

Sermon Transcription • 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NIV)**What's Love Got to Do with It****Pastor Jeff Bucknam**

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

When I was a younger guy I worked at a camp. That's actually how I came to faith in Christ. Came from a family, nominal Christian—you've probably heard that before. And came to faith in Christ at this Evangelical Bible camp that my mom just send us to to get rid of us for a week. Came back to haunt her I think. It was fantastic week. I came to faith in Christ, and then that camp actually became kind of my church. We didn't really go to a church that believed much in anything about.... about Jesus. They used his name, but they didn't believe much about him. So in the end, my faith really lived for the weeks that I went to Christian camp during the summers. And eventually I ended up working at that camp. When I was working there, it became apparent to me something that I didn't know when I was just attending. And that is that certain people at the camp, especially certain people who worked there were thought of more highly than others...based upon a particular skill. This skill, surprisingly, was barefoot waterskiing. Uh.. it was on a lake in the Seattle area. And apparently, the ability to barefoot waterski made you, you know, somewhat god-like in the minds of lots and lots of lots of people there. I remember following after one of the guys who could barefoot—this by the way were back in the days where in order to barefoot waterski you had to do it at the end of a rope. And that you had to drop a ski and you drop another ski and they just sped up as fast as they could go. You start to do it. There were only a couple guys on our staff who could do this thing. And I remember following them around the campus and when people would find out, or the campers would find out they could barefoot waterski, it was like... Moses was coming and the people were parting [hands motion like parting] and saying "Ooh...behold the man of God!" You know.. They would ask these guys questions, "Can I see the bottom of your feet? Are they calloused?" And that sort of thing.

I've noticed quite honestly as I've grown up since that time that every small community I'm part of, and I don't mean that by small town, although that's the case too, a little subculture I'm a part of, so If I'm into basketball, or if I'm into baseball, or if I'm into dance—not into dance. But, if I'm—whatever it is that I'm a part of, there is a *thing* in that little subgroup that establishes somebody as being more capable, better, in that group than others. So when I played basketball when I was young, it was the high school kids who could dunk—everybody knew who could dunk, right? There was a few people and once you establish you could actually dunk the basketball, you'd walk down the hallways of your school and the seas would part. I was told by a friend who is really into ice skating that a quad, I don't know what that is, a quad I think is 'four', [spins finger] right? As the name shows. Four times spinning around, um, I know the salchow... so.. I know that much. Anyway, the quad was the thing you had to



be able to do. And if you could, you were considered to be the very much the top of the heap in that sport, in that area. And people would treat you with a certain kind of regard and respect and say behind your back, <gasp> [hand on the mouth] “Oh! She can do the quad...” You know, “She might not be very nice...but she can do the quad!” Every one of our areas of life there’s something that we’re able to do that establishes us above others in the minds of the subgroup. Now I say that because it gives you a good indication as to what was going on in the city and the church in Corinth. There was a “thing”. If you attended that church or part of that community, there was a “thing” that you are able to do that made you top of the heap. The people would part the seas for you. Whisper behind your back, “Have you seen.... that thing that they can do?”

And that particular thing was speaking in tongues. When I say “tongues”, what I mean is the ability to speak other languages not known to the speaker but maybe known to the person who is hearing. Right? So German. Or the ability to speak in what they call the “ecstatic utterance”. [Speaks in gibberish]. Now, you have to understand there’s a reason why it is that the people in Corinth believe this. Most of the people came from pagan backgrounds, right? So nobody in the ancient world was non religious. Everybody’s religious, just like today, everybody’s religious. They say they’re not—everybody’s religious. So they had a certain set of beliefs and they worship certain gods. And when they worship those particular gods, the way that you knew that they were close to those gods, right? So if you worship Dionysus, the way you knew you were close to Dionysus is if Dionysus inhabited you. Took over your body in the worship service. And guess what would happen if Dionysus took over your body in the worship service? [Speaks in gibberish]. You would speak in ecstatic utterance. And people would step back and say, “Oh! Look how close this person is to the god! They’ve become one together!” So people from that kind of background when they come to the Christian church. There was one particular gift they thought was better than every other one. And that was the gift of tongues. Because it was a sign to them that the Spirit of God was *really, really*, with that person who was speaking it. If you’re gonna have a gift, guys, it’d better be tongues. Seek tongues. *Want* tongues. *Long* for tongues. It’s a sign that the Holy Spirit is really with you.

Now the Apostle Paul when he comes to the church and he knows that this is happening, he addresses the problem in a few different ways. One of them is to start by saying, listen, in 1 Corinthians 12, he says, “Listen, all the gifts are necessary, guys. So I get it, tongues is a real thing and it’s valuable and it can be useful. But it’s not the *only* thing. There are lots of other gifts. And they all work together to form parts of the body. And if one of the gifts isn’t functioning properly, it’s like you walking around with a bad knee. You know, the church will hobble. So every gift is necessary. Every gift is needed. And the way that you get those particular gifts,” Paul says, “Is that God distributes them as *he wills*.” So it’s not your choice regarding what gift you have and what gift you don’t have. God gives the gifts and every gift should be honoured even the ones that you don’t think are all that honourable. Because they’re all helpful and useful to the function and the proper functioning of the body. But most importantly, the goal of the gifts isn’t to show off! And to say to everyone, “Look what I can do! God is with me! Part the seas.” The goal of the gift is to edify your brothers and sister. But if you want to know what the *real* sign of spiritual life is...a real sign that the



Holy Spirit is upon you, it's not the gift of tongues. It's not the gifts at all. Paul says, let me show you the most excellent way. In fact, that's the last line. 1 Corinthians 12:31,

“And yet I will show you the most excellent way.”

So here I'm gonna show you the most excellent way in 1 Corinthians 13. It's probably one of the most important passages in the Bible about spiritual gifts. About the Holy Spirit's work. So how do you know that you are a Holy Spirit person? What is the Spirit trying to produce in you primarily? Well, 1 Corinthians 13 will tell you. And as the title of my sermon is—by the way the title of my sermon and every point of my sermon is after a famous song. I'm so excited about it. [laughs]. “What's Love Got to Do with It?” Huh...! Tina Turner. Okay. Dates me a little bit. So the answer to the question is love. What was the mark? It's love! Paul's gonna go out of his way to talk about this particular thing as it pertains to the sign that the Spirit's with you. And so here's how we're gonna do this. Three steps:

1. All You Need is Love. <hums> Yeah? Oh, come on. That's good. This one's better.
2. What is Love? <hums> Baby don't hurt me...Huh? Yeah! And then finally
3. Love Will Go On. Now I know that Celine Dion sang a song called “My Heart Will Go On” and that's the one I'm referring to. But I called it ‘love’ because I don't like Celine Dion. Anyway... Um.. [laughs]. Is that blasphemy here in Canada?

So here they are alright?

[All You Need is Love]

Verse 1. So let me show you the most excellent way... verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 then,

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

Now I gotta show you something in this passage. Paul is actually giving you like, in his mind, the most spiritual looking things that he could possibly imagine. Like if you saw somebody else doing them, you would say, “Whoa! The Holy Spirit is on them! They can barefoot ski!” So notice: speaking the tongues of men and angels, gift of prophecy so great that you can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, a faith that can move mountains, give all I possess to the poor and even give over my body to hardship—that's a reference probably to martyrdom—giving myself over to even death.

So let's talk about those just for a minute. These are for Paul, the most spiritual looking thing that you could do. The first we've already kind of talked about, the speaking in tongues—ecstatic utterance. the people in Corinth believed that if you've gone to their worship service right, and showed up, you would hear people speaking in ecstatic utterance and everyone around you would be whispering



saying, "Oh.. look at the Spirit indwell them! Look at the Spirit possess them in this moment! They're in this ecstatic trance moment. Where the Spirit is on them! Can't you see the evidence of the Spirit." That's a spiritual person.

And then he says, well what about prophecy? Imagine somebody prophesying. What does he mean by that? Well there's a little story, Charles Spurgeon tells of that I think is a really good illustration of what prophecy looks like. Charles Spurgeon was a Baptist. So this is not the kind of thing that a Baptist would normally do. Spurgeon was preaching a sermon on one occasion and he ended up telling a story later about what happened to him while he was preaching this sermon to some—Spurgeon used to, he was a pastor of a church of like 6000 people and they all met in a massive music hall in London, years ago. By years ago I mean in the 19th century. And so he's one of the most famous preachers of all time. So, thousands of people there, and this is what he said happened. Said:

"While preaching in the hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, 'There is a man sitting there [We're gonna do this in a minute], who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sunday morning, he took nine [dollars] [So it's not his shop], and there was four [dollars] profit out of it [meaning he kept back four for himself. He gave five dollars to his boss, four back for himself]; his soul is sold [pointing to the guy] to Satan for four [dollars]!' A city missionary [So, Spurgeon still talking], when doing his rounds, met with this man, and seeing that he was reading one of my sermons, he asked the question, 'Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?' 'Yes,' replied the man, 'I have every reason to know him, I have been to hear him; and, under his preaching, by God's grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened? [he said to the missionary] I went to the Music Hall [Spurgeon's church], and took my seat in the middle of the place; Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me, and in his sermon he pointed to me, and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I kept my shop open on Sundays; and I did, sir. I should not have minded that; but he also said that I took nine [dollars] the Sunday before, and that there was four [dollars] profit out of it. I did take nine [dollars] that day, and four [dollars] was just the profit; but how he should know that, I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul.'"

So, how does Spurgeon know what's going on there? This is what people talk about, talking about prophecies. He was given knowledge by God, somehow, that this guy...had been stealing. And he expresses it. Now, let me tell you. If hearing that story, if Spurgeon were here, wouldn't you go, "Oh my goodness! The Spirit's on you, man!" Like remarkable!

Paul talks about faith. He says that, what if I have a faith that can even move mountains? There's a great story about a guy named George Müller. George Müller is a guy in my opinion who had some of the greatest faith of any person I've ever read about since the New Testament. He's remarkable dude.



Müller opened all these orphanages in England years and years ago when the Industrial Revolution was wreaking havoc on the people of the day and they used to force kids to work and so all these children were homeless and parentless and they were around in the city and so Müller went around and he gathered them up and he put them in his orphanages and take care of them. The crazy thing about Müller is that he would actually not ever ask anybody for money. Like he had to provide for, he had to resource this ministry. But he would never go out and say, "Uh can you guys give me some cash?" He wouldn't go to a church to say that, wouldn't do anything like that. Instead he said, "I'm just gonna pray about it. The Lord knows our needs. I'm gonna tell the Lord and the Lord's gonna work it out." So on one occasion, he had all these hundreds of orphans. He had different orphanages around the country, but in this particular occasion, the one that he was at, they got up in the morning, and they didn't have any bread or milk for the day. They didn't have anything for breakfast. And so, instead of calling breakfast off or telling the kids to stay in their rooms, he said, "Just come out. We're gonna sit down, set the tables," he tells the staff, "Set the tables as if we're gonna eat." So all kids sit down. They're all sitting there. And Müller prays, there's nothing in front of them, servants have nothing to give them. Müller prays, "Oh God, thank you for the bounty we are about to receive." Knowing full well he doesn't have any of it. "Thank you Father for the bread and for the milk... Amen." And the kids sit there and they look down on the tables to see where the bread and the milk are coming and nothing's happening. This is a really awkward moment. [knocks the podium]. At the door, there's a knock. And there's this baker who burst into the room and says, "Mr. Müller I, I apologize I tried to get here a little bit earlier. But, I was awaken this morning at 2am and I gotta tell you, I couldn't go back to sleep. It just... I felt like God needed me to bake bread for you so I brought it with me. Can I give it to your children?" And Müller said "Yes. That'd be fine." They passed it all out to the kids and Müller said later, that he prayed in his mind, "Lord, that's half of the answer." Soon as the man left, apparently they heard a crash outside. Müller got up and he walked outside and he looked there and there was a milk cart that had broken down. In fact, because the baker had gone out so quickly, he had gotten in the way and the milk cart had broken down and the milk was going to spoil and the milkman said, "Mr. Müller I'm sorry, I can't take all. I gotta get my cart fixed and I have all these milk gone. Would you like to have the milk?" And Mr. Müller said, "Well, that would be fine." Now, listen, I tell you what, I don't have a faith to do that kind of thing. I don't. I wish I did. Wouldn't that be remarkable to be able to trust God in that kind of way? My shoelace breaks and I'm like, "Oh.. you...." [shakes fist at God] You know? It'd be phenomenal. You look at somebody with that kind of faith, if you met George Müller you'd be like, "Part the seas, guys! Cause there's a man of God! Look at the way that he has faith! He can even move mountains!"

What if I give all I possess to the poor? There's a story in the book of Acts, in Acts chapter 4 actually about this guy Barnabas. He was one of the—he was actually became Paul's traveling companion to go and reach out to all sorts of people to share the gospel with them and plant churches among them. But before that, he was just a normal dude in a church. He had an extra piece of property though, you know up in the Shuswap or whatever. And um... he was in church and he realized that there are a lot of people in the church who had needs, especially in those days you know. And so, sitting there, one day, he sensed I guess from the Spirit, that he was supposed to go and sell this property. He did. He went and sold the property. Took the proceeds and then next Sunday, he came and he brought you



know, like fat stacks down to the front. And he laid them at the feet of the apostles and said, "Listen, I know that we have a lot of needs in the church. I'm gonna give this stuff to you guys so you can distribute it as you think it needs to be distributed." Can you imagine if somebody did that today? Ahh.. I just sold off my property. Here's all the money. Use it for what you need. Imagine if that happened, you and I would be, "Wow.....Wow..." If there's ever been a sign that the Holy Spirit would be on somebody, it's that kind of thing right? The giving?

How about the handing over your body for sufferings. One of the names, that's the language that you use here at the end, "I give over my body to hardship that I may boast". Probably a reference to one of the most extreme sacrifice for Christ for the sake of identifying with Jesus. One of the names that you should know in the history of the church is a guy named Polycarp. Polycarp was one of the first bishops to ever be appointed . He knew the apostle John, who wrote the book of John and wrote Revelation. And, you know, the "disciple that Jesus loved" was John. So, he appointed Polycarp as one of his bishops. And Polycarp grew very old. He was in his 80's when the government changed and decided that they wanted to get rid of all the Christians. And they thought, "We need to identify that guy who is the most influential Christian." And it's Polycarp. So they came and they got him. They wanted him to recant right? They wanted to put him in front of a public arena and say to him, "Listen, if you—you need to turn away from Jesus publicly so all the other people who follow you will also turn away from Jesus." John Stott, commentator pastor in England, he wrote about this. He said these words,

"It was February 2, probably in the year AD 156. The venerable bishop [Polycarp], who had fled from the city at the pleading of his congregation [they knew he was gonna be killed], was tracked down to his hiding place. [When they found him] He made no attempt to flee. Instead he offered food and drink to his captors [Hey you guys want a cup of tea here?] and asked permission to retire for prayer, which he did for two hours [to pray for his captors and others]. Then, as they traveled into the city [like in an open back horse-drawn cart], the officer in charge urged him to recant. "What harm can it do," he asked, "to sacrifice to the emperor?" [You just need to put a little incense in front of everyone, and all of this will go away.] Polycarp refused. On arrival, he was roughly pushed out of the carriage, and brought before the proconsul [the governor] in the amphitheater, who [in front of hundreds] addressed him [You know, bad cop now]: "Respect your years!... Swear by the genius of Caesar." And again, "Swear, and I will release you, revile Christ!" [With all these people watching] To which Polycarp replied [some of the most famous words in the history of the Christian church since the New Testament]: "For 86 years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" The proconsul persisted: "Swear by the genius of Caesar... I have wild beasts, if you will not change your mind, I will throw you to them..." "Call them," Polycarp replied. "Since you make light of the beasts, I will have you destroyed by fire, unless you change your attitude." Angry Jews and Gentiles then gathered wood for the pile. Polycarp stood by the stake, asking not to be fastened to it [he said, I'm not gonna run away. Just light it up], and prayed, "O Lord, Almighty God, the Father of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have come to know you... I thank you for counting me worthy this day and hour of sharing the



cup of Christ among the number of your martyrs." The fire was lit, but as the wind drove the flames away from him and prolonged his suffering, a soldier put an end to his misery with a sword."

Do you guys think the Holy Spirit was with this guy? I mean, the evidence is pretty strong yeah?

So here's Paul's point with this. I want you take all of those stories, all of those examples, and Paul is throwing them all in your mind in this saying, all of that is grand and wonderful as it is. Tongues and prophecies and giving, and giving over your life—all of that, if it's not done in love, complete waste of time. If those things are done for personal glory rather than the service of others, they're ultimately empty. See, *love* not *giftedness* is the sign of true Holy Spirit vitality. Love. In fact, it is possible to take your gift and to use it in a way that is profoundly great and profoundly unloving.

So, I'm pretty good with words and the Lord has given me an ability to do that over time. My wife doesn't like it in our discussions. But there, it's come to be a help in many circumstances. I was at one point at a fair, the state fair of Washington state where I went to, they had these booths, you know these religious booths. One of them was the "Baha'i Faith" booth. I went with a friend and we, I said to him, "Why don't we go over to the Baha'i Faith booth and try to engage them in Christian things." And so, I did, I stood at the Baha'i faith booth and I started to engage the guy who is sitting across from me. There were two people sitting there. Other people were kind of mingling around and talking, immediately we got into a bit of a discussion—[finger quotation marks] "discussion"—a debate about.. you know, the nature of who Jesus was and Baha'i faith derives from some Islam to some degree. So like, we were engaging about that sort of matter. Started really peaceful, but as time went on, I decided that rhetorically that the best effect was to raise my voice. Right? And to be more argumentative because there's nothing that will ever win people like yelling at them. [audience laughs] So um.. I started to get really upset, they got upset. Finally, the guy said, "Listen, listen, you need to go." And I said, "What are you, afraid of my arguments?" I said it louder than that, <louder> "Are you afraid of my arguments?" Then he drew this other person in and we started yelling at each other, and I was yelling at him, you know—I was right. I knew it. I was getting him. Scored massive points. My friend behind me was going, "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!" You know, he was my hype guy back there. "Come on!" And um... finally, he called security. The fair security showed up. Grabbed my arm, "Don't touch me! [shrugs arm] I'm man of God. Sharing the gospel with these people...Fine, fine! I'll go!" I remember after this, I mean my friend—we used to give each other high five's, and we used to miss a lot, cause you know...it wasn't—but this high five was perfect, [high fives] <Whack!> to my friend. And I thought, "Yeah! That's a sign from God that we did the right..right thing...did we? Cause I was brilliant in this debate." My points didn't stammer. It was all coming straight at the dude! Telling him about the love of Christ! But in the process of telling him about the love of Christ I....left out the love of Christ. See you can do lovely Christian things in the most unloving un-Christian way. And if you do, all your giftedness is meaningless. See, the sign is love.



[What is Love?]

See all you need is love. Second, what is love? Man you guys are gonna have to listen quicker than what you're doing. What is Love? <hum> "Baby don't hurt—" </hum> 1 Corinthians 13:4-7,

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

I'm assuming you've heard that passage before, yes? Okay. I used to, the first time I was ever in a wedding, I was a candle lighter—my sister's wedding. They told me that "You're gonna light all the candles." She decided that she wanted to have like, every candles—a festival of lights sort of wedding right? All these candles that were up high and they gave me this wand thing that had a little hook on the end and they said, "You need to keep the wick going." The lady who is in charge said, "You need to keep the wick going! So that it doesn't burn out. Cause that'll be really awkward and your sister will get mad at you for the rest of her life cause you ruined her wedding. So keep the wick going okay?" "Wick. Got it." And they kept repeating it to me. So another girl who was lighting the candles with me, and as we started she kept her wick going and she was really focused on it. I thought, "Well I better really go for this." And so I started. I got a little aggressive, I'm not gonna lie, with the wick. And I started to push it out a little bit more and push it out a little bit more. And before you knew it, you know, I had an inferno going at the top of that thing. But then I was freaked out cause I was like, "I can't pull it back in cause I don't know if it's gonna stick and then go right back in and go out." So I kinda just went with it. I had this huge flame. The other girl had it perfect. This huge flame, and I was lighting these candles—some of them were wilting, as I was doing it, just in the.... Needless to say, they—I've never lit candles for weddings since. Most of my friends ended up, because they were either there or they heard about this cause I told them about it, said when I get to their weddings, either I was a groomsman or they would ask me to read. "Right, Jeff? You're good at reading. Read!" What would they ask me to read? Well, 1 Corinthians 13, right? Because Paul and love! Isn't it lovely that Paul broke out in this wedding text in the middle of talking about spiritual gifts. You know what's interesting about it, the reason we put this in our weddings is because we want to say something like, "This is such a beautiful picture of love! Doesn't it warm your heart to hear these words spoken out loud?" And the answer is, "Yeah, of course it is." The problem is that's not the way Paul intends this. What he's done here is he's basically said, "Look let me tell you guys about what love looks like because *none* of you are like this." None of you Northview. None of you Corinth! The way you guys are acting....is so unloving. You are so into this giftedness and yet so unloving. So let me tell you what love is like with each phrase. Let me poke you in the ribs. It's patient. It's kind. That's the summary.

The way to understand this in fact is, Gordon Fee one of the commentators said, and he was studying this. He said, the way Paul really intends this is for you to put your name in place of the word 'love'. Jeff is patient. Jeff is kind. Jeff is not self seeking. Jeff is not... And then see at the end whether or not it's applicable to you.



So let's look at it. the first two: patience and kind are kind of the big categories. Love is patient meaning 'long suffering'—that's the word that's used in some of the older translations, that's great way of saying it. It's long suffering. We should bring that one back. Because love is long suffering. Love puts up with a lot. Those of you who have babies know exactly what I'm talking about. Yes? Oh... come on. You were up last night. And the night before, and the last 30 nights. With the jerk right? Who's been... they don't care about your sleep. They're just up and they're looking at you like, <high pitch> "Hey let's play!"</voice> You're like, "Don't wanna play..." They mess themselves in the most unwanted circumstances right? You put their nice clothes on and you go to the wedding. <yells> Blowout! My wife used to yell that, <yells> "Blowout!!!" And it meant you hold them and you're like, "How did all of that come out of something so small? I gotta go clean you up." And it's not like they do it just once, they do it over and over again. Right? 'Til they're about 19. Used to call my son 'Destructo' cause everywhere he'd walk around the house, <sound of munching and chomping> [puts things in his mouth]. Cry over everything, "It's okay..." <baby cries> Crying and crying and crying. Jerks... Why do you put up with them? Well you know why, because you love them. Because love is patient. It's... it suffers a long time. And the people you love the most you think, "Yeah I've suffered a long time" with you. But you don't care because I just... love you so much. Patient like that.

It's also kind. Which is the flip side of that, yeah. Patience is willing to receive a whole bunch of trash and still keep going and kindness is "I'm going to not only receive the trash, but I'm going to offer to you kindness." Grace. Willingness to love even positively. So, my wife didn't know when she married me that I talk as much as I do. And so like, our marriage has been her walking around the house and me following her, talking to her, about everything on my mind. And after a while, she's like "Oh.. Okay.. uh huh uh huh." I'm like, "You're not listening to me, are you? You're not listening to me." "What?" She takes her headphones. No, she doesn't do that. But "You're not listening to me." "Uh.. yeah.. Yeah, I am. I am. I am." She puts up with so much for me. Willing to receive all of that and yet she still.. she still acts positively toward me and takes care of me and looks after me. That's a sign of love. Patience and kind. And by the way, if I were to describe the love of Jesus in your life, what words would you use? Well he's patient with me. And man, is he kind.

Love is patient and love is kind. and then he gets in some specifics about it. It's not proud—this word 'not puffed up' is the word there. Um, Kiwis, New Zealanders say "You're not up yourself", right? People in sports now say, "Look at that guy he's smelling himself." Right? He dunks the basketball. That's not love. So, love is not self focused like that. In fact that's the line. It's not self seeking. It doesn't dishonour others. It doesn't keep records of wrong. There's a great old story about a husband and a wife who were in counselling. And they're meeting, they can't get through in neither issues, so the counsellor says, "Listen, what I want you to do is take this box and I want you to write down on a card every time your spouse makes you angry about something. Write down and why you're angry. And put it in the box." Well they go home and they do this for a week right. Both of them putting cards in the box all week long. Instead of yelling it at each other. I'd like to yell at you right now, but... [writes a card and puts it in a box] you know... They come back to the counsellor. The counsellor sits across them and says, "Alright. Let's start with her problems first." "Alright." She's got a list, going through them all. "He doesn't listen to me enough. He doesn't care for me enough. In this particular moment



he yelled at me, didn't put away the trash when I asked..." Like all the—little to big things. all of this stuff. Pile of cards. Finally they turn over to the guy. And he has a stack of cards in front of them. and the counsellor starts to read them. He reads them out loud. First one, it says, "I love you." and the second one, "I love you." "I love you." "I love you." That's what it looks like to keep no record of wrongs. Did that describe you? You know when you have in your discussions with your significant others or your family members, you don't bring up all the other things that they've ever done wrong before? And they include it into this moment so they can see the framework for how bad they've been. So how do you do when you go through the list and you hear all of these things, not self seeking, doesn't dishonour others. All of the words, patient, kind. Do you look at yourself and say, "Yeah! If I put my name in there, it says Jeff is all those things." Cause here's what's Paul's trying to get at. That if you're a genuine Holy Spirit person, *this* is the effect.

[Love Will Go On]

Finally, love will go on. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

"Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away, [Please notice, what I just read. That the gifts will cease. In your mind you should be thinking, "When?"] 'For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

This is a great passage. There's a big debate about spiritual gifts. The sign—what they call the sign gifts. So the miraculous gifts like tongues, prophecy, these sorts of things. Words of wisdom and knowledge. There's a big debate in the Christian church about this. Do these things, were these things just part of the foundation of the Christian church. They were around in Paul's day, but then they stopped because we have the Bible now and we don't need them. Or have they continued? And should we expect them to be operating in the present time? If you're part—if you believe that first view, you're called a 'cessationist'. Because you believe in the cessation, the ceasing, of the spiritual gifts. If you're not part of that first group you say, "No, I think they continue" you're called a 'continuationist'. Cause they could not come up with a more clever name. Cessationist, continuationist would yell at each other <angry sounds>. Charismatic churches, continuationists. Non-Charismatic churches, cessationists. Mean things are said either way. And it's all revolves around this question: When will the gifts cease?

Now here's what I want to show you, this passage tells you when. Explicitly. You say, "Where?" 1 Corinthians 13,



“...[W]here there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but [Here's your answer] when *completeness* comes, what is in part disappears.”

That word ‘completeness’ means, literally reads, ‘the perfect’. When ‘the perfect’ comes, the gifts will be no longer necessary. When’s that? When’s ‘the perfect’ coming? Come yet? This is gotta be a reference to the return of Christ. Now that means, listen, that means that you should expect these gifts to continue in the present age. Paul is affirming that here. That these gifts would continue to be operative in the present age, but after that not necessary at all. And then he gives you a couple of illustrations to try to drive home his point, right? He talks about when children become adults. My wife gave me permission to share this with you. When she was a little girl she used to go to the—she had a sock box with all her socks in there. And every morning when she would go choose some pair of socks to wear, she would sit by the sock box and take every other pair out and apologize to it for not wearing it that day. “I’m so sorry, pink socks because I love you but... tomorrow. Maybe?” Right? She doesn’t do this now. I never found her doing...Why? You say, “Well she grew up.” Well what does that mean? Well it means that she, when you’re children you think these certain things, like socks are animate objects and they have wills and minds and those sort of things because you see movies about that. But they’re just socks. And as an adult you look at it, you think it’s cute, but you’re like, “No, it’s just socks.” What Paul’s saying is that we live in the present age where we’re like children. We ask lots of questions about God and what he’s going on, or “Why is it like this God?” or “How about this?” And to be honest with you, some of the questions aren’t even that good because we’re so childish in the way we think. But then when the perfect comes, we will become adults. And we will think clearly about these things and we’ll understand the world. Isn’t that lovely to think that in heaven you’ll understand, you’ll know as you’re fully known? It’s like, he gives another illustration, it’s like...looking at somebody through a mirror. Now in those days, a mirror is like the back of your pot. You know those copper backs to your pots and if you turn it over you look, it’s like a fun house mirror thing? And if I’m looking at my wife through the pot, I’m like, “Whoa.. you look so funny.” You know? It makes your ears oblong and your forehead way too big and all of these things. And then I look face to face and think, “Oh it does kind of you like you but not...I see clearly now.” Paul is saying, is that we look today through a glass dimly, through the pot dimly. You can see the contours of how it all works, but you don’t totally understand, but one day face to face. One day you’ll know as you’re fully known. So the gifts operate today but not always. They will cease. You know, we’ll always continue? Do you know what will always continue? Love.

So here’s my last line in this entire sermon. Ready? What is the mark of a Holy Spirit person? It’s not ecstatic speech, great as that might be. It’s not having insight and prophecy, great as that is. It’s not great preaching, good as that is. It’s not miraculous powers. It’s not even dying as a martyr. All you need... is love. <humms>.

Let me pray. Our Father we are thankful for your grace. Thankful for the love that you’ve given to us and shed on our hearts in Christ. And we’re thankful for the Holy Spirit who now is taking this word and wants to reproduce this love in us. This patient, kind, not self seeking love in us, but would that be



the case. Would that be the mark of we who call ourselves Christians. We, Holy Spirit people, Father. Would you take that and make that in our families, in our marriages, and in our relationships at work, in every area of our lives, Would you take love and make it our mark. And we ask it in Jesus' good name, Amen.