

The Gifts and the Fruit of the Spirit (Pentecost Sunday)

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[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bibles to, I was about to say Revelation, but we're not in Revelation. We're in 1 Corinthians 12, 27 to 14.1. We're taking a break from our regular series in the book of Revelation to talk about the Holy Spirit and his gifts, because today is Pentecost Sunday commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon God's people after Jesus' ascension.

This was on the 50th day after Easter, and that's usually when Pentecost is, but we celebrate it for our purposes, 7th Sunday after Easter, which is Pentecost Sunday.

We're going to read from 1 Corinthians 12, 27 to 14.1. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, and for the gift of your Holy Spirit.

Exalt the name of your Son and fill us more with your Spirit as we dive into 1 Corinthians 12, 14. Teach us how to understand the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit in their proper place as you teach us in your Word, so that we might be a church that pursues love and eagerly desires the spiritual gifts.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's Word from 1 Corinthians 12, 27 to 14.1.

[2 : 07] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it, and God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?

Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind.

[3 : 28] Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away.

As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three.

- [4 : 32] But the greatest of these is love. Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Amen. When the Holy Spirit moved in power during the first great awakening, 1700s, the gifts of the Holy Spirit that was manifested among the people was deeply polarizing.

And it divided people into old lights and new lights. And Jonathan Edwards there kind of emerged as a bridging force, someone to bridge the old lights and the new lights, people who denied the gifts and saw these as kind of a manipulative and sensationalist acts versus people who saw it as an essential and important part of the life in the Holy Spirit.

And even today, the manifestations of the Spirit of God and the gifts of the Spirit tend to have that polarizing effect. On the one hand are what we call cessationists who believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased, that's why cessation, cessationists, since the time of the apostles.

And they often point to the excesses, manipulative tactics and the disorderly practices of charismatics. And they accuse the charismatics of, quote, zeal without knowledge from Romans 10 too.

- [6 : 03] On the other hand are the charismatics who accept the spiritual gifts and denounce what they see as rigid formality and spiritual lethargy of those people who deny the spiritual gifts.

And they accuse them in turn of these verses, 1 Thessalonians 5, 19 to 20, of quenching the Spirit and of despising prophecies. And our local church and the denomination we are part of, Sovereign Grace Churches, we believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continue to this day.

That's why we're called continuationists. And 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 teaches us about the purpose of the gifts and the priority of the gifts so that we can put the gifts in their proper place in our ministry.

And the main point of this passage is this, pursue love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially those that build up others. That's going to be my main point, which is almost word for word, 14.1.

Or in short, you could say, chase the fruit and crave the gifts. Crave the gifts of the Spirit and chase the fruit of the Spirit. We're going to first talk about craving the gift, deeply, earnestly desiring the gifts.

- [7 : 17] It says in verse 27 of chapter 12, now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. We are all part of the one body of Christ.

There's only one body. Christ does not have multiple bodies that would be monstrous. He has one head, one body, one church, the gathering of his people. But our unity in Christ does not negate our individuality because it says we are individually members of it.

And Paul is here summarizing what he has said up to this point in chapter 12, that God has designed the church to be an interdependent body of believers, not just a jumble of independent limbs that have been put together.

the eye can look at a delicious piece of fruit all at once, but the body is not going to get full unless the hand grabs the fruit and brings it to the mouth.

And the hand can bring as much fruit as it wants to the mouth, but unless the mouth does its part and chews it up and swallows it, it will bring no nourishment to the body.

- [8 : 24] And the mouth can chew and swallow as much food as it wants, but if the digestive tract refuses to digest it, then you'll just get indigestion and die.

In some way, you need the digestive juices to be able to bring, absorb the nutrients into your body. If any of those members of the body fail, then you are destined for malnutrition and eventual death.

The church of Christ likewise, Paul says, using that same analogy, is an interdependent body. Paul restates that same principle in a different way in chapter 12, verse 7, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

To each is given to each one various gifts for the common good. These gifts are not meant to be self-serving or self-promoting, but others building for the common good.

And that means when a Christian brother or sister possesses a gift that we do not have, it's no reason to be jealous or envious. It's reason to rejoice.

[9 : 32] Thank you, God, for giving that brother that gift because now that's going to build me up. You rejoice in that. Because of the corporate nature of the church, a spiritual gift that is given to one of us is given for all of us.

And you've heard the motto of the three musketeers used earlier by Shakespeare, one for all and all for one. Each member works for the common good and the whole looks out for the part.

Each member works for the common good. As Paul says in 12:26, if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

One for all, all for one. Then in verse 28, Paul lists some of the gifts that God gives to the various members of the church. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administering, and various kinds of tongues.

You can notice that Paul numbers the first three gifts in order, first, second, third, to set them apart from the other gifts. And in doing so, he also sets out an order in which these gifts function.

[10 : 54] We see this exact order of apostles, prophets, and teachers functioning in the life of the church in the book of Acts. As scattered Christians, evangelized, and Christian converts are born in Antioch, the church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to Antioch to establish the church in Acts 11, 22.

And then Barnabas recruits Paul to join him in this church planting work, and that's what we call apostolic or the word apostle simply comes from the Greek word that means to send. It's the same word from which we get, it's the same meaning for the word missionary which comes from the Latin word that means to send or sending.

Nowadays, when we hear the word missionary, we only think of cross-cultural missionaries, generally speaking, or foreign missionaries, but Paul was not actually a cross-cultural missionary because he ministered to other Greeks and to other Greek-speaking Romans and to fellow Jews.

And so the Bible uses the term apostle or missionary in a much more broad way and it's referring to pioneering church planting work in an area that does not have gospel witness.

And so after the apostles are sent evangelize and establish the church, it says in Acts 11, 27 that the prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. First the apostles and then the prophets to minister to the church there.

[12 : 16] This is what this is referring to. This is the sense in which the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being a cornerstone as it says in Ephesians 2, 20. And we see that same pattern repeated later in Acts 15, 32, 35.

First there's the apostolic work by Paul and Barnabas and then it says in Acts 15, 32, the church in Jerusalem sent Barsabbas and Silas leading men among the brothers who were themselves prophets once again to encourage and to strengthen them.

First you send the apostles and then you send the prophets. So after the apostles are dispatched and the prophets are dispatched and then after those prophets return to their home church, it says that in Acts 15, 35, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also.

So there's teachers who continue the ongoing instruction of the word. So first apostles, second prophets, third teachers. This is the church planting timeline according to the book of Acts.

We see a slightly different fuller list in Ephesians 4, 11 to 12 where Paul writes that God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

[13 : 33] I think 1 Corinthians 11, 28 is just an abbreviated version of that list. Now a few caveats for those who are new to our church. While we believe that the gifts of apostleship continue to this day, we don't believe as a church that there are modern day offices of apostles.

Likewise, while we believe that the gift of prophecy continues to this day, we don't believe that the prophets of today carry the same authority as the scripture prophesying Old Testament prophets.

I think that's clear from 2 Peter 3, 2 where Peter exhorts believers to remember quote, the predictions of the holy prophets, referring to Old Testament prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through the apostles.

Peter sees the New Testament apostles, not New Testament prophets, as standing in the tradition and authority of the Old Testament prophets. So I don't have the time to go into this in any more detail, but if you're interested in learning more about this distinction between gifts and offices, please listen to my sermon on Ephesians 4, 1 to 16 from 2017.

That's a long time ago. In 1 Corinthians 12, 28, Paul sets the gifts of apostles, prophets, and teachers apart from the others using these ordinal numbers, first, second, and third.

[14 : 58] And that's because these are gifts that pertain to the proclamation of the gospel and the establishing of churches. These are the higher gifts that Paul mentions in chapter 12, verse 31, but earnestly desire the higher gifts.

This verse has a parallel in chapter 14, verse 1. Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. In chapter 14, Paul teaches us that prophecy is a higher gift, especially in comparison to the gift of tongues, and he tells us exactly why in verse 4.

The one who speaks in the tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Tongues is a gift of speaking in the tongues of angels, as Paul says in chapter 13, verse 1, in a heavenly language to God.

The gift of tongues, apart from the gift of interpretation of tongues, is unintelligible to the rest of the church and therefore useless for edifying the church, while prophecy is intelligible, understandable for the people and therefore beneficial to the church.

Corinthian believers were unduly impressed by and unhealthily obsessed with the gift of tongues because they saw it as a sign of spiritual arrival. But Paul flips their view on the gifts on its head.

[16 : 19] The gifts are not meant for self-aggrandizement. They are meant for selfless service. This is precisely why he lists the gift of tongues last on this list in order to de-emphasize it for the sake of the Corinthians.

If you have the gift of tongues, this is not to discourage you from using the gift. You should pray for the gift of interpretation so that your gift may be used for the upbuilding of the body. That's what Paul says in chapter 14, verse 13.

But it is notable here that in Paul's ordering, spectacular gifts, supernatural gifts like miracles and gifts of healing are not first.

And it's also notable that seemingly ordinary, natural gifts like helping and administrating are listed before the gift of tongues, which is perhaps the most otherworldly gift.

Why? It's all about the purpose of the gifts to build up the church. One for all, all for one. The pertinent question is not how supernatural is my gift or how special or spiritual is my gift.

[17 : 35] Rather, the pertinent question is how edifying is my gift for the church. God designed the church intentionally to be interdependent.

We see this clearly in verses 29 to 30. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?

Do all interpret? These verses reproduce the same order of gifts in verse 28, but he omits helping and administrating, interestingly enough.

I think because they're less helpful to the point that he's trying to make here. The gifts of helping and administrating are more natural gifts, so it may seem like everybody has those gifts to varying degrees, though that's not actually true.

For example, when I was a young boy, I saw this motivational Michael Jordan poster. I'm sure you guys have seen this. He's sticking his tongue out and dunking the ball and printed next to the picture is this quote.

[18 : 38] I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.

You know, very inspirational, right? It motivated me to practice basketball really hard when I was in high school and to try out for my high school team. Many of my friends were on the team and I had one thing going for me is that the coach was my history teacher and I was his favorite student.

I worked really hard whenever we ran lines I was the first. Anything that required effort and grit I was the first. And then as soon as we started doing stuff that required hand-eye coordination and actual athleticism I was last.

And I was mercilessly cut from the team by my teacher and I felt deceived by Michael Jordan. Even on my high school tennis team I won the most improved player back-to-back years but never the most valuable player.

No matter how much I practiced I could never attain the level of physical athleticism that some people are just naturally gifted with. That's why it's a gift.

[20 : 01] I'm not saying your effort doesn't matter you can keep trying but there is a limit. So even with helping and administrating there are people who are gifted with them in a way that other people aren't even though it seems seemingly more natural gift.

But because it doesn't serve his purposes that he's trying to illustrate he leaves that out because the implied answer to these rhetorical questions are all apostles are all prophets do all prophesy do all speak in tongues the implied emphatic answer is no.

No not all our prophets not all our apostles not all our teachers no single person has all the gifts because God intended for us to need each other and depend on one another.

As Proverbs 18 one says whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire he breaks out against all sound judgment. If you isolate yourself if you declare your independence if you go rogue then you're just seeking your own selfish desires.

Your independence is an expression of your selfishness in that case. And if you do that you break out against all sound judgment. Christian maturity does not lead to independence it leads to interdependence.

[21 : 22] Sometimes people mistakenly think that a more mature Christian has nothing to learn from a less mature Christian or that an older Christian has nothing to learn from a younger Christian. But if that's the case what are you going to do when you're 70 or 80 years old?

Look for a church that's full of centenarians. The older and more mature you get you ought to grow in humility so that you can learn and benefit from those who are younger than you.

I think Lance and Shelley are good examples of this in our young church. Yeah. Yeah. People in the church young and old have different gifts like different parts of the body and therefore we need each other.

Even someone who is less mature than you in some ways can be more mature than you in other ways. The person who lacks the gifts you have is going to have gifts that you lack.

This is by divine design. 1 Corinthians 12 11 all these gifts are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

[22 : 37] That's why Paul says in verse 31 earnestly desire the higher gifts. Similarly in 14 1 he says pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts especially that you may prophesy.

Why does Paul consistently use the language of earnestly desiring when it comes to spiritual gifts? He doesn't tell us to pursue the gifts like he tells us to pursue love.

The word pursue here is a Greek word that means to run after to chase. It's the same word that's used to describe sometimes how unbelieving world persecutes Christians how they chase Christians.

Chase after the fruit of the spirit the love of God. But it doesn't use that word. That word is very proactive. In contrast earnestly desire is a very receptive word.

And that's intentional because it's the spirit of God who apportions gifts to each one individually as he wills. And that means we can't choose or demand or earn any of these spiritual gifts.

[23 : 46] It's the Holy Spirit's sovereign prerogative to distribute his gifts among whom he wills. This is the important distinction between the fruit of the spirit and the gifts of the spirit. Galatians 5, 22 to 23 lists the fruit of the spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And if you pay attention to that passage closely you'll recognize that there's actually one fruit. It's not eight fruit or nine fruits. It's one fruit. Fruit in the singular because all of them actually comprise one fruit.

and it's headed by love because love really encompasses all the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love is the fulfilling of the law as it says in Romans 13, 8 to 10.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Galatians 5, 14. The fruit of the spirit is something that every Christian has. If you're not bearing the fruit of the spirit then you don't have the spirit which means by definition you are not a Christian.

Jesus says in Matthew 7, 16 to 18 you will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Just as grapevines bear grapes Christians who are born of the spirit of God bear the fruit of the spirit to varying degrees.

[25 : 10] So you can tell a Christian apart by the fruit that they bear. But this is very different from the spiritual gifts. Christian theologian Alistair McGrath uses a helpful illustration in his book I Believe which is about the Apostles' Creed.

He says this, now think of two fir trees. One is growing in a forest. The other is a Christmas tree inside a home with presents around its base. Those presents have nothing to do with the tree.

They didn't grow there. They were placed there by someone. They are someone's gifts not the natural fruit of the tree. Not every fir tree becomes a Christmas tree and gets surrounded by presents.

But that doesn't deny that they are fir trees. Spiritual gifts are gifts. They are not all given to everyone. It is no stigma to lack a charisma that's using the Greek word for these spiritual gifts.

A particular spiritual gift. This is why the command is to earnestly desire and not pursue or hone the gifts or practice the gifts.

[26 : 16] Spiritual gifts are gifts to be freely received not rewards to be earned or a skill to be honed. Sure, you can grow in your faith in stepping out of your comfort zone to exercise those gifts but you either have the gift or you don't.

It's what the Spirit of God sovereignly gives. So all you can do is earnestly desire it and pray for it as Paul says in chapter 14 verse 13. It's up to God to decide whether to give it to you or not.

That's why it's well intentioned but misguided and unhelpful that happens in certain church circles to teach people that they can have get the gift of tongues by repeating the word hallelujah over and over again really fast.

How many of you guys had that growing up? Okay, a few of you. You're too embarrassed to raise your hands. Yeah. Because if you do that fast enough you start speaking gibberish and it sounds sometimes like the gift of tongues.

That's why it's well intentioned but misguided and unhelpful to teach that anyone can quote activate their prophetic gift with some guidance and training which a lot of you hear this a lot on YouTube and some books.

[27 : 30] I've met plenty of people who already had the gift of prophecy for example but had no idea that they had the gift of prophecy because they had never been taught and they could start to use the gifts more effectively because now they know what it is.

I've seen that happen but I've never seen it happen that someone who didn't have the gift of prophecy simply hears teaching about it and then starts having gift of prophecy. Now that's the spirit of God's prerogative not something we activate or train.

this is why even though Christian maturity is necessarily marked by growth in the fruit of the spirit it is not necessarily marked by the gifts of the spirit.

The gifts are not connected to spiritual maturity. The spirit of God simply gave them to you like presents around the Christmas tree. This is why in 1 Corinthians 1 4-7 Paul can give thanks to God for the Corinthians saying because of the grace of God that was given to them in Christ Jesus so that in every way they were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge so that you are not lacking in any gift.

That's what Paul said about the Corinthians. This grace of God they have all speech all knowledge these prophetic gifts they're not lacking in any gift. The most gifted church in the New Testament.

[28 : 47] But then later on in that same letter to the same people he says in chapter 3 verses 1-3 But I brothers could not address you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh as infants in Christ.

I fed you with milk not solid food for you were not ready for it and even now you are not ready not yet ready for you are still of the flesh for while there is jealousy and strife among you are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

The Corinthian church was gifted but immature. This is why sometimes we see the most gifted and the most successful pastors and ministers fall into sin and scandal.

They're gifted but immature. In fact the most gifted people should be especially careful because people often mistake giftedness for maturity and because you are gifted they assume oh yeah he must be doing fine spiritually oh yeah she must be doing great spiritually but that's not necessarily the case.

Love is the mark of Christian maturity. This is why it's all the more important that we pursue love as Paul says in 14.1 you don't simply desire and pray for love you pursue it you chase it down you make use of the means of grace that God has given to us in order to grow in love you cultivate the fruit of the spirit you crave the gift but you chase the fruit.

[30 : 19] That's why Paul says in 12.31 but earnestly desire the higher gifts and I will show you a still more excellent way there's a still more excellent way than even the higher gifts that build up the church and that paves the way for chapter 13 where Paul teaches about love.

Now I do want to note well actually I'll mention that later look at chapter 13 with me. In order to demonstrate the priority and primacy of love the fruit of the spirit Paul contrasts it with several of the spiritual gifts that he has just mentioned.

He says in verse 1 if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. A noisy gong or a clanging cymbal unaccompanied by other instruments together represent these harsh discordant sounds.

A cacophony of noise. You think yourself important Paul is saying to the Corinthians because you're speaking in tongues. If you don't have love it's all a bunch of meaningless noise.

Paul continues in verse 2 and if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love I am nothing.

[31 : 42] Prophecy is a gift that Paul regularly tells us to seek. It's one of the most significant gifts for building the body of Christ and yet even that you could have all prophetic powers and mysteries and knowledge understand all of it and if you have all faith so as to remove mountains notice the contrast between all, all, all and nothing.

If you have not love I am nothing. In verse 3 Paul goes even beyond the spiritual gifts to expound the absolute necessity of love.

He says if I give away all I have and if I deliver my body to be burned but have not love I gain nothing. These two phrases describe what we might consider the two of the most total examples of self-sacrifice.

The sacrifice of all our belongings on the one hand and sacrifice of our body itself on the other. First giving away all I have refers to giving away all our possessions to the poor.

Voluntarily impoverishing oneself in order to enrich others. Similarly the second expression refers to a form of self-sacrifice. If you have footnotes in your ESV it says that there's an alternate translation it says that if I give up my body in order that I may boast that may be the accurate translation if you have NIV that has that also but you don't have to worry about the textual variations because in the end the essential meaning is the same.

[33 : 11] If you give up your own body for the sake of the Lord whether that's in giving your body away in martyrdom in serving God or as some early Christian writings have examples of for example 1st Clement of Christians surrendering themselves to slavery that with the price which they receive for themselves they might provide food for others.

Some Christians in the first century did this. They intentionally enslaved themselves so that through the money that they get from that they can pay for others who need food. It's that kind of self-sacrifice or even martyrdom that Paul has in mind.

even the greatest possible thing that we can imagine that a Christian can do for God and for the church is nothing without love.

If I'm never going to do this nor can I do this but if I start and run a Fortune 500 company and give away billions to charity but have not love I am nothing.

If I leave all my possessions behind and go somewhere to be a missionary and I plant hundreds of churches where previously there were none but have not love I am nothing. If I grow my church to thousands of members and write books that land on the bestseller list and pack stadiums full of people and speak at conferences to tens of thousands of people but have not love I am nothing.

[34 : 52] If I become a Christian social media personality with millions of subscribers but have not love I am nothing. If I can interpret all tongues and have all prophetic knowledge so that I am sought after globally as a prophet but have not love I am nothing.

Do you get the point? Do you see how extreme this is? Remember that these are not bad things.

All of these are good things. The spiritual gifts are good. Giving to the poor is good. Giving away your life for God is good but if you do any of these things without love it's pointless.

So Paul's not saying pursue love instead of the gifts he's not saying pursue love and forget about the gifts leave it or take it he says earnestly desire the gifts that's the problem in some search church schools they're like well a gift it's too scary too unpredictable out of control forget about it let's just focus on these things but that would also be unfaithful to what scripture teaches it says to earnestly desire the gifts so let's not throw the baby out with the bath water but what he is saying here is that instead is that all the spiritual gifts must be pursued or must be rather to use the biblical language must be used and desired in the context of love as expressions of love love is the context in which the gifts are to be used and if love is so important what then is it Paul describes love in verse 4 with these two positive words love is patient and kind these two words describe love in its passive form and its active form the first word is patient it's literally a combination of two words that mean anger and a long time it means that you don't get angry for a long time you're patient it means that you are long suffering this is the passive expression of love how it responds to the offenses and the provocations of other people the second word kind refers it's a more active expression of love it refers to doing good seeking the good of others it commonly used the word is used to describe the goodness of God in scripture scripture also describes God's rules as good and that God is good and does good and that's what this word is here kind it's the disposition to do good to others even to our enemies as God does so if patient describes the passive posture of love kind describes the active posture of love to love then we could define it according to 1 Corinthians 13 is to suffer long and do good to others suffer others for a long time and do good to others are you patient with others are you long suffering when others offend you or hurt you or do you flare up quickly in anger seeking vengeance in canceling them after the two positive descriptions of love as patient and kind

Paul continues with what love is not he says love does not envy the same word used earlier in chapter 3 describe exactly what the Corinthians were like they were characterized by envy and rivalry with each other envy is a covetous desire for something or someone that belongs to another it means to begrudge the status or blessing of another and therefore it's contrary to love if we love someone we delight in their blessing we rejoice with them when they rejoice but if we're envious we begrudge their good are you envious of others prosperity blessings giftedness status or position envy is a failure of love and we are rightly alarmed when we start to feel envy rising up in our hearts I wish I had the time to go through all these words in detail but I don't have the time if you want to look at those words in more detail you can listen to my sermon on 1 Corinthians 13

[39 : 21] I don't remember when I preached that love is not love does not boast these are all related words love is not arrogant love is not rude these are all these contrasts a self-oriented disposition versus others oriented disposition seeing others regarding others is more significant than for ourselves higher than ourselves rather than being self-sufficient and self-promoting love does not insist on its own way in chapter 10 Paul corrected the Corinthians because they were disregarding the consciences of others and insisting on their own way and he told them there to seek to please others by seeking out their interest and not insisting on your own way people who insist on their own way they're willful and stubborn they don't take counsel well they don't take criticism well when they are proven wrong they are reluctant to admit fault they're resistant to reforming their ways even with relation to God they're like this sometimes those who are arrogant they insist on their own way when God's doing what they think he should be doing they're really happy with him and they praise him but as soon as

God starts doing things in their life they don't like or they don't think is the way things should be they become bitter and resentful which shows that they were never submitted to God in the first place and his rule and his sovereignty now this doesn't mean that loving people necessarily makes people pushovers Jonathan Edwards mentioned before 17th century pastor and theologian writes in his sermon on 1 Corinthians 13 humility disposes people to be of a yielding spirit to others ready for the sake of peace and to gratify others to comply in many things with their inclinations and to yield to their judgments wherein they are not inconsistent with truth and holiness a truly humble person is inflexible in nothing but in the cause of his Lord and Master which is the cause of truth and virtue in this he is inflexible because God and conscience required but in things of lesser moment and which do not involve his principles as a follower of Christ and in things that only concern his own private interests he is apt to yield to others

I think that's what it means that we do not insist on our own way I've known people like this and I hope you have too because they're a pleasure to know they're like lions when it comes to the things of God and defending it when it comes to their personal preferences they're they're like a doormat love is not irritable not easily provoked to anger it's patient and forbearing it's not resentful that literally means that it does not count or reckon evil the NIV puts it as keeps no record of wrongs it's what God does for us 2 Corinthians 5.19 in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation God sees all our evil but when we put our trust in Christ and repent of our sins he does not count those sins against us likewise if we love one another we're not going to keep a record of wrongs we don't count those things against them in the way we deal with them and relate to them love covers all offenses as Proverbs 10.12 says love does not rejoice in wrongdoing it rejoices with the truth the fact that you love someone doesn't mean that you say everything that they do is okay even when they do wrong it does not rejoice with wrongdoing it speaks the truth in love and after describing at length what love is not he says in verse 7 love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things and that verse is structured chiastically the first item and the last item match each other bearing all things and enduring all things and the middle two items match each other believe all things and hope all things love believes all things and hopes all things the word all things is repeated for rhetorical effect now it doesn't mean that we should become credulous people who believe everyone and everything we need to be discerning what it does mean is that we should be disposed to trust people to give them the benefit of the doubt to believe the best about them as an expression of our love for them instead of suspecting people and distrusting them love believes all things do we love one another in this way or are we suspicious of one another skeptical toward one another inclined to distrust one another similarly love hopes all things not in the sense of naive optimism but in the sense that we never despair of people we never give up on people

I called a friend of mine recently he used to be a pastor and had a family and three kids like me but now he's divorced and he's lost custody of his children and because he's also no longer able to minister in the church and he was not guiltless in the matter but what's happened to him was way beyond what should have happened and I think the custody situation is really really unjust and I called him and to talk to him and he was just so thankful to me in the whole call we talked for about 50 minutes and like saying oh you're such a faithful friend you're such a good friend and all that and it kind of was embarrassing to me because I felt really guilty because I see him like once every two years even though he lives in New England and then and then I and he had called me like four months ago before I called him and it took me four months to call him back and so I wasn't the greatest friend to him and yet he was so thankful and so I told him like you're being really generous to me you know

I really could have been a much better friend and I'm sorry that I haven't been a better friend to you and then he said Sean no I'm not I'm not being overly generous to you because you didn't give up on me I had many friends who gave up on me but after a decade you still haven't given up on me I think that's what I don't point to myself as a shining example of love I fail every day but I think that's what this hope all things looks like you don't give up on people you keep persevering and then Paul concludes in verse 8 love never ends which sets up the contrast between the gifts of the spirit that will cease and pass away versus love which never ends as for prophecies he says they will pass away as for tongues they will cease as for knowledge it will pass away for we know in part and we prophesy in part but when the perfect comes the partial will pass away this is representative of all the gifts that he's been talking about so far in chapter 12 contrary to the thinking of the Corinthians that the spiritual gifts are a sign of arrival oh we're there

[47 : 33] I already speak in the tongues of angels we're there instead Paul says no it's not a sign of arrival the gifts are actually a sign of awaiting the perfect has not come yet we know in part we prophesy in part we have partial knowledge of God and partial prophetic revelation and that's the characteristic of our present age that will pass away eventually we will know God fully and we'll have his revelation fully and when the perfect comes the partial will pass away as Karl Barth the 20th century theologian says because the sun rises all lights are extinguished we turn on the lamps at night because there's no light but when the sun rises we all turn our lights off there's no need for lesser lights Paul also uses this analogy to explain this and in verse 11 when I was a child I spoke like a child

I thought like a child I reasoned like a child when I became a man I gave up my childish ways he's using this example to tell the Corinthians you think that you are grown up and mature because of your gifts when in fact the gifts are a sign of our childlike state and when we're fully grown we will give up these things in the same way as we grew up as adults we gave up our childish ways the gifts exist to build up the church but when Christ returns and our union with him is perfected the gifts will no longer exist because the church will no longer need to be built up it will already be complete Paul continues in verse 12 for now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face now I know in part then I shall know fully even as I have been fully known the word translated dimly here can be more literally translated as indirectly or by riddle and that's referring to in alluding to numbers 12 68 where God says when there is a prophet among you

I the Lord reveal myself to them in visions I speak to them in dreams but this is not true of my servant Moses he is faithful in all my house with him I speak face to face clearly and not in riddles he sees the form of the Lord why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses this is why Moses is considered the greatest prophet of greatest of the Old Testament prophets God spoke to him face to face and not in riddles God addressed them directly and not indirectly through dreams and visions or through prophecies that we need to decipher and interpret so the contrast is not merely between a low resolution image and a high resolution image but between a mediated view of God and a direct unmediated face to face view of God we don't have that yet just like when we're away from our loved ones we talk to them on the phone we might zoom call do a zoom call with them but you put away those things when you can sit with them face to face and embrace one another that's what will be when Christ returns and we see him face to face and we will know fully and until then we pursue love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts especially those that build up the body of Christ but we can't love one another in this way in our own strength

I realize I just faith, hope, and love it says in verse 13 so now faith, hope, and love abide these three but the greatest of these is love faith is the assurance of things hoped for a conviction of things not seen when we see Christ faith will be no more because faith will give way to sight Romans 8 24 for in this hope we were saved now hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what he sees right now we have hope because our hope is not yet realized but when Christ returns our hope will be fully realized and hope will be no more but when faith is no more and hope is no more love will abide forever it endures forever and that's why love is the greatest of the three cardinal Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love but how can we love one another we can't love one another in this way unless we have first love of God 1 John 4 19 says we love because he first loved us the love that we see in chapter 13 that is patient and kind is the very love with which

God has loved us Romans 2 4 says do you presume on the riches of his kindness same word and forbearance and patience same word not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance God has been long suffering with us through all of our sins and evil he has suffered long with us and he has and has been kind to us seeking to do good to us he has kept no record of wrongs instead he sent his only son Jesus to die on the cross to pay for our sins so that our record can be cleansed cleared that's the way in which God has loved us in Christ and it's only when we receive that love from God first and we're transformed by that love that is love is patient and kind that we can love one another in this way so let's pray together that God's love would be poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit as we trust in Jesus so that we might abound in love let's pray

[53 : 46] Father just as the gifts are the gifts of your spirit the fruit is the fruit of your spirit we can have neither apart from your spirit so give us more of your spirit Father we ask as we abide in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior who loved us and gave himself up for us in love fill us more and more with his spirit that we might abound in love toward one another so that we might use the gifts you have given us appropriately in a way that builds up one another we pray this in Jesus name amen amen Thank you.