

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*4Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*8Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*

Sometimes I think it feels like we are out on the road with a flat tire, stranded, and Jesus comes along and rescues us. We kneel, hands outstretched and receive all we need to get going again.

Or the tank is on empty, there is nothing left, and the word of God, Jesus Christ fills us once more.

Or we are lost, in the middle of nowhere, confused, uncertain which road to take. And Jesus becomes our map, making clear where all the roads lead.

But sometimes it feels like we do nothing but change the tire, over and over.

And fill the tank, again and again.

And study the map until we know it by heart.

But we never put the car in gear to move forward. Always repairing, planning, getting ready but never starting out - studying the map but with no idea of where we want to go.

Not so long ago I was thinking about my prayers in public. Lead us to do your will Lord, I pray. Again and again I have prayed it. Let your will be done in us, Lord. And what is that will? I wondered whether the confirmation students have any idea?

Today, through St. Paul God tells us: His will is that we love. That is why he has repaired all the flat tires, filled the tank with gas, given us a fine map of the terrain. God wants us to set off on the road to love.

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*Love is patient, love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

This word of God is a word to you, for you.

When Martin Luther examined the practices of the church in light of the gospel, he spoke of the priesthood of all believers. Not just some were called to be religious, to obey Jesus word, not just some were called to pray for others and expect their prayers to be heard by God. All believers are addressed by God through the scriptures. You are addressed by God, called to love. You are called in your baptism to be patient and kind with enemy and friend. You are called by God to daily put to death all enviousness in your heart. In your home and in your work, daily you are called away from irritableness, resentfulness, insistence on having your own way. God calls you to bear with your brothers and sisters when they are a burden to

you, to believe every good about them, to hope that God will do wondrous thing through them and for them. You are called by God to endure your brothers and sisters failing you and to love them still.

And when you fall and fail and run out of gas, Your Lord Jesus will fix the flat tires, and put gas in the tank and show you the map once more to put you on the road to love.

There is one more word of God through Paul that I would like to consider together before I say Amen. Paul writes, *for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face.*

All my books say that the mirror Paul is talking about is a polished metal mirror. Not a silver backed glass mirror with a sharp, clear image, but a mirror in which the image would be fuzzy. Now we see in a mirror dimly.

Though we think we have a pretty good idea of how things really are, truly our vision is clouded. What will tomorrow bring? Who is sincere, who the hypocrite? What will be best for my children, my wife, myself? I see in a mirror dimly.

But one thing is clear. God's will for God's people is love. For we have seen God face to face in Jesus Christ who healed the sick, forgave sinners, fed the hungry. He is God's love that cannot be defeated, even by death. For as Jesus is living now, raised from the dead, so God's love for you and for all shall live forever, until we are face to face with our Lord.

So faith, hope, love abide, these three. But the greatest of these is love.

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