



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

1 Corinthians

"Endless Love"

TRANSCRIPT

Continuing our studies in 1 Corinthians, we're in chapter 13, and we're going to look at the second half and concluding part of that chapter, verses 8 through 13. But I think, since it's not a very long chapter, I'll read the entirety of it, beginning with verse 1 which we covered last week. But something of a review, and it'll set the context of our lesson this morning.

Paul writes: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

"Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow

Father, we come again to this great text of Scripture, this very well-known chapter, one of the best-known chapters in all the Bible. Paul's hymn to love. And we pray that You would greatly bless us through our study of it, that You would open our minds to understand it, and that You would apply it to our hearts and lives. It's a text that has probably been preached multitudes of times, and all of us have, if not read it many times, have heard lessons and sermons on it. And it's a text that can be preached rather easily in many respects. But to do it, to live it is another thing.

So Father, we pray that we would not only be hearers of Your word but doers of it. And we, having looked at the text, having read it through just now and having spent some time last week on it, as we reflect upon it with some depth and clarity, we are given pause because we realize the difficulty of living this kind of life. It's easy to explain it. It's easy to understand it in many ways. But to do it, well, that's another thing. We must confess that. I think we all do, as we consider the kind of love that is Your standard, the kind of love that we see unfolded here, and that is really merely a reflection of Your character and Your activity.

So Father, we confess that in ourselves, we can't do this. Our flesh is weak. Our spirit might be willing, but that flesh holds us back. We pray, Lord, that You would infuse us with Your grace, that we might live a life that conforms to this, or approaches conformity to 1 Corinthians 13. Make us men and women that truly love one another sacrificially, that we put our brothers and sisters in Christ before ourselves, and that we truly love them as You love us. So Lord, bless us, give us understanding and give us the will to act upon what You've revealed to us.

But Father, help us to see Your Son in all of this, because ultimately, He's the great model of everything that we read and study in this text of Scripture. And we thank You for Him and for His life and for His death in particular. That has brought us salvation. So, may we rejoice in that as well as we study these things.

So, bless us spiritually, but Lord, we need Your blessings materially as well. As Mike mentioned, there's a lengthy list of prayer requests in the back of our bulletin, and this is only a partial list. Every person in this congregation could be listed. We all have our needs. But we do pray for those who are listed here, and we pray for those who are in the hospital and those who are just out of the hospital, those who are recovering from procedures. We pray that You'd bless them and encourage them. We pray that You'd

give them physical strength, and comfort others, Lord, whose needs maybe aren't listed here who are going through trials and difficulties in life as we all will, and we all must at some time. Those who are struggling with difficulties in the home or at work, those who are struggling with various relationships, we pray that You would encourage them and strengthen them. Give them the earnest diligence to do what is right and to endure difficulties by looking to You and remembering who we have in our Savior. We have a Savior who is our high priest, who prays for us constantly, who cares about us, and who will work everything out to our good as we trust in Him. That's true for all of us, Father, and we give You thanks for that. Lord, we pray that You bless us now as we continue our time of worship and bless us as we sing our next hymn that You use to view to prepare our hearts for time of study together, and may it be a profitable time not only in this hour, but again this evening when we gather here to remember our Lord. [End of Prayer] We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] We don't place a lot of value on things that don't last, do we? We like banks that have been around for a long time with names that we recognize. We value an oak tree that has grown for 100 years over a squash that grew up overnight. We might be surprised by someone who would pay millions of dollars for a painting of sunflowers, but we would think a person crazy for paying that for an ice sculpture. We value things that last, that don't die off or melt. That's pretty obvious.

What isn't so obvious is what Paul tells us is the most durable and valuable thing of all. And that is love. It lasts forever. He says, "Love never fails." It never ends. So, we are to value love above all things, and practice it. There's nothing more important than that.

But what love? There is a famous statue by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin titled the "The Kiss." I'm sure you've seen it, if not seen it up close, seen a picture of it. And as the title suggests, it's an image of two lovers embracing and about to kiss. It represents the popular notion of love. It is physical, it is romantic, it is what the Greeks called *eros*, desire. That is a kind of love that is the world's idea of love.

Paul spoke of something different. He spoke of *agape*, and kind of love that wishes the best of everything, the kind of love that does the good. *Eros* is self-love. *Agape* is selfless love. It is sacrificial. Paul wrote of it in 1 Corinthians 13. What he wrote were not dreamy thoughts on an abstract idea. He gives a very specific description of love. Love is personified. Love does. Love is behavior. It may involve feelings,

hopefully it will, but chiefly, we see here that love is active. And anything short of that is not love, not true love.

Paul's hymn to love, as it has been called, has three parts. In verses 1 through 3, Paul really gives the reason for the chapter. Love is so important that without it, everything, all knowledge and even self-sacrifice, is nothing, of no value, just a zero. So, he begins by stating the necessity of love, and then in verses 4 through 7, he gives the nature of love. It is active and unconditional. It bears all things. Now, the third section, verses 8 through 13. In it, Paul explains the duration of love. It's endless. Love, he says in verse 8, never fails. That's *agape*. It's certainly not *eros*. You can understand the kind of love represented in that statue by Rodin. The two figures are perfectly formed, without defect; they're both beautiful. They are naturally attracted to each other.

But will it last? Where does *eros* take them 10 years hence when youth is gone, or 30 years later when beauty fades?

The world's idea of love is conditional. It is dependent on its object. It finds some mutual advantage in the other person and it's largely about satisfying a need and feeling good. The object of that love, of worldly love, benefits the lover. When that advantage or attraction ceases, the relationship ends. That's when love fails.

Christian love, *agape* is different. It isn't drawn out by desire for another person. It originates from the person who loves, from his or her nature. It is self-sufficient. And Paul says, it never fails. At the end of verse 7, he said that love endures all things. Love perseveres. Now, Paul says, it is permanent.

There's a good explanation of this from the Mishnah, the collection of Jewish laws and writings that were roughly contemporary with the apostle Paul. It's a collection of wisdom of the rabbis of that time. One of its tractates or books titled "Avot," the rabbis said: if love depends on some material cause, and the material cause passes away, the love vanishes, too. But if it does not depend on some material cause, it will never pass away. They give some examples of both, the kind of love that passes away is the love that Amnon had for Tamar. It is called love in the Hebrew text, but it was love like *eros* is love. It was desire, it was lust, and it didn't last. It fell apart.

We're told that after Amnon had used his sister, he hated her with a hate that was greater than the love with which he had loved her. That is so telling. That is selfish love. That exposes the real nature of that kind of love, that the kind of love the world glamorizes, but not even then the world can live under that kind of love. It uses up

people and then it discards them when it's done. The second example given in the Mishnah, the example of the love that never passes away is the love of David for Johnathan. That is local love. Even when Johnathan was gone, David's love for him endured. Even when Jonathan was gone, David took care of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, the crippled boy who had no practical use to David. He was, in a sense, a burden to David, but not a burden to him, because he loved Johnathan and so he took care of this young man who called himself, "just a dead dog."

But, David's love endured. It continued and was unconditional. That's the nature of this love. It's unconditional and never fails. It is what Paul says about love. That's what he extols here. Literally, love never fails. That's how we could translate what he says. It doesn't collapse under the pressure and the disappointments of life. What Paul describes here is an uncommon love, and in fact, as I pointed out last week, I think and certainly mentioned in our prayer this morning: it is a supernatural love. It's a gift of God. Paul says that in Galatians 5 when he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, and John says it in 1 John chapter 4 verse 19. We love because He first loved us. God doesn't love us because we loved Him. We love Him because He loved us. He's the source of love. He's the fountainhead of all love and all virtue.

Well, when did the Lord first love us? We love because He first loved us. When was that love of God for us? And the answer is in eternity past. Well, when did that love and eternity past begin? It never did begin. It has no beginning; it has no ending. It is eternal. It is everlasting love. And that indicates the nature of it, that it is unending, as well as unconditional. He loved us from eternity, even when He looked through the ages and saw us wrecked and ruined by the fall. He loved us knowing we would enter this world as rebels, what Paul describes as being dead in sin, living in disobedience, walking according to the prince of the air. Still, knowing all of that, seeing all of that, from all eternity, He loved us and sent His Son to die for us in order to change us, in order to redeem us, in order to save us and make us His children, His sons and daughters, and heirs to a vast and eternal fortune.

Why? What was there in us that commended us to Him? Nothing. That's the nature of His love. It's unfathomable. We can't understand it. But that's love. And nothing can shake us from His love. Nothing can pluck us from His hand. That's the assurance that our Lord Jesus gives to us in John chapter 10 verse 28. Love is permanent. Love is unending. That's true love.

That's the kind of love that Paul extols here in his hymn, this great chapter, this greatest chapter on love. It sets a standard for us. It's the kind of love that we are to have for one another. It is a high standard. It seems an impossibly high standard, as we've noted already. Still, it is possible. It's possible for every believer in Jesus Christ, and it is required of every one of us. It sets us apart from the world. Love that perseveres and love that is permanent. Nothing in this world is permanent. It's all passing away. But love remains. That's what Paul proves.

Now, as always, this was written in a certain context. It was written to address a specific issue, a particular problem. It was written to a particular people, to the Corinthians, to the Corinthian church that had this special issue with spiritual gifts, this problem with spiritual gifts. These Corinthians had been greatly gifted by God and given spectacular gifts. All of them are good gifts; all of them are a great blessing. They had what we sometimes referred to as the sign gifts or miraculous gifts, the gifts of tongues and prophecy and others. They were proud of their gifts. But Paul explains here in chapter 13, as great as those gifts are, and they were great, and what Paul has to say about the gifts is not to demean any gift. He recognizes that all of them are a supernatural gift and blessing from God. But as great as those gifts are, and as great as a person's sacrifice may be in the service of the Lord, they will all come to nothing. Come to nothing without love.

And the greatness of love is witnessed in the fact that it never fails. It never fails. It is permanent. The gifts aren't. He says, but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are gifts of, if there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away. The knowledge he speaks of here is the spiritual gift of knowledge; he doesn't mean that we will someday stop learning and knowing.

In verse 12, Paul says in the future, in eternity, we will know perfectly. Knowledge is eternal. But the spiritual gifts are temporary. They serve a purpose in this present life. God gave revelation through the gifts of prophecy and tongues. They are very important. But Paul says they will someday end.

In fact, Paul says even now, they are only partial. They don't give us full knowledge. "For," he says in verse 9, "we know in part and we prophesy in part." No prophet of the Old Testament ever had complete revelation. You can go back and read the great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. They had great truth, significant truth. But within their prophesy, they didn't have all of the details. They didn't have everything. It

was always in increments for them and for us. Even today, knowledge is always incomplete. We don't have all the facts. We don't have all the of the information. In fact, the more we learn, the more information we get, the more we know we don't know.

Solomon understood that. One of the last warnings he gave in Ecclesiastes is: excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. We never come to the end of it. Remember years ago when I was a seminary student, a group of us were visiting with Dr. Johnson one evening and we were talking theology, and he was speaking of the frustration there is in the knowledge that you must control, and it's impossible. And he said, I have a book upstairs that just came out on love I haven't read. Things are always coming out. You can't keep up with all of the knowledge. There's so many books, and they keep proliferating. He's right. Excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. We never come to the end of it.

But an end will come, Paul says, and that is when the perfect comes. That's what he says in verse 10. "But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." What is the perfect? Paul doesn't tell us. So, a lot of ink has been spilled in an attempt to define it. One explanation is: it is the completion of Scripture and the closing of the canon, which makes some sense because Paul is describing the cessation of gifts of revelation. So, when the canon is complete, when we have the fullness of God's revelation to the church, the gifts of knowledge and prophecy and tongues will no longer be needed. That would mean that the gifts of tongues and prophecy and words of knowledge are no longer extant, no longer in existence. We have the completion of the canon and therefore the movements like the so-called charismatic movement are not valid. They're not genuine. That's a popular way of explaining this. The difficult with that interpretation is: it doesn't really fit the context or the meaning of what Paul is saying here. In verse 12, Paul says, "When the perfect comes, we will know just as we have been fully known." In other words, we will know as God knows. That doesn't mean that we'll know everything; it doesn't mean that we'll become omniscient. We'll never be omniscient. But what we know, we will know completely, without flaw, without inability. We won't have doubts about or knowledge. We'll know it all fully and completely.

That's not true today. We have the closed canon. We have the Bible. All 66 books of it. God's finished giving revelation. Though we still have to study and study by the sweat of our brow and still know the frustration Solomon expresses in Ecclesiastes.

Well, all that's been defined, as I said, the perfect for us. But what seems to fit the context best is the perfection and completeness that we are destined to have at the end of the age when Christ returns. In 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, the apostle gives the promise that when Christ appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is. We will be flawless, without spot or wrinkle, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 27. We will be perfect.

That doesn't mean that tongues and prophecy are present today. Paul does say: they will cease. He doesn't say when they will cease, but he says they will cease. But we can't prove that they have ceased today from this text. There are other reasons for believing that, and I do believe that those gifts have ceased, and we'll consider those reasons in the next chapter, in chapter 14. But here, all Paul is saying is: the gifts are temporary. They were going on at the time he wrote that. But he's saying: they're going to cease someday. They're temporary. Love is not. Love is eternal. It has greater value.

So, the chief aim of the Corinthians should be to show love. And, to make the point, Paul shows the importance of the eternal over the temporal in the next verses. He does that first in verse 11 with a contrast between childhood and adulthood. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things.

We expect children to be childish. We also expect children to grow up and grow out of childish thinking and behavior. They begin with things that are very simple. Their thinking is very simple. They learn very simple things. They have simple tools to help them learn. They begin looking at books that are full of colorful pictures. No words, just pictures. And as they grow up, the pictures are replaced with words, and the words become more prominent, and the pictures go away, and the words get smaller and bigger in their meaning, and all of that. That's the same is true of our spiritual development. I reflect upon that. I can't help but think of my own experience as a young father and my oldest daughter had a love for a particular book. It was a book my wife had found, and I think it was based on some Slavic fable about the hunter. That was the title, "The Hunter." There wasn't a word in it. It was all pictures. Colorful pictures about the hunter. I still have it vividly in my memory. The hunter gets up one morning. He gets dressed. He puts on his hat. He takes his gun. he goes out of the house into the woods, and he begins to hunt. And he shoots at the birds, and he shoots at the deer, and they run away in fear, and the hunter spends the day doing that, hunting the animals, but he

neglects the time and it becomes dark, and the hunter gets lost in the woods, at night, and he's fearful, and he can't find his way home. And he sits down on a rock and he begins to cry.

Then the animals begin to peek out from the trees and the leaves, and they feel sorry for him, and they come to him, and they comfort him, and they begin to lead him home. And as the sun comes up, he comes to his house, and he's so grateful that he breaks his gun and he loves the animals. And my daughter loved that story. And every night, "Let's read The Hunter." Do you want to read something else? "No, let's do The Hunter." Okay. The hunter gets up and the hunter puts on his hat. And I was very dramatic about it.

You know, finally, day after day, week after week, year after year, finally I say, "Rachel, you're 17 years old." I'm making that up. But, that is something of what it was like with these Corinthians. The suggestion here is that the Corinthians had not grown up. They had not grown out of the pictures. They overvalued the spectacular. Kind of like the visual. They overvalued tongues and they undervalued love because they were immature.

So, it was time to grow up. It was time to get good perspective on life, to put things in their proper order and value the things that were of the greatest value. That's what Paul is urging here. He isn't saying that this will happen naturally, that this will just occur with the passage of time. It doesn't occur with the passage of time. Now, that's true of us physically. We tend to grow. We have to eat. We have to take care of ourselves. But physical growth is very natural. It just unfolds.

But what's true of the physical is not true so much of the mental and the spiritual. We have to develop ourselves. We have to learn to read. We have to apply ourselves to that. We have to develop spiritually. That takes effort. That takes determination, and that's what he's saying. They were to make the effort to grow up, to disabuse themselves of childish attitudes, to be mature. Stop venerating the temporal over the eternal. Put away childish things, he says.

He illustrates the importance of this again in verse 12 with a contrast between the present age and the future age when the perfect comes. It is a contrast between our imperfect incomplete knowledge today and the complete knowledge that we will have in the world to come. Verse 12. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."

Corinth was famous for making mirrors. And Paul saw a ready illustration for his lesson here in that trade. Our knowledge is at best a reflection of reality. We know what is real. We really know things, but we know it vaguely. We don't know things fully. Like looking in a mirror. And those original mirrors were not quite as precise as our mirrors are today. They were highly polished bronze. Some of the finer mirrors had glass in the 1st century, but they were certainly imperfect to what we have in the way of a mirror. They didn't give off a perfect image in the mirror.

Even today, with excellent mirrors, the image is always different from the reality. It reverses left and right. The scope of reflection is limited by the size of the mirror. Looking at a mirror, looking at the best mirror isn't like seeing face to face. And that's true of our knowledge of the world. That's true of our knowledge of ourselves. That's true of our knowledge of God. We do not have perfect or complete knowledge. We see dimly, Paul says; at the best of times, we see dimly.

We get our word "enigma" from that word "dimly." The Greek word is pronounced very much like enigma. It has the meaning of "in a riddle." So, we see things in a riddle. There's so much to know. So much to learn. How can any of us, when we reflect upon that, really take any pride in the knowledge that we have. Paul didn't do that. Even Paul could say: "Now I know in part." Paul, the great apostle who was himself a prophet, knew in part, certainly. At best, I know in part.

Knowledge, it seems to me, is something like the Atlantic Ocean. And all of us together have just a thimble-full of that ocean, just a thimble-full of the knowledge of what is. That's not much.

We're just now learning how vast the universe really is. Less than 100 years ago, in the early part of the 20th century, astronomers thought that the Milky Way was the universe. That was it. That's the cosmos, the Milky Way. Then they learned, as their telescopes got more effective and could see into deeper space, they learned that some of the stars that they were looking at were really galaxies. And now we know that there are not just some galaxies out there; there are literally billions of galaxies. And as they continue to probe and look, and they've just seen a sliver of the universe; as they begin to probe, they'll find billions more and many, many other things that they had not even considered.

In fact, there's one interesting thing that I'm sure you have heard about, and that is that scientists think that most of the material universe, 80 percent of it, is made up of

something called dark matter. They don't know what dark matter is. In fact, they don't even know for sure that there is dark matter. It is a hypothesis. It's an attempt to explain things. It's an educated guess. But what all of that says is: we don't know much about the universe. It is a riddle. And so, it's quite amazing when you think about that, that scientists today, and philosophers today, can speak with such great confidence about the nature of things, about what is. And certainly, amazing that they can speak about God, and whether He is or not.

We know very little. Our knowledge is limited. We know even less about the God of whom they think they can speak. God is infinite. The universe is like a drop from His bucket, Isaiah said. That's really Paul's focus here in His instruction to the Corinthians. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. It's a vast realm of knowledge, and we know things, and we know them truly, what we know. What we know, we know has been revealed in the Bible as God's revelation. So we can have confidence about what we know. But still, what we know, we know in part. Our knowledge is very limited. But that will change. When the perfect comes, when the Lord returns, Paul says, then we will see face to face.

We don't have a reflection. We won't have a reflection then. We'll have the real thing. We will see face to face. Then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. That is, fully known by God. As God knows me now, then in the future, I will know things. The ravages of age will be reversed. They will be removed. We will remember things, things we forget now will be clear then. Thinking will be clear, more clear than ever. We'll know completely. And the older you get, the more encouraging that is.

But that's then. This is now. In the present, things are partial. Right now, things are incomplete and temporary. The gifts were good. They were given by God for a purpose. But someday, that purpose will end, and there will be no need for them. The gift of tongues is a sign for unbelievers. That's what Paul says in chapter 14 verse 22. There won't be any unbelievers in heaven. We won't need that gift. Prophecy will be unnecessary. Our knowledge will be complete. We won't need the gifts. We won't need pastors and teachers. We will be whole. Christ will be our shepherd. We'll have direct contact with Him. Our knowledge will be perfect, and all of the gifts will end. We won't need the gifts.

What will remain and what is eternal is given in verse 13. Three things: faith,

hope, and love. Paul says the greatest of these is love. Faith will continue because we will always believe God. We will always believe in Him. We will trust fully in the revelation He gives and will continually unfold to us, and we will be committed completely to Him. We will have hope in heaven. Those who are in heaven now have clear minds, but they hope for what's to come. They're hoping for the resurrection day. They're hoping for the time when the kingdom will come, and we will be that way as well. And we'll have this throughout eternity.

Now, we don't know a lot about eternity. We often speak of it in terms of time. 10,000 years, 100 billion years. Will there be time in eternity? That's something of a debate that philosophers and theologians have. We don't know. But I know, at least I believe, things will not be static. There will be succession of events, I think. That would seem to suggest that there is time of some kind, but then this will be a dimension beyond us. So, it's going to be something that we can't even comprehend. So, it may be there will be no time. But it will be an age, an endless age in which we will be expanding in our experience continually. We will continually be going from glory to glory in a world without end. And we'll always anticipate. We'll always hope for an ever deepening blessing that is coming. We'll always be looking forward to something greater and greater coming, 'cause things will become greater and greater throughout eternity.

But, of these three, the greatest, Paul says, is love. Because love is divine. It is the nature of God. God is love. First John chapter 4 verse 8. And love touches everything. When we love, we are like God. Love, true love, is selfless and sacrificial. True love is like that. It is active. It cares for other people. But, not only in deed; in thought also. It's not only external. It's also internal. When the rich young ruler walked away from Jesus' offer to come and follow Him, Mark tells us that Jesus loved him. He was not indifferent toward him. He cared for him. And it is there, in the Lord Himself, that we have the perfect example of love. Christ is the embodiment of true love. He cared for people. He cared about their welfare. He died for them. He offered Himself as a sacrifice in order to save sinners. We are not saviors. We can't imitate Christ in that sense. But, we are to love as He loved, and He loved sacrificially. And that is, in thought, as well as in deed.

We are not to envy or hate. Those are matters of the mind and attitude. We are to truly desire the best for others and extend help wherever we can in the little things of life, in the mundane things of life, the things that can escape us because they're just so routine,

small. And so, that means we help around the house, husbands. We do what we can.

We lend a hand. It has to do with the way we address people and speak to them. We're not to be critical and complain. That doesn't mean we're not to correct. I think we are.

But we're to do it with love. We're to do it with tact. We're to do it with gentleness.

There's a right way to do these things.

Now, we could give a long list of dos and donts. We don't need to do that. Paul's given us a list. It's sufficient. All we need to do is reflect upon it and see how, in principle, these things apply to the various things of life, whether it's in the home or at work or wherever. It shows us how to love. Knowledge and service are important. Love is more important. Without love, whatever we do comes to nothing before the throne of God.

So may God give us the grace to value the important thing and value most, love. And show it to those around us. We can do that. We can do that by the power of God. It is supernatural. It's not native to us. It's not something we can do in our own strength, but we can do it in the power of God, in the strength of God, because we have the Spirit of God within us. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. And as we walk by faith and as we walk with Him, He will enable us to live wisely and well and to love.

But to walk by faith, you have to have faith. And by faith, I mean faith in Christ: knowing Him, believing in Him. And so, the question we end with is: do you have that faith? He is God's Son, and man's Savior. The only Savior. And all men need saving. You need saving; I need saving. He has died in our place. He died on the cross. He took the punishment we deserved in our place so that all who believe in Him would have forgiveness of sin and life everlasting and have a new nature, a capacity to love.

Well, we see in that cross the greatest expression of love, and we're to emulate that. May God help you to come to Him and believe in Him. And those of you who have believed, I trust it's most, maybe all, I hope it's all, live for Christ. Emulate Him before the world and to others. I think that picture of Christ on the cross is a picture of our Savior. His arms are spread out on that cross and His arms are still spread out to everyone who would come to Him. To the sinner, He opens His arms wide and beckons us to come to Him, and He'll receive us. He receives everyone who comes to Him, regardless of their sin, regardless of their life. Come to Him, believe in Him, and then live for Him. God help all of us to do that. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for this great chapter that You have given us through the apostle and for the instruction it gives us on love. We've spent two weeks on it. We could spend two more. We could spend ten more. We could spend an endless amount of time on this great subject. What we've read, what we've considered is enough to give us something to think deeply about. And I pray that we'll do that, and that we will seek to live a life that's pleasing to You, a blessing to those around us.