

# Love: The Most Excellent Way

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, if you have your Bibles, can you turn with me to the book of 1 Corinthians?

From now up until the summer holidays, we're going to be in chapter 13, but for today, by way of introduction, we're going to read Paul's introduction and thanksgiving. So 1 Corinthians 1 and the first nine verses, the words will be up on the screen also. And so let's hear God's word together. Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way, with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge, God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. And now let's stand together once again so that we can call on God's name in prayer. Let's pray.

Lord, as we've just read what Paul could testify about the church in Corinth, we thank you for what's true of your church at all times and in all places, that we are those who you have called to yourself to be your holy nation. We thank you that as your people we enjoy your grace.

We thank you for the reality that you give gifts to your people so that we might serve one another and we might serve the world. We thank you for that promise that we will be kept until the return of Jesus. We thank you for that promise that you are faithful to your church and to your people and that we enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus through the gift of your Spirit. Lord, may we be so thankful for the church. May we pray for one another. May we work for unity. May we seek to encourage and build one another up as we recognize that the church is your design and plan. The church is your treasured possession. Lord, we ask that you would fill us and fill us increasingly with your love.

[ 3 : 2 0 ] Help us to be those who love the gospel, that good news of your saving grace. And we ask that you'd help us to share that love, that we would do that within the church, that we would be sharing your word together and praying for one another and seeking to encourage one another to persevere. And that we'd be sharing your love with the world and showing kindness and mercy and compassion and declaring the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus. We ask that you would encourage us in our mission here in Beccle, that we are called to be disciples who make disciples, that you call us together as a church to be a light for this city. And we ask that you would enable us in our words and in our actions to be faithful to you.

That in the way that we live together, we would demonstrate the transforming power of your love and grace such that people would want to know about Jesus as they see the way that we live together.

We pray that you'd give us wisdom and help as we look to communicate the hope that we have, that we would do that with gentleness and respect, but we would do it with the help of your Spirit and in your power. And Lord, we pray to see many coming to this church, wanting to know the truth, wanting to know more about Jesus and coming to be saved.

Lord, we pray for your church, not just here in Beccle, but we pray for your church in Edinburgh and in Scotland. And we ask that wherever your word is read and preached, wherever Jesus is declared to be Lord and God and the only Savior for sinners, that you would take that word and that you would apply it to hearts and lives and you would bring real and lasting change. Lord, we pray that you would revive your church here in Scotland, that you would encourage those who perhaps feel downhearted and weak and small. Let us know that you are with us, that you are present to help us. Lord, we pray, especially giving thanks for the church in Bonner Bridge and Lairg, thanking you that in your providence they have called Ben Fidion to be their next minister. We thank you for that church and its witness. And we pray that they might look ahead with great expectation to what you will do among them. And we pray for Ben and for Hannah and the girls as they prepare for that move. We ask that you would encourage them and equip them. Lord, we thank you for the gift they've been to us and we pray that they would continue to be used in your service up north. Lord, we thank you that you are a God who bears our burdens. Lord, we recognize in our church family, in our own families and connections that there are many who are bearing burdens of different kinds. Some to do with illness, some to do with work or with financial challenges, some to do with mental health issues, some facing particular spiritual temptation. Lord, may you draw near and may you comfort and may you provide help and deliverance.

And Lord, again, we pray for people who are suffering around the world, as we've seen the reports coming from Israel and Palestine. Lord, we pray for peace. Lord, we pray for families who are mourning. We pray that the tension wouldn't escalate, but rather it would be brought to an end.

[ 7 : 28 ] Lord, we ask that on both sides there would be a looking to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to bring lasting peace in hearts and lives. We thank you for your church in Israel and Palestine, and we pray that you protect and encourage and strengthen them to be able to serve and to bear testimony to the peace that passes understanding that's found in knowing Jesus as Lord.

And Father, we pray again for the nation of India, and we pray mercy. Mercy for those whom we love and pray for. Mercy for those ministries that we have been connected with and heard about for many years.

Lord, as your people suffer along with the rest of their country, we ask that you would uphold and you would enable them to testify to true and living hope found in the Lord Jesus.

And Lord, now as we come to read your word again, we ask that you would speak its truth into our hearts and that you would be pleased to bless us and do us good. Now we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Now if you turn again in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, we are going to look at that in just a moment, but just by way of introduction. So we're thinking for the next five or six weeks about love as the most excellent way to think about how Paul describes love here in this section. But I just wanted to introduce for us very briefly Corinth, the city, the culture, and the church, so that we sort of understand where this chapter fits. So as a city, Corinth was a very significant one in the first century, a population of maybe 80 to 100,000. It was the wealthiest city in Greece at that time.

[ 9 : 20 ] It was a major multicultural centre, had a huge stadium, a massive outdoor theatre, and a really large market district. So it was a thriving place. It was dominated by a temple that stood on a hill just on the outskirts of the city. That was a temple to the goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

And it was served by a thousand women priestesses by day who then became prostitutes by night, giving us some insight into the kind of city it was. And what about the culture of Corinth? We know that every city has its own unique culture, different features. Well, in Corinth, historians recognise a couple of things that really dominate. It was famed for having many patrons. So that's a very wealthy class of folks who then hired people known as clients. And so you worked for money, you worked for food, but in exchange you gave support. You gave good public relations, you gave social and political support to your patron.

And all this served to make sure that status was a really big deal in Corinth. Social division was a really big deal in Corinth between the classes. And you can see that as you read 1 Corinthians. So there's patrons, but they were also in Corinth famous for being wild, especially with regards to sexual immorality. There was a saying in 1st century, to be a Corinthian, which meant that you partied hard, that you followed the lifestyle of that temple up on the hill. And it's into this city and this culture that the church comes, that the gospel comes. So 1st in Acts 18, Paul comes to the city and he plants the church. We discover there's lots of opposition from the synagogue. They don't want to know. There is suffering for Paul in bringing the gospel, but he has that vision from God, encouraging him to take heart and to stay because God had many people in that city. So he stayed for 18 months. And so this letter is then written to this young church. And I want to read that introduction because it was a reminder of the fact that when Paul thinks about other Christians, he thinks of them, first of all, as being those who are in Christ. And when you read the details of a letter, it's remarkable how he thinks of them. He thinks of them as being God's church. He's confident of God's grace in their life. He's confident that God has given them gifts that will build up the church.

He's confident of God's faithfulness. He's confident that these people enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus. But nevertheless, as we get into the heart of the letter, we discover that there are many problems in this church. They need to know how this gospel that they have received then works itself into their life, and especially into life in the church. We discover this is a church that's divided.

Which leaders should they follow and hold in highest esteem? It's a church divided because of human pride, divided because of great acts of immorality going on among believers. They would sit down for fellowship meals, and you'd see a class divide. Spiritual gifts were being used not to serve others, but in unhelpful ways to make much of themselves and their gifts. That's our context for chapters 12 to 14.

[ 12 : 47 ] So this is the setting for this wonderful chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. If you've got time in the next few days, read this letter, and you'll see all of these things play out, and then see how this emphasis on love fits in. Love as the most excellent way. So having said that, let's read 1 Corinthians together.

Chapter 13, just at the end of chapter 12, verse 31, it says, And yet I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails, but where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face.

[ 14 : 44 ] Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. Amen. Love is the most excellent way. That's Paul's message. But he knows that he's writing to a people who are being pulled by competing stories.

And what's true in first century Corinth is true in the 21st century here in Edinburgh, that as a church, we are being presented with two different stories to answer the question, what's life all about? What is the good life? What is love all about? Story one is the story told by our culture.

And that story focuses very much on love yourself, on you be you. There's an emphasis on personal fulfillment, a concern for my needs, asking the question, what's in it for me. In other words, by and large, we are encouraged to put I and me at the center of the story. And we hear that a lot.

But then there's story two, and that's told in God's Word. It's heard in the gospel. And that's a story of the God who is love, who has always existed, and in eternal fellowship of perfect love, Father, Son, and Spirit. In God's Word, we discover God's love for the world in the sending of his one and only Son, Jesus, who loves us so much that he dies on the cross in our place for our sins, so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life. And we discover that by faith in this Jesus, we are brought into enjoyment of the love of our triune God. And in the gospel and in God's Word, there is a focus on love, the love of Jesus, and the way of Jesus, which is the way of love. We think about Jesus as one who was humble, leaving the glory of heaven to become one of us, to represent us, and to die as our substitute and our sacrifice. We think about that sacrificial love of Jesus, the self-giving, self-denying love of Jesus. We recognize in the love of God, one that is marked by grace, not love for those who deserve it, but love to those who don't deserve it. So in the story told by the church, the story of the gospel, the story of God's Word, it's God and his love that stands at the center. And to borrow an illustration from C.S. Lewis, the love of God and the God of love is the sun that shines bright in the sky, and it's also the light that we are to live by, day by day. But what's happening in Corinth and what happens in

Edinburgh is that these two very different stories are constantly competing for our hearts, for our attention, so that we have to choose day by day which path am I going to take, which voice am I going to listen to in this moment? What's God's desire for his church? What's his desire for us? Is that we would receive his love and that love would change our hearts? It would transform our lives and it would shape then how we love others. As the New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg rightly says, love is the centerpiece of the Christian ethic. Determining how we love should be, how we live should be love. So that's why we're going to spend a few weeks thinking about love is the most excellent way, to borrow from Paul's term and to then consider what Christian love looks like, and especially we'll keep coming back to the example of Jesus. With the goal that whatever we find ourselves doing, whoever we find ourselves with, whether we're packing lunches for children, getting ready for school, whether we're filing reports for the office, whether we're listening to a friend and their struggles, whether we're engaging on social media, whether we're enjoying a coffee with someone from our church family, all of those situations and many, many more would be shaped by knowing God's love for us in Christ. And that would determine then how we interact. Before we get into our text, just a helpful definition I came across this week of what it means to have love, to use Paul's expression. Gordon Fee, another New Testament scholar, says, to have love is to be towards others the way God in Christ has been towards us. The love of God determines and defines our view and our application of love. What is Paul trying to do in this chapter?

[ 19 : 59 ] What would he have the Word of God do for us today? Anybody's writing to a church that's divided, a church that's engaged in power plays, a church that's marked by social divisions of various kinds, where members are acting for self against the good of the church, where they're being influenced by the culture, and that's the story that they are listening to. What Paul is doing is he's telling us again the better story, the story of the God of love and the love of God that has that transforming quality about it to create a holy nation, to create the people of God who then live for God and who show God's love in the world. So we're really going to just stick on that, that love is the most excellent way. We're going to see it in these first three verses in 1 Corinthians, and then we're going to go wide and we're going to see it through the Bible. So to 1 Corinthians 13. It's a beautiful chapter, isn't it? We've probably heard it read at weddings. Perhaps some of us maybe even had it read at our weddings. But the question right now is, why is it here? Why in 1 Corinthians and why here at this point in his letter? Well, Paul wants to remind the church, he wants to remind us that love is central.

First of all, love is central in this argument he is developing in chapters 12 to 14, which is all about spiritual gifts, one of the big issues going on in this church. So let me very briefly show how he points to the centrality of love in these chapters. So in chapter 12, he's establishing principles to do with spiritual gifts. So in verse 7, first principle, to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. The Spirit gives gifts to Christians for the good of the church. It's first principle. Next principle, verse 12. Just as a body, though one has many parts, but all its parts form one body, so it is with Christ. Church is one body with many parts. Jesus is the head. Each member has a unique part to play. Third principle, verse 24 and 25. God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lack it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. In the church, every member is to be valued and cared for. Every spiritual gift is to be valued. So there's some of those principles. And then chapter 14 moves on to talk about, here's how to use spiritual gifts when the people of God gather together in worship.

So there's the principles now being worked out in practice in chapter 14. Just a couple of things to note. In verse 26, we see Paul's repeated emphasis that spiritual gifts are given for the sake of the church, for the sake of others. End of verse 26, everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

Using our gifts so the church may be built up. And also, the way we use these gifts, Paul says, it must be for the sake of mission. So chapter 14 and verse 23 and 24, one of Paul's emphasis is that church services should have a measure of order so that it's clear to people who come in what's going on.

And especially, it's clear that people can hear the gospel. So we use spiritual gifts for building one another up and for the sake of mission, so that people who are not believers can hear the gospel.

[ 24 : 08 ] So chapter 12, principles. Chapter 14, practice. Right at the center is chapter 13. And what's the driving heart of all of this? It's love. Love determines how we use spiritual gifts.

Love determines how we worship. Love determines how we go about mission. Love is central, Paul is saying. We receive the love of God in and through the Lord Jesus, and that then informs and transforms our love for God and love for others. The problem that Paul recognizes in Corinth is that they were really excited about these dramatic gifts, and we'll think about the dramatic gifts. They weren't so excited about the principle of love for others. The heart of the problem was a heart problem. The story they were listening to was me first, not God first, not the good of the church first. They weren't being controlled by this most excellent way. They weren't reflecting God's love for them in the Lord Jesus.

Before we move on to dig a bit deeper, I wonder, do you see the danger? Do I see the danger there?

When we think about the way our culture and society talks to, or maybe especially disagrees with others, it's fairly easy to spot a loss of civil dialogue, a loss of politeness. It's very easy to be quick to outrage. And then in a church, it becomes really easy for our beliefs not to be matched by our practice as we begin to hear the story and follow the example of the world around us. So, we need to ask God's Word to examine our hearts on this very practical issue of how does the love that we receive play out in the love that we show or indeed don't show. Verses 1 to 3, Paul is saying that love is central to the Christian way of life. We could summarize these verses by saying that a religious life, a spiritual life without love, in God's eyes, is worthless.

Verse 1, if I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but do not have love, I'm only a resounding gong what a clanging symbol. If a person is able to speak in another language that they've never learned so that someone else might hear God's Word in their mother tongue, or if someone is able to speak in the language of the angels, wow, that sounds an amazing gift. But Paul says without love, that's just a lot of hollow noise.

[ 27 : 07 ] I'm sure we've all been really glad to have Kellen back singing live. It does so much for our worship, I think. But imagine if, instead of playing the piano, you got up and started smashing some cymbals.

Maybe we'd be happy to go back to our recording, wouldn't we? And what Paul is saying is that the speaking gifts without love is just so much ugly noise. Verse 2, if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If a person is able to explain God's Word to someone else, if someone has the insight into God's Word, if someone has a powerful faith but has no love, while others may think much of those gifts, Paul is saying in God's eyes, it's nothing. I am nothing without love. Verse 3, if I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. What's the gift in view here?

The ability of self-sacrifice and self-denial, giving up our possessions, giving our body to suffering, but without love? It's just self-serving. That person would gain nothing. Again, what Paul is saying is that love is central, must be central to our discipleship and to our mission. These three verses contain one basic truth, that God cannot use loveless Christians for His glory. We need to be controlled by, motivated by the love of God, not looking for our own glory. Last week, well, a couple of weeks now ago, Friday afternoon at five o'clock, George IV Bridge, our car developed a problem.

The engine lost power, and the clutch wouldn't engage. Stuck, going nowhere, no movement, dashboard warning lights. Paul gives us 1 Corinthians 13 verses 1 to 3 as dashboard warning lights for the church.

God's love is the engine that is to drive our love and our service for Him and for others, and there is a huge problem if we become disconnected from that love.

[ 30 : 01 ] God's love in Christ is to be what engages our hearts and creates movement to mission and to loving one another. We need to know and be filled by and to live out of the love of God.

A really basic question then. What does God want from you and from me today and in this coming week?

Put yourself in a number of different situations. Imagine sitting down at the family meal table, or imagine yourself at your workstation, or at your computer at home and you're responding to the latest social media feed, or you're with a fellow Christian in church. In all those moments, and in so many more, what does God want for you and for me? He would want us to know God's love in Christ, to believe the gospel and to live in that good news of God's love for us in sending Jesus to be our Savior. He'd want us to enjoy that love, that that would be the story that would grab our hearts, that would captivate our heart and our mind, and that we would then share that love in our fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, in our mission in the world.

Love is the most excellent way. That's what Paul says. Now, just to back this up to help it hopefully stick in our hearts and our minds, let's just really briefly look at four ways the Bible, if we go wider, the Bible reveals love as the most excellent way. First, we see in the Bible that love is God's greatest gift. You see that here, end of chapter 13, verse 13, and now these three remain, faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love. How does anyone come to know the love of God? How does anyone come to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus? Is it the case that we go to bed one day as an enemy of God, we wake up the next day, and we just decide that we're going to love God from now on?

That we just make that? No, the answer is it's a gift of God's love and a gift of God's grace. The Bible speaks to us of the love of God the Father who chooses His people, who takes the initiative to save, who sends His Son on a rescue mission. The Bible tells us of the love of Jesus the Son, who in obedience to the Father, in love for His Father, obeys the law that we break, goes to the cross in our place, dying to save sinners so that anyone who puts their faith and their trust in Jesus will enjoy forgiveness and eternal life. And the Bible tells us of the Holy Spirit who, in love, applies the truth of the good news about Jesus to our hearts, who comes to live within us. The God of love comes to live in His people. So it becomes clear to understand that you and I were not saved by our own ability. We're not saved by our goodness. We are saved because God pours out His love in our hearts.

[ 33 : 34 ] So as the Apostle John says, we love because, and only because, God first loved us. Love is God's greatest gift because it's what saves us. Because it's what saves us and brings us into His family. So that Christian love, our love, is to be motivated by a sense of gratitude for that love that we have received.

And it's powered by the Spirit of love that dwells within us. God is love, and the greatest gift He's ever given us is Himself, as He pours His love in our hearts. So love is the most excellent way because love is God's greatest gift. We can think about it in another way, though. Love is the most excellent way because love is what we were made for. And for this, let's go back to the beginning. Let's go back to Genesis. And there in the book of Genesis, we discover that we are, as people, created by God in His image, in the image of the God who is love. And we are made to know and enjoy Him and His love, and also to love one another as fellow image bearers. And then as a church, we also come to know that God is our Father in heaven. And in God's family, love is the key family value. Every church could have that sign on the wall. In this family, in God's family, we do love. And as people made in God's image, we are made, indeed, we are commanded to love God and to love others. We are part of the family of the human race, and so we owe love to others. And especially, we are called to love the family of faith. We are to have a special kind of love for one another in the church. And we see how important love is that we are made for it when we think about, for example, the Ten Commandments. Exodus chapter 20, what do we find? That we can break the Ten Commandments down into two sections. The first four are all about love for God, and the next six are all about love for others. When Jesus is asked, what's the greatest command? How do you summarize the Lord? Jesus said, love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. We are made as people in God's image to love, to love God, to love others. So the question we need to ask ourselves, then, is why is there so much hate in the world? And indeed, if we're honest, why is there so much hate and anger in our own hearts? Why is there so much sadness, and why is there so much brokenness?

And the answer is sin, Genesis 3. This sin that spoils and pollutes and corrupts the image of God, that breaks relationship. This sin that, instead of allowing love to go up to God and out to others, turns in on oneself, creating so much hurt and sadness.

That's why the gospel is good news, because what's Jesus come to do? Jesus has come to break the stranglehold of sin in our lives. Jesus has come to break the power of sin. Jesus has come to make us new creations in Christ who are able to love God and to love others from a new heart, having been forgiven of our sin. So love is the most excellent way, because love is what we were made for.

Love is also the most excellent way, because love, according to Jesus, is the badge, it's the distinguishing feature of the Christian. For this, we can go to John chapter 13. So this is just after Jesus has washed his disciples' feet, and he washed his disciples' feet, anticipating that he would serve them in a far greater way by dying on the cross in their place for their sin, indeed doing that for all who trust in him. And there in John chapter 13, at verse 34, Jesus said, A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all people know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. That's the distinguishing mark of the church. Now, we know that cultures and nations and people groups, we have unique markers.

[ 38 : 16 ] Scotland are unique markers. Our guys walk around in kilts, we drink iron brew and whiskey, and we are sunny and optimistic by nature. True, isn't it? Perhaps.

Sometimes you can tell where a person is from, from how they look, how they sound, how they dress. Christians, we should be known because of how we love, because of this Christ-like love in us, where we are ready to put others first, where we are ready to be humble, where we are quick to be self-giving. We are called to be ambassadors of Jesus.

We represent him in the world, in the message that we declare, that the good news that's found in him, and in our way of life, that we should look like Jesus. We should be little Christ's Christians.

We are a holy nation. And our governing principle is love, that we enjoy that love that we receive, and we share that love that we enjoy. So, love is the most excellent way because it's the badge of the Christian. And love is the most excellent way, finally, because love never fails. This is from verse 8 here. Love never fails, but where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. Those great gifts, spectacular gifts that the church was celebrating, Paul's saying, they won't be there in heaven, but love will be. I recommended a few weeks ago, I'm going to recommend again, wonderful sermon from Jonathan Edwards, Heaven at a World of Love. You can find it online or find it in print. It's a beautiful, beautiful sermon. But imagine with me for a moment, a world without jealousy. Imagine a world free of anger, no slander or gossip. Imagine a world where your words or your actions and attitudes were never misrepresented. Imagine a world without misunderstanding. Imagine a world without misunderstanding.

And then imagine, as an individual, being unlimited in your ability to love. Never too tired, never too busy. Imagine being unlimited in who you loved. Not choosing to love some and ignoring others.

[ 40 : 59 ] Imagine being 100% completely committed to the good of others always. And then imagine a world where nothing ever spoiled or polluted that love. Imagine where perfect love lasts for all eternity.

Friends, this is heaven. This, as Christians, is our true home. This will be our culture and our story.

Love, perfect love, God's love. And what Paul is calling us to, what the Bible calls us to, is to live in that love, to live with that culture day by day.

We want to, as it were, lessen the culture shock for the day when we get to heaven, to live day by day enjoying that love and sharing that love.

Paul says love is the most excellent way. And since that's true, what should you and I do as we close? First of all, we should seek this love. If you're here today and you're not a Christian, know that God would give you His love. Know that God has sent His Son Jesus to show you the full extent of His love, that He would die in your place for your sins so that by faith you might be forgiven and have new life. If you're growing cold in your love for Jesus, if you feel that you're backsliding, seek again this love. God would give it to you.

[ 42 : 53 ] Well, we turn from our natural love of self to our faith in Jesus and to enjoy God's love. So we're called to seek this love. We should also, secondly, share this love.



Think about your coming week. Think about what's already in your diary. Think about the stuff that's not yet in your diary. Think about those tens, hundreds, perhaps thousands of interactions you will have with different people this week. Each of them represents a chance to show the love of God to someone else. So let's ask for God's grace to show love to our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we would be those who would encourage others, that we would build others up, that we would bear others' burdens, that we'd speak well of one another, we'd speak the truth to one another. And ask for grace to show love in your community, in your particular sphere, so that God's love might fill the hearts of others, that someone might be drawn to Jesus because they see his love in us. So let's seek this love, and let's share this love. And finally, as Christians, let's savor this love. Let's delight in and treasure

God's love for us in Christ. Think about it, and think about it often. The wonder of the gospel. Sing about it when you're at home or when you're in the car. Read about it in God's Word or in good books, because no love compares with God's love. No story is as good as God's story of his love for us in Christ.

Love is the most excellent way. Let's pray together. Lord, our God, thank you that the Bible is so full of your great love and your desire to save people and to bring them to yourself and to give the hope of an eternity of perfect love.

And Lord, we thank you for showing us your love in sending Jesus. May each one of us seek your love. May each one of us call on Jesus as Lord and Savior, returning from sin to trust in him. May you help us to share his love with others, Christians, non-Christians, family, friends, colleagues, people in our community.

[ 45 : 38 ] And may we do that as we are constantly receiving and being refreshed by your love in our lives. May we savor, may we delight in your goodness to us, your love and kindness for us. May that always warm our hearts. May it always lead us to praise and to worship. We ask it for your glory and for our greatest good.

Amen. Now let's finish our time this morning. Again, as Kellen will lead us in the hymn, Grace.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Your grace that leads this sinner home From death to life forever And sings the song of righteousness By blood and not by merit Your grace that reaches far and wide To every tribe and nation Has called my heart to enter in The joy of your salvation By grace I am redeemed

By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord Your grace that I cannot explain Not by my earthly wisdom The prince of life without a stain Was traded for this sin By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord

[ 48 : 57 ] Let praise rise up and overflow My song resound forever For grace will see me welcomed home To walk beside my Savior By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored

And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord Let's stand for the benediction May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Amen Amen Come on

Love you all Most of the glory the Lord And and and and-