

1 Corinthians 13:4–13

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[0 : 00] Our sermon passage this morning is found in 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-13. And if you need a Bible, would you raise your hand and a greeter will provide you with one.

! Would you please stand as you are able for the reading of God's word. 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-13.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away.

[1 : 03] For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child.

I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide.

These three. But the greatest of these is love. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

And let me rush to add a word of welcome to our service this morning to Christ Church Chicago. We're so glad that you are here as we continue the series on the Spirit-filled church this morning.

[2 : 09] I was 11 years old. I quietly slipped into the house one day after school trying to hold back the tears so no one would notice.

But of course, my mother stopped me and said, hey, what's wrong with you?

Tried to play it off. But of course, that never works with mothers. And she persisted. What's wrong with you?

Finally, with tears in my eyes, now on full display, I said, Becky broke up with me.

My mother said, who on earth is Becky?

[3 : 29] I said, she's my soulmate. My mother said, you're a soulmate.

I said, yeah. And today, she said we couldn't be together anymore because she was going to go see Tony. Well, my mother, trying to act concerned, asked me, so how long have the two of you been talking?

I said, almost two weeks now. She said, well, that's not really a very long time for you to be this upset, son.

But mom, you don't understand. I love her. To which my mother replied, boy, you don't even know what love is.

There's a big difference in an 11-year-old's version of love and grown-up love. All right, she was.

[4 : 50] In our passage this morning, Paul relays what it looks like when love is all grown up.

Let me first echo, in my own way, part of what we heard from Pastor Helm's wonderful sermon last week. What's love got to do with it?

Everything. No matter how gifted you are, no matter how much knowledge you have, you can quote the Westminster Confession by heart. You've read all the books, listened to all the podcasts.

If you don't have love, you have nothing. Nothing. Love is indispensable, and it is sourced from God himself.

Further, as was also mentioned last week, and I just need to press in for a moment on it as we move forward, there's nothing in today's passage, indeed, nothing in this entire chapter about your

feelings.

[6 : 01] feelings. There's nothing about how your heart skips a beat, or you get butterflies in your stomach, or goosebumps on your arms when they walk into the room.

This is not the romantic fairy tale passage often read at weddings, although it will certainly have an indelible impact on your marriage and all other relationships if you let it.

Once, I had a couple ask me to dramatically read this passage at their wedding, and they wanted me to do it in a low, very white, romantic, romantic voice.

So, I said, love is patient. Yeah, and love is kind.

I sure regret I did that. Because this passage actually offers a sobering reality about what love is and what love is not.

[7 : 34] What love does and what love does not do. Whether you feel it or not, whether you're married or single, this is really what it looks like when love is all grown up.

love, in this particular context, in fact, it wasn't meant to be pleasant at all. It was more of an indictment, a corrective to the church at Corinth about how they were acting.

Paul is literally laying love as a grid of sorts over the messed up church to show them how misaligned their behavior was.

He's using it as the criterion for why some of their attitudes and actions and maybe some of our attitudes and actions are unacceptable and not what grown up love looks like.

Last week, we learned that love is indispensable and now in our text this morning, Paul describes the characteristics of that indispensable love.

[8 : 55] As he does, understand that Paul deliberately uses the highest word for love in the Greek vocabulary and he takes it far beyond any definition of love known to the Greeks or anyone else.

Paul uses this Greek word *agape*. This word has a distinctly Christian meaning that captures really the essence of God's love.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Because his love transcends all human ideas and expressions of love.

This grown-up love Paul now describes comes from a determined act of the will. Not an emotion or feeling.

This grown-up love doesn't always coincide with our natural inclinations. love is not love nor is it concerned with only those for whom we have some natural affection or affinity.

[10 : 09] This love demands something of the one who loves not the one who is loved. love this grown-up love doesn't just love the people who love you back.

No, this love is not looking to get anything but rather to give to others even if they don't deserve it. Doesn't sound very romantic does it?

I know our version of love the world's version of love. You need to think about yourself. You need to find yourself. You need to discover yourself.

You need to accomplish things for yourself so you can attain the good life. Church, the good life is not found in just believing in yourself and trying to reach your full potential.

The good life is actually found in striving for yourself as little as possible. Is your aim in life to love others or seeking to be loved?

[11 : 20] That's the question. It goes like this. I love Joe. Always have.

And I love it when you love Joe. And hey, I will love you if you love me.

And I'll love you even more when you do and say and think what makes Joe happy. But if you make my life difficult, then my love is going to be difficult.

If you hurt me, I'm not even sure I want to love you anymore. If you stand in the way of my love for myself, then I may even hate you.

How deep the precious love for Joe. How vast beyond all measure. The same for some of you here today.

[12 : 33] hang on because Paul now shatters that viewpoint for Corinth and for us as he describes what grown-up love really looks like.

Starting at verses 4 through 7 of our text, we find 15 characteristics of love jam-packed into these first four verses.

I'll move through them as swiftly as I can, but every one is important. He starts with two things that love is. Love is patient.

Lord, why did Paul have to start here? Anybody ever took a test and you looked at the first question of the test and already knew you failed the whole test?

patient? That was me with these first three words. Love is patient. The word patient here really means long-suffering. The ability to suffer under difficult trying or irritating circumstances for a long time.

[13:48] Love is not short-tempered or easily angered. It bears with frustrations. It knows how to cope when things don't go its way and it doesn't take it out on others.

It shows self-restraint when faced with provocation. It remembers how Christ waited on it and it should wait on others.

Lord, help me. Love is patient and then love is kind. Where patience and long-suffering passively wait, kindness is active goodness that goes forth on behalf of another, even those who require patience.

It is goodwill and generosity given to others without thought of what they can do for you. My grandmother would say sometimes it's just nice to be nice.

One writer puts it this way, kindness is love in work clothes. It is an intentional choice to deal with people respectfully and gently because of the image of God that is in them.

[15:06] Paul then goes on to mention several things that love is not. Love does not envy or boast. Grown-up love isn't jealous about or desires what someone else has, while at the same time conceitedly bragging about what it has.

Saints, envy is a dangerous thing. Envy murdered Abel. Envy enslaved Joseph.

And Matthew 27 says envy caused the people to hand over Jesus to be crucified on the cross. Envy can be deadly.

Look, the fact of the matter is it doesn't take anything away from me to compliment someone else's preaching or someone else's music. I don't have to be the one singing to clap for the song. I don't have to be the one praying to say amen to the prayer. Now, if you struggle in this area, let me give you just a quick tip for free.

[16:18] The fastest way to kill envy is to actively pray for the one whose gifts you might be coveting. Because it's really hard to be jealous of someone while you're praying for them.

There's no reason to be jealous of what someone else does or to brag about what God alone has gifted you to do. Grown-up love doesn't need to draw attention to itself.

It's not anxious to impress other people. It doesn't need a megaphone to do a good job or to be satisfied with the results. Proverbs 27 says, let another praise you and not your own mouth.

A stranger and not your lips. Love is just keep on coming as Paul says, love is not arrogant or rude. You know, if you're arrogant, you assume you always know the most. You deserve the best. You don't listen to others because you're full of yourself.

[17:32] One who is puffed up, the King James version says, is the person who has an exaggerated sense of his or her own importance.

Come on, you know the type. The one who seems to know everything about everything. The one who's never even been in a swimming pool but yet knows everything about deep sea diving.

Grown-up love shows humility and says, I'm just going to be quiet because I don't have a clue as to what I'm talking about. Kind of how I felt my first couple of weeks at Christ Church Chicago.

Lord, this has got to be the smartest group of people I have ever been around in my life. And now, well, all right.

Love strives to be big hearted, not big headed. Arrogance then unfortunately produces rudeness.

[18:45] Unseemly, inconsiderate behavior. A rude Christian ought to be an oxymoron. But sadly, it's all too common and it's not what grown-up love looks like.

Christians who act like Jesus died for them and nobody else. Christians who say, get out of my way versus how can I help you along the way.

Christians who feel that super spirituality should bypass the rules of manners and common courtesy. Years ago, I worked with someone who would routinely walk by people and just not speak.

speaking. I asked him, why do you do this? And he said, I have to be selective about who I speak to because my time is valuable.

No, you and your time are spiritually immature and your love has not grown up. What else doesn't love do?

[19 : 54] Love doesn't insist on its own way. True love is never selfish. It's never self-centered. Paul is not saying that we can never look out for ourselves or never argue a point.

No, the problem is when we think ourselves only to the neglect of others. The problem is when we desire something so much for our own advantage that it prevents us from showing concern for our neighbors.

We have to do it our way. When it comes down to it, if you think about it, that's really a primary source for a lot of our interpersonal conflict.

My way or no way at all. Love is also not irritable or resentful. You know irritable, easily provoked. You live your life on a hair trigger. people are nervous about being around you and they walk on eggshells every time they see you coming.

[21 : 02] Your buttons are easily pushed. Moses missed out on the promised land because he let people get under his skin. The resentment Paul speaks about here literally means love does not store up memory of any wrong it has received.

You know, so it can be used at a later time. The resentful person lives more by don't get mad, get even, than they do forgive and forget.

Yeah, I do forgive you, but you need to know I'm going to hang on to this information for future reference. And Lord, don't let things go well for the one that has wronged them.

Then the resentment grows even more. Mature Christians are thankful for the Lord's blessings on others, even those who have wronged them.

That's grown up love. Further, love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Sin twists everything.

[22 : 18] And because of sin, we can be tempted to rejoice at the downfall of another. Maybe we're struggling with somebody and then things go really poorly for them.

The temptation is to feel some sense of vindication and be happy that they went down. Yeah, Lord, get them.

They deserve it. But love does not rejoice or take pleasure in any of that. No, love rejoices in what is good and what is honest and what is true.

Think about this. What you rejoice in is an indication of what your heart really cherishes. what are you delighting in?

Back home, my wife and I know people who look at the jail website each week just to see if they know anybody who's been arrested so they can talk about it.

[23 : 27] Grown-up love doesn't rejoice in that. Grown-up love rejoices in the truth. Now in verse 7, Paul concludes this list of characteristics with four things love does.

Spurgeon calls these love's four sweet companions. In this list, the first and the fourth deal with the present. Love bears endures all things.

This doesn't mean we have to be passive victims or suffer quietly every injustice that comes our way, but it means we keep loving even when it's hard. We cover their character even when it's not convenient.

Grown-up love is more than sentimentality. It's tenacious, courageous, and hard working. I know it's tempting when you're hurt to act like a child.

Well, I'll just take my ball and I'll go home. This church doesn't appreciate me. My spouse takes me for granted. My friends don't respect me.

[24 : 44] I'm out of here. Love bears, love endures. It's tenacious. love and third virtues on the list deal with the future.

Love believes all things, hopes all things. Again, this doesn't mean we're gullible and we never pass judgment on anything, but it does mean we are inclined to show trust and we are slow to accuse.

If you love someone, you are eager to believe what is good about them. You are hopeful that God, if necessary, can change them, hopeful that God can bring a dead relationship back to life.

In other words, love never gives up. It never gives in. That's the greatness of grown-up love. It bears the unbearable.

It believes the unbelievable. It hopes in what appears to be hopeless and it adores when anything less would have already given up. And then after it does all that, it does it again and again and again which gets us to verse 8.

[26 : 04] Love never ends. Love is permanent. It is an attribute of God which means it never withers or decays.

Paul addresses here again the overemphasis the Corinthian church had on gifts, especially prophecy and tongues.

He tells them that they should emphasize love more than the gifts because the gifts are really containers of God's work while love is the work itself.

love. Listen church, whatever the discussion about gifts that are or are not still active, cessation over continuation, we all can agree on and what Paul is emphasizing is that long after that discussion is over, love will still remain.

Paul says, you all keep acting like children, children, verse 11. You're acting like children about this stuff, fighting over things you only partially even understand right now.

[27 : 22] It's time to put away all of that childish stuff, grow up and realize that childish 11 year old love is not the same as grown up love.

Whatever you think you know right now or think is important right now, it will all fade in comparison to when you see him face to face and everything is clear.

And then you know what? Love will still remain. I hear you, Pastor Joe, this seems pretty hard to do, difficult to maintain.

love will be. If only we had an example of what grown up love looked like.

If only there was some model to pattern our behavior after. If only there was some model that could show us love that sees us at our worst and doesn't walk away.

[28 : 32] love that doesn't vanish when beauty fades or money runs out or strength fails. Is there anyone who's ever loved like this?

Well, it turns out there is an example. There is a model. His name is Jesus. The very expression of grown up love.

He loved us when we were unlovable. He did not come because we were lovely but to make us lovely. He didn't come because we were righteous and good but to make us righteous and good.

He gave himself for us when we had nothing to offer in return. Romans 5 verse 8 says, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died.

for us. Paul closes verse 13, so now faith, hope, and love abide.

[29 : 45] These three, but the greatest of these is love. The reason why love is the greatest is not because love outlasts faith and hope.

Love is the greatest because it outranks faith and hope. Because faith and hope are built on love. and a building can't stand without its foundation. When Christ returns and we all get to heaven, faith and hope will have fulfilled their purpose.

We won't need faith because we will be experiencing what our faith pointed to. We won't need hope because we will be realizing what we were hoping in.

but we'll always have love throughout all eternity. Love is the greatest not only because it is an attribute of God, 1 John 4, 8, but faith and hope are not actually a part of God's character or personality.

[30 : 58] God does not have faith in the way we have faith because he never has had to trust anything outside of himself. God does not have hope the way we have hope.

because he knows all things and is in complete control of all things. But God is love and will always be love.

And since God is love, since our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is love, Jesus is love, I'm closing.

You can actually move love, you can remove the word love and substitute it with the name Jesus, who is love.

God is watch then what happens to the text. Y'all, you may shout even before you get to the last verse.

[32 : 06] Can I read it for you that way? Can I do it? Brother Drayton, can I read from the revised Jesus version of the Bible? Pastor Helm, I'm going to start back at verse 1 just to bring it all together.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have Jesus, I am a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And if I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith to move mountains but I don't have Jesus, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have and I deliver up my body to be burned but I have not Jesus, I gain nothing.

Why? Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus is not envious, Jesus is not boastful, Jesus is not arrogant or rude, Jesus does not insist on his own way, Jesus is not irritable, Jesus does not rejoice

in wrongdoing, Jesus rejoices in the truth.

Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, Jesus for us endures all things, Jesus never ends. So now abides faith, hope, and Jesus.

But the greatest of these is Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. The reason why I have great expectation is because I now have this marvelous illustration of what grown-up love looks like.

[33 : 53] When love is a child, it's all about me. But when love grows up, it's all about you. When love is a child, it's fragile in the wind.

But when love grows up, it can stand in the storm. When love is a child, it celebrates what feels good. But when love grows up, it rejoices in the truth.

When love is a child, it quits when it's hurt. But when love grows up, it bears, it believes, it hopes, it endures. That's the love we need.

That's the love that transforms us. That's the love that will transform our marriages, our relationships, and yes, our church.

And that's the love Paul is calling us to embody. Not noisy, self-centered, virtue-signaling love, but cross-shaped, Christ-like, others' first love.

[34 : 57] This is what happens when love is all grown up. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the love that you've given to us even when we didn't deserve it. May we model what you've done for us.

May we strive to walk in mature love that focuses on others greater than ourselves.

Thank you for your example. We love you, and we thank you for first loving us. Your son's name