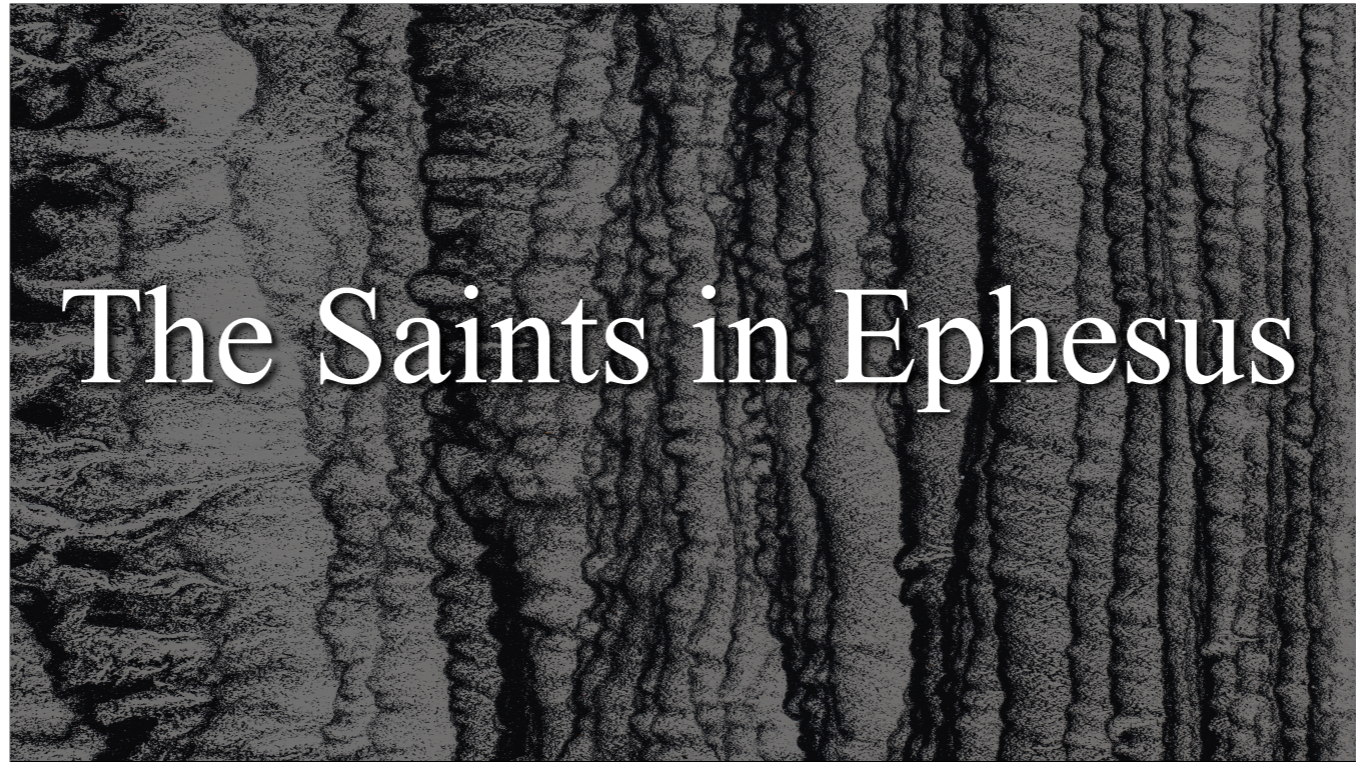




- Since God is love, and we are to love one another
  - And these are the greatest commands
- A still more excellent way
  - Paul appeals to their desires to be the best
- What happens when love is absent?

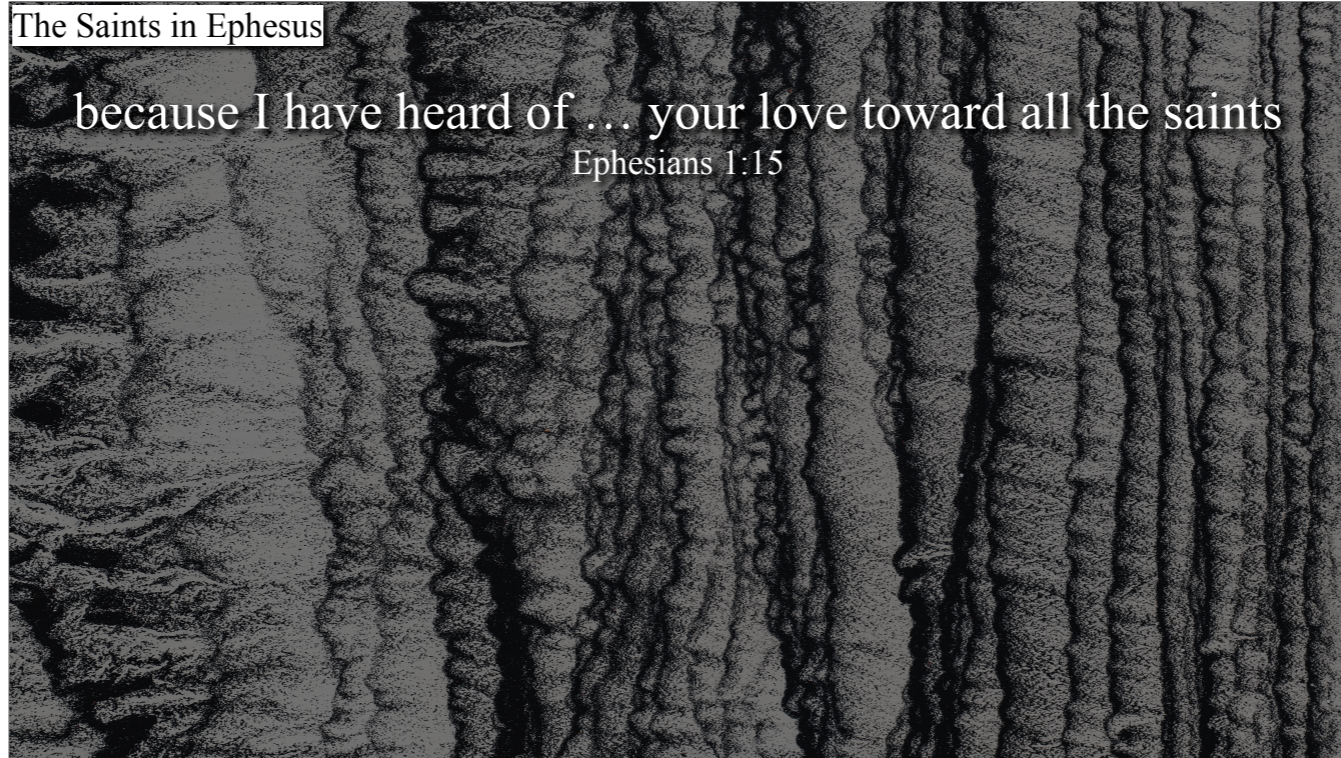


- The Saints in Ephesus: About 62 AD

The Saints in Ephesus

because I have heard of ... your love toward all the saints

Ephesians 1:15



- Commended for their love
  - Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

The Saints in Ephesus

because I have heard of ... your love toward all the saints

Ephesians 1:15

being rooted and grounded in love

Ephesians 1:17

- Prayed for their love
  - Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

The Saints in Ephesus

because I have heard of ... your love toward all the saints

Ephesians 1:15

being rooted and grounded in love

Ephesians 1:17

bearing with one  
another in love

Ephesians 4:2

builds itself  
up in love

Ephesians 4:16

speaking the  
truth in love

Ephesians 4:15

- Encouraged to love (4.2, 15, 16; 5.2, 25)
  - Ephesians 4:2 bearing with one another in love,
  - Ephesians 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love
  - Ephesians 4:16 makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The Saints in Ephesus

because I have heard of ... your love toward all the saints

Ephesians 1:15

being rooted and grounded in love

Ephesians 1:17

bearing with one  
another in love

Ephesians 4:2

builds itself  
up in love

Ephesians 4:16

Husbands, love  
your wives

Ephesians 5:25

speaking the  
truth in love

Ephesians 4:15

walk in love

Ephesians 5:2

- Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

The Saints in Ephesus

But I have this against you, that you have  
abandoned the love you had at first.

Revelation 2:4

- 95 AD?
- Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
- What happened to the church in Ephesus?

The Saints in Ephesus

But I have this against you, that you have  
abandoned the love you had at first.

Revelation 2:4

- Most of us would have walked among them and been impressed by their activity, etc.
- Maybe we would have thought that there was something slightly wrong, something not quite right.
- They were still so busy, so hard at work, enduring; but... no love

The Saints in Ephesus

But I have this against you, that you have  
abandoned the love you had at first.

Revelation 2:4

- What love had they abandoned?
  - Love for God, brethren, truth, lost? Any/All?
  - Doesn't matter. They are interconnected and related and vitally important.
- Real danger ... remove lampstand (identity as a church)

The Saints in Ephesus

But I have this against you, that you have  
abandoned the love you had at first.

Revelation 2:4

- Jesus tells them that they need to (5)
  - Remember from where they had fallen
    - As seen by Paul and taught by Paul
  - Repent
    - change
  - Do the works you did at first
    - works that are not just place holders for ritual, tradition, and claims of godliness, piety, and righteousness

The Saints in Ephesus

But I have this against you, that you have  
abandoned the love you had at first.

Revelation 2:4

- The church in Ephesus reminds us that we cannot become complacent about love.
  - whether because of our neglect, selfishness, laziness, or failure to understand the importance of love.
  - If we don't have love, we are not God's people
- How close are we to the church of Ephesus?
  - The one Paul wrote to?
  - The one Jesus wrote to?



- The Saints in Corinth

But earnestly desire the higher gifts.  
And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
1 Corinthians 12:31

- 1 Corinthians 12:31 (ESV)
  - But earnestly desire the higher gifts. (13:13: faith, hope, love?)
  - And I will show you a still more excellent way.
- Paul is going to help the Corinthian saints to understand the importance of love.
  - Today, we'll be learning with them about the absolute necessity of love.

The Saints in Corinth

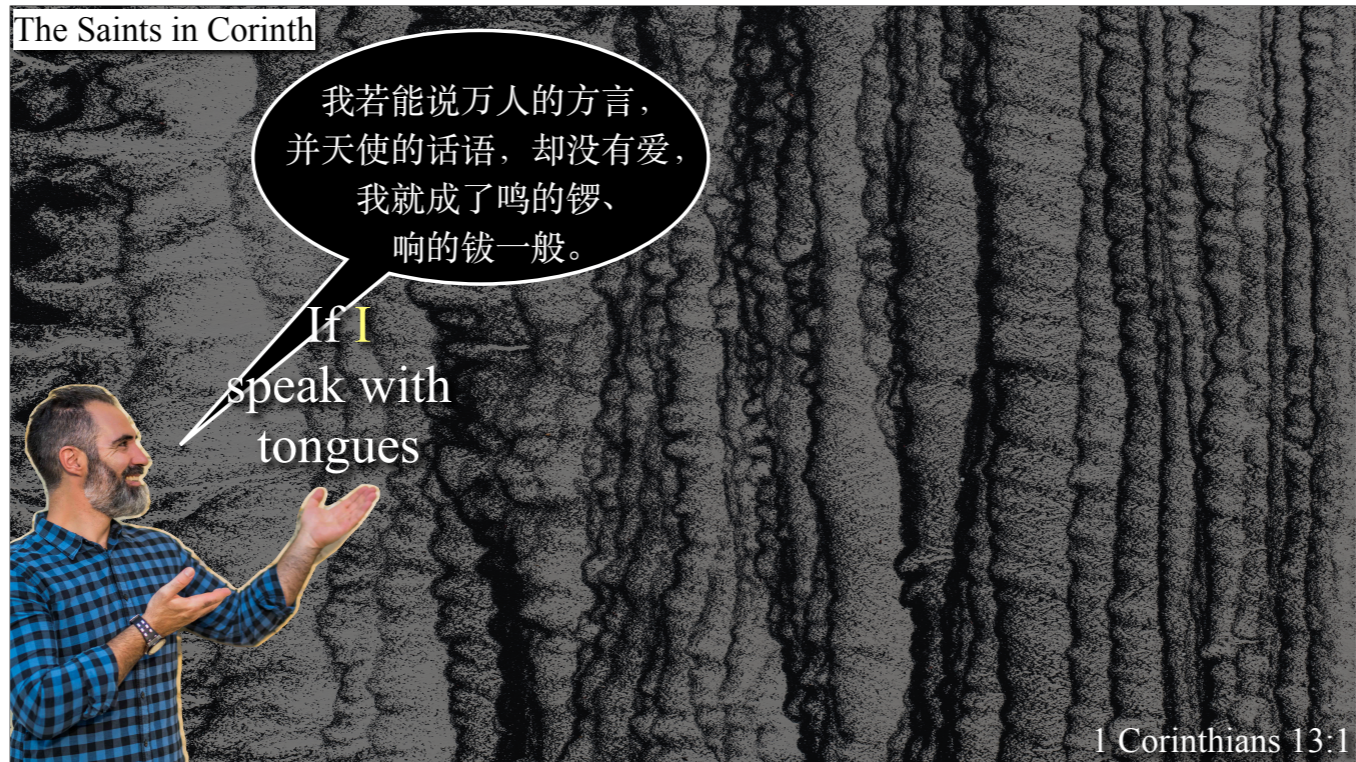
But earnestly desire the higher gifts.  
And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
1 Corinthians 12:31

- The gifts and the childish thinking (1 Cor. 12, 14)
  - Paul reminds them these gifts come from the Spirit (they are a blessing)
  - And that all of these gifts have a purpose and function in the church and for the congregation

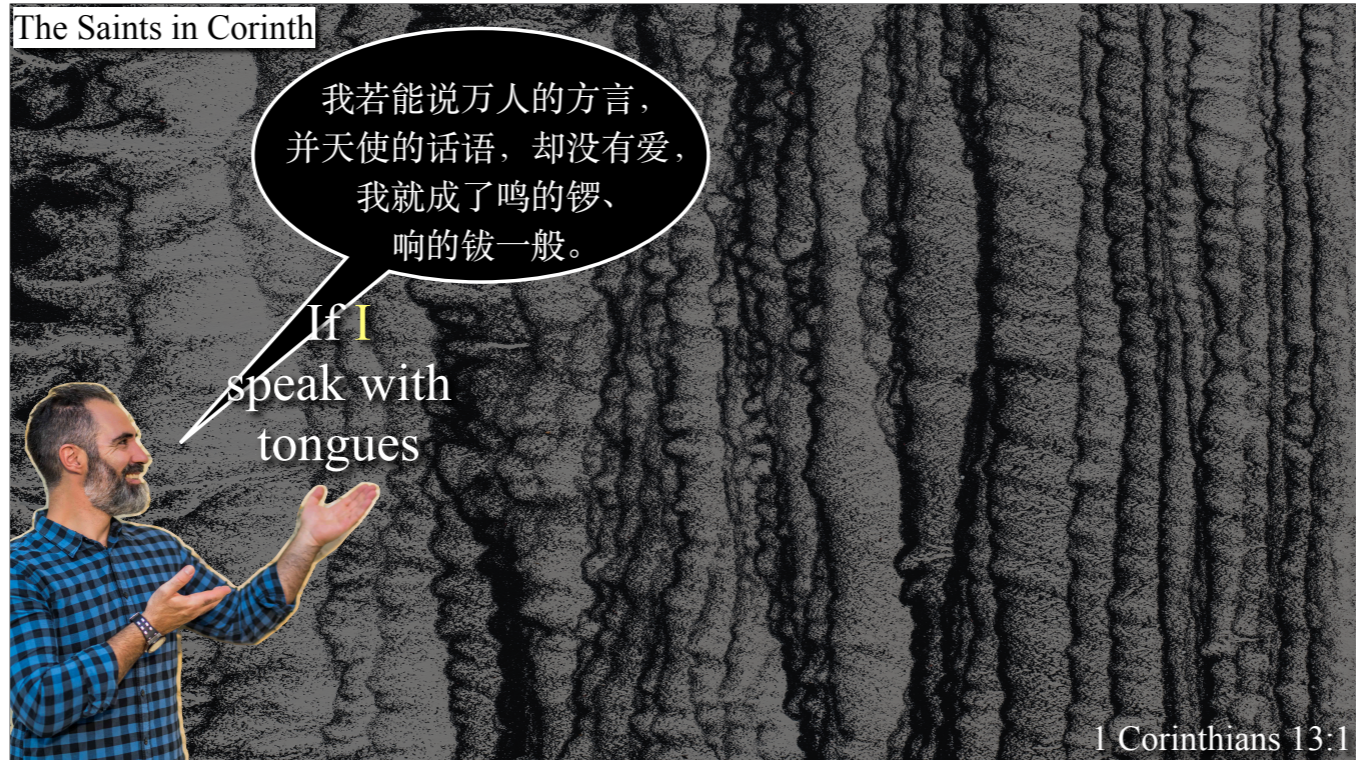
The Saints in Corinth

But earnestly desire the higher gifts.  
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1 Corinthians 12:31

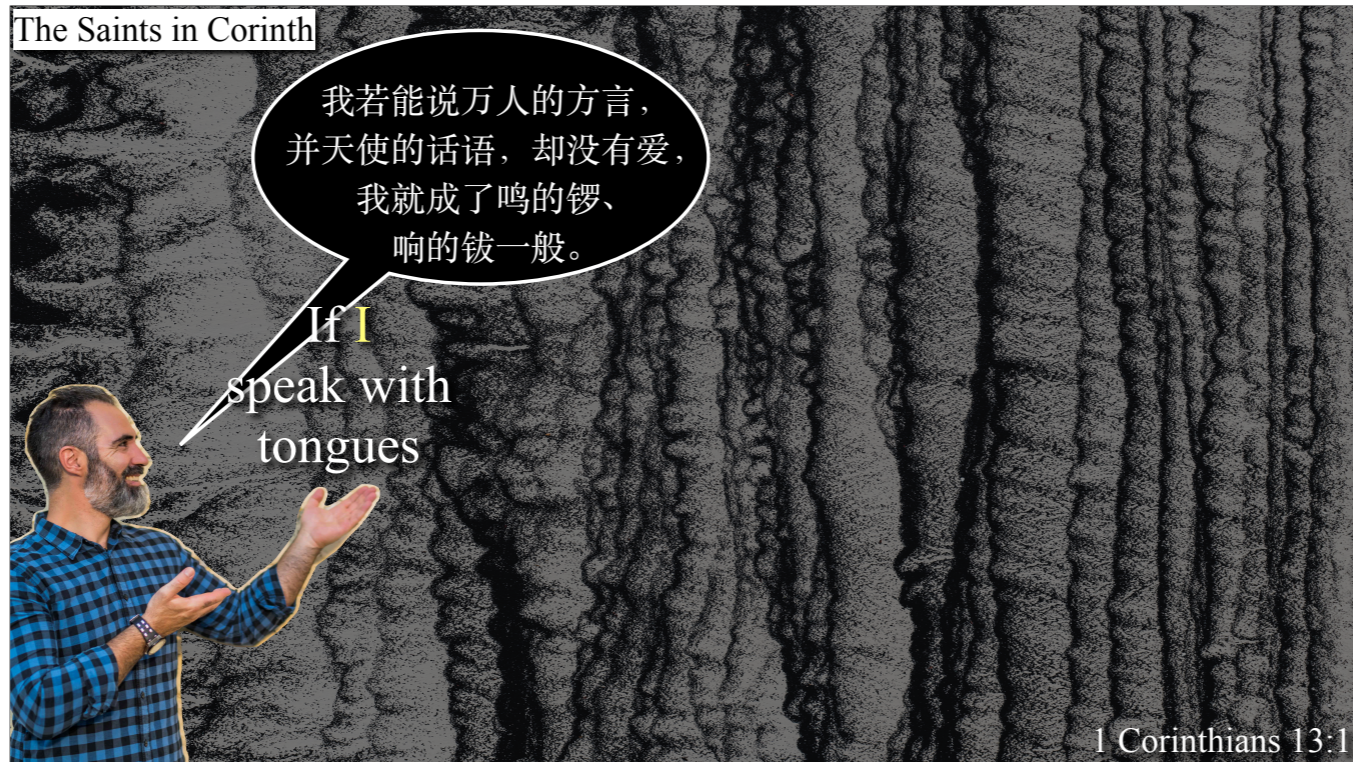
- He speaks specifically in chapter 14 about speaking in tongues and prophecy.
  - 5: church built up
  - 12: build up the church
  - 26: Let all things be done for building up



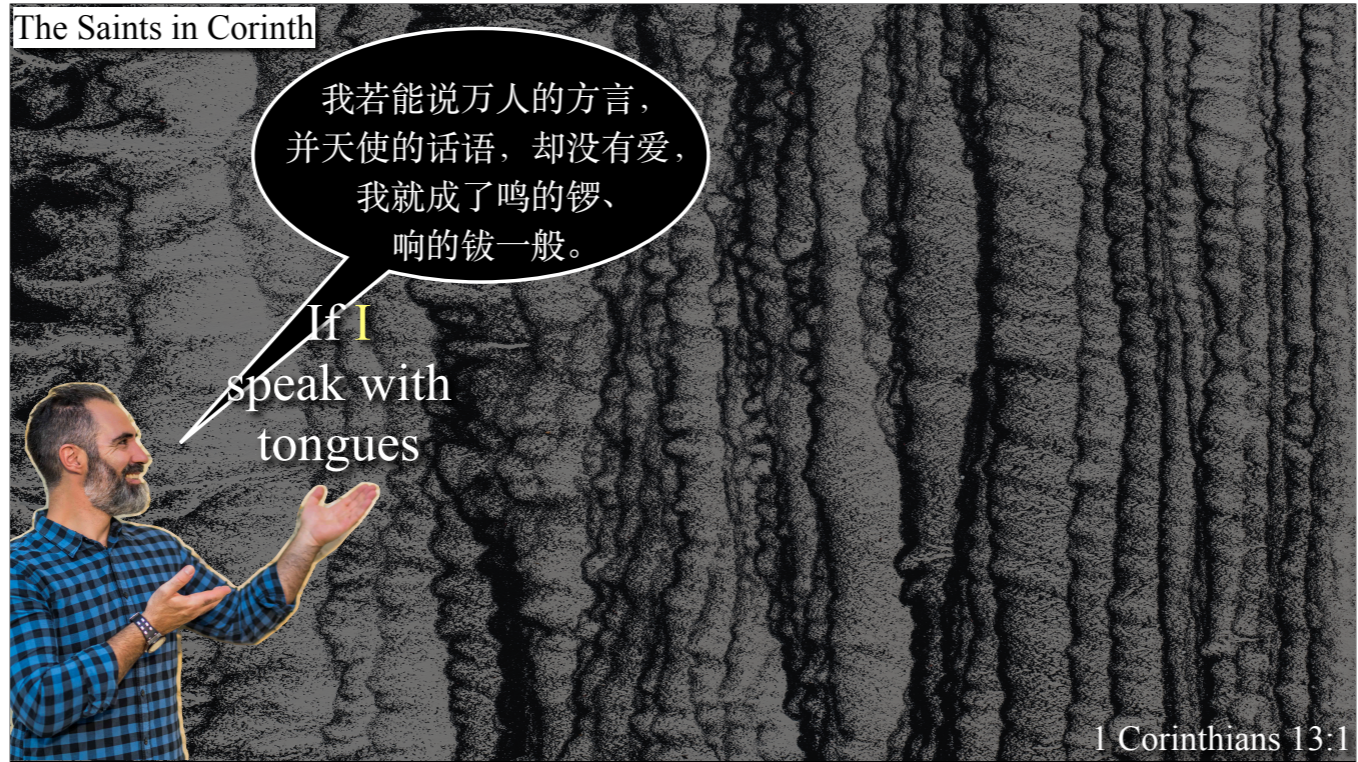
- Speak with tongues of men and angels
  - languages
    - 1 Corinthians 14:10-11 There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.



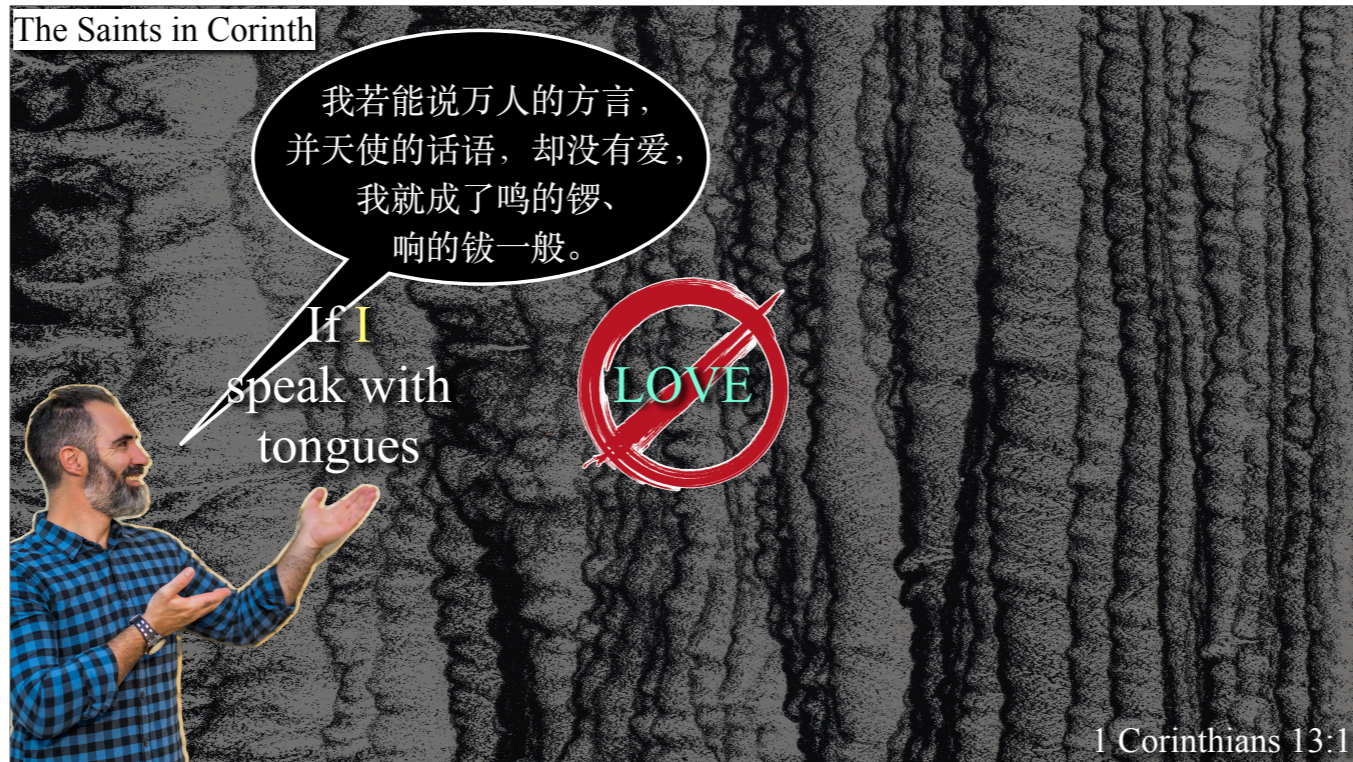
- And Paul moves it to hyperbole: speaking the language of angels
  - which sounds just super fantastic and holy
  - what could be better than talking in the language of angels?



- Speaking these languages
  - 14:2) speaks to God, not to men: utters mysteries in the Spirit
  - 14:4) builds up himself
  - 14:5) unless someone interprets
  - 14:9) speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?
  - 14:9) speaking in the air
  - 14:22) a sign for unbelievers (not believers)



- If I
  - This is not about the gift or the power of the gift.
  - It's about me.



- But have not love
  - There are a lot of things we might have ... zeal, confidence, enthusiasm, desire to help, to teach, to save.
  - But Paul focuses on only one thing: Love
    - In some ways, love will encompass of these
    - But it keeps us properly grounded in being like our Father



- I am
  - a noisy gong or clanging cymbal
    - RWP: "I am already become..."
    - meaning noise that serves no purpose or function: empty
    - annoying and pointless



- Paul's changes the conversation.
  - It's no longer about the gift.
    - This wonderful gift from the spirit has not failed.
    - I have failed
  - It's about me and my relationship with others in the church, and even unbelievers

The Saints in Corinth

If I have ...

- prophetic powers
- understand all mysteries
- all knowledge
- all faith



1 Corinthians 13:2

- Prophetic Powers (1 Cor. 13:2)
- 1 Corinthians 13:2 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.

The Saints in Corinth

If I have ...

- prophetic powers
- understand all mysteries
- all knowledge
- all faith



1 Corinthians 13:2

- Paul continues to focus on the issue in Corinth, but amplifies it beyond just the specific.
  - Because it's not about the gift or how great the gift is
  - Prophecy is great, and Paul goes on to make that clear in chapter 14
    - speaks to people for upbuilding, encouragement, consolation
    - builds up the church
    - sign for believers (not unbelievers)
- If I have — not about the gift, but me

The Saints in Corinth

If I have ...

- prophetic powers
- understand all mysteries
- all knowledge
- all faith



1 Corinthians 13:2

- Have not love —

The Saints in Corinth

If I have ...

- prophetic powers
- understand all mysteries
- all knowledge
- all faith



I am  
nothing



1 Corinthians 13:2

- I am nothing
  - RWP: Not “nobody”. But an absolute zero.

The Saints in Corinth

If I ...

- give away all
- deliver up my body



1 Corinthians 13:3

- Sacrifice (1 Cor. 13:3)
- 1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

The Saints in Corinth

If I ...

- give away all
- deliver up my body



1 Corinthians 13:3

- Paul moves on to things that are not gifts from the Spirit
  - But these are still things that are often considered particularly religious and special
  - And we often honor those who do these things
  - These are also going to an extreme to demonstrate our absolute devotion: giving all, dying
  - Even going to the uttermost sacrifice

The Saints in Corinth

If I ...

- give away all
- deliver up my body



1 Corinthians 13:3

- If I have not love



- I gain nothing
  - gain = to assist, be useful, advantageous, profitable
  - RWP: “I am helped nothing”
  - The implication is that without doing these with love
    - Then it becomes an aspect of glory seeking, pride, recognition from men
    - And thus is more about self, than others.

# What's So Special About Love?

- What's so special about love?
- 1 John 4:8

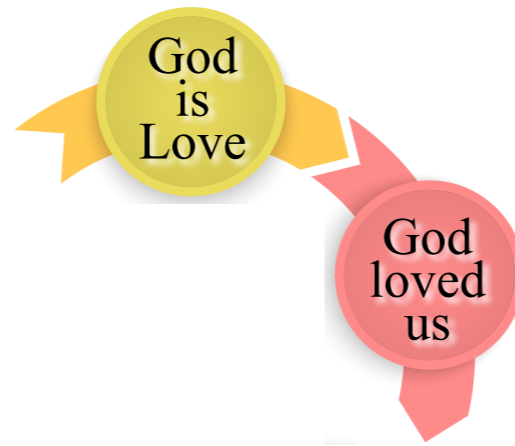
What's So Special about Love?



1 John 4:8-12

- 8) God is love.
  - An essential and defining characteristic of our Father is love.
    - This is not to diminish any others at all.

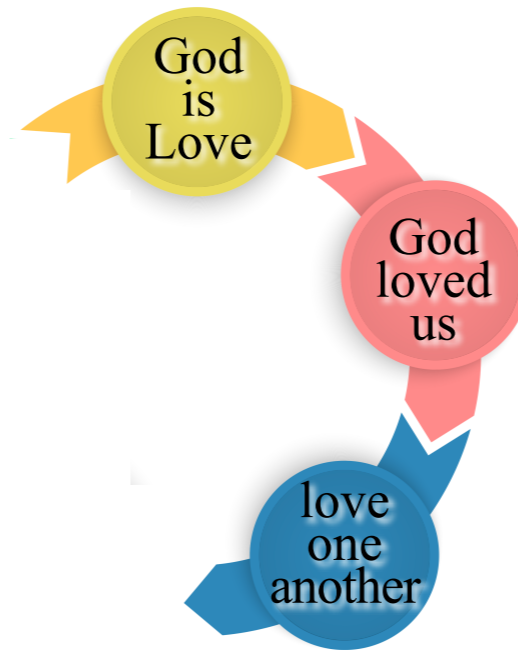
What's So Special about Love?



1 John 4:8-12

- 9-10) God loves us
  - sent his only son
  - we might live
  - this is love
    - not that we loved him
    - he loved us: sent son to be propitiation for our sins

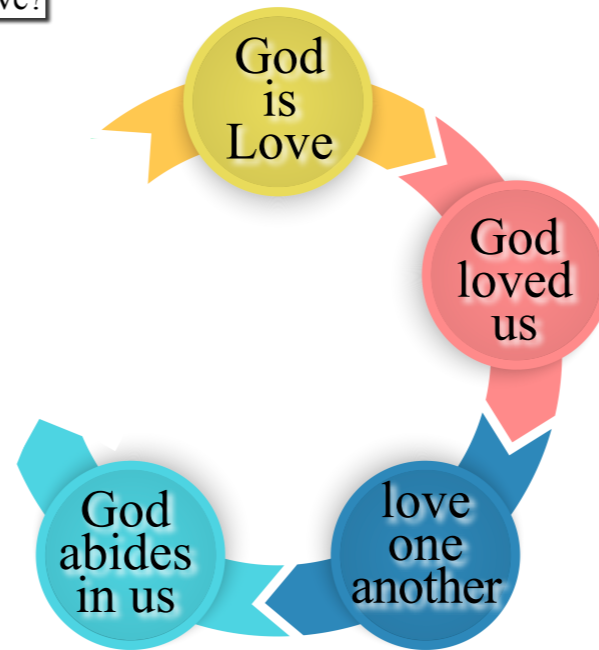
What's So Special about Love?



1 John 4:8-12

- 11) We ought to love one another
  - Having seen clearly and powerfully how God loved us
  - we ought to love one another
    - This is not about niceties.
    - The depth and sacrifice of God's love must be seen among us.

What's So Special about Love?



1 John 4:8-12

- 12, 16) God abides in us
  - if we love one another, God abides in us
    - United together in common character and being
- 16) God is love
  - know and believe the love God has for us
  - abides in love — abides in God, God abides in him
- Careful not to pass over this too quickly
  - Love and loving makes us like our Father

What's So Special about Love?



1 John 4:8-12

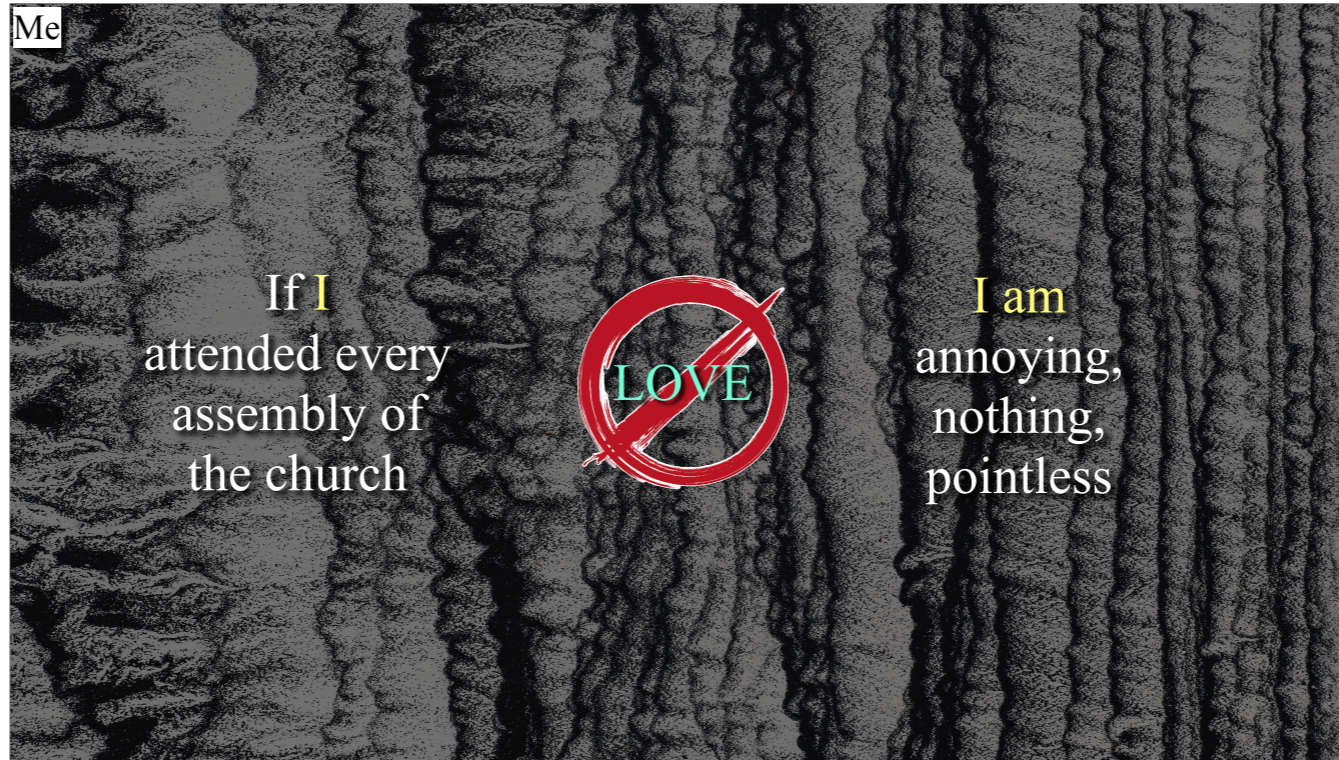
- 12) His love is perfected in us
  - perfected = complete
  - The whole point of this is that just as God is love
  - I am to be love also
- (I understand the struggles we have with this very well)
  - But this is God's intention and plan

What's So Special about Love?

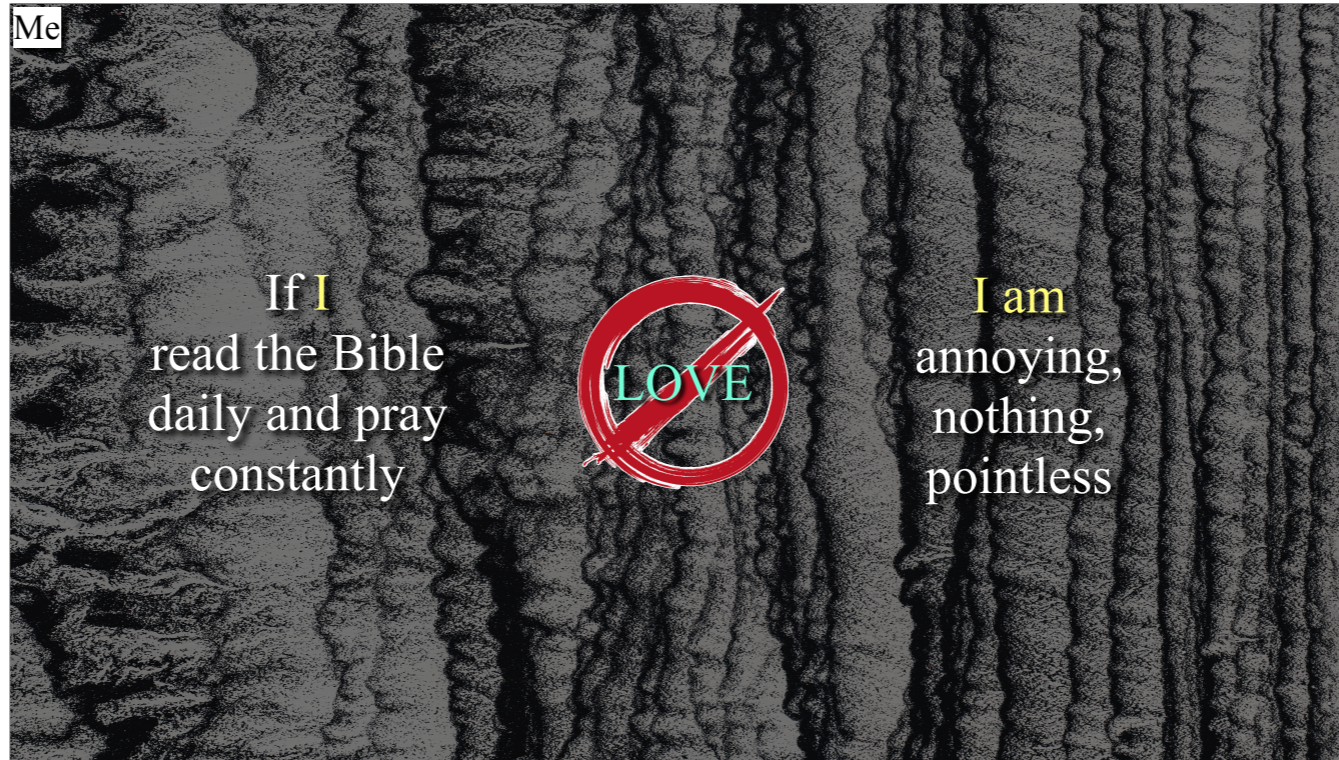


1 John 4:8-12

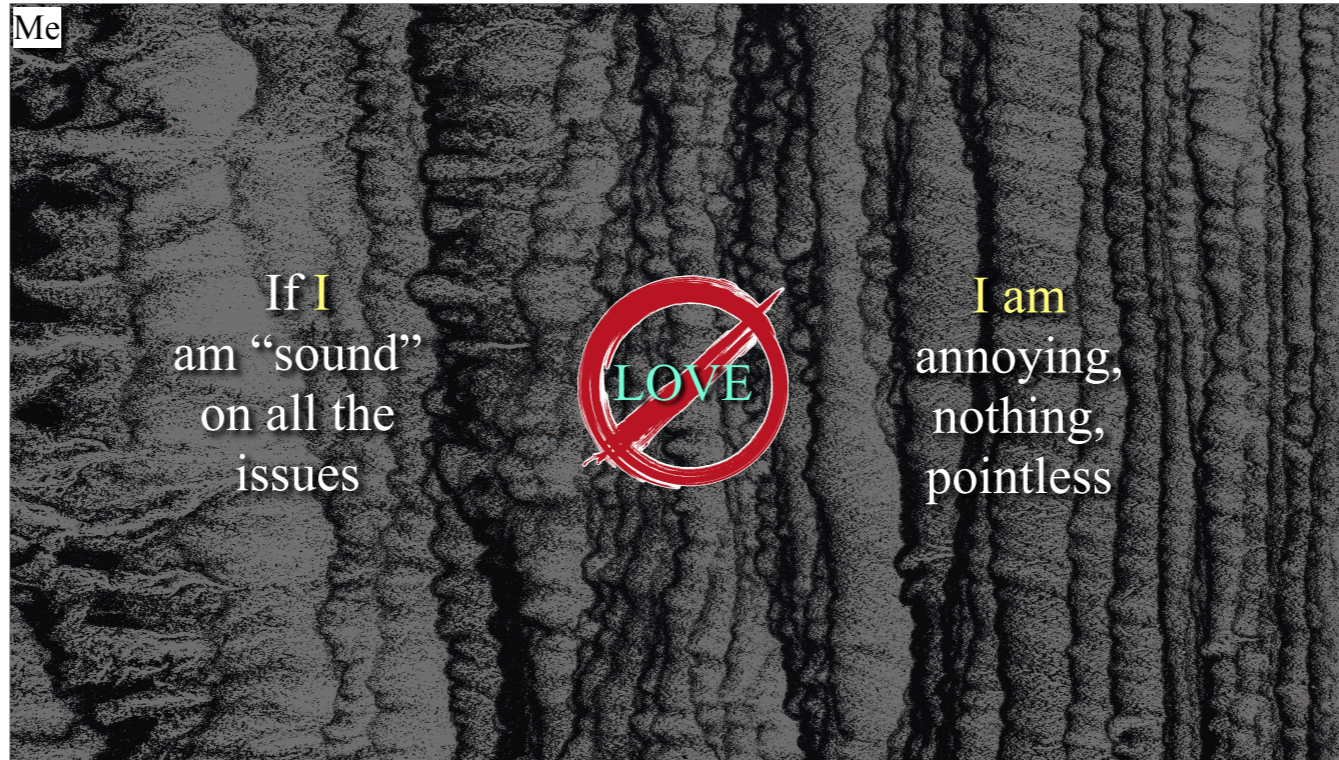
- What happens if one of these is missing?
- Specifically, that we fail to love one another?
- Then the cycle is not complete.
  - God does not abide in us
  - His love is not completed
  - And that means that we are not like him.



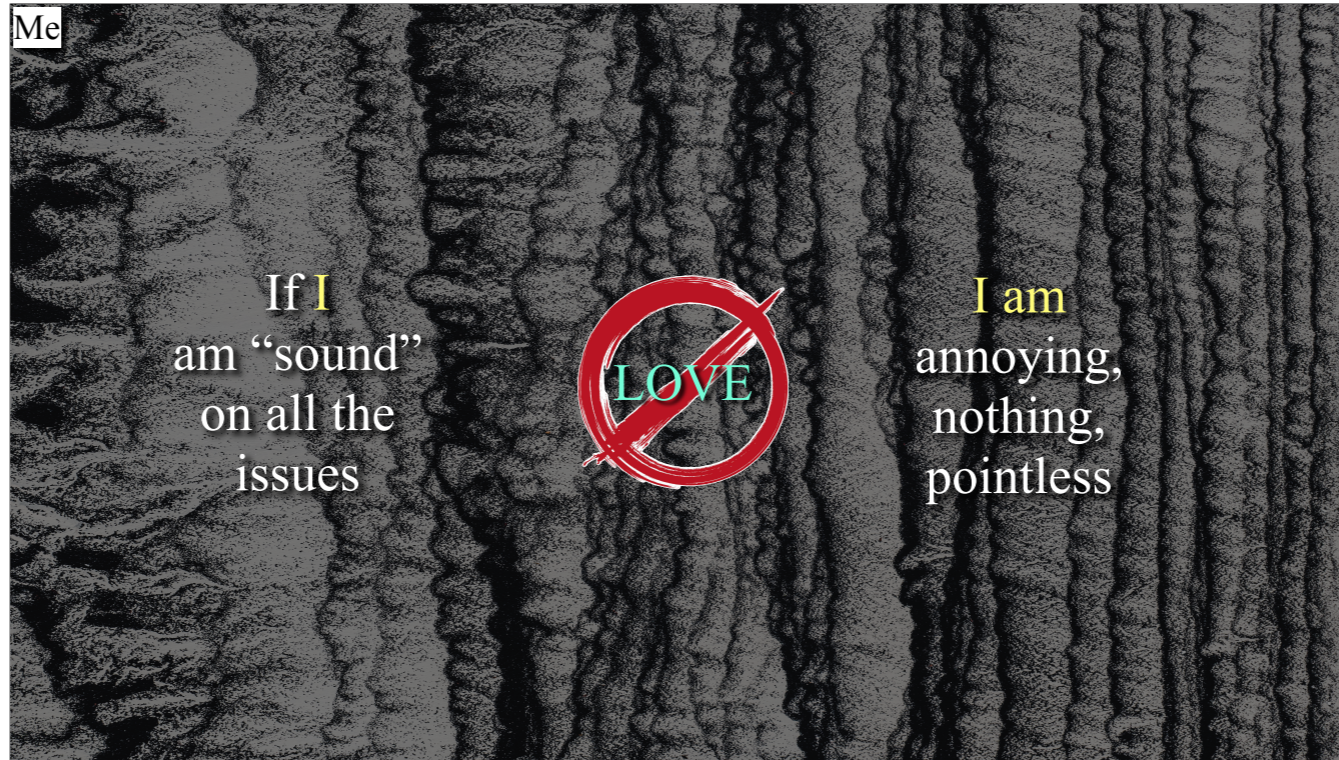
- If I attend every assembly of the church
  - but have not love
  - I am annoying, nothing, pointless



- If I read the bible daily and pray constantly
  - but have not love
  - I am annoying, nothing, pointless



- If I am "sound" on all the issues
  - but have not love
  - I am annoying, nothing, pointless



- If I am "sound" on all the issues
  - but have not love
  - I am annoying, nothing, pointless



- Paul's point is not about only these specific issues.
  - He used them because they were relevant to the saints in Corinth
- The danger is always present that we fail to be like God, that we forget love
  - And when that happens, then any "religious" thing I do is pointless
  - And I am motivated by pleasing myself, not pleasing God or brethren
- If I'm not loving like God loves, then it doesn't matter what else I do.



- Romans 12:9 — “Let love be genuine”
  - “without hypocrisy” (ASV, NASV, NKJV, NET)
  - without dissimulation” (KJV)
  - sincere (NIV)
  - unfeigned, undisguised, sincere (Thayer)
  - not pretended (RWP)
- Like God’s love for us love is active, striving to save and help.

We implore you  
on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Call to Action

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The Greatest of These

#03

Compiled and Presented by:  
Dave Stewart  
2026 March 1  
www.1corinthians1614.com

## But Have Not Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

We are easily and often distracted from what is most important, sometimes even by the gifts given to us by God. Anything that we do, no matter how great it may seem to us; when we do it without love, we become annoying, nothing, pointless.

Modified from the original lesson from the series: "A Still More Excellent Way", But Have Not Love.  
2006 October 29

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**"Let all that you do be done with love."**