

Not a Wedding Scripture

The bigger issue

This was not an abstract essay on the nature of love.

It was a comprehensive, scathing repudiation of the culture of the church at Corinth.

Love does not...

Love Does Not...

Envy

Boast

Puff up (arrogant)

Act rudely

Insist on its own way

Get provoked easily

Keep record of wrongs (resentful)

Rejoice at wrongdoing

The Corinthians Do...

1 Corinthians 3:3

1 Corinthians 1:29; 3:21; 4:7

1 Corinthians 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1

1 Corinthians 7:36

1 Corinthians 10:24

1 Corinthians 6:7-8 (also probably ch. 1:11)

1 Corinthians 6:7-8

1 Corinthians 5:1-2; 11:21-22

Comparison to Lake Jackson

Corinth

About 95 years old at time of Paul’s writing.

Brought into existence for economic purposes.

Attracts a diverse group of intense people.

No landed tradition or aristocracy.

Lake Jackson

Lake Jackson is 83 years old.

Was founded for industry and jobs.

People come from everywhere, for opportunity.

More than three generations are rare.

What Doesn’t Matter

Your displays of spirituality (vs. 1)

Compares tongues without love to obnoxious noise, perhaps like pagan celebrations such as those held by Dionysus, the God of Wine, or other pagan gods.

Your [ministry] talents (vs. 2)

Prophetic powers → Direct revelation from God combined with communication ability

Understand all mysteries and knowledge → Intellect and study, comprehension of God’s Word

Faith to move mountains → A vision for the future, leadership ability

Without love, these incredible gifts amount to being “nothing.”

Your moral sacrifice (vs. 3)

*Giving away possessions → perhaps for an ascetic type of life, like the Jesus to the rich young ruler.
Deliver my body up to be burned → martyrdom.*

Without love, these incredible gifts gain you “nothing.”

Spiritual gifts ≠ Spiritual fruit¹

These phrases, “I am nothing, I gain nothing, I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal” are a way of saying that a person may not know Jesus at all and still display all of these gifts and moral virtues.

There’s Balaam and King Saul in the OT. There’s Judas in the NT. These men were not doing false miracles through Satanic power. They were doing true miracles by God’s (Jesus’) power!

Matthew 7:22-23 “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Gifts are not evidence of salvation!!

Jonathan Edwards argues that holiness (fruit of Spirit) are true indicators of salvation, not the gifts.

A Reason to Rejoice

Rejoicing in the assurance of our relationship with Jesus

Luke 10:17-20 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”¹⁸ And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Questions for Personal Study

1. When is a time that you experienced deep love from another Christian, or God? How did it shape you?
2. Why do we conflate the action of spiritual gifts with a person’s character or walk with God?
3. What are you going to do to refocus on love?
4. Have you been so busy, like the church in Ephesus, that you’ve missed out on Jesus? What are you going to do to spend authentic time with him?

¹ I am Following Tim Keller, who follows Jonathan Edwards, who wrote sixteen sermons on 1 Cor. 13.