



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“The Face of Love”

TRANSCRIPT

It's 7:30. Let's open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the access that we have in him. We thank Thee for the way that he has opened for us by the shedding of his blood. And we thank Thee for the confidence that we have by reason of that that Thou doest hear our prayers and that Thou wilt answer them in accordance with the teaching of the word of God that Thou hast given to us.

We thank Thee for the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way in which they guide and direct us. And we ask, Lord, that thou wilt constantly be giving us a love for the word of God and the desire to read and ponder it and study it and, above all, to follow it. Help us to remember that Thy word is settled in heaven forever, is reliable. And in all of the experiences of life the joys, the sorrows, the difficulties and trials, the word of God, as ministered to us by the Holy Spirit, is our support.

We thank Thee for all the apostles and the prophets have written concerning the ministry of Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for those who look forward to him and to whom Thou didst give the Word of God. And for those who were here upon the earth when he was here upon the earth and have recorded for us, by the inspiration of the third person

of the Trinity, the things that Thou hast given to them. We thank Thee for those who remained after our Lord was gone among the apostles and who being taught by him have also taught us.

We thank Thee Lord that, by the providence of God, we are able, each of us, to hold in our hands a copy of the holy Scriptures. What a marvelous privilege that is that countless millions down through the years have not had. Enable us, Lord, to appreciate that and respond accordingly to the blessings that Thou hast showered upon us. We commit our study to Thee now. We ask that Thou be with each of us. May our lives pass before us in the light of the word of God and the teaching of the Spirit.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, we’re looking at the great chapter on Christian love, 1 Corinthians chapter 13. This has often been called a lyric of love or a lyrical poem on love. And I guess there is probably a good basis for that. It certainly is a remarkable chapter. And this evening we look at the second part of chapter 13, verse 4 through verse 7. And our subject is “The Face of Love.”

The apostle has expounded for us, in rather brief fashion, the indispensability of love. And so now he turns to its nature. And verse 4, 5, 6, and 7 form what someone has called a penned portrait of the nature of love. And others have called a crisp cameo of the nature of love. One might think, if he looked about in our society, and if he looked about in our Christian society, that love is something like sentiment because we have so little doctrinal preaching, so little of the theology of the word of God, and so Christian love is very much like what we would imagine sentiment to be.

There is a story that one of the commentators tells about a pastor who was leaving his church to go to another church. He was one of the modern, “up to the minute” preachers who could say a lot of sweet nothings that wouldn’t hurt a flea. And on the other hand, would do no one any good. So, it is said a young man came up to him and said, “Pastor, I am so sorry we’re going to lose you. When you came to us three years

ago I was a young man who didn’t care for God, man, or the devil, but since listening to your beautiful sermons, I’ve learned to love them all.” [Laughter] Well, that is the kind of sentiment that passes for love in these days.

The apostle, of course, was speaking of something more serious. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “All mankind loves a lover,” but even Emerson’s words are not anything like the words of holy Scripture. For in Holy Scripture, we are talking about divine love. We are talking about the kind of love that is unique because it’s the love of God for men and women in Jesus Christ. There is nothing like that. It is absolutely unique. It’s of an entirely different character. It is explained for us in its essence in 1 John chapter 4. And there the apostle tells us that the kind of love that is divine love is the love that sent the savior to be the propitiation for our sins on the cross at Calvary. If we want to define love, that’s the definition. If we want to understand what our Lord did in performing that act by which we have propitiation, the definition of it is divine love. You cannot separate the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross from Christian love. It’s the fundamental basis of everything that we call Christian love. Any kind of sermon, any kind of discourse, any kind of talk about love by Christians that is not grounded in the sacrifice in blood of Calvary’s cross is not Christian love in its essence.

Now, we are looking at verse 4 through verse 7, and I’d like to read the verses now. The apostle continues. And notice the stress on the nature of love,

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

Some have taken the first two words of verse 4, “Love suffers long and is kind,” as something of two heads from which everything else develops in the list of the things that

make up the nature of love. And on the one hand, we have “longsuffering,” on the other hand we have “kindness.” And then the next eight statements that are made are lined up under the first of those words “suffers long” and then the last four under “kindness.” Well, I think there is possibly -- it’s possible to do that, but I’m just going to pass that up because it would get us into something that might be more suitable for a seminary classroom, and we are not interested in doing that at the moment.

Clearly, Paul feels that the qualities are particularly appropriate for the Corinthians. And so it probably is not true to this book to say this is the definition of love, this is the explanation of nature in all of its aspects, because he seems to have the Corinthian Church primarily in mind. What we can say is, this is Christian love as it applies to the problems that are in the church in Corinth at the time that Paul writes. And we’ll point that out as we go along. Because what Paul seems to suggest, by what he is saying in these words by which he describes the nature of love, is that if the Corinthians had love, they would have solved all of their local problems in the church, if not all of them, most of them because the words that are chosen are words that apply so beautifully to things we’ve already seen in the epistle to the Corinthians. So we’ll look at it that way.

I’m going to do something I don’t usually do because Karl Barth does not have a very good name among evangelicals. I studied for a time in Basel, listened to Professor Barth’s lectures, met him, was in a class in which he was teaching. I feel that there was exhibited in those classrooms an evidence of true Christianity in his relationship to the Lord. But there is a lot of debate over that and, of course, no human being can know the ultimate destiny of another person. But he has a famous outline on 1 Corinthians 13:4 through 7, and it’s been accepted by a number of expositors, and I’m just going to use it as the way by which we discuss this particular section of 1 Corinthians 13.

And the first of his outlines -- and there are three points to it -- it’s love and the darkness in ourselves, love and the darkness in ourselves, beginning with verse 4 in the middle of the verse and going on through the first part of verse 5. Notice what he says is

love does not envy. That suggests that we are envious from time to time. Is that true? Well, yes, of course. Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own. These are things that represent the darkness of sin that still remains in Christians, which it is the work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God and through his ministry to us to eliminate from our lives, at least in measure. We know of course, we’re never without sin. But let’s look at some of them.

First of all, love is longsuffering or love suffers long. The two words in the New Testament which occur frequently that have similar ideas. This is one of them, the word that means to suffer long, longsuffering. It has to do with patience regarding antagonistic persons. What we need with reference to persons who are problems is longsuffering. That’s why the Bible so frequently says that God is longsuffering, because he has to deal with people who are as people antagonistic persons. The other word, which is used in this passage also, is the word that means patience with regard to adverse things; that is, things in our lives. It means to endure. One of these means to suffer long, the other means to endure. Both of them occur here. Now, at the beginning he begins with love suffers long. That is, patience with regard to antagonistic persons.

Now, we had a beautiful illustration this past weekend of this because we had a fellow come here from Arizona who is a person or with reference to whom you need a lot of patience; that is, if you are a supporter of the Dallas Cowboys. And we know that Buddy Ryan came to town, and he came to town boasting about what the Phoenix Cardinals would do for us -- or the Arizona Cardinals now. In fact, I have a friend in Mesa, which is a kind of a suburb of Phoenix, who called me just yesterday or maybe last night -- I’ve forgotten which -- and gave me some other things that Buddy had said.

He said when he came to town they would mop up with the Cowboys. His exact words were that we will easily win. The score will be twenty-seven to seven. He said, I think that the Cowboys will be able to score once on us but that’s all, have no doubt about it. And he came to Dallas on Saturday night and told the sports writers here the

same thing. Now, all of those Cowboy rooters -- I started to say us but I don’t want to make it personal -- all of the Cowboy rooters were disturbed by him because he’s been bragging for now about three years for the fact that he has a winning streak against the Cowboys, when they weren’t any good, of six straight, I believe. He had never lost to the Cowboys as a head coach. So when the score came, of course, on Sunday thirty-eight to three, the Cowboys felt redeemed and poor Buddy -- well, it’s a different Buddy now. He’s talking about the fact that he’s learned a little humility. It will last about a week, so far as we know [laughter]. What one needs with Buddy Ryan in the football world is *makrothumeo*, longsuffering, *makrothumia*, the noun, longsuffering that is regarding antagonistic persons.

But transfer that now into the Christian life. Fortunately, the people that we have to deal with are not so blatantly antagonistic, we think, to us as Buddy Ryan is on the football field. It’s more permissible there, of course. But at any rate, Christians need longsuffering and love suffers long.

Another thing Christians also need endurance with reference to adverse things. What I started to say about the longsuffering is that Barry Switzer knew how to deal with it. And so they brought up to him before the game all of these things that Ryan had said he would do, and he, in the way in which I guess might be at least an illustration of the way you deal with someone who might be antagonistic, he said, “Oh, that’s Buddy. I’ve known him for a long time.”

Now, with reference to endurance and longsuffering, we have an illustration in the life of a well-known character, and the character is Job. Job is an individual who not only had to endure, but he has also had to exercise longsuffering. In fact, the Bible speaks of James something like this. In chapter 5 in verse 11 of the Epistle of James we read, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and seen the end intended by the Lord, and the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” He dealt with Job that way in Job’s problems. Job’s problems were with both

longsuffering and endurance because Job had friends who came to him and castigated him for his life. They said obviously if a person like you is suffering, it must be because you have done something wrong. That’s the theology of Lucy of the *Peanuts* strip. That’s her theology. It won’t stand in any evangelical school, but that’s her theology. If something happens to you, you’ve done something wrong.

But Job also had to endure as well. He had not only people that disturbed him like his friends, so called. But also his experiences, the things that happened to him, the catastrophes, the tragedies in his own family described in the earlier part of the book. So we could use Job as an illustration to remind us of the fact that love suffers long. There is an experience in the lives of most of us when we have to, if we are going to exercise love, we have to know what longsuffering that is a gift of God through the Holy Spirit is. That’s the first thing.

Now, he says that love is kind. That is a word that means something like that, kind, good sometimes. It’s what is referred to in Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 32 with reference to our Lord. And there we read these words in Ephesians 4:32, And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave you, kindness that too, one of the things that make up the nature of biblical love. And then in verse 4 further, “Love does not envy.” This is part of the darkness in us. We still have the old nature and the old nature, the sin nature, is the nature that does not wish to suffer long. It does not want to be kind naturally and it envies. And so love does not envy.

Jealousy, pride, selfishness, characterized what church? The church at Corinth. This is a word that is addressed to them. Love does not envy. There was resentment. There was dissatisfaction with the status of the Corinthians and their part in the body of Christ. So often describes us, of course. It described them in chapter 12 when Paul was talking about the Christian church and speaking of it as a body, and the fact that each of us in the body are different members of the body. Each of us have different parts to play in the Christian church, in the local church, some of us are eyes, some of us are arms,

some of us are legs, some of us are feet, some of us are various other parts of the body. The important thing for each of us, Paul says in chapter 12, is to realize that we each are part of the body. Each part, regardless of what it may be, the more prominent ones, the less prominent ones are just as necessary. No need to go into the exposition again of chapter 12. I’m sure most of you, if you didn’t hear the exposition, but you’ve read the chapter, you know precisely what I am talking about.

You know that in the Christian church, there is frequently jealousy among Christians because some play one part in the church and others play another and the other would like to play the part of the other. So that jealousy and pride and selfishness characterize local churches just as they characterize the church at Corinth. There is resentment often. There is dissatisfaction with the place that we have in the body of Christ. And Paul, in saying to us that love does not envy, is putting his finger on the local church and the needs that are found in almost all local churches. One does not have to go over this country much to know that in almost all of the Christian churches in one form or another, these problems either exist or they have existed or they will exist. Love does not envy.

Now, last weekend I went down to Salado, and we had a conference there. And we aggravated the Arminians a little bit because the messages were largely directed towards Arminianism in criticism, friendly criticism, loving criticism, of course of the Arminians. And while we were down there, Martha and I, on Saturday afternoon when there were no meetings, we walked around in Salado again. And she’s been down there so many times, she knows all the places to go, that is, the places to shop. She knows all of them. And so we went in a little store that I don’t think she had been in. It’s new. And while I was there, I saw a few little books, and I bought them. They are humorous little books. For example, one of them was entitled “Men and Other Reptiles.” [Laughter] And then another one, which I’m going to remind the little church in Fort Worth that I occasionally preach in on Sunday morning, which is full of lawyers, “Lawyers and Other

Reptiles” [laughter] another little book. And there is one also called the “Sports Page,” which is quotations, unusual quotations from sports figures, and so immediately I bought that. I practically have read it through already because I love sports quotations.

And there was a quotation of Jimmy Connors in it, the tennis star. Jimmy Connors said -- and if you’ve watched Jimmy Connors play through the years you know he’s got really a tremendous urge to win. In fact, that’s probably the main reason he was a top-notch tennis player. He said, “I hate to lose more than I like to win. I hate to see the happiness in their faces when they beat me.” [Laughter] Would you call that envy? It’s something like it, isn’t it? Well, it’s obvious that Mr. Connors, at that moment at least, is not controlled by Christian love. Love does not envy.

The apostle continues. He has a good handle on what Christian love should be. And so he says, love does not parade itself. Now, this verb can be rendered to behave as a braggart or as a windbag. As you well know, those of you who are Cowboy rooters -- and there are a number in this audience who are -- you know that one of the things that football players are filled with these days, which probably a generation ago was not quite as obvious as today, but football cornerbacks say to wide receivers hoping, for example, to stir them and upset them so they might not keep their mind on catching the ball, and so that they constantly talk trash they call it. Doesn’t mean anything. It’s just talk that you are trying to upset the opposite team. Love does not parade itself, does not behave as a braggart, does not behave as a windbag.

Now, we have that in Corinth. We don’t have that talking trash because Christians don’t talk trash as a rule. Very rarely does a Christian ever break down and really curse a fellow Christian. It has been done, of course, but that very rarely happens. What he does is a better class of being a windbag. The Corinthians were good at that. I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Apollos -- I am of Apollos, that great preacher. Peter, just a fisherman. I am of Apollos. The people who appreciate Apollos are the one’s who understand the finer things of life. Or I am of Paul and so forth. So one can see the

application even of that to the situation in Corinth. “Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.” Now, that, of course, is something that 1 Corinthians is filled with. I guess you know that. You know in chapter 1, for example, in verse 10, we read these words.

“Now I plead with you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

And then for about three chapters, he talks about the pride of the Corinthians. And finally in chapter 4 in verse 6, we have the beginning of the use of the expression. “Now these things brethren I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written that none of you may be puffed up.”

Verse 18 and verse 19, “Now some are puffed up as though I were not coming to you, but I will come to you shortly if the Lord wills and I will know not the words of those who are puffed up, but the power.” Paul, he could say some things that could be called rather sharp, could he not?

Verse 2 of chapter 5, “And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he who has done this deed might be taken away from you.”

In chapter 8 in verse 1 again, “Now concerning things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge, knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.”

Puffed up, many of us are like that. We get that like that. Preachers particularly. Preachers, in Believers Chapel particularly, in fact, there is one of them standing before you. I know that this is something addressed to me. Now, the apostle speaks specifically, of course, to the Corinthians, but he’s talking about all of us who may fall into this kind of sin.

Now, my little sports thing that I read has a quotation from John McEnroe in it. John McEnroe, former outstanding tennis player, known for his tantrums on the court, as most of you know, involving the referees, involving his opponents, involving the tennis balls and the racquets and anything, anything, the crowd especially. This is what John McEnroe once said -- see if you can believe it, if you know anything about tennis. “It is vital, in my opinion, that tennis maintains a strong and watchful stand against swearing.” [Laughter] Now, this is a man who is known for these things.

Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali was never known for being a modest kind of person. He was riding on a plane one time, and you remember he often said “I am the greatest,” and he came -- one of the stewardesses walking up the aisle of the plane looked at him, saw he didn’t have his seatbelt fastened, and said to him “Mr. Ali, you’ll have to fix your seatbelt.” He said “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” [Laughter] So the stewardess then replied -- and I marvel at her ability to do this -- “Superman don’t need no airplane either.” [Laughter, Johnson laughs]

Those of us who are puffed up can be easily deflated. And if only for that reason we should avoid being puffed up. So the apostle says, “Is not puffed up, Christian love is not puffed up.” We look at ourselves as the Scriptures set us forth.

Now, further in chapter 5 in the first part of the verse, the first clause he says, “Does not behave rudely,” not boorish. That’s a wonderful old word, “boorish,” a social bore. Some of us, as Christians, have filled that little place very well. We are social bores. But as he says, “Christians and Christian love does not behave rudely,” boorishly. If we are moved by Christian love, we will not be boorish. We will not be filled with tantrums.

Our Lord Jesus never ignored a person. The only time it might be said he ignored a person was to instruct that person in the mercy of God with reference to his movement toward Israel and the Gentiles. And the result was, of course, the enlightenment of the lady and the enlightenment of all of us, and he did speak sharply to her in that instance.

But then as it cleared as the incident finished, she obviously came to understand that it was the means by which she came to understand truth and understand forgiveness. Our Lord never put anyone down then. He rebuked -- his rebukes that he gave people were really kindnesses, and as a general rule, people came to understand that fact. So love is not boorish, is never boorish. The finest gentleman in the world is the man who knows Jesus Christ best. That is always true.

Dr. Ironside has a remarkable little paragraph I think, and I think I am just going to try to sum it up for you. He said he was reading a history of the world written by an English writer completed about the year 1600 A.D. In the course of his history, he came down to the early part, early years of the Christian era. And he said it was in these days -- that is, the book said, it was in these days that there appeared in Judea that knightly gentleman Jesus Christ. Dr. Ironside [said] he was so taken aback that he thought, “I don’t know whether I like that or not, that knightly gentleman Jesus Christ. I stopped to analyze it, and then I thought, Could words have been used that more truly describe the life of my Lord here on earth.”

What is a gentleman? Is it somebody born heir to some vast estate and perhaps having the right to put a title to his name? Not necessarily. A man might be heir to millions but be a perfect boor. A man might be the poorest of the poor and yet be controlled by divine love and so be a perfect gentleman. Have you never notice the refining influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ve lived long enough to note that. I know a lot of seminary students who came to seminary and while they weren’t boors, there were a lot of rough edges upon them. And I’ve seen them twenty-five years later, what a difference the life with Christ means. Ironside says as he concludes the incident or the paragraph, “Take a man brought out of the gutter and saved by grace; see how the Spirit of God changes him until his whole character becomes different.” Love, Christian love never behaves in a boorish way.

And then in chapter 5 again, “Does not seek its own.” One of the things that characterized our Lord was that he never sought recognition. He didn’t go around saying I’m the Son of God, bow down before me. He didn’t go around saying I’m in the long line of the prophets and please pay attention to my status in society. In his case, what he did in all of the experiences through which he went is what Peter talks about in 1 Peter chapter 2 in verse 23, where with reference to the Lord Jesus he says verse 23, “Who when he was reviled did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously.” The Christian is the kind of person who in all of the experiences of life that might be inclined to make him express the darkness that still lies within him commits himself to the Lord knowing that he judges righteously. As Paul says in Romans 15 concerning our Lord, “He did not please himself.”

Well, that’s the love, Christian love, and the darkness that is within us. But now in the second point of Professor Barth’s outline in verse 5B through the 6th verse, Christian love and the darkness of others. There are three ways we may permit others the lead us into lovelessness. Notice in the latter part of verse 5 now, “Love is not provoked.” I’ll tell you, when I read the Authorized Version there, I smile. The translators of the Authorized Version, they are wonderful men, but they were men. So what do you do with the statement “love is not provoked”? Why, there are so many of us that are provoked that what you do is what they did. You add the word “easily.” It’s not easily provoked. There isn’t anything in the original text that suggests easily. What they did was to say you cannot say love is not provoked, but it’s not easily provoked. No, the text says “love is not provoked.” It’s not provoked. So if we are provoked, we are not letting the love of God control our lives. “Love is not provoked.” Now, that is very difficult. Some people have a knack for provoking us.

Now, I want to tell you something about me. I have some people that naturally have the gift of provoking me. [Laughter] And it is very difficult to deal with them. So one of the things I do is, if I can do it with a clear conscience, I avoid them. And then I say to

myself, as I talk to them, be quiet now, be still, don’t respond to hastily. And this is so true to life. Love, however, is not provoked. I’m not loving completely if I am provoked, provoked by anyone. “Love is not provoked.”

Now, why does that apply to the Corinthians? Well, what were the Corinthians doing? They were so provoked with each other that they were running over to Fort Worth for the Christian lawyers in order to meet them in court. “Love is not provoked.” You think that wouldn’t happen in Believers Chapel? Huh-uh. Listen, it is happening in Believers Chapel. There was a church in Houston that I was involved fairly closely with for a period of time, not living there, but often preaching there. They had several of their offices fighting with each other in a law court. We had opportunities for that in Believers Chapel. It’s not uncommon at all for that to happen in Christian churches, even though 1 Corinthians chapter 6 says, “Christians ought not to go to law with one another.” Why should we go before the unrighteous to settle out disputes that we have?

So the apostle has that in mind. I fully believe, when he says that “love is not provoked,” 1 Corinthians 6 verse 1 through 11, there it all is right there, “Love is not provoked.” And so when Christians go to law with one another, they have been provoked with reference to each other. Christian love is not operating. What do you do in a case like that? Go to the elders. Let the elders deal with the problem. I know they are happy to hear me say that, but go to the elders they are the ones that have the oversight. Christians they have problems with other Christians within the body, and it’s possible for that to happen, as Corinth lets us know. Take it to them. Let those who will not take sides, ideally, solve the dispute and rest with what they do.

Further, the apostle says in verse 5, “Thinks no evil.” Now, that’s impossible on the spur of the moment as we look at that text, “Thinks no evil.” How is it possible for a person who still has the sin principle within him to think no evil? I think we all in this room would probably agree it’s impossible for me to live up to that statement, “thinks no evil.”

It may be helpful, however, to understand what thinks means. It really is a word that means to account no evil, to reckon no evil. That is that we do not reckon to someone else evil when we don’t know the status of things that exist in that person’s life. So does not reckon evil to a person. We often do that, you know. Somebody has done something and we immediately pass judgment on it not knowing the facts at all. That’s not Christian love. You are not guided by God the Holy Spirit when you make judgments like that. Usually on hearsay evidence, that’s all. Love does not reckon evil. The things that you hear about others are best not acted upon if you do not have the necessary witnesses from the word of God that the word of God sets forth for you.

The third thing that might permit others to lead us into lovelessness is, “Rejoices in the truth.” Well, I should read the first part of it, “Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” We have great weakness, all of us, in the fact that we often rejoice in iniquity. Oh, we wouldn’t say that, but we do. We have the weakness of gloating over the sin of others. Now, we don’t come out and say that. Now, you’ve been a Christian for a little while, we know the signs of hypocrisy pretty well. So we don’t say now I’m going to gloat awhile over what’s happened to sister or brother so and so. We don’t do that. We do it in a much more professional kind of way, Christian professional kind of way. What we say is we need to pray for so and so who has done such and such. This is our way of getting around the statements of the word of God which says do not rejoice in iniquity. But down deep within, rather gloating over the fact that our friend who has been provoking us in some way or another, whom we don’t like, has done something and we think we can legitimately be critical of them with reference to.

So under the cloak of sharing a need for prayer, we, in effect, gloat over our Christians. We rejoice in the evil that they have done, secretly deep down within. We don’t even want to identify. Sometimes we don’t say anything. We just have a kind of a pleased look feeling deep down within. I knew that would happen. I knew that would happen. Some of you I can tell, you are guilty. I can tell by the way your face is. You

are laughing because you recognize that this is you. I recognize myself here. If I’ve been critical of something and then something happens that indicates that the person about whom I have had these doubts or questions, maybe their theology, and now they’ve done something that seems to justify my opinion, before you can catch yourself, you have gloated a little bit. I was right about that. I hope people will pay attention to me from now on.

In fact, there is a professional name for this, too. There is a good scholarly name for it because it is a German word. And you know that real scholars always have a German scholar up their sleeves that, if you get them into a corner, they pull out the German scholar who says such and such, and we cannot answer them because it’s a German scholar. Well the Germans have a word for it. They call it *schadenfreude*. That is the joy that we have over the difficulties of others. Put it this way, the malicious joy that we have over the misfortune of others. Everyone in this audience has been guilty of *schadenfreude*.

Now, let me give you some simple illustrations. It’s the joy that people have in laughing in cartoons that show people slipping on a banana peel. You ever smile at that? Of course you have. Look at you kids, you sit them in front of the TV, and they die laughing. How can you get the attention of a kid, a little kid? Prat fall. It’s just natural to the man, woman, child, infant that has the sin nature. So if you see a person buy a bag of popcorn and he trips and he loses his popcorn, what do you do? You laugh. It’s something you just cannot stop yourself from doing. You laugh. Somebody said, Ah schadenfreuder.

Well that’s precisely what takes place in the Christian life. But there is no room for *schadenfreude* in the Christian life. There is no room for laughing at the misfortunes that other believers have. We should be disturbed by them. They are our brothers and our sisters. And the proper response is to be concerned, truly concerned, for those who

have difficulties and trials. It’s a test of our Christian love. And if we are not, then we don’t have Christian love.

Well. I want to try to finish this up. And verse 7 the last verse, we will just call this as Professor Barth did, love and the apparent darkness of God. The love that overcomes when the heavens are made of brass, when the Lord God in heaven does not seem to care; these are the things that the apostle may refer to here because he says love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Bears all things, that’s endures all things. It’s kind of a different word from the word that means to endure in other places, but this is essential to the force of this particular word. Love is neither impatient nor malicious nor does it opt for the wrong meaning in the events that happen in our lives. Love bears all things.

Now, back in chapter 9 in verse 12, there was occasion to use this because there in verse 12 we read if others are partakers of this right or view are we not even more. Nevertheless, we have not used this right but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Paul said that he, as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, had the right to the support of the Corinthians. That was his right as a minister of the gospel of Christ, he was to live of the gospel. But he did not insist that they pay him. He looked to the Lord. Love bears all things.

In other words, the apostle says I had the right to your support. I was the apostle who brought you to the knowledge of the Lord. And it’s your responsibility to support those who minister the word of God to you. I had that right, but I did not insist upon it. The apostle looked to the Lord constantly for all of his support. He never appealed for funds. He never sent out prayer letters. He never stood up before people and told them of the things he was going to do and ask them to send in checks. He didn’t do any of that. He looked to the Lord. And so, consequently, the things that happened we know were the Lord’s doing. How do we know what the Lord’s doing is, in so many of our Christian works today, when having the methods of big business, applying them, knowing

that certain ways of sending out appeals for funds always produce money, how do they know that that’s from the Lord? Well, you can say they’re Lord letters, but there is hardly any evidence that you can specifically point to. But if you say, we will look to the Lord alone then that, it seems to me, is a legitimate test.

And the faith that we have in the truths of the word of God in our Lord in the things that are said in holy Scripture give us a sure ground for believing that if a work is of the Lord, the means will be supplied to support it. If the means does not come in, then we adjust to that as well. That’s a word from God to us. To my mind that’s the way a church should operate. I am grateful to God that, through the years of Believers Chapel’s existence, to my knowledge, there has never been sent out an appeal for any funds. Not one dollar, so far as I know. And I hope when I get to heaven, which is not far off, I can look down and say, Well, they are still looking to our great God in heaven for the needs that exist.

Love bears all things. Love believes all things. Ah, gullibility? No, no, not gullibility, not ill-founded suspicions, but we do put the most favorable construction, if we possibly can by the power of the Holy Spirit, upon things that are ambiguous to us. That’s precisely what this means, believes all things, not gullibility. We don’t believe false doctrine. If a doctrine is false, we don’t believe false doctrine. But when things are unclear, ambiguous, we do not accept ill-founded suspicions. We, again, look to the Lord for the result that flows out of it. “Hopes all things.” Do we hope all things? No, we don’t hope all things. We don’t hope the young man who is sick with cancer will die of the cancer. We don’t hope that. You can see that the all here is not really completely all.

In fact, when we read endures all things, the same thing is true. Look at those “alls.” He has said there is “all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” So it’s evident, at least in the Bible, that there are “all,” the word “all,” doesn’t always mean “all,” does it? It may be that love rejoices in all truths including mathematics

and botany, Gordon Clark says. But more likely Paul means the gospel when he says that love rejoices in all things.

Furthermore, the more the four instances Professor Clark has said with the all in it, must be interpreted with limitations, just as I mentioned. As you can see from what I said, we don’t believe all things. We don’t believe false doctrine. Love certainly would not keep all things confidential. It would report cases of rape and murder to the authorities, would we not? Yes, we would. We should.

Obviously love does not or should not believe all things, slanders, lies, as well as false doctrine. Nor does it hope all things such as wishing our friends who are sick would die. Arminians lay a great deal of stress on the word “all.” They look at the passages and say Christ died for “all” men. And they say that means all without exception. I say, in many cases, sometimes it does, in other cases it means “all” without distinction. That is, Jews and Gentiles, context to support that interpretation in many places of the New Testament. The idea that always always means “all” without exception is obviously wrong right here. So we are aggravating some of the Arminians in a friendly Christian way over the weekend. I didn’t think about his text. So I’m looking for my friends again and will ask them some questions about this. So here in verse 6 then -- or verse 7, “Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.”

Now, I have a point or two to make in closing. This is practically one sentence. That’s a long sentence, isn’t it? As far as I know, in our English Version, I didn’t look at an English Version -- I was looking at the Greek text altogether -- but I think it’s one sentence. Notice verse 4 ends in a semicolon, verse 5 in a semicolon, verse 6 in a semicolon, verse 7 ends with a period. That’s a four-verse sentence. That covers a lot of material. It’s a far-flung sentence -- someone has called it -- is this lyric of love. And if you pay attention to it my Christian friend, it is not a lyric, it’s a lancet. It’s like the doctors lance in which he is surgically dealing with some of the problems in your body.

Now, will you notice this? The apostle uses verbs, verbs. Look at what he says. Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice, but rejoices, bears, believes, hopes, endures, these are verbs.

What does that say? Well, it says that love does things. Love does things. What does that mean? Well, that means that love is very much like obedience. We tend to think of love as we can sit back and think nice thoughts about someone. We can think sweet thoughts about people. But no Paul says love does things.

Now, we know that in personal life. I couldn’t have sweet thoughts about Martha without evidencing it. She’d let me know immediately about that. You talk about love, but you are not doing this or that. We know that. That’s what Paul is talking about. Love and obedience are coextensive. What Paul is talking about when he talks about love is, what he’s really talking about is a character that is ruled by love, is his point. Lovers behave in certain ways. They engage in certain actions. Love is a volition, not an emotion, fundamentally. It’s volition. What you do.

Now, you think that Paul was out of sorts with things when he said this? No, he was just following the teaching of our Lord. Let me read you a few texts. We’ll close because we don’t have time to do anything more. Chapter 14 in verse 15 our Lord says, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” “If you love me keep my commandments.”

Verse 21, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Chapter 15 verse 10, “If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I’ve kept my father’s commandments and abide in his love.”

Verse 14, “You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you.”

Verbs, doing, doing these things is what Christian love is. That’s Christian love, to do his commandments.

One last thought because time’s up. If you look back over these things that have been said, what do these verbs describe? Put it all together, what do they describe? Well, they describe the character of Jesus Christ. You can put our Lord’s name in for all of these other things. Put him in for love, for example. Christ and then just go through the text with our Lord’s name in verse 4 and following. Christ suffers long, is kind. Christ does not envy. Christ does not parade himself, is not puffed up, and so on. This is a picture of our Lord. And this is the one who is our example. May the Lord help us to realize precisely what Christian love is. And may it make a difference in our lives, in our families, and in the Christian church, in this church.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for these marvelous words from the Apostle Paul guided surely by the Holy Spirit. Help us, Lord. Help us to truly keep our Lord’s commandments. To demonstrate what we feel deep down in our heart is that ultimate love for him that owes everything that we are to him. Deliver us from the shame of disobedience. Enable us, Lord, to love not only our Lord fully, but our fellow believers in Christ and those outside of Christ as well.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.