

Love

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Preacher: Jason Golden

[0:00] Well, it's my pleasure to introduce again somebody that, if you've been coming to our church for at least a year, he was here to preach a year ago.

And we're glad to have him and his family back with us again. So I'm going to be introducing Pastor Jason Golden, who was with Fellowship Baptist Church just north of Siler City for about 15 years, 14 years?

Twelve and a half. Okay. So anyway, they loved him and he did a marvelous job in that church. And then we had an opening come up in our association.

And I'm not going to go into talking a lot about the association because he will, perhaps. But our association is a network of Baptist churches in our area that support one another and do the work of the Lord together.

So anyway, he's now our associational missionary, been in that position for about a year and a month or two. And we're just really pleased to have Jason Golden back with us and his wife, Anna, and his children.

[1:05] So come on, brother, share with the Lord's prayer in your heart. Thank you so much for taking, Matt. Good to see you. Well, great to be back with you guys again. And as Matt shared, we work with the association.

Anna is our administrative assistant. She took Jordan's role when Jordan gave that up. And Jordan did such a great job in that role as well. And they have become fast friends.

And that's been a blessing to our family as well. But I just want to just mention a few things about the association. There's 49 churches. So when we come together, there's a bunch of you.

And spread out across Chatham and Lee County. And when you give to the association, you are helping support missions and ministry to our area and beyond.

And missions and ministry to one another. But just since the new year, we've had five pulpits open up, five churches open up. And now looking for pastors just in the Siler City area.

[2:04] And so we help churches with that. You know, I'll meet with deacons. And we'll try to do some pulpit supply from time to time, help them begin into a search. And so we help out in those ways.

We help out with church revitalization, actively meeting with the church a couple times a month now, leading them through a process of visioning and looking forward. And what can they do to grow and to get things moving once again?

And so we do all those kinds of things and connect with things in Baptist life. For example, some things that you guys could connect with, even potentially coming up very soon, is some Baptist on Missions disaster relief training.

Anybody here go to the mountains for when Helene happened or maybe you've responded to some kind of disaster in the past? They have doors where you can just go, but they also provide some training so that you can kind of be on a call list in various different areas.

I know at Fellowship we had some couples that in their retirement years, several times they went out of state and responded to various hurricanes that took place down in Florida or Texas.

[3:10] And they would serve on the food preparation trailers and make something like 10,000, 20,000 meals a day. And pretty amazing. Or I think some of them even worked with the laundry trailer where you're doing laundry for people when they're out of power for so long.

And so there is actually some trainings coming up here in Baptist life or Baptist on Missions. This is our link newsletter here for this month. If you want to be on the mailing list for that, we email it out every month.

And we always forward it. Thank you. Praise the Lord. Appreciate that. That's the big, that's the best help right there. Thank you guys for doing that. And so if you actually read it, we try to do a good job of putting things out there that are coming up in Baptist life.

You know, if you have announcements, things your church is doing like a chili cook off or something, you know, if you can let us know ahead of time, we can try to include some of those things. If it's something you'd like to invite, you know, neighbors or, you know, other churches to be involved in, let us know.

But disaster response training, there's some things coming up February the 28th, which is just, I guess, next Saturday. Is that how that falls? Coming up real soon, there's a disaster relief training in Greensboro.

[4:20] That's the closest one to us. But there's others in Mooresville, Arnberg, Roxburgh, Roanoke Rapids coming up February, March and on into April. And they train you in all kinds of different areas.

So go online to Baptist on Mission's website, BOM or baptisonmission.org. Baptists, because we're together in this, onmission.org. And you can find out all about the trainings and things coming up. Baptist Missions Conference also is happening April the 10th and 11th. They have a lot of missions breakout sessions that's going on in Charlotte this time. So a little bit of a drive. But those are some things coming up in Baptist life that'd be worth taking advantage of.

I see there's some other things I kind of highlighted. There's a youth conference going on at a local church in Sanford, the Disciple Now Conference. Pastors of Gideon's Meal is happening this coming Thursday in Siler City.

We've got that in here. And here's something to pray about is the praying of your pastors. We're really trying to bring together our pastors to pray across our association regionally.

[5:26] So this month we have began every Wednesday in a different part of our association, Siler City, Pittsburgh area, Sanford area. We're meeting on Wednesdays in those various areas.

And just the pastors gathering to pray together. And it's been very fruitful and a great thing. That's the sorts of things we try to do as well is bring together our pastors to focus on how can we, one, have good prayer and brotherhood with each other.

But also how can we focus on reaching our community that we're together in the gospel for.

Because there's enough lost people out there that if all of our churches were slammed full, we would need more room.

And so we're all on the same page, brothers and sisters in Christ, trying to reach our communities together. And so we try to get pastors together to work together on that.

There's some conferences coming up that we put in here as well that neighboring association churches in Bobbdian. But one thing we do have coming up I wanted to share is in April, we have a missions team as part of our structure and our association.

[6:31] We have a church leadership development team like we've done some deacon trainings before and offer some other trainings as well. Just let us know what you need and we'll bring it together. And we have a church strengthening team.

Well, the church leadership development team and church strengthening team are putting together a leadership series in April. And the first one will be at, they're two Tuesdays in April.

The first one will be April the 21st. It's going to be held at First Baptist Church down in Sanford. And it's a leadership luncheon. So if you're on a committee or a team in this church, raise your hand. All right, you're invited.

Okay, so anybody involved in the ministry of the church, we want you there. If you've been involved in the past, come, okay? It's going to be at the lunch hour at noon to about 1.30.

Dr. Mac Brunson, who's been a big pastor in Baptist life over the years, he's actually going to be preaching revival at First Baptist Church that first part of the week. So we're taking advantage of when he's in town.

[7:25] We're going to have a leadership luncheon with him and his wife. He's going to be here as well. And we'll have lunch together. Then we'll

break out. The ladies will go and hear from his wife. And then Dr. Mac will speak to his men.

It'll be a great time. I encourage you, if you're available, to come out during that lunchtime. April the 21st, mark your calendars. And then for pastors, the following Tuesday, Dr. Chuck Lawless is pretty well known in Baptist circles.

He's a professor at Southeastern University. And he's going to be leading a pastor's conference. And that will be held at Fellowship Baptist Church. Our church strengthening team is putting that on the following Tuesday, April the 28th.

So, guys, y'all mark that. And anybody else that maybe preaches around, brother, you're invited, okay? And that will be from 930 a.m. to 1230. We'll feed you lunch that day as well. We'll get some registrations out about those things.

But those are just some things coming up. We have our spring meeting. We'll be actually just over into May this year. And so mark your calendar for that, that first Monday in May.

[8:27] I believe the 4th is when that falls. That will be our spring gathering. Still working on a location exactly for that. We have a church that's willing, but they're like at the far edge.

And they're like, please find one more central. So we'll get that nailed down. But if you'll open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Well, Valentine's Day was yesterday.

And I feel like we'd just be remiss if we didn't talk a little bit about love. And, of course, 1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter. So turn or tap in your Bible app and find 1 Corinthians 13.

And let's pray together. So, gracious Lord, as we open your word, we pray, Lord, that you'd help us to open our hearts. To receive the love that your Holy Spirit is there to give to us. That we might then shed it abroad to one another.

And live well in love. Serving one another. And loving you as we all. God, I pray you'd do a work in us this morning. And rejuvenate our level of love and our loving nature towards one another.

[9:25] Father, I thank you for this church. I thank you for this church family. And, Lord, I pray that you'll just feed us from your word this morning. And, Lord, we look forward to the chili that we already smell in the distance. And, Lord, we pray it'll be a blessed time as well.

God be with us now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You know, one of the great ways we can love people is by ministering to them. And I have jotted down, but I didn't mention it. I don't know if your church is participating with the Hope for Appalachian Hope Bags.

Wonderful, guys. That's a great ministry. Emmaus Baptist Church, it kind of heads that up. It started out of Sandy Branch years ago. And Emmaus Baptist carried it on after them.

But it takes all, you know, churches throughout the association being on board. Because they pack something like 1,800 bags and take them up into Kentucky. And give them out to young people with the gospel.

I mean, it's like one-on-few gospel presentation. And it's amazing to see these young people, their hearts changing. Them falling under conviction as the gospel is shared with them. And then the Bible is sent home with them in that bag as well.

[10:27] And so it's a lot like Operation Christmas Child where, you know, you're putting stuff together in a bag. And then it gets taken off to a place with the gospel. But here it's in our own backyard. It's just right up there in Kentucky.

And the opportunity and door that's open there is just amazing. And so thank you for participating in that. Be praying for that. I think March 15th is when those bags are due. And then the mission trip will be up going in April.

I don't know if they have some slots available for that mission trip. But I think they were trying to open it up to a few others. So if somebody says, hey, I'd like to go be a part of that, you know, let me know. Or just call up Emmaus and get in touch with them.

John Hill, associate pastor there, would be a good guy to talk to on that. Or Pastor Steve. We just wanted to mention that as another way, you know, a ministry that's going on out of our association. Well, with Valentine's Day here, a lot of you probably, you know, have celebrated. You at least gave your sweetheart a card. I went old school and did a little bit of a repeat of our first Valentine when I asked Anna to bury me.

[11:29] And I made a Valentine with, you know, a little poem on it and pasted together. And, of course, the glue bled through, so it looked like a second-grader's project. But, you know, it's the thought that counts.

And so, you know, probably gave a card, maybe went out to eat, you know, perhaps bought a gift. They saved jewelry and flower sales. It was like through the roof this time of year. But this Valentine's, it ultimately came from a guy named Valentine.

And if you don't know the history, there were probably a couple guys named Valentine back in the era who were actually martyrs in the 200s A.D., okay, so a long time ago.

It was, at that time in Rome, it was a dangerous place, dangerous time to be a Christian. And there were a couple different martyrs named Valentine. And back that long ago about this guy, the history is just not very well documented.

But the possibilities about Valentine for what they can find written about him are that he was imprisoned and the jailer was impressed by him.

[12:28] And so I asked him to tutor his daughter, who may have been blind. And before Valentine died, was martyred, was killed, he left her a note inscribed, From your Valentine.

That's a possibility about his history. Another could just be that the cards that he would send to fellow Christians outside of prison. And there's also the story that Claudius the Goth, the leader at that time, was prohibiting soldiers to marry, thinking that married men would be less devoted to the army.

And there was a time where they needed as many troops as they could get. And so he forbade people to marry. And Valentine married them off to their sweethearts anyway and was imprisoned for it and ultimately tortured and killed.

So whichever way that history is, it has grown to today where the holiday was, as we mentioned over time, this history of him. And, of course, he's still celebrated as a martyr saint by the church, especially the Catholic church today.

And we still celebrate the sweetness of giving tokens of our love to those that we are especially fond of. Well, how often you think about especially perhaps young people and they're infatuated and they give that valentine, they give that gift, but then that love grows cold and things kind of fall apart.

[13:51] And that, you know, two months later, that relationship is no more. You know, or how many marriages have started and sadly they break apart. Valentine's gifts gone to naught.

What happened to that love? And so it's a good time for us to really take a fresh look at love and ask, what is love and how can I love and love well in a way that lasts?

Of course, here in chapter 13, the love chapter, Paul is actually taking a pause in the midst of a larger discussion about service and using the Spirit of God enabled spiritual gifts that he's given to individuals, all of you within the church who are in the body of Christ.

He's given these spiritual gifts so that we can serve each other to edify one another, to be a blessing and a benefit to our brothers through serving with our spiritual gifts.

And he's talking about spiritual gifts there in chapter 12, then over in chapter 14. But he pauses here in chapter 13 and says, let me show you a more excellent way there at the end of chapter 12.

[14:59] And then he goes into this excellent way of love. And Paul shows us three things about love. He shows us the problem of when love lacks. And he shows us how real love acts.

And then he shows us how real love lasts. Now we see what it's like first when love is not genuine, when love lacks in the first three verses.

1 Corinthians 13, starting in verse 1 there, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. Amazing, right, to even think of that. But have not love.

I've become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gifts of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I'm nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

[16:05] Now again, in the surrounding context, Paul's talking about serving for the edification, the good of your brother or sister in Christ, serve to the benefit of your brother.

And so what's love got to do with it? Okay, well, remember love, or if you're in the King James charity, it's that word that Stephen mentioned, agape.

Agape. God kind of love. God so agape the world that he gave his only begotten son. It's a son. It's a sacrificial giving love. It's not looking for anything in return.

It's a love that's without conditions. This is how Jesus loved when he put off his robes of heaven and put on the robes of human flesh and became one of us and lived without sin.

So he then out of his love for us could die for us and take the penalty of, for our sins through his death on the cross of Calvary and raised to life again. That was God's love expressed to us when Jesus came and died for us.

[17:10] This is the kind of sacrificial love. That's a more excellent way to act towards one another in the life of the church, in our lives at home, and our interactions with our fellow man.

Love is the excellent way to live. Love is the excellent way to live. But in reality, we know that it's not always excellent in our relationships.

Right? We all live in a family. Okay? And you probably, some of you had bump ups in your relationship on the way to church. Don't get up, don't, don't, keep your hands down, right?

That's just, we know that it's not always excellent. That there's bad results when love is maybe not as genuine as it ought to be, when there's some selfishness that comes in.

And Paul describes to us three characters that come out when love lacks, when love is not genuine.

To put it simply, you end up with loud mouths, showboats, and empty givers. It's what we see here.

[18:13] You see the loud mouths. They're very eloquent, perhaps sing with the voice of an angel, speaking with tongues of angels, but when not genuinely driven by love and compassion, they're just noisemakers.

The word clang here, actually in the original, is an onomatopoeia, a sound word. It's clang, gong, just a loud, noisy sound.

That's the dissonance that exists when what we say does not match up with what we do. When we act, but we're acting in selfishness instead of in agape lovingness.

End up with a loveless loud mouth. To put it in perspective, if you speak well of the Lord on Sunday, but have a vicious tongue on Monday, you could be a loveless loud mouth.

Or a showboat. You have great spiritual gifts, gifts of prophecy, understanding mysteries and knowledge, having all kinds of faith. You could remove mountains, but if no love, I'm nothing.

[19:20] It speaks of spiritual abilities to proclaim truth and know great things and have great faith. What Paul is saying is that the supreme spirituality, not motivated by love, is nothing but a good show.

Those who seem as spiritual giants in the church, but are not motivated by love, it's just a show, a hypocrisy.

And that's what that word means, is to play the actor. But remember, God doesn't look at our act. Where does He look? On the heart.

Our heart, our motives, are what God measures. And what's going on in our hearts is what matters to God. Remember, what's the greatest commandment?

Love. Yes, the Lord your God with all yourself. Your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. It's hokey pokey, he says, that you put your whole self in and you shake it all about for Jesus.

[20:23] Okay, David got that word when he danced before the Lord. It was loving God with the whole self and love your neighbor. Likewise, love your neighbor as yourself. Okay, you care about yourself a whole lot and so if you're loving your neighbor as yourself, you're going to care about them a whole lot too.

And so, even if you had all these gifts and could do all these things, if it's not motivated by love, it profits nothing. And so, there's loud mouths and showboats and then empty givers.

The one that gives everything to feed the poor even gives themselves to be burned as a martyr but has profited nothing. Empty givers give all their goods, give even their bodies but if not motivated by love, what might they be motivated with?

Making a good show? To be seen of others? To be praised of men? One, empty givers. They're doing it just to be seen.

It's just pride. It's sinful, self-promoting motives. The only right motive is love. Only selfless, sacrificial love can profit us in God's economy.

[21:35] To give out of something other than love is to give and be left empty. You know the Pharisees of Jesus, they liked to give so that people could see.

They'd make sure it was some, you know, good change and make a good sound when they dropped it in the big vase, big thing that they put the money in because they wanted people to give them praise instead of to receive praise from God.

Jesus highlighted the woman who gave all that she had though it was just two bites. It was all she had to live on. Jesus said, she's given more than all of them and I'm sure she didn't go up and say, hey, look at me. She just went and slipped it in because she loved God and it proffered her greatly. You could only imagine her home in glory. Action is motivated by genuine love. That's the more excellent way. Without real love, you're just left empty, only putting on a noisy show and it doesn't impress anybody, especially not God.

So there's no good when love lacks. But then Paul goes on to describe how love acts. Look at verse 4 on through 7 there. He says that love, well, it suffers long and is kind.

[22:57] Love does not envy and does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. We'll pause right there. This is how love acts.

He shows two attitudes of love and then eight attitudes that love avoids and then four ways that love acts here. If you count it up, that's several, right?

Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, right? God. First, a couple of genuine attitudes of love. Love suffers long and is kind. All right, now note these are action words.

Paul's not writing about loving feelings. How love feels, he's talking about loving actions. A true love is demonstrated by action. Because of God's love, he took action.

[23:58] God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believes on him will not perish but have everlasting life. God took action because of his great love for us and that love didn't feel very good.

Going to the cross and dying for our sins, well that, that hurt. It was sorrowful. my God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? As Jesus bore our sins in that moment, the father had to turn his back so sin could be fully paid for.

And Jesus could say, it is finished or paid in full. love is a verb, not just a heart vibration.

Love is action, not just warm feelings. The act of love should begin with warm feelings, a compassion from our splagna, our guts is the word.

Passion that comes from within that moves us. A genuine kindness and care and concern for others should drive us to action for their good on their behalf. And when we have and show God's love, it will be seen in simple acts of kindness.

[25:08] It will also be seen in being willing to put up with each other longer. Long suffering is one of the acts of love and attitudes of love. How often do we get tested in that area?

We fly off the handle and really we just need to let love cover a multitude of sins and imperfections and be a little more long suffering with them and kind even in the face of their prickliness.

You see how this touches home, don't we? And Paul also lists these eight attitudes that love avoids theirs. We read through them. Love does not envy.

You know, envy is one of the least productive and most damaging of all sins. It really accomplishes nothing except to hurt. Maybe it wants to always be preferred above others.

It even resents it when others are promoted or blessed or gets positioned or favor ahead of yourself. Envy is what led Cain to kill his brother Abel. Envy led Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery.

[26:14] His daddy's favorite. Look at that coat he's wearing. You know what? We can throw him in his pit or we can kill him was their first plan. One of the brothers kind of rescued him from that and when he wasn't looking, they sold him off as a slave to some traveling merchants.

Why? Because of envy. They said, we'll get rid of this guy, our brother. Envy is what put Jesus on the cross. Matthew 27, 18 says that Pilate knew that the Jewish religious leaders handed him over because of envy.

Jesus was gaining a greater following than them and he could cast out demons and perform all kinds of miracles that they couldn't do. And he taught with authority which they kind of struggled with.

They were envious of him. Pilate knew that. The love does not envy or resent when someone else is promoted or blessed. Love's not envious. Instead it rejoices with those that rejoice.

Weeps with those that weep. Love does not parade itself. It doesn't put on a show. Love does not vaunt or flaunt or boast. True love can do good works synonymously.

[27:24] Does not have to have the limelight or the attention. Does not look for applause or praise. The Pharisees of Jesus' day they were very bad to parade their acts of love.

They wanted to do it on a street corner or out where people could see it and they would wear their nice clothes and you know I probably shouldn't even wore a tie today. I couldn't remember. Do you wear ties around here? I did. I've shedded when we get ready to die in that chili.

Don't worry. But the Pharisees they wanted to parade it. They wanted to be praised by men and Jesus said that's the only reward you're going to get.

Love does not parade itself. Love is also not puffed up or big headed. It's also rooted in pride. Love is not arrogant and self-focused. It doesn't let its head swell.

Instead true love focuses on the needs of others. Not what will make me look better or feel better about myself but what will bless them.

[28:22] Love does not behave rudely. Where there's love there will be kindness and good manners. Not necessarily the stuffy you know I can bounce a book on my head and know which forks go where.

Not necessarily those kind of manners but just good conduct. Good care for one another. Love does not practice unseemly, uncouth, improper, or unbecoming behavior.

Love is well-mannered because in love you want to be hospitable to others. You want to think of others and be considerate towards others and be thoughtful of others and so you treat them well.

So love's not rude and also does not seek its own. Instead as Romans 12.10 puts it Paul said there in honor it gives preference to one another. Or Philippians 2.4 look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others.

You're not seeking your own but what's for the best of others. It's being like Jesus in the most basic way. It's being others centered instead of self-centered.

[29:29] Love cares well for the welfare, comfort, and salvation of all. It's not just selfishly looking out for what strokes your own preferences or ego or wants or desires but looks out for others' interests and needs.

Now this can really become a problem in churches sometimes. Well I don't like the way that we do that over there or the way that the preacher said this or the way we sing that song or the way that picture's hung on the wall or why we did this outside.

You know what all that's about? My preference for it. My preference for it. Pride, sin, me, me, me. Instead, you know what? What might reach my neighbors out here better? What will be a blessing to the other people in my church that maybe are a little bit younger than I am?

So I'm okay if a kid's running down the aisle to come to Children's Church, you know? I'm not going to be bothered by that. Okay? I'm not going to be bothered if, man, some of that chili makes it through that doorway and ends up with, God forbid, it happened now that I've said it.

[30:41] All right? I'm not going to be bothered by things like that because it's just preference. Okay? Look, you're the church. It's just a structure. It's a pretty structure.

Praise the Lord that He's given you a nice structure to worship them in. But you're the church. The Holy Spirit's in you. And when you go from this place, the Holy Spirit goes with you. He's not

camping out here waiting for you to show up next Sunday.

He's with you where you are, Christian. Your body is His temple. All right? So don't seek after your own, your own preference and what you want selfishly.

Love is also not provoked easily. This means getting irritated with others, being easily stirred up, becoming sharp with others, you know, being touchy, you know, easily provoked.

But Moses was kept from going into the promised land because he was provoked by the Israelites. They were complaining and God told them, He said, all right, Moses, speak to the rock this time.

[31:40] Before he struck it, water came out. God said this time, speak to the rock. Because that rock was a picture of Christ. Christ had already been struck, the picture of His crucifixion on the cross. Now the Christian can just speak to Him in prayer and He'll give what's needed.

That was the picture God was trying to portray. Moses in anger and being provoked, he struck that rock that second time and He was just supposed to speak to it. Because of that, He didn't get to go to the promised land.

Moses allowed himself to be provoked by their complaining. But what does love do? Love keeps cool. It remains in self-control. It's not easily provoked, not touchy. It's able to put up with.

Now you say, I don't know if I can do that. Well, you know what? Praise God, He sheds abroad His love in your heart with the Holy Spirit. Okay? You're not trying to, you know, build up your own love. God provides us the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. And so as we yield to God and we say, Lord, I want to please you. You've got to help me with this though. His Spirit will give you the resources that you need to act lovingly, to be self-controlled.

[32:45] Remember, that's another part of the fruit of the Spirit, temperance, self-control. So God will give you what you need in those moments. Moses was walking in the flesh in that moment, not leaning into the resources of the Lord.

love also thinks no evil. Literally, it means love does not store up a memory of any wrong that's been received. Love will put away the hurts of the past instead of clinging to them.

We don't store up the past. Then we never suppose that another's actions are bad. In other words, we won't be suspicious of others because we're not remembering what they've done or how they might be trying to get back at us.

We're not suspicious to them. We don't store up wrongs against us. We don't invent or devise evil. Okay? We think no evil because we're not keeping a record of past hurts and thinking about how somebody's going to get at us again.

Love also does not rejoice in iniquity but in the truth. It's pure and it's good. It wants, like truth, it's pure and good. It wants what's best for others. It will not rejoice in anyone's sinning.

[33:52] Love is not happy with evil. Evil. And then there's four more things that love is. Spurgeon calls these four virtues, love's four sweet companions.

In verse 7, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and it endures all things. All things, that encompasses everything. You know, we can endure some things but in love we need to be prepared to contend with all the things that we can find in other people's character sometimes. And in love we can bear all the things. Because love bears all things. It's what Peter had in mind when he said, above all things have fervent love for one another. For love will cover a multitude of sins.

Love bears, covers over, overlooks others' imperfections and sins. Charles Purgeon put it this way, like a pearl or oyster, a hurtful particle, a piece of sand will intrude and it cannot eject the evil.

And so what it does is covers over this little aggravating particle with a precious substance that's extricated out of its own life. That oyster produces something out of itself that goes and covers that other but we're not left on our own to produce it.

[35:10] We have the Holy Spirit that puts forth the salve that enables us. And in time with that oyster, that little grain of sand is turned into a pearl.

Spurgeon says, Oh, that we could do so with the provocations we receive from our fellow Christians so that pearls of patience, gentleness, long-suffering, and forgiveness might be bred within us by that which has harmed us.

Beautiful. And so love is able to bear all things. It's strong enough to put up with people and be the better for it in the end. It also believes all things.

It takes the best and kindest views of all men in all circumstances as long as facts allow it. Believing all things is the opposite of looking at people in the darkest color and assuming the worst.

Love runs counter to the attitude and spirit of the cynic, of the pessimist, of the rival, of the anonymous slanderer, or the secret distractor.

[36:12] Love believes all things. Well, it looks at the best in people as long as facts allow it. Love also hopes all things, has confidence in the future, not pessimism.

When hurt, true love says it will be this, or when hurt, true love does not say it's going to be this way forever. It's never going to get better. No, love is hopeful.

Love believes that God is able to take all things and work them together for good. Loving God and hope is also to turn against anxiety because hope reminds you that God's good ends and his ability to bring it to pass.

And so love endures all things because if you know that it will turn out good in the end for you in Christ, then you can endure a lot, even unto death. And so the greatness of agape love is that in all things it ever endures.

In bearing, in believing, and in hoping, love endures and does not give up. Love can even destroy enemies by sticking with them, enduring with them long enough to turn them into friends.

[37:25] And the best way to understand each of these qualities is really to see them in the life of Jesus. Because you know we can read through this passage and say, Jesus, anytime you see the word love, replace it there.

Jesus is enduring. Okay? Jesus suffers long. Jesus is kind. Jesus does not envy. Jesus did not parade himself. Jesus was not puffed up.

He did not behave rudely. He did not seek his own. He was not provoked. Jesus thinks no evil. He did not rejoice in iniquity, but in the truth. Jesus bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things.

Jesus never failed. Now, if you were to instead put your name there and read through that list putting your name in the place of love, would it sound a little ridiculous or far-fetched in places?

It's a good evaluation. In the link, I put another one I wrote about in this love chapter and it gave you an opportunity to rank yourself one to ten.

[38:30] You're doing well, zero, or really, not well, zero, or really well, ten, you know. Where are you at in this and how well you're loving? And there's reason why Paul, you know, put this chapter in the midst of discussion about spiritual gifts because Paul wants us to remember that giftedness is not the measure of maturity.

but how well we love is. And remember too, we're not dependent on ourselves. Romans 5, 5, again, the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who's given to us.

It's the first of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Love is empowered and poured through us to our fellow men by the Spirit of God as we lay selfishness aside and in Christ abide.

Love is the more excellent way. Love is unfailing and will last. And Paul closes this chapter with the reality that love does last.

Let's look at it very quickly. In verse 8, he continues on. He says, Love never fails. But whether there's prophecy, they will fail.

[39:54] Whether there are tongues, they will cease. Whether there's knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I am, as I also am known. Now abides faith, hope, love, these three.

The greatest of these is love. Stephen led us in a song about our future heavenly home, didn't he? Where's our home, Christian?

Heaven, glory. Now Paul is getting at that here in this closing. It's like he's saying, love well by remembering where you're going.

[40:52] And he talks, he's talking about remembering this process of what maturity really looks like, what the excellent way is in our service to each other. He names in verse 8 speaking gifts that are enabled by God's spirit, prophecy, tongues, knowledge.

Some of these were especially active in the early church before the New Testament was complete to give validity to the gospel message. While these will vanish away, he says love will last and never fail.

And he closes this section with the last verse of chapter 13, verse 13, now abides faith, hope, love, these three. For the greatest of these is love. Why is it love never fails and is the greatest?

Well think about when we get to heaven and our future there. We won't need faith and hope anymore. You get it? All right, faith, when we get into heaven's shore, when we're standing in glory on the street of gold and we see Jesus and we walk through the pearly gate, we've seen our loved ones and other friends that's gone ahead of us, friends, our faith will have become sight.

Our hope will have been realized. But what will we still have and enjoy for all eternity? Love. It's not going anywhere.

[42:11] We won't need faith and hope anymore. Because what we had faith in and hoped in all our lives will have come to pass and we will be experiencing it. We will taste the food that the marriage suffered of the lamb.

We will smell the trees there. We will see the sights and bow before Jesus and feel gold under our feet. It will be glory and it will be our full and total experience.

Amen. But we will also forever have love. Perfect love. Love not tainted anymore by sin. And it will be wonderful.

We will love God and love one another with perfection as we enjoy and explore the bliss of this place called heaven and the new heaven and the new earth that Jesus is on the way preparing for us right now.

Why? Because He loves us. We don't deserve that love but in His mercy and His grace and His love He just poured out and lavished His love upon us. And that's something we'll experience and enjoy forever and ever.

[43:18] Love lasts forever. To help us understand this Paul gives a couple illustrations. He talks about a child maturing to adulthood in verse 11 When I became a man I put away childish things.

You see maturing and growing up is the natural progression of life. Likewise faith and hope and God's revealed word will mature into sight and experience one day.

But love will still be around in heaven and love is the mature thing. It's the more excellent way. He also illustrates that we are now seeing a dim reflection of what will be there in verse 12.

Now our knowledge of heaven is limited. Now we can only now we only have what's been prophesied and proclaimed and written in the word of God. But it's just a dim reflection of the reality that's there.

It's kind of like knowing about the Grand Canyon and actually going and seeing it. Who's seen the Grand Canyon? Do pictures do it justice?

[44:21] That's everybody that's ever been there say the pictures postcards they can't possibly do the Grand Canyon justice because when you're there your field of view is this not just this and you're seeing the vast grandness of that vast chasm there and it's so impactful that often it brings tears to our eyes.

Now imagine how much better heaven is going to be when you get there if you're trusting Jesus as your Savior. no longer then will you need faith and hope because you'll be experiencing it by feeling and knowing by experiencing it.

And so now abides faith hope love now abides those things. These three the greatest though is love because it's what's forever and it's the more excellent way for us to live with one another because for all eternity you will continue to live in that love love will last so let's get really good at loving now because it's going to be our forever experience let's mature now into loving well because walking

and living in perfected love for God and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ that's going to be our forever reality so let's get good at it now let's make love like that reality here in this life with one another love never fails and it's lasting and that's why it's greatest of all so let us love well to love well you've got to first be sure that you're in the family be sure that you are experiencing the love of God expressed towards you believing the reality that God did so love the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life be sure that you have seen your need for the savior turn to

God believing upon Jesus to forgive your sins and to give you that gift of eternal life believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved be forgiven experience the love of God and then Christian evaluate how well you love be sure you're not just a loud mouth showboat an empty giver make it make sense to read your name in that list of describing what love is and is not make it make sense to put your name in there and you do that by abiding near to God and to his word and allowing his spirit to work out and work in that love into your life to be able to express it out towards others and cling to that love for it will be your lasting forever experience with God and his people in heaven cling to it so that you love well and love towards others now and here because love is the excellent way to live let's close our eyes and bow our heads if we have invitation time we'll ask musicians to come and the first question

I'll ask you is have you experienced the love of God have you put your trust in Jesus to be your savior from your sins if not what are you waiting for turn to God say I don't understand it all but I know I've sinned when I'm honest with myself I know I stand guilty before you God but I believe Jesus paid the penalty for my sins through his death on the cross please God forgive me save me I receive forgiveness from you begin there if you're not sure where you're standing with God get that right with God and then Christian say Lord I need your love in my life so that I can live it out towards others and begin to mature in your faith so that you're putting on these good things and making it make sense to read your name into that description love of what love really looks like commit to that now Lord help me to love better Lord help me to love better make that your prayer Lord help me to love better Father do your work in us as we sing this invitation we thank you in

[48:40] Jesus name Amen the stand God