

Sermon Notes for February 14, 2010

“The Danger of Abusing Your Spiritual Gifts” I Corinthians 13:1-3

Maybe you heard **about the guy who fell in love with an opera singer**. He hardly knew her, since his only view of the singer was through binoculars—from the third balcony. **But he was convinced he could live “happily ever after” married to a voice like that.** He scarcely noticed she was considerably older than he. Nor did he care that she walked with a limp. **Her mezzo-soprano voice would take them through whatever might come.** After a whirlwind romance and a hurry-up ceremony, they were off for their honeymoon together.

She began to prepare for their first night together. As he watched, his chin dropped to his chest. She plucked out her **glass eye** and plopped it into a container on the nightstand. She pulled off her **wig**, ripped off her false **eyelashes**, yanked out her **dentures**, unstrapped her **artificial leg**, and smiled at him as she slipped off her glasses that hid her **hearing aid**. Stunned and horrified, he gasped, **“For goodness sake, woman, sing, sing, SING!”**

KID’S VIEW OF LOVE:

- **WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE?**
“On the first date, they just tell each other lies, and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date.” – Martin 10
- **HOW CAN YOU TELL IF TWO ADULTS EATING DINNER AT A RESTAURANT ARE IN LOVE?**
“It’s love if they order one of those desserts that are on fire. They like to order those because it’s just like how their hearts are—on fire.” – Christine, age 9
- **HOW DO PEOPLE IN LOVE TYPICALLY BEHAVE?**
“When a person gets kissed for the first time, they fall down and they don’t get up for at least an hour.” – Wendy, age 8
- **HOW DOES A PERSON DECIDE WHO TO MARRY?**
“You flip a nickel, and heads means you stay with him and tails means you try the next one.” – Kally, age 9
- **WHAT MOST PEOPLE ARE THINKING WHEN THEY SAY “I LOVE YOU”**
“The person is thinking: Yeah, I really do love him. But I hope he showers at least once a day.” – Michelle, age 9
- **HOW A PERSON LEARNS TO KISS**
“You can have a big rehearsal with your Barbie and Ken dolls.” – Julia, age 7
- **HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK?**
“Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a truck.”
– Ricky, age 10

Introduction

A. The WORLD'S View Of Love.

1. It seems as if the world is preoccupied with love.
 - a. songs
 - b. musicals
 - c. movies
 - d. plays
 - e. Amazon.com lists . . .
 - 1,652 book titles regarding “heaven,”
 - 10,304 for “money,”
 - 16,767 for “sex,”
 - 18,818 for “God,”
 - **and 30,066 for “Love.”**
2. But it seems that the world is preoccupied with love as a feeling.
 - a. love seems to be a totally emotional feeling
 - b. as one couple said in their marriage vows “we will live together as long as we shall love.”
3. Even the more liberal PCUSA has such a view:
 - a. my experience in Kosciusko
 - b. From Marriage and Divorce – Confession of Faith, Chapter 26, PCUSA
 “It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by the death of either husband or wife. However, weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows so that **marriages dies at the heart** and the union become intolerable.”

B. The FOUR TYPES Of Love.

1. **stergo – family**
 - a. husband and wife
 - b. parent and child
 - c. love of people for their ruler
2. **philos – friend**
 - a. friends
 - b. love for things
3. **eros – sexual**
 - a. sexual – man and woman
 - b. deep longing for
4. **agape – spiritual**
 - a. the love that God gives
 - b. love between God and man

C. The THREE VIEWS Of Love.

1. I will love you **IF**:
 - a. you do things for me
 - b. you like what I like
2. I will love you **BECAUSE OF**:
 - a. your honors

- b. your ability
- 3. I will love you **IN SPITE OF**:
 - a. you can do nothing to earn my love
 - b. you can do nothing to lose my love

D. The CORINTHIANS' VIEW Of Love.

1. Despite the fact that they were Christians, the church at Corinth had a “more worldly” view of love.
 - a. because they were Christians, they had been given spiritual gifts
 - b. but they were “using” their spiritual gifts to express a spiritual pride, as if they were “special” because they had a certain spiritual gift.
2. In a sense, they were:
 - a. They were **impressed** with their spiritual gifts
 1. the gift of tongues
 2. the gift of prophecy
 3. the gift of giving
 - b. They were **ignorant** of their spiritual gifts
 1. there was definitely something wrong – they were actually “proud” of their spiritual gifts
 2. in this case, they were “**right and totally wrong**” at the same time
3. In this text, the Apostle Paul showed them the proper attitude of love to have in the church –
 - a. while they thought that they understood spiritual gifts
 - b. Paul was going to show them a “more excellent way” to think about these gifts.
 - c. **D.L. Moody** once remarked that “**Some men occasionally take a journey into I Corinthians 13, “but very few people actually live there.”**

I. The Ministry Of SIGN Gifts.

A. The BLESSING Of Sign Gifts.

Vs. 1 - “If I speak in the **tongues of men and of angels**, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

1. The **definition** of tongues.

Vs. 1a – “If I speak in the **tongues of men and of angels**,”

- a. the **tongues of men**

1. at Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit descended on the early church
2. as a result, God gifted many with the incredible ability to speak in a tongue that they did not know
3. obviously –
 - a. this was a sign of the supernatural – that God had physically and verbally placed His hand upon that person
 - b. there were those in the church who had this gift and those who did not
 - c. the danger of being a Preacher
 1. our training
 2. H.E. made a great presentation but I did not

know what he was talking about

b. the **tongues of angels**

1. this reference was a little harder to grasp
 - a. was it literally the “tongues of angels?”
 - b. when angels talked to people in the Scriptures
 1. they didn’t use “angelic language”
 2. each time, the angels spoke to the person in their native tongue
 2. as if a person could “talk like an angel”

2. The **danger** of tongues.

Vs. 1b – **“but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”**

a. Paul is **CLEARLY** saying that **EVEN IF** I were:

1. a golden tongued orator, who spoke with the gift that God gave the few
2. a person who talked with a heavenly language, like the angels of heaven

b. **AND DID NOT SPEAK IN LOVE . . .**

1. I would actually be making noise

a. **“a resounding gong”**

1. KJV – “sounding brass”
2. Greek word echeo – echo
3. banging garbage tops together
4. some even believe that Paul is referring to pagan worship
 - a. when a pagan would walk to his Temple for worship, he would hit a gong to “wake up his god.”
 - b. in essence, Paul was saying that speaking in tongues, without love – is like making noise to a dead god

b. **“a clanging cymbal”**

1. KJV – “tinkling cymbal”
2. the lowest and least expensive of all musical instruments

2. ultimately after all of that spiritual ability, I would be saying nothing

- a. the person with the gift of tongues would pride himself that God had given him this supernatural gift. He was special.
- b. but Paul says that as special as this gift is, without love, this gift is nothing but useless noise.

c. Richard Burton – 23rd Psalm

1. “I know the Psalm.”
2. “He knows the shepherd.”

B. The BURDEN Of Sign Gifts.

Vs. 1 – “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.”

II. The Ministry Of SPEAKING Gifts.

A. The BLESSING Of Speaking Gifts.

Vs. 2 – “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 have not love, I am nothing.”

1. The speaking gift of **prophecy**.

Vs. 2 – “If I have the **gift of prophecy**”

a. the **definition** of prophecy

1. two definitions

a. **foretelling – revelation**

1. the supernatural ability to foretell the future

2. Elijah, Jeremiah, etc.

b. **forth telling – reiteration**

1. to boldly and correctly teach the Word of God to His people

2. the gift God gives to preachers

3. THIS WAS PAUL’S GIFT!

b. the **danger** of prophecy

1. there is so much danger in this gift

a. to be able to tell the future – of what God is going to do

b. to be able to teach God’s Word to His people

2. this is what John MacArthur calls a “showing gift”

a. it is the most obvious, most visible gift

b. it is the gift that Paul calls “the most important spiritual gift” **I Cor. 4:1** – “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, **especially the gift of prophecy.**”

3. but . . . without love, the preacher IS NOTHING

a. the preacher may think that he is something – but God knows that he is nothing

b. examples:

1. arrogance in the pulpit

a. M.Div; Ph.D. D.Min; 3 stripes on the robe

b. always up front, for all to see and hear

2. R.C.

2. The speaking gift of **discernment**.

Vs. 2 – “and can **fathom all mysteries**”

a. the **definition** of discernment

1. the Greek word musterion – mysteries

2. the ability to discern what God has done and is doing in the world

3. this person would be able to tell us:

a. why is there cancer?

b. why a tornado killed an entire family?

c. how could God allow terrorists to fly into the World Trade Center Towers?

d. Why thousands of people died in Haiti

- e. if you had a question about what God was doing in your life, you could ask this person and he would know.
- 4. this person could answer **Deuteronomy 29:29** – “The **secret things belong to the LORD our God**, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”
- b. the **danger** of discernment
 - 1. you can imagine the impact such a person could have in the church
 - a. **EVERY PERSON IN THIS ROOM WOULD WANT TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH HIM!**
 - b. IMAGINE! having a person in the church who could answer all of your questions
 - 2. wouldn't it be easy for this person to feel important?
 - a. Paul says that **WITHOUT LOVE THIS PERSON IS NOTHING**. . . “but have not love, **I am nothing**”
 - b. all of the advice, all of the wisdom – **FOR NOTHING**.
- 3. The speaking gift of **knowledge**.
Vs. 2 – “and **all knowledge**,”
 - a. the **definition** of knowledge
 - 1. this spiritual gift represents one who has enormous amounts of Biblical knowledge in his head.
 - 2. there would be no Biblical question or fact that you could ask this person that he would not know
 - a. all the books of the Bible
 - b. all of the kings of the Old Testament
 - c. Hebrew and Greek
 - d. location of verses in the Bible
 - b. the **danger** of knowledge
 - 1. how wonderful it would be to know such a person – **ESPECIALLY FOR ME**, a preacher!
 - a. I wouldn't have to dig so much in books and commentaries
 - b. I would simply make a phone call to this person before every sermon to get my facts straight
 - 2. **HOWEVER**, despite this person's phenomenal gift:
 - a. Paul says, **WITHOUT LOVE, YOU ARE NOTHING!**
 - b. **Explo 72; bum quoting Scripture.**
 - c. Have you heard the story about the actor who was playing the part of **Christ in the Passion Play in the Ozarks?** As he carried the cross up the hill a tourist began heckling, making fun of him, and shouting insults at him. Finally, the actor had taken all of it he could take. **So he threw down his cross, walked over to the tourist and punched him out.**
After the play was over, the director told him, “I know he was a pest, but I can't condone what you did.

Besides, you're playing the part of Jesus and Jesus never retaliated. So don't do anything like that again." Well, the man promised he wouldn't. **But the next day the heckler was back worse than before, and finally the actor exploded and punched him out again.**

The director said, "That's it. I have to fire you. We just can't have you behaving this way while playing the part of Jesus." The actor begged, "**Please give me one more chance.** I really need this job, and I can handle it if it happens again." So the director decided to give him another chance.

The next day he was carrying his cross up the street. Sure enough, the heckler was there again. You could tell that the actor was really trying to control himself, but it was about to get the best of him. He was clinching his fists and grinding his teeth. Finally, he looked at the heckler and said, "**I'll meet you after the resurrection.**"

- d. **MacArthur – "It is easier to be orthodox than to be loving, and easier to be active in church work than to be loving."**

4. The speaking gift of **faith**.

Vs. 2 – "and if I have a faith that can move mountains,"

a. the **definition** of faith

1. this is a gift of **ATTITUDE** - believing that God can do anything
 - a. a faith that does not need to be encouraged
 - b. a faith that believes that God can do ANYTHING
 - c. this person would have no doubt, no fear, no wavering
2. but also, this is a gift of **ACTION** – using that faith to "become the hands of God"
 - a. Paul, in fact, uses the same illustration that Jesus used with His disciples in **Matthew 17:20-21** - He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if **you have faith as small as a mustard seed**, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."
 - b. this is literally a faith that could move a mountain

b. the **danger** of faith

Vs. 2 – "but have not love, I am nothing."

1. can you imagine the impact that this person could have on a church!
2. this is a person with the gift of faith, the gift of **PRAYER**

3. how critical the person is with the gift of prayer
 - a. prayer is the “gasoline” that moves the church
 - b. and this person “owns the gas station!”
 - c. how vital, how important this person could feel
 1. a nobody
 2. a nothing
- c. Those with speaking gifts “think” that they are “something”
 1. However, without love, God says that this person is NOTHING!
 2. nothing special

B. The BURDEN of Speaking Gifts.

Vs. 2 – “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 have not love, I am nothing.**”

III. The Ministry Of SERVICE Gifts.

A. The Blessing Of SERVICE Gifts.

Vs. 3 – “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

1. The service gift of **giving**.

Vs. 3a – “If I give all I possess to the poor”

- a. the **definition** of giving.
 1. this is a special spiritual desire that God gives you to give financially to the ministry of the church
 2. while you may not be wealthy, God provides the means for you to give to the ministry
 3. the actual meaning of the word giving is interesting
 - a. the Greek word giving actually means “morsel”
 1. the sense is that the person in this text would give away everything that he had “in morsels,” piece by piece
 2. imagine that:
 - a. to take everything that you have:
 1. bank accounts
 2. retirement
 3. insurance policy
 4. EVERYTHING THAT YOU OWN
 - b. and hand it out, piece by piece, to others
 - b. you could imagine how “sacrificial” this could be for the giver.
- b. The **danger** of giving.
 1. how **powerful** this gift is
 - a. I would love to have a bunch of people in this church with the gift of giving
 - b. whenever there was a financial need, I would simply make a few phone calls to get what was needed
 2. how **pitiful** this gift could be
 - a. but, Paul is saying that, **DESPITE** giving away **ALL THAT YOU HAVE, PIECE BY PIECE**

- b. you would gain nothing – if you did not give it away in love
- 2. The service gift of **martyrdom**.
 - Vs. 3b** – “and **surrender my body to the flames,**”
 - a. The **definition** of martyrdom.
 - 1. the calling of God for a person to offer their life for the cause of Christ
 - 2. obviously, the **ABSOLUTE FINAL** gift that a person can offer to God
 - b. The **danger** of martyrdom.
 - Vs. 3** – “**but have not love, I gain nothing.**”
 - 1. how could someone “top this gift?”
 - 2. of all of the gifts, the gift of martyrdom could be the most “impressive”
 - 3. scholars say that due to the fact that there was such notoriety earned by dying a martyr’s death, there were actually those in the early church who sought martyrdom as a way of gaining “special spiritual credit”
 - 4. what Paul is saying, however, is that if your life was taken in any other way than for giving love for Christ, that your death was a waste of time – **YOU ULTIMATELY GAINED NOTHING!**
 - a. it gave me no advantage
 - b. “I got no credit from God.”

B. The BURDEN of Service Gifts.

Vs. 3 – “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but **have not love, I gain nothing.**”

IV. The Ministry Of LOVE.

A. It is NOT About Your Spiritual Gifts.

- 1. Hopefully, you realize from this text that it is **not about your spiritual gifts**.
 - a. first of all, we don’t evaluate people according to their spiritual gifts
 - b. it is not:
 - 1. a contest
 - 2. a race

2. YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT IS MERELY HOW YOU COMMUNICATE THE LOVE OF GOD TO OTHERS.

- a. after all, HE gave you your spiritual gift
- b. you did not earn it – you simply “express” it

B. It IS ABOUT Your Spiritual Love.

- 1. Love is the **essence of God**.
 - a. **I John 4:15-16** – “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.**”
 - b. **John 3:16** - "For God **so loved the world** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
- 2. Love is the **essence of Jesus**.

- a. **Eph. 5:25** – “Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**”
- b. John 13: Jesus showed His disciples “the full extent of His love.”
- 3. Love must be the **essence of the Christian.**
 - A. WHEN WE DON’T SERVE CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE OUT OF LOVE, WE DON’T REPRESENT GOD TO OTHERS**
 - 1. when we serve out of duty
 - 2. when we serve out of guilt and obligation
 - 3. when we serve out of pride and arrogance
 - b. AND OUR SERVICE BECOMES A WASTE OF TIME AND AT BEST, NOISE.**

C. HOW Is Your Love?

- 1. First of all, **YOU CAN’T LOVE WITH GOD’S LOVE WITHOUT GOD FIRST LOVING YOU.**
 - a. **Romans 5:3-5** – “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, **because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**”
 - b. Notice the listing of the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23** - “But the **fruit of the Spirit** is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law.”
- 2. So . . . love, or your lack of it, becomes the “evidence” of where you truly, spiritually are.
 - a. God is not impressed with your use of your spiritual gifts
 - b. How you feel inside is **WHO YOU REALLY ARE, AND WHERE YOU REALLY ARE!**
 - 1. so, who are you?
 - 2. and what is causing you to serve at all?
- 3. I love some points that Charles Swindoll made relative to this text:
 - a. **love or nothing**

“Suppose you were to fill a sheet of paper with **all your impressive achievements, done sincerely and faithfully, yet without genuine love for others.**

Then suppose that paper was read at your funeral.

As the minister ascends the pulpit for the eulogy, he would look compassionately over the gathered mourners and unfold the sheet of paper, hoping its words would give comfort. But to his chagrin, he would be speechless . . . **for the paper would be blank.**
 - b. **love’s consistent exhibition**
 - 1. **do you consider love absolutely essential?**
 - a. is love the most important aspect in your relationship with others?
 - b. is loving others your daily objective and goal?
 - 2. **do you express your love?**
 - a. even though others have hurt you . . .
 - b. do you “show” love to others?

3. **does your love fade in and out?**

- a. does your love turn from hot to cold depending on the actions of others?
- b. is your love something that others can count on no matter how undeserving they might be?

4. **does love come to the surface of your life more often than any other virtue?**

- a. if those around you were to choose one virtue to describe you, would it be love?

b. **Doug Nichols** went to **India** to be a missionary, but while he was starting to study the language he became infected with tuberculosis and had to be put in a sanitarium.

It was not a very good place to be. It was not very clean and conditions were difficult because there were so many sick people there. But Doug decided to do the best he could in that situation. **So he took a bunch of Christian books and tracts and tried to witness to the other patients in the sanitarium.**

But when he tried to pass out tracts, they were rejected. No one wanted them. He tried to hand out books, but no one would take them. He tried to witness, but he was handicapped because of his inability to communicate in their language, and he felt so discouraged.

Here he was. Because of his illness he would be there a long time. But it seemed like the work that he had been sent to do would not be done because no one would listen to him.

Because of his own tuberculosis, every night at about 2 o'clock he would wake up with chronic coughing that wouldn't quit. Then one night when he awoke he noticed across the aisle an **old man trying to get out of bed.** He said the man would roll himself up into a little ball and teeter back and forth trying to get up the momentum to get up and stand on his feet. But he just couldn't do it. He was too weak.

Finally, after several attempts, the old man laid back and wept. The next morning Doug understood why the man was weeping. He was trying to get up to go to the bathroom and didn't have enough strength to do that. **So his bed was a mess and there was a smell in the air.**

The other patients made fun of the old man. The nurses came to clean up his bed and they weren't kind to him, either. In fact, one of them even slapped him in the face. Doug said that the old man just laid there and cried.

Doug said, "That next night about 2 o'clock I started coughing again. I looked across the way and there was the old man trying to get out of bed once more. **I really didn't want to do it, but somehow I managed to get up and I walked across the aisle and I helped the old man stand up.**"

But he was too weak to walk, so Doug said, **"I took him in my arms and carried him like a baby.** He was so light that it wasn't a

difficult task. I took him into the bathroom, which was nothing more than a dirty hole in the floor, and I stood behind him and cradled him in my arms as he took care of himself."

"Then I carried him back to his bed and laid him down. As I turned to leave he reached up and grabbed my face and **pulled me close and kissed me on the cheek and said what I think was `Thank you.'**"

Doug said, "The next morning there were patients waiting when I awoke and they asked if they could read some of the books and tracts that I had brought. Others had questions about the God I worshiped and His only begotten Son who came into the world to die for their sins."

Doug Nichols says that in the next few weeks he gave out all the literature that he had brought, and many of the Doctors and nurses and patients in that sanitarium came to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, too.

He said, **"Now what did I do? I didn't preach a sermon. I couldn't even communicate in their language. I didn't have a great lesson to teach them. I didn't have wonderful things to offer. All I did was take an old man to the bathroom."**

Someone has said, **"They will not care how much you know, until they know how much you care."**