

1Corinthians 18-09-09b

Let's resume our study now, we're in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and we have, in my estimation, made a helpful observation at the end of chapter 12 verse 31. This chapter 13 is a better way than trying to desire a greater gift, trying to hope for or pray for or work toward a different effort, a different set of circumstances, a different opportunity, a different kind of ministry, a different sort of function within the body of Christ. You are the body of Christ and members individually.

You have been assigned a place. God has appointed the communication gifts first and foremost and then the support and maintenance functions beyond that. And this is God's appointment.

But you are, Corinthians, you are desiring better gifts. Well, according to whose standard, according to whose notion, by what measure is it a better gift? For you, the gift that you have is perfect. Because God figured it out, God suited you to it and assigned you your place in the body.

So how much sense does it make to, you could almost put the word allegedly, you desire an allegedly greater gift. How could it be greater if it's what God has appointed, what God has assigned? In another place Paul says, I have learned in whatever state I find myself therewith to be content, whether I'm abased, whether I abound, I'm content because I know this is God's assignment. This is where God has placed me and he has called me to be faithful.

Faithful is he that calleth you who also will perform it. Bring it about. So he says, instead of being zealous for a change, zealous for something quote unquote better, Paul says, yet I show you.

And dichotomy is a word that really means to demonstrate, to point to something. Somebody stops and asks directions, which way is prior? And I say, it's that way. I'm trying to get to foil.

It's that way. Dichotomy, I am pointing to, I'm going to draw your attention to, focus you on a kata hyperbolain. I want to talk a little bit about more excellent, what's translated more excellent here.

Because this type of word only occurs in Paul's letters in the New Testament. The participle of hyperbolo is used in Ephesians 3.19, which says to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. You're going to know something that is beyond knowledge, beyond human knowledge, beyond what a human mind could encompass.

To know the love of Christ, which is hyperbolo knowledge, hyperbolain, it's surpassing, it's supreme, it's the uttermost and the beyond. In Ephesians 2, verse 7, he says that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. We can't even fully appreciate it in this life.

In the ages to come, he is going to show the exceeding riches of his grace, the hyperbolic Plutus, of his grace. He's going to demonstrate it. He's going to point to it.

He's going to show it. Very similar to our statement here. In Ephesians 1.19, I'm kind of working my way backwards in Ephesians, he says that you may come to know three things, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and so on.

And in verse 19, he says, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, the hyperbolic, greatness of his power. It surpasses anything. It is the excess.

In secular Greek, this was used for, have you ever heard of the golden mean? In the ancient philosophical world, they had the golden mean. It was supposed to be the perfect balance, and there was shortness and inadequacy and insufficiency on one side, and there was excess and going beyond the pale on the other side. It's funny because nobody knows what a pale is anymore, and when you say beyond the pale, people will spell it like P-A-I-L, and it's one of those fading pieces of vocabulary.

But we used to have fences that were made of palings. A paling is like a picket. And you would pound a post in the ground, like when you're staking out a new house, and you would put a pale in the ground, a P-A-L-E, pale.

It's not its color, but it's a paling. It's a thin stick. And that would mark the limit.

It would be a property boundary. It would be a building boundary. It would be a fence boundary.

Well, if you have a paling or a pale and go beyond it, you've surpassed. You've gone beyond the limit. So here, Hooper Ballo is speaking of that excellence, but it really means supreme.

I will show you a supreme way. It's not like more excellent indicates that there is an excellence, right? Like, well, wanting a greater gift is excellent. Let me show you a more excellent way.

This is excellent. This is more excellent. That's not what he's saying.

He says, you all are earnestly zealous. You're trying for these better gifts. Let me show you the surpassing way.

It's according to surpassingness. It's according to what is supreme. And it is this way that he's going to show them is on a level with the work of Christ in Ephesians 3.19, the love of Christ that is beyond what you can appreciate.

It is the riches of His grace that are just so far beyond anything you could imagine in Ephesians 2.7. It is the greatness of His power in Ephesians 1.19. And I could give you a host of other references, but those three in Ephesians give you an idea of how much better this way is than anything else somebody could think of. They might try to justify or vindicate or rationalize their seeking better gifts or wanting to do more and be more. And they can rationalize it.

Well, I just want to be a bigger blessing. I want to contribute more. I want to be more helpful and more whatever.

And he says, look, if you want to be more, if you want to surpass, if you want to be beyond the pale in terms of excellence, I'll show you the way. That's what chapter 13 is. Your zeal is great, but it is misdirected.

You're zealous for the wrong thing. Of course, it's not the only time Paul talks about misdirected zeal, as I have already mentioned, when he talks about Israel having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. He says, I bear them witness.

Nothing wrong with their zeal. This is Romans chapter 10. 9, 10, and 11 in Romans is where he's talking about his investment in Israel and his desire that they be saved.

And he says in 10.2, I bear them witness. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. And what happens as a result? If your passion is misdirected, if your desire is aimed just even slightly wrong, it's a zeal for God.

How can that be wrong? It can't be wrong if it feels so right. Oh, yes, it can. Wake up in the cold, stark light of day and realize you've made a horrible, life-changing mistake.

Why is the zeal for God, not according to knowledge, bad? Well, the next verse in Romans, Romans 10.3 says, because they were ignorant of God's righteousness. They have a zeal that is not informed. What were the first three great gifts, 1, 2, and 3? Apostle, prophet, and teacher.

This gives you knowledge so that you can aim your zeal in the right direction. Zeal for God, not according to knowledge, because they are ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own. And the same thing happens if you have an ignorant approach to the function of your gift, your assigned appointed place in the body of Christ.

Knowledge helps us aim that in the right direction and not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, or think of ourselves more often than we ought to think, or think of ourselves more in terms of our zeal than we ought to. Our zeal for God needs to be according to knowledge. Otherwise, we will be ignorant of where God's righteousness is.

In the human eye, righteousness is helping people, bettering them in some way. This is why charity is so often pursued, even by unbelievers. Because, well, what more can you do than to be a benefit? You listen to the descriptions of all of the foundations that contribute to PBS.

You try to watch a program on there and they say, well, it's partially underwritten by the essence of it. Then they'll have a little motto, you know, making a better world, helping people become all they can be. They've got these little taglines and little sayings and little summaries of what the mission of their philanthropic organization is.

Philanthropy, philos, anthropos, love for man. I love man and I want to help him. So I'm going

to chuck money into this fund and we're going to put stuff on PBS that'll, you know, help people learn and grow and be better.

Not according to knowledge. Ignorant of God's righteousness. God's righteousness is often inscrutable.

We don't know why God has us doing what we're doing, or being where we are being, or undertaking and undergoing what we undertake and what we undergo. It's not manifest. It's not obvious because God's ways are higher than our ways.

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His goals and objectives are so far beyond. I saw an interesting little play, if you will.

I think it was a televised version of something that might have been written as a play. But people make what they consider to be good judgments about a girl. She seems to be a troublemaker, so she's fired from her job.

And then she goes to another job and is trying to work there. But somebody is in a snit and wants to take it out on somebody and blames her for something that isn't her fault. And she gets fired from that job.

And then she's entangled in other ways. And people feel vindicated and justified in their little circumscribed view that, well, it was right at the time. But they don't know her circumstance.

And they don't know how desperate she is increasingly becoming. Until at the end, she commits suicide. And all of the members of this family are involved in it.

Well, once they become aware of the full picture for a time, they are deeply ashamed and feel guilty and recognize their part in this girl's helpless descent into horrible situations. Each of them had a little part. And because they were only looking at their little narrow view and didn't have all the facts, there was a way that seemed right in their eyes.

But the ends thereof in this little story were literally the ways of death. And this girl is pushed over the edge because of mistreatment and unfair judgments and people indulging their pride and so on. Well, we don't know enough.

We need to be humble about our knowledge and careful about our judgments. Because we don't have the knowledge that God has. And if he has assigned us a place and assigned us a function, we have to trust that he knows what he's doing and that our knowledge is limited and our view is necessarily circumscribed.

When you're down on the ground, you can only see little ways. That's why forest rangers go up in a tower. Now I can see more.

Well, God's tower is a lot higher than anything we can build. People thought, well, we'll build the Tower of Babel and we'll be able to see like God sees. Well, no, you can't.

And so we have to trust that he knows what he's doing. So, being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. And it becomes an element of humility, submission.

Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time. And sometimes that time isn't due for a long time. So, you are earnestly zealous.

You're earnestly desiring better gifts. And it's not the best. It's better.

Maisona means better. It's a comparative, not a superlative. You want to move up in your gift.

You think your gift is not good enough. Your assignment is not important enough, not splashy enough, not appreciated enough, not satisfying enough. You find something wrong with your assigned gift and you're wanting something better.

And yet, I am directing your attention to a surpassingly great way. So much better than what you're trying to do. So, now we come to chapter 13 once again.

And as we've already seen, there are three statements at the beginning. Paul shifts to the first person talking about gifts. And there is a unique Greek construction here in verse 1. When he says, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.

Nowhere else in Greek do we have this. I'm going to read you the Greek and explain as I go. Aion means if.

E-A-N. That's the first word. Aion, thys, glos, ais, ton, anthropon.

Glossa is tongues. So, if the tongues of men. That's literally how it begins.

Aion, thys, glos, ais, ton, anthropon. If the tongues of men, lalo, I speak. This is laleo, you know, lalo, lales, lalei.

This is lalo. If the tongues of men I speak. And of angels.

The verb is right in the middle of the double direct object here. The tongues of men I speak and of angels. Doesn't occur anywhere else by anybody in the New Testament.

What is happening here? When Paul says this, if I speak with the tongues of men. And they say, yeah, that's what I'm after. That tongue talking is what I want to do.

And of angels. Not just or, and. Remember earlier he said there are types of tongues? He says, I can do them both.

I can speak with the tongues of men and of angels. And this goes back to Jewish tradition. There are books that were written in the intertestamental period that were in existence.

The Testament of the Daughters of Job or something. It talks about the Daughters of Job talking

tongues. And speaking the language of angels.

And so this was known in the culture that there was supposedly a language that angels spoke to each other. I suspect it's probably Hebrew. Original ancient Hebrew.

Which was becoming a lost language in this day. In favor of Aramaic. But tongues of men and angels.

And have not love. Agapain de me echo. It's kind of backwards.

It literally says, love but not I have. But the emphasis is on love. So he says, eontais gloses tonanthropon lalo.

If the tongues of men I speak, and of angels, love I don't have. I speak, but I don't have. Now, this is a really interesting question I'm about to ask you.

What is the difference? See if you can puzzle out an answer to this for me. What is the difference between loving and having love? He doesn't say, and I don't love. Agapao is a perfectly good and often used Greek verb.

He doesn't say, but I am not loving. He doesn't use a participle. He doesn't use an infinitive.

He doesn't use a verb here. It's a noun that is the direct object of echo. To have or to hold.

To possess. So what's the difference? What's the difference in I love pizza and I have love for pizza? I love you or I have love. What's the difference in the active verb form to love and echo? Because you will notice all the way through here.

Good chapter 13. Have not love, I have become sounding brass tinkling sin. Though I have the gift of prophecy, understand mysteries, knowledge, faith, move mountains, but have not love.

Bestow all my goods to feed the poor, give my body to burn, but have not love. All three of these, he doesn't say, but I don't love my brother, or I don't love Christ, or I don't love God, or I don't love the church. He says, have love.

Now, what is the difference, do you think? To have love versus to love. To have it, to possess it. Now, if I take this Bible and give it to somebody that doesn't have a Bible, what can I now say? You have a Bible because it's been given to you.

You have a nose because God gave it to you. What we have, what do you have that you did not receive? Can you claim to have anything that you didn't receive? I would suggest that having love, this kind of love, this love that is described is no accident. That he uses echo three times, to have love.

Then he's going to go on to describe this love that you didn't receive. This love that is had, that needs to be, we realize that he's suggesting this is a necessary love to have, right? So, what kind

of love is it? Well, there are three introductory statements made here. I can talk.

I can have prophecy, in verse two. I can have prophecy and I can know all mysteries and all knowledge. And I can have all faith.

Notice that prophecy is something that is had. No prophecies of any private interpretation. Men spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy is something that is given, right? And when it's given, then you have it. Understand all mysteries and though I have all faith so that I can remove mountains. I have faith.

Right? It is something that is given. Mountain moving faith is a gift. There is the gift of faith.

He's already enumerated it up above. It's a gift of faith. Or he's enumerated it somewhere.

But I have not love, I am nothing. And though I do these things, I bestow my goods on the poor and give my body to be burned. In other words, I selflessly give away everything I have and then destroy myself on behalf of others.

And have not love, it profits me nothing. It gains me nothing. You have these three statements.

Now in verse four through verse seven, you're going to have fourteen descriptions. Seven of them are positive and seven of them are negative. You have two positives, seven negatives, and five positives.

That's how it breaks down. So there is a double seven here in the description of this love that needs to be had. The first two positive ones, love suffers long and is kind.

It is long-suffering. It is durable. It puts up with adverse reactions and adverse circumstances.

It bears up under pressure. That's a positive. This is macrothumia.

It means patience, durability. And it is kind. It thinks better.

This is crestos. C-H-R-E-S-T This is crestuitai. It comes from crestuomai.

Which means to be good. Good toward something. Paul says, for me to live is good, to die is gain.

Crestos. So love is macrothumia. Has great endurance, great patience.

It is kind. Patient and kind. Kindly disposed.

Good. Somebody says, boy, this peace and quiet is really good for me. This rest is good for me.

It's beneficial. Beneficial is a good way of looking at it. Crestuitai.

Two positive things. Now you're going to get seven negative statements. This is what love is

not.

Sometimes you define a thing by what it is, and you define it by what it is not. So we're going to have seven nots. It does not envy, number one.

It does not parade itself. And is not puffed up. Parading and puffing are really similar here.

Two ways of saying the same thing. Does not behave rudely. Does not seek its own.

Is not provoked. Thinks no evil. Does not rejoice in iniquity.

So then you come back to the positives. We had two at the beginning. You've got five more.

It rejoices in the truth. Bears all things. Believes all things.

Hopes all things. And endures all things. So you have eight negatives there.

But parading itself and being puffed up I count as one characteristic there. I couldn't tell you the difference between parading yourself and being puffed up. Except maybe one is public and one is intrinsic.

But you have these descriptions of this love. Now, back to my question. What is the difference between loving and having love? And I've given you a little bit of a hint.

And you can think that this kind of love that suffers long and is kind, that doesn't envy and doesn't parade itself, isn't puffed up, doesn't behave rudely, doesn't seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, doesn't rejoice in iniquity, but it rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. This is not what we normally call love in the human realm, is it? What kind of love is this? This is Holy Spirit driven, Word of God informed love. Paul says, I need to have this love, essentially.

If I have it not, I profit nothing, I am nothing, and I accomplish nothing. I can communicate in the language of men. I can communicate in the language of angels.

And if I don't have this love, I'm ineffectual. I'm a horn or a cymbal. I make a noise, but it's ineffectual.

It doesn't communicate anything. It's a communication. I'm talking, but I'm not saying anything.

So, my suggestion to you in the answer to the question is to have this love. You can't tell somebody. We just saw in the last verse of chapter 12, right? Paul can't say, earnestly want this.

Make yourself desire it. Somebody telling me to want something, earnestly desire green peppers. I don't care how many times you tell me that.

I'm not going to want them. Earnestly desire insanely hot food that is so painful you can't taste

it. Desire a pink necktie and a banana yellow jacket.

It doesn't appeal to me. I don't care how many times you tell me to want that. I'm not going to want it.

I don't like pink ties, and I don't want to wear a banana yellow jacket. That doesn't appeal. Telling me to desire it doesn't give me any basis to desire it.

Now, apologies if you have a pink tie or a yellow jacket. I'm just saying for me. And there are things, if I knew enough, I could give you an example.

There's something that doesn't appeal. Earnestly desire a LL Cool J CD, if you're not into rap. Earnestly desire a two-and-a-half-hour DVD of a ballet filmed in 1984 in low res.

Do you want that? Probably not. But I tell you, you should earnestly desire it. If I don't give you some justification or give you a reason, does Paul give any reason to upgrade your gift? He says that zeal is misdirected.

What you need to have, the more excellent way, is to have this love. Well, you could say it's the same problem. How do you have this love? If he said love suffers long as in kind, why doesn't he just say you suffer long and be kind? You don't envy.

You don't parade yourself. You don't puff yourself up. Don't behave rudely.

Don't seek your own. Don't be provoked. Don't think evil.

Don't rejoice in iniquity. Rejoice in the truth. Bear up under all things.

Believe everything. Hope everything. Endure everything.

He could say this directly and give them as imperatives, right? But that's really difficult, to just spontaneously develop these things because you've been told that it's a good thing, right? He says love has all of these qualities and you need to have this love. Well, the great thing about having the love is that it can be given. Put an asterisk on each side of that.

You can have this love in the same way you can have a Bible or you can have a nose or you can have most of what you have. You have it because it is given. I show you a more excellent way.

Take hold of, possess this love. It's available and you can have it. Now, where does it come from? Turn to Romans chapter 5. Go backward in your Bible to Romans chapter 5. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have... What? Peace with God.

We were justified in the passives. God justified us through Christ's work. And having been justified, we have peace.

We didn't develop it. We didn't create it. We didn't bring it about.

We have it. This peace has been given to you. What did Jesus say right before he left? Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you, not as the world gives. I give you peace. Now you have peace because it has been given.

Ask and it shall be given. And when something is given, now you have it. Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through whom also we have access by faith. Did you have to bulldoze away into the throne of grace? Did you have to create a tower that you could climb to get to God? Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We have access.

It's been granted to us. It's been given to us. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope. Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts. The love of God, the supernatural love described in 1 Corinthians 13, we have it.

Why? Because it has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. The Holy Spirit is given to us and we have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He pours out the love of God in our hearts.

So, when you read 1 Corinthians 13 and you want to have that love, where do you go to get it? Do you have to generate it? Do you have to outthink yourself? Do you have to come up with it? Do you have to generate it? Do you have to plant something and water it and grow it to have this love? It has been given. It's poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. You possess it.

Paul says, if I have it not, I am ineffectual, I profit nothing, I am nothing. So, what's our conclusion here as we look at this wonderful 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians and realize how admirable and how powerful and how fruitful this love is and we say, well I want that. Where do you go to get it? Because I don't have to generate long-suffering.

I don't have to figure out a way to be more durable and more patient. Love is patient. So, if I have this love, patience comes with it.

Isn't that great? This love has a bunch of features. It comes with. I got a garage door open the other day and it came with a remote and it came with a wall button, a wired wall button.

It came with it. By getting the garage door, I get the opener and I get the remote. You buy a TV, you get the remote and they often give you the batteries.

Buy the TV, get concomitant beneficial associated things. We have the Holy Spirit. He is pouring out this love in our souls and the love comes with.

He doesn't say, be more patient, be more kind. Don't do this, don't do that, don't do these eight things. Love suffers long.

You need more patience? Get this love. Have this love. Patience comes with.

The kindness, the disposition to be a benefit to others comes with this love. If you have the love, that's going to come with it. If you have a problem of wishing you had what somebody else has, like you envy their spiritual gift, you envy their prosperity, you envy their particular set of problems, which you think are much lighter and easier to endure than your own.

You envy their fill in the blank and you don't want to do that. You say, I hate it that I keep being jealous of that. I keep envying that.

I don't know how to quit. You don't have to work on the jealousy. You don't have to work on the envy.

You don't have to work on the pride problem. You don't have to work on the puffing up problem. You don't have to work on the I need the approbation of people problem.

I really feel that need. I need approval. I need appreciation.

You don't need to work on your rudeness problem, your insensitivity to others. You don't need to worry about selfishness and self-gratification. You don't need to worry about being too sensitive and easily provoked.

Your temper goes off in a flash. And you don't have to worry about these evil thoughts that constantly intrude. You think, gosh, I've got to get rid of these evil thoughts.

I've got to quit being so rude and insensitive. I've got to quit saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. And I've got to quit having this insane need for people to think well of me and to justify myself and vindicate myself.

Love has all of these qualities. All I've got to do is get the love. Because if I have the love, love comes with all of these concomitant benefits and attributes and characteristics.

Love has them. Do you see now why he says, have love? If I have it not, I'm in trouble. If I have it, it comes with this wonderful package of accessories.

They're all there. If I go for the love, if I go for the possession of this love, all of these things will follow. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Seek the love, and these 14 or 15 things, depending on how you want to count them, come with. That greatly simplifies my spiritual life. I don't have to work on a whole hydra-headed Pandora's box full of problems in my soul.

I've just got to focus on having love. So, how do we have love? I'm back to Romans chapter 5. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit do His work? What is the magic formula? What is the combination of things? What is the epoxy that brings the power of God into the life of a believer? It is the Word of God, which is why He appointed first apostles and prophets and teachers.

Because you've already got the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been given. What do you have to acquire that you don't already have? You have already got the Holy Spirit, and you can't get more of Him.

You can be more fully influenced by Him, be filled with the Spirit, right? But He's already there. What do we need? We need to give Him voice. We need to give Him space.

We need to give Him an environment in which to do His work. I want to reload more ammunition, but I can't right now because I've got no space. All of my workspaces right now are cluttered up with my stuff, because I've not unpacked from moving.

I haven't cleared out old things that need to go. So I don't have a place to put my reloading equipment up, and nor do I have the time, really, to make ammunition. So I need to clear out the space.

If I want that to happen, I'm going to have to take some time and make an environment in which reloading can take place safely and enjoyably, where I don't blow myself up with my cans of gunpowder, and I don't set off a primer accidentally, and I don't tangle fingers or something and double-charge a thing, and when I go to shoot it, it takes my weapon apart and me with it. You've got to be careful. You've got to have a good, stable, peaceful, well-organized space to reload, or you can hurt yourself and others.

Create the space for that. If you want the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in your heart, He's got to have an environment where He can work. What does this mean? Get rid of sin.

Get rid of lack of forgiveness of others. If I harbor iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me, and God won't talk to me. Your iniquities are separated between you and your God.

Your sins hide His face so that He will not hear. Well, if He doesn't hear, how is He going to answer? How are you going to converse if one person is not listening? Have you ever tried that? Try to talk to somebody that's not listening, have a conversation? Just wasting your breath. So, acknowledging, judging ourselves so that we are not judged.

Praying David's prayer, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

We've got to export that which is detrimental and negative and sinful and evil out. The Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness of others. Disinvest.

Let go. Leave it behind. Bury the hatchet.

Bury whatever it was you wanted to hit with the hatchet. Let it go. Dismiss it.

Forget it. Commit it to God. He'll repay.

If there's any payment necessary, God will repay. Vengeance is mine. Retribution is mine.

Recompense, judgment, all of that belongs to God. Give it to God. Let go.

Don't elbow God out of the way and decide that we're going to penalize somebody. We're going to make them pay. We'll show them who's right and who's wrong.

Let it go. Create a space for the Holy Spirit, because it's God the Holy Spirit in the presence and power of God's word that pours out the love of God and all of these other things come with the love. All we have to do is give the Holy Spirit His space and His place and all of this is going to be true of us by default.

It's when we willfully misdirect our passion. If we don't have a zeal for the presence of God in our soul. Remember what Jesus said in John? The one who has my words and keeps them, He's the one who loves me.

I and my Father will come to Him and make our home with Him. I will send you another Comforter. He is with you and will be in you.

He tells the disciples, wait until you receive power from on high before you try to do anything. You can't do anything without power from on high and that power from on high is Acts chapter 2. It is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. You don't have to cultivate love.

You don't have to cultivate patience. You don't have to cultivate any of these absences and pluses. We have to cultivate the presence and power of God in our souls.

The Holy Spirit will pour out this love of God and all of these things will follow naturally. Isn't that a great thing? So simple. We've got to examine ourselves, make sure that we're in the faith, that we're listening to and reflecting on and meditating in the word of God.

Psalms 1. Meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. Be that tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth its fruit in its season. Your leaf won't wither and whatever you do will prosper.

But it is by abiding in that water of life, being where we're supposed to be, doing what we're supposed to do, looking to God. This is the more excellent way. It is surpassing.

It's like the grace of God. It's like the riches that's talked about in Ephesians 3 and Ephesians 2 and Ephesians 1 where Paul uses this same word. You will not even know the extent to which these things are going to characterize and manifest in your life.

It's surpassing. It's a surpassing way. It has extensions and permutations and resonances and outgrowths and fruitfulnesses that you'll never even see.

It's a surpassing way. And it is simple. It's not hard.

It's not an undoable thing. It's not an unmeetable challenge. It's not an insurpassable obstacle.

It's not so high in heaven that you've got to climb up there to reach it. It's not so far down in Hades that you've got to descend to the pit to get it. It is near.

It is in our hearts. It is given to us. But we have to take it.

Ask and you'll receive. Seek and you'll find. Knock and the door will be opened.

The Holy Spirit's already here. The Word of God is already available. It's just a matter of putting these things together.

We are members of the body of Christ. Individually. We've been assigned a place.

And for it to function effectively, for it to be fruitful and to really be surpassingly great, it has to be done in love. You can talk and debate and argue great points all you want. But if love is absent, you might as well be clanging a symbol.

You can have wisdom and knowledge and bring great factual information to bear for people. And if love is not present, you're nothing. You're wasting your time.

You have not made a dent. And you can be as self-sacrificial with your goods and with yourself as anybody has ever been. And if it isn't done in love, if you don't have this love, it profits you nothing.

On the other hand, if you speak and you have love, now it's effective. If you are able to communicate mysteries and knowledge and wisdom and faith with love, now it's effective. Now it makes a difference.

Now it does something. If you are sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others and you have this love, this love points the passion in the right direction. There are people who are passionate about communication.

There are people who are passionate about doing things and making knowledge and wisdom available. There are people who are passionate about investing themselves in the lives of other people. And that's all wonderful.

But your passion is not the same as this love. You being invested in it is not the same as having God's love. Having God's love comes from the Holy Spirit, not from us.

We don't generate it. And being committed to and passionate about a thing doesn't make it valuable or fruitful. This is the mistake people make when they love someone so much.

Nobody has ever loved like I love this person. And the assumption is, well, they've got to love me back. This is where your stalkers and your freaky people come from who fall so in love with an actress or an actor or some other figure.

And they think, you know, if they only knew how utterly devoted and completely centered on them I am, they would say, wow, there's nobody like this. I've got to love them back. And it's just a horrible mistake of perception.

It's usually off-putting for somebody to be just exceedingly, fanatically, manically obsessed with you. It's scary. It's off-putting.

Nobody should have nothing to do but focus on me. We need to have a mutual respect, a mutual appreciation that is built on us having a balance. I don't want a binary star where one is big and the other is a little moon that's just going to get sucked into the flames.

There's got to be balance. But people think if you only knew how passionate I am, you would appreciate me because I'm unlike anybody else in the level of my passion. Your passion is meaningless.

You have to have God's love. That's what corrects the direction. That's what sends everything in an effective and fruitful way.

And being off even a little. The zeal for God not according to knowledge puts you in Israel. Where's Israel now? The nation is gone.

They sleep in the dust of the earth waiting for Daniel 12-2. They're gone and they had a zeal for God. This has to be conditioned by the love that God gives.

So we go to the source of love. We love because He first loved us. Romans 5-5, just think about it.

The love of God is shed upon our hearts. All of this is ours as a gift if we have it, if we take possession of it, if we focus on that. And it comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's word.

That's how God's power always comes into the life of the believer. So these are not high lofty ideals that we'll never attain. They are simple practical outgrowths of an effective filling of the Holy Spirit in the mind of a thoughtful and committed knowledgeable believer.

And that can be us. It's easily done. Don't have to climb a mountain.

Don't have to descend into the pit. It's near. It's a matter of identifying it, asking for it, pursuing it, aiming our zeal in the right direction.

Well, this is going to bring us to whether love fails or not in verse 8. And that's where we'll pick up next time. Father, thank You for the truth of Your word. Thank You for the presence and

power of Your Holy Spirit.

We know that through these two things we come to a greater and greater appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He Himself is the way into Your throne room and into Your presence, into Your grace and favor and opportunity to lay hold of Your righteousness as we avail ourselves of all of these wonderful potentials that You have given us in Him. We pray that as we reflect on it that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our path and show us clearly how we can not just hear about it and not just think about it, but actually bring Your love into being in our souls and in our hearts and in our lives so that we can express it in our periphery and exploit these wonderful gifts that You have distributed in our midst so that the whole body of Christ fitly joined together will grow up to the standard of a mature man and reflect Your glory even as the Lord Jesus did when He was here on this earth.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.