

Without Love, I Am Nothing

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the profound topic of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, emphasizing the transformative power of divine love that surpasses human understanding. The speaker shares a personal encounter with God's love that challenged his theology and highlights the distinction between human kindness and the divine love of God. Drawing from biblical narratives like Jacob's encounter with God and the fall of man in Eden, the sermon explores the impact of sin and the need for divine redemption through Jesus Christ, who embodies God's love. The message culminates in an invitation to surrender to God's love, allowing the Holy Spirit to fill hearts with the incomparable love of God.

Duration: 38:50

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1, John 4:8, John 17:25, Romans 5:5, John 3:16, Genesis 1:1, John 3:17, 1 John 4:7, Romans 8:38

Topics: "Divine Love", "Redemption through Christ"

Description

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Transcript

It's a real pleasure to be here with you and I've been looking to the Lord about this and looking forward to the occasion. Joni may end up giving a different title to this message but when I was pulling my thoughts together I jotted down on my paper heading the words without love I am nothing and I'm taking that from 1st Corinthians 13. I'm going to read just two verses from chapter 13 where the Apostle Paul says though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not 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 could remove mountains and have not charity I am nothing.

Now of course that was from the old King James and the word love is translated here with the word charity. This topic that I'm touching on here is actually a huge topic and that was really one of my other challenges earlier on wondering just which aspect of this I can deal with in the time that we have together

but it's a most important subject and I hope that I can show you what I mean by that. So the statement again without love I am nothing that's a very very challenging statement and to understand what were to think about with these words we must first understand the identity of the love that is being spoken of.

Some of you will have heard me say something like this before if you've been listening to me on other occasions but in 1966 I was a professing Christian young man and without going into details I was coerced to go into a large sort of nondescript house in Liverpool. I was with my brother and my sister-in-law and they'd been attending meetings there. On this occasion they wanted me to go in.

It was not a meeting night or anything but they wanted me to go in and just meet some of the people they knew who would be present and I didn't want to go and so I used the word earlier coerced. It was kind of against what I perceived to be my better judgment but I was wrong because the Lord was in control of that situation and he had a plan for me to go into that house because it would turn out to be a pivotal moment for my entire life and I went in I spent about an hour I should think talking with the folk that I met there and when I returned home my wife knew where I had been and she knew that I in fact to be more specific she thought I was just dropping my brother and my sister-in-law off there and then returning home so when I hadn't returned for an hour or so she kind of put two and two together that I'd obviously got caught up there and gone in the house and but so her words to me when I arrived home well what happened what happened Fred and my response was this verbatim I know I'm absolutely to the word accurate when I say this I said Sheila I have never seen love like that and you have to keep in mind that of course I've been accustomed to Christian meetings Christian people for all my life up to that stage I was I think 25 at that point and the fact of the matter was that my in that house with those people and then perhaps in a particular way what I left with and what was going on in me as I drove home on that occasion was confusion I was confused because on the one hand I couldn't deny that I had been to borrow John Wesley's words I've been strangely warmed in that context and yet on the other hand my theology was totally rocked because they I knew that they were talking about some things that I had I had not understood at all and we had lived a very narrow sort of exclusive Christian experience and this was different to me and we were under the impression that we had it all right in fact there was a joke if I can share this that I heard among some of the young people and they said when we all get to heaven there'll be there'll be all these doors and there'll be a sign on one of the doors and it will say something like please don't make a noise because there are the Plymouth brethren inside and they think they're the only ones here but that's the way we thought we had the edge on the truth of the Word of God and here I was with some people who were of a sort of different persuasion which I won't go into at this point in time but the fact is it challenged everything in me on the one hand I sensed that I had been touched by something I really didn't understand and it was rocking my theology and I believe coming back to this text to truly understand the love that is being referred to in this verse we must we must really allow God to speak to us in our hearts we need God to help us with this because what we're talking about and what we're faced with here is more than just endearing personalities which I could say I found in that room really nice people and they're very kind they're very loving towards me they even gave me tea I mean that's loving for an English person but but there's a huge huge distinction between a human personality that is endearing and kind and gentle and to all intents and purposes loving and the love that is referred to in this passage of Scripture we could end up if we were being very superficial we could read those verses that I've just read and in particular the you know if we have not got this charity then nothing else matters and we could think of well you know God's looking for nice people kind people and so on but there's far more for us to understand here God's people are nice people they're the most nice and most wonderful people in the whole of the world those that are truly his but we're looking at something which is different the Apostle

John he made a many profound statements but one that I'm thinking of right now in the first of his epistles chapter 4 he said simply and you know these words God is love God is love what John is really saying there and helping us to understand is that God doesn't merely practice love God isn't merely loving in the way that we generally think of love and being loving but what he is saying is that God is love the very essence of his being is love and this love that is being referred to here in this section is God now let's be clear I am not saying that love is God because we'd be then thinking of love as we know it generally and to say that that's God is ridiculous and I'm certainly most certainly not saying that but what what I am saying is that this love that we're to think about here and understand is is an attribute of God's own being it's it's the it's who he is God is love so we're thinking about love on an entirely different level to what we would normally think about and to to to be encountered by this love is really another way of saying I'm being encountered by God and I believe that is what happened to me when I went into that house I was being encountered by God you know this reminds me of one of the stories of Jacob in the Old Testament do you remember he was sort of on the run and there's a story behind that statement but he's sleeping out doors and the text says that he he used a rock for his pillow and when he woke up he was confused mind you I think if I slept all night outside with my head on a rock I'd be confused in a different way but but he was confused in a transcendent manner because while he was sleeping he had an encounter with God God spoke to him and made certain very great statements to him and when he eventually woke up and reflected on what had happened he said he said God was in this place and I didn't realize it I knew it not as the old King James and he called the name of the place Bethel and so what I'm talking about is having an experience that is very very real and undeniably out of the normal sphere and beyond the normal parameters of our understanding and yet at the same time we don't really understand this and that's what happened to me maybe that's happened to you and maybe more than once too in the journey of your life but let me let me as it were sort of take the camera I've got right now in my imagination and back it up back it up a long long long way in fact I'm going back to the to the beginning of what we're learning in the very early chapters of the Bible but we're told that God created all right and to sort of jump through this quickly God created a paradise the word Eden is translated as a meaning of being paradise God created paradise and in that paradise he created man he made man in his own image and after his own likeness foretold and God gave to the man and indeed to the woman that he would later create he gave them abilities he psychologically can I say he designed them for love he gave to them a capacity for love and for that love to be expressed it was not good for Adam to be alone so God created woman as we know made this help me for him that was identically suited to him that shared the same capacities and abilities and they shared and they gave and received love together that's how God intended it and and then in the context of that perfection of innocence and harmony God himself came down were told in the cool of the day and although the word isn't used there in that in the early text but but he fellowshiped with the man and the woman that he'd created that were enjoying this this incredibly wonderful relationship together and it was shared in a sense with God and God was pleased with the whole thing now what we know very well is that in that context there was a cataclysmic event that took place and Adam betrayed the sacred trust in his relationship with God and he in his own heart and by decision he usurped God and he made himself God and there was a consequence for that and as the result of that just moving stepping forward a couple of steps quite quickly Adam and his wife they shuffled into the darkness and behind them traipse the entire human race to dwell in a world without divine fellowship without fellowship with God estranged from God distanced from God let me just add a parenthesis here as it were all this that was taking place was no accident in terms of a surprise for God what God wasn't surprised by anything that was happening he knew exactly how all this would unfold and everything was right within the context of his sovereign plan and purpose but in any event as the result of that that took place in Eden man reproduced after his own

kind and the story unfolds right up until this present moment of time in which we live but here's the point I want to make it's quite evident to me that there was a kind of residue of Eden that would linger somehow within man's own being within his own human heart sort of a memory indeed a memory that men and women today attempt to sort of create to replicate an experience of Eden it's sort of within us too we have our own plans about it but we have a sense within us that we need to create something that's enjoyable that fulfills us that satisfies all of our needs and longings and so on and we see that that residue expressed in different ways I mean in some very noble ways for example I think of human romance I think of I think of a mother with a child or with her children and we could pause and think about that longer I'm just making references here but the fact is as a another song that I know and you may know it also puts it sin has left its crimson stain and that original innocence was completely corrupted and remains completely corrupted and so while we may see some some genuine decency and some kindness that's very real and indisputable and frankly we thank God that it's around us in people out there who are not Christian believers we said well that's wonderful we wish everyone could be like that so to speak and there be no more chaos and hurt but here's the reality while we can isolate you know wonderful romance and loving parents and children in secure home situations and so on we know that that innocence that has been so terribly corrupted displays itself in some very very different ways not in frequently I've heard stories and I'm sure you're as aware of these kinds of stories as I am but I'm thinking of stories of hearts of people who believe that they've found true love only to discover that they've been betrayed they've been rejected and they've been gravely wounded somehow I'm thinking I'm thinking of a daughter who has suffered the worst of all betrayals she's been subjected to her father's lust I'm thinking of a son whose father's walked away from him leaving him with open wounds to deal with in many cases for the rest of his life I'm thinking of the husband who betrays his marriage vows and leaves a wife broken-hearted and in despair all these kinds of issues leave men and women's and young people's and children's inward states as playgrounds for demons we're only too ready to seize the opportunities to spoil and ruin you know here I mentioned just a few examples there's so much more that could be said here I mean today we're watching our culture spiraling into the dark abyss you know when Adam rebelled against God we refer to that event as the as the fall but who can measure how how far he fell and we're seeing all that out working out today as we look around we don't have to look very far but thank God let me change the tune tune here thank God there is a gospel the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the Apostle Paul calls it on another occasion the glorious gospel of the blessed God and another occasion he just calls it the gospel of God and we we are so thankful that we've come under the sound and under the influences of this great and wonderful gospel it's the gospel of divine redemption yes indeed sin has left a crimson stain and it's brought moral calamity and hopelessness but hallelujah a second Adam came from heaven a Savior a deliverer and his were told was to destroy the works of the devil how wonderful how wonderful he paid redemption's price with his blood and his nature and his name is love Charles Wesley penned those words his nature and his name is love not human love not not even human love at its very very very best this love was God veiled in human flesh it's interesting Rome's Rome's final testimony to this with these words truly this was the Son of God in that wonderful I'd like to expand on that beloved I'm asking you just to think about some words of Jesus I'm turning in my Bible back to John's gospel and in John chapter 17 Jesus is praying to his father and in the 26th verse it's actually the last statement in his praying to his father just immediately before Calvary and this is what Jesus says I'll read two verses 25 and 26 Oh righteous father the world has not known thee but I have known thee and these have known that thou hast sent me and I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them this is staggering this is staggering what a wonderful thing oh I mentioned a few moments ago that the purpose of the Redeemer coming was to this and the deliverer to destroy the works

of the devil and there's much that could be said to explain and to help us understand what that meant and still means but it became I'm thinking of John's words you know them well someone said it's the most well-known verse in the Bible but 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 wonderful and here's Jesus is on the threshold of the very climax of his purpose in coming which humanly and I think also and believe also from his point of view also was the most catastrophic and most challenging situation that has ever existed in the whole of the world let me put it in the broadest terms and here he is another scripture will tell us that he sweats as it were great drops of blood he's got the agony of Gethsemane ahead of him he's got he's got the cross itself with all that that would involve before him but at that moment is he is the embodiment of divine love he's in fellowship with his father who is the embodiment of divine love and together with the Holy Spirit this triune God have existed and will exist eternally in purest love in love divine all loves excelling and in that moment is he's talking to his father and anticipating Calvary and why he's going there at Calvary it was to save and rescue sinful lost hopeless men and women and bring them to himself and here he speaks to his father and he says father I'm praying that the love well with you have loved me that love Lord father I want that to be in them wonderful this is it this as I say it's it's a staggering request he's making but it comes with a staggering expectation as well because he knows that God his father's going to answer this prayer and he's told his people about it a number of times just recorded in the earlier chapters of John's Gospel Amen the divine love of God which is not human love it's not a human emotion it's somehow it's somehow the very essence of who God is let that love be in them and I in them this is God's but this is God's prayer for you whoever you are whatever's going on in your life perhaps there may be some who will listen to me speaking who find themselves in one of those awful categories that Aaron that I mentioned just minutes ago and perhaps your heart is torn and your situation is desperate you may feel betrayed and desperately alone but here is the one who loves you with an everlasting love with a love that belongs to another world altogether and he's speaking to you he wants to love you with that love I talked again earlier of me encountering that love and it warming my heart in some strange way perhaps your heart is being warmed in some strange way now as you're beginning to recognize that you are loved of God you are special to God you are his darling he loves you and he wants to bring deliverance to he wants to bring healing to he wants to bring a restoration not to what you once were but restoration to how God intended men and women to live in the world and he's still accomplishing that to this day wonderful we ask ourselves well how is how is this possible how you know that reminds me as I use the word how it reminds me of that event that remembered annually in a very particular way the angel is visiting the young maiden Mary and he makes a talking about staggering statements he makes an astonishing statement to her which we won't pause to discuss but do you remember that when Mary hears this word she responds with this word how she said to the angel how can this be I don't know a man in this way and how can it how can it be and do you remember the angels response he said the Holy Ghost will come upon you then he said some other things the Holy Ghost that's the old King James I was raised on the old King James some people think I should have changed a long time ago well I do look I dip into other translations but he's saying the Holy Spirit of God shall come upon you and that holy thing that shall be born of you shall be the very Son of God we're asking the question today how can this divine love which is the very essence of God's being enter into my life and the answer to that is you can't make it happen it doesn't come because of all your studying and all of your schooling and all of your Bible sessions and all of the videos you watch and whatever it's only the Spirit of God that can accomplish this in your life and there's the answer in a word and the Apostle Paul he puts it this way in Romans chapter 5 and verse 5 he says the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us there's the answer to our question it's it's the the Holy Spirit that we refer to sometimes as a third person of the Trinity he has

come into the world he's always been in the world from the very beginning it was his spirit that was brooding on the face of the waters in the beginning to remember that verse of Scripture in Genesis 1 he's always been but on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with a new mission with a mission he had never before and that mission was to bring to experience to that which Jesus had purchased on the cross of Calvary he came to to bring the effects and the virtue the power the reasoning for Calvary and make it a reality in the lives of men and women and he's still doing that to this day and when we're saying well how can we receive this supernatural this transcendent love this heavenly love into our hearts that Jesus is talking about and praying about the answer once again is the Holy Spirit of God he is the almighty agent who will accomplish this in a man and in a woman's life even today we know that on the day of Pentecost when all this was launched following Calvary God as it were he he flash flooded his his life into the hearts of those men and women that were there open and disposed to him on that occasion and it's interesting because the verse I quoted from Romans 5 and verse 5 is the love of God says the Apostle is shed abroad the idea that word that's translated shed abroad is only used on one other occasion in the New Testament and that was the occasion when the woman broke the the flask of fragrance that she was going to anoint Jesus with and the text of Scripture there says that the whole house was filled with the aroma of the ointment in other words it went everywhere got into every crevice and every corner of the house and that's what Paul understood to happen when the Holy Spirit comes and sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts it's not something that's contained in some small corner our religious corner our Sunday morning service corner or anything like that he fills he flash floods the entire heart and spirit of a man and of a woman amen in in I think it was the last message I spoke just very recently I reached a stage and I think I'm reaching the same stage here in this that I'm sharing with you just now I think my question was came like this what shall I do you know in the light of this offer in the light of this need and this provision what shall I do can I just pause for a moment just this morning I received an email from a man a man I've known for a long time but I haven't been fellowshiping with him for a long time and he wrote to me and he told me did you listen on the internet to that message and he said I can't tell you what it meant for me because he said you know I know that I've lost ground spiritually I'm putting this into my own words now but he said I know I've lost ground somewhere and I've not known how to sort of get my life right again with God and he said and he said when you've made that statement because you said these are now his words he said when you ask the question what do I need to do your answer was nothing and he said that released me in an amazing way this heavenly blessing if God is speaking to you today if your heart is being strangely warmed by his presence and you sense him speaking to you you can you can take this for granted this is an indication that God is working toward you and the issue for you is not to question how do I get this what do I need to do or even what do I need to say all you need to do is with this full confidence that God is calling you is to just fall into his love you know the the issue at its root is is that you must yeah I'm sorry I'm trying to think how to say this the issue at the roots is not what what does what does God need to do to make this become a reality the God is saying to you you must more fully give yourself to him we're saying you give yourself more fully to me that's really what I'm trying to get to here and God is saying I'm already here I'm for you I have this provision it's in my heart to do this in your life you need to simply just fall into my love and trust me and believe me and drink in as you open your life even more fully to me with a fuller expectation that that which I will do in you will be greater than anything you have received before you know so much theology that we've been taught wants to leave us with the impression well we got all that at the beginning and now we just have to make sure that we try to keep ourselves on track by our discipline and you know but but no God is always wanting to do something more something deeper something richer amen so you're saying to God give me and God is saying to you no no you give me you give me yourself will you do that my friend today an old hymn writer who I quote often

Charles Wesley I referred to him earlier he puts these these things into words poetically in an amazing way but two verses that come to a mind he says oh thou it's like a prayer to God it could be my prayer right now oh thou who camest from above the pure celestial fire to impart kindle a flame of sacred love on the mean altar of my heart there let it for thy glory burn within extinguishable blaze and trembling to its source return in humble prayer and fervent praise I must close here but you know it's only when we have responded to this gracious offer of God in an ever fuller manner that that love that came from heaven that was manifested and embodied in the person of Jesus Christ that brought him to that self-sacrificing moment on the cross and now is imparted to us as we receive it and drink it into our inner being only then will this divine love begin to be manifested or become visible through my life in my relationships and in all of my living and without it Paul was right I am nothing may God bless you let me just close with a short word of prayer father this is your word this is your gospel this is your heart for these your people and father I pray that you will awaken an understanding concerning the wonder of wonders of your love for them and enable them Lord to dispose themselves and to open their inner being to you as they have never done before now with a fresh understanding and fuller expectation of what you're about to do Lord and come and bring the richness and the wonder of this divine life this divine love in every heart in Jesus name Amen

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