

THE PRIORITY OF LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1–3.

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.

In today's world, we value and exalt giftedness in individuals. The recently concluded Olympics are a testament to that fact. Moreover, we appreciate power and knowledge. Smart people rule, and education is big business. In many circles, the churchy and religiously pious are still thought to be impressive, and those who sacrifice their lives are honored and memorialized.

Giftedness is a beautiful thing that is given to us by our Creator. Using our cognitive powers to learn is a natural impulse that is hard to quell. Likewise, faith is an essential endeavor, and sacrifice for the greater good is noble. However, the Word says they are only outstanding as long as we understand them in their place.

Hear me on this. I am not suggesting we don't identify our gifts and deploy them in the Kingdom. I am not suggesting we act dumb because learning and education are terrible. I am not suggesting that deep faith is a worthless pursuit, and I am not suggesting that self-sacrifice is pointless.

However, Paul points out that we can find ourselves in a spiritual place where we look and act rich, but the financial reports reveal bankruptcy. As people of faith, we can look like rockstars but, as one preacher has put it, be experiencing "the worst bankruptcy of all." For, without LOVE, all the things we value are nothing.

Jesus supports this idea with his answer to a lawyer's question about the most important things.

Matthew 22

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

When you boil it all down, Paul is speaking to the church in Corinth about a person's purpose in life and guiding ethos.

The simple litmus test for every activity of every day is this: Do I possess, and am I acting out of love? If the answer is NO, it's time to pause and pivot. If the answer is YES, then hit the gas.

But, you may be wondering, what is love? Good question! Stay tuned for more from Paul's exhortations.

Eyes up!
Ryan