

“May the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all.”

Let’s take a moment to reflect on an important message drawn from the words of the Apostle Paul—one that challenges the very foundation of our Christian faith.

The Priority of Love Over Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 (NIV), Paul writes:

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am 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 do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

The Corinthian church was highly gifted (see 1 Corinthians 1:7), but Paul saw that their practice of spiritual gifts lacked something

essential—agape love—the selfless, sacrificial, God-centered love that is the core of Christian character.

He uses a striking metaphor: even if we speak heavenly languages or perform incredible acts of faith, without love, we're just making noise—like a brass gong or clanging cymbals that make an impression but quickly fade away. These instruments are loud but ultimately meaningless without melody or purpose. So too are spiritual gifts and religious acts without genuine love.

Love Is Not Optional—It Is Foundational

In Matthew 22:37–40 (ESV), Jesus summarized the entire Law and the Prophets with two commandments:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
This is the great and first commandment.
And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Without this two-fold love—for God and for people—our worship,

service, and sacrifices lose eternal value.

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV) to describe the nature of true love:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, 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.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.”

This is the kind of love God demonstrated to us through Christ—“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (*Romans 5:8, ESV*). We didn’t earn it. We didn’t deserve it. Yet, He gave it freely. That’s agape—and that’s the love we’re called to reflect.

The Danger of Giftedness Without Holiness

Sometimes people begin their spiritual journey with great zeal—especially after experiencing miracles or breakthroughs. But if that zeal isn't rooted in love for God, it fades over time. Like a gong, it's loud at first but quickly silences. Jesus warned of this in the Parable of the Sower—some receive the word with joy, but when trials come, they fall away (Matthew 13:20-21, NIV).

There's a sobering story of a renowned pastor in Jamaica—known for powerful prophetic gifts. He could reveal deep secrets of the heart, and many viewed him as a mighty man of God. But during a powerful service where the Holy Spirit moved, he broke down in tears, confessing a long-hidden life of sexual immorality. His gifts had continued, but his personal life was in rebellion against God. He was, in Paul's terms, a "clanging cymbal"—outwardly powerful, but inwardly empty of love and holiness.

Jesus also warned about this:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name...?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you.'"

(Matthew 7:21-23, NIV)

Serving God Must Flow from Love

We must constantly examine our hearts. Are we preaching, singing, evangelizing, prophesying, or giving from a place of love for God and others? Or is it for recognition, tradition, or personal gain?

If not rooted in love, our service—even if it blesses others—may not be accepted by God. Paul says in Galatians 5:6 (NIV):

“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Let’s not run in vain. Let’s not be Christians who “sound” spiritual but lack substance. We may see miracles, speak in tongues, and fill churches—but if our hearts are far from God, we’re just noise in His ears.

The Call to Return to First Love

Jesus said to the church in Ephesus:

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

(Revelation 2:4-5, NIV)

Let us not fall into that trap. Let's love God not because of what He does for us, but because of who He is. Let's love people not only when they love us back, but because Christ loved us first.

In Conclusion:

Without love, everything we do for God is in vain. Let us put love first—pure, patient, selfless, forgiving love. Only that kind of love will remain when all gifts, knowledge, and tongues pass away.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV)

May the Lord help us to walk in love that reflects His heart.
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