

# The more excellent way of love

## Part 1

Speaker	J.S. Blackburn
Duration	00:56:03
Online version	<a href="https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/jsb003/the-more-excellent-way-of-love">https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/jsb003/the-more-excellent-way-of-love</a>

*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:00] Mr. Scales in his opening remarks this afternoon mentions title. Now one might have thought of his title, which was in fact contrasts in the first epistle of John, one might have thought of his title as God is light. Now how near we came to having our title this evening, God is love, I leave you to judge afterwards. But I have felt for a particular purpose, which I hope will become clear, I have felt that I ought to read this chapter and to use the title this evening, the more excellent way of divine love. The more excellent way of divine love. In an already longish life amongst the meetings, I have heard some very strange [00:01:02] things by way of audible prayer. It isn't very long since I didn't hear this with my own ears, but I know they find it rather concerned. He opened his prayer by saying, Lord, when I looked in the shaving mirror this morning I didn't like what I saw. And I myself have heard him pray like this, a most sincere brother and in some things well instructed, Lord we never know what thou hast up thy sleeve for us. But I think the first prize for extraordinary utterances in prayer was the case, once again, which I heard myself, a brother, in the full torrent of his sincere outpourings of his heart to the Lord, uttered loud and clear these exact words, Lord may the new wine of thy spirit burst these old skins [00:02:07] of ours. And after we had resisted the temptation to dial 999 and bring an ambulance, and the police, and the fire brigade, we had to come to the conclusion that there was a great deal in what he said. He recognized that there was something wrong amongst which much that was good and to which we had to thank God. He recognized that there was with God what could put it right, and he turned these two convictions into a prayer, somewhat original in its wording, but nevertheless sincere, and it evoked a response and an amen from many of the brethren present. Now it was quite certain that regarding the Corinthian [00:03:02] assembly, there were serious things that were wrong. On the one hand, they were enriched with all gifts. In the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they came behind in no gift. And they were diligent in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we read that they were riddled with carnality. I'm not now speaking, of course, of the gross carnality which is indicated in chapter 5. I'm thinking of the kind of carnality which made for parties in the Corinthian church, and divisions and schisms, and the kind of carnality which is again and again spoken of in that they were puffed up about things about which they ought to be humbled before the Lord. They were full of carnality. Now in its setting, I'm sure we have to see that this chapter which speaks about the more excellent [00:04:08] way of divine love, is presented to us as something which, if known and experienced in its own true power, would lift the Saints out of the level where self makes carnality, into the level where the Holy Spirit makes much of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is a prayer that we all want to pray about our reading of Holy Scripture and the ministry of the Word. And there we see ourselves so often the prey of what is that kind of carnality which was found in the Corinthian epistle. And if in any measure there are amongst us those who feel in heart that this is so, then we shall love to contemplate this evening and to meditate upon this [00:05:05] chapter which

presents to us the more excellent way of divine love. When one thinks about the danger of complacency, then I personally frequently think about the words of one of the great masters of the English language in our days, who was nevertheless obviously a sincere Christian man. He said, the trouble is, regarding whatever may have been his subject at that moment, that we so often sigh with tranquil veneration when we ought to be struck down with terror, or we ought to be transported with the thoughts of the wonder of the divine love.

And we often feel like that. Well, the more excellent way of divine love, if the [00:06:07] Spirit of God writes it upon our hearts, will be the means whereby these results will follow for us. When we think of the word love, as I read it in this chapter, then it leads me to ask your, your coming along with me in a few introductory remarks before we speak about the verses themselves. And I'm saying this because I don't want anybody to think that the general introductory remarks are only things to be passed over. A great deal of the substance of what I have to say this evening is in these general remarks, just as much as in the detail of the verses themselves. Now when we read this chapter, the very first thing that strikes us is the word charity. Well, that's a pretty poor word [00:07:06] to have found its way into the authorized version of Holy Scripture, some of us might think. If by any means most of you know all about this, I don't advise you to go to sleep, but you'll have patience with me while I explain it a little, so you'll be ready to catch up all right when we get through this particular part. But the story of how the word charity got into the authorized version is really an extremely significant one for the world, and I don't mean the world, I mean the time in which we live and seek to honor the Lord and worship the Father and enjoy the fellowship of the Saints with a godly assembly order according to the scriptures. Now the word charity was put there because it was reckoned to be a direct translation of the Latin word [00:08:03] caritas. A great deal of influence was exerted by the earlier English versions upon the authorized version, and lots of these were translated from the Latin. Now in the Latin, the ordinary word amor was so polluted that it wasn't felt at all suitable for a sentence which would ultimately appear in the sacred scriptures, God is love. And so they used what they felt to be a better word, caritas, to present the divine love. And of course if we take the matter a little further, it's better to look at the original language of the scriptures where the difference is even more significant. In English we have one word, love. And we all know how that word comes more and more to be used in the world in which we live. But in the original language of the scriptures there was, [00:09:02] there were three words. One word, eros, which if for no other reason, we know it because of the statue in Piccadilly Circus, was so utterly polluted in the speech and in the world of the New Testament that it was quite impossible to bring it into connection with divine things. And therefore it has no place at all in the New Testament. It is found as a matter of fact in the Old Testament, but not in the New. The second word, philia, is a word which is widely used in the New Testament. It is a word which is often translated affection, or the love of friendship, and betokens that warm attitude of the heart towards those whom we have good cause to love. Because of friendship, or because of relationship, it's the word that's used for brotherly love in Holy Scripture. And it's the word from which the word in the original scripture, friend, comes. It's a very [00:10:05] important word, and it has an important part in Scripture. You'll find a lot of this explained in the footnote to the New Translation in the conversation between the Lord and Peter in John chapter 21. But this was also not adequate for the purpose, and therefore the Spirit of God, to all intents and purposes, invented a word which actually had its birth in the sacred scriptures. It was not known in any other or previous literature at all. The verb was known, but the noun was completely unknown outside Holy Scripture. And so careful was the Spirit of God to guard this most sacred subject, that that word, agape, is used for the love of God. It couldn't be otherwise, when in the end, this wonderful [00:11:02] sentence from part of Holy Scripture, God is love. You may say, why is it that we need to consider these questions today? Why should we bother to consider the difference? Well, one reason is that our young men and women, especially students, are

growing up in a world where a serious attempt is made to equate eroticism with the love that is the love of God. A serious attempt, I've heard made, to make out that if men and women abandon themselves to the sensualities of eroticism, then they're finding the fulfillment of the Scripture, God is love. It's one of the foulest blots upon the civilization in which we live, and [00:12:02] therefore we need to come back and back again to see clearly what it is that has come from God, and has given the Savior, and has dwelt in our hearts, and made us his children. The subject of this chapter, therefore, and that's why I used it in my title, is most specifically divine love. And in 1973, we need more than ever to be quite sure what we mean by divine love. Another very important reason, of course, for my attempting to restate this point at this moment, is because this wonderful theme is the theme of 1st Corinthians 13. I have a very special kind of facet in my mind when I speak about 1st Corinthians 13 like this, but [00:13:01] it is most important for us to begin by seizing the point that it isn't love in the abstract. It isn't the love that certain so-called Christian teachers mean when they say love is God, but it's the love of which Holy Scripture speaks, and in which we have the characters most plainly. We are contemplating this evening, so that we may have our hearts set on fire by its warmth, and thereby respond to God. We may seize the wonder of this chapter. Now I must, if I may linger a little longer, just briefly detach upon what are these characters of divine love in particular. And I would like to say a few words about its source, and its outflow, and its existence in us, because these are all uniquely things that are facts concerning divine love. The more [00:14:08] excellent way of divine love that we are seeking to understand and to follow this evening. Now the source of this divine love, where would we find that source?

Well, I give you one most wonderful verse for this. Out of all the scriptures that crowd in upon the mind and the heart, when we think of divine love, I give you this scripture. John 17 chapter 24. The Son, the blessed and only Son of God, addressing his Father at that hour of all hours. Father, thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. The world occurs in that sentence. Do you realize that in that sentence, the world which has evoked and has absorbed the energies of [00:15:05] Alexander and Augustus and Napoleon. The world in which men probe so deeply that they have to measure its minute things in submicrons, and they penetrate into the world outside, where in searching the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the bands of Orion, they have to measure it in light years. The world that spreads its allurements to us all, old and young, that world is only an episode in eternity in that wonderful chapter where the Son addresses the Father. And the two great things that dwelt in that home of eternal divine joy and delight were glory, the glory which I had with thee before the world was, and love. There is the source of divine love. I expect you have all read at some time in your lives [00:16:07] the story of the discovery of the source of the Nile. From the most ancient times the source of that mighty river that came down annually and produced life wherever it went, the source of that mighty river was a mystery. Until in the latter part of the 19th century, three intrepid explorers discovered that the sources of the Nile were in the two vast inland seas called Victoria Nianza and Victoria Albert. And the great mystery, the great age-old mystery was solved.

There was more water at the source of the river than at any point along all its life-giving source, this stream. And when we want to think of that divine love that has reached us, that divine love that has saved us, the divine love [00:17:06] that having cleansed us by the precious blood of Christ has made the children of God, we find the source of that divine love in the fathomless, boundless ocean of eternity. Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. I hope I'm not going to land myself in trouble with a clock, but I feel that I would like to dwell upon this just a second or two longer. One of the lovely features of the best human love is this, that it consists very largely in satisfaction with a person. The other day I was in a meeting, and as soon as the restraints of the meeting were loosened, here's a little fellow about two and a half years [00:18:01] old, with his long trousers and his

little bandy legs, busy, ran right across the meeting room and leaped at one fell swoop into his grandfather's knee, and they simply sat and smiled at each other. And the father of this little fellow said to me, you know, Martin and his grandfather, they're entirely satisfied with each other's company. And that is love. That's the thing. So far as these earthly things are concerned, that's the best thing of all. I know quite recently a middle-aged man, he probably wouldn't be very pleased if he heard me say that, he's about 40, but a middle-aged man who had to have his holiday at a different time from his wife and his family, and his mother, his widowed mother, came to stay for that short period, and he spent the time taking her around and showing the beauties of the place. And my wife said to me, she'll be in the land of [00:19:05] heart's delight. And it was true. She would be absolutely satisfied with being in the company of her only son. The cartoonists have often gone to town upon this. More than once I've seen a picture of a man and a maid, arm in arm, and looking into each other's eyes and going across the road, and all the traffic is stopped, and you can't get past. And they're saying to each other, you know, nobody would know we were in love, would they? But they were so completely satisfied with each other that all the traffic in the world meant nothing to them. In human affairs, then, the essence of the best love is satisfaction in a person. Oh, how wonderful to turn back the pages of Holy Scripture to Proverbs [00:20:03] chapter 8, and hear wisdom, who is the Word, who is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, say, Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way before his works of old. Then I was his nursing, I was daily his delight. That's where the source of divine love is. Now when I come to suggest to you just a salient feature about the stream, the outflow of divine love, then this is a point at which this word springs to light as the only word that would do. The characteristic of Eros is to demand satisfaction for its self. The characteristic of divine love, where we have it here, and where we have [00:21:01] it in so many places, and in John's epistle, God is love, the characteristic action of divine love is to give. God so loved the world that he gave the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ, I give you this one verse, Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25, Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

In that chapter John 17, which is above all chapters the one which presents to us the Father and the Son in their own world of pure delight and love, 17 times in its 26 verses we have the word give. The characteristic action of divine love is to give, and oh who can measure the giving of God right through to the [00:22:05] moment that we shall be given glory alongside his beloved Son. And finally on the subject of the nature of divine love, how does it ever come to exist in us? Because it does exist in us, this chapter. This is one reason why I read this chapter. It does exist in us. Divine love can exist in the saints, that is in you and me, only and uniquely as a response. And I give you 1 John chapter 4 towards the end. We love because he first loved us. As for him, which isn't in any of our books, sometimes think, with apologies to my good brethren who have been an interest in this matter, if I were responsible for revising the Hindu book I [00:23:04] might tuck it away somewhere in the end where we put individual hymns rather than assemble hymns. It goes like this, let me love thee, addressed to the Savior, let me love thee, come revealing all thy love has done for me, help my heart so unbelieving by the sight of Calvary. Let me see thy love, despising all the shame my sin had wrought, by thy torment realizing what a price my pardon bought.

This is the way and the only way in which divine love will be awakened, will be caused to live, will work with its burning power on this principle, we love. The Bible doesn't say we love him, although that's true, it says we love because he first loved us. And therefore the last of my general thoughts to offer [00:24:10] you about this wonderful theme of divine love is that it exists in us only as a response. Now the unique contribution of 1st Corinthians chapter 13 on this subject of divine love is what I would like to try to explain to you now before I come to deal very briefly with the verses in detail. It is quite plain that although this is divine love, it would be not so much untrue as inappropriate to say of

God in the essential attribute of his deity, for example, that he is not [00:25:02] puffed up. This would be altogether inappropriate to say such a thing, and yet this chapter says that love is not puffed up. What I'm indicating clearly is that this chapter considers quite specifically divine love, but divine love in a man. It has always been seen that while you couldn't, right, you couldn't appropriately put God in here, you could also sweetly and appropriately put the Lord Jesus Christ in here. He suffered long, he was kind, he sought not his own, he endured all things, he never failed. But I don't think that this is primarily the subject of this chapter. It is divine love in the Saints. That is the great theme of this chapter. It was the solution to all the carnalities and the consequent difficulties in that assembly and in our assemblies. It is divine love [00:26:04] in a man. Now here is the point which uniquely concerns 1st Corinthians 13. What we have in 1st Corinthians 13 is the subjective effect of love. Somebody says, come off it. What exactly do you mean by that? Well I tell you what I mean by that. I've often heard it said, and with this obviously I fully agree, love must have an object. This is right. But there's not one word in this chapter about the object of love. Why? Because the whole subject is in the transforming power on the character of the person who loves. The person who loves becomes like this. The person who loves ceases to be the man that he was. I've written them down. Envious, we hand out this afternoon, braggart, puffed up, ill-mannered, [00:27:02] self-centered, censorious. That's the man we are by nature. But bringing in the blood of Christ and the Spirit of God, we can also bring in divine love. And this chapter teaches us the subjective effect, the effect on the person who loves with divine love, with divine love. Most important, you'll agree with me. I think this matter is most delightfully illustrated in the story of Jacob and Rebekah. It says that he served for her seven years. In the day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night. But there seemed as a few days for the great love wherewith he loved her. Now there's a great deal there, of course, about the [00:28:02] object of love, but there's a great deal there about the disciplining, transforming effect upon the person who loves of that love. It disciplined Jacob. That twister, that supplanter, it changed him at that time of that moment into a person who was disciplined and devoted and willing to believe and to endure and the love that never failed. The love of Jacob changed Jacob. And that's what this chapter is telling us. It's the subjective effect of love upon the person who loves, and this is the real speciality of 1 Corinthians 13. A very interesting parallel, just to try to make quite sure that we're all with each other upon this point, we have about prayer in the last chapter Philippians. It says don't be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and [00:29:02] supplication and with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Well there's a great deal in the Bible about the conditions of prayer. It must be in the name. It must be according to the will of God. There are many conditions, but there's not a word there about the conditions of prayer, or the answers to prayer, or the mountainous demand for prayer in the service of the Lord. The subject is the effect of prayer upon the person who prays, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And so it is here. The really unique contribution of 1 Corinthians 13 to the subject, the wonderful treasury of divine love, is that it teaches us the effect of love upon the person who loves. Now I've got to start on the chapter yet, [00:30:08] haven't I? But I promise you that the greater part of what I have to say really was in these first remarks, and I will try to be as brief as possible. Everyone who has studied this chapter has seen it divided into three paragraphs. The first three verses present to us the indispensability of love. From verse 4 to the first phrase of verse 8 we have the characters of love. This is what I've been already briefly speaking about. And from the second phrase of verse 8 to the end we have the permanence of love. Now when I think about these first three verses, that I'm bound to say something [00:31:06] like, we heard this afternoon, I'm bound to say that I find them absolutely gigantic. You see, the very things that Christian men have been disposed to make much of, dare we say, have been disposed to make too much of. Have we been disposed to make too much of the understanding of

mysteries? Nothing else matters, you might think, some people think. Nothing else matters as long as we understand mysteries. Well of course it's very important to understand mysteries. But the gigantic statement of the Spirit of God by this, coming up to the end to say, though I give my body to be burned, think of the crackling flames on the steak and the very flesh roasting. Though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it doesn't mean I'm wrong. It doesn't say I'm small. It doesn't say [00:32:06] I've got a lot to learn. I am nothing. If I have the things that Christian men have found comforting and strengthening and instructing, and I have not love, I am nothing, that's an absolutely gigantic statement that we can slip back. And it ought to teach us that there is a way set before us in Holy Scripture by which we can encourage and we can feed the growth and the burning and the power of divine love in our hearts. Then we'll say like John Wesley, give me the book that tells me how to do that. Show me the more excellent way of divine love. Then in the middle section of the chapter, we have the characters of love. And I've said a [00:33:03] little bit about these already. It's a very interesting thing that you have nine negatives, such as saying charity isn't jealous. I'm quoting Mr. Scales again.

Love isn't jealous. If I am jealous, it isn't love that makes me jealous. Some people think it is. If I'm jealous, it isn't love that makes me jealous. Love is not jealous. There are nine negatives and there are seven positives. There is a clean contrast between the way love does behave and the way love does not behave. There is a clean contrast between what I am by nature, and I'll repeat again, bringing the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, there is a, and between, and between that and between what divine love will make us in character, that is [00:34:04] the characters of divine love. And I note particularly the expression in the end of verse four, it is not puffed up. Now I haven't counted, but it would, could very easily be made out that the recurrent theme concerning the carnalities of the Corinthian church which robbed them of everything was that they were puffed up. They were puffed up. The very time they should have been groveling in the dust before God, they were puffed up about it. They were puffed up. They were puffed up for leaders. They were puffed up for knowledge. But we read here, this divine alchemy would have altered it all, because divine love is not only not envious, but divine love is not puffed up. And then we have in Ephesians four, one [00:35:01] of the great classics in Holy Scripture about Christian unity, it says, Endeavoring with all long-suffering a meekness to keep the unity of the Spirit in the one of peace. That long-suffering is one of the characters of divine love in a man. And then we could dwell in detail. We read about it that it is kind.

The charm of a man is his kindness. I feel, and I sometimes think that you would feel the same, that we can forgive a person a very great deal if we are aware of his kindnesses. Many a brother externally misjudged, if we penetrate the veil of ignorance of the man really that surrounds us, we would find such kindness in him, that we have to acknowledge there the presence of divine love. Now in the [00:36:09] seventh verse and the beginning of the eighth verse, you know what I love to think of, if only I had something more of the voice of men and angels, I might have imported it better into the reading, but I believe we have a mounting crescendo of triumph. Let no one think that divine love is the supine, idle, tranquil virtue. No, it's the militant virtue. Just read them again, bear us all things, believe us all things, help us all things, sticks at it through all things. Love, divine love, never fails. And if we are overcome, and the measure which in our own discipleship, and in the assembly we feel overcome, then we need that God will speak to us more and more about the more excellent way of divine love. What [00:37:04] are these all things? Well, they're undoubtedly all things that are the enemies of true spiritual progress. All things that are the enemies of our being really, the self-denying devoted disciples of Christ representing him in a world that knows him not. All things are overcome by divine love. But I come to the last section of the chapter, where we begin in verse 9 by saying, for we know in part, and we prophesy in part. There's an air in my mind and heart as I as I read these

verses, there's an air of indefinable sadness on the one hand about them. That those things that have helped us, because we have been helped by prophecies. Brothers and sisters, in the assembly of God we have [00:38:05] been helped by prophecies. Some people might say they've been helped by tongues. We certainly have been helped by knowledge in the things of God. And a great amount that's wrong with Christendom today is simply ignorance and absence of knowledge of the things of God. We have been helped by these things. And there is perhaps an indefinable air of sadness as you read. They shall pass away, they shall cease, until we realize that in their place there is something far far better when that which is perfect is come. The thread about these verses are strong, is to throw into contrast in a particular way what is in part with what is perfect. Verse 9, we know in part. But in verse 10, that which is perfect is come. And then in verse 12 again, I know in part. What is in part is [00:39:13] contrasted with what is perfect. Now that is of course illustrated by the particular case of the child becoming a man. And of course the wonderful thing to see about the way in which the maturity of manhood causes to cease the qualities of childhood, there is nevertheless a continuity. In spite of the fact that the old wives say that men never grow up, there is a continuity, you see, between the child and the man. But there's another way in which the man puts out of existence the child. You might think of various ways in which the sight of one thing is lost. An eclipse, for example, something comes between. We lose the [00:40:04] sight of the stars in the daytime. And I love to quote the scripture, by reason of the glory that excelleth. When the sun appears in his majesty, they can't be seen. But this particular causing to cease, or bringing to nothing, is because what is partial is swallowed up in what is perfect. When we were children, then we devoted ourselves to the things of children. But when we grew up, then we put away childish things. The child ceases to exist in one sense. But in the other sense, in nature and quality, it's the same. You see, it's development. And there's a very important lesson here, it seems to me, and that is that I have heard older brethren discourage the younger brethren from gaining knowledge. My dear friends, [00:41:01] we do a young man or a woman a very ill service if we discourage them from getting the knowledge of divine things. As long as we always point out to them that knowledge without love puffeth up. But oh, there's a great deal in Holy Scripture. The Apostle prays in Ephesians chapter 1 that there might be an increase in knowledge. We do an ill service when we discourage the young from acquiring knowledge, as long as alongside it there is the distrust of self. Alongside it there is that humility that belongs to the true Christian character, and above all the recognition that what we have by way of knowledge is in part. I often dwell upon Ephesians chapter 4. It says in the early part of Ephesians chapter 4 about the unity, there is one faith. Then I say to myself if there's one faith, why do Christians disagree so much? Well, I read the answer [00:42:06] in the New Translational later. The gifts are given until we all arrive at the unity of the faith, at a perfect band, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The reason for a large number, not all, I fully accept what Mr. the speaker this afternoon said about this, but a large amount of the disagreement that we find is because we all fail to recognize that our knowledge is partial. And we see through a glass darkly, without importing into Scripture the idea that what we see is Jesus. Oh how sad it is that we see through a glass darkly. Oh how sad it is that our glimpses are broken glimpses of the Savior, but oh that we should encourage each other to get more and more even though there be broken glimpses of the Savior and see him. [00:43:03] Because in the end, when all the treasure of the divine love fully extends and pours itself upon us in the Father's house, we will have the same thing, the same knowledge only perfected, and the same sight only no longer through a glass darkly. For I suppose the ancient world's glass must have been pretty poor stuff. Even the modern stuff distorts quite a lot. There's also a glass darkly, distorted. There are broken glimpses. But then we shall see him face to face. We shall see him face to face. This is the end of the road which the more excellent way of divine love will take with us. The fact that we shall see Jesus is the end of one of the most wonderful chains that stretches from the beginning to the end of our Bibles. It is to see God in resurrection.

[00:44:06] Hear, Joe, though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God for myself and not another. Hear, David, I shall be satisfied when I awake with her likeness. Hear, Isaiah, that I shall see the King in his beauty. Hear, Paul, we shall see him face to face. And at the end of our Bibles, hear, John, his servants shall see him. They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. Then that which is perfect will have come, and that which is in part shall be done away. I'm not wise enough to explain the mystery of this question of faith and [00:45:02] hope abiding, because what it says, of course, is that amongst all these things that are changing, then the things that are lasting are faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love, and therefore it says follow after love. Could you grant me another three or four minutes in order to speak to you about what the scripture does give us, about the means whereby, means that we can take to follow after love. Here is the words on which our reading ended. Here are the words that we should like to have written upon our hearts tonight. Make divine love your quest. Follow after love. Seek love, divine love. This is the thing that will put every wrong thing right by the power of the Spirit of God. Well the [00:46:04] first thing that I would leave with you on this subject, as to how we can follow, seek, make quest after divine love. The first thing is Galatians chapter 5, the fruit of the Spirit. Of course, if I were to go beyond the first element, we should be here all night. But I'm thinking only of the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is love. And there it is simply. Walk in the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit will be seen, and this is love. What is walking in the Spirit? Well I feel that every student of Holy Scripture, for his own heart and life, has his own clear impression of what it means to walk in the Spirit. I give you one illustration. If you think I'm mixing my metaphors, then Paul mixes his [00:47:01] metaphors, because walking is one metaphor and fruit is another. So I can mix them a little bit as well. But I often think, as an example, about the process of log rolling in Canada. There up in the Rocky Mountains you have all that wealth of timber that's needed for the great purposes across the world. But it would require all the wealth of the Indies to transport by imported power all that timber down to the seaboard where it has to be shipped. But fortunately there is a tremendous power working in the right direction. And so that what they do is during the winter, when all these streams and rivers are frozen, they trim the trees and fell them and pile them up in the beds of the rivers. And eventually the thaw comes, the drip is heard, bit by bit the ice floors begin to move, and lo and behold all that great wealth of timber is taken by a [00:48:08] power that happens to be going in the right direction down to where it's wanted in the sea. We have to remind ourselves when we are thinking about walking in the Spirit, and the fact that the power of the Spirit of God is adequate to produce no less a marvel than divine love in the Saints if we walk in the Spirit. There will be no use putting the logs into the river if they wanted them up the stream, if they wanted the mountaintop, they could only have that power in one direction. And for you and me this is the fact. The power of the Spirit of God is not available to make me a great preacher. The power of the Spirit of God is not available to make you distinct from others in a way that [00:49:02] does some great thing for you. The Spirit of God is available and his power works in one direction only. He's glorifying Christ and is making good the things of Christ in my heart and your heart. And the faintest, feeblest step that you take Christ was. And to glorify him in thought and word and deed has that power of the Spirit of God with you. Walk in the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit will be seen. And in the measure in which we walk in the Spirit, the ugly works of the flesh will wither, and the lovely fruit of the Spirit of God will be seen as they are in fact described as the fruits of divine love in this chapter. And of course my last second and last suggestion to you about how this divine love can be awakened and we can live more and more in its power, is the fact [00:50:04] that you and I are to be thankful to God every day of our lives, that we are in a community where 1st Corinthians 11 is fully meaning to us. And the scripture that says the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread. And it is according to the loving wisdom of our Savior that we are brought week by week, although at other times we have the privilege of doing it, we are brought week by week to think of the body given and the blood shed in sacrifice, and as the outcome of that mighty love toward us.



And we have there in our scriptural practice of the Lord's Supper, more than any other conceivable thing, the means whereby we love, because he first loved us. I'll quote you another [00:51:06] verse. I might say finally. I have heard that there are certain Scottish preachers who when they say finally, I mean they've got a second wind. I assure you that I only have three minutes more, something like this. I quote you one more verse of that hymn, and I want you to see how the unique content of 1st Corinthians, as divine love as a power that controls the thoughts and the words and the life and the deeds. I want you to say, it's all in this verse, let me love thee. Love is mighty, swaying realms of deed and thought. By it I shall walk of rightly, I shall serve thee as I ought. Let me see, I'm quoting the first verse again. I come to the last two words only because my memory has lost two [00:52:02] lines here, but the last verse says, love will triumph, love will dare. They've come back to my poor old memory again. Love will soften every sorrow, love will lighten every care, love unquestioning will follow, love will triumph, love will dare. It's been my lot in my life to visit factories, sometimes enormous factories, across the world. And once or twice I've had an awe-inspiring experience. I'm thinking of one such experience. And you walk through the buildings and you found all the vessels ready to do their wonderful work, with intricate design and sophisticated instrumentation. You walk nearer to the [00:53:04] heart of the matter and you saw the great gleaming turbo generators, huge enough to supply the whole of the London underground system. And you went further and you saw the boiler plant, everything in order and everything ready, but there's the stillness of death on everything. Usually hum of machinery, the hiss of escaping whist of spent steam, the roar of the air intake that the boilers need, but now as still as death. What is wrong? There's no fire, there's no fire. And when I think of the wonders of divine love, then I feel how much we will each want to take to ourselves not only what this chapter has brought before us this evening, but what it says in the end. Follow after love, make love your quest. [00:54:03] We have a great deal of reason to be thankful to God, as I've said already, for the experiences that we have in the assembly. But I feel sometimes that we feel that we'd like to say to each other that we look abroad and we see tremendous activity in evangelical circles. We see the number of those who are interested in divine things swelling into thousands, and we know very well that a large part of it is ill-founded, and in fact probably clean contrary to the Bible pattern. Now what I've said is not that I think that I'm searching, I want you to search for thousands. Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not. But I do suggest to you that if in the power of this more [00:55:02] excellent way of divine love we were more whole into the head, then there would not only be nourishment ministers ministered, we would not only be knit together in love, and these are wonderful things, but there would be, and oh how sad if we are satisfied when there is not, there would be increase with the increase of God. We ought to be, you ought to be, the very people who can prove and demonstrate that walking in the path of obedience to the Word of God, there is love, knitting the Brethren together, you see. There is nourishment ministered, but also, and they're only too content without this clear indication of the divine word, there is also increase with the increase of God. And that it is the increase of God is the great safeguard that we're all seeking. The increase is there, but it is increase with the increase of God.