

Without It We Are Nothing

by Kjell Olsen

Without God's love, everything else is nothing, and we need to obtain God's love in order to be effective in our lives.

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Topics: "Gods Love", "Christian Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on understanding and recognizing love according to the Word of God. They highlight the practical aspects of love, such as patience and long-suffering. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of considering and marveling at God's love for us, even after being born again. They encourage listeners to reflect on 1 John 3:1, which reminds us of the incredible love the Father has bestowed upon us. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes the need to obey in order to love, urging listeners to take action rather than waiting for a feeling or understanding to come.

Transcript

On the topic, without it we are nothing, and without it we gain nothing. If you're busy turning to 1 Corinthians 13, you're right. I'll also be turning to 1 John 4 verse 7. And I'm fully aware that as I speak this, as I share it, this is a message for me.

I need it. I preach it to myself as well. For it starts off by saying, even if you are very eloquent in verse 1, even if you can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, even though one can be ever so eloquent and reach the heights of expression which can touch people emotionally, soulishly, and they have been great, great speakers, and they still are.

There was one great orator about 250 years ago, he was also a Shakespearean actor. I think it was Spurgeon who said of him that he could utter a single word like Mesopotamia and cause people to laugh or say the same word, Mesopotamia, in a way that they would all cry. So I'm fully aware of the desperate need for God by his spirit to work.

So you help me while we seek God's word together. As we examine it together, you be in prayer as I am. Because even if it is great speech according to verse 1, that covers all the languages and all expressions and all emotions, and even the angels' languages, if it is without God, without his love, it is all just a noise.

When I come into a service, I often pray, Lord, find me out, discover me, catch me. Corner me, don't let me escape. And this is one of these words, one of these texts that surely you have to be absolutely stone dead to not to be caught and to be discovered and to be exposed and stripped by this word.

Now, none of us really can reach these heights of speech that are spoken here. Some are more gifted, some are less. But so what? Even the greatest speaker is but nothing and is only an irritating nuisance without God's love.

And it says this, Paul says this in the midst of saying, seek the gifts, seek the greater gifts like prophecy. But then he says, like in verse 2, even if you have the gift of prophecy, speaking the mind and word of God, even if you have insight, the second part of verse 2, insight that is so amazing that you are able to understand even the mysterious things behind the word. And the mysteries of this world.

And you understand it adds all knowledge. And knowledge keeps on changing. What they knew 20 years ago is put into the back shelves of museums.

It's hardly worth anything today. What they knew about the first engines was wonderful in those days and it was world news. First vehicles could go as fast as 10 miles an hour.

They warned that many people would be killed at such a speed. Now there are vehicles or rockets that travel with people in it at over 20,000 kilometers an hour. And there are faster things.

Even the petrol engine might become a thing of the past. When you perhaps saw in another generation, they started with the first hydrogen vehicles. They just pump air into it or the part of air that is hydrogen.

But even if you know all that, and most of us know very little even about the old engines, let alone the new ones, even if we know all future knowledge, and if we add to that, at the end of verse 2, all faith, all religious power, so to say, Speaking here of dramatic faith, faith that is visible and works and even moves mountains. But without this single ingredient, all that knowledge, prophecy, eloquence, understanding of mysteries, and all the knowledge of the future and all faith all put together, the sum total of it is not even a little bit. It is nothing.

We should already be asking ourselves, well, what have I been busy with then this past week? What am I busy with even now? If everything put together is in vain without this ingredient, and this ingredient is everything. Without it we have nothing. Then in verse 3 of 1 Corinthians 13, we discover that we also are nothing without it.

And we get nothing. We gain nothing. We will receive nothing forever without it.

Even if it is a sacrificial life you live, and it speaks here of the works that usually go along with love, even if you are able to do these outward signs without the inward ingredient of God's love, without it you gain nothing. Even if I bestow in verse 3 all my goods to feed the poor, that is a real humanitarian philanthropic kind spirit. But surely that is love, isn't it? We would sing the praises of such a person.

The world would offer them the Nobel Peace Prize. But it goes further. It says even if you are so sacrificial that you give not only your goods, your property, your house, your things, but you even give yourself without God's love, it is still nothing for you to gain.

There is nothing in it. So it is really cutting to the quick. This drives the point home.

In case we escape through the net in verse 1, and we still, as the net got finer, we escaped in verse 2, by verse 3 we say, well, what is it? And also, how can I get it? What is so important that without that ingredient, even if you become a martyr for the faith, imagine, even being burned alive at the stake. That without it, you gain absolutely nothing. It makes me to have to tremble before God's word.

I cannot but say, Lord, all that I've been doing in all these years, and all the work I do, and the efforts, it can all be utterly useless and in vain. Now, of course, this is not a discouragement to good works. This is not to make you say, well, I'm giving it up then.

If my good deeds and my helping others and my sacrificial lifestyle of giving and donating is all useless, then I'm just going to throw the towel in. No, that's not what it's saying. But it's telling us that unless all these things, our eloquence, our gifts of ministry, our understanding, our discernment, our knowledge and our sacrifice, unless it's not just mixed with love and oiled with love, unless it's driven by love, unless it's founded by God's love and on that rock bed, it is all in vain.

You've heard enough sermons, I'm sure, and you've heard about this topic many times, and you know that there's a difference in various types of love, human love and God's love. I won't even go into that. Obviously, this must need a miraculous supernatural love, and it must be the love of God.

Now, this is so practical because right there and then, as we begin to ask ourselves, well, what is it like? I hear about love, but what is it like? It goes into the details of a very practical way to understand and recognize it. I'm going to look at that very briefly, and then I'd like to end with a final point of looking at the how-to. How do we arrive at this love? How do we get it? Some practical measures that we have to take, lest we're of the attitude that we're waiting for that love to happen and to just get into us.

I just wanted two examples as it says what it is, as it defines it. Verse 4. Love is patient. In my version here, it says love suffers long.

It comes right down to your everyday life. It takes it right out of the emotional into the everyday doing it of living your normal life. In case you're wondering, well, what does it mean love is patient? Well, start by asking yourself, how long has God been patient with you? That's the best illustration of patience.

That you stand astounded at how long-suffering God has been with you. Think of what you're like, and what you've been like, and how you have caused God to have to suffer long, and He has been patient with you. Keep in mind, just by the way, in case you take the illustration too far and you say, well, that's wonderful, so I can just hang in there and He'll just be patient with me forever.

No, not at all. In another place, God says His patience is there to lead us to repentance. If you marvel right now that God has been patient with you regarding a certain issue, then repent of that issue, of that sin, today.

Don't stretch His patience another day. Let's leave that. We've got too many things to look at.

Love is kind. Love does not envy, or love is not jealous. Let's just look at the last two parts.

Love is not jealous, and love does not boast, it says. The last part of verse four. They're actually both part of the same coin, just two different sides of one coin.

Jealousy puts other people down. Boasting puts yourself up. Envy is trying to squash others through criticism and through just resisting and hating others.

And boasting, it says it in different ways, vaunting yourself, or puffing yourself up, or parading yourself. Boasting is the final state of selfishness. C.S. Lewis, a great apologist for the Christian faith and author of many wonderful Christian books, said that the utmost evil, the worst evil, is bragging.

C.S. Lewis, a great apologist for the Christian faith and author of many wonderful Christian books, said that the utmost evil, the worst evil, is bragging. Bragging, the utmost evil, have you thought of it in that way before? Just to sober you up, what do you have that God hasn't given you? What health do you have that you are so confident about as if though you have produced it and it's yours? You and I are just a hairbreadth from our lost heartbeat. That self-confidence and bragging nature of yours is the utmost evil, for it is a rejection of God and it is deception to the uttermost.

Even what you might have done and done for others, what could you do without the health and the blessings that God has given you to do it with? Do you find yourself with a desperate striving to be recognized and therefore you have to brag a bit just to embellish the stories you tell and to add a little bit more to what was really true? Just to gain the attention and to brag about you. Then, in verse 5, love does not behave rudely. In other words, it does not misbehave, it is not impolite, it is the utmost respect for others.

It teaches you to be tactful and careful and wise. Sometimes you have to be very tactful and very careful. I heard yesterday of a new minister and his family who moved into their new church.

He had been transferred from one church to another. When they arrived, one of the church ladies baked a pie as a welcoming gift and presented it to them at their home, a big pie for the minister's wife and his children. When they cut it open and tasted it, they realized that the lady of the church was not gifted in pie making.

They just could not stomach it and they reluctantly had to just throw it into the rubbish bin. But then the minister was in a predicament. How was he to say thank you and be honest? He wrote a letter, something to the tune of, Dear Mr. So-and-so, thank you for your kindness and generosity to me and my family.

I can assure you with a pie like that, it's not going to stay around in our house for long. Sometimes tact is just an excuse for being ashamed of the gospel and we pretend we're being wise but we're just embarrassed about our Lord. So make sure that if you're tactful, if it's the love of God that makes you not rude, then that it's from God and that it's not just a cunning and your own wisdom.

Now I end with a final point which consists of about six or seven on how to. If God's love is the crucial ingredient without which everything else is just stupid and doesn't even come into the picture is absolutely nothing. If these ingredients, as we've read the definition of it, it's so high, so unreachable, so to say, within our human strength and it is.

We ought to be desperate. We ought to be desperate for God and crying to God in our hearts and often saying, God, I need this love. Show it to me.

How do I have this love? The first point is that you've got to start in God. You've got to be born of God to have this love. I'd said our second text was 1 John 4 verse 7. Let's briefly look at it.

Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. We discover here that without new birth, without being born from above, without God implanting himself into you, you will not be able to reach for this love. Going back a chapter in chapter three, verse nine, it says, whoever has been born of God does not sin.

For his seed, that is God's seed, remains in him. You have to ask yourself the crucial question, am I born again? Am I converted? Have I repented and turned to God and am I living a new life? And we find here that this ingredient becomes possible when you're born of God. We've read there, he who is born of God has received the seed, that is the nature, that is the character, it is simply the spirit of God, it is Jesus Christ in your heart.

We could put it like this, you've received the DNA of God, you've received the basic building blocks, the basic building blocks of life itself. So have you been born into his family? Because you cannot begin to display your father's characteristics if you're not born of him, if he's not your father. I'm just going to look at a few random points, I said this is the last point, the how-to, I said there are about six points.

Secondly, consider and marvel at his love. I'm not putting it in any specific order or sequence, I hope at least one of these points means something to you. Spend time considering God's love for you.

In other words, even when you are born again, don't say well that's it, it's done, it's finished and therefore it's going to happen. There are some things that you've got to do, that's what we're considering now. 1 John 3 verse 1, have a look at that.

Because remember you may have received the seed of God but you may have so crushed that seed or so blocked his seed and so grieved his spirit that there's no evidence of his presence. Look at 1 John 3 verse 1 and consider with me here, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us. That we should be called the children of God.

Have you ever marveled at that and just contemplated and meditated and stood astounded and adored and worshipped God as you think of his love towards you? Maybe you've never considered his patience with you. Could be that you're hanging on to sinful things because you just don't see and recognize his manner of love. In fact maybe that's why you persevere in some purposeful wickedness because you do not behold the love of God.

Consider this, that his love is not free. Well it's free for you to receive, it's not free for the giver. You freely receive but let me tell you and the Bible makes it clear that you were bought with a price.

We are reminded for instance 1 John 4 verse 19 that he first loved us. Recognize as you behold his love that instinctively you have hated God. I don't know how people can say I've always loved the Lord.

By nature we are rebels against God. If you've always loved the Lord well then you first loved him. But he loved us while we hated him.

But as you behold and consider that love, don't make it cheap, it costs something. It costs the most precious thing in the world and in the universe, God's own sin. Have you considered Christ bleeding for you? That's the second point that I want to just touch upon, helping you towards God's love in you.

Because when we understand even if it's only dimly, God's love, it melts us and it causes a stirring of love towards him. And it causes you to look at other people very differently when you behold God's love for

you. You see them as potential trophies of grace.

You look at them as a possibility of God and as people loved by God, as defiled as they may be. We've read in Corinthians, love is not rude, love is patient. Well, you become very careful, very patient, very polite and honouring towards a person who is loved by God.

If you think of the price upon that person's head and the preciousness, the value that the Lord Jesus holds them in, then you begin to treat them a bit differently. The third point, grow in his love. It's something that has got to be grown.

Remember, we've read there that God has planted his seed in us if we are born of him and he is our father. It's his seed, now it's got to grow. Do the things that make you grow.

Avoid the things that stunt your growth. Spend time with the word. Deal with sin thoroughly and properly according to the way that God shows you so clearly.

In other words, grow up. And if you don't turn to it, but if you make a note, if you're writing notes, in Ephesians 3.14-19, it says there, and I'm just quoting half a sentence to you. Ephesians 3.14-19, it says there, and I'm just taking little points out.

His Spirit in our inner being, we being rooted and established in love, filled to the measure of the fullness of God. In other words, grow up in God. Alright, we'll leave it there.

You can go and read that at home. It's just that whole context there speaks about growing up in God's love. If you've received it, then grow it.

It's become fashionable to want to be tall. It hasn't always been like that. But it's considered to be a great advantage.

I have many bumps on my head to prove otherwise. Let's just speak spiritually. Are you a dwarf spiritually? I don't mean that you need to grow up and be tall.

In other words, to boast and be vainglorious. But are you at the growth where you should be today? Or are you a midget? You're stunted. You're a runt.

You're never able to look in the eyes of your colleagues because they've just surpassed you. Get cracking. Get going.

And let go of the things that are dwarfing you. There are some biological causes for lack of physical growth, like the lack of essential vitamins when you're a little baby. Well, if you think that you can just attain to these things that we speak of, and meantime you're feeding yourself with junk food.

If you feed your flesh and feed the carnal nature, well, that's what's going to grow and dominate. And you'll be ruled by the flesh by sin. Fourthly, learn to obey in order to love.

And just do it. Don't say, well, I don't yet feel like it. It hasn't arrived.

I don't yet get it. Just do it. The world might say just do it, but it never provides you with the power to do anything.

God says do it, and he does it in you if you're willing to obey. He says to the lame man, arise and walk. Take up your bed and walk.

Say to your lame heart, obey God, oh lame heart, and rise up. In the same context of what John has been telling us in his epistle, there are a number of commands. He speaks about what God has done, but then he says, now you do this.

Look at in chapter 3, 1 John 3 verse 11. This is the message we've heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. It's a command.

Do it. Just a chapter before, it says in verse 15, do not love the world. All the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Do you want to get rid of the love of the Father? Love the world. And it's also proof that the love of God is not in you.

But don't try and work out the debate. It says, love not the world. It's a straight, simple, clear command.

Read a little bit further on. When you get the time, what is the world? What are the things in the world that it speaks about? So it's a command. Loving is a command.

It's something you receive, but it's also something you do. It's a verb and not a noun. It has been said that a bell is not a bell until you ring it.

And love is not love until it gives itself away. Love has to be done. Puzzle it out and debate and spend hours and weeks and months and waste years saying, now how do I arrive? How do I get hold of this thing, this missing element, without which I am nothing? It's been absolutely practical and it's just saying, do it.

Love not the world. Love the brethren. The world teaches us the opposite.

It speaks about, I fell in love. The same person, maybe sometime later when they want to divorce, they'll say, well, I love somebody else now. It arrived.

The feeling came. The chemistry was there. It happened.

The true love of God has to be done. I'll leave out another point. I was going to add the point of let love be your motive, but I want to draw right to an end now.

Go to the last point of the last point. Be cleansed. Be purified in order to love.

In the context of 1 John chapter 3, where it says, behold the manner, contemplate on the manner of God, and it speaks about loving the brethren. It also says in verse 3, and everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. Purify yourself.

Let the blood of Jesus Christ be made use of. Bring your sins to the cross. Confess them.

Deal with them if you want to love. Otherwise, the quickest way to destroy God's love is to allow sin to rule in your life. 1 Corinthians 13 will forever be a mystery to you.

You'll never understand it and never live it. Forget about the long complicated list and you say, but what about the years and years and what about this and what about... Well, just deal with the obvious thing first.

Purify yourself.

The Lord Jesus said to his church in Revelation 3 that if you realize that you have fallen from the heights of this first love, then repent, be purified, do the first works of repentance. Go and apologize, make right, make restitution, do the things that brought about the first love. Just before I came here, late last night, I shared with Brother Funos Bissi about this topic and he said, he added this point and it's so essential and this is the final conclusion of all that we've discussed.

That is that as you do this, the fragrance of God's love will stick to you and there will be a wonderful aroma of Christ that just travels with you. He said to me, what a pity that there is so much of ourselves that sticks with us. And wherever we go, our perfume fills the air instead of the perfume of God's love following us everywhere.

This is the life that Christ died for, nothing less. Let's bow and pray. Lord, we thank you for your great love that we only have the slightest glimpse and understanding of.

Lord, open our eyes through your word. By your spirit, Lord, reveal the things that have been blocking and destroying your love in us. And Lord, afresh, speak to us, breathe upon us.

Help us, Lord, to obey your word. And to fulfill what you've always said, that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and being. And our neighbour as ourselves.

Lord, we see the great heights and the impossibility of us reaching there without you. Lord, we desperately need, not just a touch of this love, but for that love to control us and to possess us. Please be with us, Lord, and continue to minister to us and to challenge us and to do your work in us.

Help us to obey your word at the same time. Amen.

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