

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Stunning Love

PART

8

TITLE

Love Is Hopeful

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:4-7



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So love we're told in the Bible is full of hope. We all love hope. We all love to have hope. We all love it when people hope in us and it's really gratifying when the hope that we extend to other people, it's met with faithfulness or with endurance, and so our hope is rewarded. It's a wonderful thing. But sometimes it's not. What's amazing about love is that love continues to hope. Most of us actually got here this morning in a vehicle with an airbag system. They look soft and fluffy but they come out fast. At least that's what I've been told. I've never felt that. I never have actually been in an accident like that. But the fact is this, is that what comes standard on that vehicle is actually a pretty remarkable system. And you think about the speed in which it does what it does, it really boggles the mind.

So let me just tell you just a little bit about the airbag system in your vehicle. There's actually sensors all over your car that can read that if there's an impact, it not only reads the force of the impact, but even the angle of the impact to know which airbag should actually be used. And what's even more remarkable is that not only does it register through those sensors what's happening to it, but in such a speedy way it sends a signal to a conductor, and that conductor heats up and it heats up so fast that it switches and suddenly it just ignites this gas. And this gas instantly fills up an airbag. You think wow, all those things have to happen. You have to get hit and then something has to go hey, I think that's strong enough to go ahead and send a signal to the conductor to heat up, and once it gets hot enough then it's going to light the match, and that match is going to light and the gas is going to ... It takes three quarters of one second from the time that something runs into your vehicle to the time when that airbag is fully inflated.

It's a remarkable thing if you actually think about it. And it protects so many lives. But just imagine then if it were possible for our lives to be created with this relational airbag system that had the capacity to overlook small offenses so that it didn't inflate every time somebody was rude to us. And yet when somebody was rude or when there was sin or there was strangeness or there was things that were happening to us, suddenly this airbag system could shield not only us, but even our responses back towards the individual. Can you imagine? You think back to some of your relational tensions in life with maybe a friend or a roommate or a spouse or a child or a parent or a neighbor. And you think wouldn't it be amazing in that very moment if I had this relational airbag system all the way around me that would protect not only me, but also my neighbor or my friend from me.

What the Bible tells us is that God has created that in us and it's called love. It's a stunning love that Jesus himself demonstrated for us, and that when we trust him as our savior and Lord he comes into our heart and he enables us to live in these stunning kinds of ways. So let me pray for us as we get started and we think about these things. Father in heaven I pray for those who are here and those that are observing a livestream or who will watch this later in time. We confess to you as a people that we routinely run into each other. We are rude and impatient. We are self seeking and we are easily angered. God, in many ways we live so many parts of our days totally full of ourself. We can be arrogant and we can be boasting and we can insist on our own way. We can be irritable. We can be resentful. And yet your word

tells us here in this amazing passage in 1st Corinthians that love behaves in such a way that you've actually created it to be this sort of an airbag around us that helps us to have the wisdom to know when we need to be protected and when others need to be protected, and even how to go about doing that. And so I pray that you would be gracious to each one of us.

I pray that you would go before us in our heart right now to help us to believe what we're about to read. Help us to understand it and then help us to have the courage to apply it. I pray for those in the room right now who are already bored. I pray God that you would create an interest in their heart as they look at their own life and what these truths from your word could actually do for them and their relationships. So God we need your help, ask for your grace in our lives, and we pray all of this in Jesus name. Amen.

Well I am glad you're here. If you're a guest, welcome. We're thrilled that you've joined us and I pray this time will be really encouraging to you. If you don't know anything about Christ or the gospel, we sang all kinds of words like blood and cross and righteousness and all kinds of words that maybe you don't understand. I'm going to use a lot of those and I'm going to seek to explain what we were singing even in the context of what we talk about here in love. All of this is found in the Bible. This is God's word to us and it tells a true story to us of what's happening not only in the past, what's happening in our life, but what's happening and will happen in the future. So I'm going to ask you to look with me at 1st Corinthians 13. If you don't have one with you there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. We're in a series that's called Stunning Love.

Paul writes about love. And what he does in this passage is he seeks to describe what love is and then he hangs what he describes on the walls and mirrors so that when you and I walk by it and we read it, we're supposed to evaluate our life on the basis of what love actually is. And it's interesting, 21 years ago I was in seminary and finished seminary, and I took all kinds of exams and quizzes and finals, and I wrote all kinds of papers and every single one of my grade was on the basis of something I knew. Never once was I tested on the one thing that Jesus said matters to him the most. You see the Bible tells us in this very book, 1st Corinthians chapter eight, he says listen to me. Our knowledge, it only puffs up. It just makes us arrogant. He goes, it's love that builds up. And this is ultimately what's taking place. You see Paul knows that Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you're my disciples. By the way that you have love for one another." This is the one thing he wants. This is what he wants to see in our life. This is the embodiment of the entire law, that if we could just love God with all of our heart and love each other as we love ourselves and as he's loved us, we would fulfill the law.

And we can't and so he came in order to rescue us. But Paul is writing a real church in a real city called Corinth. And these people, they were gifted and they were smart, but the Bible tells us here that they lacked love. And you see Paul was gripped by something. It wasn't just that he didn't see love in them and he said oh, that just burdens me. No, there's something deeper. And that is that Paul saw the risk to Jesus' glory, not only in Corinth, but to the ends of the earth. And the risk is there if his church is

repelling people instead of reaching people. If our knowledge of God and our ability to do things that we think are a part of church, if they repel people instead of reach people, because we don't love people. He says, "Man, this is a burden." We're supposed to live in such a way that when people look at our life they go, "Man, if that's what it's like to follow Jesus Christ, it's to be like him or to be like her, well that's a trade up and not a trade down. Why would I not want that? That's appealing. That's attractive."

And so Paul, he's just burdened over a city that is so lost and without Christ, and the lighthouse in the middle of the city is so dim because they have not learned to love. This is what he says. He goes, "Look, if I speak in tongues" ... This chapter 13 verse one. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and could understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 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."

You know, it was a year ago ... For some of you that is so weird, but my sermon prep and planning is usually a year out. Now, I didn't write this sermon a year out, but I knew where we were going in this series a year out. And even a year ago I was just praying, "God when we get there I just pray that you would use this series to just invoke us to be a people that are marked by love." And in this sermon what we want to look at is just verse seven, the first three phrases. Love bears all things. It believes all things. It hopes all things. What would it look like for us as a church body, for people to look at us and go, "You know, I don't even know necessarily why, but they just bear with people and they believe in people and they hope. Those are people that bear and believe and hope. I don't understand why, but I just see it in their life." So we want to look at these characteristics that can be seen in our life that were perfected in the life of Jesus Christ for us to see.

So the first thing is this, when he says love bears all things this is what it means. It means that love provides a protective covering. This is the first point. Love provides a protective covering. We use the word bear and we don't really even know what it means, so let me tell you what it means. It actually can be translated cover, or a protective cover, or even as a roof. In Mark chapter two verse four, four friends, they have a friend and he needs to be with Jesus. He's on a mat. The house is so full they can't get in. So you know what they do? They go up on the ceiling and they dig a hole in the roof. It's the exact same word, the word roof, as love bears all things. You say okay, help me understand. Roof? Love roofs all things? What does that mean exactly? Well, look at this roof right here. If you can imagine this roof, it represents every single one of us. We all have holes in our lives. Insecurities, weaknesses, embarrassing situations, failures, faults, we all have it. We're all broken. We're all a little messed up right? And so there's holes roof.

Now, if you want to picture, so that you can just remember oh, that's what that means, just imagine you

own that house but you can't get up and fix those holes and so your neighbors who bear all things, they love you in such a way ... So what they do is every time it rains, four or five of them, they come out with umbrellas, they climb up ladders and they get up on your roof and they stand in the rain and they place the umbrella over the hole in your life, in your house, over your house. This is what it means for love to bear all things. Love sees the holes in other people and then patiently stands over them in the rain as a covering to protect them from harm and shame. And we naturally do this with people we like don't we? We all naturally cover our wife or our husband or a friend or our children.

We all naturally go, "Man, I see a problem. It's raining. Let me run over there." And that's what he's saying. He goes for a people of God we're supposed to be marked by love in all of our relationships, that we're supposed to be a people that mark by seeing holes in other people just as they see them in us. And yet we sacrifice our time and energy and resource in order to go stand in the rain of their problems and hold an umbrella over their life. This is what it means to bear all things. And we see it perfected in Jesus Christ. Even in his parables. In Luke chapter 15 he tells a story. There's a dad, he has some sons, and the one son comes up to him ... This is a paraphrase by the way. And he says, "Dad I wish you were dead but you're not dead so let's act like you are dead. Go ahead and give me my inheritance." And he does. And he goes and he takes all his inheritance, he squanders it all in reckless, shameful, sinful living until he's totally broke. He's at the end of his rope and he's like, "What am I going to do?"

He goes, "I'll tell you what, I'm going to go home and I'm going to ask my dad to forgive me." So he runs home. He's all in tattered clothes, he's been hanging out with the pigs, he's been eating after the pigs, he's dirty, he smells bad, everything. There's shame all over him. What does the father do? It says in the parable that he's speaking of God himself. He goes this is what he does for each one of our lives. He sees us coming from a distance and he runs out to meet us. And instead of saying okay, I'll tell you what, everybody in the household line up so that he has to walk through all of us and let's just expose his shame in front of everybody, no, what does he do? He says, "Hey, I want you to go get a robe and I want you to get a ring and some sandals." And they bring them out and he places the robe around him. Why? To minimize the shame coming home. God bears all things. He provides us protective covering over us so that we don't have to experience all the harm and shame that is due us.

Now some of the holes in our life are simply due to strangeness. We're just strange people. And the fact is, you're like, I'm not strange. Well you're strange to somebody. I promise you. You are. Like if you ever wonder who's that weird uncle in the family? It may be you. So we're all a little bit strange. We are. We all do things differently. And it's interesting, on Friday ... So I had two of my boys and we went to Walmart, and that's a place to test your ... That's a place to shop. So we're going through and I see a guy and I'm like, wow. All right, that's strange. What he's wearing right now is strange. And you know, I had the impulse in that very moment to mock him in front of my sons, and to say hey, look at that guy. And I didn't. And you know why I didn't? It's because that morning I was looking over these truths. And in that moment I thought wait a minute, love bears, love's supposed to be a protective covering for this man right now.

Later that day I actually was at a wedding. I actually did a wedding. And they're there and everyone's looking good, bride and groom, everybody's happy and I'm just looking at them and I'm thinking you have no idea what you're about to face. Everything's just so lovely. You're going to get there and all of a sudden you're going to find there's some strange stuff in the person standing in front of you. I mean if you've ever had a roommate or a wife or a husband, like hygiene habits, that's strange. We all do things a little bit differently. We talk a little bit differently. We load the dishwasher a little differently. We drive a little differently. We're different from one another. We're strange. But this is what love does with strangeness. Love covers strangeness even though exposing it makes us feel superior. This is why we post that hey, look at this guy I saw at Walmart. This is why we say, "Hey, look at that guy over there." Why? It's because what we're saying is we're better than him. We're better than her. And so it's only natural when we see strangeness to expose it because we think it's strange because we're better, we're superior. And love says no, no, no. That's a person. Cover it.

Sometimes it's not strangeness though that creates the holes in the roof of our life. Sometimes it's just flat sin. We're just wrongdoing. So what do we do then? What if there's sin? As you know sin is scalable. Now a sin is a sin is a sin, but sins have different consequences socially here on the earth and so we treat them a little bit differently on the basis of severity. But there's a principle that marks all of it and it's found ... Same author. Paul wants to write another church. In fact a series of churches in a region called Galatia. And this is what he says to them. He says, "Look brothers, if anyone is caught in a transgression", he says "You who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Now the law of Christ is the law of love and the law of love then bears ... Notice it bears with one another in love. It bears with one another's burdens. And what are the burdens in this context, the direct context that Paul is looking at? It's when you see somebody else who's caught in sin.

And so he says this. He says, "When one is caught" ... Now caught doesn't mean exposed in this context, it means bound, entangled. They're handcuffed by it. They can't get out of it. He says, "You are spiritual." That doesn't mean you're perfect. It means that in the moment you're walking in the spirit and you're not bound by that same sin. So when you see somebody who sins and you're not in that moment sinning in that same way, he says that we have a responsibility to do something in their life. And he says that what love aims to do is to go and gently restore the person. The word restore literally means to set a bone. When a bone gets broken we can leave it, but they'll have a limp the rest of their life. To set it causes immediate pain, but then it sets things straight so that they can grow strong so they can be used for the rest of his life. So this is what he's saying is when you see somebody in sin, he says it's our responsibility to gently restore so they don't limp forever. In other words, love covers sin by correcting, but it corrects under a canopy of trust.

See even when it's sin we're trying to be a roof. And so the roof that we put over them is trust, it's affection. I'm for you, I love you, I'm going to be with you. And yet at the same time there's something I see that you may not be able to see and so I want to correct so that you don't limp the rest of your life.

Matthew 18 gives us a pathway, at least one pathway, for how we're supposed to think about this. He says if somebody sins, you are to go to that person who sins against you and correct them in private. If there's no repentance, if there's no change of behavior, then he says then you go and you take a friend. If there's still no repentance and there's no change, he goes then you go to the church and you say the church needs to be able to help. The church leaders need to be able to help in order to reset a bone.

And so this is what's happening. Let's just say that you're at a party. Everyone's doing well and your friend, somebody that you love, they sin. What do you do in that moment? Well, the first thing you need to do is to try to provide a covering. You see why he says go and correct them in private is because when we're corrected in public the first impulse that we have, our instinct, is even if we know we're guilty we put up a wall of defense because we're embarrassed. So what you do is you love somebody in that moment and you just put a covering over the situation. You try to change the subject. All right, let's just move on. Then you're driving home and you're like, "Sweetie, that may not have been the best way to say that. This is how that came off." Now all of a sudden there's more of an inclination when it's in private because now there's a canopy of trust. See, so love aims to cover shame until we can gently restore.

And you say, "Now wait a minute, what about big sins, bad sins, sins like abuse?" In fact some of you right now, when you heard bears all things, some of you ... I know this is a horrible reality. It's an incredibly tragic thing. But some of you right now are being abused. It may be emotional, it may be physical, it may be some other way. Somebody's hurting you and you're listening to this and you go, "Oh, so I'm supposed to just bear all things. I'm supposed to be the roof over it. It's probably my fault anyway." No it's not your fault. Abuse is never right, ever. So what do we do in that situation? Well Matthew 18 would say well you know what, if somebody sins you go in private. If someone's abusing you, you don't go in private. Why? Here's why. Because there's other passages in the Bible that add color to the perspective. Let me show you.

God's word tells us in Matthew 18 that the church is the final step of that recovery process for immoral behavior, but in Romans 13 it says that the governing authorities are the first step for illegal behaviors. And so when the two overlap, when there is a sin but that sin is illegal, it's abusive, it's literally hurting people to the place to where you should not go and rebuke them in private because you put yourself at risk or other people at risk, what happens then? Well in this last step it's this. It's that love covers other potential victims by inviting the authorities to do the correcting and the restoring. And so what I hope you see though is that even ... There's no way for me to go through every scenario. That's why there's lots of pastors here, there's lots of leaders, deacons, elders, and if you say, "Man, this is where I'm at. I just need a pathway to know what to do next." We want to be able to help. I'm just trying to give you a few categories. But what I hope you see is this, is that love is this airbag that looks at other people and says you know what man, I see this gaping hole in your life right now and I'm going to try to do something about it that's redemptive, that's for your good.

It looks different with different people. Whether it's strangeness or whether it's sin or whether it's abusive sin. Love still says I want to provide a covering because I care about you. But that covering looks differently for each situation. And you see, we can provide this covering ultimately because Jesus provided it for us. See Jesus looked down from heaven, he saw all the holes in our life, and instead of mocking our problems and shaming us and posting it on ... "Hey, look at this person down here. Look what they're doing. Look what they're dressed like." No, what did he do? It says that he came down and he bore our sorrows. He took our sin upon himself and he died for it. That's why we sing about the blood is because his blood was shed in order to forgive us of our sin. You see, why in the world would Jesus stand in the rain of God's wrath and hold an umbrella over us? It's because Jesus is love and love bears all things. And so as a people we want to provide protective covering for people.

Second is love provides a protective trust. A protective trust for people. He says love bears all things, second it believes all things. The word believe there can also be translated trust. In fact some of your Bibles actually says "Love protects. Love trusts." My Bible and the ones in the seats around here, it says that love bears all things and believes all things. Same words. There's just a different word that is being translated. So believes all things. Now some of you are like, "Now wait a minute, I'm not supposed to believe everything." And it's true. Proverbs chapter 14 verse 15 says, "The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps." You see just like this fish, the simpleton is the one who believes everything, and that person is just as doomed as the fish who cannot see the hook. Some you are like believes all things. Well I got an email last night from a Nigerian prince and he says all I need to do is send my social security number and he's going to send me some of his inheritance. You don't believe it. Some of you, you hear promises from politicians and you go, should I believe that?

Some of you, you read books and you listen to sermon from preachers and you're supposed to ask the question should I believe that? We're supposed to be people who think with an open Bible about the realities of the things that we're hearing. You cannot bite everything because some things have a hook, and you cannot believe everything because some things have a hook. Some ideas have a hook. And so Paul says to us in 1st Thessalonians five, "Test everything and hold fast what is good." You're supposed to test everything. You're supposed to look. And so what does he mean then when he says all things? He's using hyperbole. That's intended exaggeration in order to create a distinction in God's people. This is Paul's hope. He wants for the people in Corinth to look at the Christians in the church in Corinth and go, "You know what, those Christians, they are no fools, but they sure do try to trust people. They sure do aim to be people that believe in people and that want the best for people." You see love believes people until truth requires us not to. And even when truth requires us not to believe what they say, love believes that God can still redeem.

Love doesn't go through life cynical. Have you ever noticed that the people in your life that you go that is the most loving person I know, they're not a cynic. They don't go around judging everybody's motives. That person, I bet they're a bad egg from the beginning. That's a horrible person too. No, they don't do that.

Love believes. It aims to believe, longs to believe. It's not cynical. The fact is I go through these characteristics every week just like you. Frankly I spend a whole lot more time than you probably do this morning to get ready for this moment. So God's always exposing in areas of my life. Just a few weeks ago I sinned in this very area. I was at this conference where they just kind of line up a bunch of people to speak and a friend of mine, we were about to head back into a main session and he says, "Man you know, the guy they have up next man, this is not going to be a good thing." And he was explaining more things about it. And so I just thought man this is going to be bad. So much so that I told my wife and another person we were with, said "I don't even know if we should really go back for this one because this one may not be all that good."

Instead of believing in the guy, hoping that he may have something ... So anyway, we went. And I sat there and I was so encouraged by what he said. He just told his story of suffering and how the Lord had led him through it. It was just a remarkable correction in my own life when I look and I go man, I don't have all the information. You see, in the void of information our human nature naturally assumes the worst. You read a news story and in the news story it says, and that pastor, or that leader, or that person, they declined comment. We naturally go I knew it. I knew they were a bad egg. This is not how Christians act. This is not the way of love. You see love tries to assume the best. You see when we love this way our actions will more likely be misinterpreted as being naïve than being discerning. I'm not saying that the Bible says we shouldn't be discerning and we should be naïve. But when people see people who believe in people and who are fighting to believe in people, people will accuse them of being naïve. "Seriously? You're believing in him? You're believing in her? Come on. They're a lost cause." They're not a lost cause.

Why can we do this? Because think of what Jesus has done for you and for me. We love because he first loved us. Can you imagine Jesus, let's just say he's in the garden night before his death and he's praying. Just imagine if the passage added these words, "You know Father, I was supposed to just pass this mission of to these guys, but man I picked 12 losers. I mean I don't know what to do with them and since I'm sovereign I can look forward in time and everybody that they win to Christ and tell about Jesus, they all have problems too. I just don't know if this is a good plan." He could have. He saw us. Think about what he's entrusted to you, and he knows you. He knows everything about your past and he placed the gospel in your hand, he says "I am going to give you the most powerful thing in the history of the world that can change people's life. And I'm going to do it because I believe what I can do in you." And we're going to look at people and go I just don't ... Lost cause. No, no, no. Not Christians.

Not the people who know what he's done in our life. You see love does not let go of the umbrella when it gets windy. Love is a protective covering. It provides a protective trust. And then the third is it provides a protective optimism. He says love hopes all things. Literally love is hopelessly optimistic. Love is the characteristic of a parent who says, "One day our son is going to come back home. One day our daughter's going to turn back to the Lord." You see hope ... I don't know if they still have this game. It's called Whackamole. You guys remember Whackamole. If you don't remember it, this is it right here.

You put the money in and all of a sudden it starts and these little moles, they start popping out of the hole. And you take the little hammer and you hit them over the head and they go back down. And then another one pops back up. This is a portrait of hope. Think about it. Hope just gets whacked down every single time and it just pops back up. I think it's going to work this time. Pops back up. And this is what we do with people. People disappoint us and all of a sudden hope pops back up. It just keeps coming.

You see, the reason is because Christian hope remembers God's power. Christian hope remembers that God has a power unlike any other power that can change somebody's life. That can help somebody turn a corner. Hope says God is still God and he can do it, and then love applies this optimistic hope to people and he says, "My son is not too lost for God's right arm. My marriage is not too broken for God to reconcile. My unbelieving parent is not too hard for God to save." You see love is slow to cut people loose because love considers God's power. You know, I don't have a whole lot of struggle hoping in you. And it's not because there's been times that hope has not disappointed. I think back in my life and I just imagine ... This probably didn't happen. But I just imagine ... I just remember when I was 15 years old I was not walking with the Lord, I didn't know Christ as my savior, and I was making a wreck of my life. And I just imagine what was taking place in heaven.

Can you imagine an angel going up to God and saying, "Look at him." "What you looking at?" "Well, look at him. Let's mock him." God's like, "No, no, no. I'm going to put a protective roof over him right here. Don't say a thing about it." "But look at him. He's making a total wreck of life. There's no way you can believe in him." "Oh, I do believe in him. In a year from now he's going to trust my son. And I'm going to change his life. He's going to become a preacher." "A preacher? He's got a speech impediment. He stutters so bad he can't answer the telephone." "You're right, but just wait until I get ahold of him." You see, when I see what he's done in my life, how can I not believe that he can do amazing things in you? How can I not hope that he's not going to do amazing things in you? You know we just had 100 people stand up on this stage and some of them failed yesterday. And do you know why we're sending them? It's because we believe God's power in them can use them while they go. We're believing in them. We're hoping in them.

We're hoping that God is going to use them. This is the power of God in our lives. It's been brought to us. Romans five, "Hope does not put us to shame." I love that, what he says there. When you hope in somebody, it doesn't put us to shame. You know why? Because God's love has been poured into our hearts, the holy spirit who's been given to us. I see what he's done in my life and what it does is it inspires me to bear with people and to believe in people and to hope in people. And ultimately my bearing and believing and hoping is not because I think you or I are just so amazing. It's because God loves to fill broken people. He loves to do amazing things in broken people. So what do we do with all this? First thing is this, is let's turn towards Christ and respond in faith. The Bible begins with the words in the beginning God. Which means that nothing in life makes sense unless we're facing Godward. But sometimes what happens is we lose sight of God and we get embroiled in our situations. And so this is what I'm going to encourage you to do. This is something that'll actually help you.

Those of you who know Christ as your savior and Lord, this is what I want to encourage you to do. When you're in a situation, I know that God is invisible. If you turn around you don't see him there either, physically. But oftentimes what happens is that we turn our back on the Lord. We don't think of his power, we don't think of his promises, we don't think of anything about him. His nearness, his presence. And so we're embroiled in this situation and we're just responding to the situation with only the resources that we have in ourself. And this is what I want to encourage you to do. As believers in Christ, just get to the other side of the situation and see okay, now that I see God in the backdrop of this person's life, now that I see God I see his power, I see his promises, now what would I do in this situation now that I remember that there's a power that's available? That's there's a wisdom that's available. There's patience, there's endurance that's available because of God in our life. We live so many of our days totally blind, totally unconscious to God's presence in our life.

And so Christians I beg you to turn around and seek Christ and respond in faith. And then for those of you who've never trusted Christ, I want to encourage you today to see his love for you. He bore your burden on a cross. He died for you and for me. He was buried and he rose from the dead. And he did all this in order to hoist us up. There's a pastor whose name is Brian Chapel and he tells a story of two brothers, a true story in his own hometown, who were playing in the sand banks by the river. And this one particular place where they were playing there's a sink hole and so they began to sink obviously. And time went and neighbors and family they didn't see them and so they went searching for them and they found the youngest brother, just his face above the sand, unconscious. And they pull him up and they say, "Where's your brother? Where's your brother?" You know what he said? He goes, "I'm standing on his shoulders." You see Jesus is our true elder brother who went under the wrath of God in order to hoist us up.

Some of you this morning, you have never trusted Christ. And he has made it available to you to get on his shoulders. You do that by believing that you cannot save yourself, by believing in what he accomplished and confessing him as Lord of your life. The Bible says he'll forgive you of your sin. You can do that today. The second thing is this, is let's repent over our lack of love. Christians, let me just tell you something, love is a command. These are not suggested virtues. Romans 13 says that love is the fulfillment of the law. In other words to violate them, to not bear with one another, to not believe in one another, to not hope in one another is not just bad relational technique. No, it's a sin against a holy God. This is what love is. And so let me encourage you to examine your heart and wherever you see a lack of love to confess it as sin so that you can be forgiven. And then third, is let's share Christ's love with others.

Every single one of us in the room can imagine the tangible benefits of bearing with one another and believing in one another and hoping in one another. We can imagine what that could be like in a marriage or a friendship or a home or between parent and child or in a life group or in a church or in a country. Just imagine if the whole country, we just believed in each other, we hoped in each other, we bore each other's burdens. Just imagine. We go wow, that's amazing. Let's do that so that life will be so good. And Paul definitely cares about the quality of our relationships, but let me tell you something, quality of relationships

is not what was on Paul's heart. You see Paul had the mission of Jesus Christ on his mind. He had the realities of heaven and hell on his mind. He knew that people in Corinth were living and dying without Christ and he knew that the church in Corinth wasn't sharing and that the church wasn't going to be listening to them even if they did. Because they lacked love.

If Paul was here today he would see Raleigh is a place where there's tons of people who live and die without Christ. And I believe that he would look at us and he would plead with us to be a people that are marked by love. So not only would we not be distracted ... This is what happens. When you get embroiled in controversy because of a lack of love, you stop thinking about where people are going to be going forever. See if we would be totally marked by love, we would be undistracted in our mission and the people of this world and the people of our city would be inclined to listen. So may the Lord give us grace and expand our capacity to love so that the gospel of Jesus Christ can go to the ends of the earth.

So let me pray for us. Father in heaven thank you for your love for us and we confess to you that when we look into this mirror, we see imperfections in our life. We see a lack of love and I ask that you would forgive us. That you would cleanse us from our unrighteousness. I pray Father that you would mark us by love, that you would do a work in each of our lives and I pray Father that as we consider your love for us and even now as we sing we pray God that you would cause our hearts to be enthused about the grace and love that you have given to us. I pray Father for mercy. I pray for your help. And even as we give an offering now, Lord, many of these dollars you already know are already earmarked to help these people that stood on this stage to go overseas to take the gospel, and that's our prayer, is that you would bless not only our singing to you, but you would bless the resources that we give specifically that the name and the gospel of Jesus Christ would run fast and far to the ends of the earth. So for all these things we look to you in faith. Thank you for your love for us and we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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