

THE GREATEST GIFT

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts...”

— 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1

The idea of love is wonderful, but in the daily grind of our lives how can we ever get a hold of it? How can we live like another Francis of Assisi or Mother Theresa?

If we are Christian, then we are gifted by God, each in our own unique way as God determines. Paul teaches that in our spiritual gifting, love is not the prerogative of a few but is the possession of all. He founded the church in Corinth which had complete misconceptions about spiritual gifts, and was the most immature, deeply divided church. New Christians were involved in sexual immorality, drunkenness and caught up in all kinds of pagan ways. But it was to these people Paul said, “I want you to know you can experience this love as the means by which you engage in ministry to one another.”

Spiritual gifting is always for the benefit of others, but if it isn't carried out in love, it counts for nothing. If love is not the motive in great acts of benevolence and faith, it amounts to nothing. If love is not the reason for martyrdom, even that will gain nothing. Love is the highest virtue of all, and for one very clear reason. Because God is love. Detaching God and His works from who He is will simply become an expression of ourselves for the praise of others. The means by which the gifts of the Spirit are offered is love, and if they are going to be fruitful must be exercised in love.

We can mimic and counterfeit all spiritual gifts, but we cannot counterfeit love. Love is truthful and it never fails. Paul tells us that where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. “And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Then he says, “Follow the way of love...” Effective Christian ministry depends on it.

Love is what changes us and makes us significant in the environment God has placed us. Whatever God gives us to do is measured by the benefit it brings to other people as we exercise it in love. It is our love of God that will express itself in our love for others.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, Thank You for your love. May it richly and powerfully indwell me so that it is always expressed in my interactions with others.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I exercising my spiritual gift so that it reflects God’s love?