

# The Way of Love

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you'll be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and we'll see in verse 31.

And I want to speak tonight on the way of love. And I know that I'm trying my best to preach this message without sounding like a hippie, but we need love. We need love in our churches.

And really what Paul is saying in this passage is that we need love in our church. And it's not that we just need love. It's really the essence of our church. The church of Corinth was a horrible church.

They had tons of problems. They had a culture of selfishness and of hatred and of arguing. There was fornication in the church. There was division. They liked Peter and Paul and Apollos.

And everybody was hating each other. They were preferring what preacher they liked best. They liked saying, well, my pastor is so-and-so and my pastor is so-and-so. And they start arguing about all these things and they're constantly in arguments.

[ 1 : 0 0 ] They're constantly fighting. They're abusing their spiritual gifts. They're abusing their Christian liberty. They're abusing of other Christians. They're just a church that just nags and eats at each other.

They bite at each other. And they're really just full of hatred. And chapter 12 speaks of how spiritual gifts and God has given us each spiritual gifts. And we all are part of the body of Christ.

And we're supposed to use those gifts to edify the body of Christ. And in verse 31, it's kind of a transition. There's one side that says, but covet earnestly the best gifts.

And it speaks of the gifts that we've just heard. Chapter 14 will tell us that that's really, you know, the announcing, the preaching of the gospel. But he says, covet the best gifts. And the last part says, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

And so the way that these Corinthians had been living this whole time was a way of destruction. It was destroying the church. It was breaking fellowship. It was breaking communion. It was being really destructive for the church.

[ 2 : 0 0 ] And Paul says, well, let me show you a more excellent way. The way of love. The way of love is to edify. The way of love gives peace in the church. And our gifts really have no value unless we speak of love.

Chapter 12 speaks of spiritual gifts. Chapter 14 speaks of spiritual gifts. But chapter 13 is the chapter of love. Everybody's called it the chapter of love. It's really one of Paul's most beautiful pieces of scripture that he's written.

It's just a beautiful chapter. And it speaks of love. Why? Because spiritual gifts are of no use if you don't have love. So you can have all the talents in the world.

You can have all the abilities in the world. You can have all the gifts in the world. You can have all the knowledge in the world. But if you don't have love, you have nothing. And so the church throughout history has had a big problem with love.

It's real easy to have the right doctrine instead of love. It's real easy to be real straight and not have love. It's easy to be active in the ministry.

[ 3 : 04 ] It's easy to be preparing for ministry. It's easy to be getting ready to be a missionary. It's easy to be helping others and be busy and not have love.

And so he says in verse 31, And yet show I unto you a more excellent way. And so the first thing that I'd like to mention is the nature of love.

And when he says a more excellent way, he's saying that this is extraordinarily larger than any of these gifts that you can express, that any of these gifts that you can use, the opportunity and the love that we should be expressing toward one another is way more than these gifts.

It is extraordinarily more excellent. And it's agape. In chapter 13 and verse 1 says, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, and that word is agape, love, charity, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling 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 can remove mountains and have not charity, agape, I am nothing, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, agape, love, it profiteth me nothing.

And so this word agape is the strongest, highest, biggest kind of love that you can find in the New Testament. You don't see it in much Greek literature, but you see it a ton in the New Testament because it is a divine love.

[ 4 : 40 ] It is much more than emotional love. It is a love of the will. It is a love that focuses its attention on a subject, and the point of love is that God is love.

Why is love so important? Because God is love. 1 John chapter 4, in verse 7 through 8, gives us one of the simplest descriptions of God.

Love defines God because God is love, and verse 7 says, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God. For, read it with me, for God is love. Our God is love. Jump to verse 16, in the same chapter it says, And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

Read it again with me. God is love. And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in Him. God doesn't know about love. God doesn't have a lot of experience about love.

[ 5 : 40 ] God is love. God is the very essence of true love. And in Him we find everything that we need to know about love.

What love means. And you say, What do you mean that in Him we find it? Well, He expressed it, and He showed it in the coming of Jesus Christ. We love Him because He first loved us.

Although God or Christ are not mentioned in this passage, the cross of Christ is the greatest manifestation of God's love for this world. Romans chapter 5 and verse 8 says, But God commendeth His love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I know you've heard this passage before. Romans 8, 37 says, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Galatians 2, 20, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me in the life which I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

[ 6 : 43 ] This is the central truth for Paul when he says, I'm going to show you a more excellent way. He is saying, I'm going to show you love through the cross of Christ. I'm going to show you God's love through the cross of Christ.

He's not speaking of a human virtue, but a love that is only shown in God through Christ. John 3, 16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For Paul, when he's speaking of this, if you read the whole chapter, for Paul, love isn't just an idea. It's not a motivator for our behavior. Love is behavior.

Love is action. Love demands action. And anything less than action is not love. Love, above all things, is sacrificial, and we see that in Christ.

It is sacrificing one's well-being for the well-being of another. It might even be a sacrifice for the well-being of people that do not love you, people that despise you, people that hate you, like Christ.

[ 7 : 55 ] It isn't a feeling. It's an act of our will. Love is a joyful desire of putting others' well-being above our own.

And we see that in God. We see that in Jesus. Jesus is love. God is love. And we follow Jesus.

Amen? That's the one we follow. Love. And see, we do not like to talk about love because we're tough men, right? That's what we think of love.

It's just too pink. No, that's not love. You know, it's not this romantic idea, Hollywood, you know, cutesy kittens.

You know, forget kittens. That's not love. True love is in Christ. Jesus. And we need love. It's important to us because all speech, all knowledge, all actions are absolutely useless, render everything useless if they do not have love.

[ 9 : 01 ] And they not only render the actions, the speech, the knowledge useless, but they actually render us useless. Nothing. Go to verse 1 says, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, agape, love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Without love, our gifts are useless. Paul isn't trying to say that love and gifts are opposed to each other. They actually work together, but without love, one is rendered completely useless.

And the tongues of men and of angels, you know, it's not speaking of, you know, of unintelligible speech. You know, every time you see an angel speak in the Bible, they're understood by humans, right?

And he's actually going into hyperbole. He's exaggerating completely to make us understand the importance of love. He says, Man, I could be the most eloquent, the most well-spoken.

I could speak as many languages you want me to speak. I could be as eloquent as you want me to be, but if I do not have love, my words are just noise.

[ 10 : 12 ] Just absolute noise. And so to preach without love is just noise. To speak to our neighbors, to our co-workers, to speak to anyone about the Gospel or about true Christian living without love in our hearts is just absolute noise.

and it is of no benefit to you or to them. I remember when I was learning how to play the guitar. You know, my dad loves music.

If you've known him for a very long time, you know he loves music. And you also know that I'm lying. He's not a big fan of music. I was playing the guitar and I remember, you know, I wasn't very skilled on the guitar.

And so, you know, and all of a sudden I hear, Darren, go play that in the bathroom. You know, that's all I heard because it was of no benefit to my father however I played the guitar.

And, you know, the same thing happens when we speak without love. Right? Is it, is it, what's, Charlie? No, not Charlie Chaplin.

[ 11 : 24 ] The little bald kid with the, Charlie Brown. Isn't the teacher or somebody that calls on the phone and all you hear, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah? Is that right? I've never watched that cartoon but it's a good illustration, right?

That's, that is, that is what you sound like when you do not have love in your heart. And, you know, we, we want to pride ourselves on being good preachers.

We want to pride ourselves on knowing the Bible. We want to pride ourselves on being expository preachers. And believe me, I strive to be a better preacher every day.

And man, I study and I love being a preacher. But man, if, if I can be the best preacher in the world but if there's no love, it's of no use. It's of no use.

You can be the best speaker. You can be the most persuasive person but if you don't have love, it is of no use. Verse 13, 2 says, and though I have the gifts of prophecy and understand all mystery and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing.

[ 12 : 32 ] He says, I've got the prophecy and knowledge. It's understanding the message of God. Man, if you could understand and have just the best understanding of the Word of God that anybody has and you could write all the commentaries and you could just know so much, it doesn't say that it's of no use if you don't have love.

It says, if you don't have love, you are nothing. So man, I can write all the commentaries I want. I can read all the Bible I want. I can try to explain all the Bible I want.

But if I don't have love, I am nothing. It's not that my words are useless. It's not that my knowledge is useless. It's that I have become completely nothing.

There's absolutely nothing without love. Verse 2 says, you have to prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith.

Here's the exaggeration, right? He says, so that I could move mountains. He said, if I could move mountains with my faith, exaggeration, he says, if I could move mountains with my faith, I have not love, I am nothing.

[ 13 : 43 ] He's not talking about saving faith. He's talking about this excessive faith, this gift of faith where somebody knows, man, I can expect things from God. I can pray and know God listens and you know that person, right?

You know, the person that goes to a car dealership and prays and says, God, if you want me to have that car, I've met, you know, preachers like that. God, if you want me to have that brand new car, if it's your will, you know, thank you and next thing you know, some church member just goes out and buys it for them.

Have you ever met, I don't know, half the stories that preachers tell aren't true so I don't know if it is or not but I've heard them. They're really impressive and I don't know if I have that gift of faith but you know, that gift of faith, right, where people, God, I want that church property, right, and you know, God gives them that church property and God gives them and God opens doors and God, I just know you're going to work things out and he does and you can have that, right, you can have that knowing an expectation that God's going to provide and that God's going to open doors and just that faith that can move mountains.

Hey man, if you don't have love, nothing. You're nothing. We are nothing. Paul's not trying to yell at them. He's trying to say, guys, you got it all wrong.

The way isn't a selfish use of gifts. The way is love and love is the way to exercise, to work your gifts.

[ 15 : 12 ] I apologize. This is the first time I've preached in English in a year. Verse 3 says, and if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, you can be generous, you can be a martyr.

If you don't have love, it profits you nothing. The only way that giving becomes spiritual, it's when it's motivated by love. The person that gives out of a legalistic obligation, the person that gives out of trying to appease their conscience, the person that gives out of wanting to receive recognition, will end up with an empty bank account and an empty spiritual account.

Because the only thing that makes giving spiritual is love. It is love. And he says, look, the loveless person, the loveless person produces nothing, is of no benefit, and is nothing.

If we have no love in our hearts, it matters not what we do. It won't be of any use to you, to anyone else, and your life has no value.

It's what the passage says, at least. So many of us, we give, and we work, and we pray, and we do all these things, and we don't receive any fruit, and we don't see any satisfaction in our ministry, get frustrated, we get tired, we don't want to serve anymore, we don't want to do anymore, we don't want to do anything.

[ 16 : 50 ] Why? Because we're not being motivated by love. We're not being driven by love. We haven't given our lives wholly to love. And like I said, it's not an emotion, it's not this pink, you know, kitten, you know, wrapped in a Christmas present.

That's not love. I'm speaking of an action given toward the will of God. And so there is a major importance to love. So many times, we've just gotten completely distracted as to what we are, and I've got two minutes, so let's hurry on to the third point.

Where is the source of my love? Where is the source of love? Jesus left no doubt that the highest mark of disciple was to love. So how do we do it? It is a work of the Spirit.

It is a work of the Spirit. The Lord has given us love through the Spirit of God. It says, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

So, we've received love. How many of you have received the Holy Spirit? Raise your hand. You have received love. Congratulations, my friend. Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22 says, but the fruit of the Spirit is love.

[ 18 : 00 ] That's the first one on the list. So, if you have the Spirit you should have love. So, have you received love? Walking in love is walking in the Spirit.

It says, this I say, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Walking in love is constantly seeking the benefit of others. Christ taught us how to love.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 9 says, but as touching brotherly love you need not know you need not that I write unto you but you yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

We don't have to create love. We don't have to manufacture love. We just have to give the love that we have received from Jesus Christ. And we should cultivate that love. 1 Corinthians 14 1 says, follow after charity, agape, love, and desire spiritual gifts rather than ye may prophesy.

Colossians 3.14 it says, and above all these things put on charity. Philippians 2.2 says, fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded having the same love.

[ 19 : 03 ] Hebrews 10.24 says, let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. And so, living in love is living in the Spirit.

Living in love is following after Christ daily. Living in love is living in obedience to the Word of God. Living in love is obeying God's Word and seeking the well-being of others.

Seeking to benefit others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ told us to love each other. He said that we would be identified as His disciples. Why?

Because of our good doctrine? Uh-uh. Because of our good preaching? No. Because of our... No. Because of love. Because we love one another. So, man, we come to church and we don't like the guy in the back.

Sorry, brother. We don't like the guy in the back or we don't like the lady in the front. He says, love one another. Are you living a life dedicated to the love of God?

[ 20 : 09 ] God, I'll finish with this. The greatest commandment that Jesus gives us in Matthew 22, 37 says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is likened to it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

So, if you want to sum up all of the law, there's two. Love God, love others. Love God, love others.

Are you living a life dedicated to the love of God? Are you walking in the Spirit? If someone looked at your life, could they say, that God loves?

If someone looked at your life, ma'am, she loves. Sacrificially, she loves. She gives of herself to other people to come and know the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 21 : 18 ] Is our love shown in the lives of other people? Or do we only come to church looking to do things for ourselves, to receive attention, to exercise our spiritual gifts so that people can know that we know how to speak?

Amen. Or do we actually want to serve others? To live in love is to walk in the Spirit. Let's pray. Dear God, I ask You that You would work in our lives.

I know that I fail at this so many times. I love knowledge and I love doctrine and I love all these things and I forget to love You. Dear God, I ask You that You would put in my heart a love towards You and a love towards others that would be unquenchable.

that God love would motivate every single thing that we do. Thank You for Your love toward us. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

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[ 22 : 23 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.