

Love One Another

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. It's great to be here with you.

! You know, sometimes as we realize the Lord's coming back soon, we ponder on different things in our life, on things maybe we've done right, things that we've done wrong, whether we've loved the Lord in a way that is really honoring to Him, and how we have loved one another.

And the last time I shared with you, we spoke on love. And today, I'm going to be looking at the different facets of what love is.

The Bible gives us the only authoritative description of what love is. And so I'd like for us to take a look at that.

[1:21] You know, as Paul starts out in 1 Corinthians 13, in the first three verses, he's addressing some issues. Because those in Corinth, or in Cornith, they were, they had gifts.

You know, every one of us gets a gift, at least one, as a Christian, when you get born again. And those gifts are not for self-edification as much as they are for building up one another.

So if you have a gift in a certain area, that gift is for you to teach other people how to use, develop that gift to become more like Christ.

Because every one of the gifts will help us to become more like Christ. And Christ was the total embodiment of all the spiritual gifts, if you will. Sometimes you hear, well, that's not my gift, so I don't, I don't serve or clean tables or whatever.

Well then, if your gift is giving, you'll be the only one doing it because it's not everybody else's gift. How long would the church last?

[2:40] You know, our gifts are meant for us to take and build up the body of Christ by showing them in example and in word and in practical teaching on how you can become more like what the gift I have is to build up the body.

and if everybody was doing that, the body would be a lot stronger, our gifts would be more Christ honoring and we would be more maturing.

I've read down through the ages, I've read I don't know how many books on the love of God. It was the love of God that reached out and saved me when I was at the end of my rope and that's happened with many individuals when they didn't know where to turn or what to do and they were given up on life and all of a sudden somehow or another God reached down and touched their heart.

And so we can have misconceptions on love. Some think that it's a feeling.

Well, feelings can accompany it but love is an act of the will first and foremost. If it wasn't, if it was based on feelings would God be correct?

[4:21] correct, if you will, in telling us to love our enemies? You know, we have to choose. Just like within this body here, we have to choose to love one another.

We have a greeting time on Sunday morning. Oftentimes, we go to the same ones that we always go to and yet there are new faces.

there are faces that we haven't really connected with yet that we could and learn to know one another and be able to love one another in a deeper way.

So, before we get into it this morning, let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Oh, merciful Father, I ask you today to grant to us that we might have ears to hear, that we might have a heart to obey,

that we might learn, Lord, how to love one another.

What does it mean to love? I love steak. I love taking trips.

[5:46] There's so many things that I really use the term or at one time use that term that I love this or that, but then I devoured it. And so it was that we taught our children that we love people and we like things.

So, Father, I'm asking you this morning, because only you can do it, speak to hearts. Lord, challenge each and every one of us to love one another in a deeper way.

Yes, we're going to have to step out of our comfort zone, but once we start stepping, we'll find that our lives are blessed beyond measure.

You have so much to do in us and through us. And so now, Father, we ask your blessing upon our time in the word. In Jesus' name, amen.

And once again, as I often do, I ask you to bear with me. Medications dry my mouth way out, and so I need to take more drinks of water.

[7:12] But at any rate, I'd like for us to go through, it says love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous, it's not boastful, it's not rude, and it goes through a bunch of different things to, in a sense, as Paul was doing, defining love.

And most of us, we've heard this over and over in some ways, and so it just kind of goes over our head. You know, you become, how would you say it, you become adjusted, or you become, where you hear it so often, that it's something that you don't really listen to with your heart.

It might go in your ears, but then it goes out the other one. And Paul wants us to understand things.

First, he gives us a definition of love as a thing in and of itself, not merely a description of people who are behaving in a loving way.

so Paul's not talking about the way we love here as much as he is talking about what love is.

And then I have to decide, does that love fit me? Am I loving in the way Paul speaks of love?

[8:52] Paul doesn't say, people who are loving are this or that. Instead, he writes, love is this or that. So that we can grab onto it and hopefully, prayerfully, take that into our heart and demonstrate love.

I have read a lot on church history, and in the readings, you find that what really made Christians stand out was not their doctrine, not the holy title that they have over their church.

What really made the Christians stand out was the fact that they had a love for one another that was so great they were willing to sell their homes or farms or whatever if the need was that great. they lived a sacrificial lifestyle. They had what the Bible refers to as love feasts. And what that was, it's like our potlucks.

You get together and you fellowship and you share with one another and you grow, hopefully, learning from one another on what God is doing in individuals' lives and how that's helping to shape them.

[10:21] We tend to focus all on education and what we know. We look for that in degrees and you know, whether it's for candidates for a pastor or a candidate for a job.

And I'm not saying that's wrong. But if we had more character leading this country over the last 50 years, we'd have a different country.

Character is something that's very much lacking. And at the base of that is a love. Whether it's a love of patriotism towards our country or for a Christian, it's a love for our Lord and Savior, the one who came, who lived his life sacrificially, you go through the Gospels and you look at how Christ lived and what he did.

And you see, you begin to see what love looks like. It's been modeled before us in the Gospels. love. The second thing that's interesting to notice is that although you can't see it in English translation, it is speaking not of any old agape love, but rather of the agape love.

[11:59] You see, if you look it up in the dictionary and you look up agape love, one of the definitions is the love brothers and sisters in a church community would have for one another.

That could be an agape love, but it is a agape love. Paul gives us a description, the definitive description, of the agape love, the love that God possesses, because that's his very nature, that's his essence.

God is love. So, we let, hopefully, prayerfully, we let as the Holy Spirit speak to us this morning as we look at the definition, how he wants us to repent and change in our love toward one another. Every place you look back in church history, it was the love that they had for God and the love that they had for one another. And you'll read of ones who gave their life, like John Huss, who was a Catholic priest, and he came to faith in Christ, and he started sharing the gospel, and he was commanded by the Pope to stop, and he wouldn't do it, so they burned him on the stake in the city hall.

And he died singing praise to God as he went up in flames. And there are so many stories of that same nature, of ones who loved God with all their heart, not a bit of it, but all of it.

[13:57] God was number one. And their love for the brethren is what changed the world. And I shared this before I know, but I'll share it quickly this morning.

A missionary went in Russia, or a missionary went to Russia, and he spoke with a Russian man who was a Christian, and he said, how, in a country where it's commanded not to share Christianity, where you could go to jail for it, or be, you know, beaten, or whatever the case might be, he said, how is it that you share the gospel in this country?

And the Russian said, we live in such a way that people are compelled to ask us what makes you so different.

you see, it comes back down to that love. Today, we get hung up on doctrines, and, you know, that, and I'm not saying that that's all wrong, but we get hung up on whether you got to wear a suit to church, or blue jeans, okay, or whether you look this way, or that way, or whether you can have tattoos, or not.

we can get hung up on so many, so many different things, but when we're demonstrating the love of Christ, all of those things don't matter.

[15:24] matter. I spoke to somebody on a vacation this past week, and they're from out west, and they said that in their church, there's a big church in town, and they won't let homosexuals or anyone else into their church.

You come, there's the door. She said, at our church, we do. She said, Jesus sat down with sinners. We don't compromise truth, but we show them the love of Christ, and when they see the love of Christ, then they're seeing genuine Christians that are making a difference in this world in which we live.

love. And if you look, as we will today, at agape love, when rightly understood in the ways that this passage explains it or defines it, it's nothing less than a picture or a portrait of Jesus Christ.

You get that? Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind. Jesus is not rude.

And we could go all through the different aspects of love, and you have a portrait of the one that we are to become like.

[17:19] Understand that you, you, singly you, now it's corporate as well, but I'm talking about each one of us.

If I'm living in such a way that people see me as different, not necessarily weird, though some might think that's weird because of some of the things that you do, like trusting in difficult situations or rejoicing in trials.

But if each one of us took on this responsibility that, Lord, I want to love as you love. I want agape love in my life.

Agape love is a self-sacrificing, not self-serving, but a self-sacrificing love for our brothers and sisters.

sisters. So then Paul gets into the passage, and what does agape love look like in action?

[18:34] First, he says that love suffers long. To suffer long means to be patient. Some of your translations use the word patient. It's to be patient.

Literally, the word itself means to be far off from anger. You get angry easy? It means to have a long fuse with people if we're patient.

Sometimes we are rather short-fused, aren't we, though? Oh, how I battle that for years with Sunday drivers on seven days a week.

And eventually, I let it go. And they don't bother me anymore. Maybe because I let my wife drive more, so it's her problem to deal with.

But love suffers long. We easily get impatient with people, but true agape love does not get impatient with others.

[19:52] We learn to just rest and wait for God to open doors, close doors. I'd always choose the line at the supermarket.

Two people in this line, 20 in that line, and I'd get in the two-person line because I'm important. I got something important to do, supposedly, and the 20 would get through before I would.

God, what is wrong? Why do you keep doing this to me? And then he brings to mind, learn patience, my son. Learn patience.

impatience. Our impatience is actually an expression of too much self-love.

Where I have the right, I'm more important, I should be at the front, I should get out quicker than you. get out quicker than you. I should get out quicker than you. there was a time when Jesus called his disciples to himself and they went far from the, or went away far from the demands of ministry in order that they might have some quiet time.

[21:27] You know, where you can get away and just chill. Jesus told his disciples, he said, come apart a while and rest. Leonard Ravenhill says, if you do not come apart a while to rest, you'll come apart a while.

We need that time. And Jesus had set that time and had gone away with his disciples. They needed time away in the light of the terrible and grievous news.

And what was that news? That John the Baptist had been beheaded. A fellow servant of Christ.

One that baptized Jesus. And they needed to get some time away maybe in grieve and deal with it. But when Jesus and his disciples arrived at the place of rest, they found that multitudes had gotten word that he was there. And he gathered together and they had gathered together to meet him.

[22:38] And the Bible tells us in Matthew 14, 14, that when Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them and healed their sick.

No R&R.; he saw people in need and he sacrificed his own time, if you will, to meet those needs.

The next one going down is love is kind. It's gentle in its manner and not harsh with people.

Gentle in its manner, not harsh. When we get in a rush or we're under some pressure, we tend to get harsh with one another.

And every now and then it might go a little bit farther and we'll say things that we'll forever regret. we sometimes talk about showing tough love to some people and there certainly may be a place for that at times for firmness.

[24:07] But I suspect that in many times it's not tough love that I'm really showing, rather it's just toughness. Jesus was gentle and kind in the way he showed love to his people.

Remember how kind he was to the woman that was caught in adultery? Others were ready to stone her to death. She was a guilty sinner.

She was humiliated, she was ashamed, and she was traumatized. But Jesus protected her from her accusers. And in John 8, when they were all gone, he asked if anyone was left to accuse her.

And when she said no, he said neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. don't be committing adultery.

Be a changed woman. And he didn't condemn her, he showed kindness to her. Love does not envy.

[25:32] And perhaps when Paul wrote those words, he had the Corinthians very specifically in mind. Many of them were envious of one another's spiritual gifts.

And they were jealous of each other's ministries. You know, whatever kind of ministry you're in, I'm a pastor.

I'm a counselor. I can clean toilets. I can vacuum. I can help rearrange the chairs. You see, none of it is below me.

And I'm not so lofty that I think I shouldn't or wouldn't have to do any of that. They had their gifts and thought they were pretty important.

but a gift is only really for the benefit of others. Yes, we'll benefit, we'll be edified, we'll be encouraged when we see the fruit of what we've done with our gift to build somebody else up.

[26:47] love. To be jealous of others is the very opposite of agape love, which is a love that seeks the blessedness of others.

I think here of how free from any envy or jealousy our Lord is with us. do you think that if he would be right or could be right in being jealous of us if we were made somebody important, you know, like Billy Graham.

Billy Graham ministered hundreds of thousands of souls. Whether you agree with this technique or not, I praise God for him and for all the hearts and lives that he has touched.

God used him and he stayed humble. That's why God could use him. As soon as we start to think we're somebody that we're not, in a proud way, God lets us do our thing until we wake up.

Consider this. Jesus holds nothing back for himself, but freely gives us all that he has to us.

[28:33] Did you know that in John 17, when he prayed to the father for us, he said, and the glory you gave me, I have given to them.

You are receiving the glory that God had given to his own son. that amazes me.

I am so unworthy to receive his glory. But oh, I thank God.

I thank God for all that he's done and all the love that he has shown. He holds nothing back.

How completely free from jealousy and envy our Lord is for us. We need to be like him, with love free from jealousy and envy.

[29:52] I've seen ones get a trophy or something and somebody else that wanted it, they're over there pouting. We've probably all been there at one time or another or over one thing or another.

But you see, agape love would rejoice that they had received it. putting others first.

And we'll look here at the last one this morning and given the opportunity, I'll finish these off when we get to, when I get to be up here again.

But the next one is love does not parade itself. Other translations have it that love does not brag or boast.

It's a way to seek and draw attention to ourselves or to seek the applause of others is the very opposite of the other-centered focus that characterizes true agape love.

[31:18] We don't look to draw attention to ourself. We look to draw attention to our Lord and Savior.

Agape love doesn't draw attention to itself, not even in order to show anyone else how sacrificially loving it is.

You know, we can do things and say, look at how great I am. It can be, in a sense, a hidden sin of pride when we want to flaunt how wonderful we are in all the things that we're doing or all the things that we can do, but rather we seek to lift up.

You know, there was a time, way back when, when we started this church in the basement of our home, when we did everything.

and I led worship and Pete came along, pulled me out of that, did a great job and as others came in and were willing to serve, give it all away.

[32:46] Give it all away. Let the body learn to serve and love one another. together. And that's what happened. And today, I don't worry about sound booth.

Today, I don't worry about the grass being mowed or the snow being plowed or the church being cleaned or anything else.

Why? Because everybody's jumping in. And as one person once said, more hands make less labor. And we learned to share and even to have fun in the sharing.

I remember in the military when I got mouthy with the wrong person and I had to scrub a bathroom floor with a toothbrush. And another guy came in and joined me and boy, we had a riot.

At first, I was, why did I have to do this? And then we found out it was great. What changed? Well, for one, I had fellowship.

[34:02] Not around the Lord, but I had someone else to share the situation in which I was in. And that's why we stick together.

together. That's why we do things together. That's why we have love feasts, if you will. Our potlucks and everything and sing-alongs and for us to get together and spend time with each other and encourage and see what gifts and abilities people have.

Jesus didn't behave this way in his love toward people. He would often withdraw from the crowds that wanted to applaud him.

He wasn't looking for accolades. He was looking to walk in a way that honored his father and so taught the others.

And today in different countries there are small groups of people over in Africa and down in the Amazon, et cetera, and even in countries that are more, I don't want to say civilized, but for lack of a better term.

[35:32] and you find that they live in a sense of community and they share with one another wherever one has needs and they demonstrate love toward one another.

If one man's hut would burn down, they'd all get together and rebuild that hut. Today, nope, can't make it, Super Bowl's on.

Oh, that would kill me to miss that. Jesus says, die. Die to yourself.

We live and we live for one purpose and that's to bring glory to our Lord and Savior. And if he came back today, how would you rate yourself on that scale before he said a word?

I'm going to cut it off here for this week. But, you know, it says, as it goes through this definition of agape love, I think it would be proper and even biblical to say that let's put Jesus in there.

[37:01] Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind. He is not rude. He is not arrogant. He doesn't seek his own. Would that not be fair?

And why? Because Jesus is love. Now, we are to, I don't want to say ape him, where we're just going through the motions, but we are to grow into Christ's likeness.

And the more we grow in maturity, I believe personally that as we mature, God gives us more gifts to accomplish greater things.

He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much, and you've been faithful in little, so I'm going to give you more. But then the real test comes down.

Let's try love on for ourself. Jack is patient. Jack is kind. Jack is not arrogant.

[38:13] And boy, as you're going through, you wouldn't believe the thoughts that run through your head that God is saying, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. You see, beloved, God wants all of us.

And I don't think he's going to be near as concerned about all the doctrine and the things that we get hung up on. Again, not to say that they're wrong, but that our priority is that we love each other as Christ loved us.

Jesus commanded us, love one another just as I have loved you. And how did he love us?

How does he love us every day? Does he not show us kindness? Does he not protect us when we're driving down the interstate? Does he not provide for us?

Does he not comfort us in our pain and sorrow? Yeah, every day. Let's pray.

[39:34] Our heavenly father, father, I want to thank you for the time that we had together this morning. I would ask that you would help the things that have been shared, Lord, that your Holy Spirit who indwells all believers would bring these truths to mind and help us to go to do a study or to look at these words intently and what does it mean that love never fails?

Ask ourselves the questions and Lord, you'll give us the answers. So we do thank you in Christ's name and I thank each and every one of you out here today for sharing this time with us.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.