

September 27

Scriptures: Read 1 Corinthians 13

Key Verse: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Overview

Fruitfulness, as distinct from giftedness, is what this chapter is about. Generally, we tend to take the “love chapter” out of context. It is important in Bible interpretation to remember context—and in this case, chapter 13 comes right in the middle of Paul’s attempt to dispel ignorance about the “gifts of the Spirit”. Here he is bluntly declaring the ineffectual nature of giftedness when it is independent of fruitfulness.

Imagine having the supernatural ability to speak, not only every human language but the language of angels as well! Or being able to prophecy and interpret life’s mysteries. How about the kind of faith where you were able to physically move mountains? Not impressive enough? Then try giving everything you have to the poor, or even giving your life for some great cause. If there’s anything impressive in human experience, it’s martyrdom! The Nobel Prize is in the bag! We’re impressed. And we assume God is too.

No! There’s only one thing that impresses God—love: love for Him, love for neighbor, love for self. Jesus said it (Mk.12:29-31), and it’s the ultimate condition of Christian service.

It’s not what appears to be; it’s what actually is. You can fool others, even yourself, but you can’t fool God. He looks on the heart; He knows why you’re ministering. He knows if your motive is guilt, ego, or money. He knows if your motives are mixed. He knows everything.

God is love, John tells us. The whole motive of His creating the world and us was love. Love is the oil, which lubricates the universe. If we don’t love, we become a wrench in the gears—we become at cross-purposes with our Creator. Let’s examine our motives and repent. Let’s turn in love’s direction. Let’s bear fruit.

Prayer

O great God whom the apostle John wrote “is love”, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will distribute the gifts to each one individually as He wills, so that we can truly minister to one another, as Jesus ministered; and when we minister, Lord, may Your love fill us so completely that we’ll live as You lived, giving evidence of the “fruit of the Spirit”.