

Blazing Love (1 Cor 13:1-13)

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[0 : 00] So, the passage today is 1 Corinthians chapter 13. If you'd like to bring that up. 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 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 do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

[1 : 11] But where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part. Then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain. Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. Now Pastor Albert will preach to us. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you Pastor William for giving me this excellent passage to share. Maybe he thinks I'm old enough.

[2 : 16] Because I've kind of lived enough years to exercise love. I don't think so. But I think as I recount my years, maybe the more of failures of records in exercising love.

So time is not a matter. It's really how I grasp the opportunities to love. I don't think anyone can boast.

Just talk to your spouses whether you are loving or not. And on Saturday last night we had a great Christian movie. Talking about love from a husband to a wife who suddenly got sickness.

Real fatal sickness. And how he used the love of God. Exercised the love of God. Yeah, just serving her. So I think love is like it's a relationship.

I think it's all sorts of things we talk about love these days, right? You know, there's all different aspects. But the media will tell us this is all very selfish, erotic, kind of sexual kind of thing.

[3 : 30] And everybody focuses on it. And even some healthier, some good, positive ideas about love is like, oh, it's affectionate actions.

You know, I do good things to you to make you feel good. And I think that's one aspect, too. But I think love is multi-aspects.

And the essence of it has got to be from God. So I would like to share with you that like today, can I have the PowerPoints? Oh, yeah, yeah.

Thank you. I think this love, I would call this, I was trying to name it just as well. I asked Pastor William, otherwise I'd put in a wrong word for it.

But I like to put this word blazing love. What does it mean? We all talk about love, all right? And we all have theories of love. And we all know about the Bible, about what God says about love.

[4 : 38] And we teach, I teach my children, I teach my child, I teach people about love, okay? But only when love is put under fire, under testing times, that love can really, really actually have the opportunity to exercise it.

You know, it's all nice and, you know, everything goes smooth. And I'll just say, I love you, dear. That's easy to do, right?

It's comparatively easy to preach a sermon about love than to actually love somebody that I do not love, do not like. Right?

After the QMM two weeks ago, three weeks ago, I'm sure there was a lot of hurts. A lot of people wouldn't want to talk to another. But these are the opportunities, these are the times that God places us under the fire to really, really exercise love.

All right? I have two pieces of hamburger bread here, okay? Who's hungry today?

[5 : 58] Okay, okay, you can have it. And I have two pieces of patties here, rock hard. Just came out from fridge, freezer.

Eat it. Eat it, mate. Right now. You would? Now you'll break your teeth. What is the best way to treat my brother?

To really cook it up. To really put under the pan. To really, really fry it. And all this sizzling kind of, you can imagine, right?

Oh, yeah, I want it. Okay? That is the kind of love that we need. Not just talking about it, but to seize those testing opportunities, those times that I don't really want to exercise love with God.

You love him, but I hate him. I don't want to. But God says to you, you still need to love. And eventually, we don't win.

[7 : 10] God wins. And okay, Lord, all right. Even though I don't like him, I like her, but I'll try to pray for her. Pray for her. And then God will begin to change me.

That's my past experience. One of the experiences was with my mother. Right? And God did an amazing thing. So, this is what I said.

Blazing love. Love put under testing time and got the flame by the Holy Spirit. And to use those opportunities to exercise love.

Love not just in theory. Not just from the Bible. But love practiced in everyday life. I like the Sunday school this morning, what Eva said to us.

If we read 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes Bible, right, we get what, well, this passage here, you get about 30 minutes of message.

[8 : 14] You have to discern it. If God says to you, all right, I got it. I got this message of love. But then, the rest of the 23 hours, something like that, apart from your sleep, all right, we need to put that into exercise and to love those ones that God has placed in my life.

Whether home, whether work tomorrow, whether your neighbors, whether your friends, this is what we are supposed to do. So, 13 verses 1 to 13.

Thanks, Venus, for reading that to us. I think Paul stated that. He was saying that, actually in 12, 31, he was saying that, I'm going to show you the most excellent way.

That is the most excellent way. Because in the context of the people, in the Corinthian church, they were trying to compare spiritual gifts. Which is greater?

I've got this. I've got that. I'm more important. We're all kind of trying to demonstrate the things that God has given to me, show my quality. And Paul says, yeah, it's all fine with spiritual gifts.

[9 : 26] Sure, there's no problem with tongues. There's no problem with prophecies and all these kind of miraculous gifts. But the most important way, the most excellent way to exercise it is by means of genuine, selfless love.

If we do not have love, all these things will become meaningless. So, today, as we read this passage, may God speak to us.

All right? Just seize this love that God has given to us. Thank you, Venus, for letting us to reflect on. It's not the love that's in me.

It's that love that flows from God through me. I don't manufacture this love in me. There's nothing here, right? But God fills me with His love by the Holy Spirit.

And I can be filled abundantly. And while we are filled, we can share that, exercise it, channel it to those around us, to those God has placed in my life.

[10 : 38] So, in the passage here, I mean, in the previous passage, Paul always says something like, knowledge puffs up.

Okay? It's just nothing there. You just puff it up. Right? I remember last time we went to this Shanghai restaurant. Somebody ordered this pumpkin cake.

It's all very nice. It was round ball. And we asked him, hey, can you actually cut it up so that we can share it? And once she used the scissors to cut it up, it was hollowed inside.

And suddenly, that big round ball become two little pieces of deflated kind of flowers. There's nothing there.

And it's like, you know, we think we're proud. We're proud of, you know, it's all puffed up. It's no. But when love, love actually steadily builds up others.

[11:44] So, this is what Paul has been trying to say. Nothing wrong with gifts. Nothing wrong with knowledge. But how do we operate the gifts, the knowledge, experiences that God has given to us, talents?

How do we use them in order to build one another? Okay. Now, I cannot see the...

Can you have the original... Because it's all black. It was... The original... It was not like that. Now, so I can... I can't see anything.

Can I show the original one, please? Yeah. It's on the desktop. Now, I think... What I mean, blazing love, why do I use this illustration for this patty here?

Right? It's actually... It was from the structure of the... Thank you, Donald. Yeah. The structure of 12 to 13, it was actually...

[12:53] It was like that. So, 12 is about spiritual gift, what Pastor William preached to us last time. And the next sermon also will be about spiritual gifts.

But today, the sermons, there's nothing about spiritual gift. It's about love. So, why? It's actually... It is talking about spiritual gift, but it talks about the way to operate spiritual gifts.

So, it was like a hamburger. Right? So, the meat in the middle, the way that Paul... Although originally, it was not...

There's no chapters and verses. Okay? But the way Paul was writing in this 12, 13, 14, it was a complete section.

The more important thing he wants to stress, yes, spiritual gift, tongues, and unity is important. But the most important thing was in 12, 31, and chapter 13.

[13:55] So, that was the sizzling, the blazing love, the love that needs to exercise so that we can work out, we can serve God with our different gifts together in church.

All right? Same thing. It was in chapter 8 and chapter 10. So, chapter 8, chapter 10 was talking about idols, idolatry.

But in chapter 9, said nothing about it. Paul says, I lay down my rights. So, he wants to share that. I share my example so that this will apply to you.

Please, do that. So, that is the thing that Paul was talking about. So, today, I'd like to share three things about this passage.

Okay? Firstly, it's about... In verses 1 to 3, Paul was saying about loveless actions. Okay? If I speak the tongues of angels, men and angels, tongues were one of the gifts.

[15:10] All right? If I have the gift of prophecy, there was... They were, you know, trying to compare which was greater. And those who possessed the gift of tongues, they said, oh, tongues were better than prophecy.

So, he did blah, blah, blah. He's just talking away. And it was also... He mentioned something about faith that could move mountains. That something was taught by Jesus.

Right? Amazing stuff. Faith could move mountains. And he was talking... Also talking about giving all he had to the poor. And even to give over their body to hardship.

All that. All right? But... But... Do not have love. If I do all these things without love...

We can do that, too. I mean, we can... We can copy... We can... We can just deceive others by doing great things.

[16:11] Right? But we know... We know. Is it from our heart? Or is it just... We want others to... You know, to praise me.

Oh, pastor is a good guy. Or... Because I'm a pastor, I need to do good things. Oh, really? If I do all these things without love... Paul says...

Nothing. Loveless tongues... Meaningless. It's not just meaningless. I think it will be very annoying. All right? Say... If...

He was actually saying that... Using this example... Every time he's done... If I do that... The whole hour... You'll be very annoyed.

But if Isaac was playing this... Music in harmony... The whole hour... That would build me up. So Paul was saying that.

[17:07] Right? So... Loveless tongue... You know, you're just... Babbling away... No one understands... And... And you know without any consideration... That...

One of the considerations is to... Translate it. Right? So... If I... If I practice these gifts... Without love... Meaningless... Can be destructive too.

Loveless prophecies... All right? You understand what I'm talking about? I preach... I preach the word of God... I have the full knowledge... If I have the faith... Without love... Still nothing.

If I give all that I have... Left... Empty. Futile. You know? So... Paul was saying that...

Love... Without... Actions... Without love... Is meaningless. Let's not do it. These...

[18:08] Truths are... Apple trees. But if you look closer... One is fake. One is real. A lot of fake trees...

These days. All right? You go to... To malls. You go to the plazas. A lot of fake stuff. My home... My wife has a lot of... Like... Fake...

Plants in my home. All right? It's okay for decoration. But you go to an apple tree... Trying to get an apple to eat. I... I much...

Prefer... Genuine stuff. I mean... They could look the same. In our lives... We think we can deceive others. But God knows...

Are those actions... Grown... Produced... With love. From God's love... Being loved... Exercised...

[19:06] Now... No one's talking about perfection here. No one is perfect. But... Remember...

Blazing love. Love... Under... Testing times.

Then... We rely on God... To... To exercise... To love. Now... Yes... I... Last time I said...

We're not commanded to like... All right? Like is a feeling. Feeling... We're not to be... We got to be genuine to our feeling. I don't like this... I don't like that person.

That's fine. Okay? But even that emotion... We are to... Place it to God. Allow God to change me. It's that attitude...

Mentality... Of love... We need... We need... To ask God... To help us... So that we can... Love... So...

[20:06] Four to seven... One to three... Is loveless... Actions. Four to seven... Is love... In actions. Okay?

This is... Basically... Our verse for this month. Okay? It's not that hard. In Chinese... We all know it. I believe that will be the first passage...

First few passages... When we became Christians. We all memorize that. Okay? This is... Fantastic for weddings. Right? Choose that. All right?

Let us know... What you use... In a bulletin... In next month. All right? All right? But... You wouldn't choose... You wouldn't choose verses one to three...

In your wedding. Nobody chooses one to three... To let my body be burned. Right? What are you talking about? Right? But... Pay attention to this.

[21:04] Grammatically... All right? What is patient? Who's good in English here? Patient. What is it? What is it? Is that...

Is that a noun? Is it an adjective? What is it? Patient. Is it an adjective or a noun?

Or what? Adjective. What is kind? It's also adjective. What is envy? It's a noun.

Isn't it? Is that... Correct me, please. Correct me. My brother here. Probably, right? I don't want to boast. Right? Love does not boast.

Okay? I think... I think... Yeah. With lots of songs. All right? About... There's a song that we usually sing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

[22:00] Love does not boast. Does not envy. Does not boast. Right? All right. But in the original language... I'll tell you what. All these descriptions were verbs.

All right? In Greek, all were verbs. And what does verbs mean? You need to do it. All right?

It's not just a description of what it is. So, for example, love is patient. Okay? So, what does it mean? Love is patient.

It means... I will hold my cool as long as I can. Even I want to give up, I will not.

That is patient. And patient is not indifference. Now, indifference is... I don't even want to bother. I don't even want to care what is it about.

[22 : 57] But... Patient is something... It could be... I'm hurt. I'm being hurt. There's some wrongs in our relationship.

I'm not going to blow my top. I'm not going to tell you off right away. I want to hold my patience. I don't want to give up this relationship.

But I'm not diminishing the wrongs in it. But it's not the right time. I won't blow. I won't put myself in anger. You know, that is patient.

It's not just a very nice, nice description, you know. Yeah, just to share. Ah, this is lovely. No, it's not lovely. You know, loving others at times is very hard.

And say, kind. What is kind in verb? All right? It's caring in action.

[24 : 06] All right? Caring in action. If I don't see you... If I see... Oh, Isaac, you don't have anything to eat? Oh, so pity so you. But I'm going to buffet dinner with my wife tonight.

But you can't come along. No. You just get Venus to help you. A bit if she can help you. No? She'll give you some drugs. She's a doctor.

That kind of drug. That kind of drug. Not those drugs. All right? You know what I mean? Love is not just talking.

It's doing. How much in our daily interaction with others that we actually live out these loving actions.

I mean, yes, it's all good to have affections, to feel affectionate, to have the affection from others.

It's good to have that nice feeling.

[25 : 20] But when... You know, the heartbeat, the essence of love, sometimes you don't feel it right away.

Okay? Okay? I remember as, you know, being pastor here for many years, the first few years, I think I was, yeah, I was trying to get to get to know each other and people get to know me.

And I'm sure I did some silly things. I said some silly things. And I have received a few loving letters, real, genuine letters to correct me.

And I thank God for these letters. Right? Pastor, yes, it's okay for you to stress that, but sometimes you may be overstressed a little bit.

And I'm really thankful for this loving reminder, willing to write, willing to even give me his or her name.

[26 : 27] And today they are still at church. Right? So loving will need to be expressed in actions.

Pray for these opportunities. Not just telling others about how God loves him or her or how we love. And at times we can be cliches. God loves you. God bless you. It's a means of, hey, goodbye. See you next week. You know? But grass sees these opportunities to, yeah, to love.

Put love into actions. And lastly, this is the message. I like that. Message actually did put all these loving descriptions as verbs.

This is one version of the, well, you can't, well, marginally you can call it one version of the Bible, but it's a paraphrase, right?

[27 : 32] So you don't study message, okay? Bible. But you can use it as, to read alongside and helps me to understand a little bit more. See? Love never gives up.

Love cares. See? All these are verbs, right? Care for others more than myself. Doesn't want what it doesn't have. See? All these were verbs. It does remind us, doesn't it?

Love are actions, verbs to practice. Okay? You can, I'm sure you have a version of the message in your phone.

You can, you can read into it. All right. Okay. Lastly, love's anticipation. Loveless actions, love in action, love's anticipation.

In verses 8 to 13, love never fails. What does it mean? It means that love will stand firm, steadfast, will not be moved.

[28 : 43] Okay? Surely, it's from God. So God's love will not be moved. If I hold on to God, I can stand firm. If I depend on myself, I waver.

All right? All right? So we need to stick with God. Allow God's love to penetrate me so that my love for my wife, the people that God placed into me, I can stand firm a little bit longer.

Not with my strength. But here, and the rest of the passage, he makes another comparison. All right? It's comparison about the present and the eternal virtues.

The present gifts, the present situation with the eternal virtues. Okay? Prophecies will cease. Tongues will be stowed.

Knowledge will pass away. Everything what we have now, in part, in part, in part. And then he illustrated with a, looking into the mirror.

[29 : 54] All right? Please, it's not today's mirror. It was not, never, it was never as clear. It was bronze mirror at the time.

All right? It's really just, you can almost see a blur kind of, it's like what you have in Zoom. It kind of, when you have the blur, you know, background. It's something like that.

You can see, you can't even see any wrinkles in me. You look in the mirror in those times. You can see a figure. That's about it. You know, a figure like a human head, not like a pig. Oh, that's me.

Okay? That's about it. This is, so that's, Paul was trying to say, for what we see only a reflection in the mirror. Okay? But one day, we will see God face to face.

I know now in part, but God knows me fully. So why boast? Now, yeah, tongues, prophecies.

[30 : 54] Sure. I think some people ask, what about tongues? I mean, different people will have different interpretations. Okay? Some believe there was just earthly language. Some think there is a heavenly language.

Doesn't matter. I don't even know what they are. It needs to be interpreted, right? So I don't know. God knows. So why fight on something that we don't have 100% accuracy?

Right? So that was what happened in the Corinthian church. And please do not copy that. And Paul said, you know, be like adults in good things.

Don't be childish. I think, yeah, one day when God comes, we all see face to face.

And what we have now, I'm sure when God revealed his truth to us, when he revealed, given us gifts and talents to serve him, I'm sure in God's reality, it might be different from what we can perceive.

[32 : 15] I'm not saying God's truth is partial or something or limited something. It's my conception.

Because try to talk, you know, the PhD level to a three years old. How would you use the terms? You can't use it in the advanced level to talk to a three years old, right? You have to use what they have. And this is like what God's showing us.

God finds in our limited mind, in our limited language, he, yeah, he conveyed to us what we could understand.

Now, Grace Chu, been here a couple weeks ago, remember? I think he's gone back to Asia now.

[33 : 16] One of the ministry he did, she did, was to teach music to those who was illiterate. How could you teach music to someone who don't even have language, don't even have musical notes?

Did she share anything about that here? Yeah? She was using this. So we're using corn, using, yeah, seeds, using red beans, peanuts, right?

To, yeah, to illustrate this is half a note, quarter note, this is a full note, and these are things. Now, imagine these people, you know, they argue over, ah, this is something, this is what I think, this is not right.

You're, you know, this is, we use the red beans, not, not, not the green beans. And they fight over it. You know, is this what we do at times?

We think we have the 100% truth, and then we think others are not right, and we just put others down.

[34 : 36] I think I'm guilty at that, too. The more, the more I, I, I've been, served longer, I, I would, I could fall into that trap. I've got, I've got, I've got it right, you don't.

Sure, we, God reveals to us, we can know, we can understand, okay? But we don't have the 100% truth. It's only partial, especially on the gifts here, talking about the gifts and the knowledge, right?

So let's, let's, with love, let's discern, let's listen, let's learn together. That's the best way. All right?

Finish, I'd like to use this as an illustration. This is Eva, okay, last time, in the first lesson of Sunday school. I thought it was, that was great.

She talked about sanctification, okay? Loving others is one of the greatest exercises we can to love God, to love others in our sanctification process, you know?

[35 : 50] What is sanctification? It's our life in Christ. Don't, don't be scared off by these big words, okay? Justification does really mean God forgives our sin. When we come to God, we have new birth, all right?

And sanctification is like our life continues to be sanctified, to be renewed in Christ. And one day when Christ come, we'll be all like Jesus.

There'll be glorification when Christ shall come. But here, in this sanctification process, we're all here now, okay? We're all here, okay? Until Christ come.

Eva says something like, We can't just sit at home and when Christ comes, suddenly I'll be very much Christ-like, right?

I just sit at home and suddenly I'll be changed. See, my home is eight minutes drive away to church. [36 : 50] I just cannot sit at my home and suddenly, eight minutes later, I found myself in church. It just won't work.

It won't happen, all right? So what I had to do, I had to get in my car. I had to ignite my car and now reverse out. I could bang into my garage door and I could, on my way, turn out, come out to Smell's Road.

I could get a ticket. I could, somehow I made a wrong turn. But eventually, it might take me 18, 28 minutes, eight months, I can come to church.

But if I sit at home, I do nothing, I will never be at church. You see what I mean? You see what Eva mean? Okay? Santification is a process we need to try and exercise.

God will not just change me just like that. Love one another. This great poem, this psalm of love. Love is patient.

[37 : 59] Love is kind. We need to exercise that. At times, chaotic. At times, no, I don't want to, Lord. At times, I fail.

I fail more than I succeed. But this is the process. This is where God wants us to grow. At church, we have different gifts, talents.

We serve with our diversity of our culture, our language, our nature, personalities.

But God seems good to put us together. Right? At times, I feel like, God, why don't you ask this guy to move to somewhere?

And God maybe say to you, I want to move you. But this is what we have. Let's learn to love.

[39 : 01] Thank you. Let's pray. Father God, I just want to thank you for your word. Yeah. The church in Corinth struggled. And we struggle, Lord. I struggle.

But thank you for the Holy Spirit in me, pouring out the love of God into my heart. That we are able to, in our very limited, with our fragile, with fallible nature, Lord, that you are very patient with us. You've been very, very patient with us, Lord. So have mercy on us. Holy Spirit, continue to renew us, to transform us, to be like Christ.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Hear our prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.