

Covet the Best Gifts

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead emphasizes the importance of love in the exercise of spiritual gifts and argues for their continuation in the church today.

Duration: 53:00

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Gifts"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of love in the Christian faith. He begins by quoting from 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, emphasizing the need for believers to covet the best gifts while also showing a more excellent way, which is love. The preacher highlights the value of love by contrasting it with various spiritual gifts and actions that are meaningless without love. He then goes on to explain the characteristics of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, emphasizing its patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, and truthfulness. The sermon concludes with the exhortation to pursue love and desire spiritual gifts in a balanced manner.

Transcript

Will you turn please to 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and 14. We're going to read, beginning with the last verse of the twelfth chapter, and conclude with the first verse of the fourteenth chapter, just bridging these two chapter divisions. In this last utterance of the twelfth chapter, the apostle has this to say, but covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. 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 love, I am nothing. Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Love suffereth long and is kind. Love envieth not. Love boughteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Doth not behave itself unseemly. Seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked. Thinketh no evil.

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails.

Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I speak as a child.

I understood as a child. I thought as a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love.

These three, but the greatest of these is love. Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. Now we are facing a day in which one large section of the Church of Jesus Christ has declared categorically that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit do not exist today.

That they all stopped at one of two points in history. They either stopped at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Now the reason behind this argument is as follows.

The Jews require a sign, was the statement of the Apostle. The gifts of the Spirit were the equipment given to the Church to minister to the Jews. As long as God was allowing the Jewish ministry to continue, the gifts of the Spirit were to continue.

But when in 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed, God officially fulfilled the 40 years of judgment from 30 to 70 AD, extending that latter three and a half years to the seven to the 40 years, which is typical of the number of judgment. At that time God officially turned away from Israel, and at that time the gifts of the Spirit ceased. Now there's only one thing the matter with that, they didn't.

Because John the Apostle was one of those who had been at Pentecost and was gifted and has given to us the gospel of John, the epistles of John, and the book of Revelation. All of these are with us and we know full well from the record of the Church that the gifts of the Spirit didn't cease then, but continued on without interruption. And this may astound you down across the centuries.

Another group of people have taken this argument, trying to ignore the fact that these supernatural enablements do continue and are held in perpetuity by the Church. They have stated that all of the gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn at the completion of the canon, that they were necessary until the New Testament scriptures were complete, that until the time that the canon had been collected and the Church had been given this completion of the book, these 27 books of the New Testament, until that time it was necessary for the gifts of the Spirit to be held in the Church. But when the New Testament came, then that which was perfect had come, and there was then no longer any need for the gifts of the Spirit.

The completion of the canon then is marked as the time when God officially withdrew the gifts of the Spirit from the Church. Well now, this might seem plausible to some, but might I suggest, and I would ask you to turn now to 1 Corinthians 13, verses 9 and thereafter, before we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.

When I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now to equate that which was perfect with the canon, and to ignore the continuity of testimony that by every law of biblical study would tie verse 12 in with verse 10, is, I say, to use a sharp, not knife, but

hatchet on the Word of God to make it fit one's preconceived idea.

To say, therefore, that the gifts of the Spirit were completed, when that which was perfect, and refers thus to the canon of the New Testament, was come, is then to say that the Church now sees face to face and knows even as the Lord knows then. This has not happened. No one would hold it to have happened.

Out of all the commentators on the Scripture, there are only very few that have ever dared to go against the strong stream and current of biblical exegesis, and so assert. But most of the men that the Church has recognized through the years as being scholarly and orthodox commentators have agreed to this end, that that which is perfect has a relationship vitally tied in with the seeing face to face, has reference to the coming of the Lord, when all of these gifts that were given by Christ to his Church to compensate for the loss sustained by the captivity of Satan are, in truth, no longer needed. Now I would say just one thing further relative to this, for I am aware of the fact that every one of us, whenever we mention the fact that we believe that the gifts of the Spirit belong in the Church and are held in perpetuity by the Lord for the Church, we are faced with one of these two arguments.

I do not know which one you have received, but I assure you that if you give any thought to this or have discussion of it, you will find those that will cite one of these two reasons for the withdrawal of these gifts. But may I call to your attention now a collaborating Scripture found in Ephesians chapter 3, and I would turn you to the latter portion of the chapter from 14 on, but particularly verses 19, 20, and 21. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and in the latter part of verse 19, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now this is the normal Christian life. Notice in verse 20, Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly in the first century until the Jerusalem was destroyed. Is that what it says? Let me read it again.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think until the completion of the canon. Is that what it says? In either case, the answer is an unqualified no, but study. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us.

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Filled with the fullness of God is to be the normal condition of believers throughout all ages, world without end. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think according to the power that worketh in us throughout all ages, world without end.

And in this that's absolutely clear to my mind that there was to be no difference at all. In one of the most significant books on this important book, the Acts of the Apostles, G. Campbell Morgan, and in scholar that is accepted by most evangelicals and is recognized as one of the outstanding expositors of the word, states, and I quoted it some months past in the beginning of our study of the book of Acts, that we are to view this time of God's dealing as the day of Pentecost. That actually what happened in the upper room recorded in Acts the second chapter was the dawn of Pentecost.

Too frequently we speak of that as the day. In fact, says Dr. Morgan, it ought to be considered the dawn. For this is the day of the Holy Spirit, ministry in the church.

I read this some years ago and can't quote you the source, but I think it's appropriate nonetheless. There have been those that have fought every person of the Godhead who has ministered. For instance, when God was manifesting himself through Moses, they murmured against Moses.

But when God was working through the judges, they murmured against the judges and said, we have Moses. And then when God was through with Moses and the judges and used the prophets, they killed the prophets saying, we have the judges and Moses. And when Jesus Christ came, they crucified him saying, we have Moses and the prophets.

And today in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, they say, we have Jesus Christ, the prophets, and Moses, and that is enough for us. And ignore or reject the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Wherever God has manifest himself, there have been those who have been religious and claimed to be his, who have rejected the person of the Godhead then ministering in favor of one of the past.

For by this, they could escape the obligation of his immediate presence and his personal ministry. And thus, it is my firm conviction shared not just alone tonight, but through the years of ministry here, that all of the gifts of the Spirit belong in the Church. The absence of those gifts are evidence of the Church's low level of spirituality.

But what has happened? This has been the process of thinking with which all of us are afflicted, and perhaps even some tonight have been crippled. We discover that there is something in the Word of God that we don't have, something others have. Now there are two approaches to this discovery.

The first is, we aren't what we ought to be, we don't have what we ought to have. Let us get before God in humility and brokenness and in faith, and wait upon the Lord until God can do for us what he wants to do. This, I believe, is the proper attitude and the one that I commend to you.

The second attitude is one that smacks of vanity and egotism, that says, well, there's never been a people quite as wise and well taught as us. And if we don't have what's described of others, all that can mean is that God isn't doing today as he used to do. And therefore, rather than to humble oneself with seeking heart and wait upon the Lord, it's so much easier to relegate that which was the norm to another dispensation.

A man, a teacher that many of you might know, a Bible teacher, was in a church where I had been privileged to serve so many years ago now, perhaps as many as eight. And I had just in passing referred to that which is before us, for I have longed always that a Christian should have everything that's their heritage in Christ, the whole word, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. But this man, knowing that I'd been there and attributing to me things which I had never, didn't then believe and never have, made this statement.

If anyone believes that healing is one of the benefits of the atonement, that there is any crisis experience of the baptism of the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit subsequent to regeneration, or that the gifts of the Spirit belong in the church today, anyone that would affirm this gives evidence of one of two things. And that the first is that he is using chicanery and duplicity for his own advantage, and thus is criminal, or he is a victim of the satanic delusion to occur at the end of the age. Now this was made categorically, an affirmation which had the effect of branding Andrew Murray as a heretic, Georgia Mueller as deceived, Hudson Taylor as a victim of a delusion, Albert Simpson, R.A. Torrey, and F.P. Meyer, and a host of others of having been held in the bondage of darkness.

I submit to you that any such exegesis has by virtue of its accusation fixed its own brand and has itself identified itself. No, dear heart, we are quite prepared tonight to establish as clearly as words can affirm, and if there's anyone that's interested in what is being said tonight, I'm happy to report that copies of it are being made by tape so you can refer to it subsequently, as in all the messages from this pulpit. May I thus affirm that I believe beyond any question of a doubt that God has intended all of the gifts of the Spirit supernatural abilities to remain in the church until Jesus comes.

That every member of the body of Christ has been bequeathed in God's purpose, though they may not have received the same, some function in some place which they never can fulfill until they have been come to the cross in union with Christ in death and then have entered into that state of the fullness of the Spirit. There we are born of the Spirit, but we are not born full of the Spirit, and it remains therefore as for us to voluntarily embrace the cross, experience the deeper dimension of repentance, present our bodies a living sacrifice, and through faith enter into the fullness of Christ, just as Paul prayed that this church at Ephesus, of which we've read, might, strengthened by the Spirit, enter into the experience of Christ taking up his lasting habitation in the heart, that they might be filled unto all of the fullness of God, in order that God could do exceeding abundantly above all they would ask or think according to his power working in them. That until the member of the body of Christ comes into this normal relationship, and when I say normal I mean less than this is subnormal, until one comes into this normal relationship the function has to be on a level other than God has intended it to be.

And therefore we will affirm again that it is God's purpose for every born-again believer to be filled with the Spirit, walk in the fullness of the Spirit, and everyone thus walking will have some particular function in the body of Christ, as well as some anointing and endowment and gift of ministry for the benefit of the entire body. But we recognize that there have been for every doctrine perversions. May I establish here another principle.

If the only scripture that you retain and the only truth to which you adhere is the truth that has not somewhere, sometime been abused, then my dear you have precious little. Let me illustrate it. The glorious truth of the virgin birth of Christ is that upon which the foundation of our faith rests, but it has been abused and perverted into the most monstrous idolatrous system the world's ever seen in mereolatry.

Now if you were going to say because this truth of the virgin birth has been abused to this degree we must eliminate it and abandon it, then the very foundation of our faith would be gone. Take a second illustration. There is a truth in the scripture concerning water baptism as the testimony of a relationship with Christ and an evidence of commitment to Christ and an act of obedience to Christ.

But we know that this has been twisted and turned across the centuries to something that has the appropriate title of baptism or regeneration. That salvation is by water rather than by blood. Now we see multitudes of people that have carried their infants to a point of baptism or themselves have come to water more of it in immersion and have thus thought themselves to be saved.

We go back to Augustine with no calumny intended against the man whom we've quoted here with appreciation so frequently. But Augustine wrote that if twins were born of Christian parents and at the time of birth one of them was baptized and died it would go straight to heaven but the little child that died before the water could get to its forehead would go straight to hell. And this was the affirmation of that man and held by the church and held by many even till the moment that salvation is by baptism.

Now if we view this, if you view it with the horror that I do, then your tendency would be to say any doctrine that is capable of such perversion must be rejected and there would go baptism. You know full well that the scripture teaches that God preserves his own by causing them to persevere. And there's no question about this.

But this doctrine of the preserving grace of God and the perseverance of the Saints has been twisted into a heinous, horrible, monstrous perversion called antinomianism. Now you say, what's that? Anti means against, nomos the law. It's the teaching that a person because he's believed in Christ can live in sin and die and go to heaven.

Live deliberately in sin, persistently in sin. Now the Bible does not teach that. The Bible doesn't teach it.

It says Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins, not in them. The great God and our Savior Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good words. But this, because God is the word our Lord says, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me and no man shall pluck them out of my hand, this has been turned into this doctrine against which every writer of spiritual discernment of which I have any contact, including John Calvin who invaded against it in stronger terms than almost any other, has denied, categorically denied, repeatedly denied antinomianism.

But the grace of God has been in part as some turned into lasciviousness and a license for sin. And the scripture doesn't so teach at all, not in any particular at any time ever. But you'd have to reject then the preserving grace of God if you were to say that because something has been abused it isn't true.

I think these three cases are sufficient to show you that counterfeits are never made of that which has no value but only of that which does have value. Now if I were the devil and had the responsibility of robbing the church of its heritage and keeping it powerless, I think I'd do just about what he's done. What's he done? He's gotten his crowd that know nothing of sovereign grace and nothing of supernatural salvation to take the portion of scripture that's been rejected and neglected by the church, namely 1st Corinthians 12 and 14.

He's gotten, and I certainly am not saying this is true of all by any means. Don't misunderstand me. I'm simply saying that there have been distortions and perversions which have caused many good people to say, if that's what the gifts of the Spirit are and if that's what they lead to, I don't want anything to do with it.

And they've drawn aside and they've rejected the Word of God because they've seen clowns masquerading and parading, claiming to have something that belongs and is the heritage of the children of God. Now you can admire his strategy. You can see why he would do this, trying to keep the church from the tools of her victory and rob her of the equipment for her ministry.

But what you can't understand is why the church falls for it. I can't understand that. Back home on the farm in Minnesota, when we had a particular choice patch of garden stuff, we'd get the most grotesque costume we could and stretch it on a couple of boards out in the field, put bells and cans and fix up this horrible spectacle, and so that every time the wind blew from any direction that a rattle or screech or something would happen, with the hopes that when the blackbirds came around they'd be so frightened of this thing that they'd flee.

But we found at our place that all this was was good old Madison Avenue advertising and apparently they had their observers flying around and wherever they heard a screech or saw a fluttering rag in the wind they said, ha, that's where the eating is best. And down they'd come and in two days they'd have nests built in the hat of the old scarecrow. They figured that if they've taken so much pains to scare them away there must be something worthwhile underneath.

Now I don't attribute much brains to most of us, but I believe we've got more brains than blackbirds. And when we find the devil's crowd out parading around claiming to have this, then I think that's the place we ought to go and devotedly and sincerely and earnestly study the Word of God to have everything that's our heritage in Christ. And I'm not going to turn it away, not going to give it away, they're not going to abandon that which was purchased with the blessed blood of the Son of God of whom it was said he led captivity captive and he gave gifts unto men.

If he hadn't given those gifts with the intention of their equipping his church for their ministry then he never would have needed to have at least the agony that this involved. And therefore we conclude that these gifts are necessary. But this is what we find.

It is true that in Corinth there were people that were more concerned about the supernatural than they were about the spiritual. And so we have here the correction of this, but even there God sovereignly gave us the fullest description of these gifts, and perhaps they were occasioned by their very enthusiasm. For we find many references to the gifts of the Spirit, but we find no setting forth of the truth concerning them.

And thus, we have here the statement of the Apostle, covet earnestly the best gifts. This is to every child of God. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

What are they? Which is best? Which is best? What is a gift? Isn't it something that he bestows? Suppose I could prove to you tonight that one gift was better than the other and so induce all of you to go to the Lord, the giver, and insist that he give you this gift because it was best. What would it be? When he did, if he did succumb to your entreaty, it wouldn't be a gift any longer. Do you know what it would be? An extortion.

If there was upon your part such an insistence upon one gift, it wouldn't be a gift, it would be an extortion. What is a gift? Something freely bestowed, not earned or even deserved, but given because of the largeness of the heart of the giver. What is the best gift? It is that gift that the head of the church by his victor the Holy Ghost knows you need to complete your ministry for him.

This makes it best because it's his will for you. And to covet earnestly the best gifts is to follow the word of the song that we had from Dr. Simpson who said, once the gift I wanted, now the giver own. He wasn't repudiating the gifts, but he said his eyes were fixed upon the giver and he wanted what the giver had for him and that was best which the giver had.

Do you see? To covet earnestly the best gifts is to open your heart for that which the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, has seen is his bestowal upon you the member of his body for the completion of your function and ministry in his body. And that gift is best which he has for you. Now how are you going to recognize what gift is yours? Well I believe two ways.

First you're going to recognize that he divides to every man severally as he wills, speaking of the Holy Spirit. He divides to every man severally as he wills. And thus there is a sovereign element in this.

God has established that which is his plan and his intention for you. I know that one dear man sought greatly from the Lord that he might have the gift of healing, for he was constantly being confronted with the sick and their need. But as he went before the Lord, God showed him quite clearly that this was not his purpose, but the gift of discernment, the discerning of spirits, was the gift that he had for him, and it was this that he desired him to exercise in behalf of the church.

And to him this became the best gift, because it was accompanied by the unfolding of the will of the Lord, the head of the church, for him as a member of the body of Christ. Therefore, it is to recognize that to covet earnestly the best gifts is to fix your eyes upon the giver until you want only what he wants you to have, and you will have only what he's provided for you. And then you will discover that which he has by virtue of the church, for it's a church matter.

You remember that the Paul writing to Timothy said, stir up the gift which is in you by the laying on of my hands. There is, you know, the ordinance of the laying on of hands with prophecy. And as Paul had laid hands upon him, as we do for every missionary candidate that goes out to the field, as the elders here at the headquarters gather with every departing group, so it was the presence of the Holy Ghost through the Apostle Paul enabled him to state that dear Timothy going out to minister in the churches would have this gift to exercise.

And thus when Paul wrote to him, he said, Timothy, you've told me that you've known this gift, you've exercised this gift, you've ministered this gift, but something has transpired and of late you haven't. And so it would be by the church, by the recognition of the spirit of God's ministry through the eldership of the church. Then of course, there would be also the ministry of one's own circumstances and one's need.

I am sure that Pastor Shi of China, this dear man of whom Mrs. Hudson Taylor wrote, and I would like to have all of you if you can, though the book is out of print and difficult to secure, to get and to read the book by the wife of the founder of the China Inland Mission entitled, Pastor Shi, Master of Devils, the life story of that dear man. He came to know the Lord through the ministry of the Taylors, Hudson Taylors, I believe just Taylors. He came to understand that the spirit of God would fill him with his own presence through reading the word, and God wonderfully met him and she described that to which he testified.

And then he encountered so many in China that were demon possessed that the Lord gave to him a particular burden for the delivering of these that were bound by the power of Satan. Now there is no gift of the casting out of devils. The gift is the gift of miracles.

It is a miracle to speak in the name of Jesus Christ and have Satan who was lodged in this personality depart upon the command. And so this was the gift, the gift of miracles that accompanied the ministry of Pastor Shi through all of the years of his labor for Christ there in China. It was because of his burden, because of his constantly meeting the need that he saw this ministry.

And so it would be that by your own burden, by your own encounter with need, by the spirit of God speaking to your heart, and by the recognition of the church that you would discover that gift which was best. But notice he said, I show unto you a more excellent way. In no wise was the apostle trying to use first Corinthians 12 the way some men today try to use it, to squelch interest in this wonderful bequeathment of Christ to his church.

As though it was inevitable that if anyone became interested in this that they would go to the excess of the church. Oh no, of the church at Corinth. No, no.

Covet earnestly the best gifts, I show unto you a more excellent way. What is this excellent way? It's over in 14.1. Follow after love, then desire spiritual gifts. And the intervening chapter, this 13th chapter of first Corinthians, so familiar to us all, is this statement.

Going back to the original analogy I gave you some weeks ago about the ministry of the spirit-filled Christian, a balanced ministry. You remember we named the sum, touching all of these other ministries, the ministry of the fruit of the spirit, the ministry of intercession, the ministry of witness or ambassadorship, the ministry of authority, and the ministry of the gifts of the spirit. Now you can imagine, could you not, the church at Corinth, instead of having a hand in balance, because of their enthusiasm and their excess, their little finger had grown about two feet long.

Now he wasn't particularly interested in lopping off the little finger, but he was just willing to getting that, desirous of getting the hand in proportionate size. And so he said, make love your aim. Make love your aim.

This is the more excellent way, a balanced ministry, so that one hasn't been carried to excess on this, or rejected the other. It's balanced. And the balance to which he particularly refers is this, the thumb, if you please, the ministry of a fruit-filled life.

And he describes it. He says, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, this is the gift of tongues and interpretation. And I have not love, it's just noise, just noise.

It's possible for one to have the gift of the spirit, and not to be walking in love. It's possible. You say, well how can it be? And when the moment that you begin to say, how can it be, then I would ask you, how can it be that God would ever tabernacle with men? How could it be that God would ever regenerate a sinner? If you want to start asking, how can it be, where will we go back to it, where will we stop? I don't know how it can be, I know it is.

Not how, but it is. It is possible for one to have the gift of the spirit legitimate and real, and not to exercise the gift or the fruit of the spirit in love. Now I don't know how, but I know that.

And to deny that it can be is to deny the validity and the importance and the pertinence of this 13th chapter. So said he, it's possible to have the gift of tongues and interpretation, tongues of men and of angels. Not to have love, but if you do, it's just noise.

Then he says it's possible for you to have the gift of understanding, the gift of prophecy, this gift of utterance, with exhortation and so on, and not to have knowledge, the gift of knowledge, the gift of prophecy, and not to have love. But what is it? I am nothing. And then it is possible for one to have the gifts of miracles, the gifts of power, and not to have love.

But what is it? It profits nothing. So said he, it's possible for one to have the gifts of the spirit, become so enamored with them, become so preoccupied with them, that they fail to realize that there's a balanced ministry. And so it is establishing here the principle that it's not this or that.

Oh how weary I am of people coming to me and telling me this is the key. Oh brother, if we just had miracles happening, if we just had people being healed, if we just had the demon possessed being delivered, then all our problems would be answered. They are, this is important, but all of our problems aren't going to be answered then.

Well they'll not be answered until our ministries are balanced and complete and whole, and everything God wants them to be. Do you see? There's the balance, there's the total testimony. It isn't this that is the key or that that's the answer.

It's the whole counsel of God and the balance of truth. And this is what Paul is saying. You can have the gifts of the spirit.

Now I know dear people that have emphasized the fruit of the spirit, and who have denied the existence of the gifts of the spirit, and have said there because Paul has made this statement, only thing that's as important is the fruit of the spirit. But this isn't true either. It's to take the whole of God's truth.

It's to take all of it, just as it's presented to us. And it's presented to us this way. Make love your aim.

Do recognize that God isn't glorified by what we say or what we know or what we do, but by what we are. Herein is my Father glorified, said our Lord, that you bear much fruit. This fruit is the fruit of the spirit.

It's love and joy and peace and long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, self-control. But when you've said that, you haven't in any wise denied the fact that he has given gifts to the church, and without these gifts the church is blind and led about as dumb brute beasts, and unaware of the privileges that are hers and the ministry that is hers. So he's not using one to nullify the other.

He's not saying the gifts of the spirit aren't important, love is. He is saying that there's the balance, the fruit of the spirit, the evidence of his presence that can't be counterfeited, that can't be denied. He is saying that this is the better way.

And so it isn't to just put emphasis on one or the other. It's not to deny. It's to see that the Word of God teaches bold, covet earnestly the best gifts.

I show unto you a more excellent way. What is it? Love with the gifts, not instead, but with. The more excellent way isn't to deny the supernatural enablements that the head of the church gave to his body.

Oh no, it's to recognize that all of these enablements, all these divine, this divine equipment, was to be with love and in the fruit of the spirit. Now lest anyone should surmise that this love is something which takes away discernment in the ability to stand firmly for right and against wrong, may I remind you that it was the Lord Jesus Christ, who with proper reason and with love that can't be challenged, dared to stand up and say to the religious leaders of his day, you are whited sepulchres. You're full of dead men's bones, said your wolves in sheep clothing.

Now you say, is this love? How could anyone that was the son of God talk like this to people? The reason he could talk like this was because that's what they were. And love demanded that he be truthful, that he speak that which he knew. And so lest anyone should, and there is a cult today which tries to say that love has got to be so soft and so wishy-washy and without strength or without character, without firmness, this teaching, I say, brands our Lord Jesus as less than God.

For he certainly stood and did the Apostle Paul and Peter and John and all others for Christ and against wrong and against evildoers. No, love seeks the best interests of all. And it wasn't until Peter turned to Simon Magus and said, oh ye son of all subtlety, that he began to see the nature of the deception that had gripped him, and he was prepared to flee from it.

And consequently, I submit to you that this love, that is the better part, is a love which has an eye single to the glory of Christ and desires that glory to be wrought out in every life. But it's not something that I exercise of my own or you of yours. It isn't that you say I'm going to determine from today on to be loving.

It is that I determine from today on to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to be himself in me. And present your body to him a living sacrifice. Invite him to live in you and live through you his own life.

And allow him to give to you such gifts and place in the body of Christ as he has purposed for you to have. And then to walk in the Spirit. And to walk under the control of the presence of the Lord.

This is what he has purposed for every member of his body. This is the more excellent way. It is, I say, my firm conviction and I trust it shall become yours with equal firmness.

I do not say by any means that because I believe the gifts of the Spirit are in the church today and belong in the church today, that they are in this church in the measure God wants them, or that they are in any church, but to the degree God wants them. But I submit to you this, that if I shall never see what I hold to be the pattern of the Word of God, I shall stand by the pattern and stand by the truth and strive with all within me to see it brought to reality. I will not adjust my convictions to fit what we find in our, but will ever seek to adjust us to what the Word of God teaches and sets forth as his norm, his pattern, and his plan.

And this pattern is that every member of the body of Christ be in union with Christ, crucified with him. This is the only way the insufferable ego of myself and you can ever be dealt with and give the Lord opportunity to work. Crucified with Christ.

We never can say Christ liveth in me until first we can say I'm crucified with Christ. Then to present our bodies living sacrifices. Then to have him fill us with his fullness.

And then to continue to in breathe of his life, walking in his fullness, to allow this wonderful Lord to live out his resurrection life in us and through us. What is the more excellent way? It is this, that we should follow after love and desire spiritual gifts. This is the excellent way.

This is God's plan for you. Not either or, but both. And oh may God speed the day when you and I, when we together are a body where the glorious Lord, our wonderful Lord Jesus, can walk in the midst of the candlesticks free at home to be himself and reveal himself in and through our lives.

May God cause your meditation and the word to be sweet. If you do not know him, whom to know is life eternal. Oh may I submit to you that there's nothing so glorious as to have him bring you out of death into life.

Let us bow our hearts now together in prayer. Our father we thank and praise thee that thou hast given to us thy word. We dare to open it and stand upon it and say it means what it says and accept it as what it is.

We deny all excess. We deny all extra biblical abuse. We in every area, not just this, but we stand on thy word and declare it to be true and long for thee to fulfill in us all that is thy loving purpose and thy blessed intention.

And Lord we ask thee that thou will get a people that hate sin and love righteousness and holiness whose eyes are fixed upon the Lord Jesus and their purpose centered on his praise. So that thou canst begin to reveal the splendor of the resurrection glory of thy dear son here in the heart of this world of iniquity New

York City. We're with thine.

We know Lord thou art interested in us. We know Lord that thou art on the victor's side. We follow in the train of the triumph of our Lord Jesus.

We claim that victory even as we speak about the panoply and the equipment and the provisions that the head of the church has provided for his church when he led captivity captive. Should there be among us those who do not know the joy of sins forgiven might this be the night when their hearts are drawn to thee and thou art pleased to reveal thy son in them. So seal to thy our hearts thy word and bless us now as we part for Jesus sake.

Amen. You're dismissed and God bless you.

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