

Love Is The Greatest



Foundations (Day 216)
by Derek Prince

We have said that among the various purposes for which God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit, this pouring out of divine love within the believer's heart occupies a place of unique importance. The reason for this is that, without the all-pervading influence of divine love in the believer's heart, all the other results which may be produced by the baptism in the Holy Spirit lose their true significance and fail to accomplish their true purpose.

Paul uses a vivid series of examples to emphasise the unique importance of this agape love.

> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-2)

With characteristic humility, Paul puts himself in the place of a believer who exercises spiritual gifts but lacks divine love. In the previous chapter of 1 Corinthians he enumerated nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. He now imagines himself to be one who exercises various of these gifts, but who lacks love.

First he considers the possibility of exercising the gift of tongues on such a high supernatural plane that he speaks not only unknown human languages but even the language of angels. He says that if he were to do this without divine love, he would be no better than a gong or a cymbal that produces a loud noise when it is struck but is quite empty inside.

Then he considers the possibility of exercising other outstanding spiritual gifts – such as prophecy, or the word of wisdom, or the word of knowledge or faith. But he says that if he should exercise any or all of these gifts without divine love, he would be absolutely nothing.

These words of Paul provide the answer to a question which is being asked in many circles today: Is it possible to misuse the gift of tongues? The answer to this is clear: yes, it is perfectly possible to misuse the gift of tongues. Any use of tongues apart from divine love is a misuse, because it

renders the believer who exercises it no better than an empty, clanging gong or cymbal, and this was certainly never the purpose for which God bestowed the gift.

This applies equally to the other gifts which Paul mentions in the next verse – prophecy, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and faith. To use any of these gifts apart from divine love is to miss the whole purpose of God.

Devotional

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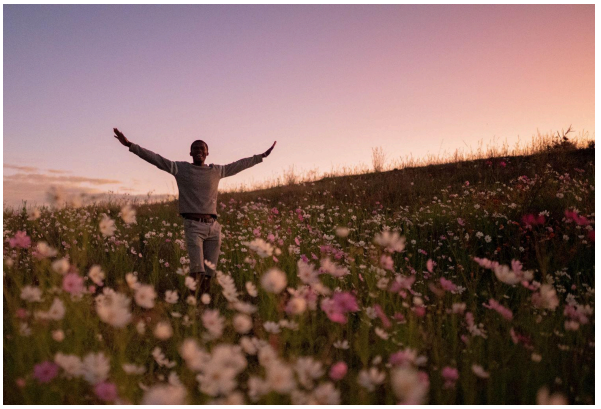

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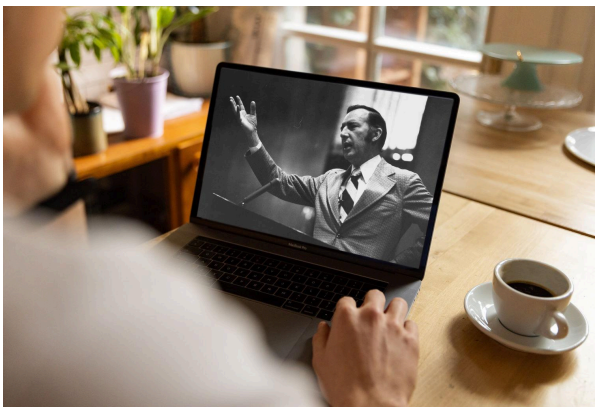

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