

Corinthians - the Most Excellent Way (1)

by J. Glyn Owen

The most excellent way is a way of agape love that surpasses the best gifts of the Spirit and is the highest gift of God to his child.

Duration: 49:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:28, Luke 10:17-20, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 3:14, Revelation 21:27

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of love, specifically the love of God. He mentions that the word 'love' has become diluted in our present context and needs to be explained. The speaker refers to C.S. Lewis's book 'Four Loves' as a helpful resource for understanding the concept of love. He then focuses on 1 Corinthians 13, highlighting that without love, the gifts of the Spirit lose their value and significance. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need to consider our actions and motives in light of our love for Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Now, our subject tonight, then, is the most excellent way. Having summoned the Corinthians jealously to seek the best gifts, Paul next pointed them to a way which is better than the best to which he had just referred. The RSV translates it, a still more excellent way.

He's already pointed them to the best, but this is a still more excellent way. J.B. Phillips translates it, a way which surpasses them all. Now, what a daring statement this is.

I found the wind taken out of my sails when it came home to me at long last what the Apostle Paul was really saying here. It's difficult to take it in. It almost sounds heretical, but yet here he is saying, saying with all the robust grandeur of his own apostolic authority, there actually is a way which is more excellent than that which takes us in pursuit of the very best gifts of the Spirit.

Now, hold your breath a moment. I haven't made a mistake. That's what Paul said.

Follow after the very best of the gifts, he says, not the least of them, not the ones that you may despise or somebody else despises, the very best. That was the command. But he's no sooner given the command than he says, and yet he says, I want to show you a way that is better than the best.

And what he means is that there is a pursuit in the Christian life which takes us on to a higher level of Christian living than simply to pursue the gifts of the Spirit for ourselves. This is not to deny the value of the gift. This is not to disparage or to despise what God has given.

The Apostle Paul would never do that, and I trust none of us would. But it is to recognize that the highest gift of God to his child is not a charismatic gift as such. It is something beyond it.

The whole of 1 Corinthians 13 is taken up with that. Let me put it in the words of a theologian of some renown who has now gone to be with his Lord. The late Professor F. L. Godet's comment sets the tone which I think summarizes, and at the same time summarizes, Paul's thought in these words.

This is how he represents Paul's thoughts. Seek gifts, he says, and moreover, I will now describe a way which is still better than the mere exercise of the best of the gifts. That whereby alone the possession and exercise of gifts truly becomes a blessing.

And that brings us to 1 Corinthians 13. This lovely Christian hymn about agape, about Christian love. The writers of the New Testament, it has been often said, do leave their own individual marks upon their writings, even though they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

And you can recognize the writings of James by his emphasis, especially on works. You can recognize something of Peter's emphasis, because it is always one of hope. Peter is said to have been the apostle of hope, and certainly his first epistle is a great epistle of hope, and so do we have much else in the Gospels which reflect the hope in Peter, having, of course, come to a knowledge of his Lord and of the power of the Holy Spirit.

John is universally described as the apostle of love. Paul is said to be the logician and the theologian of the party, and his emphasis is pre-eminently upon the great doctrine of justification by faith. But what I want you to notice here is this, not simply the fact that none of them sang a gospel of one note, but this great hymn of love doesn't come, as we might have been taught to expect, from the pen of the apostle John.

It comes from the heart of the great theologian, of the great missionary, the apostle Paul. It comes from the heart of the man who had seen the meaning of the death of Christ on the cross as making propitiation for the sins of the world, as in consequence to demanding from man a sacrifice of life and limb and everything else as a part of our very Christian worship. Now there is so much one could say about this chapter, and I'm tempted to do that, but I must try to desist.

Those of you who are fond of poetry will have unquestionably been drawn to this chapter as a sheer piece of poetry, and I suppose that it is one of the most exquisitely beautiful poems that we have anywhere in literature. There are those who have classified it as such, and one could say much about that. There is symmetry, there is order, there is beauty, the cadence is such that there is something, there is something that is telling about it.

It is a song as well as a poem. It strikes, it strikes the heart and the mind and the conscience. It gets right at the whole of the personality.

It speaks of a whole of me. Now of course, the most important thing about this poem is its subject, and that subject is love, the love of God. The word love has unfortunately, as we've had occasion to notice many a time before, it has to be explained in our present context ere we can proceed.

Time was when that was not necessary, but so many things go today by the word love that we have to take some time to say what we mean. Now I wish I could have given us advance notice that all of you could have read a book like C.S. Lewis's *Four Loves* or something like that. Well, if you haven't read it before, just get it, get it again, it'll do no harm.

C.S. Lewis tells us and rightly tells us that in the age in which our Lord and his apostles lived, there were four words for love, and they represented four different kinds of love. The first word was eros. That word has come through into our English erotic, eroticism.

Eros could be used, of course, of the intensive passion that goes to the making of patriotism, though its characteristic usage in Greek literature relates to sexual passion or strong emotions that refuse to delay gratification. You know that kind of passion that comes upon you and you can't stop. You say to yourself, I have to get it now.

It masters you. It's the most irrational thing. It cares for no one, cares for nothing.

It just laps you like a flame and devours your energy, devours you, your mind and your emotions, and you fall victim. That's eros. It's a cruel love, if love we can call it eros.

There's another kind called storge. Storge was a word which could again be used of a nation's devotion to its ruler and was so used in the ancient world. But its peculiar and its most characteristic flavor was domestic.

It was generally described, or I should say rather, it generally described the natural affection of a brother for a sister or of the most intimate people within the family circle. But it was always within the family circle. It was the kind of affection that bound people together who were already in a closely knit community, never for strangers but for our own.

We use the word kith and kin. Some people have quite a smile at that and their cynicism is aroused immediately. All right, this word storge related to that particularly.

It relates to those that you know and love and respect and much else. Then there is a third word used, or there was a third word used in New Testament times, and it's by far the more popular one in the New Testament. It's the word philia, the noun philia.

This refers to a warm affectionate regard for someone, and I'm quoting from one or two of the authorities. Though it included physical love, it involves far much more than simply physical love. It involves much else as well and has been said to be akin to our English word cherish at its best.

Now probably that is the right way of putting it. The word cherish is a very precious one, and you know what you mean when you cherish someone. You're careful what you say.

You have respect. You do not simply have affection, but it is an affection with a little bit of antiseptic in it. You're careful what you say.

You're careful what you do, where there is respect, where you cherish someone. But now, eros is not found in our Bible at all. The doors of the Bible are locked against the very suggestion of eros.

Storge comes in, not often. Philia is the most common, but the most common or the most familiar in the Gospels at any rate is the one that goes by the name agape, and that's the one that Paul is using here in 1

Corinthians 13. This noun was not found in the Greek classical writings, in the pagan writings of the day.

It does appear in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and it's a very remarkable word. It is the characteristic New Testament word for love, when that love is meant to be of the highest possible order and quality. Agape, you see, involves the whole being, and the concern and compassion and care of a whole being for another person, irrespective of the deserts of that other person.

That's the characteristic of agape. The thing that sets agape love a-going is not because a girl is beautiful or a man is manly, or there is something worthy and attractive to allure that love, to kindle it in our hearts. It's not that at all.

The thing that sets agape a-going is in our own heart. It's not that he or she or it deserves it, but it is that I feel that I want to give it. And if it is the agape of God, I feel that I want to share it, because God has put it there.

In the great words of Saint Paul, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us. In other words, the Spirit of God coming from another sphere altogether, the Holy Spirit of God comes into our hearts and floods and saturates our inner man with this thing called agape. And because of that, the heart's doors open, and the inner energy of the soul causes the hands to stretch forth, and they're full of good things, and the lips to speak, and they're full of good words, and the feet to move, and they're going on good errands.

Now that's agape. And it doesn't matter what that person looks like. He or she may not be deserving.

The reason for it, the mainspring for it, is not in man. It's in me and in you. The classical illustration of that, of course, is John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world, and he gave his only begotten Son. Now what made God do that? Well, he looked down upon some Canadian people like you good folks, and he said, how good-looking you were, and how much else. Don't you believe it? Didn't see anything of the kind.

He looked upon a world that was utterly lost in sin, spoiled. The mind was dark. The will was warped and weakened.

The nature was polluted. Man was going away and astray from God. Man was under the condemnation of God.

Man is described in the Bible as an enemy of God. He hated and loathed the very God that came after him in love, and crucified on a cross the very one who would die for him, the incarnate Lord. Yet God loved, you see, because the reason for it was not in the man that he loved, but in himself.

That's why he didn't turn back. And this is why a man, this is why a Christian man or a Christian woman can go into the most difficult places to serve the Lord Jesus. The reason for it is not in the climate of the countries they go to, or in something they've long learned anthropologically or sociologically about the people they're going to serve.

It's not that at all. But they have the love of God in their hearts. Now that is the theme of Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 13.

And you notice that he introduces it at a point in his argument when he's already stressed the fact that not all have any one particular gift of the Spirit, though all should seek the best. And now he points to this way of agape as a way that is better than the best, and then goes on to say this, and all of you, that's the implication, can have this. And if I understand the Apostle Paul all right, he's not only telling us here gathered in Knox tonight, look, you should be looking after this.

You should be seeking after this, but you may have it. And you may have it so that it possesses your souls and becomes like a river of divine grace flowing out of you, flowing through you, reaching the parched needy world around you. You can have it.

The best is for you. Now there is one main point that I want to stress tonight, and I want to say three things about it. I hope that what I say in terms of our main point summarizes verses one to three.

Well you can check up and see that that is, whether that is so or not. I hope it is. I think that verses one to three says this, that without love the gifts of the Spirit lose their value.

They never come to their own, in other words. Let me read to you 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.

That's one gift. Here's the next. If I have the gift of prophecy, and then because I have the gift of prophecy, I 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. Now I trust the Spirit of God will enable us to see this picture.

It really is a most remarkable one. Any gift of the Spirit is to be prized and valued, both on account of its divine author and of the service for which it capacitates God's people. No gift of the Spirit is therefore to be despised.

To do so is to grieve the Spirit. Even so, to treat the gifts of the Spirit as God's most precious benefits to his people, when they are not, is to dishonor the Spirit. In his inscrutable wisdom, God has seen fit, you know, to empower and impart and impart gifts to men to whom he never gave saving grace at all.

Now I'm very glad of this, particularly of some occasions. I remember, for example, somebody asked me quite recently, someone was going to a hospital here and going in for surgery, and I said that we would be praying for so-and-so, and asked who was to carry out the operation. And this person mentioned a certain name and said, I don't know whether he's a believer or not.

And I said, my dear lady, God has many more servants than he has sons. What do you mean, she said. Well, I said, our God can't give gifts to men when he hasn't given them any grace.

But the Bible doesn't say that, she said. Wait a moment, I said. Don't you remember that God called Cyrus of Babylon, Cyrus the Persian, to deliver the people of God of old after their captivity and send them back to their homeland? Cyrus had no saving grace, but he had a divine gift, the capacity, the ability to do everything that was necessary to get the people back.

If you want me to give you one more illustration nearer home, I can put it to you like this, because I see some of you a little bit dumbfounded. You know, Judas Iscariot received the same gifts exactly as the rest

of the eleven. When the Lord Jesus sent them out and he gave them authority over unclean spirits, it doesn't say all of you but Judas.

And I've no doubt in my own heart that when they went out and they commanded the unclean spirits to be exercised, Judas was among them. Judas had gifts. This is one reason you see why the Lord Jesus Christ says at one point in his gospel, many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you.

Away from me, you evildoers. I say to you, it is possible to have the gift of God, the gift of God's Spirit, without having the grace of God's Spirit, the saving grace of it. And so it is that our Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples to be very careful.

Their attitude toward this is so important. You remember one day they came back. They'd been out on an evangelistic tour and they came back all rejoicing.

You remember how they said the 72? They returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. That was a great day. That was a great time.

They see the demons tremble at the name of Jesus. You remember what he said? Did he join in the hallelujahs? Did he say that's marvelous? No, he didn't. He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. That's true, he says.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. First things first, says our Lord. Recognize the relative value of things.

I've given you power over Satan and over unclean spirits. That's true. And I do rejoice with you.

And I love to hear you coming back and saying, you've seen these things happening in my name. But wait a moment, he says, that's not the main thing to rejoice about. It is this, that by the blood I am about to shed on Calvary.

My father has written your name in his register. You belong to the new Jerusalem. You're citizens of the kingdom of the ages.

That's the thing to be joyous about. To be more grateful for startling gifts than for saving grace betrays a very wrong sense of values. Salvation is a boon of far greater significance and value than the possession of supernatural gifts.

Now, here in 1 Corinthians 13, 1 to 3, however, Paul proceeds to show that the highest and most prized gift of the Spirit requires along with it the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, in order to come to its own. And he particularly singles out love in order to press home the point. Now let's look at this.

The three statements I want to make are these. Here's the first. Without love, the Spirit's gift of tongues amounts to nothing but noise.

Now please don't be cross with me. I really didn't say that, but Paul said so. Now listen to it.

If I dare say what is said here and made it my own statement, I'm sure there would be some people here, or at least in the city of Toronto, who would never look upon me as a friend again. But you know what Paul said? You may have the gift of tongues, and it is nothing but noise unless you have love alongside of it. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Now we know from 1 Corinthians 14, 18, that Paul himself spoke in tongues, and we thus naturally conclude that he is not here writing as a stranger to the phenomenon, nor as a disappointed, disgruntled soul to whom the gift of tongues had been denied. Paul wasn't peeved. He speaks with an appreciation of what the gift had brought to him.

He's not an ignorant person, and he's not ignorant of this subject. He's not ignorant of the inner significance of having this gift imparted by God. Therefore, he's not a jealous critic.

That's important to remember. Yet with the authority of an apostle and with a personal experience of speaking in tongues, he makes this very significant assessment of their worth in the absence of love. What do they come to? Nothing but noise.

Neither is he thinking of tongues at their worst. Now, in the controversy that raged a couple of years ago about tongues or no tongues, I always noticed that some people who didn't believe in tongues were always talking about tongues at their worst, which is never a fair thing to do in Christian circles. Well, now you can't do it with Paul anyway.

Paul is talking about tongues at their best, though I speak, he says, with the tongues of men and of angels. Tongues at their best and tongues at their worst. But I may have tongues like the angels of tongues, he says, and yet they profit me nothing.

That's the challenging point. The noise with which he compares them is described, and I quote now from the Grammarians, they make me shudder a little bit. The noise with which he compares them is described in very humiliating terms.

A noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, or if you want another translation, echoing bronze or the clash of cymbals. A noisy gong. Now actually the word here translated gong comes to refer to bronze, not brass, an alloy of copper and tin, something very cheap, so that if you have noise out of it, it's the most tinny, it's the most awful noise you can possibly imagine.

There's no music to it. Along with the word translated noisy, it doubtless refers to the resounding noise of an instrument that you'd like to keep at least a mile away from your house. A clanging cymbal.

The thought is of metal clanging to produce a harsh loud noise, most unattractive to the ear. Thus we have the gong and the cymbal, the noise and the clatter, so accumulating as to be meaningless and useless, indeed an annoyance. And there is one other thing, and I put it in the form of a question because I can't dogmatize here.

It is sheer noise. That is clear, that is clear from the language of the Apostle Paul. But it may be that the Apostle is referring to something in particular.

Paul may well be desirous of making it still more challenging to the tongue-speaking Corinthians, if, as we may legitimately suppose, he has in mind the kind of thing that was regularly to be heard coming from the

temple of the pagan deities of Dionysus and Cybele. Now I'm not going to try to describe to you, I'm not a musician for one thing, and I couldn't do it even if I tried. But if I were to try to present to you the kind of noise that morning, noon and night came from the temp, these pagan temples, I think it would drive you out of your wits.

And that would be worse than my trying to sing a solo here tonight. That's saying something. In other words, the noise that came from the pagan temples were absolutely outrageous.

And, says Paul, you may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but it's like this awful, wretched, meaningless noise that comes from a pagan temple at best, unless it is bathed in love. And it is filled with the agathe of God, so that the divine in it is the most remarkable thing about it. That's the first thing.

Without love, the Spirit's gift of tongues amounts to nothing more than noise. The second is this. Without love, the capacity for prophesying, for understanding mysteries and working miracles, leave a man a sheer nonentity.

Listen to verse two. 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'm nothing. Paul now turns from the more ecstatic gift of tongues to that which has to do with the intellect on the one hand, and to faith on the other.

The great Charles Hodge says that there are three separable gifts referred to here, with reference to the mind, namely prophecy, the word of knowledge, and the word of miracle. Now whether that is true or not, it doesn't make all that much difference. What is important to note is the fact that prophecy ranks highest in the Apostle's estimation of the gifts of the Spirit.

If you would like to turn on to chapter 14 and verse 1, you will find these words. Follow the way of love, he says, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. Now when we come to chapter 14, then the Apostle Paul is putting the emphasis upon prophecy before any of the other gifts, love apart of course.

And yet now he says in the verse before us, if I have the gift of prophecy, and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can remove mountains but have not love, I'm nothing. Even prophecy means nothing. Now if we lived nearer to scripture, we would have so much light to guide us in dark days.

Whether we see one or more gifts in in the passage before us, they're all wrapped up in prophecy. That is in this second verse, in prophecy. So that it ranks exceedingly high in the Apostle's estimation.

Now to this however, he adds his reference to the possession of such faith as can remove mountains. So that the intellectual understanding is linked to a practical end. Our Lord too spoke about moving mountains if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed.

Paul also knew something about this. The child of God in the New Testament lives and walks by faith. Faith is his staff, not faith as such, but faith in God and in his Son and Spirit and in his Word.

You remember our Lord's words, I tell you the truth. He says if anyone says to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Luke puts it like this, he replied, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you will say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it will obey.

Now notice, notice Paul's qualifying word, all, here in this verse. He envisages himself as being able to fathom all mysteries and all knowledge. Now it would be a great thing if we could just unravel some mysteries and have some knowledge of some things.

But Paul is going much further, you see. He's thinking of the sheer extreme of having the ability to unravel all mysteries and to have all knowledge at his command. Though I have it all, he says, with nothing missing.

Yet I have to confess that if I don't have love, he says, I am what? Nothing. Nothing. What an astonishing prospect.

How exceedingly marvelous it would be to have some knowledge, some understanding, some faith, especially the extraordinary kind of faith that could move mountains, and people could say, my, look at those people who go down to Knox there on a Sunday. They've got faith, they can move mountains all right. Wouldn't it be wonderful? But you know, we could have that and have nothing.

What's Paul is saying? Nothing. But to have all there is to be got is beyond one's capacity to appreciate. Then comes this vital assessment, this devastating word, where Paul says, but if I have all this without love, I am nothing.

The threefold all evaporates into one nothing. I don't know how you do your arithmetic in a passage like this. But in the absence of love, though I have all, all, all, it comes to nothing, nothing, nothing.

The prophet indulging in his exploits in the field of knowledge and understanding, and complementing his vast knowledge with a miraculous feats is actually a sheer nonentity in the sight of God, if it hasn't got love. Such is the apostolic testimony to the relative value of the highest charismatic gifts, to the necessity of love for their proper functioning. And the last, look at verse three.

Philanthropy and heroism at their very highest bring no profit in the absence of love. If I give all that I possess to the poor, and I surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain what? Nothing. Plain nothing.

Paul now turns, you notice, from the ecstatic, the intellectual, miraculous gifts of the Spirit, to deeds of mercy and to heroism in self-sacrificial service. The extreme philanthropy that uses one's resources to feed the poor is very graphically portrayed by him. You know, he uses the very word that is translated in John's gospel, our Lord put a morsel, says King James, in the in the sop.

A morsel, when Judas was betrayed, was disclosed at the table. A sop, a morsel. That's the word.

And if we are literally to translate here, it comes to something like this. It implies that the man concerned here is giving out morsels of what he's got. He's giving out and he's packing up packages of what he's got all the time, until everything that he has in the house, everything that he has in his possession is gone.

Gone, gone, gone. There's nothing left. The house is bare.

The bank is bare. The pockets are bare. The life has nothing.

Everything's gone. And now when everything else is gone, he's throwing himself onto the flameless as a sacrifice. He loves the cause and he'll give his body for the cause.

You say, hurrah for a man like this. And Paul comes back and says, you know, he says that you can do that kind of thing without agape. For the glory of yourself or another God.

And if you do, he says, I want you to know that it comes to absolutely n-o-u-g-h-t, not nothing. Not have not love, I gain nothing. Of course the kind of thing brings profit to those whom one feeds with food or with other provision.

They benefit. But as far as the individual concerned is involved, there is no profit in it for him. Because he does it without agape.

Was it not last Lord's Day morning, we were seeing the other the other side of the story, said Jesus, you know, he says, if you give a cup of water in the name of a disciple, you'll not lose your reward. But here you may give yourself and your possessions and your prospects and everything away, and it comes to nothing, nothing, nothing. Now I'm closing.

It is hardly possible to contemplate a more graphic and startling way of saying that the very highest and best, the noblest gifts of the Spirit and actions inspired by him, simply come to naught where love is absent. I repeat, everything else totaled up comes to naught in the absence of love. You and I may go to church and worship, and we go through the whole routine, and it is only our Heavenly Father knows how much there is in it all.

This agape that puts real worth to it, so that he in heaven, his dwelling place, takes note and is gladdened by it. Tongues of men and of angels are but noises that might come from a heathen temple, prophesying and the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, even when accompanied by miracles. Leave the man who practices them a sheer nonentity and nothing, whilst the highest, costliest philanthropy and self-sacrifice has no real value without love.

Thus does the apostle evaluate in turn the kind of gifts to which the Corinthians gave priority, tongues and knowledge. The kind he personally affirmed to be the most important for the prophecy, and the kind of philanthropy and self-sacrifice which earns universal approval, giving of our goods to the poor. In the absence of agape, says Paul, all these things are and their combined value come to nothing.

You know it makes you wonder. We say to ourselves sometimes the end must be near. And I believe it must be.

It must be. But if it is, your works and mine are going to be weighed in the balances of God. Let us make no mistake about that.

We shall receive according to the things done in the body to Corinthians 5, whether we have done bad, whether we have done good. And it's not the externality of your deed or mine that will really matter, but it's the innermost significance of an act done for Jesus' sake out of love for him. You know the real question still is, what do you think of Jesus Christ? How, what think ye of Christ? Whose Lord is he? Do you think of him as the one that deserves everything and more? God bless you.

That's the one he's after. Or do you think of him as a sort of earthly master that you barter with and say, well all right, yeah, I don't mind going so far if I can get a little bit of peace and I can get a little bit of decency and folk look at me and see, oh yeah, he's a decent fellow, she's a decent lady. I don't, you know, I'd be pleased with that.

One of these days, heaven only knows, but you and I will be fried in the fire. May we not be found wanting. May there be found in the very texture of our spirits.

An agape love for God and man that has been giving light to the lamp over the years of our life's testimony and will continue to do so to the end. So let it be. Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we bow humbly before you as we open our hearts and our minds to something of this great message of your servant, Paul. And we ask that it may flood in upon us and as its current sweeps through the cobwebs of unbelief or false belief, grant that the passage of truth through us, through our minds, may have a purging effect. But more, our Lord, we pray that the truth may lodge in us and work in us and purify us, even as our Lord himself is pure.

That we may not simply be doers of the deed, but be men and women who live the life of the age to come. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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