

Love Always...

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The church is declared by the Lord to be His Family
 - 1. We have been placed under the new covenant
 - a) God is our Father
 - b) Jesus is our Brother
 - c) Our fellow Christians are our brothers and sisters
 - 2. We are family ... even when we don't feel like it
 - a) Do you always **feel** like family with your blood family?
 - b) Nevertheless, you KNOW that you're family
 - (1) with obligations to support
 - (2) with obligations to love
 - c) Likewise, with your spiritual family
 - (1) obligations to support
 - (2) obligations to love
 - d) Not an easy thing and that's why there is so much emphasis placed on love in the New Testament

- B. One of the places where it is most emphasized is the letter of 1 Corinthians
 - 1. Lots of relationship problems
 - 2. Paul's strongest medicine was chapter 13 — the love chapter of the Bible
 - a) Has so many powerful and specific teachings about Christian love.
 - b) Is a favorite of many Christians
 - 3. But one of the most overlooked portions of that great chapter are the last few words that Paul uses to define God's αγαπη love, v.7
 - 4. "Love **bears** all things,
 - 5. **believes** all things,
 - 6. **hopes** all things,
 - 7. **endures** all things."

- C. Let's study and apply this latter section of the the great, inspired definition of love this morning, in order to better be THE FAMILY OF GOD

II. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS (LOVE ALWAYS RESTRAINS ITSELF)

- A. The Greek word is *stegeri*
 - 1. Often used as a noun in reference to a roof or covering to keep out the elements (see Mt. 8:8, Mk. 2:4 and others)
 - 2. But when used as a verb it takes on the meaning of
 - (1) "enclosing" or
 - (2) "covering" (put a lid on it) or
 - (3) "restraint"
 - 1. In the NT we find it used this way...

- a) “**Therefore** when **we could bear it** no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,” 1 Thessalonians 3:1, RSV.
 - b) “For this reason, **when I could bear it** no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.” 1 Thessalonians 3:5, RSV.
 - c) “If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but **we endure anything** rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 9:12, RSV.
 - d) **Self-restraint**
 - (1) **especially as it deals with emotions**
 - (2) sort of the **opposite of “outburst”**
 - (3) Modern English might say, “stand it” or “put up with”
- B. This facet of Christian love was important to the Corinthian church
- 1. With all the relationship problems and difficulties that it had
 - 2. There was a great need for self-restraint
 - 3. It continues to be important in the Family life of every church
- C. To put it into plain language...
- 1. **Agape love should restrain us from...**
 - a) Harsh words
 - b) Inappropriate public confrontations
 - c) Inappropriate deeds and angry outbursts
 - 2. Agape love is a deed done **IN SPITE OF** the other person
 - 3. Consider Jesus’ perfect self-restraint in the face of...
 - a) His accusers
 - b) His floggers
 - c) His abusers
 - d) His crucifiers
- D. **Love bears, restrains itself, in all things**

III. **LOVE BELIEVES (TRUSTS) ALL THINGS**

- A. Love trusts and is not suspicious
- 1. Elvis sang about that, didn’t he? “We can’t go on together, with suspicious minds”
 - 2. Because suspicion believes the worst about everything
 - a) Can see an evil motive in the most innocent of words or deeds
 - b) In the end, it **DESTROYS** relationships in bitterness and paranoia
- B. This was a problem in the Corinthian church
- 1. Relations chafed between rich and poor
 - 2. Knowledgeable and ignorant
 - 3. Mature and immature

4. Gifted and ungifted
 5. Old timer and upstart
 6. Jew and Gentile
- C. **Because the world breeds and even encourages** this sort of cynicism and suspicion, it can be easy for the Christian to fall into it — even among the family of God
1. It can become too easy to wonder...
 - a) “What did he mean by that?”
 - b) “I wonder what he or she is up to.”
 - c) “They’re ignoring me, because they thinks they’re better than me.”
 - d) Too easy to let our pride, ambition, or ego get in the way and think the worst about the intentions of brothers or sisters in Christ
 2. **Pride, ambition, or ego** can cause us to think the worst about the intentions of others — even brothers or sisters in Christ
 3. **But Christian love thinks and acts differently**
 - a) Let’s all give each other a break,
 - a) think the **BEST** of one another
 - b) **find a good excuse** for the slight (real or imagined) that someone gave you
 - c) **believe** your brother or sister, as men and women of honor
- D. Isn’t that what Jesus did?
1. Lots of people would reject Him
 2. But He gave His life as if we would all be obedient

IV. **LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS**

- A. Connected with trust, because trust deals with the present, but hope deals with what we expect in the future from them
- B. **In the Corinthian church**
1. there were plenty of reasons to expect the worst
 - a) Perhaps many of these brethren had known each other before they became Christians
 - b) Perhaps there had been history and hurt feelings in the past between some of them
 - c) Perhaps some brethren (Gentiles) were slower in their Christian maturity than others (Jews)
 - d) And some appeared to be letting old habits of culture infect their assemblies and relationships
 - (1) legal suits
 - (2) “the world revolves around me”
 - (3) ambition, pride, and jealousy
 2. It would be easy to **expect** “more of the same”
- C. But Paul commanded Christians in their love to HOPE all things
1. Expect **things** to improve!

2. Expect **people** to improve and grow and mature!
3. Deal with people as if they **ARE** going to change
4. **Because such a love...**
 - a) doesn't give up on the less mature
 - b) doesn't give up on the hard to get along with
 - c) is willing to teach
 - d) is willing to encourage
 - e) and is willing to be patient with others
 - f) It is an observable fact that that people tend to live up to your expectations and hopes

D. Isn't that what Jesus is doing with us?

1. Treating us like children of God!
2. Treating us like we're worth something!
3. Look what it did for you!!!

E. Love expects the best

1. Someone might think, *"Well, that's not very realistic."*
2. Yeah, that's just what the world would think — just like it would tell us so many other Christian commands are kind of stupid and unrealistic
3. **But Christian love that hopes all things and expresses that hope is what**
 - a) keeps the church together
 - b) ...growing
 - c) ...and reflecting Christ to the world

V. **LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS (HUPOMENE)**

A. This is one of my favorite words in Greek

1. Often translated "endure"
2. But it is much more than that
 - a) About courage
 - b) About fortitude
 - c) About heroism, strength, and valor
 - d) **Not about just holding on by your fingernails, whining and whimpering all the way**

B. **Love always endures with courage and valor**

1. There is no honor in enduring an insult whining all the way home
2. There is great honor in enduring insults, being patient with an offense graciously, generously, and honorably

C. It is the very picture of Jesus on the cross

D. **Love hupomene, endures all things**

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The church in Corinth had big problems, 1 Cor. 13 had strong medicine — LOVE
 - 1. Medicine which is not only a curative, but a preventative.
 - 2. One with which every congregation of the Lord's people should inoculate itself
 - a) LOVE... bears all things, restrains itself toward its brothers and sisters in all things
 - b) ... believes, trusts, its brothers and sisters in all things
 - c) ... always hopes, expects the best of its brothers and sisters in all things
 - d) ... heroically endures through every trial or offense
 - 3. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." 1 Corinthians 13:7, RSV.

- B. Perhaps your love has fallen short of this great and important definition of love
 - 1. Perhaps it has poisoned some relationships
 - 2. repent

- C. God offers his great agape this morning
 - 1. Forgiveness
 - 2. Relationship