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Sermon Notes

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Love is Long-Suffering; Love is Kind

1 Corinthians 13:4

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is long-suffering, love is kind.

We have already seen in 1 Corinthians 13 that love is “the most excellent way, and that even the most excellent gifts and actions without love are worthless, completely empty of eternal virtue and will result in no eternal reward. Love is the crowning characteristic of our salvation.

Paul establishes these facts with some of the most astonishing assertions ever made... using extreme, hyperbolic language

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

These strong assertions were necessary for the Corinthians, because for all their giftedness, they were not a very loving people. But the real issue here is not the ancient Corinthian church... those people all died a little less than two millennia ago, and that local church has long since died away. The real issue is not so much “What were the Corinthians like?” but “What are WE like?” or more to the point, “What am I like?” The point of all the sermons I will preach on this, the greatest chapter on love in the Bible, is not “How good is this sermon?” or “How excellent

are my illustrations?" or my logic, or my eloquence, or my delivery... it is not whether you like the sermon, or found it engaging... the question is "What is the Holy Spirit saying to me personally about my own life... my own heart?" The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words so that every generation of Christians could look in the mirror of God's word and see how we need to be healed of our lovelessness... because honestly, the kind of love described in this chapter is SUPERNATURAL... beyond anything any of us can do consistently, day after day, minute after minute...

There is nothing particularly miraculous about any detail of it... it's not like it's saying "Love is patient, love walks on water, love flies like a peregrine falcon, love cooks dinner every night for the family..." a strange mixture of normal and supernatural actions. Actually every bit of this chapter is BOTH normal and supernatural... we can be loving in very short stretches, but the sin nature in us is so strong that we daily get swept away into disobedience

As Paul said:

Romans 7:15-20 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

We can understand what love is, but we cannot seem to carry it out day after day

This chapter is given to us to show us what we ought to pray for, for the Lord to work these things in us by the Holy Spirit

For the "fruit of the Spirit" is LOVE

Now, I feel no compulsion to hurry through this magnificent chapter. As I said last week, my greatest mentor on this chapter is Jonathan Edwards, whose collection of sixteen lectures on this one brief chapter is entitled *Charity and Its Fruits*

I want to lean on him as I unfold this morning just the first two descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4

“Love is long-suffering, love is kind”

I. What Does It Mean to Be Long-Suffering?

A. To Patiently Endure Injuries of Every Kind

Alistair Begg... “Love has a long fuse” ... it takes a long time to blow up... specifically has to do with patience with other people, not merely circumstances

Chrysostom: a man who has been wronged, and easily has it in his power to avenge himself and refuses to do so

Ultimately, Christ is the best picture of this...

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.

Like God himself... Christ could have made short work of his enemies!!

Exodus 9:15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth.

B. Various Injuries Cataloged

The myriad ways that people injure one another in this world is staggering and beyond a comprehensive cataloging

My only purpose here is to give you a flavor of the kind of world we live in, and why it is necessary for Christians to develop a love that is supernaturally LONG-SUFFERING

1. Injuries in business/financial dealings

- a. People in this world are constantly defrauding one another in many ways
- b. People withhold payment, or renege on agreements, or do shoddy workmanship on a job for which they were hired
- c. People steal, and embezzle, and break contracts, and hire high-priced lawyers to win in court
- d. Mechanics and merchants and plumbers and electricians overcharge
- e. Money is at the root of ALL KINDS OF EVIL in this world, and more injuries than we can relate
- f. Christian long-suffering is on display when we put our own sanctification and our witness and the glory of God above money

2. Injuries in reputation

- a. People slander each other, tearing people down with their words
- b. They do character assassination, spreading gossip and poisonous innuendo
- c. More commonly, people just exaggerate the faults of others in recounting a story about this or that
- d. People judge each other's motives, and put their harsh judgments into words
- e. People can use insults, verbal assaults, and other harsh words to pour poison into our ears and severely wound our hearts
- f. Beyond such overt verbal assaults, there is mockery, sarcasm, and irony that is designed to cut a person down so that the speaker may be elevated

3. Injuries in evil thoughts

- a. So also people harbor bitter and evil thoughts about others and it causes them to act in malice for years and years
- b. These bitter thoughts are clear from facial expressions and body language, and while they may not result in more overt acts of injury, just the communication by these non-verbal cues “I don’t like you! You’re not welcome here! I hate you!” is extremely painful to bear

4. Injuries to our bodies

- a. Of course, since the time of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, bitter attitudes toward others has often broken out into actual physical assault
- b. People may attack you, your person, your possessions, your loved ones... even to the point of permanent injury or death
- c. Some injuries to the body are not intentional, but still very painful... as in a car accident, or any other kind of accidental injury
- d. A person might just be consistently clumsy, stepping on your toes literally or figuratively day after day

5. Injuries from authority figures

- a. Some people use their positions of authority to do us harm
- b. It could be a government official, a police officer, a boss, a coach, a teacher or professor... someone with genuine authority and the ability to make your life miserable
- c. And they lord it over you, abuse you physically or verbally, or materially
- d. They enact laws that restrict you or other Christians... unjust laws that make life as a Christian very difficult

6. Injuries from neighbors

- a. Perhaps they like to play loud music, or shoot firearms at odd hours

- b. Our neighbor in Japan used to burn garbage and the wind would blow the stench in our direction day after day
- c. Maybe it's a crotchety old man who yells "Get off my lawn" at your kids
- d. Maybe your neighbor has a dog that barks all hours of the night
- e. Perhaps you live in an apartment complex, and they cook with ingredients that stink up the whole building

7. Injuries from family members

- a. Those closest to us can be the ones that can get under our skin the most
- b. Husbands with wives, and wives with husbands... the injuries I have in mind are not so much those in an abusive relationship—those issues are in another category
- c. But just the daily annoyances that can develop in a marriage
- d. So also the injuries from parent to child and from child to parent... we can act so unloving to each other, with a long track record of insults and injuries that happen at home
- e. We always seem to hurt the most the ones we are closest to

C. What Does It Mean to Be Long-Suffering?

- 1. To bear the injury meekly, humbly
- 2. To not seek retaliation/vengeance at all
 - a. And there are so many things that we can do to get revenge
 - b. So many movies out there are REVENGE movies... paying an individual back for the wrongs they have done
 - c. This is actually a standard plot technique... early in the movie, the villain does something villainous, and the rest of the movie is the story of the righteous revenge by the hero

- d. There are vigilante stories, in which the hero sees an injustice and takes matters entirely into his own hands... he becomes, jury, judge, and executioner and dispatches the villain to the great satisfaction of the audience
 - e. But to be LONG-SUFFERING means to forego any revenge or retaliation... to choose not to slander the neighbor, or the co-worker who backstabbed you in the office and caused you not to get the promotion
 - f. To be LONG-SUFFERING means to forgo the right to treat your neighbor as they have treated you; to repay your spouse for all the rude comments; even to forego giving her or him the silent treatment... to be passive-aggressive
3. To not harbor any bitter spirit of retaliation/revenge
 - a. Not only do you not enact revenge in real life, you don't even fantasize about it in your mind and heart
 - b. You don't cherish thoughts of getting the person back for the injury they have done to you
 - c. You drop the matter entirely, forgiving as the Lord has forgiven you; you treat the person as if the injury had never occurred
 4. To maintain a loving spirit in the heart... no interruption of that spirit
 5. To not lose the quietness and peacefulness of our spirits
 6. To be willing to suffer much to maintain peace in the relationships

1 Corinthians 6:7 Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

Ephesians 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

D. Why Is It Called "Long-Suffering"?

1. Because of the scope and magnitude of the willingness to be wronged

2. Bearing not only a small injury, but even a very great one
3. And to bear it not for a short period of time, but for an extremely long duration
4. It takes supernatural endurance

Think of a Christian wife who has been praying for years for a non-Christian husband. He is not abusive, he is generally a decent man... but he is not a Christian, does not want to go to church or pray with her, or train the children in the faith. He has bad habits that a Christian would not have – language, drink, the movies he watches, the live he is living... she has prayed for him for years, year after year. She must be LONG-SUFFERING

Or again, the Christian parents of a wayward daughter who is living an “alternate lifestyle.” She has been a source of almost incalculable grief to her parents – snarky comments, open insults, family occasions ruined, affronts to their standards and sensibilities... a constant stream of injuries to have to bear

II. How Does Christian Love Enable Us to Be Long-Suffering?

A. Love for God and for Christ Enables Us to Be Long-Suffering

1. God is extremely long-suffering... and our love for God makes us want to imitate him... to be like him!

Exodus 34:6-7 "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Genesis 15:16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure

Romans 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Romans 10:21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

2. Gratitude to God for his patience toward us enables us to be long-suffering to others
 - a. God has been so incredibly patient with us, dear friends
 - b. He has been LONG-SUFFERING with us, and put up with our repeated sins in besetting areas; our sins are more numerous than the hairs of our heads, and God has covered them again and again with his grace
 - c. We have been stubborn and defied him and resisted him and disobeyed him; we have sinned in some areas more times than we can count; we have made promises to God and broken them; we have tested his patience all our lives
 - d. We should be long-suffering to others just out of thankfulness to the God who has been so long-suffering to us!
3. Love for God makes us extremely humble; and arrogance is the root of much retaliation and loss of love when injured
 - a. We will talk more in future weeks about how love is humble... not haughty or arrogant
 - b. But this has slayed the prideful root of my intolerance for others... the root is a wicked PRIDE that says "I don't deserve to be treated like this!!"
 - c. Our Christian faith is an honest stance before God that says this:

Luke 18:13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'
 - d. How can forgiven sinners like us not be long-suffering toward other sinners? How can we be prideful and say "I don't deserve these injuries you are giving me?"
4. Love for God enables us to see God's hand in all the injuries we are experiencing

- a. God has a purpose in everything... and God uses the injuries and afflictions that happen in our lives to shape us and mold us and prepare us for heaven
- b. The Apostle Paul was harshly treated everywhere he went... he never forgot that he was the chief of sinners and did not deserve to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God and deserved to have been slaughtered on the Road to Damascus
- c. But he understood the sufferings of his life were actually part of God's plan to advance the gospel and to prepare him for heaven

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal

- 5. Love for God sets us infinitely above any earthly hurt anyone can ever do to us
 - a. Consider for a moment how trivial are all our earthly injuries... in light of eternity, they are like a dust speck on the scales, like a flickering spark that is soon extinguished
 - b. We are going to spend eternity in a heavenly home whose glory defies earthly description

Hebrews 13:6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Matthew 6:20-21 store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

B. Love for Our Neighbor Enables Us to Be Long-Suffering

- 1. Love for neighbor means to see him in light of eternity... to earnestly desire his eternal blessedness and glory; this enables us to be long-suffering

Acts 7:59 - 8:1 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out,

"Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. 8:1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

Stephen's heart was expanded to include his persecutors... the Holy Spirit was upon him, and he prayed even for those who were killing him, that the Lord might actually save them and forgive them

Saul of Tarsus was the fruit of his prayer. To bear patiently the injuries that others do to us means to desire their eternal blessedness in heaven

2. Love for neighbor was perfectly displayed in the long-suffering of Jesus Christ
 - a. Stephen's prayer was really patterned after the perfect example of Jesus Christ

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

- b. Christ bore patiently day after day the sinful opposition of his Jewish countrymen... they said he was demon-possessed; they said he was Mary's bastard son by a Samaritan man; insulted him, opposed him, plotted to kill him; they hated everything about him

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

3. Christian long-suffering is the mark of a great work in the human soul
 - a. When God the Spirit works this level of love in you, you are a mature Christian
 - b. To be able to turn the other cheek humbly, to respond with kindness, to give a gentle answer that turns away wrath... this is true greatness, because it flows from the humility the Spirit alone can give

4. Christian long-suffering has been amazingly displayed by other saints
 - a. We've mentioned Stephen already... what about the other martyrs... like William Tyndale who died saying "Lord, open the King of England's eyes"
 - b. What about the Christian heroes and heroines in closed countries like China and Muslim lands and North Korea and behind the Iron Curtain in the days of the Cold War... bearing patiently so many insults and assaults with grace and dignity
5. Christian long-suffering will be richly rewarded in heaven

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

C. Immediate Application

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III. What Does It Mean to Be Kind?

1 Corinthians 13:4 "Love is long-suffering, love is kind."

- A. Long-Suffering is Love Playing Defense... Kindness is Love Moving Out in Action
- B. The Word: To Freely Do Good to Others
 1. It is a combination of a sweet, free, generous demeanor coupled with actual works given to meet a need
 2. It may have to do with goodness done to the souls of others, or to their bodies
 3. The kindness of the Good Samaritan is seen plainly in what he did for his body

Luke 10:33-35 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

4. Or as Jesus said to the Sheep:

Matthew 25:35-36 I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

5. To see a need and meet it

1 John 3:17-18 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

C. Doing it FREELY, with Gentle Delight

1. It is not stingy or selfish or grudging

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2. In kindness, there is a sense of the delight of the one giving... they enjoy it, yearn to do it, beg for the chance to serve in this way

3. I think of two great examples of kindness in the Old Testament

a. Joseph... who treated his brothers with amazing tenderness... despite all that they had done to him

Genesis 50:18-21 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I

will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

b. Boaz, with Ruth

Ruth 2:8-13 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." ¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me-- a foreigner?" ¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband-- how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." ¹³ "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant-- though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls."

D. The Kindness of Christ

Luke 7:37-38 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸ and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Luke 7:44-50 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even

forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 7:12-15 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." ¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

There is a tenderness, a sweetness, a gentleness to kindness... it is seen in the healing touch of a mother to a five year old who has skinned his knee and goes running for his mommy; it is seen in the loving gentle way an elderly husband cares for his invalid wife of fifty years, helping her up in bed, feeding her soup, wiping her chin when she needs it.

Example: Tim Tebow, the Heisman-trophy winning quarterback, has been known for years for his many acts of kindness to special needs kids... he start

IV. How Does Christian Love Enable Us to Be Kind?

A. The Kindness of God to Us in Christ is a Limitless Motivation

Titus 3:4-6 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

B. The Spirit of Kindness is In Us

1. He is likened to a dove for his gentleness
2. He persistently works kindness in us, to see a good thing to do and do it