

---

# The Contrast of Love (When It All Means Nothing)

---

## Defining Love

Pastor Wil Nichols

February 22, 2026

**Victorious Praise Fellowship Church of God in Christ**

2116 Page Rd. Durham NC 27703

WEBSITE: [www.VictoriousPraise.org](http://www.VictoriousPraise.org)

EMAIL: [PastorWil@VictoriousPraise.org](mailto:PastorWil@VictoriousPraise.org), [Info@VictoriousPraise.org](mailto:Info@VictoriousPraise.org)

PHONE: (919) 957-7500

***Sermon: Defining Love: The Contrast of Love (When It All Means Nothing)***

***Lesson Text***

1 Corinthians 13:1–3 (KJV)<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

***Introduction***

To date, we've looked at Love from the perspective of the *identify of love* (disciples), overcoming *opposition to love* (offenses, betrayal, and hatred), and the *application of love* (neighbors, strangers, and enemies).

For the next several weeks, I want to look at how we should define love, and more specifically its primacy or supremacy to gifts.

The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is universally known as the “Love Chapter”. It, more than any other chapter, defines God’s **Agapē** Love.

Now in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> chapters of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, the Apostle Paul not only instructs the church on the proper use of the spiritual gifts but rebukes them on their misuse of tongues.

It is in the last verse of chapter 12 that explains why the love chapter is sandwiched between the two teachings on gifts.

- 1 Corinthians 12: <sup>31</sup> But covet earnestly the best gifts: *and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*
- What is that more excellent way? What is it that supersedes the gifts? God’s Love!

To define God’s Love, Paul breaks this chapter into three sections:

- The Contrast of Love, verses 1–3 - What Love is Greater Than, Gifts: Even tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, generosity, and martyrdom mean nothing without love.
- The Character of Love, verses 4–7 – What Love Looks Like, Character: Patient. Kind. Not envious. Not boastful. Not self-seeking.
- The Constancy of Love, verses 8–13. – What Love Never Does, Never Fails: Prophecies will cease. Tongues will cease. Knowledge will pass away. But love remains eternal.

The first way Paul defines love is to contrast it to other things!

This is how most people tend to define themselves – contrast and comparison to others. What do I have as compared to you? What is my occupation as contrasted to theirs? How much money, what kind of car, how big of a house, what neighborhood, ...?

These things are based on our gifts, talents, and abilities. Now the problem with this self-comparison and contrast is when we lose these things, we lose ourselves. Thus, having all these things ultimately means nothing.

“Testimony of my frustrations with Pastoring”

But what matters is God’s Love, which is above all, never fails, and remains forever.

***Series and Sermon: Defining Love: The Contrast of Love (When It All Means Nothing)***

(Tongues That Say Nothing, Prophecy That Means Nothing, Sacrifice That Profits Nothing)

### ***I. Tongues That Say Nothing***

1 Corinthians 13: <sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, ***I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.***

Tongues make noise, but without God’s Love they are saying nothing.

They are spoken eloquently (tongues of men), prophetically (tongues of angels), or heavenly (unknown tongues); but without love they are just noise saying nothing.

We can sound spiritual but be spiritually empty!

I recently did a podcast based on my book, “The Complete Guide To Understanding The Holy Spirit.” I talked about the church’s fascination with tongues.

Tongues of Men (Eloquently): We say we have the Holy Ghost as evidence of Speaking in Tongues according to Acts 2. Although most Christians speak in unknown tongues, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts is actually about the gift of the tongues of men.

- Acts 2: <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with ***other tongues***, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
- Acts 2: <sup>7</sup> And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? <sup>8</sup> And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
- The gift of the tongues of men is not about unknown tongues, but other tongues (a foreign language) known to other people who understand it. It is the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit translating the Word of God to foreign tongues.

Tongues of Angels (Prophetically): These tongues are also not unknown tongues. When angels spoke in the Bible, it was always in human language; but what they spoke was an exalted, glorious, and prophetic word.

- Message from God to Mary: Luke 1: <sup>28</sup> And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women.
- Message from God to the Shepherds: Luke 2: <sup>10</sup> And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
- The tongues of angels are about exalted speech; that is a glorious message from God.

Unknown tongues (Heavenly): By definition, these tongues are unknown, and are of no use to man.

- 1 Corinthians 14: <sup>2</sup> For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

The love of God is always about benefiting man (salvation, mercy, forgiveness, goodness), and if our tongues are not benefiting others with the Love of God, we are saying nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Tongues without Love are making noise but saying nothing.

## ***II. Prophecy that Means Nothing***

1 Corinthians 13: <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **and have not charity, I am nothing.**

Prophecy can move mountains, but without God's Love it means nothing.

Although prophecy can give us understanding of deep mysteries, revelatory insight of things unseen, and faith that moves mountains; but without love none of this means anything.

In the church world, our fascination with the prophetic is interesting. When someone speaks to us prophetically, it increases our faith, brings us confirmation, and even reveals the deep things of God. However, without love, these gifts produce arrogance, pride, and harshness.

Gifts don't build character, they reveal it.

I often hear people saying, I need a prophetic word, I need to go to the school of the prophets, I need to be a part of a church that focuses on the prophetic. "No You Don't!" What we need is the "School of Love!"

And so, without love, our prophets become very arrogant, those with a word of faith operate without gentleness, and those with the gift of knowledge can be very prideful.

Never assume that a gifted person is a godly person. Romans 11:29 (KJV)<sup>29</sup> For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

Proverbs 16: <sup>18</sup> Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

James 4: <sup>6</sup> But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

The love of God always gives, but gifts without love only takes. And the way you know the difference is not in what is said, but what you are left with after the prophesy.

1 Corinthians 13: <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, ... and have not charity, I am nothing.

Gifts reveal ability, but God's love reveals maturity.

### ***III. Sacrifice That Profits Nothing***

1 Corinthians 13: <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, ***it profiteth me nothing.***

- Tongues make noise, but without God's love they are saying nothing.
- Prophecy can move mountains, but without God's Love it means nothing.
- Sacrifice may come with great suffering, but without God's Love it profits us nothing.

Mark 8: <sup>36</sup> **For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**

“The Right Movement, but the Wrong Motives!” It's not what you do, it's why you do it.

Matthew 7: <sup>21</sup> **Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.** <sup>22</sup> **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?** <sup>23</sup> **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

Obedience is better than a sacrifice, and to obey is to love.

John 14: <sup>15</sup> **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

God rewards the obedience of love, not the performance of sacrifice!

Deuteronomy 28: <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. <sup>3</sup> Blessed *shalt thou be* in the city, and blessed *shalt thou be* in the field. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store. <sup>6</sup> Blessed *shalt thou be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt thou be* when thou goest out.

# The Contrast of Love (When It All Means Nothing)

Page 5 of 5 (February 22, 2026)

## Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: The Contrast of Love (When It All Means Nothing))

### Lesson Text

- 1 Corinthians 13:1–3

### Sermon Outline

- I. *Tongues That Say Nothing*
- II. *Prophecy That Means Nothing*
- III. *Sacrifice That Profits Nothing*

### Questions: (What was your main takeaway from this message?)

#### I. Getting to Know “Me”

1. If you had your own talk show, who would your first guest be?
2. What would you do if you had an extra hour a day?

#### II. Into The Bible

1. In Jeremiah 31:3, God says, He draws people with lovingkindness. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul says actions without love are meaningless. Based on these passages, what do you think Paul is correcting in the Corinthian church? How does God’s example in Jeremiah help us to understand what true spiritual maturity looks like?
2. When you read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and Jeremiah 31:3 together, what do you learn about God’s motivation and the motivation He desires in His people? Identify specific words or phrases in both passages that reveal how love is expressed and how it influences actions.

#### II. Life Application

1. How does understanding the importance of love compared to spiritual gifts influence your idea of what it means to serve God?
2. How will you examine your motives to ensure they align with God’s love?