

The Indispensable Virtue

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, September 11, 2016

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Good morning, church. You may have noticed we have a fancy new microphone. We're getting hi-tech today. Can you hear me okay? Praise the Lord. Okay. I'm the guinea pig this morning.

Let's pray and before we get into that, before we pray, it's something I remind myself every time we come to the word, every time we come to hear it preached, and every time I preach it, that it will be ineffective unless the Holy Spirit engages it in my heart, unless he engages it in your heart. Without the Spirit breathing life into us, nothing is going to happen; nothing is going to change, our faith will not be increased, we will not be edified but with the Holy Spirit's work in our heart working through his word, miraculous change occurs inside of us, things that we can't accomplish on our own. So as we go, as we open the word, please pray with me this morning that the Lord would change your heart through it, that he would cause understanding, that he would cause clarity, that he would cause humility and submission to what he says because that doesn't happen automatically and we desperately need that. We come here to church to hear the word not because we're good, not because we're fine and not something that makes us righteous to be here, we come because we desperately need to change. We desperately need to worship Christ and to love him more faithfully, to put off sin and to put on righteousness, and a failure to do so is destructive in our life. So we come as desperate people this morning and I come as a desperate preacher, inadequate to convey what we all need to know and believe and so we need the Lord as always. So please as I pray, this isn't just a formality, this isn't just some way to gather our thoughts or smooth the transition in a service, this is real. We talk to God and we beg him for his help. So just as we do that this morning, please pray with me.

Let's pray.

Father, we desperately need you and we acknowledge your greatness and power, your worth, your might. We acknowledge that you deserve all the praise for everything good. And so, Lord, we need you to come to make your word effective in our hearts. Lord, we could pray all day and never exhaust all the ways that we need you and so, Father, we come to you as a body seeking your favor, your kindness to grow us and change us more into the image of Christ. We pray in his name. Amen.

Also too, just as we get started, of course the preaching of the word is the focal point. To hear from God but the spotlight is not on the preacher and I know, okay, I'm the new guy, I'm just going to call it out, the elephant in the room. I'm the new guy. How is he going to do? Cheering for him. You know, I really appreciate the love that is shown and the desire for me to do well and that shows your love for me but let's take that spotlight and that needs to be turned now onto your heart. The word of God is now shining on your heart and then let's take that spotlight and shine it on Jesus where the attention needs to be.

You know, we come together as a body and each member gifted in different ways, each member equipped by the Holy Spirit, equipped by God to minister to one another and the playing of instruments and the singing and everything that goes into that, the work that it takes to be skilled at that is incredible, and for that then to be used not for one's own glory and honor but for the honor of Christ. What a blessing. What a blessing to come, where we're not coming to a performance, we're coming to a worship service where we are all built up by what each other adds. That's amazing. That is an amazing gift of God that not one of us has everything that we need but together, equipped by the Holy Spirit, we have what we need today to be built up into the image of Christ. And I up here from this vantage point have the clearest picture of Christ, of who Christ is on earth. Think of Christ, he was the perfect man, gifted in every way, you could say; each of the gifts to its max. And he has given a piece of that to each of us and when we are here together, we have a treasure because we get to see Christ. That's why Christianity on your own watching YouTube or whatever, you're missing out. You're missing out because we get to be here together and to benefit from Jesus, that mystery, Christ in you, Christ in us, the hope of glory together. I'm just bursting with joy that I get to be a part of this body, of this church, and to see that his love for us displayed through you all and what an amazing blessing and treasure that we have so I want to highlight that and magnify that and praise him for that, and may we never neglect to come together, not because that's what good Christians do, we show up, but because we need each other and we are blessed by each other.

So with that, please open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12. We're going to start here for some context and then end up in verse 13 and this relates to just what I was talking about. 1 Corinthians 12:4. He says,

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

There's the purpose that you've been given this.

8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds

of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Alright, my purpose today is not to get into all the controversies regarding the spiritual gifts and tongues and prophecy and all of that. You can go and read John MacArthur's book "Strange Fire" or go talk to our friend, Todd Friel, he can help you out with those things. But to highlight that the Holy Spirit has given us those gifts and those abilities and he has given them for a purpose, for the benefit and the common good of the body, but these gifts are useless apart from one thing.

Let's go ahead and skip on down to chapter 13, verse 1,

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

This chapter will be the focus of our, I guess, meditation today. That's often the preacher's job, right, is read this passage and now look at it and now think about it, look at this.

Chapter 13, verse 1, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels." Tongues, the miraculous ability given by God to speak a known language, a real language, so that someone who is a native speaker of that language could hear the glory of God in their own language and be saved. It was a sign of the truth of God. It was miraculous. Can you imagine if you had that ability? Can you imagine if one of us had that ability to do that here? If someone came in the door, didn't speak a word of English, only Mandarin Chinese, and someone got up here who had never learned a lick of Chinese and got up and expounded eloquently on the Gospel in Chinese and that person got saved. I mean, that's a pretty big deal, right? I mean, that kind of stuff actually happened in the early church and some people were gifted with this ability apparently to do this on a regular basis. Can you imagine? Can you imagine like how prominent that person would be among us? "We've got one person, I mean, man, that guy is close to God. That guy is spiritual. He's going to be close to the throne." Well, Paul lays this out here that if you don't have love and you are able to do that and yet you don't have love, you're just a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal; a noisy clashing, crashing gong. It's irritating. It's useless. You think of a cymbal in an orchestra when it's within its purpose, it's great, it adds to the music, but when the guy is just over there crashing wildly, drawing attention to himself, he is useless for the purpose for which it was made and it ruins everything else.

And Paul takes it a step beyond the tongues of men, he says to this hyperbole of "tongues of angels," hypothetically speaking, "If I could speak in the tongue of angels." I mean, angels must communicate. I'm sure they communicate and I suppose they must have

some kind of language. Can you imagine, I mean, if you had that ability to just go and talk to angels, to speak in their language? And I believe Paul is going to this extreme, this hyperbole, this doesn't really happen, but apparently some people in Corinth claimed to have that ability. Some people claim to have that ability today, to speak in the tongues of angels. Well, that would be amazing, that would be pretty cool, and I'll tell you what, our view of that guy would be, "Wow, what a spiritual guy." If it was legit. If he legitimately talked to angels. Man, I want to go and talk to that guy, right? He's got...what do you talk about with angels? Right? Well, he says here, "if you have not love," agape love, love that is selfless, a selfless desire for the benefit of another, if you do not have that, "then you are a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal."

So you could say this for us today: if your spiritual gift, if you are gifted amazingly and yet you have no love, you are useless and irritating. We all recognize that, right? We know how hard it is to deal with gifted people who are proud. It's tough to deal with. You're not edified by that person and when that person makes a joke, you don't laugh. That person says something, you tune out. You want to plug your ears just like when someone is crashing a cymbal in your face. You want to close your ears. That is our gifts, the best, the most spectacular of our gifts without love.

Verse 2, he goes on to prophetic powers and he says, "if I have all prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Prophetic powers, that could be the ability given by God to tell the future or to declare God's truth; gifted by God to proclaim his truth. Those are your preachers. I mean, today you could say that's your pastors, your elders.

And if I have the ability to understand all mysteries. Okay, what are mysteries? Those are things that God has hidden and only revealed to a certain few; things that God hasn't disclosed to everybody. And if you had that ability and God had given you that understanding, that you understand the deep things of God, the mysteries that have been hidden from everyone else, and if you had all knowledge. I mean, how prominent would that person be? To know theology, to know doctrine, to know wisdom, to know the right answer to everything. This person is authoritative and yet if they don't have love, they're nothing. Think about how we view those people in our own life, people who we see as wise and knowledgeable and who are gifted at preaching and speaking the word of God. These are people that we lift up and rightfully so. I mean, that should be esteemed. But God says right here, Paul says right here that if you have no love, not only are you irritating and annoying, here it says, "I am nothing." I really think I'm something because of all these gifts that I have and yet the opposite is actually true if I have no love. You see, exercising your gifts, just serving and using your gifts does not equal love. You can do that without love. It's possible to serve without love. It's possible to do all the things that you're good at and gifted at and to work hard at it and yet not do it from love.

Then he goes on in verse 3, it says, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." You know, love is sacrificial but sacrifice is not always motivated by love; sometimes it's pride, sometimes it's selfishness,

sometimes it's to gain something else but it's not always done by love, and you could give up your body to be burned as a martyr and divide up all you have and give it away and yet not have love, and if that's the case, you gain nothing. Now, what is he talking about, gaining nothing? What is there to be gained? You know, I've heard often, "Oh, people can't use you if you don't have love." Is that true? That God can't use you? Has God ever used somebody who didn't have love in your life? Yes, he uses evil for good. My parents got saved, they were started on the path of searching out the Scriptures through Jehovah's Witnesses.

God can use anybody but it says right here that you will not gain from it. What is he talking about? This is a neglected topic, I think, in our Christian world, is the idea of eternal reward; that God will reward for faithfulness on the last day. It's not going to be a giant Christian communist country in heaven where we all just got the same reward, that there are differences of reward in heaven.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 4. Let's actually, let's jump up to chapter 3 and we'll get down to chapter 4 in a second, but chapter 3, and he says in verse 5, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." Okay, so what do Paul and Apollos deserve credit for there? For the growth? Nothing. God deserves credit for the growth but look at verse 8, "He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." So what he's saying there is that they will receive wages based on their labor, not salvation, not earning salvation, but that they will be rewarded appropriately according to their work. They don't deserve the credit for the growth but they do for...God honors their faithfulness.

Look on in verse 10, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." So he's using a metaphor of a building and the type of materials that you use to build; certain materials will survive a fire and others won't. He's relating that to the work that we do here. Now, by what will that be determined? What will be the judge of that? What is determined to last and what won't? Does that mean that people won't get saved through the guy that doesn't do good work? Well, no, because people get saved through all kinds of different means.

What is the determination of this? Look down at chapter 4, verse 1, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." He's talking about the teachers, Paul and Apollos. "Moreover, it is required of stewards that

they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me." Verse 5, "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." What are the things that we cannot see? What can I see about a preacher like John MacArthur? What can I see? I can see the sermons. I can see the seminaries and the colleges, and I can see all the stuff and I can see the results in people's lives. I can see that but what can I not see? What can't I see? His motives. I can't see his heart. And I'm not calling into question his motives, please don't misunderstand me, but what this is saying, what 1 Corinthians is saying, "Look, you do not know the heart. You don't know the heart of all these teachers." And some of them were boasting about which teacher was their favorite and which one they followed. That was the thing that elevated them over other people is, "I follow this guy or you follow that guy? What's wrong with you? I'm of Paul. I'm of Apollos. I'm of Cephas." These were all godly teachers, teachers of righteousness and truth, okay. We're not talking about false teachers here but they were elevating one against the other. They were using this as a means to elevate themselves and they were judging the heart of these men, and here he says that only God knows the purposes of the heart but there will be a day when he will "bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."

Paul says elsewhere in Romans and in 2 Corinthians that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, not to be condemned but our hearts will be exposed for who we really are and for what we have really done, what has been motivated rightly. Do you remember the Sermon on the Mount where he says don't do your deeds to be seen by men, do it to please the Lord. Those who do it to be seen by men, that's all the reward that they are going to get, but God who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly. On that last day, secret faithfulness will be rewarded openly, secret sin will be exposed openly. That's humbling, isn't it?

But that day is coming and I think that will serve a couple of purposes. Right now that's a motivation, "Man, I don't want to stand before the Lord and look at all the dishonor I brought on his name. I want to have loved him and been motivated properly." It also on that last day, I think, will be a cause for humility which will then ramp up our love for him on that last day because we will be so humbled, we will be so humbled by the grace that he has shown us and to see that all of that false, these false motives were covered by the blood of Christ who died for me. But that day is coming, guys. That will be an actual day when we will all stand before him and it is joyful and fearful at the same time and that's the way Scripture holds us in that tension. That's what I believe he's referring to in chapter 13, is if I do all of this stuff and yet I'm not motivated by love, I am nothing. I'll be one of those guys that escapes through the fire with the smell of smoke. I'll be in heaven but the reward will be small comparatively and I will have gained nothing if I am not motivated by love.

You see, 1 Corinthians was written to humble a proud church. Their pride showed up in so many ways. It showed up in the divisions that we just talked about. One word that Paul uses several times throughout this book is, "you are arrogant; you have become arrogant or puffed up," and he says, "Why are you arrogant? What do you have that you didn't receive?" By the way, where there is jealousy, he says in chapter 3, where there is jealousy and envy, that's not spiritual. You're acting like carnal people. You claim to be spiritual and yet you act like unbelievers; people who are not just not spiritual, you are unspiritual. You're the opposite of spiritual. Then he goes in and over and over he is humbling them. He's not just giving them specific instructions on how to deal with immorality or divisions or the Lord's supper. That's not his point. His point is, "You guys should have handled these things better if you were so spiritual." So he's exposing these things and their lack of love throughout the book, their pride and their arrogance. You see it in so many...

One of the other things too that stands out is the Lord's supper in chapter 11, or is it 10? Anyway, I should know this. He says that to take the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner, that was demonstrated by them having this feast, that's how they did it, a love feast, and they would share in the Lord's table, and the more wealthy individuals who didn't have to work all day, they would show up early and they would eat it all up and get drunk and there would be nothing left for the poor guys that would work all day and have to show up a little bit later, and they despised one another for this. He said, "You should wait for one another, but instead you profane the body of Christ." You see, we are the visible representation of the body of Christ and if you take the Lord's table while you are causing divisions and mistreating one another, you are profaning the body of Christ, and he says, "For that reason some of you are dead. Some of you have died for this, because of this. God has brought some kind of judgment." That's what it's talking about. So this is a big deal.

So all of these problems are going on in the Corinthian church and he is exposing them and then in chapter 13, he gives the cure: it's love. So we've just talked about this: without love, you're nothing. You can do all the good stuff, without love you're nothing, you gain nothing, you should rather be humbled. Well, how do you know it's love? How do you know that what you're doing is actually genuinely motivated by love? Well, he goes on to describe love in the following verses in chapter 13, verses 4 through 8. He describes what love does, what it looks like, and love always makes its way into action. It is always active. It's an attitude of the heart, a value of the heart that is shown in the following ways. And by the way, all of these qualities that he lists here in 4 through 8 are present active verbs meaning that love is constantly all of these things all the time. It's not one way sometimes and then sometimes it's over here, it's all of these things. So this is how you diagnose your actions and your attitudes: is what I did, did it really come from love?

Let's jump in, verse 4, this is how you know, "Love is first patient and kind." Patient. Long-suffering. It waits. It's more passive. It doesn't react and retaliate. Love is patient. If you're not patient, then you don't have love and therefore you're nothing and it profits you nothing. If in your service you are impatient and unkind, it's not love that is motivating you. You could be making all the sacrifices in the world. Husbands, you can be working

your guts out all day, come home, work on the yard and do all the stuff, and yet if you are impatient with your family, it's not love that is motivating you.

Love is not only patient but it is also kind. This is the active side of it. It works for the good of another person. It's purposeful in this. It is loving and merciful. The word actually can be translated "excellent; serviceable; useful." Love is useful. You know, we talk a lot about the pursuit of excellence and I think this word, this idea for excellence should inform how we think about that. We pursue excellence as kindness towards one another. We do what we do excellently, useful, for the benefit of the body. It's not excellence so that we can exalt ourselves. Kind, loving, merciful, excellent. God is this way. Luke 6:35 says, "But love your enemies. Do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the most high for he himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast. This word for "envy," it's "displeased with the success of others; desiring their success and wishing that they didn't have it." It's a malicious sort of desire that wants them to fail while you succeed; angry with them for doing well. Have you ever had somebody at work that was promoted that you didn't feel like deserved it and you envied them? Somebody was praised and you were overlooked? Somebody was given a gift and you were forgotten and you hated them because of it? You were bitter with them because of it? That's envy.

It's not boastful. This is the other side. Love does not envy or boast. Both of those things are driven by the same motive: selfish pride. The ones who envy are the ones that didn't get it. The ones that boast are the ones that did get it. They boasted and held it over and looked down upon those who did not get what they got and it became a way for them to feel superior over others. The word for "boasting" could be translated "windbag." It's breathing out their own praises. Love neither envies nor boasts. It's all of these things at once: patient and kind, not envious or boastful.

It is not arrogant. That's puffed up. Concerned about itself. Impressed with its own glory. Its own self-importance. It asserts itself. That's arrogance.

Love is not arrogant and it is not rude, verse 5. It doesn't act in a way that is unbecoming, disgraceful, dishonorable, indecent because love is thoughtful toward others. Love does not seek to offend just because it enjoys offending people. Love is not unseemly. It's not rude. If we are these things, we don't have love and therefore all of our service amounts to nothing before God.

Verse 5, again, it does not insist on its own way. It is not self-seeking. It doesn't seek its own things. It is not selfish or self-centered. In our world, this assertiveness is praised, is driven, you know, like Steve Jobs, a guy like Steve Jobs is lifted up as this great man. You want to talk about somebody that insisted on his own way where he destroyed other people for his own ideas, for his own pride, his own benefit. That is not praiseworthy. It does not insist on its own way.

Here is another one: it's not irritable. I mean, I don't know if any of us are getting through this chapter unscathed. It's not easily angered. It's not touchy, sensitive. There is a place for righteous anger but even the Lord is slow to anger. You think of when Adam and Eve sinned, how long did he let them live before they died? Over 800 years. How long once he decided, once he announced that he was going to flood the earth, how long was it before he finally followed through on that? 120 years. That was God's self-revelation to Moses when Moses said, "Show me your glory," on the mountain in Exodus 33, and he says, "The Lord, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger." That's the first thing God wants you to know about himself. If we are children of God, then we will continue to grow in this, to be slow to anger.

Love is not irritable. It is not easily angered. That is little momentary irritation, the end of verse 5, it is not resentful. This is to keep a record of wrongs against you. This is to keep a list. "You know, I've got my list of all the things that you have done wrong against me and when the proper time comes, I'm just going to let you have it. I'm just waiting for that right moment." That's resent. Bitterness. Holding grudges. Love does not do that. It doesn't take notice of every evil thing and harbor it against them. It doesn't sit there and be hurt forever.

Love is not irritable, temporarily irritable, easily angered and it doesn't have the slow burn. It doesn't flicker with wrath and it doesn't slowly pine away at wrong suffered. Instead, as he moves on to verse 6, it does not rejoice at evil but it rejoices in the truth. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing. When would be a time when you would rejoice at wrongdoing? Have you ever rejoiced when somebody that you didn't like that you knew was a bad dude did something evil and got caught and you were glad that he went down? Somebody that you just didn't like and you rejoiced that they went down? The Corinthians in chapter 5 or chapter 6, they were suing one another. They were taking the opportunity of being wronged by somebody and they were using it to their own advantage to gain something out of it, to get money from it. You can see this in lawsuits where people are fighting against each other and all of a sudden something comes out about this side that helps their case. That's rejoicing in evil, to want that to happen. That's malicious and ungodly and that's not what love does.

It rejoices with the truth. Okay, now this can be where if someone truly was evil and they got exposed to be true, that's good. They got exposed to be evil and the truth came out, that's a good thing. We rejoice at what is true, what is real. That's what love does. So love neither rejoices at evil but on the other side, it doesn't pretend like evil doesn't exist. It's not in this fog where it just believes like everything is good all the time. That's not love. Love lives in the truth and love can only be adequately administered when it's done in truth. Think about this. We've had members of our body who have had cancer, family members diagnosed recently, now that's not pleasant news but to truly love a person, you have to know the truth about what's going on. Love can only be effectively administered according to the truth. So love rejoices when the truth comes out, when the truth is told, when the truth is exposed, when it is believed, when it is valued.

Now verse 7, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." This idea of "to bear" has the idea of protecting and not giving away easily. It holds up. Love is not easily discouraged. It's not easily crushed. One commentator said that love is not overwhelmed. Love is not overwhelmed. There have been many times in my life where I have been overwhelmed with the tasks, with the work at hand. Why am I overwhelmed? Is it because of love or is it because of pride and the fear of failure? Is it because I want to please man and I want people to think highly of me? Because love bears up and endures. Love bears up and remains faithful. It believes all things. It remains faithful. It hopes and it believes that there is always a way. It doesn't give up. It hopes for the best. It believes that it's possible. That's the opposite of judgment. When you judge one another, you have given up and you have declared that they are guilty and to be condemned. That's judgment. Love is the opposite of that. It hopes and it believes that it can happen and it wants what is best. For the most sinful among us, we want that. For the most selfish among us, we want that. For the most proud among us, we want that; that the best would happen to them; that God would change them; that God would grow them. Love is always faithful and it always hopes and it always endures. It never ends, verse 8. It's indestructible. Love is the greatest and most indispensable of virtues. It adds value to everything that we do and the lack of it makes everything as zero.

We desperately need Christ, don't we? Because none of us has lived this way for very long and we don't sustain this very well. It's easy to fight for truth and yet not love, not from love. It's easy to want to do things well and yet not for love, not with love, not from love. A failure to love is destructive, it's not just benign. It's not just, "Well, okay, I'll work on it." Jesus calls the church in Revelation 1, the church at Ephesus, chapter 2, he calls them to repent for their lost love. Okay, they lost their first love and he doesn't say, "Okay, guys, work on it. You can do a bunch of really good stuff." He says, "No, repent. You have lost your first love." Is that referring to love for Christ? I believe so, it's love for Christ but as you see in 1 John, love for Christ is always shown in love for one another. It's a character trait and if you do not love your brother who you see, you cannot love God whom you do not see. So if you lack patience and kindness and all of these things that we talked about, you do not have love, and if you don't love your brother, you don't love God and we need to repent.

And yet what I think that is the point of 1 Corinthians, is they were proud of themselves but Paul intended to humble them. Are we humbled today at this diagnosis of our lack of love? Can you muster that up yourself? No, we must go to Christ. We need him to change us and that starts by conviction, by the truth being exposed; the cancer that is in our soul and the flesh that fights against this kind of selfless love, let's turn to him, let's look to him and let's love one another. Let's love one another and let this be a part of our conscience that when we are impatient and unkind, "Oh, it doesn't matter what else I did, it was worthless." If I am arrogant and boastful, if I'm rude, if I insist on my own way, it doesn't matter what all the work that I did, it's worthless. But with love, there is nothing greater and heaven will be a place of perfect love. So let's pray for that and let's pray that the Lord would change us and grow us right now.

Lord, your word is an x-ray to our souls. You know what we have needed and I pray, Lord, that you would make it so. May we humble ourselves before you that we would never be proud for very long before you show us the truth. Lord, teach us to love, teach us to be like you and, Lord, may we pursue this with great fervor for the sake of your body here, Lord, that the fellowship here would be all the more sweet as we pursue love in every way. Help us to be patient with one another and kind. Guard us from boasting, guard us from envy. May we yield rather than insist on our own way. May we endure and bear all things. Help us not to rejoice in evil but rejoice in the truth. Take us, Father, change us in your likeness. We beg you for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.