

Loving Others: The Prevailing Power of Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Wednesday, October 23, 2002 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, *Life's Greatest Quest*] <side 1 @ 317>

Thank you Donna. If you've been a... in a mall in recent days you know that a... Christmas decorations are starting to appear everywhere and believe it or not as we stand here tonight we're 63 days away from Christmas. And while I know there's a lot of orange out there right now at the a... front part of the store you don't have to look far till you get to the red and the green and it won't be long until many of us are spending a lot more time trying to increase a... the schedule of life in the shopping malls so that we can get those gifts and get them out to friends and love ones at Christmas time. And a... as you go to these stores not only will you see the decorations but you will often be called to take time to look in some of the displays that are there.

Now for those of you ladies that are in this room you know what it is to go to a display case, especially in typically the middle part of the department store. Those display cases have a... a whole array of racks on the counter top area and on those racks are a variety of different things that sparkle and glisten, gold and silver and a variety of different gem stones, in their appearance. But you know full well that what's sitting on the counter is not nearly as significant as what's sitting in the case and that what is there on the counter is just a frail picture of the real thing that is down inside those display cases. And you know how it is to go and to take time and to look in those cases and to look at those diamonds and those pieces of gold and all those different beautiful colored gems that are there and a... Some of you are already ribbing your husbands and others reminding them that maybe that would be a good gift this Christmas. Other men in this room are already thinking how quickly can you get away from this subject, I don't relate to this, never have figured out why, if the stuff on top looks as good as the stuff in the thing, you spend that much more money on the stuff in the case. But, anyway, you know what I'm talking about? The real thing is there in the display case.

Now for you guys. You know what it is to go to the meat counter, right, in the grocery store? And you can go over there and look around in that stuff that's all wrapped in plastic and been sittin out there for a few days. But there are those areas in the meat department where those big thick freshly cut pieces of meat are there in the counter. They hadn't been all wrapped up and you know, put together, they're...they're waitin for you just to say, "I want that one." And to pick it up and put it on the scale and to weigh it out and wrap it up and take it home. And while men don't

always enjoy being around the jewelry they enjoy going to the display case if there's meat in it and thinking about being able to share and enjoy a sumptuous feast.

Well, I take you to those display cases in your mind tonight because in a very real sense that's what we're going to do in the Scripture tonight. We're gonna go to the display case of the Word of God that describes love, what love is, what love looks like, the real thing. And if you have a Bible I want you to open it to 1st Corinthians chapter 13 because there we want to identify the authentic traits of love that are on display. What we find in 1st Corinthians 13 is not nearly so much a definition of love as it is a description of love, love on display. And here in 1st Corinthians 13 we began investigating last week and really brought the opening verses, verses 1 through 3 down to a very simple, a very specific equation for life and this is what we said:

$$\text{LIFE} - \text{LOVE} = 0$$

Life minus love equals nothing. And 1st Corinthians 13 verses 1 through 3 talks to us about what it is like to have knowledge, to have wisdom, to have gifts, to give things, but to do all of these things without love and clearly the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, hey if your life and my life has every other ornament but doesn't have the real quality of love then life minus love is nothing. But then we pick up our reading in 1st Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 4 and we begin to examine love, as though it were in the display case. And this is what it says:

⁴Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; it does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵love does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶it does not rejoice in iniquity, but it rejoices in the truth; ⁷it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love,...

God's love, the kind of love that God wants to see in you and me:

...never fails.

Now 2 or even 3 times the word love is mentioned, it's mentioned first with 2 positive attributes and then it's listed a second time in verse 4 and followed by 8 negative expressions. In other words telling us what love is not. And tonight, and beginning tonight and over the next couple of weeks we're not gonna have any problem understanding what love is and what love isn't. The challenge in life is gonna be applying the reality of this love to my life and to your life. Now when the Bible says that love suffers long and is kind, it very quickly tells us that it is a statement made in the present tense. It is a love that is to be abiding and a love that is to be active in my life and in your life as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And tonight I want us to look at love with an attitude. We know a lot of people with attitudes don't we? We see attitude every day in places that we go and people that we interact with and frankly a lot of

the attitude that we see is bad attitude. But the Bible, tonight, describes for you and for me the attitude of love and love with an attitude is love that is first stated here in chapter 13 in verse 4 in 3 simple words, love is patient, it suffers long.

Love is patient. The word there patient is a Greek word and I'm gonna give you a little Greek wor...Greek lesson tonight because I think it's a important one. The Greek word for patient that is found there and several other places in the Scripture is the Greek word, "makrothumia." Makrothumia, now you know what makro means, it means something that's large, something that's big. You know what a microscope is and then a makro, something big. The thumas that is there, thumia is the idea of a fuse, it can be the idea of something burning and so the idea here is that love has a big or a long fuse and God's kind of love is a love with a long fuse. It's not always an easily set off, it doesn't live in the set off mode. The love of God and the love that God desires in my life and in your life and in the relationships that make up our lives as believers in the church, as members of the body, as friends, brothers and sisters in Christ and ultimately within our homes and families, that love is intended to be a love with and attitude that has a long fuse and is willing to consider the importance of dealing rightly with people in every circumstance of life. If I could say it negatively, it says true love does not retaliate, it does not have resentment and it does not look to retribution.

And there was something that was needed in correction in the church in Corinth because this kind of love was not being expressed. Some of you are aware of the fact that in the book of...that in the church in Corinth there was a conflict because some were saying, I'm of Paul and I'm of Po...Apollon and I'm of Peter and they kinda each one had their little figure heads of who they liked in the church. And we even know more about the lack of patience, the lack of long suffering in this church because if you turn back from 1st Corinthians 13 to 1st Corinthians chapter 11 there a passage of Scripture that many of you are familiar with, you may just not have know where it is found in the Bible. It the passage of Scripture talking about how the church is to administer the Lord's Supper and here in this passage of Scripture the Bible says in verse 17 of 1st Corinthians 11:

¹⁷Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you,...

Paul said, I can't come to here and say [David claps] doin a great job. He said I can't praise you.

...since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you,...

I just talked to you about that.

...and in part I believe it. ¹⁹But there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

And then it says:

²⁰Therefore when you come together in one place, it's not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

He said, when you come to the Lord's Table the biggest thing that you show is that there's no patience, there's no kindness, there's not goodness; instead there's just this sense of selfishness and selfish indulgence. So is it any wonder when he comes to talk about love that he says, now let me remind you, let's go to the display case. What does love look like? He said love is patient. And that's what was missing in that church. It was missing in that the love that they claimed to have was not a love that was qualified and clarified by the biblical characteristic of love. For you see the Bible tells us that love is patient. The Bible also tells us that God is love. Therefore the Bible is telling us that God is patient. And so what we have to understand is that when the Bible tells us that love is patient, the Bible is telling us that God wants to see in my life and in your life a quality of love that can be defined and exhibited in the form of patience and that is the attitude becoming of true love. In fact that's the first major motivation that I would give to you, the first insight that I would case us to circle around tonight and that is that when the Bible tells us that love is patient and the Bible is calling us to a standard of love that reflects patience it's all based on this concept. We must remember how patient God is with...I must remember how patient God is with me; how patient He is with us. And when I talk about loving people I have to exhibit a God like quality in my love. And one of the greatest things that is true of God is His patience towards people.

If you can keep your hand there in 1st Corinthians 13 and look over in the book of 1st Peter in the New Testament, chapter 3 and verse 20, the Bible reminds us of the patience of God, in fact the very same word, makrothumia that I introduced to you just a moment ago is found here in 1st Peter chapter 3 and verse 20. The Bible says and I'm jumping into the middle of a sentence, but it says:

who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

The Bible says, look back at the time of Noah, and for a hundred and twenty years, God was patient, he was longsuffering. Noah lived as a living testimony of a God who loved and warned and was gracious and was patient. But even in that beautiful picture of patience there were only 8 souls saved because so many rebuffed the patience of the love of God. But you see God is a God of love. God is a God of longsuffering and God is a God of patience. Now, when we say that God is longsuffering we're not for a moment saying that God is soft. We're not saying that God is not serious about sin and it's consequences. And when I say to you that you are to love and I am to love and our love is to be a patient love I'm not for a moment im...implying that love is just to be soft, that it never takes

positive action, that it never takes corrective action. But I'm clearly saying to you that it is a love that it has lots and lots of time. Time for prayer, time for faith and time to believe God to work in the lives of people and so the love with an attitude that is exhibited in the life of the believer is a love that is based on the fact that I remember how patient God is with me and how much that's a part of His character. Here's the point I'm trying to make to you, the basis of my patience with others is not their worthiness but it's God graciousness to me. It's not the worthiness of other people. Sometimes people don't deserve my patience. But the reality is, is that the patience that I exhibit to others is not based on their worthiness but it's based on God's graciousness to me.

There's second thing that I want you to see tonight and that is not only that the love that has the attitude of patience is...comes out of the fact that I remember God's patience towards me but secondly and I know this is just a very simple thing but it's a reflection of love. I recognize that we are all different and therefore I have to develop patience in my dealings with you and in your dealings with me. We are different; male and female, younger-older, aggressive-passive, expressive-quiete, so many differences that make up the people that are just in this room tonight. And frankly the differences that we have in our lives can become mo...some of the most polarizing and divisive aspects of our being. We can be a fractured, divided congregation any time we wanna be. In fact so many churches in America are nothing more than that. But you see what God wants in my life and in yours and what God has given us as a church is a pursuit of Himself in true love so that the love that we demonstrate to one another is based on the fact that we recognize that there are differences and diversities in who we are and how God has made us. And that sometimes there are deficiencies in the lives of others. But what builds our unity is that love is the perfect bond of unity and when love is there, love is patient.

You remember just a few weeks ago I shared with you about a, a little acrostic that Pastor Rick Warren from Saddleback Church a... had given on SHAPE? Do you remember that just a few weeks ago, those of you who are here? Nod your heads if some of you remember that, vaguely you remember something about it. Well, SHAPE, what does it mean. It simply says:

Spiritual Gifts

Heart

Abilities

Personalities

Experiences

We all have a different shape. And you know something I've learned in life and ministry is that my shape can help others to get bent out of shape. That's something I've learned. And your shape causes me to get bent out of shape and so we have to realize that our shapes don't always match up. And it's very important when we have differences and deficiencies and a ver...a

variety of drives and, and motivations that we learn how to honor the differences in spiritual gifts, the differences in what really makes my heart beat fast and your heart beat fast and the abilities that God's given us, in the personality dynamics that go on and in the experiences that we've had. So that through understanding our differences we may bring the dynamic and we may bring the high quality of patience to love and to fellowship. I'm convinced that so many of the misunderstandings that happen in life happen because we are just impatient with one another. It happens in our families all the time. We become very impatient with our spouses, with our children and instead of seeking to understand them we immediately operate based on our shape, our design and before you know it the whole family's bent out of shape. And it's so important that we understand how easy it is to live with misunderstanding with one another. I think there're 4 things about misunderstandings that we need to see and to, to identify tonight.

One: I believe that we **falsely assume that words mean the same thing** to all of us. It's so important that we carefully watch our words. Why do you think the Bible is so full of specific commandments, about the shaping of the words of your mouth? And the Bible describes, especially in the book of Proverbs, I, one of the most fascinating studies in the Bible is just to go through the book of Proverbs and just identify the tongue, the tongue, the tongue. Why? Because our words don't always mean the same thing and so we have to be careful about our words.

And sometimes we have misunderstandings because we falsely assume that our... [<turn tape>](#) ...other times we have a... misunderstandings because we **falsely assume that there's only one right way to see things**. My way, heh! I'm not saying there's not a right in all things. We must have conviction, we must have foundation, we must seek to lay line upon line and precept upon precept and we must seek to walk in the truth. But so many times my idea of what is right is bent by my shape and I need you and you need me to help to understand a broader picture of how we can be right together in Christ. And then when we falsely assume that our way is right, I guess I've really just said that, my way or the highway.

And finally when we **falsely assume that we can figure out the motives of others**. I think one of the greatest misjudgments and misunderstandings that goes on in so many of our lives, our homes, our relationships is that we assume that we know the motivation of another person. And when you jump to begin to judge the motives of another you many times jump over the barrier of patience and of kindness, the attitude of love and ultimately become a destructive person in a relationship. Now God has given us a behavioral standard to help us to all shape up together and God's behavioral standard to help us to shape up is simply this, love is what? Patience!

There's a third thing tonight, I remember God's patience with me, I recognize that it's important because we are different that I develop patience toward you and you towards me and then I resolve. **I resolve to treat others with patience the same way that I want them to treat me**. If

God in His Word says love is longsuffering, love is patient then God is clearly saying to you and to me when His love is abiding in us through the power of the Holy Spirit then when we relinquish control of our lives to the Spirit, the Spirit is going to produce patience towards others. And therefore every day I have to get up and say Lord Jesus would You let me so express Your love today that people who come in contact with me would see love with an attitude, love that is patient.

It was Jesus who gave the Golden Rule to His disciples. What is the Golden Rule? Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Where one of the active aspects of doing to others is do show other people patience, show them restraint, show them kindness and the extension of your heart and of your life. You see there is a very easy trap for us to fall into and that is to see people as either tools to use or troubles to avoid. A lot of people live with that kind of a utilitarian view of their relationships, that all people are either just tools to be used or their troubles to be avoided. But you see Jesus says we are to treat people with value, we are to do unto others as we would have them to do unto us. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. And so the question then tonight is how do I want people to treat me? And maybe the easiest way to take what we've talked about on love being patient and really wrap it into our lives and seek to get it to the shelf of the display case of my daily living is simply to say how do I want people to treat me? Well, let me just make some suggestions tonight. I'd have to say that one of the ways that I want people to treat me is that I want them to be as the Bible says:

Slow to anger. How bout you? Do you like people to be angry with you? It's not something I really enjoy in life. I don't like people being angry with me. I learned a long time ago as a pastor that I could not make everybody happy and that was a hard thing for me to learn. But the harder thing that I had to learn was that I could make everybody mad. Heh! [pause for congregation laughter] And when anger is present and when resentment and resistance is communicated the ultimate result is rejection. And so in my life I want people to be slow to anger and therefore it is important to me that I begin to treat people with an attitude that is slow to anger. You see anger is so often nothing more than the reflection of the contents of a life and if what I'm always showing people is anger it's because there's something wrong on the inside. What's inside spills out. And so it's very important for me to guard the natural tendency towards impatience and anger and to embrace makrothumia, a longsuffering kind of love towards others.

Secondly, I want people to be **sensitive to my needs**. Anybody else agree with that? Do you like people to be sensitive to your needs? And one of the hardest things is so many times we just wanna say to somebody would you just walk in my shoes for a few days? [David takes his shoe off and holds it up] If you'd just walk in my shoes then maybe you'd know how I feel then maybe you'd understand why I struggle and maybe you know...have you ever just wanted to give somebody you shoes and say would you just walk in these? Now don't try that because I promise you they're not gonna touch your shoes. In fact most of you are worried that I don't have that

on right now and I'll get it back on. But you see the problem is, is that I want people to treat me as though they understand that I have needs, to understand that I have bad days, to understand that sometimes I'm anxious, sometimes I struggle, sometimes I'm frustrated. Because I know that, that happens in my life and that happens in your life and so what is needed is for others to see us and to understand us and for us to see others and understand them in just that way. I'm sure many of you have read some of the *Chicken Soup For The Soul* books and in one of the early volumes there was a story about a man who was on a subway train in New York City. He got on the train early in the morning and his kids were just wild. Every other commuter that was on that train was literally just aghast at the attitude. The guy was just sitting there staring at the floor and the kids were screaming and yelling and bumping and moving. And finally someone on the train just decided they'd get the where-with-all to try to put it all together and put a...put this man and his kids in his place and said, "Sir excuse me but could you do something with your children?" And out of his gaze he looked up and he said, "Oh, I'm sorry." He said, "I didn't even realize." He said, "We've just left the hospital, their mother has just passed away." And the story goes on to relate how that every person in that subway suddenly moved from anger and impatience to tenderness and kindness. Because suddenly stepping in their shoes changed the whole way they saw the situation. You see that's the wonderful thing about the love of God is that God sees me from the inside out and He knows sometimes what's goin on in here. [points to heart] And just as God treats me in that same way it's important for me to extend that same treatment to others in their lives and in their experiences as well. So love is slow to anger and that's how I want other people to treat me. I want to treat people where I am sensitive to their needs.

And then I like people to treat me in a way where they are **swift to forgive**. I like to be forgiven very easily and I think that's the kind of treatment you want too. We want people to very quickly forgive us and one of the most powerful expressions of patience is prompt forgiveness. Now don't take my word for it, let's take the word of God. Move from 1st Corinthians 13 to Matthew chapter 18 and I want you to take time to read this text more thoroughly on your own but in Matthew chapter 18 the Bible of course has the sequence of events and a discussion where Peter ask Jesus how many times he should forgive somebody and a... you know that Peter thought that he had it all figured out and he said Lord should I forgive em 7 times? And Jesus aid no, seventy times seven. He just kinda took Peter's little equation and just blew the edges off of it. He said you've gotta become great at forgiving people. But the interesting thing is, is that right after that all took place Jesus told a parable. He told a parable about a man who had a great debt and who went and appealed to his master and in that same chapter he says in verse 26:

"The servant fell down before his master whom he owed a debt, and he said, 'Master have patience with me and I will pay you all that I owe'"

Guess what that word is? Makrothumia, master please have a long fuse. And in just the same way that Jesus used that parable to demonstrate what

forgiveness looks like in the same way God is looking for you and for me to demonstrate that kind of patience and forgiveness toward one another. It is the long fuse. It's a fascinating story out of history about how Leonardo De Vince when he was painting his famed, *Last Supper*, has a dispute with a fellow artist, a fellow painter who was helping him with some of just the, the background of the detail. And apparently the conflict was so intense that De Vince when he returned to complete his project used the image of that painters face to become the face of Judas at the *Last Supper*. But there was a problem, after he created the figure and the face of Judas he started trying to paint the face of Jesus and he couldn't do it. And as the story is told it was only when De Vince forgave his friend, his brother that he was able to create and to paint the face of Jesus. Because you see ultimately to be right with God I have to be right with others through the power of forgiveness and one of the greatest ways to expr...express patient love is to express it with the spirit of forgiveness.

A forth thing that I long for and you long for in treatment is to seek to listen. I want to have others listen to me and therefore I must seek to listen to others and listening is not just something you do with your ears, it's something you do with your eyes, it's something you do with your attention, it's something that you do with your entire being. And patient love is listening love that listens for the heart that listens for the desire and that listens for the very best.

And a final thing, I want others to show compassion to me and I wanna be someone who shows compassion to others. I love the fact that over and over in the gospel of Mark that every time you read about Jesus, not only do you read kind of an express story of the life of Jesus, immediately, immediately, immediately you keep reading about Jesus and His compassion. And I guess that's what I'm saying to you. Do, do you want the picture of what patient love looks like? Look at Jesus. Jesus is patient love, patient enough that He was willing on a faithful Friday to be hung on a cross and while they cheered and chanted, "Save others, save your...you can save yourself." While they cheered and chanted and called Him to impatience and even to bring down the very wrath of God, Jesus in patience hung and died on the Cross for you and for me. You wanna know how patient God is with us? It's just like this in His love and God is calling you and God is calling me to live with an attitude of love that is seen in that kind of patience.

Love is patient. Love's attitude is patient love. Tonight if we're looking for love in all the right places then we have to start looking at the patience that God has demonstrated to us and become display cases of that patience to everyone who comes close to us day by day.