. We're going to be talking about how sight is better today. But don't take that to mean that faith is not good.

Faith is good. It's just that sight is better. John, in the book of Revelation, saw the risen Lord. And you remember the effect that it had on him.

He fell at Jesus' feet as if dead. He was overawed. And that was just with a little sight of him. And that's what we want. We want more. We want to be awed. We want to be shaken to the very core of our being with his glory.

And we want to be thrilled. And our sin stops us. Our selfishness stops us. We have blindness in our own hearts and so on.

[4:29] But faith itself is weak compared to sight. Faith takes a hold of unseen things, things to come.

And it makes it real enough for us to enjoy them, for us to live on them, to make decisions based on our faith, to live by our faith. It's a wonderful gift.

We rejoice in what we have by faith. But something better awaits us. Faith will give way to sight. And that's what we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, in verses 8 through 13.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is arguing for love's superiority to gifts. Love's superiority to gifts. Without love, gifts are nothing. That's what he talks about in the first three verses. Gifts are worthless without love. In the next few verses, he talks about how love makes men holy.

[5:30] Gifts don't make men holy by themselves. And then in verses 18 through 13, he talks about how love is permanent. Gifts, whether the miraculous, supernatural gifts that he's talking about, or any of the other spiritual gifts, are temporary.

But love is forever. Heaven is a world of love, Jonathan Edwards said. It's not a world of miraculous gifts.

It's not a world of tongues and prophesying. It's a world of love. And so he's comparing these two times. The time of the imperfect and the time of the perfect. And you see that in verse 10.

When the perfect comes, the imperfect disappears. Two times. Now and then. Faith and sight.

You see that in verse 12. Now we see in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. So in verses 12 and 13, he talks about three ways that sight is better than faith.

[6:41] And that's what we want to look at tonight. These three ways that sight is going to be better than faith. As we think about Christ and his glory.

Well, the first difference is that in the first way that we see that he shows us that sight is better than faith. Is that it's the difference between a child and an adult.

A child and an adult. Now we are children. But then when we see him face to face, we will be adults. That's how sight is different than faith.

So Paul says, I talked, I thought, I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now, what does Paul mean here?

What is he saying? Well, he's saying faith is the time of childhood. Childish ways are okay for children. And as we talk about the differences here, I don't want to give anyone the wrong impression that necessarily childish ways are bad or wrong.

[7:47] They're okay for children. But at some point, they have to be put away. They can't last forever. They're only temporary. Childhood was never meant to go on forever.

So we were never meant to be Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up. We were meant to grow up and become men. And that's what Paul is saying here. That childhood can't last forever.

Something stronger, more permanent must come. So when Paul turned 13, like every Jewish boy, he became a man.

He became a man. He took on the role of a man. And in most ancient cultures, it's not in our culture, but in most ancient cultures, there was a definitive, a definite break between child and adult.

You went through some sort of ceremony, some sort of ritual. You turned a certain age. And it wasn't a slow transition like we have. There wasn't a time of adolescence where you're not a child really, but you're not a full-grown adult.

[8:51] There was a more definitive break. And that's how it worked. At a certain age, with a certain ritual, you pass from child to adult.

Your life changed forever. You put childish ways behind you. Now, faith is a part of our spiritual childhood.

It was never meant to last forever. It's good. It's wonderful. It's helpful while it lasts, but it was never meant to last forever. And there's a number of reasons why.

And he brings up one. Childhood is marked by childishness. It's marked by immaturity. When he says, I put childish ways behind me, that word childish definitely carries the idea of immaturity.

Of something that can't last forever. Of something that might be good or okay for a time, but you can't see that in a full-grown adult. So that's the time of faith.

[9:54] Now, as children, we don't see things clearly. We don't understand what's going on in the world as clearly as adults do. And so children don't see why they have to go to school every day.

They don't see why they have to eat their vegetables. They don't see why it's important to do their chores. Parents do. Children don't. And then children have childish desires.

They love and want things that adults never could want. And don't you find that in your own self?

That there are even now desires in your heart that won't be there when you're in heaven.

They're childish desires. And so you leave Walmart. Walmart. And what do you see? Well, right, you see the gumball machines. And they have what I call one-minute gum.

You know what that is, right? You buy it, you stick it in your mouth, and it has its flavor for one minute. And then you're left with just a bland piece of rubber in your mouth. And so there those machines are.

[10:58] Now, are they at your height? No, they're down low. They're down where you don't even see them, but children see them. And the kids want one. And you say, no. If you want some gum, I'll get you a pack of gum.

I'll get you some decent gum. You don't want to waste your money on that gum. But next to those gum machines are the whatever they are, the stickers and the trinkets and the rubber balls and all that sort of plastic doohickeys.

And so they see those, and they want one of those. That doesn't scratch where you itch, but that's where their heart is. They have childish desires and thoughts and reasons, and they think those things will make them so happy.

You reason like a child. You think like a child. And they beg for it. And so you say, fine. Here's a quarter. And they love it, and they play with it in the car, and they take it into the house, and then they lose it.

Or my children make a homemade display, and they prop it up, and they think it's the greatest thing ever. Either way, it's childish.

[12:11] It's good for a child. It's not good for an adult. It can't go on. And eventually, it must be left behind. So what do you think of an adult who's standing there at the Walmart, and he's feeding the dollar or the two dollars or whatever to get that grabber thing?

And to get a chance to grab a stuffed animal. You look at him, and you say, what are you doing? You don't say that, but you think to yourself, you need to grow up. What are you doing? There's a time to be a child and a time to grow up.

And that's what Paul is saying. When we see Jesus, when we see him face to face, as verse 12 says, then we'll put childish ways behind us. All the immature desires that we have now, because of the weakness of our faith, they'll be put behind us.

We go from child to man. We go from a child wanting the wrong things, not able to understand, confused, unable to articulate, sometimes talking silly about things that we sort of understand, our confusion.

Well, that will give way. All of that will be put behind us in this blaze of glory. And we'll see him.

[13:33] And the stuttering of a child will turn into the eloquence of a man. The mind of a child will be turned into the mind of a man. Our confusion will be turned to clarity.

The clouds will be rolled back. And the sunshine will shine into our minds. Faith is good.

Sight is better. Now, secondly, how do you see that sight is better than faith? Verse 12 says, faith is like looking at a poor reflection as in a mirror.

That's how we see and that's how we relate to Jesus now. That's how we comprehend his glory.

And so in this series, we've been looking at the glory of Christ in all these different aspects.

And it has a certain power, but on the other side, it's a poor reflection. We don't see it in its full glory. It doesn't hit us with the power and the awesomeness that it will then.

[14:38] Mirrors in Paul's day were just shiny pieces of metal. So think of a metal serving plate. You can see in it, but it's not that good.

And that's what it's like now. We see through a glass dimly. There's nothing inglorious, lacking in Christ's glory, but we have a hard time seeing it.

And it's not just because of our sin. It's because faith in and of itself is, well, it helps us to see and it gives us enough to see. It doesn't have the same power, the same sharpness as sight will.

We see Christ's glory, but it isn't directly and it isn't clearly. It's a poor reflection.

And the word there is where we get our word enigma. You know what an enigma is? It's a dark saying, an obscure saying. It's a confusing thing.

[15:39] So faith gives us a true idea. It's true. But it's limited.

And so the picture fades along the edges. It's not as brilliant and as clear. The colors aren't as strong as seen with our own eyes. And there's, it's hard to hold that vision.

And it fades around the edges and it becomes sort of unreal. But then what does he say? What's the opposite of seeing through this mirror?

It's seeing face to face. Person to person. In person. Real personal experience. Now the term face to face is used a number of times in the Bible.

It's used for how Israel saw God on the mountain. They didn't just receive the Ten Commandments. They had a personal experience with God and his awesomeness.

[16 : 44] It was a personal encounter with God. Remember when Jacob wrestled the angel of the Lord. He, at the end of that, he, afterward, he called the place Peniel saying, It is because I saw God face to face.

So the wrestling match. The personal dealings. It was face to face. Or John in his epistles saying, in 2nd and 3rd John, he says it to the elect sister and then Gaius.

He says this, I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face so that our joy may be complete. Now, John has joy.

He has joy in writing. He has joy in hearing from them. He loves to hear that his children are walking in the faith. But his joy is not complete. His joy will only be complete when he sees them face to face.

When he's with them. Now something is missing. But then when we're face to face, our joy will be complete. So face to face. It's a personal encounter. It's personal, in the flesh dealings.

[17 : 58] So now we see a poor reflection. But then face to face. That's what we long for. Paul says, I long to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.

It's not just seeing Christ in his glory. It's being with him. And so you will see his glory, but you won't be just a mere spectator. Face to face never has the idea of just spectator at a distance.

Face to face is personal, intimate. You're having dealings with a person. So you'll do things with him. So faith is good.

Sight is better. And then you get the third reason sight is better than faith. In the last part of verse 12. Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully.

Even as I am fully known. Now, this is sort of hard to interpret and understand. But I think what he's saying is faith gives us, at best, a partial knowledge of Christ and his glory.

[19 : 06] The weakness of our faith, it makes it so Christ and his glory is not as strong as it could be. It gives us this partial knowledge of Christ's glory. And I think it helps us to realize that Paul is not talking merely about intellectual.

He's not talking about, then I'll have more facts. Where I don't have the facts that I need now. He's talking about a personal, experiential knowledge.

Now we know in part. Now only a part of me is engaged in this relationship. So faith lets us know Christ partially. We know him and we rely on him.

But we only know him in part. But then I shall know fully. Even as I am fully known. So think about a gallon bucket.

And you have your gallon bucket. And so I am fully known. How much of God, or how much of me does God know and understand and relate to?

[20 : 09] If I'm a gallon bucket, he understands me. He knows me from the bottom all the way to the top. Even now, I am fully known, comprehended, understood. He knows all that there is about me.

He knows my ways, my motivations, my thoughts, my feelings. He knows me in and out. I'm fully known. But we now know only in part. So go back to our gallon bucket.

I don't think he's saying, well, he says now we know in part, but then we'll know fully. It can't mean that we're going to totally comprehend God.

That we'll know everything about God because God is infinite. And a great part of the joy of heaven is going to be finding out more and understanding more about God.

So it's not like as soon as we see him, our brains are going to be able to comprehend and gather all of God up. All of Jesus Christ up. I don't think that's what he's saying here. Instead, I think what Paul is getting at is that just as God comprehends all of me, just as I am known down to the deepest parts of my personality by God now, then I will know him with all of my being down to the deepest parts of me.

[21 : 26] So think of our gallon bucket. Right now, knowledge of him only fills me a quarter of a way. There are places in my heart that are dark.

There are places in my emotions and my desires and my thoughts and my will that the knowledge of Christ, it doesn't shine there. My flesh is there. My own desires are there.

My own selfishness is there. And so I'm blind. I'm dark. I don't fully understand Christ. But that will change. When we see him, we'll be filled up.

His glory will saturate us. His glory will fill us. And so the darkest places of our hearts will shine with the knowledge of Christ and his glory.

His glory will shine completely through us. Now faith isn't strong enough to do that. Faith isn't strong enough to fill all the dark places of our hearts.

[22 : 26] But then we'll see him. And then we'll know him fully even as we are fully known. Now let's go deeper.

Let's think about this some more. So those are the three ways that Paul shows us that sight is better than faith. When perfect comes, the imperfect will go away.

So what will it be like? This is our last sermon in the series on the glory of Christ.

So what will happen to us when we move from faith to sight? When we will see Christ's glory?

When we'll put away the childish ways.

We'll put away the imperfect and go on to perfection. What will happen to us? What will it be like to live in the full beams of Christ's glory?

[23 : 24] What is ahead of us? Well, we'll know nothing but love. That's obviously what this chapter is about.

We'll know nothing but love. We will be with our groom. And the long marriage will begin.

And he will love on us for ages and ages to come. And we will love him for ages and ages. And nothing will cloud his love for us.

And we'll know it fully. There won't be any dimness. We'll know how much he loves us. And no more will our love fade for him.

Now it goes through ups and downs, doesn't it? We have cold spells. We reach dry places. There's times of sweet bliss. I hope you're experiencing those things.

[24 : 25] Where there's times where we know he loves us. God, the Spirit is pouring out his love in our hearts. And now there's times of fervency and passion. We know he loves us. Those are drops of heaven.

And there his mercy expands to an ocean. Samuel Rutherford. But there to an ocean fullness his mercy doth expand.

So when stars have gone out and suns are no more, if those things happen, his love will be our light. His love will be the warmth of our souls.

The long marriage will be beginning. So we'll be like those old married couples that know everything about each other.

That have grown to look alike because they've spent so much time with each other. And they'll be happy and at rest. We'll be like newlyweds.

[25 : 24] Full of passion and desire. Everything new. Everything exciting. Or we'll be like middle-aged couples with that sturdy working relationship. Where they know each other.

It's exciting. There's joys old and new. Every fairy tale is pointed forward to this. Every love song has tried to capture it. And it will be ours.

Love. And all of its moods and all of its colors. It will be ours. And we'll have forever to be with the one that we love. And that's why Paul says this here.

Gifts are nothing compared to love. Gifts as great as they are will not sustain us for ages to come.

Love will. Well, what will it be like? Well, then there will be nothing but endless delight. If heaven is a world of love, then it will be definitely a place of endless delight.

[26 : 26] Delight. And if that's our future, then our future is a future of complete and absolute delight and excitement.

Now it's not good for us to be on the mountaintops for very long, is it? We get heady. We get lifted up. It's not good for us. We lose our way. But then we'll be like him.

Then sin will be gone. And there will be nothing to keep us from having endless delight and an enjoyment in him. Well, why endless delight?

Because we'll be with him. We'll be with him. And he's altogether lovely. He's an ocean of delight.

He's an ocean of joy. And so in this world, we latch on to something and we can enjoy it for a time.

But then we get bored with it. Everything is like that. Everything is too small for us here. Or my wife gives me a hard time because I like to read the same books again and again.

[27 : 25] But even I get bored with the same books again and again. And we have our favorite movies, but we don't watch the same movies all the time. Because everything here is too small for us.

And we get bored with them. There's not enough delight. There's not enough enjoyment. They're not big enough to enrapture our heart forever. But then we'll be like little children again.

You know how little children are. They say again and again. I want it again. Do it over. More.

Another piggyback ride. Another story. Again.

Again. They never get tired because everything is so much bigger for them. And so then we will be like children again. And God will be filling our hearts. And so when we see Christ and we're with him, there will be that glee of more.

More. Again. Again. Let's do it again. Finally, we'll be with someone who fills our hearts completely. And his glory will shine.

[28:30] And there will be no holes. There will be no missing feelings. There will be no aches. There will be no regrets. He'll fill our minds with pleasure and with delight. Tonight, we'll be one flesh with the God-man.

And he'll fill us in every way. There's an infinity of delights in Christ. Robert Murray McShane said, Unfathomable oceans of grace are in Christ for you.

Let me read that again. Unfathomable, unmeasurable oceans of grace are in Christ for you. Dive and dive again.

And you will never come to the bottom of their depths. How many millions of dazzling pearls and gems are at this moment hid in the deep recesses of the ocean caves.

But there are unsearchable riches in Christ. So think of all the pearls that are in the ocean. Think of the delight of finding a pearl in the ocean.

[29:35] And millions of them. Millions of them. And Robert Murray McShane says, They're nothing compared to the unsearchable riches that are in Christ.

So don't you love going for a walk and finding something? Something exciting? Something new? Something beautiful? So you find a beautiful rock. And you say, Hey, look what I found. Or you're walking on the beach.

And you find a beautiful shell. And you say, Look what I found. You take delight in finding new things. Well, heaven will be an endless walk on the beach.

Hand in hand with Jesus. Face to face with Jesus. We'll find more and more about him. And with each new discovery, We'll say, Look at what I found. Look at this.

Isn't this new? Isn't this exciting? I've never seen this before. Delight. Delight at coming to know him better. And then delight as he pours out his love and affection on us.

[30:34] And I just say this reverently, But there will be endless years of romance.

Where our husband will find new ways of loving us. And we will find new ways of loving him.

Endless years of us pleasing him.

And endless years of him pleasing his bride. And that's our future. That should put the present in perspective.

That should put your trials into perspective. They're working for us. An eternal weight of glory.

They're very small compared to what is ahead.

Why will there be delight? Because then our worship will finally be what we've always wanted it to be. Then our songs will ring out from the very bottom of our heart.

[31:37] Now, don't you find it to be only... It's so rare that I'm totally engaged in worship. But there my whole heart will be.

And then delight. Because every eye will look at him. And I will enjoy seeing you look at Jesus and taking delight in him. And seeing angels look at him.

And I'll rejoice as I see you looking at him. And I'll rejoice as I see angels bowing down before him.

So what will it be like? Delight? Love? What else?

No more fear. Love drives out fear. So no fear. Perfect security. Perfect comfort.

When we see his glory. It will be impossible for us to be afraid. How could you be afraid when you're seeing the lion and the lamb and all of his glory?

[32:36] You'll be in awe of him. And all the other fears will go away. And there won't be any reason to fear. There wouldn't be any reason to fear anyways.

Because all of our enemies will be destroyed. Read Revelation. And in some ways, as you're reading Revelation, especially chapters 13 through 19, it's Jesus preparing for his wedding day. It's Jesus preparing for his wedding day. We can't have a wedding with dragons and monsters around. We can't have a wedding with a prostitute hanging around. We can't have a wedding with

the kings of men threatening my bride.

And so he rides. And one by one, he destroys them. One by one, he deals with them finally. He does it for God's glory.

But he does it also for his bride's joy. And so when faith gives way to sight, we will say goodbye to fear forever.

[33:36] And all we'll know is the fear of the Lord. And that will fill our hearts with both joy and worship. And then last, there will be no more pride.

Heaven is an exalted place. But heaven is a humble place. When we see Christ, pride will die.

There could be no exalting yourself in the presence of the lion.

And so when men talk about what they'll say and what they'll do, it's all just utter nonsense. The Bible shows us what happens when people show up at the feet of Jesus.

They're not talking glib. They're lying down as dead. So no more pride.

And that fills me with joy. Pride will disappear from our hearts. Pride is that one thing that is so hard to kill. It's the one thing that if you focus on it, it seems to just grow and grow and grow.

[34:41] But then pride will disappear from our hearts. Faith isn't clear enough. It's not strong enough to drive it completely out of our hearts. But sight will do that. And then as Jonathan Edwards said, we'll be like a little white flower you see growing in the spring of the year.

Low and humble to the ground. Opening its blossom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory. That will be us.

Low and humble to the ground. With our blossom open. Receiving the sun's glory. Pride won't make us stumble.

Pride won't make us sick. With its inflaming infection. And so in a sight, our hearts will rest in humility. No more restless pride.

Just restful humility. And we'll know our part. We'll know the fear of the Lord completely. And we'll see him. And at long last, pride will be gone.

[35:50] Now as we end, seeing Christ. Is that what you long for? Is that what you strive for?

This is the mark of a true Christian. A true Christian is not satisfied with what they have here and now. They want more. They want more. So Paul says, I forget what's behind and I press on.

I want to know Christ. Seeing Christ. That's the mark of a healthy Christian. That's the mark of a true Christian.

A true Christian, a healthy Christian, lives with half of his heart already in heaven. He lives with Paul's words on his heart.

On his heart. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far. So, how do you look on death?

[36:57] That's an important question. How do you look on death? Is death the end of your fun? Is that the end of your joys, your life?

Or is death the beginning of your life? Test yourself. Am I a true Christian? Am I a healthy Christian?

Are my best things passing away like we saw this morning? Or are my best things, is my very best thing Jesus Christ? And that's what I'm striving for and straining for and hoping to reach and going to reach.

Test yourself. And if you need to repent, then repent. Repent. Put the things, put the childish ways behind you. Put the lesser things behind you.

And find in Christ everything you need. And we'll leave this series with just these words from the book of Song of Songs.

[38:01] How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others that you charge us so?

My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. His mouth is sweetness itself.

He is altogether lovely. This is my lover. This is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. Strive to be with him.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the gift of faith. Thank you that even now we can start to see Christ in all of his glory.

Thank you that one day the faith will become sight. And everything imperfect, everything unclear, everything childish, will be done away with, put away.

[ 39 : 05 ] So we thank you for faith. And we thank you that we have even something better to look forward to. We thank you for Jesus Christ in all of his glory.

And I pray that you would send the Spirit of God into our hearts. And with your truth and in your power, win our hearts for Jesus.

Win our affections. Win our desires. To him. He's done everything. He is altogether lovely. And yet, our eyes are so weak.

And our faith is weak. We pray that you would help us. And empower us. And inflame our hearts. Inflame our love. Inflame our desires.

For our Lord and our Savior. Pray that we would not settle for anything less than a fervent relationship with Jesus.

[ 40 : 06 ] And I pray for those who are living for lesser things. Things that are passing. Oh, please spare them. Please save them.

Break in upon them. And call them to Jesus Christ. And call them to see Christ and his glory. That Jesus would be glorified.

And I pray these things in his name Amen