

No Substitute for Love



The Love of God (Part 13)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to prepare our hearts for the New Year that now faces us with our special theme, The Love of God.

In my talk yesterday I explain that love is the end purpose of the law. Some people have the impression that under the law, under the old covenant, God wanted one kind of result; but under grace, under the new covenant, God wants something different. That's not true. God's desire for humanity has always been summed up in the two great basic commandments: "Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself." The difference between the law and the gospel is not in the end but in the means. And Paul explains the law failed to achieve that end, not because there was anything wrong with the law, but because of the sinfulness of man's heart. The gospel has the only remedy for changing man's sinful heart and thus enabling him to fulfill God's eternal, unchanging requirement, which is love.

We looked at three phrases that James uses in his epistle about love. The law of love. He calls it the perfect law. It includes everything else. He calls it the royal law; the one who lives by that law lives like a king, not like a slave. And he calls it the law that gives freedom because when you really love you are always free to do what you want to do because love always makes you want to do the right thing.

Today I'm going to share with you a related fact of tremendous importance and one that we must never allow ourselves to forget. And this is it: there is no substitute for love. Let me say that again: there is no substitute for love.

I'll turn to the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, First Corinthians and I'm going to begin right at the end of chapter 12, verse 31 and read on into chapter 13 through verse 3. Chapter 13 is the chapter that is often called "The Love Chapter." At the end of First Corinthians chapter 12, Paul endorses the exercise of spiritual gifts. He says:

> "But eagerly desire the greater gifts. [That's really not an option. It's a command. The Bible doesn't leave it open to us whether we desire spiritual gifts. We are instructed to desire spiritual gifts as Christians. But Paul goes on to warn that without something else, spiritual gifts in themselves, cannot achieve the purpose

> of God. What is the something else? Paul calls it 'the most excellent way' and it is love. Now I'll read on. Paul says...] And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not 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 have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (NIV)

There are some very tremendous statements there that we need to give heed to. Paul goes on in the context of his teaching about spiritual gifts and he gives examples in the first three verses of chapter 13 which essentially cover the three main recognized areas of spiritual gifts, that is gifts of utterance, gifts of revelation and gifts of power. The gifts of utterance are covered in verses 1 and 2 where Paul speaks about the tongues of men and angels and the gift of prophecy. And he says, "Even with all those gifts, if they are exercised without love, the result is simply a person is a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." A lot of noise but nothing real inside.

Then he goes on with the gifts of revelation and he covers this with, "...I can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge," but he says, "If I have all that and I don't have love I am nothing." And then he goes on to the area of theexercise of the gifts of power and he gives an example of the supreme gift of power, faith. He says, "I have the greatest kind of faith, the faith that can move mountains, but have not love I am nothing."

In this passage at the beginning of First Corinthians 13, Paul not merely speaks about the exercise of all spiritual gifts and says that without love they are all empty or nothing, but he also speaks about the utmost kind of good deeds. He says, "If I give all I possess to the poor, and I surrender my body to the flames. I'm willing to die as a martyr, an agonizing death, and I have not love, I gain nothing." That's really a tremendous statement. No matter what we may do in the realm of supernatural gifts or in the realm of self-sacrifice and giving ourselves, our substance, our very lives; all of it without love is ineffective.

How earnestly we all need to take this to heart. I can confess that looking back over my own ministry there have been times when I've allowed myself to be diverted from the real issue, which is love. And I've taught and exercised on spiritual gifts and yet at times my own life has been lacking in love. I've been critical of other Christians, I may have been somewhat proud and arrogant because of my spiritual gifts. And I have missed the real purpose of God at times. And I have to state frankly, as I look at the body of Christ, Christians worldwide, I think the greatest single deficiency is love. If we had this divine love we would not treat one another the way we so often do. We would not make accusations. We would not be critical. We would not be jealous. We would not tear one another down. We would build one another up. That's one of the things that Paul says about love, love edifies. It builds up. It doesn't pull down. It's not negative.

So often we can use our cleverness and our gifts and our talents destructively. But love is never destructive. It's always positive; it's always edifying. That's why there is no substitute for love. May everyone of us continually keep this in mind. Let me say it once more. There is no substitute for love.

There is one more extremely important thing that I need to say in this connection and it is this, the kind of love that we are talking about comes only from thing in our lives and that is faith. You see some people tend to exalt love at the expense of faith. There attitude is, "The only thing that matters is love. Don't talk to me too much about faith." But that's illogical and inconsistent. Not that love isn't the supremely important thing, but because love of this kind can come into our lives and be expressed through us only by faith. Faith is the essential prerequisite for enjoying and manifesting this kind of love. This is what Paul says in Galatians 5, verse 6:

> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. [I believe Paul, there takes circumcision and uncircumcision as being outward religious acts. And he says, By themselves outward religious acts have no value unless they're joined with love. And then he goes on to say in the same verse...] The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (NIV)

That's very sweeping. "The only that counts is faith expressing itself through love." We must never divorce faith and love. You see we can say we have faith and be proud of our faith, but if it doesn't produce love it's really worthless in the long run. Or we can lay all our emphasis on love and say, "Love is what really matters," but we must not overlook the fact that the only way to this kind of love is faith. There's no other way to reproduce God's love, but by God's faith. So if we just keep on telling people you must be loving, you must love one another, but we do not put in their hands the key of faith, then we just frustrate them. One thing I will tell you, is you cannot have God's love by trying. In fact, in general love does not come by trying. This is a simply but very profound

fact.

Suppose I were to say to my dear wife, “I’m really trying to love you.” Do you think she would appreciate that? I don’t. Why not? Because trying to love a person is really a confession that you don’t love them. And trying to love people generally is a confession we don’t have the love of God. It does not come by trying.

How does it come? By faith, if it’s God’s faith, through the new birth releases in our hearts and lives the love of God and there is no other way to that love.

Our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. I’ll be continuing tomorrow with this theme: The Love of God.

Radio Program

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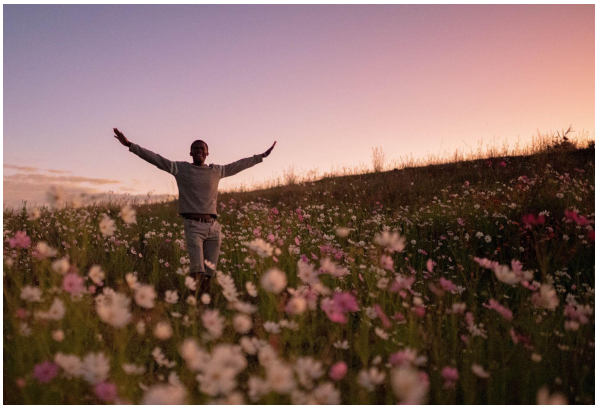

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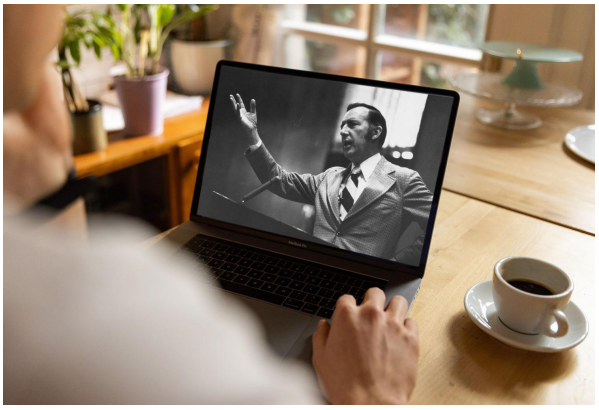

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