

I Am Nothing Without Love

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the most excellent way, highlighting how even with extraordinary spiritual gifts, lacking love renders one as nothing. The speaker uses hypothetical individuals to illustrate how lacking love nullifies all other spiritual accomplishments, urging listeners to pursue love above all else. The message challenges Christians to self-assess their love towards others and strive to imitate Christ's sacrificial love in their actions.

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Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Corinthians 13:4, 1 John 3:14, Romans 12:9, Philippians 1:9, 1 Timothy 1:5

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Description

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Transcript

Well, before I have you turn to the passage I'm going to speak out of, I want to kind of set you up, get your mind thinking. And I'm sure some of you, as I speak, are going to know where we're going to be. But I want to start out by describing to you four types of people who could theoretically be found in an evangelistic church that is zealously using their spiritual gifts.

And I'm just going to explain to you one aspect of these individuals and leave out the other side of the story until later. But as I describe these individuals, you should ask yourself, how truly spiritual are they? Does it sound like they're truly spiritual? Or do I actually not have enough information to make a judgment based on what I share? So, the four people. And I'm not going to say their names right now.

At the end I'm going to mention their names. Their names are found in our text. You don't know about yet, but we'll see how well you know your Bibles.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for the absolute privilege to be a Christian this morning. Lord, to actually want to sing those songs and have any impulse inside to yell, Amen or Hallelujah.

Lord, we're grateful. We do praise Yahweh this morning. And we thank you that there is a name above every name, that every knee will bow.

And we confess, Lord Jesus, you're altogether lovely. We want to be like Christ. Father, I pray you'd use this message to help make the saints and myself more like the Lord Jesus.

Amen. So, four people. Number one.

This person was a preacher. They were so clear when they spoke. Very, very gifted communicator.

People would say of him, if you looked up the word eloquence in the dictionary, you would find his name right next to the word eloquence. And it was not just that he was a gifted communicator, but he often would speak in tons and actually bring out some revelation and knowledge that was of great benefit after he interpreted it. The notes his speech made were distinct and clear.

Like Apollos, it could be said of him, he was an eloquent man. So that's person number one. That's all I'm going to say about him right now.

Person number two. The second person we have is a church member who at times they have spontaneously stood up in the meeting. They gave an exhortation to us that could not have been more timely.

I mean, it hit the spot. It was obvious God had given this man a prophetic word that even the unbelievers who were in the meeting fell under conviction when he spoke. Even some of the children who were lost, their attention was riveted as he spoke.

This brother also had an understanding of all the hard passages in the Bible. And I mean all the hard passages. There was not one passage he did not understand.

He had the right view of Romans 7, whatever that right view is. And in 1 Corinthians 15, 29, he exactly knew what it meant to be baptized on behalf of the dead. Out of the 30 views out there, he had the right one for that.

He knew what it meant that Christ proclaimed to the spirits in prison. This person wrote and published a commentary. And this commentary was on the whole Bible.

And every explanation was right. He plunged all the depths of every hard text. When it came to pointing out the types and shadows of Christ from the Old Testament, he brought out insights no one had ever seen.

This is the second person. Third person. This is an older man in the church.

This man, he has faith like Elijah of old. We even saw his answered prayer with our own eyes. We were having an outdoor fellowship at the park, lightning and rain, 100% on the forecast to come.

And this man led us all in prayer. And instantly the clouds went away. And we knew he had access.

It appeared. He reminded us of Mark 11, 23, which says, Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. If you wanted someone praying for you, you wanted this

man praying for you.

Number four. Fourth person. The last person was a single sister in the church.

In view of the present distress, she had determined never to get married so that she could not have the cares of this world distract her. The deacon said that she was not just a big giver, but she had actually given everything away. Then years later, she received a large inheritance of \$16 million from her dad, and you know what she did with that money? She gave it all away.

Every last penny. As time went on, she went on a brief trip to India to visit missionaries there. And she and others were actually held hostage.

She was given the opportunity while being a hostage to go free. But instead she chose to stay that others might go free. And she ended up being killed and was declared a martyr for the gospel.

Her life was so impactful, great interest arose in the church to write a biography about her. And someone took up the task to do so. They really wanted to get a full perspective of every aspect of this sister's life.

Now later we'll look at what they found out about her. Now, don't these four people sound like those we should imitate and strive to be like? But I only described one aspect of their life, of their lives. What if there was an aspect that if I described would entirely undo everything I just mentioned about them? What if there was one thing lacking that would make all four of these individuals in God's sight to be nothing? Nothing at all.

Let's find out. What's my text? Yeah, let's turn there. 1 Corinthians 13.

I obviously want to speak to you this morning on love. Here in this passage, Paul describes these four theoretical people in the first three verses. Paul says, If I... If I... So let's look.

1 Corinthians 13. If I, speaking to tons of men and of angels, but have not love... Interesting. Have not love, I am a noisy, gone, or a claiming symbol.

That was person number one. Verse two. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge... That's person number two who wrote the commentary.

And if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. That's person number three. Person number four.

Verse three. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but I have not love, I gain nothing. Those are some incredible statements from Paul.

Incredible statements from Paul. And Paul makes it personal by saying if I, if this was true of me, imagine all these spiritual gifts were true in my life. And Paul doesn't say imagine if I had some form of those gifts.

Notice what he says here. And if I understand all mysteries, all knowledge, if I have all faith. Paul's not just saying you have some form.

He's saying you've got it to the max extent you can possibly have it. And Paul doesn't here divide this up into four individuals. He says what if I had all of these into one individual, and if that one individual had all the spiritual gifts to the max extent, but they have not love.

Paul says they're nothing. Nothing. They gain nothing.

They are nothing. It's incredible. This absolutely puts a massive importance on love.

And let's quickly read verse four. Paul says love is patient. So obviously he's talking about our love towards others.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. He's describing it in 15 ways right here.

It's not arrogant or rude. It doesn't insist on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Love never ends. So imagine if I had the entire range of spiritual gifts to their max degree, but have not love. But have not love.

So Paul is telling us emphatically that if there's one person, they have all the higher gifts to the max degree, but the one characteristic of love is gone. It's all nothing. It's waste.

It's something to be put out to the curb and collected by the trash collector. It does not matter. It does not profit.

It's no good. All that appeared to be good, its value is entirely stripped away. He says in verse 1, I am a noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal.

Here the person with all this ability to speak and communicate clearly, people can't hear that individual because of the lack of love. All of those gifts of tons and all of that, it's not profitable. And then he says the next hard statement he said right there is that I am nothing.

Wait, the guy with all knowledge, all mysteries who could write a commentary on all of the difficult passages of the Bible? Isn't that guy something, Paul? I mean, even if he doesn't have love, isn't there something to him with all the knowledge? Paul says no. He's nothing. Just lacking love makes him equal to nothing.

And then he says, verse 3, this person who is so sacrificial, they gain nothing. They give everything away, including their life, and it actually gains them absolutely nothing. Now Paul is making these extreme hypothetical people to drive home a strong point to those at Corinth.

Before this chapter, if you know this letter, Paul has dealt with multiple issues, all of which in some way have a root of a lack of love that this church had that led to all sorts of problems. In a way, Paul has kind of been instructing in different ways, and then he's getting to chapter 13, and it's like he's finished instructing the child, and he's giving them a really hard spanking, trying to wake them up. Because he recognized those at Corinth had an opposing view of who was truly spiritual.

They didn't actually view true spirituality correctly. They had too much of an emphasis on the spiritual gifts. Look at chapter 12, verse 31.

Paul says here, we should earnestly desire the higher gifts. He's not doing away with that. And then he says this, and I will show you still a more excellent way than these higher gifts.

And it's the way of love. It's the way of love. Love is a big thing.

Love is not a cheap word that we should let the world hijack and take from us as Christians. If you want to be known as anything, if I want to be known as anything, I hope people would say, James Jennings, he's loving. He sacrificially serves others.

He's not about himself. That's how we want to be known. So they had an imbalanced view.

And you can imagine that happening, right? You have all these spiritual gifts taking place, and different imbalances can creep in. And love can lose its proper place. And these people can be too focused on the spiritual gifts.

But Paul, he finishes chapter 13 and look at the start of chapter 14. He then tells them, pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. So Paul's not saying, don't desire the spiritual gifts.

Paul's trying to get them balanced again. And so in a similar way, that's my hope this morning. All of us to some degree are lacking in the area of Christ-like love and service to other believers.

And we all have our blind spots. And I hope this can help correct some imbalance with this emphasis of love. And you'll see it as important as it truly is.

And Paul here is not saying you need the gifts or love. Paul is saying you need the gifts and love together. That's how they function.

It's through love that these gifts function and you actually build up those in the church. Right? It's as you use your gift, coupled with love, that it's really going to be beneficial and helpful for individuals. So let's first right here, let's think briefly about how Paul describes love in chapter 13, verse 4 to 7. And honestly, you could do an entire sermon on every single one of these phrases here.

And so I by no means am going to exhaust this. I'm just going to say a few things. Now as I describe these things, I'm also going to point out a few areas prior to chapter 13 where the church at Corinth lacked the very thing that Paul is mentioning here.

And these are going to be some of the reasons why Paul was led to say what he did in chapter 13. So let's think of that. The first one right here.

There's 15 descriptions of love. Verse 4. Paul says love is patient and kind. This describes how we should respond to people.

How do you respond to people? Do you respond in patience? Kindness? Do you get frustrated? Love is patient. It's kind. To be kind is to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish.

There's so much that could be said just on that one phrase. Love is patient. Anytime you're not being patient, the issue is you're not being loving.

You're thinking all about yourself and your timing and your schedule and you're frustrated that someone else is not meeting the standard that you have set. Now, after he says love is patient and kind, Paul mentions how love does not behave towards others. And I'll mention as well, all of these words here in the Greek language which the New Testament was written in, they're all verbs.

They're action words. Because love is not just some idea, it's an action. And Paul here is describing these actions.

So the next thing he says is love does not envy or boast. Love does not envy or boast. Think about envy.

Envy is when you are discontent because of the qualities of another and you desire those qualities. You want them for yourself. It's not a godly jealousy of wanting to be more like Christ.

Envy is painted as something. It's simple. Love does not envy.

And this was happening at the very start of this letter. What were people saying in chapter 1? I follow Paul. I follow Apollos.

And he goes on to describe this in chapter 3. He says that brought about jealousy and strife among the brethren. So they were having this envy about, well, this guy, he preaches the best and I follow him and I follow this other guy and there's all this division being created because of envy and jealousy and strife in the church. The next thing Paul says here in chapter 13, not just does it envy, but it does not boast.

Love does not praise one's self excessively. How many times have we... I mean, look, we all enjoy when someone says something encouraging to us and that's a good thing. The Bible says, let another's lips praise you and not your own.

But how many times we can subtly seek to praise ourself? That's not love. You're not thinking of others. You're thinking about yourself.

You get in a conversation with an individual and all they want to talk about is themselves. And this was happening for those in Corinth. In chapter 4, it says they were being puffed up in favor of one against another.

They were being puffed up. They were clearly thinking too excessively about themselves and they were boasting about themselves. And Paul, he says to them, who sees anything different in you? Isn't what you have something you receive from God? And if you've received it from God, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? So Paul is tearing down this unloving mindset, this boasting that they were doing in chapter 4. And he goes on here.

Chapter 13, verse 4, he says, love is not arrogant. What chapter does Paul tell those at the church, are you not arrogant? Chapter 5. And what was going on in chapter 5? The church wasn't putting a sexually immoral man out of the church. And Paul looked at that as arrogant.

They had a log in their own eye. They were leaving a poisonous man in the church who was corrupting the church. They should have put him out and they didn't do it.

And clearly here, love burying all things doesn't mean you keep someone living in sin in the church because it was affecting the whole church. So Paul says to them, are you not arrogant? Why are you not putting this man out of the church? So that was going on for those at Corinth. They thought they were okay as a church with a massive blind spot that they were unwilling to deal with.

The next thing he says here, he says love is not rude. Rude. Rude.

The idea of that word is love doesn't do something that's shameful. Right? I mean, when someone actually does something that we consider rude, you tend to think that was shameful. That conduct, it was embarrassing, it was shameful.

And this happened as well in 1 Corinthians. The letter. What chapter do we see something clearly rude taking place in? Something shameful that other Christians were doing? Okay, 6, yes.

We'll get to 6. Yeah, 11 is what I was thinking about. In 11, you find them coming together to take the Lord's Supper and they're having a meal. And what was going on? Some people who had food were going ahead and eating while others who did not have food were sitting over there without food being humiliated.

They should have been ashamed. See, if their love was abounding, they would have went and shared their food with the other people and not just went on eating while others had none. And Paul says they were despising the church of God by their actions.

You see, all these situations, they lack love. Not spiritual gifts. That's not what they were lacking.

So, think of this. Love does not insist on its own way. What a statement that is.

Love does not insist on its own way. What chapter was that taking place in? Yeah, 8. Chapter 8, you have people who they did not care about the weak Christians in the church who had previously been involved in different cults where meat was sacrificed to idols and they viewed if you eat that meat as a Christian, you're partaking of this idolatry. Their conscience was weak.

And stronger Christians who had all knowledge, they came along and they looked and they thought, well, it doesn't matter if the weaker guy is bothered by it, I've got a liberty, I'm free to do whatever I do. That's insisting on their own way. And we see this happen.

There are people, they have a liberty that is absolutely a God-given liberty, but they don't discern how to exercise that liberty, in that case, to eat the meat, and they do it around a weaker Christian. And what does Paul say you're doing to your brother when you do that? You're destroying him. Is destroying your brother walking in the most excellent way? No.

That's the strongest statement. The idea of destroy, the idea of stumble, means to push towards hell. That's the idea.

You're not helping them by doing that. It's not loving to destroy your own brother. So that was happening in this letter as well.

Christians were insisting on their liberties, and by doing so, were pushing younger Christians in a horrible direction. Now, what's the next thing he says here? We're just briefly looking at these 15 descriptions of love that Paul gives here. Love is not irritable.

Love is not irritable. What a word that is, right? Get irritated. That irritates me.

How many of us have said that this week? And what we mean is that provoked me to a point of frustration, to a point of an angry response. Even if there's no response, it might just be in my heart that I have sinned with a sinful irritation, an unrighteously angry response. Paul says love, it's not irritated.

It does not get irritated. Then he goes on and he says love is not resentful. Resentful.

What does it mean to be resentful? One of the translations could be love does not count up wrongdoing. It doesn't make a list of wrongs. And clearly where we see this happening, which was already mentioned, was in 1 Corinthians 6. You have two members go to court to sue one another.

Let's make a practical example here. The Lucianos are my neighbors. We're both members in the church.

What if David, when he's parking his truck, he crushes my car, it's damaged, and I decide we can't resolve the problem, no one in the church can help us resolve the problem, so I'm going to sue the Lucianos and take them to court. You'd think that's ridiculous. Now I realize, a car, it's not as big of an issue.

What if it was something far more serious? Paul, you know what he said to those in chapter 6? What did he say? Why not rather suffer wrong? You see, what keeps us from suffering being wrong and bearing with it? Well, resentment. I've got to get payback. I need to do something to get them back.

I mean, I can't just let them do that to me and do nothing about it, right? Then that might look like I'm actually loving, and I wouldn't want them to think that I'm really loving and just going to forgive them for anything, because then that might enable them to take advantage of me. Well, you know what Christ got taken advantage of, and He was the most loving person to ever walk on the face of the earth. Our issue is not that we get taken advantage of too much.

That's not our problem. So love is not resentful. Why not rather suffer wrong? And then Paul, he says the next thing, I mean, it does not rejoice at wrong doing.

Oh, it's horrible when we might rejoice at the failures of others because it makes us look good. And sometimes it's such a subtle thing. Something bad happens to someone who you might feel competitive towards in the spiritual realm, and rather than feel genuine sorrow for them, you subtly have some type of rejoicing at something wrong that's happened.

Paul says love, what does it do? It rejoices with the truth. The loving person rejoices with those who rejoice. Even if it hurts them, they're going to rejoice with others.

Even if it's a sore spot because of the trials they've gone through in their own life, they recognize this is the most excellent way. I'm going to rejoice with those who rejoice. I'm going to rejoice with the truth.

I'm going to think about what's true. And then Paul goes on to say these phrases. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Bears all things. What is Paul meaning there? The believer does not give up easily under pressure, but they keep loving. It's very easy to not want to bear.

This is too hard. This is too difficult. For ten years, I've kind of had this test with this other Christian in the church.

Do I really need to keep bearing with this for another ten years? Can't God just sanctify them now and deal with the problem and we get done with it? No, God might actually allow them to have the blind spot to keep using it to sanctify you and your own blind spots. Am I going to keep going and loving under pressure? Believes all things. Obviously, he doesn't mean believe what is obviously false.

But you know what? As Christians, we've got to assume the best. Rather than think evil about another, we should see what they do and believe the best. Again, so much more could be said on all of these.

But love hopes all things. It's often easy to give up in the midst of our frustrations, but we need a hope for the best. We need a hope for change.

Love endures all things. Again, love perseveres in the face of those who are mean to you. What did Christ endure? It says He endured hostility from sinners.

He endured a lot. The things that we have endured for being a Christian, it's not that much. We've got to keep going the second mile, the third mile.

We need to keep pressing on. We need to show love in a miraculous way that we have in many ways failed. So in every one of these situations mentioned from the letter leading up to this chapter, if love was abounding, the problem would be over.

Every one of those situations. If they were living out these 15 descriptions of love in chapter 13, those problems would have been taken care of if they had these realities. Now, who did this whole list perfectly? Who's the one man? Jesus Christ.

Yet, Paul doesn't go here like he does in Philippians 2, and he says, have this mind among you which is in Christ Jesus, right? And let each of us look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind that Christ had. That's what Paul's ultimately pointing to.

This is us seeking to imitate Jesus Christ. Christ is our example. John 13, verse 34, Jesus says, Love as I have loved you.

He appeals to Himself as the example for how we are to love individuals. And here, Paul, he says love is superior because love is never going to end. Even into heaven it will be there.

And he says in verse 13, Now faith, hope, and love abide. Right now here in this present life of the church, and he says the greatest of these is love. What he prayed for for the Philippi church in Philippians 1-9, he prayed that their love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that they might approve what is excellent.

You see, you can't approve what is excellent if you're not abounding in the most excellent way, which is to have these characteristics of love be at the forefront of how you're living your life. You know, without love, they who appear to have all have nothing and are nothing. It's incredible.

Doesn't that feel like an imbalanced statement? Doesn't it feel a little imbalanced? Someone might feel like saying, but Paul, isn't there some good from all of those apparent spiritual gifts? And Paul says no. If there is not a life of love, it's nothing. It's nothing.

Now that obviously brings up this question. Is this person even a Christian? Are they even saved? Now remember, Paul's not talking about a liberal person here, right? He's talking about a theoretical, imaginary person that he's giving as an example to make a statement. If I had all of this true of me, Paul is saying he would be nothing.

Right? And many, no doubt at Corinth, would have longed to be the person who had all the spiritual gifts to the max extent. I mean, everyone would have been saying I follow that man. I follow him.

But that man would have been nothing. How severe of a deficiency is lacking love for the brethren? Who can think of a text that says it in a very strong way? 1 John 3.14 We know that we've passed from death

into life because we manifest all these spiritual gifts? No. Because we walk in purity? No.

Because we love the brethren. John gives one test of assurance that we know we're a Christian is that we love the brothers. We love our fellow Christians.

And he says whoever does not love abides in death. So John is saying if you don't love others, you're lost. If you don't love others, you're lost.

It doesn't matter what manifestations of the Spirit are going on in your life. And you might say, well, a lost person doesn't have the Spirit. How are they going to have a manifestation of the Spirit? Well, remember Jesus' words in Matthew 7.21 On that day, many will say to Me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Their prophecy is did we not cast out demons in Your name? And do many mighty works in Your name? That sounds like all faith.

See, mountains moved. And what does Jesus say to those people? He declares to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.

So these people apparently did supernatural things, and yet they were devoid of the love of God in their hearts. So obviously, if you live a life without love, the person is not a true Christian in the sense that they're literally absolutely nothing in the sight of God. You can really appear to have a lot going on in the spiritual realm and be nothing and be lost.

And we've had that come through the church. We've had people come here who they believed they had all sorts of words from God. They thought they were spiritual.

And it became to nothing. They could not love the brethren. They had such pride and arrogance, refused correction.

So, mighty works are not a sign you have the Holy Spirit. I think that's pretty obvious. But Christian love is.

Isn't that amazing? That's usually not what people are going to say. And Christian love is rooted in knowing Christ. You know what Paul says at the end of this letter? If you're on chapter 13, just flip to chapter 16.

Paul says in verse 22, if anyone has no love for the Lord, that's the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed. You see, love for Christ is going to lead me to love the brethren. It's going to lead me to love as Christ has loved.

1 John says we love because He first loved us. Jesus says in John 14-15, He says, if you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, the love of Christ controlled him.

He no longer lived for himself, but he lived for Christ. So are some of those prophesying at Corinth lost? Yes. But I want to mention another person.

This is the person that we can fall into at times, Christian. Think of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3. He talked about a picture of judgment day and some of what the Christian has done being burned up as wood, hay, and stubble. That sounds like you gained nothing, right? You get to the judgment bar and you think a certain work in your life as a Christian was going to be worth something, and then you find out what? It burns up.

It didn't really have. It wasn't gold, it wasn't silver. It burns up.

And Paul's not saying that the person's lost. They are still saved. They are a true Christian.

They do have good works. But there were specific works in their life that because they did them devoid of love to God and love to man, that work was worth nothing. Nothing.

What they did was just a selfish act that was all about themselves and it burns up. It's wood, hay, and stubble on that final great day. And brethren, that is so sobering.

Because like Paul said, we can't ultimately say we're truly acquitted when we look to judge ourselves. We can say I don't know of anything against myself. But there are things that I've done in my life that I imagine will burn up on that great day that I do not recognize at this point in my Christian life.

That I did not really see how much self was involved in what I did. And come that day, it's going to end up being absolutely nothing. But obviously the true Christian, they have works.

He's saved us for works that He's prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. But there are certain actions, specific works, that will prove to be nothing because they were done devoid of love. So, what does a strong passage like this do for you, the Christian? Paul's making this extreme example of one person having the max extent of all the spiritual gifts.

And he says they're nothing, they gain nothing, they're noisy gone when they speak, it's just all hollow sound. You cannot hear what they're saying despite all the gift because they lack love. What does that do to a Christian to hear Paul speak like that? What does it do to you? You know what it does to me? It makes me want to have more love.

Right? It makes me say I have deficiencies and I am not content. I want to press on to higher ground. I want to be more loving.

I want my love to abound more and more. I'm sick of selfishness. I'm sick of despising certain Christians for specific things.

I'm tired of being too critical for certain individuals when it's unjustified. I want to be kinder. I want to have more patience.

I want to have a sinless car ride as I go to Missouri with my family and not be frustrated in a carnal way. I want to love like Christ loved. That's what this does to the true Christian.

The lost person who's truly nothing, they hear all of this and they don't ultimately care. Because they just want to clean on to all of these gifts and all of this supposed thing where they're getting their praise before man in this life. The Christian, they say, yes, I want to be a more loving Paul.

I don't want to be nothing. And those with gifts, they recognize, you know what, my gift is pretty pathetic and unimportant if I fell in this one area. And it gets you right back in balance.

In balance. In balance, not imbalance. Because again, does Paul drive us from the ditch on the right side of the road onto the road into the ditch on the left side of the road? No.

He gets us back in the middle. And he ends and he says, you pursue love and you desire earnestly the spiritual gifts. Paul's not saying do away with these things.

So, Paul desires love be the way in which the gifts function. We don't pick between the two. Rather, we use our gifts in love.

So let's relook briefly at these four people that I mentioned at the beginning of my message. The first preacher's name, his name is Noisy Gone. Though this person had the gift of tons, he gave distinct notes, people knew what was being played, yet because of his lack of love, the people could not sit in the concert hall and listen.

Everyone left. It is as if the entire orchestra was people smashing a noisy gone or a claiming cymbal. And as many people who've preached on this text have done, if they have a band, a drum set up here, they will go and they will smash the cymbals.

And as someone said initially, it's funny, right? Everyone kind of laughs. But then you keep smashing it and people don't think it's funny anymore, right? They're thinking my ears hurt. Can you please stop that? And then if you don't stop, if I don't stop it, I'll clear this building out pretty quickly.

If you don't have love, that's what happens. The second person's name was Know-It-All. You bought his commentary.

You began to read it. Yet one Sunday, you witnessed his rudeness towards someone. And it troubled you.

You later came to find out that many people sought to address him on his harshness, and he defended himself and showed no humility, full of pride. All of a sudden, his commentary that was like none ever written is unreadable to you. Know-It-All was always quarreling.

He wasn't kind to anyone. He's correcting his opponents with harshness. Yet now you view him and all of his insights as nothing and would rather hear an unlearned man speak who manifested the love of Christ.

Third person. Their name was All-Faith. He kept seeing answers to prayer again and again.

He got praise before men for this. His name spread among the churches as the big prayer warrior. Then in our church, someone else had a major breakthrough on a specific matter of prayer.

And when that member was honored about the answered prayer and people thanked God in the assembly, All-Faith did not rejoice together. He did the opposite. He wanted wrongdoing to happen to them.

He tried to make it look like they already knew it was going to be answered anyways. It was a setup. He hoped they would leave the church.

He envied them. Because now they were becoming known as a person whom God hears. The fourth person.

And then there's the fourth. Her name was entirely sacrificial. Remember her? Someone was looking into doing a biography on her.

Wonder what they found. As they began to interview people, it shockingly kept coming up again and again that she was irritable and always insisting on her own way. She burned bridge after bridge.

But here she had apparently died a martyr. Apparently died a martyr. I mean, 1 John 3.16 says, By this we know love that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

Well, didn't she lay down her life? Isn't that what love does? Yet her whole life was not one of genuine love. It was a religious zeal and selfishness motivating her every act. Like Ananias and Sapphira, her motives were all about self and being sane before men.

The biographer, he couldn't publish the book, and on his draft he changed the title to entirely sacrificial was entirely nothing at all. So those are shocking ends to these theoretical people. And Paul says, If I, and we should do that, right? We should have a self-assessment.

If you have all these powers and do all these things and lack love, you are nothing. What am I? What are you? Paul says if you're like that, I would be nothing. What are you? What am I? You know what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15? He says, By the grace of God, I am what I am.

And that's where we come back to time and time again. By the grace of God, we are what we are. And it's because of the grace of God that we should expect Him to enable us to grow in this area of love.

That's why Paul prayed for those at Philippi that their love would abound more and more. He prayed that in faith that it would be answered. You pray for your love to abound, God will give you opportunities to show patience and kindness and not insisting on your own way.

Romans 12 v. 9 It says love must be genuine or without hypocrisy. You can have a supposed love that is hypocritical and not genuine. Paul says you can give yourself to be burned and it all be fake.

1 Timothy 1 v. 5 says, the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith. We're being sincere in what we do. See, love is a big deal.

This passion should cause you to do, as Paul says at the end in 14.1, it should cause you to pursue love in big ways, in small ways. I don't even need to mention, there are some small ways right now in this pandemic that could be a way for you to love the brethren. Figure that out.

What is something I could do to love the brethren? Paul says love is more excellent. Paul says it's the greatest. Do you say that? When you think about love, do you say, man, that's the greatest.

I want more love. Boy, that's the most excellent way. I want to be on that path.

Here, an example. Well, before I get this example, let me just mention this, and I already quoted this, but Philippians 1. Was the church at Philippi a missions-minded church? Yes. Paul says they had been laboring together in the Gospel from the first day until now.

And yet, isn't it amazing what Paul prayed for them? This missions church that had been supporting him since the beginning, and Paul prays, it's my prayer that your love would abound more and more. That's what Paul wanted. With knowledge and discernment, but love, it was the big thing.

It was the big thing there. So let me give an example. This is from Robert Chapman's biography.

Robert Chapman was known as the Apostle of Love. That's the name on the front of the biography. This is an example of love.

Chapman would go and street preach. He says this. Someone wrote this.

Some people were greatly offended by his plain preaching on sin and the need for repentance. A touching story is told of his love and concern for one of those critics. A grocer in Barnstable became so upset when Chapman was preaching in the open air that he strode up to where Chapman was standing and he spit on him.

Later, one of Robert Chapman's wealthy relatives came to Barnstable to visit him and to try to understand his activities. Arriving by a horse-drawn cab at the address given to him, the relative at first would not believe that Chapman lived in such a simple abode in such a poor neighborhood. Chapman ushered him into the clean but simple interior and explained what living dependence on the Lord meant and how the Lord had provided for all his needs.

The relative asked, Can I purchase groceries for you? Chapman gladly assented, but stipulated that he must buy food from a certain grocer. What grocer do you think that is? The man who spit on him. The relative went there, made a large purchase, and paid the bill.

When the grocer learned that the food was to be delivered to R.C. Chapman, he said that the visitor must have come to the wrong shop. Chapman's relative, however, replied that Chapman himself had specifically directed him to that shop. The grocer, who had viciously attacked and castigated Chapman for years, broke down in tears.

Soon he came to Chapman's house, asked forgiveness, and yielded his life to Christ. You see, that's what love does. Was it his prophesying and gift of tons and all his knowledge? Is that what broke the man down? No.

Do we desire earnestly the spiritual gifts? Yes. But what's excellent is love. The greatest of these is love.

Love. We need to view love as excellent as it actually is and truly spiritual as it is. If we were picking spiritual teams in Paul's day, so to speak, and I know that would be wrong in and of itself to be picking teams, so maybe that's a bad example, but to get into your mind, who would you pick? Right? We line everyone up.

And you've got the four people I mentioned. You've got Noisy Gone. Obviously, his name back then was a really eloquent preacher.

Then you've got All Faith, and you've got Entirely Sacrificial. Who would you pick? And then you've got the little person over there who you can't really discern what spiritual gift they have. But man, you know they're loving.

You've seen their patience with you in incredible ways. Who would you pick on your team? You know who Paul would pick? The little person. Because he says the other people, if they don't have love, they're nothing.

Do we view true spirituality as it is? How discerning are you in regards to that? Brethren, love is superior to all extraordinary gifts. If one person had all the gifts to their max extent, but they lacked love, they're

nothing. It's incredible.

Love is an ingredient. You do not want to lack that. If you do, you're not ultimately a Christian if that's the character of your whole life.

For us true Christians, we fail at times. But the true Christian, they get up. They keep on going.

They want to love more. They want to be more like the Savior. They clear their conscience.

They call that person they sinned against and say, will you forgive me? That was harsh of me to say what I said or that was unloving of me to do what I do. So I hope this message does what Hebrews 10 and other places tell us to do. To stir up one another to love and good works.

I hope this stirs you up to love. Because that's what you and I need more of. And if you don't think you need more of it, then you first need more humility.

Alright, let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word and even the Apostle Paul, Lord, we're so thankful to have these different letters as he deals with different churches and deals with different problems. Father, I pray that we would see more spiritual gifts genuinely taking place in our day.

Lord, even though these things, we don't claim that they're normative as they were in Acts, but Lord, we do desire greater manifestations of Your power that are genuine. But Lord, more than that, we desire what is most excellent and that is more love. And so Lord, I pray that our love would abound more and more.

That our kindness and patience and not insisting on our own way, rejoicing with the truth, Lord, help us not be envious or rude or arrogant. Lord, take pride away. Lord, help us to love more.

Lord, help us to excel in this. Help us to pursue it, to go after it, to hunt it down, to look for opportunities. Lord, I pray that You would stir up the brethren, that You would stir up my own heart to love in a greater way.

Lord, supernaturally stir up our hearts to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for His example and we want to imitate Him. And so we ask for Your power to do that.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Okay, we are dismissed.

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