

Love is

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Date: 26 March 2017

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[0 : 00] So I have been looking forward to today and praying for you. It's been great to meet some of you already. It's been exciting to hear about what God's doing here and in your collection of churches.

So I want to speak to you this morning about love and particularly love is the mark of holiness. Actually, I think I have a lot to learn about loving others.

But God's taught me some things from his word, my experience, and I want to share those this morning. So if you would, would you open up with me to the book of 1 Corinthians? I'll give you the page number.

If you have one of the church Bibles, it's 1 Corinthians 13 and it begins on page 1153. Many of you will know that this is the well-known chapter on love.

So why don't you follow along as I read it for us. I'm going to read all of chapter 13. 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.

[1 : 14] If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains but have not love, I'm nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It's not proud. It's not rude. It's not self-seeking.

It's 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, but when there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put away childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in the mirror.

[2 : 33] Then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love.

But the greatest of these is love. Why don't we just pray for a moment again. Father, we thank you for the time that we've had already, the encouragement of singing your word and being together. Father, and God, we pray that you would graciously meet us with your spirit right now. Lord, we pray that our own hearts would be filled with love for you and reminded and instructed in how our calling is to love you and to love one another.

So help us towards that end, Father. Help us to think about our own lives and what that really should look like in the course of everyday life. And God, we pray, give us minds and hearts right now that are focused on you and see the things that you say in your word to us.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Before we just jump in and look at the text, I want to spend a few minutes saying something that I hope will be helpful as we think about what it looks like and how we should be thinking about loving one another.

[4 : 10] God often uses the small, ordinary, everyday events of life to work in us, to change us, to show us the greater degrees that we need to grow in love.

Don't you think that? I was just mentioning a few minutes ago that I'm slowly renovating my home. And I do mean slowly. My wife would say very slowly.

Ella, my five-year-old daughter's bedroom, is the most recent part of our house that we've renovated. The thing that I did before that was the bathroom, which sort of abuts to her room.

And to do all the work on the plumbing, I had to basically break down half of her room. And she went back in her room. There are all kinds of pipes and things exposed. So she was in there, and the plaster was falling off, and there's pipes everywhere.

And that was her room. So that was the room that had to get renovated next. And so night after night, slowly over the course of a few months, whenever I'd have time, I would go in and put up new walls and new ceiling and strip all the molding.

[5 : 23] And I put up new crown. And then I painted all of her furniture. And I painted her room. And finally, after a long time, her room was complete. And it was just the kind of clean, bright room that any five-year-old girl, I think, would love to have.

So the night after I finished her room, we had two of our close family friends over. And those two family friends of you are smiling already.

You know where this story's going. But they had three little girls, my little girl Ella's age. And they went up, and they played in her room all night. And I just thought, how fantastic.

You know, I finished her room, and they'd usually be all around. And they just were able to play there for the whole night. It was just great. And then at one point in the night, we were sitting, the three couples, around our dinner table.

And Ella and her three friends came down in their, like, most beautiful little princess gowns. And they had taken hand lotion and slathered it all over their hair.

[6 : 26] And they came walking down the stairs, and we're, like, horrified looking at them. They think they're looking all cute and twirling around. We're sort of trying to hide our horror. And it was kind of a hint about what was happening up in that room.

I should have clued in at that moment. Anyway, the night came to an end, and we said goodbye to our friends and walked them out the door. And I took little Ella back up to her room to say goodnight.

Now, remember, I've been working on this room for, like, three months. I'm a little bit of a perfectionist, so I had it just how I wanted every last bit. And I walk in, and on the pristine baseboards and furniture is bright blue little girl nail polish everywhere.

And beside it was cleaning products, so they must have realized what they did and tried to clean it. And I thought, oh, Ella, and frustration and anger and annoyance, all the things that can so easily well up in these ordinary, everyday moments.

Or when we grow in love and holiness, we slowly start to respond differently to those times, don't we? I think there's some symbolism in that for you and for me.

[7 : 46] During, as I think about my own renovation, you know, the day-to-day work of renovating happens so slowly, and often you don't really see the progress, right? Or you might come into a room, and unless you knew what had happened underneath all the walls and where you started from, it doesn't look like very much has happened.

And I think our sanctification and our growth in love often looks that way. You can kind of just take a snapshot of a moment and feel maybe like you're stuck in the same place, when really, even though it's been maybe imperceptibly and you can't see it on a day-to-day basis, but you truly have actually been growing in love as time has gone on.

And then after some time has gone on, one day you sort of turn around and you kind of do see some of that great work that God's been doing in your life, and you no longer have to go into the house and redo every room.

God's done some great renovating work in your life and your heart, and that's encouraging, I think. There's a part in James that I've been reflecting on over the last number of months where James addresses in his letter, in chapter 4, these Christians that have just really not been loving God the way that they should.

And maybe that's how, that's where you find your own heart today, perhaps, that there's a sense that you haven't been loving God the way that you want, and you feel that particularly in how your own heart isn't as warm in love for others.

[9 : 23] And what James says to those very people in his letter is, but God gives more grace. I love that part of James. You've been far from God.

You feel far from Him. You haven't loved Him the way that you should. You don't deserve His grace, but He gives more grace. I think that's such an encouraging thing to think about as we think about how we want to grow in love.

So, with the hopefulness of God's promise of grace in mind, let's turn our thoughts back to this text in 1 Corinthians now.

So we're going to dive in in a moment. I just read it for us. I've got a question for you about this. How many of you have been to a wedding? It's a pretty innocuous question, so don't be afraid to raise your hand.

How many of you have been to a wedding? You don't have to commit too much to say you've been to a wedding. How many of you have been to a wedding where 1 Corinthians 13 has been read or preached? Okay, they do that here too.

[10:33] That's good. And why not? It's lovely. It's poetic. It's beautiful. But when I read 1 Corinthians 13, did you hear anything about romantic love or marriage?

No. No. I think this passage and what God says through its words have some very important things to say to us, but we will have trouble seeing them if we don't realize that this passage is not actually about, in the first place, romantic love.

So I want to show you just for a moment that it's not about love and actually what it is about. So you can actually see in this translation, if you look at the verse that comes right before chapter 13, it's actually set in in this paragraph.

It's verse, the end of chapter 12. Paul says right here, before he gets to chapter 13, and now I will show you the most excellent way or the more excellent way.

This is what Paul says he's going to go on to do in chapter 13. It's pretty clear that he's saying that love is this most excellent way, but more excellent than what?

[11:47] What's the context? Well, if you look back in the beginning of chapter 12 with me to verse 1, Paul begins this chapter that leads into chapter 13 saying, now about spiritual gifts, brothers.

The context here really is spiritual gifts. And the context in the church in Corinth was that there were certain people that had gifts, spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of speaking in tongues that thought that because they had that gift, they were the ones that were more important, more valuable, and that everyone else, frankly, that didn't have that gift was maybe not so important.

So Paul writes to them in chapter 12 and says, no, you know what? Actually, God's very intentionally designed the church in a way where he's given different gifts to different Christians and he's done that because that's what's required to build up the church.

So God's done that on purpose because all of those gifts are necessary for the edification and the upbuilding of the church. So what does Paul mean when he says, I will show you a more excellent way?

He's making some kind of comparison between spiritual gifts and love. But if you look again at verse 31, even just before where we read there, the beginning of verse 31, Paul says, but eagerly desire the greater gifts.

[13:17] So right up to the passage we're looking at, Paul's been explaining how there are these greater gifts. He gives this list in verse 27 of how God first gave apostles and then prophets and then teachers and last tongues.

Later on in chapter 14, he talks about how the gift of tongues is one thing because it edifies yourself, but prophecy is greater because of how it builds up other people.

And the Corinthians had fallen into thinking that if you had those gifts that were more miraculous, more showy, that put you up front, those were the really important gifts.

And if you had those, man, you were really spiritual. And Paul says, no, you're wrong. Those gifts are important. All gifts are important. And there are greater gifts, but the greater gifts aren't the showy gifts.

It's the gifts that do the most in terms of building other people up. That's what makes a gift great. So he says, earnestly desire those gifts, but, then verse 31, I will still show you a more excellent way.

[14:32] So all that's to say the contrast that Paul's making here as we get into chapter 13 is he's saying, more important than all spiritual gifts, even the greatest ones, is love.

More important than all spiritual gifts is love. So we're going to look at chapter 13 and here's what I want you to know and how I want you to be thinking about it.

This chapter really answers the question, how do you live a worthy, godly, holy, Christian life? And the context has already been set out that a meaningful, valuable, God-honoring life that's worthy of the gospel is one that builds up the church, that uses your gifts and your life to edify others, to bless others, and to build them up, that loves the Christians well around you, that edifies and encourages

and comforts.

And then Paul comes to chapter 13 in that context and he says, I'm going to give you the answer of how you first and foremost live that worthy life that builds other people up and the way that you do that first and foremost is through love.

That's what Paul is explaining here in chapter 13. So we're going to look at three realities about love that we need to learn about today. Love's importance, love's character, and love's nature.

[16:07] Paul talks about love's importance in verse 1 through 3 and that's really the heart of this whole passage. He's going to say some other things but they all really are to this great point that that church and we would feel just how important love is for our lives as Christians.

That's verse 1 through 3, love's importance. And then in 4 through 7 love's character. Then 8 through 13 love's nature. So how important is love?

I just said a minute ago that love is the reality that really makes a Christian life worthy. So was that rhetorical or was that stretching it a bit?

How important is love for your life? Think about that. Let's see what Paul says here in verse 1 through 3 about love's importance.

Let me read it for us again. 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.

[17:17] 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.

So let's imagine for a second that I have the gift of tongues and we'll just for example's sake assume that that's some kind of unknown human language that I know that I have that ability to speak in and on top of that I have some kind of majestic angelic gift I can somehow speak in the language of angels.

Pretty helpful. Imagine, it certainly is if you would think about how it would work out so you're the guy that I came and I shared the gospel with in your own native language right?

And I've never learned your language but because of the gift of tongues I was able to share the gospel with you in a language that you understood even though I never learned it and you came to faith pretty helpful right?

It certainly was for that foreigner that would have come to faith but Paul says but if you don't have love even if you can do that you're still nothing.

[18:38] You're like a clanging cymbal or empty ringing brass like a brass shield clinking off the ground or resounding brass just things that sound hollow and tinny.

So you have these incredible gifts genuinely incredible but don't have love what are you? Paul says it's empty and hollow and notice he doesn't actually say the gifts are empty and hollow he says I am hollow I am empty.

Or he moves on he gives a second example he says what if you have prophetic powers? He's already talked about in this letter about how genuinely edifying prophecy was.

He says not only do you have prophecy but you know all mystery and all knowledge so you just know it all you understand all of God's ways his plan our lives sanctification so you know someone experiences great tragedy maybe they lose someone under really difficult circumstances and they come to you and you know exactly what to say and how to counsel them you have all mystery and all knowledge and on top of that you have great faith this deep faith faith that proverbially can move a mountain like Jesus had once talked about so faith that can inspire a generation of Christians you have all of that but Paul says but if you don't have love you're nothing no matter how much good you can do it doesn't count for anything in God's sight and he gets to the last example which I think is so powerful here he says what if you give away everything you have or if like this translation renders it what if you give up your body to be burned right you're you know honey

I was on the way home and I met this guy and he said they just don't have what they need so I gave him my entire paycheck for the month or you know if you don't recant you're going to be burned at the stake and you don't recant and you are burned at the stake for your faith and surely those things in themselves have to have some kind of there has to be some kind of honor in those actions just in themselves because of their very nature but Paul says even if you do that and you don't have love you actually gain nothing it's not worthy in God's eyes he doesn't see it as pleasing he's not going to reward for it D.A.

[21 : 38] Carson if you know that name a Bible scholar says if Paul were addressing the modern church perhaps he would extrapolate further and say you know you Christians who prove your spirituality by the amount of theological knowledge that you can cram in your heads I tell you that such knowledge by itself proves nothing or you who affirm the spirit's presence in your meetings because there's a certain style of worship whatever that style is if your patterns are not expressions of love it's spiritually bankrupt so how important is love without love theological knowledge all kinds of personal dedication to God eloquent sermons all the service that you do all the sacrifice if it's not driven by love

Paul says it's empty it's not what it should be that same scholar D.A. Carson says when you look at the five scenarios here about gifts and sacrifice compared to love according to divine mathematics five minus one equals zero another brother said everything minus love equals nothing everything minus love equals nothing D.L.

Moody says there's no use to do church work without love a doctor a lawyer they may do good work without love but God's work can't be done without love now I think that's profoundly convicting on one level how many things have we done that haven't been done from love out of pride or whatever selfishness or just sometimes very mere duty just let the reality and the weight of that settle for a minute everything minus love equals nothing but here's what's also so especially good I think about this news now are you somebody at times that wonders how your life will count for much maybe you don't think you're particularly gifted listen what God says through

Paul here is that if you grow in love if you grow in love your life will count more in God's eyes than if you had every gift and ability it's amazing if you grow in love your life can do others more good than if you had other gifts that you don't have God will take your life and the gifts that you do have and do more good to people than you could have ever imagined if you just grow in love you think what we do sometimes is small and unimportant right all kinds of things seem that way through the course of life whether it's being a mom at home or smaller things that we do in the course of church life

Jonathan Edwards says God delights in little things when they spring from sincere love to himself a cup of cold water given to a disciple and sincere love is worth more in

God's sight than all one's goods given to the poor even the wealth of a kingdom given away or a body offered up that's actually what 1 Corinthians says isn't it I think these verses in some ways cut through a lot of the complexities of things that are very complex right where where do we pour our time and energy in as Christians where there can be so many layers sometimes to the Christian life and thinking about what God wants us to do and how we should live our lives the answer in one sense to that is always to pursue love so how important is love everything minus love equals nothing but you add a little love in front of even the smallest of sacrifices and service and immediately it has value that's what this text says now that's all in verse one through three and

[26 : 36] Paul doesn't stray very far from this in fact like I was saying before this is really the heart of what he wants us to hear but he's going to go on and he's going to talk a little bit about the character of love and he's going to do that not just in sort of like an abstract fashion he's talking very love for this church he's thinking about all the different areas that they're struggling in their love particularly in terms of spiritual gifts and he sets out this description of love for them so it's very much contextual and it's not comprehensive but it's still very helpful for us I think because we struggle with the same kinds of things and have the same issues below our particular struggles with loving people as this church did so I want to read this description for us again and secondly think with you about love's character for a moment here so after

Paul makes this initial point about how important love is he gets to verse 4 through 7 and he gives this description of love's character and he says love is patient love is kind it does not envy it does not boast it is not proud it is not rude 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 these descriptions basically have three parts it begins with this sort of two positive expressions about love at the beginning about how love is patient and how love is kind and then he gives eight little short descriptions about what love is not or what love doesn't do or the attitude that it doesn't have and then he finishes off with these four similar descriptions about how love does these in all things and he picks up on those cardinal

Christian areas of faith and hope and then he comes back to right where he started back at how love is patient and enduring John Piper says when you try to group all these 15 into categories basically what we see is descriptions about how love is patient and it endures and about how love is

not proud I think about that do those describe us we think about our lives our life within our home and our church think about the things we say and don't say and do and don't do here's what God says must characterize our interaction for them to be loving you must be patient first of all not expecting things to go your way or feeling justified when they don't to be angry or frustrated or annoyed but just the opposite actually expecting that there will be things obstacles hard things and because of that being ready to suffer those things to be long suffering and patient not going home with kids and expecting everything to go okay right because it doesn't but being ready that that's that's what we signed up for you must not be or you must be kind secondly treat other people with the same kind of understanding and thoughtfulness and consideration that we would always want to be shown to us no matter what you must not be envious jealously competitive

I'm always comparing I'm secretly happy when success doesn't happen for that other person or boastful bragging about yourself or proud arrogantly thinking for whatever reason you're great or special or rude Paul uses that in the sense of things that are indecent that are against sort of what's the common standard of decency or how about this one insisting on your own way just being concerned with what's good for you as opposed to being concerned about what's good for others or irritable easily angered or resentful holding on to what others have done and feeling a level of annoyance or cold or bitter to them he says you must not rejoice at evil things that are wrong that aren't good but instead rejoice with the truth the very things that are beautiful and good set out that way in

God's word and he says you have to bear all things and believe all things and hope all things and endure all things in other words he says you know love is not naive but love doesn't set limits on what it will endure it perseveres it doesn't quit on people that that's what God says here is our measurement for how he calls us to love to treat other people and that's really what I want and what you should want if we think about the priority that's given to love here you think about your Christian life what should you want I think above all other things in one sense we can say that our great desire should be and our great prayer should be God cause me to be someone that loves more that loves you more and loves others more like this that should be what we long for probably our whole [33 : 05] Christian lives and more than anything else that God would make us truly people with all the right biblical qualifications about what real love is that God would make us people that are genuinely and deeply loving now Paul's going to go on basically and he's going to say this again he's just going to say it in a he's going to say it from a different angle and then he's going to actually leave us with a very important conclusion after all of this so I want us to see both of them but let's look at this third section here where Paul's going to really make the same point again about love's importance but he's going to do it from the angle of thinking about the nature of love let me read it fails but where there's prophecies they will cease where there are tongues they'll be stilled where there's knowledge it will pass away for we know in part and we prophesy in part but when the perfect comes the imperfect disappears when

I was a child I talked like a child I thought like a child I reasoned like a child when I became a man I put away childish ways behind me now know fully even as I am fully known and now these three abide or remain faith hope and love the greatest of these is love so he says prophecy it ends knowledge it ends it ends when the perfect comes when we stay face to face when when Jesus returns and we know we're resurrected and we see Christ face to face and we're fully known as we know fully as we're already fully known and he gives that comparison about how even in human life as we mature we have to sort of shed those immature undeveloped things even on a physical level and a character level as we get older the same thing happens when we become the mature people we are in the resurrection there won't be prophecy there won't be tongues even as marvelous as those gifts are they're still temporary and temporal they're part of that fallen creation they're somehow bound up with imperfection and immaturity love love never ends it's of a nature and a quality that's unlike any other spiritual gift in fact it's part of the world to come and

I think even despite the difficulties of making sense of verse 13 here and it is hard to make sense of I think Paul is making a similar argument I think he's saying you know faith and hope those things are central to our faith faith is what saves us right that's how we live we live by faith and hope is how we live we live constantly hoping for when Christ returns but faith is going to end and hallelujah right one day faith is going to be gone nobody in this room is going to have faith anymore we're going to see right and hope is going to be gone we're not going to hope for anything anymore we're going to have what we hope for so six million years into eternity and faith will be gone we'll see and hope will

be gone we'll have everything we'll have Jesus but love will still be there love will fill the entire earth the new earth and

Paul is saying again listen I'm trying to tell you greater than spiritual gifts even the best of spiritual gifts even more important than faith and hope in one sense is love and he brings it to this conclusion we can ask ourselves so what then right where should this bring us to look at Paul's conclusion here after he gives this big paragraph about just how central love is he gets to the end of this and then he says here follow the way of love or in my translation that I was reading earlier he says pursue love that's the wrap up of the whole chapter right he he writes all he does in first corinthians 13 to get to that very practical conclusion for you and for

I to say and to be convinced of the fact that what we need to do is pursue love love to make love the priority of our Christian discipleship to see love as the mark of holiness so how do we do that I want to think with you for a moment about that how do we actually fulfill this command and pursue love I think first of all especially given these descriptions here that were sort of meant as a guide for this church things that they would see and that they could put on and live out that Paul has in mind first of all here that we pursue love by showing love that we would put on love and demonstrate love every description here in verse 4 through 7 is a verb it's hard to see in English but they're all things that we are to do or to put on and you know

[39 : 09] Paul is the one who says to us like in Romans for just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification he's the one who says in Colossians put on love this is not a text that says don't do right for other people until you really feel that kind of affection in your heart it certainly has affections in mind and it's very much getting at our motivations isn't it in one sense the whole passage is about motivations but in another sense all of this loving is viewed primarily in terms of doing and I think what Paul is saying here is you don't wait until you just have those proper affections love here is actually just seeing that God has called us to do the good things that build each other up and to get on with doing those things and listen actions don't just follow affections but actions also breed affections don't they actions produce habits and habits make character and ultimately character is what determines how we feel and think about things so

Paul says put on love present yourself to what's right and loving stop yourself when you're sinning and doing the things that are described in this text and instead change your attitude put on patience put on kindness put on what is loving and it will lead to a heart that's loving put on what's loving and it will lead to a heart that's loving pursue love by showing love I think that's what he'd think of first but I can't imagine Paul saying pursue love without also us thinking about beholding love not just showing love but also beholding love or how we actually have beheld love in Christ like we were thinking about earlier Romans 5 8 God shows God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us or 1

John 3 16 by this we know love that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers right the Christian message isn't first do what God says is that God has made us and he knows exactly what is good for us and he has come to the world in his son to show us his love and he has done that through Christ dying on the cross for our sin and rising again so that he could reconcile us to God and show us the way that leads to life that's the love that we know as Christians that's the God that we know that's the message that we want someone that's not following Christ to hear to not look at what we are to do first but to look at the God who has shown this kind of love to us and demonstrated that in his son that's where the

Christian life begins isn't it as we repent of our sins and we come to God the God who loves us and really that's where it has to continue think about what scripture says Paul says be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us so love is what you're called to and be loved is who you are right preeminently who you are as a Christian who I am is that we're beloved as we were hearing a few minutes ago or whatever it was more than a few minutes isn't it but it's such a simple but such an important truth to remember that God does love us and that's preeminently who we are and from that flows preeminently what we're called to to love others

I love Jesus command where he says a new command I give you that you love one another just as I have loved you you also are to love one another so isn't that sweet to think about that the love that we have for others is actually supposed to be and really is a reflection of the love that Christ had and has for us Johnny was praying that earlier right that the very ways that we want to love that's

how God loves us so does Jesus care about your sin yeah is he displeased when you sin yeah does he want us to grow in some of those areas that have been struggles for a long time yes he sure does but he loves you he's patient right he's long suffering and he's kind he's understanding he's not caught up with insisting on his own rights and having you do what he wants you to do just as an abstract he wants you to live that life for your good he's not irritable or easily angered or annoyed or cold his heart to you if you can imagine is exactly in one sense we could say anyway what our hearts would be if we perfectly love someone else like we should and he showed us that love hasn't he in the cross and that same love hasn't changed we can't we can't lose sight of that because it's really as we drink in

[45 : 37] God's love that our hearts are warmed and enabled to love others the way that we should right there's no other way beholding love is what leads to loving so we need to put on love and show love but we also really need to make it our great priority to behold love to pray God show me open my heart again to how much you really love me that's not a selfish thing to pray right that's in one sense the most selfless thing we can pray as we think about how we really love others and that's where I want to leave us with this last and third way that I think Paul would call us to pursuing love and that's by showing by beholding and last by praying how do you behold love think about Ephesians 3 right Paul says God show me the breadth and the great dimensions of your love for me in

Christ so that I can be filled with the fullness of God that's what I need I need to pray and ask you to remind me to open my heart again and flood it with affection for how much you really love me in Christ so that I would be able to love others I I pray God help help me to love my church help me to love my wife help me to love them in the way that I want to I want to have that heart that compels me to love them from you know the greatest sacrifices to the smallest little ways that I can serve at home in the course of a day and to just really want that and be driven to it and I want to interact with them in the way where when there's such love filling our hearts it just does other people so much good when we talk with them and minister to them and the way I get there is by saying God teach me how much you love me and to pray for that to make that our prayer maybe something we should pray every day is

God let me really behold your love for me remind me of where I was and how you saved me right remind me the truth of my sin and what it means to be yours to pray like that God make me more loving by beholding your love this text tells us to pursue love above all other things to pursue love by showing love and beholding love and praying for love I just want to leave you with one last thought here as we wrap up I don't know if you've ever read anything by Jerry Bridges but he's a well he was he passed away recently but he's a he was a great author and Bible teacher and he said this about the priority of love he said you can write down either in your imagination or on a sheet of paper a row of zeros and you keep adding zeros until you fill the whole line on the page what does it add up to exactly nothing right even if you were to write thousands of them still adds up to nothing but you put one positive number in front of them and immediately you have value and that's how it is with our gifts and abilities and our zeal they're all the

Don't count. But you put love in front of them and immediately they have value. And just like if you add a number two instead of a number one, the more love that we grow in, the exponentially more valuable our gifts in our life will be.

So remember, it's not the number that comes first or that comes after, excuse me. The number that comes after the gifts that the things that you have that matters first and foremost.

[49 : 51] First and foremost, it's the number that comes first. It's your love. So hear this text today where I think we can summarize it as hearing be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love.

Beloved is who we are as Christians and what we're called to be above all other things as people that are learning to love our neighbors like Christ has loved us.

Let me pray for us and pray that God would really help us to do that. our Father, we ask that you would help each one of us Lord, that are Christians to freshly grasp how much you love us.

Lord, even this day, this week, we pray that you would take us back to who we were and how you rescued us.

Lord, maybe it's been a long time since we've been walking with you and we want to be refreshed in that simple truth of just how much it means to be yours. Lord, we pray you would brighten our hearts and minds with this truth of your love and Father, I pray that you would not allow this calling

of ours to be people that love to be lost in the course of so many other things that we want to give our life to as Christians.

[51 : 36] Lord, the great commandment is to love you and to love others and we need your help not just to grow in that love, Father, but to not lose sight of our calling. So we pray for that, Father.

I pray that this church and the families in this church, people, Lord, that they would really be grown up more and more and more in their love for you and their love for one another.

Help us to do that, Father, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.