

Spirit Filled Love

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[0 : 0 0] well let's start by praying God we just want to thank you that you do love us we thank you that you love us so much that you sent your son into this world to die for us to enable us to be forgiven for our sin and to come into a right relationship with you God we thank you that you demonstrated your power by raising Jesus from the dead showing his victory over sin and Satan and God we thank you that when we put our trust in you you give us the spirit to help us and to transform us to become more and more like Jesus and Father we just want to pray now that your spirit would move in each of us tonight convicting us of sin and empowering us to live with increasing boldness and fruitfulness as we live out the great commission of Jesus help us God to be a people marked by great love for Jesus and his glory and a great love for all people in Jesus name we pray amen well you're a bit of freedom tonight

I've been a Christian for about 10 years now and in those 10 years I've seen God do lots of things in my life and in the lives of others and when I go back to Tasmania because I'm from Tasmania it gives me a lot of joy to see people who I was ministering to three or four years ago really involved in the church so there's three or four boys who I used to lead in a discipleship group down there and when I go back now they're running the youth ministry that I used to be leading and that gives me great joy not because I feel good about myself but because I've seen God go to work through me and last time I went back to Tasmania this girl told me that the reason she was so involved in church now was because of something that I'd said and I didn't think I'd really had any impact on this girl whatsoever God has done some amazing things and I've been privileged, been blessed really just to be a part of them and while it's good that God's done so much sadly what's going on with that popping?

sadly there is I can probably count on one hand the number of people who've come from a complete non-Christian background into a saving relationship with Jesus in the ministries that I've been involved in I've seen, sure I've seen people who aren't so sure about Jesus but lived in a Christian home make decisions but people who've just got no background I can probably count on one maybe I might need to start using a couple of digits on this hand to see people who've come into a relationship with Jesus and it's made me think from time to time if only see if only when I was back in Tasmania I had the faith that could move Mount Wellington from one side of the river to the other then think of what the things God would do think of the people who would put their faith in Jesus if I had the faith that could move Mount Wellington from one side of the Doent River to the other if only

I had the wisdom and the knowledge to explain the difficult parts of the Bible the parts of the Bible that people like Richard Dawkins appeal to to say that Christianity is stupid if only I could powerfully wisely defeat him with my awesome knowledge then think of the atheist I would have converted or if only in my own life I could stop putting my need to have money and security before my need to live for Jesus if only I could stop putting those things instead of Jesus then maybe I could make a difference for him or now I think if only I was one of those cool youth ministers who could play guitar and who knew about lights and we could set something up in here and we could get some smoke machines going and I could sing a rock song and the youth of Doncaster could come in and I'd have the coolest haircut and the latest clothes and the spiritual gift of coolness would be upon me and they'd want to listen they'd want to listen to me because I was the coolest guy in Doncaster if only that was the case then I'd see many many Christians maybe be made want me to swap?

should I swap to the handheld or alright why not this thing's not that comfortable anyway oh I've got massive ears alright thank you why okay now where am I so if I had the spiritual gift of coolness that would be awesome because people would come and they want to hear about Jesus because I'm so cool or at least maybe they'd give me permission to speak into their lives because they thought I was so cool now all of these things faith and knowledge and coolness would be fantastic but there's something else that I need which surpasses all of these good things I need to have love because if I can play the guitar really mega coolly or if I can win an argument every time but I don't have love then what's the point

[6 : 06] I'm nothing at all Paul says in this reading tonight if I preach this sermon without love for you guys then I might as well just stand here for the next 20 minutes smashing that symbol because that's what it would be like if I didn't love you guys it would be that effective it would be that annoying to you and that's what Paul's saying here that better than all the other things in the life of a Christian better than all the gifts that he can give more effective than all the talents you have is love so you could be a better preacher than your favourite preacher Don Carson or Andrew Reid or Paul Barker or Jono or me but without love it would be useless and I realised this terrible thing as I was preparing this sermon when I dream of a bigger youth group of seeing more people come to know Jesus in Doncaster when I long for different spiritual gifts that will enable me to do my job better or to be a more faithful Christian

I'm left with this uncomfortable realisation that the fact is I may not want those things because I love the youth of Doncaster or I love the people in the world I may want those things because I love me because I want to be part of something bigger see I may not want revival to break out in Melbourne because I love other people and I think there's nothing better in the world than to be saved though that is what I think but the motivation when I search deep into my heart might be and I think often is that I want to be part of something successful when I get older I want to think I was a successful minister when I get older I want to think that maybe I've done enough that at Ridley College in church history in 150 years time they're going to study Chris Bowditch 101 it's so easy to want good things like revival to break out or the whole of Doncaster

Secretary College to be saved but God cares about our motives for those things he cares about our heart and when we seek the good things of God when we seek to be used by him for good we need to be motivated our hearts need to be pointed in two directions we must firstly have a desire for God and his glory and we must have a love for each other and for other people see it's not enough to want good things if we have the wrong intentions and it's not enough either to merely be seeking God's glory or to merely be loving others you see imagine this situation imagine you have an enemy at work you dislike him intensely and you think you know what I'm going to do today you've annoyed me so much

I'm going to go and share the gospel and tell you you're going to hell and I'm going to enjoy that fact because you just annoy me now no one here would ever do that I'm sure but let me tell you when I went to school there was a guy who told me that he wished my dad was a minister he told me he wished that all ministers would die and I wished I wished in that moment that he would go to hell it's easy and I thought I'm glad you're not a Christian because you are going to die soon and one day you'll be in hell and then that'll serve you right that's shocking shocking but that that's what I thought it's easy for us when people are having a go to take comfort in their eternal destruction but that's not what God wants for us he wants us to love those people so it's not enough to merely be telling the truth without love we have to have love as well but neither neither is it enough to be known as the loving guy or the nice girl no if you're loving people and you're a nice person then somehow you need to be turning that to God to his glory

God must get glory because of our love and we must seek his glory in the way that we love others so what is love well I think the primary way we know what love is by looking to God and 1 John is a good book that tells us a lot about some of the ways God has loved us and what that means for us and in 1 John 4 8 and 9 it says God is love and that God has revealed his love to us by sending his only son into the world so that we can have life love and earlier before that in 1 John 3 16 it says this is how we know what love is that Jesus laid down his life for us so we also ought lay down our lives for each other and in 1 John 4 21 it says that we must love both

[11 : 58] God and others and this comes at the end of a whole section that says if we do not love other people then we cannot claim that we love God if we say we love God but we act unlovingly towards each other then we can't say we love God because that's not what people who love God do so if we love God then we are going to love others and we are going to be focused other person focused and in Matthew 22 verses 34 to 40 Jesus says that all of God's law hangs on two things that you love God with all your heart and soul and mind with everything you have and that you love your neighbour as yourself you love each other love is a whole of life thing and we love God because of what he's done for us let me take a few verses that many of us can just rattle off the top of our heads while we were still sinners

Jesus died for us when while what sorry while we're still sinners Christ died for us we were we were God's enemies but he made us his friends you see when we deserve death God gave us life love that's because he loved us people love is outrageously generous and that's the model that we have is God and the love that he shows in his son Jesus and I think that's the model that Paul is expanding on in detail in our reading tonight so in 1 Corinthians 13 which is what Ross just read for us Paul gives us a list of things that love is and is not and I don't know about you but maybe some of you heard the saying love is a verb there used to be this song when I was growing up by a band called DC Talk who are the cause of much of my childhood and lack of friends

I have to explain it now they used to have this ad on TV right where they dance around in Tasmania that Christians always had ads on TVs they dance around like this and then they'd sit down you know being a Christian it's not like a boxed up bootleg kind of life you can be cool and a rapper and whatever and that was fine right except that the ad was being played in the year 2000 and they were from 1984 or something and for some reason I told someone I owned their album and I had never had a friend in high school again but they had this song called love is a verb they had this song called love is a verb and all the things Paul says here to describe love he's using verbs and so I want to make the big claim tonight that love is only present in action not feeling but action we show love in the way we act towards others so what actions do we have here tonight first thing we've got there if you've got your bibles open you can follow along is love is patient and that literally sort of means that love is far from wrath or far from anger it is love is long tempered that is means to love is to never act without first thinking of someone else again look to God our model

God has been ever so patient with us there's a God is slow to anger and abounding in love and if you really want a big sort of snapshot of the Bible from start to finish it is one of God being patient with us people the human race even though we keep ignoring him he's patient with us he loves us even though we don't deserve it and so if we want to be a people who are marked by love then we need to be patient when people annoy us when they hurt us we've got to be patient with them slow to anger and abounding in love towards them but it's not just a matter of patience because love is also kind and that sort of literally means that love shows undeserved generosity or love is outrageously generous and when you combine this with patience you've got a pretty interesting thing see it might be one thing just to put up with someone who's hurt you or to put up with someone who might annoy you a bit or whatever but love love that a

Christian has and is meant to have towards people actually demands that we be generous to that person not just patient but kind and generous showing them the same kind of love that we would show our best friend we have to be generous to all people it's not a selective thing then Paul gets into a bunch of notes love is not envious he says now this is a good test this one the envy test if you're envious of something or someone or something that they have then that reveals to you the state of your heart that reveals that in your heart you are more concerned with your own advancement rather than the advancement of others and as

[18:08] Christians we're called to be other person focused so if you're envious of the good things that God has given to other people then that shows you haven't really figured it out because you should be glad that God has given different gifts to different people and you should rejoice with them cry with them but not be envious of them and there's a flip side to this as well I think is that you should not make it easy for other people to envy you by not using your gifts so that is the way that people that is a way to test your heart the next two things that Paul says are related love is not boastful it is not arrogant now boasting involves bragging

I'm the humblest guy in the world right and arrogance involves internal bragging so I sit down in the corner and I look at everyone and go I'm the humblest guy in the world but I don't tell you they're very very related but if we love then instead of arrogantly proclaiming to the world I am insert favorite gift here I am the greatest preacher in the world I'm the humblest guy in the world I am whatever or instead of thinking those things in our head if we're going to love others then what we're actually going to be doing is using our gifts and using our talents in the service of others and we're going to enjoy receiving the generosity of others using their gifts and we're going to be so busy right get this we're going to be so busy blessing each other with our gifts and talents that there's going to be no time hopefully to think gosh

I'm a good good humble guy there'll be no time for that because we'll just be blessing each other with our gifts and our fruits love is also not rude which can also be translated it does not dishonor others and I think that's a fairly simple one that if we love other people we don't gossip about them we don't speak behind their backs we don't talk them down but rather we build them up love also does not insist on its own way and this one is all about making the interests of others more important than your own this one's about denying yourself for the sake of others see we live in a world that places you or me but certainly not both of us at the centre of things we live in a world that says you have rights and you're entitled to enforce them and that sort of seems fair enough on one level if this is my things you're not entitled to take them if this is my body I'm entitled to do what I want with it and I get that but when the world speaks of love and our rights it sort of limits them but here not insisting on its own way I think is radical for our world because it doesn't mean it means for us that we don't have a finders keepers losers weepers this is my right you know I've been driving around Doncaster

Chopping Town car park for longer than you this is my car park get out of the way it's more of a putting other people first kind of thing if God thought like we think I've got rights I've got responsibilities I don't have to do things that go outside my comfort zone this is my body whatever I deserve is what I do then guess what he wouldn't have sent his son into the world his son wouldn't have died because he didn't deserve death he was perfect see God is a great model for us and if we love we must put other people first we must sometimes deny what some might call our inalienable rights for the sake of another because that is radical and that is what love drives us to to be radical and we've got to keep thinking

Jesus died in my place so what is it to me to give up this money I'm entitled to or this last piece of pizza in the plate that I'm entitled whatever it is wherever it happens it could be much bigger than that this job promotion that I'm entitled to what is it to give up those things when Jesus gave up his life for us so if we love and it's a love we ought to have for all people then we put them first love is also not irritable Paul says and that means that if we love others we're not going to go around behaving in ways that cause people to get irritated and this is how I think this works out here in this church and probably in all churches an unloving thing to do is to come to the church and to do nothing an unloving thing to do is to take and take and take and take and do nothing because what that does is that makes it very hard for good people who give of their time and their energy and their money for the good of this church to not get irritated

[24 : 34] I know a lot of people in this church who get irritated with other people who they perceive to be taking and taking and taking now I've got something to say to them next but if you don't do anything here in this church it's not loving it's unloving God calls us to put others first God calls us not to be irritating and quite frankly it's irritating when people just come and sit and don't do what they're supposed to do or say they're going to do something and don't do it that is not the way a Christian lives a Christian's yes is yes and their no is no and when they come to a church they should serve now obviously there's time constraints and jobs and all those kind of things but I think most of us can probably lift the bar a little love is also not resentful and this is where I speak to those people who might be getting irritated that means for love to not be resentful that means it forgives when there is wrong instead of storing it up it seeks to name it to name the wrong and to seek forgiveness and to seek restoration in the relationship it doesn't go around resenting the people but it seeks to encourage them so if you're one of those people who's irritated by someone then don't just complain to me about it go see the person and say hey this might be unfair but you irritate me and

Chris said I need to talk to you and we need to sort this out and then maybe you'll actually find out they're working 655 hours a week and doing 25 hours of evangelism somewhere in there and you're an idiot for resenting them but maybe you won't and maybe they'll get involved and maybe life will be happily lived ever after there's no way of knowing unless you actually love the person enough to find out what's going on to not store up hatred but to deal with it love also does not rejoice in wrong doing and this is I think like a bit like what I was saying earlier about the story I told about the guy who wanted my dad to die and I wanted him to go to hell or the person who we just dislike and we tell them the gospel but we don't really want them to repent love doesn't rejoice in wrong doing because that is wrong it is wrong for people to deny Jesus and it does not rejoice in seeing the downfall of other Christians and seeing moral failure of other Christians you know perhaps it's easy sometimes if there's someone who we dislike we don't get on with and they do something and they stuff up and they get kicked off your ministry team and they've been annoying you anyway to rejoice I'm so glad that person is not on the music team anymore they were so annoying anyway their love mourns doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing it mourns wrongdoing if we love someone then we're not going to be happy about them not living up to their claims of faith we're going to love them we're going to care for them we're going to say tough things when we still might need to kick people out or whatever but we don't rejoice in that we mourn for that and we still love that person and love rejoices in truth and there are two parts to this that is love rejoices when a truth in a situation prevails that is love rejoices when justice prevails if you like so when we see an injustice and you know someone's fighting in court for something and we know them and then they win and they were right to win we rejoice with them because we love them but also love rejoices in the truth that is found only in

Jesus see I think this might be a big claim but I think it's a good one I don't think without a model of God's love seen in Jesus without being empowered by the spirit we can love ever love fully I'm not saying we can't enjoy love because obviously there are people who say they're in love who don't have that model but it will never be I don't think as full and as possible to be realized as we can realize because we have the truth we have a true model to follow and we have someone helping us to do that love rejoices not only in justice but in the truth of the gospel and love is made complete I think when it's done out of a Christ-centered lifestyle then there are four other things that

Paul lists there that show us that love has no limits that is no matter how much you people hurt you no matter how much people abuse your trust no matter how bad things get if you love them or if they love you love will never give up God is our model and that is how God loves us see we have hurt God we have abused his trust we have walked away from him but he has never once given up on us never and he never will and so that is how we ought to love others without limits and that is pretty radical because we love to limit things we love to put limits we love to put things in a box but I think here we have a direction to go beyond where we want to draw a line to love more outrageously than where we want to draw the line and there's one more thing that we learn about love here in this chapter and that is I think and this was pretty amazing to my mind love is the thing we have now that as Christians is going to carry over with us into eternity that's what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 13 8 when he says love never ends and then again in verse 13 he says now faith hope and love abide these three and the greatest of these is love love is the greatest because it never ends see what do we have faith in got faith in Jesus right faith in his return our hope is in

Jesus return to come and judge the world and when that happens we don't need that we don't need to have faith in God in heaven because we're in heaven we don't need to hope in all the bad stuff in the world now being restored we're in heaven it is restored it's fantastic it's perfect we live in perfect relationship with God and there's no need for hope our hope is fulfilled our faith is fulfilled but love get this love continues it's like the carryover champ or something love continues in heaven that is what marks us out and that's what's going to be there in heaven perfect fulfilled love and that's what God is calling us to live out now and that's why it's so important because the way we love now is going to be a bit like only better it'll be better in heaven that is the way we love now should be a bit like the way we're going to love each other in heaven and that's why Christian community is so awesome because it's a taste of heaven because we are loving each other like the way Paul says we're modeling ourselves on God and that is going to be a bit like heaven that's radical we can love each other now and that same kind of love is going to carry over into heaven the way Christians love others is meant to be a foretaste of what heaven will be like love that's why love so important that's why it's truth and love are always the things that God puts together love God and love each other so we're called to be a people of love we're called to love like God has loved which is outrageous and generous which is a love that denies our own rights for the sake of another and we have to remember especially in this series that it's the

[34 : 19] Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to love in this way not our own strength in fact it seems impossible sometimes to deny our own rights but if we submit to God and his leading then maybe I think it is possible to get better at love and love is the primary part of the fruit of the spirit that John talked about a few weeks ago and as this chapter follows on from spiritual gifts which I talked about last week if we do not have love then our spiritual gifts don't matter as spirit-filled Christians who live out the Great Commission and as people who are striving to do that with increasing boldness and fruitfulness we must be a people of love now it's about to be Christmas and we're about to sing carols and 2000 years ago God gave us a great gift God gave us his son Jesus and he gave that gift to us because he loved us Jesus took the punishment we deserved for our sins he denied his rights so that we you and I could be restored to a right relationship with God and he did all of that because he loved us and on that first Christmas day 2000 odd years ago God gave us a gift that we desperately needed Jesus that's right but we had no entitlement to it our right was to die

Jesus right was to live but he denied that for us because he loved us he gave his life for us even though we had no entitlement to it God did not have to give us Jesus this is why Christmas is so amazing God did not have to give us Jesus he wanted to and none of us are entitled to receive that gift but because God is outrageous he's generous he has said that the gift is ours if we want it if you're not a Christian I want to encourage you this Christmas to think about receiving the greatest gift that's ever given ever has been given ever will be given greater than your iPod or your iPad you're about to receive on next Saturday better than that thousandfold and it keeps on giving there's no upgrade

God's not holding anything back like Apple do we're not putting a camera in I want to encourage you to experience the greatest love that there is in putting your faith and trust in Jesus trust in Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem for your salvation because that's what God wants he wants you to receive his gift because he loves you and you need it you need it and if you are a Christian well let's remember how amazing it is let's not just sing these carols we're about to sing and think oh yeah God came down from heaven came here and been yeah no worries awesome no no wrong let's remember how amazing it is God came down from heaven became a human because he loved us and he gave us something which we could not get on our own let us remember that and let us motivate that in the way that we love others let us motivate that to get us up out of our seats and to use our spiritual gifts to serve each other let us motivate that to put the needs of others above the needs of ourself and let that motivate us to be to make us be a people who are known for unlimited love let us be known as people who will love even when everyone else has said it's done when everyone else has had it told us to stop let us remember that

God never gave up on us he still gave Jesus even though he didn't deserve it and so we will still be people who love when everyone else tells us we should stop and let us make that our prayer and let us sing these carols because we love God and let's be called