

You should be more zealous to cultivate the higher charisms than to practice the more spectacular ones. Yet let me show you a course of action which is far superior even to this preference.

Suppose I do cultivate the higher gift of preaching even up beyond the level of human discourse to the angelic. If love is not my motive, what does it all amount to? A gong clanging, a cymbal clashing! Music perhaps, but not a word from God! Even if there is no mystery inscrutable to me and no knowledge beyond my gift of interpretation, even if no circumstance I ever face can find my faith inadequate, if love is not my motive I add up to nothing.

Even if I dole out all my possessions and sell myself into slavery, it does me no good if I do it from some other motive than love.

Love is patient.

Love does the kind thing, not the jealous thing.

Love does not show herself off, does not puff herself up with anger or pride, does not do what is out of place, does not seek her own ends, is not provocative of anger in others, does not keep a record of the evil done against her, takes no joy in injustice but rejoices with truth.

Love puts up with anything, trusts always, hopes always, endures always.

There is no circumstance for which love is inadequate.

The future will give the lie to prophecies. Ecstatic utterances will cease. What we call knowledge will be annulled. (For our knowledge and our interpretation of the will of God are partial. Perfection when it comes will abolish the partial.)

Let me use the analogy of human development: My talking, thinking, and reasoning were childish--when I was a child. When I became a man I abolished childish things.

Yet another illustration, the mirror: Our present vision of God is indirect, reflected, puzzling; later we shall see face to face. My present knowledge is partial; later I shall know directly just as God's knowledge of me is direct.

For the present time, however, I find permanence in Christian faith, Christian hope, Christian love, these three things. And the greatest of these, the one the permanence of which is eternal, is Christian love.