

Part 2: Growing in



1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

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livinghopechurch.net

“It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor.”

– Martin Luther

1. No Expositors class today.
2. Evening service 5pm
3. Barb Loikets' brother Earl passed away yesterday, not much past 50.

If you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the seat in front of you. Open your Bible to **1 Cor. 13** The title of our message this morning is “Growing in Love.”

Introduction – Scott's Back Surgeries

What do you live for? The vast majority of people don't know what to live for. They actually are not living for anything. They are wasting their days away trying to survive and simply distracting themselves from the pain by entertainment or alcohol or some other distraction.

There are some who live for very high purposes. I think of the doctors who operated on my brother Scott. It was so fantastic what happened, he made the Chicago Tribune on December 28, 1975, almost 41 years ago.

The article says that at 13 years old, my brother Scott was diagnosed with scoliosis, and by the time he was 17 had several major back surgeries that put him in a body cast for six to nine months at a time. They had to realign his back. His back was curved by so many inches that one surgery he went in shorter than my dad, and then came out an inch or two taller.

This article in the Chicago Tribune from 1977 says that my brother Scott was taking classes by speaker the intercom system at Oak Forest High School. The intercom was connected to his room where he lay in a body cast, and with the push of a button he could communicate with his teacher and interact with his classmates several miles away.

We live in an age of amazing medical technology in which we have surgeons that can realign the body. But how can we realign our hearts?

Something Greater than the Doctors

This morning we are talking about something **even greater than the doctors** who realigned my brothers back. We are talking about our God and Healer who through His sacrificial love can realign our souls.

Live for Something Greater than Yourself

I want to encourage you to live for something beyond yourself. Live for the one who is love. Live to be an instrument of His healing. Let's stop living for ourselves and live for something greater than ourselves.

We can live for the highest principles: the healing of the body, the feeding of the hungry, the encouragement of the weary, but St. Paul says if we do not have God's divine love as our motivation, all of our best endeavors are nothing.

Think about it, these amazing doctors can heal the most crippled person and give them 80 or 90 good years on the earth. But if they do not know the Love of Christ, they will die and perish forever, and all those good years will mean nothing.

This is what Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 13. All we do we should be motivated not by our own egos but for selfless love which is found in Christ.

Last week we looked the first of 15 attributes of Biblical love. They come from 1 Cor. 13.

Holy Scripture

1 Corinthians 13:1-13, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Love is About Growing in Christ

Paul is focusing specifically on Christians as they function in the Body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12-13 are all about spiritual gifts, and our function in the Body of Christ. And so love is the goal of our Christian growth. Paul presents love as it relates to growing and changing in Christ.

WHAT LOVE IS...

I. Love is **patient**, Love gives people **time** to grow.

To be patient means to “suffer long.” It has the idea of having a “long fuse” or to be “long-tempered.” It is the exact opposite of our expression “short-fused.”

“Love’s patience is the ability to be **inconvenienced** or **taken advantage of** by a person over and over again and yet not be upset or angry.”¹

The Supreme Example

The supreme example of patience, of course, is God Himself. Consider our Lord as an example of perfect patience. While the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, after He had endured all that He had endured, He said this about His killers: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34a). Christ could have cursed his killers on the cross, but instead he blessed them when they hurt Him. He asked His Father not to hold this against them.

II. Love is **kind**, Love **helps** people grow.

The word translated “kindness” here means “to be **useful** or profitable, to furnish what is needed.” **Love puts the needs of others first**. It is the same word that Jesus uses when he says, “My yoke is EASY [same Greek word for kind] and my burden is light.” Kindness, like Jesus, gets into the harness of life’s problems with the other person and does all they can to lift those burdens. That’s kindness.

WHAT LOVE IS NOT...

III. Love is not **jealous**, Love isn’t **jealous** over others’ spiritual gifts/positions.

Sinful jealousy is nothing more than selfishness. We tend to be jealous when others succeed because we want to have top billing! We want the attention and the importance.

Listen we are not important. Let’s not be protective of our glory and usefulness and position. Let’s help others serve. Let’s glory in God, not in our own giftedness.

Love is not jealous for “my ...rights, things, opinions, ideas, way, etc. at all cost” in the Body of Christ. Love puts others first and zealously wants them to succeed. Indeed we ought to

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1984). *1 Corinthians* (p. 338). Chicago: Moody Press.

be happy and eager to sacrifice ourselves so that others might succeed! We ought not to think of ourselves but of others!

IV. Love is not boastful or arrogant, Love doesn't boast at one's own growth or gifts or think one is more important.

Love is not boastful. The word for boastful (*perpereuetai*) could be translated to "be a wind-bag"² or to "**parade** oneself" through your words.

I kind of think of the Macy's day parade. A braggart is like one of those gigantic inflated balloons. Sometimes we **inflate** our own worth with boastful words. What windbags we can be.

As struggling Christians, we have the potential to become "wind-bags" of our own spiritual greatness. We boast too highly of ourselves; we **inflate** our own value.

If you are a spiritual leader, beware of being a spiritual windbag!

We are all expendable. We should not boast or be arrogant. Everything we have is a gift. Let's not have an inflated view of our gifts or usefulness to the Body of Christ. Paul says love is not "puffed up" like that (**verse 5**).

You realize everything you have is a gift from God. "To whom much is given much will be required." To love means you realize you are no better than any other sinner saved by grace. Any gift or position is from God, so we should not take glory for ourselves, but give glory to God!

V. Love is not rude, Love act rude or unfittingly, but tries to lovingly "fit" with the rest the growing Body of Christ.

The word "rude" means to act unbecomingly, and unfittingly— to act with disdain for someone else, even to the point of disgracing or embarrassing someone.

Love is not rude, but works hard at always saying or doing the appropriate or fitting thing. Love is considerate of other people and is considerate of others at all times.

Body Life

No member of the body can have disdain for another member. "By this shall all people know you are my disciples, by your love, one for another" (Jn. 13:35).

We are to **accommodate** and be courteous to one another as **Eph. 4:15-17** says, "we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held [FITTED] together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Every Member Matters

In the Body of Christ, every member matters. There is no place to offend needlessly. Love has good manners. It is courteous, polite, sensitive to the feelings of others and always uses tact.

² Riddlebarger, Kim (2013-07-02). First Corinthians (The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament) (Kindle Locations 5452-5453). Tolle Lege Press. Kindle Edition.

We Grow at Different Rates

As we grow in Christ, sometimes people grow at different rates. Don't be rude to people who don't have the same standards or rate of growth as you do. Don't be rude or scolding because people are not where you are at. Be polite. Use words in loving, strategic ways that will edify each other in love. Rudeness never helped anyone grow in Christ.

VI. Love is not selfish, Love lays aside "my rights" for the good of the Body.

Paul says, Love does not insist on her own way. This has the idea of laying aside my importance and my rights for the good of others.

Selfishness is destructive, because we are a Body and we need each other. If I am a hand and I stick something in my heart, that is destructive.

Selfishness (putting my needs above others) destroys relationships because we become incapable of seeing others' needs and desire. My consuming desire to fulfill my every need will always lead to my own self-destruction. I need relationships in the Body of Christ to grow.

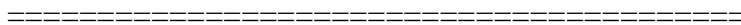
It's Not About You!

If you are going to grow in Christ, you must realize that the Christian life is not about you! **It's all about Jesus.** It's about the community of saints, where Jesus, not you or me, is head. Jesus is our Head. Jesus is our King of kings and Lord of lords.

VII. Love is not irritable, Love is not put off by the hang ups and quirks of others as they grow.

Love is not easily angered by the quirks and hang-ups of others. Does anyone here not have hang-ups and quirks? Love realizes that each of us is unique. A foot is different from a lung. But both are needed. Because we are all so different, we can all seem really quirky to each other.

But love realizes that God makes each of us unique, and we don't need to be irritable with each other.



VIII. Love is not resentful, Love forgives and keeps no record of wrongs.

No Record of Wrongs

Love hurts. Love requires that we get so close to someone and be so vulnerable that we see each others' flaws. That means love hurts. Everyone who loves will get hurt. We often give offenses and insults to the ones we love the most, don't we?

Love is not resentful when those wrongs and hurts and insults come. It keeps no record of wrongs suffered (1 Corinthians 13:5). We have no "private file of personal grievances that can be consulted and nursed whenever there is possibility of some new slight. It's stance in the presence of genuine evil precludes such accounting; for at a very deep level, love cannot bear to be judgmental or hypocritical. Love covers a multitude of sins because all we have to do is look in the mirror and see we are all sinners. **1 Peter 4:8** — "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

We Know the Deep, Forgiving Love of Jesus

If you have kept a record of wrongs, it means that you have forgotten the deep, deep love of Jesus. Oh how deep is the love of Jesus, that He would keep no record of our wrongs. He buries them in the depths of the sea.

When a person puts their faith in Christ, His payment for sin on the Cross is put in our place. Banks keep records or debts. That's the term being used here. God puts our wrongs on Jesus. There is a great exchange – our sins for His righteousness. Our debts are wiped away!

The same Greek word is used often in the New Testament to represent the pardoning act of God for those who trust in Jesus Christ. “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account” (Rom. 4:8). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). Once sin is placed under the blood of Christ there is no more record of it. It is blotted out, “wiped away” (Acts 3:19). In God's heavenly record the only entry after the names of His redeemed is “righteous,” because we are counted righteous in Christ. Christ's righteousness is placed to our credit. No other record exists.³

Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

True Forgiveness: Paid in Full

As true Christians, we do not keep the records of those who sin against us, but instead we truly forgive. To forgive is an accounting term that means never to bring it up again. It is a true sign of love to forgive as Jesus told us to – seventy times seven!

If your mortgage is forgiven, the bank can no longer remind you of it; it's paid in full! Same with your sin debt. God has forgiven it. He will never remind you of it. It's “paid in full.”

May Take Time to Build Trust

Love forgives. Sometimes it is hard to forgive, but you know you have forgiven if you are willing not to bring the wrong up again. It **may take time to build trust**.

Love is not resentful. Love doesn't “save up” wrongs to use strategically at a later time. **Resentment** is careful to keep books, which it reads and rereads, hoping for a chance to get even. Love keeps no books, because it has no place for resentment or grudges.

Chrysostom, the golden tongued preacher of the Fourth Century, observed that a wrong done against love is like a spark that fails into the sea and is quenched. Love quenches wrongs rather than records them.⁴

³ MacArthur, 347.

⁴ Ibid.

IX. Love does not rejoice in wrong-doing, Love does not parade another person's failures.

Because We Are All Sinners too!

Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing – when others fail. Let's face it, when others fail, it might make us feel more spiritual or be filled with spiritual pride. Can we not see our own sins? Is our own self-importance and pride blinding us? Why would we gloat when others sin?

There is no room in love for spiritual pride or gloating when those around us fail. There is no "I'm better than them" attitude in love. Love does not gloat in spiritual pride like that. That's hypocrisy. We are all sinners.

If someone you don't like falls into sin, because of our tendency toward pride, we might be tempted to gloat. Loving Christians don't gloat over sin, they grieve, because God is grieved over sin. If repentance comes, you rejoice.

Love is instead pure and is not double-faced. There is a wholesomeness and genuineness to Christian love.

Don't Be Lazy! Work Hard to Help Your Brothers and Sisters Grow

Love cannot rejoice in iniquity because it's sincere. It's hard work to help people let go of sinful habits and thinking!

It is not loving to allow another person to go on in sin. Love will sensitively confront and correct precisely because it cares deeply and knows that sin destroys.

Sometimes We May Rejoice When Another Fails because We Want the Spotlight

There is this idea in the churches today that my brand of Christianity is special, or that my church or my pastor is the ideal church or pastor. Get that out of your mind. There is one church. There is one body. When other churches fail, we grieve and sorrow and remember that we are all a mess aren't we? Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Our Focus is Not Highlighting the Sins of Others, But Building Christ's Body

We have to tear down in order to build, but the emphasis is on the new building, not on the demolition of the old.

And so it is, that although we earnestly contend for the faith against wrongdoing, love's distinction is **not** that she tracts down and points out the wrongs, but emphasizes instead that which is spiritually healthy and truthful.

The major emphasis of the Christian is not what is wrong, but what is true. Love never takes satisfaction from sin, whether our own sin or that of others.

When another brother or ministry sins through pride, we must not gloat over their failures and say, "Ha! I told you so!" That is hypocritical self-righteousness.

We do not "rejoice in wrongdoing" with a prideful self-righteousness. Instead, we want to help them and restore them.

Consider **Galatians 6:1-3**, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

Restore your brother or sister in Christ quickly, but be sure you truly are restoring them. Don’t just give empty words. It may take some time with God before you can truly forgive. If you don’t deal with it, you’ll keep bringing it up.

What we are tempted to do with faults is to store them up and use them in a time of war. Instead of rejoicing in iniquity, seek to help your brothers and sisters reconcile. If they ask for forgiveness, forgive them immediately.

X. Love rejoices in spiritual growth, Love rejoices when others walk in the truth!

Walking in the Truth

Love rejoices in the Truth. Jesus is at the center! He is the truth. Love’s emphasis is not tracking down people and telling them everything that is wrong, but rather, to encourage people to come to Christ and walk in the truth.

Love rejoices with the truth. The idea is rejoicing in spiritual victories when one is walking in the truth (Gill).

Love Rejoices in the Truth

Love rejoices with the truth. Love gets excited when it hears of spiritual victories. Love encourages by expressing joy over little evidences of growth. John, the apostle of love, wrote, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

Rejoicing in Changed Lives

This is why the motto of our church is “Growing and Changing in Christ”! We need to stand against the destructiveness of sin and the deceitfulness of sin, but let’s get on to the business of growing in Christ! Let’s rejoice in the power and truth of Christ in changed lives!

WHAT LOVE IS “ALWAYS”...

XI. Love *always* protects, Love covers the reputation of others with care and concern.

Love covers

Love bears all things! The idea is that love “covers” or “protects” like a soldier throwing himself on a grenade to protect his fellow troops. Or like a police officer putting himself in the line of fire to protect his fellow man and woman. Love bears all things.

Fallen human nature has the opposite inclination. There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone's faults and failures.⁵

Love **bears all things** by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm. Genuine love does not gossip or listen to gossip. Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person. Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner.⁶

Protecting from Gossip

Often tidbits of gossip come our way about members of the Body of Christ. Do you protect the reputation of God's children? Do you "bear all things" with God's people. Do you cover them and protect them?

Love bears with, or "covers" all things. The idea is that love protects. Paul uses the word "cherish" for this idea in Ephesians 5:28–29 — "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church". Husbands are to cherish their wives.

When you hit your thumb with a hammer, you feel the pain, and you do all you can to relieve it. Do you do that for your wife? Do you know when she is hurting? Do you protect her?

Love Does Not Expose the Sins of Others

Love handles the sins of others in ways that will not bring exposure or shame. Paul had in mind the concept of endurance, he meant that love bears with many offenses and does not stop loving even under the strain of difficulties imposed by others, even going so far as to love enemies (Luke 6:27). If he had in mind the concept of covering, then he may have meant that love will not seek to expose the sins of others.⁷

A Limit to Protection

It is evident that Paul limited such endurance or protection for people's good. For example, he instructed Timothy that "those who sin are to be rebuked publicly" (1 Tim. 5:20). Likewise, he called public attention to the strife between **Euodia** and **Syntyche** (Phil. 4:2). He commanded the Corinthians to stop tolerating the man who had his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1–13). Wisdom is required to know when and how to protect or to expose, and love always tends to protect.⁸

Protecting Reputation

So it is that love protects people even in their sin. God never intends His people to ultimately be hurt or condemned for their sin. We confront sin head on, not through gossip or slander or exaggeration. We want God's people to be restored, not ridiculed.

⁵ MacArthur, 353

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pratt, R. L., Jr. (2000). *I & II Corinthians* (Vol. 7, p. 232). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁸ Ibid.

He intends that they grow through it and put it off. A loving Christian will make sure that no brother or sister is maligned or mocked or gossiped about, but seek to protect them, and if there is sin, to help them grow and learn by their failures.

Remember a “righteous man falls seven times” and then gets up again (Prov. 24:16). We need to help our brothers and sisters get up every time they fall.

XII. Love *always* **believes the best**, Love gives people the benefit of the doubt.

Believes the Best

Love **believes** all things. Love “fills in the blanks” of people with good thoughts. Love thinks the best of people. Love trusts the best about people.

Remember When You Were Courting?

The idea is that love **trusts** and believes the best of people. You married men, remember when you first met your wife? As you got to courting her, you thought she could do no wrong. She had deficiencies then, but back then you thought they were “cute.” You loved her. You thought the best of her. She thought the best of you. You got along well, because you displayed this aspect of love.

Fill in the Unknowns with Positives

Often when we are hurt we think the worst. We fill in the blanks with negatives and accusations.

When things are going great in in any relationship all the deficiencies of your wife are forgotten, they are covered, but when things are hard, you fill in any blank spaces with further negatives. Focus on the positives of your wife. Give her the benefit of the doubt. Fill in the unknowns with positives.

Never, never, never speak ill of your wife or any other person in front of others. Speak about that person as if they were there. Constantly rehearse in your mind the things that you are thankful about for people.

XIII. Love is *always* **optimistic**. Love sees God’s work in people.

Expects the Best for People

We are all a work in progress are we not? Love hopes all things. Love hopes for the best. Love fills in the blanks of life with good. It never thinks the worst, but always hopes and expects the best about a person when there is any question.

This could be translated as follows: “Love is always hopeful” or “Love hopes under all circumstances.” Love doesn’t write “hopeless” over anyone or any circumstances.

This biblical optimism grows out of **faith** in God, not men. Hope is the joyous anticipation of good to come. This hope in God must be woven into the practical fabric of our lives.

Hope Not Through Being Smarter

Hope is not anchored in having things your way, or manipulating people or situations because you are “smarter” than everyone. God calls the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and weak things to confound the strong (1 Cor. 1:26ff).

Hope is attached to God Himself to do what is right, good and best for all and knowing that He will give sufficient grace to handle any situation that His plan has for you. It is hope in Him that He will bring about what is good, right, fair, etc. in every one and all situations.

XIV. Love *always* perseveres with imperfect people. Love goes beyond normal limits and boundaries.

Endurance

Love “endures all things” (verse 7). Love perseveres with imperfect people. The word translated **endure** is a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. In other words, you are your brother’s and sister’s keeper. Our armed forces leave no one behind. So it is with the Body of Christ. We persevere with each other! We leave no one behind. This could be translated as follows:

- “Love is ever patient”
- “Love endures without limit”
- “Love gives us power to endure everything”

Battles have been won because a small pocket of men refused to quit and run. It means to remain under – that is to endure or sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions or provocations in faith and patience.

Eliminates Negative Attitudes

“All things” – every sort of offense, pressure, affliction, difficulty, victory, defeat etc. Love endures! It eliminates attitudes such as:

- I can’t take it anymore.
- Things have got to ease up.
- If things don’t change, I’ll crack.

Your love for God and others, energized by God within you (Phil. 2:13), is the source and strength for endurance. Only theology can change this. Knowing God and His love and care for you. How is your endurance seen in your home? at work? Etc.

Consider some biblical examples of endurance.

Job endured. Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Paul endured. 2 Tim. 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Jesus Christ endured. Heb. 12:2,3 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

XV. Love produces eternal fruit, Many things will pass away, but the consequences of love will never end.

A Love that Never Ends

Love never ends or fails (verse 8). Love bears eternal fruit and brings eternal rewards. Love always prospers!

When everything else passes away, love will remain.

Conclusion

Mark 8:36-37, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?”

We thank God for those doctors who heal our bodies. But one day we are going to die, and no doctor can prevent ultimate death. Ten out of ten people die. It’s the ultimate statistic.

What are you living for? Even the most noble things are worthless if you are not living in and for the love of God found in Jesus Christ.

Look to the Cross! There is love hanging on a tree. There is love sacrificing Himself for you and me! Turn to Christ. Let Him fill you with His love today.