

Love Is Patient and Kind

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. We're going to be reading verses 1 through 7.

If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.
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.

[1 : 17] What is love? That question has moved many down through the ages to write poems and to write songs. Titled, in fact, What is love?

That song by Hadaway. It's considered to be an iconic song. It's considered by many to be a classic song. Billboard called it a glorious house pop ditty.

And Billboard also said that it gets precious mileage out of minimal lyrics. Perhaps, maybe.

It certainly does have minimal lyrics, but really how much mileage does the song get out of those minimal lyrics when you consider the fact that Hadaway fails to ever answer the question.

What is love? He never tells us. Go read the lyrics. There's a lot of woes and uh-huhs and babies and don't hurt me's. It's mind-numbing.

[2 : 16] But he doesn't say anything much at all, let alone any kind of clear, succinct answer to the profound question, what is love?

And frankly, even if Hadaway did answer the question, it probably wouldn't be the greatest answer. Who is turning to pop stars to tell us what love is? We certainly are not tonight.

We are turning to a far superior source, the best source, to answer the question, what is love?

God's Word gives us the answer here in 1 Corinthians 13.

Now, of course, 1 Corinthians 13 isn't all that God says about love, but what He says in our passage this evening is clear and succinct, and of course, it's true.

I don't know about Hadaway getting precious mileage out of minimal lyrics, but God certainly does. He gets precious mileage out of minimal verses. Now, as we come to this passage, we have to remember the greater context.

[3 : 23] 1 Corinthians 13, it is a beloved portion of Scripture, as we saw last time when we were together in this chapter. But sometimes when a passage is beloved, its context can be forgotten.

We see a verse on the wall of our home. We hear it preached in a wedding ceremony, and we can perhaps easily lose sight of where that passage is in our Bibles and why we have it there in our Bibles.

So why all this talk of love in 1 Corinthians 13? Well, because the Corinthians needed to hear it, and we do as well.

We've seen that the Corinthians were failing to live, as Paul says at the end of his letter, in chapter 16, verse 14, let all that you do be done in love.

The Corinthians were forgetting about the centrality of love in the Christian life, and we'll see that as we walk through this passage. Love was seemingly absent from their relationships in the church.

[4 : 30] Now, interestingly enough, that word, love, has been almost absent from Paul's letter so far, especially in any kind of teaching or exhortation.

If you take away any titles that include love, like calling the Corinthians beloved, you only find the word love mentioned once in chapter 2, once in chapter 4, and twice in chapter 8.

You could argue, based on word count, well, love doesn't seem to be all that important to Paul. But going by word count isn't really the best indicator, because as we'll see, so many other virtues can be traced back to love, and so many sinful vices that are apparent in the Corinthian church can also be traced back to a lack of love.

So as we unpack chapter 13, this passage with a highly concentrated amount of love, we'll see that Paul has had the centrality of love, the need for love on his mind all along in this letter.

We're looking at what Paul has called the still more excellent way. That tells us that he's making a contrast. There's another way. It's not as good.

[5 : 47] And that's the way of focusing only on spiritual gifts. It's not all about spiritual gifts. Which ones you possess or don't possess.

Which is more impressive or less impressive. It's not all about spiritual gifts. That's something of what Paul is hammering home to the Corinthians. Desire them?

Yes. But we must also pursue love. Because the way of love is a still more excellent way. And there's three reasons why Paul would say that to us in 1 Corinthians 13.

And we've looked at the first reason the last time that we were in 1 Corinthians. Love is a still more excellent way because of the place of love. We saw in the first three verses that love should be primary.

It should come first. Love should permeate our relationships in the church. And so love should permeate our exercising of gifts in the church as well.

[6 : 50] It's the key ingredient to a healthy life in the body of Christ. And we saw this last time. If you're missing love, it doesn't matter how remarkable your gifting may be.

You are nothing. You gain nothing, Paul says. Gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit amount to nothing. The way of love is a still more excellent way because of the place of love.

That's the first reason. Now tonight we come to the second reason. Because of the properties of love. Paul gives us many here this evening. Many properties.

Many characteristics. Many qualities of love. Fifteen to be exact. Fifteen different properties of love listed for us here. Now some are very similar and we'll cover together.

Others unique, standalone, that we'll take as such. Of the fifteen, seven are stated in the positive, telling us what love is. And eight are stated in the negative, telling us what love is not.

[7 : 55] So let's dive in. And let's look at these different properties of love. These different traits of love. First we see that love is patient and kind. Now we need to take those two together.

And we need to remember that all of these traits are to be understood in the context of relationships. So what Paul doesn't have so much in mind when we think of patience is the ability to sit quietly, perhaps, in the waiting room at the doctor's office.

That is something of what it means to be patient. But he's especially talking about patience with others. Patience in relationship to others.

Not so much patience in the midst of a trying situation, though that is good. He's speaking here of being patient in the midst of perhaps a trying relationship. Being patient towards someone who is agitating you.

Someone who is stirring you up. The patience that love displays keeps us from responding rashly towards someone. It keeps us from answering quickly when we think that we have been wronged or offended by someone.

[9 : 03] Now the kindness. The kindness that Paul speaks of here goes with the patience. Love is patient and kind. If patience is the more passive response of love, the lack of doing something, well, kindness is the more active response.

You are doing something. You're treating another person well. So kindness, the more active counterpart to patience. If patience is refraining from lashing out, then kindness is intentionally reaching out.

Not in anger, but in love towards another. It does good to those who may well inflict harm. Or as one commentator says very simply, kindness plays the gentle part.

As we'll see in all of these properties of love, God is our supreme example. So what does this patience and kindness look like in action?

Look no further than to your God. He has been kind and patient towards you. Paul appeals to this very patience and kindness in Romans chapter 2.

[10:16] It's really a warning. Paul says, Praise God that all of us who are in Christ have been led to repentance by that rich kindness and patience of God towards us.

So we then are to show it as well. To show that same kindness and patience towards others also. Well, Paul then moves from these first two positive attributes of love to seven straight negatives. What are not true of love? Beginning with envy. Love does not envy. Love does not look at someone and wish for what they had.

Love says, I give to you. Envy says, I wish what you have would be given to me. I want your success. I want your status.

I want your possessions. I want your position. We've seen all of that with the Corinthians in this letter. And that same sinful heart desire can be found in us too.

[11:32] I want what you have and it will eat at me until I get it. And when I don't, I'll resent God. Because He hasn't given it to me.

Why are they so good at that? And I'm not. Why are they so well received by others? And I'm not. Why do they have that spiritual gift? And I don't.

Envy destroys relationships with others. It creates sinful competition and strife in the church. That's all bad, of course. But even worse, at the heart of envy is an attack on God.

You gave them this, but not me. You made them like this, but not me. Envy is an expression of the opposite of love.

Love desires good for another. Love is willing to sacrifice self for the sake of another. But envy, envy is just the reverse. Envy is willing and wishes to sacrifice another for the sake of self.

[12:39] Envy says, give me. Love says, I give of myself. So love does not envy. And love does not boast. Nor is it arrogant.

Those next two traits of love, we say that they go together. The arrogant person does what? Boasts. And that's what they do.

The person who thinks highly of himself, talks highly about himself. He says, look at me. Wow, I'm really something. When in reality, the proud person, the person who boasts in himself, is delusional in his sin.

Paul has already addressed this in chapter 4. Beginning in verse 7, he says, what do you have that you did not receive? Implied answer, nothing.

There's nothing that you and I have that we didn't receive from God. Everything that I have received, everything that I have, I have received from God.

[13:45] Paul goes on, if then you received it, why do you boast? As if you did not receive it. So, boasting in ourselves reveals that we are actually out of touch with reality.

The one who boasts, sins against God, and makes a fool of himself, believing something to be true that simply isn't. Instead of giving thanks, the proud person gives himself a pat on the back.

He puffs himself up. He makes himself to look big, to look important, when in reality he's not.

Whatever he or she has, has been given by God.

Now, if we think back to envy for a moment, in some ways, pride and envy go together. They are both self-focused. The envious person wishes that what God has given to another would be given to him.

The proud person looks at what God has given to him and pretends that he earned it himself. The proud person boasts in himself.

[14:54] The proud person seeks attention for himself, seeks credit for himself, seeks the spotlight for himself, rather than for God. Again, love is just the opposite of that.

Love doesn't make much of self. Love doesn't boast. Love is not arrogant. Love makes much of another. Love makes much of God, especially.

So love does not boast. Love is not arrogant. And love is not rude either. Love doesn't dishonor others.

Love doesn't demean others. Paul has already said in his letter that love builds up. Love edifies. Those who are rude tear down.

Perhaps we hear the word rude and we think of the person who makes a big scene at the restaurant because the waitress got the order wrong. Or maybe we think of the person who cuts in line at the airport to complain to the representative because their flight was delayed or even worse, canceled.

[16:00] We think of that and we say, that's rude. And it is. But those kinds of situations, if that's all we think of when we think of rude, we can almost make it kind of into somewhat of a trivial sin in our minds, as though it's something we kind of roll our eyes at, if nothing else.

But that's not how we should think of it. To be rude isn't just to make a scene at the restaurant or the airport. It's to behave indecently and disgracefully, which certainly includes those situations. But it also includes dragging another brother to court and seeking to discredit him and to win the lawsuit, just as Paul said in chapter 6.

That's shameful. Or a man treating his father's wife as though she is his own, just as Paul addressed in chapter 5. That is grossly dishonorable.

Or humiliating those who have little to eat during the meal at the Lord's Supper service, as Paul addressed in chapter 11. That's disgraceful behavior.

[17:08] All of that is rude. And the Corinthians have been guilty of this. Behaving in ways that are shameful and dishonoring to the Lord. From causing a scene in a restaurant to committing acts of sexual immorality, the rude person throws off what God has said is good and orderly and decent.

The rude person ignores that. The rude person is unashamed of shameful behavior. So again, at the root of this sin of being rude, we see self.

Ignoring God's way and going one's own way. And again, this is not the way of love. Love is not rude. Love is respectful.

Love does what is honorable. Love does what is orderly and decent, as God has said. Next, we see that love does not insist on its own way.

That's to say that love is not self-seeking, nor is it self-serving. Paul has actually given himself to us as an example of this trait of love already in this letter.

[18:20] Paul's entire ministry has been one of looking to the benefit of others. He described that for us in chapters 9 and 10, particularly in chapter 10.

Beginning in verse 32, Paul says, Again, this runs counter to everything we've seen in the behavior of the Corinthians.

They were seeking their own interests, and they were doing it very aggressively as they were jockeying for position in the social order of their day. The leaders that they followed directly reflected on themselves.

But Paul says, this is not the way of love. Love lives according to what he says in Philippians 2, counting others, more significant than yourself.

Not looking to your own interests, but to the interests of others. And of course, Paul isn't the only example of this. He doesn't just give himself as that example.

[19:41] No, in Philippians 2, he gives Christ, our supreme example. Paul goes on to say in Philippians 2, Have this mind among yourselves.

This mind that counts others as more significant than yourself. This mind is the one that is not self-seeking. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

And then Paul goes on to describe the self-giving, self-sacrificing humility of the Lord. This is what love looks like. It does not insist on its own way.

Nor, as we continue in this list here, is it irritable or resentful. If you have the NIV, it reads a little differently. It says that love is not easily angered.

It keeps no record of wrongs. Now, irritation, as the ESV translates, so often leads to anger, as the NIV reads.

[20:45] The one who is easily irritated gets carried away in anger. Love doesn't get exasperated. It's not touchy. Again, this is very similar to patience.

Love forbears with others. Love is long-suffering towards others. Love can put up with a lot. And it's not keeping this mental record of wrongs either.

As one commentary says, love doesn't nurse an injury. It's not building up resentment inwardly. This couples well with the previous property.

Love is not easily angered. Love is not irritable. That's something that so often shows very outwardly. If you're irritated, if you're angry, you lash out.

Love doesn't do that. And at the same time, love is not building up resentment on the inside. Both irritability and resentment are unbecoming of love.

[21:45] So love does not spew out in anger. And love does not stew on wrongdoing. Outwardly and inwardly, there's integrity.

Neither evil actions nor evil thoughts. Some people seemingly keep no record of wrongdoing because they get angry right away.

And they lash out. That is not the way of love. Other people, well, they don't seem to get angry all that often because they are keeping long records of wrongdoing that they let simmer in their hearts. That's not the way of love either. Neither irritable nor resentful. And now we come to verse 6. And there's our small transition for us.

Paul's given us those seven straight traits that love is not. Well, now he tells us something that love both does and doesn't do.

[22 : 46] For the previous seven things that love is not, we had to infer. If love is not something, well, then what is it? And we sought to fill in the blank appropriately.

Not so with what Paul says here in verse 6. He spells it out for us. He tells us very overtly, Love doesn't do this, but rather it does this.

Love does not rejoice with wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Now there is so much that is packed into this little verse.

So much that this one little verse alone tells us about love. In a world where love is to accept and condone and celebrate any kind of belief or behavior, we see something entirely different here in 1 Corinthians 13, 6.

There are clear parameters set for us. Love rejoices with the truth. Meaning love sides with the truth. Love celebrates the truth.

[23 : 56] And Jesus told us very plainly what the truth is. As He prayed to His Father. In John 17, He said, Your Word is truth.

The psalmist echoes this. Psalm 119, The sum of Your Word is truth. Our God is called the God of truth.

In Isaiah 65, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Indeed, Jesus Himself came full of grace and truth. And after ascending into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit, who He called multiple times the Spirit of truth.

And who is God seeking His worshipers? Well, those who worship Him in spirit and truth. For they have heard the Word of truth. As Ephesians 1.13 says, The gospel of our salvation.

[24 : 54] That is the word of truth. And we have believed the gospel. We have believed in Jesus. We have heard about Him. We were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus.

And those who know the truth, Jesus says, are set free. So we listen to the word of truth given to us by the God of truth who sent His Son into the world full of grace and truth, who has given us the Spirit of truth in order to learn what it is that we rejoice with.

We rejoice with the truth. Love agrees with God and the truth of His Word. God calls us to love truth. God calls us to hate evil and to love good.

God calls us to speak the truth in love. God calls us to walk in the truth. Truth and love are good friends. To disregard the truth, to celebrate evil, to celebrate wrongdoing, is to fail to love.

It's an affront against God. It's a failure to love Him and it's a failure to those who commit, it's a failure to love those who commit wrongdoing. Celebrating evil is not to love someone, but to lead them astray to their destruction even.

[26 : 17] Love does not rejoice with wrongdoing, but it rejoices with the truth. And now finally, the last four traits that we see in verse 7.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. All four of these traits, they go together.

We see that all things helps to tie them together. This verse is telling us that love perseveres. Love endures. Love never gives up.

Now, just to be clear, this isn't some kind of unfounded, fanciful optimism. Paul is not being anything like what we said Habakkuk wasn't being this morning.

Neither of them are this. Paul is not just saying, well, you need to believe the best about everything and everyone, no matter what, just because. This isn't about trusting everyone blindly.

[27 : 16] This isn't about some naive faith in humanity, or as one commentator put it, in the invincible power of human good. No, Paul is much like Habakkuk.

This is a confident trust in God and in His ability to transform. So indeed, we of all people should be the most hopeful because our hope is in God.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. So 15 different properties or traits of love.

We've seen that indeed, love is the still more excellent way. But if we are examining ourselves honestly, we must also say, it is the impossible way.

The last time that we were in 1 Corinthians 13, we introduced this chapter with this surprising quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones where he said that this chapter terrifies him.

[28 : 18] This chapter that we put on our walls and that we have read in weddings, he said it terrifies him. But he's right because as he says, this is talking about me. This is examining my heart.

This is an x-ray that's going to reveal every possible deficiency that is in my constitution. And brothers and sisters, it's meant to do the same for us.

And having examined ourselves, we should conclude, I don't love like this. We want to be loved like this, don't we? But we don't love like this, not fully, not always.

But we can take heart because God does. God loves like this perfectly. For as 1 John 4 tells us so simply, God is love.

And in love for us, God became man. And so as we see our Savior, as we see Him in His Word, we see this 1 Corinthians 13 love on display.

[29 : 25] Jesus is patient and kind. Jesus does not envy or boast. Jesus is not arrogant or rude. Jesus never insists on His way, just the opposite, in fact, as He cried out to the Father there in the garden, not my will, but yours be done.

Jesus is not irritable or resentful as He cried out on the cross, forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do. Jesus does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. For our salvation, He endured from sinners such hostility against Himself.

For our salvation, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. In ourselves, we could never love as 1 Corinthians 13 calls us to love.

But we live through Christ who loved us and gave Himself up for us. And so we are called to love. This is what this passage is all about.

[30 : 39] Here is how to live. This is the kind of love that we are to pursue. That's exactly what Paul is going to call us to do in chapter 14. So don't think, oh, this is just supposed to tell us how God loves, but we're off the hook.

No! We are to love in this way too. Pursue this love. We are to walk in love as Christ loved us. 1 John 4, 7 says, Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

So let's remember God is love. Let's remember what love God has shown to us, and then let's seek to love Him in return.

And let's seek to love one another in these very clear, tangible ways. and let's seek to love the lost that they might hear of and know the love of God as we do.

God did not come and show His love to us because we were so very lovely. God came and showed His love to us while we were still sinners. Enemies of God, He sent His Son to die for us.

[31 : 55] What love He has shown. Here is love. We've seen it. Now may He guide us that we would love in that way too. Let's pray. Father, we do thank You that You have not only demonstrated such love towards us, but that Your Spirit lives in us.

That You empower us that we might love. There's no command that You would give us that You would then say, but You can't do. No, You've given us the strength.

You've given us Your Spirit. So help us, Father, that we might live as 1 Corinthians 13 calls us to live. That we might love in this way.

That we might see that it is the still more excellent way and rejoice and be glad and call out to You crying, give us strength by Your Spirit to love in this way.

Thank You that You first loved us. Thank You that You sent Your Son to die on the cross for our sins and You did that in love for us. What love You have shown, so help us to love in this way.

[33 : 05] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.