

# 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

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[0:00] All right, our text for this morning is 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 4 through 7. So if you'll turn with me there. 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4 through 7.

Now, while you're getting there, before we study this text, I want to remind you of one thing and inform you of another. The reminder is that our teaching on Sundays has been working in concord with CFC's Bible reading plan.

Because we want you to see the connectivity of the text. We are believing that the beauty of the scripture will come alive to you across the year. And that you will have a greater grasp of its narrative arc.

And we want you to read your Bible. We want you to fill in the gaps in between the teaching you are receiving. We want you to be hungry for this. You can read the entirety of your Bible this year for 10 to 15 minutes of effort each day.

It doesn't take much time to do this. And I would encourage you to be in your Bible even more than 10 or 15 minutes each day. And if you're not already doing so, we hope that you'll consider doing so.

[1:03] Secondly, to inform you that the teaching this morning will be brief by design. So that you can take time with the discussion questions already posted on Slack for you. Also, as some of us are gathered in this larger group, we do not want anyone to watch children.

We just thought that would be so sad if we had to have some child care. So for the sake of the children, too, we're also keeping comments short this morning. So 1 Corinthians chapter 13, beginning in verse 4.

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.

We find ourselves living in days of such turmoil. If it's one thing, it's another. The troubles just seem to be compounding on top of each other.

[2:11] Confusion and uncertainty seems to reign right now. At every turn, we are faced with animosity of all varieties. And I expect this will get worse and not better.

There will be for American Christians a growing discomfort in the coming years. We will likely experience this even in the coming months. None of this should be of any surprise to us.

We have labored here to help you develop a robust theology of suffering. If you have been with us for very long, you have heard references to passages like John chapter 15, verses 18 and 19, where Jesus says, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Or 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12, where Paul wrote, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It is not the abnormal experience of a Christian to be treated with hostility, but rather the normative. And we should be found rejoicing at this.

[3:33] Paul wrote in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 24, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

Paul was pleased that he had been given opportunity to suffer, so that the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ would be displayed in him for the sake of the church.

Now you may be wondering what this has to do with today's text, and that is a fair question so far. I've been thinking a lot these past weeks about how I and we ought to be acting in a time such as this, and in a time I anticipate is coming our way.

And my mind was drawn to Jesus' words in John chapter 13 and verse 35. He said, By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Well, I think that the trouble of our day and the future affliction I anticipate we will experience has and will afford us opportunity to declare who we belong to through the way that we love one another.

[4:46] It's a chance for us to make much of Christ, and this is a thing to rejoice in. So let's take some time to think about what that love should look like.

What characterizes our pursuit of Jesus as we love one another? This text is a beautiful text to read at a wedding, but its exhortations extend beyond marriage to every relationship within the church. It's not just a marriage text. May we be a people who are unmistakably disciples of Jesus Christ because we love the way he loved.

We love by giving of ourselves for the sake of others. We love sacrificially. So in these four verses, Paul describes sacrificial love 15 different ways.

And so, yes, this is a 15-point sermon, but we'll move really quickly through each of them. So number one, and they'll all follow this format, sacrificial love is patient.

[5:54] Sacrificial love is patient. The Greek word here, rendered patient, comes from two words meaning long-tempered. If you're patient, you're slow to anger.

You endure personal wrongs without retaliating. You bear with others imperfections, faults, and differences. You give them time to change, room to make mistakes without coming down hard on them.

Do you do that, men, with your wife and your children? During the late 1500s, Dr. Thomas Cooper edited a dictionary with the addition of 33,000 words and many other improvements.

It's a big work. He had already been collecting materials for eight years when his wife, a rather difficult woman, went into a study one day while he was gone and burned all of his notes under the pretense of fearing that he would kill himself with study.

Eight years of work. Up in smoke. Dr. Cooper came home, saw the destruction, and asked who had done it. His wife told him boldly that she had done it.

[7:01] The patient man heaved a deep sigh and said, Oh, Dinah, Dinah, thou hast given a world of trouble. And he quietly sat down to another eight years of hard labor to replace the notes which she had destroyed.

Sacrificial love is a patient love. It bears with people for their good. Second, sacrificial love is kind. Kindness is sort of patience in action. The Greek word comes from a word meaning useful. A kind person is disposed to be helpful. He seeks out needs and looks for opportunities to meet those needs without repayment.

He is tender and forgiving when wronged. The word was used in Greek of mellow wine and suggests a person who is gentle, who has an ability to soothe hurt feelings, to calm an upset person, to help quietly in practical ways.

Note that it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. Romans chapter 2 and verse 4. So sacrificial love is kind.

[8:21] Third, sacrificial love does not envy. The word means to eagerly desire and it is used both positively and negatively in the Bible. Envy or jealousy in the negative sense is related to greed and selfishness.

The jealous person wants what others have. He wants things for himself. He does not want to give of what he has or of himself for the sake of others.

Right? It's self-seeking, self-serving. And this is not love. Sacrificial love does not envy. Fourth and fifth, sacrificial love does not boast and is not arrogant.

These two ugly twins are related. They both stem from selfishness and are the flip side of jealousy or envy. John MacArthur in his commentary on this text said, Jealousy is wanting what someone

else has.

Bragging is trying to make others jealous of what we have. Jealousy puts others down. Bragging builds us up. So boasting is an outward manifestation of pride.

[9:33] The bragger tries to impress others of his great accomplishments in order to make himself look good. But love isn't trying to build up me. Love is trying to build up the other.

Love is humble. The humble, loving person is aware that everything he has is an undeserved gift from God. See 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 7.

So he doesn't boast, but thankfully uses what God has given him to serve others. Sacrificial love does not boast and is not arrogant.

Sixth, sacrificial love is not rude. Love does not needlessly offend. At times the truth is offensive, but love is not needlessly offensive.

Love has good manners. It is courteous, polite, sensitive to the feelings of others, and always uses tact. The reason we are not courteous when we are not courteous is that we are thinking only of ourselves and not of others.

[10:40] Sacrificial love is not rude. Seventh, sacrificial love does not insist on its own way. It is not selfish, does not demand its rights.

Selfishness is the root problem of the human race.

It is the antithesis of love, which is self-sacrificing. Elizabeth Elliott was once speaking on the subject to an audience that included some young children who were sitting right in front of her. As she spoke, she wondered how she could make this plain to them so that they could apply it. Later, she got a letter from one of those children, a six-year-old boy who wrote, That little boy was learning the importance of sacrificial love.

Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't insist on his own rights?

[12:15] He would have stayed in heaven. He would not have come to serve you and I by suffering in our place for our sin. Jesus, after all, was God.

He did not have to do this thing. Just as Jesus laid down his life for us, we are to lay down our lives for one another. He is our supreme example.

Sacrificial love. Sacrificial love does not insist on its own way. Eighth, sacrificial love is not irritable. The Greek word here, rendered irritable, means to sharpen, stimulate, rouse to anger.

It is not touchy. Love does not have a hair-trigger temper. Some people make everyone around them walk on eggshells.

They're easily offended and they use their temper to intimidate and to punish. When you're angry, you are usually not loving, right?

[13:17] There are some occasions for righteous anger. But most often, when we're angry, we are not being loving. Sacrificial love is not irritable.

Ninth, sacrificial love is not resentful. Love does not keep a tally of wrongs and bear a grudge until everyone is paid for.

It doesn't try to gain the upper hand by reminding the other person of past wrongs. One married man said to a friend, You know, every time my wife and I get into a conflict, she gets historical. His friend said, Historical? Don't you mean hysterical? And he said, No, I mean historical. She rehearses everything I've ever done wrong in the whole history of our marriage, right?

That's keeping score. That's not love. Love forgives. Sacrificial love is not resentful.

[14:15] Number 10 and 11. Sacrificial love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. These qualities are the flip side of one another.

To rejoice in the truth means to be glad about behavior in accordance with the truth of God's word. If someone you don't like falls into sin, you don't gloat.

You grieve because God is grieved over sin. If they repent, you rejoice. There's a fine balance to love. Although love is kind and overlooks the faults of others, it does not compromise the truth or take a soft view of sin.

To allow another person to go on in sin, whether it is known sin or a blind spot in their life, is not seeking his or her best and therefore is not love, right?

Sometimes we must confront people and sometimes we can't do it with the measure of kindness we would like. Love will, when possible, sensitively confront and correct precisely because it cares deeply and knows that sin destroys.

[15:26] Love rejoices with the truth. Love gets excited when it hears of growth in people's life. It seeks after that very thing.

Love encourages by expressing joy over little evidences of growth, right? Valuing the good that God is working in people as you minimize those things they still need working on.

The Apostle John wrote in 3 John verse 4, Sacrificial love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Twelfth. I don't say that often, do I? Sacrificial love bears all things. The word can mean either to bear up under or to protect by covering.

If it has the first meaning, then it would be the same as endures all things. I, for a long time, have wondered, how is bearing and enduring different? I prefer the second meaning for this reason, that Paul's trying to communicate something different here.

[16:37] That is, to protect by covering. Love doesn't broadcast the problems of others. Love doesn't run down others with jokes, sarcasm, put-downs.

Love defends the character of the other person as much as possible within the limits of truth. Love won't lie about weaknesses, but neither will it deliberately expose and emphasize them.

Love protects. You can think of it in those terms. Sacrificial love bears all things. Thirteenth.

Sacrificial love believes all things.

Love trusts. This does not mean gullibility. It does not mean that love is not suspicious and doubting of the other person's character and motives without good reason, even if his actions offended you.

If trust has been broken, then it needs to be earned again, step by step. But love believes the other person is innocent until proven guilty. Not guilty until proven...

[17:43] That doesn't make sense. That's a nonsensical sentence I wrote. Love believes the other person is innocent until proven guilty. Period. If there's a problem, love doesn't jump immediately to blame the other person.

Love assumes the best of a person instead of assuming the worst. Fourteenth. Sacrificial love hopes all things.

Love is not pessimistic. This little phrase in this chapter I have to go over again and again in my head because I am a born pessimist.

Love is not pessimistic. It does not expect the one loved to fail, but to succeed. Love refuses to take failure as final.

It exudes a godly optimism which says, I know you can do it because God in you is able to do it. It does not ignore reality.

[18:42] It does not close its eyes to problems, but it rests on the promises of God. That he is working all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to purpose.

Right? It is confident that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ. Sacrificial love hopes all things.

Fifteenth. And finally. Sacrificial love endures all things. The word endures is a military word in the Greek, meaning to sustain the assault of an enemy.

It has the idea of holding up under trial, of perseverance in spite of difficulties. It means that love hangs in there, right? It hangs on.

It's not just a passive stoic attitude. It's a positive triumphant spirit that sticks it out. There's an epidemic among Christians of bailing out of tough situations.

[19:40] People get a bit uncomfortable and they run. All areas of life this happens. Love hangs in and love gets to work. Sacrificial love endures all things.

That's how love acts, right? Such an opportunity. And always have had, to be clear. But we have such an opportunity today and a day out ahead of us to be characterized differently as God's people.

This is love. It is sacrificial. Wholly directed to building up others for the glory of Christ. Of course, nobody can love like this on their own, right?

God is love. But put Christ in verses 4 through 7 instead of love and you have a description of him. Jesus Christ is patient and kind.

He does not envy or boast. He is not arrogant or rude. He does not insist on his own way. He is not irritable or resentful. He does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

[20:45] Jesus Christ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. If we are to love one another sacrificially as we ought, we must focus on his perfect love for us and walk in a spirit who produces his love in us.

Let's pray together.