

(1.15) Works Done Out of Love

Evil is never to be justified in this world and we must not be misled in thinking it can somehow benefit someone we really care for; but a good work for someone in need can be left undone temporarily, and not lost, if it is changed into something better at a later time.

Without love our outward works are not profitable. *If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.*¹ But that which is done with even a small amount of love becomes fruitful because *love never fails.*² God judges the amount of love in a work and not simply the amount of work itself.



You do much if you love much;
you do a good deal if you do well what you do;
you do well if you serve the common good and not your own self.

The gifts of the Spirit, *the particular manifestations of the Spirit granted to each one are to be used for the general good.*³ It is not uncommon for that which appears as an act of love is a result of our own misdirection because we seek pleasure, reward, our own interests, marked by an absence of spiritual consideration.

If you are truly moved by perfect love then you *do not seek your own interests*⁴ but desire only that God be glorified in all ways. You will envy no one if you have no personal agenda concerning self-aggrandizement, but always seek your joy in God above all else.

Attribute all good to God who is the source from which all proceeds, and not to men, for this is how the Saints attained their perfection and joy. If a man has the real spark of love he understands that worldly things are to a great extent mirrored by vanity.

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 15 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)

¹ 1Corinthians 13:3

² 1Corinthians 13:8

³ 1Corinthians 12:7

⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:5