

Qualities of Love – Is Trusting

1 Corinthians

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1 Corinthians 13 is where we are again this evening. 1 Corinthians 13 and we read again beginning with verse 1,

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And 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. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 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. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Let's go to the Lord together in prayer.

Father in heaven, Lord, we thank you for these things that we are learning in this section and how our hearts are being challenged and how, Lord, our sins are being made manifest by the working of your Spirit and, Lord, our desire is that in each case, as we look at each one of these qualities and we recognize more and more of what you mean to make us, I pray, Lord, that we would just step by step humbly submit our hearts to you and confess as sin that which is sin in us and turn to you, Lord, with dependent faith and walk in these things that you have given us the capacity to walk in in your Son. Lord, I pray that tonight you would be at work in our midst. I pray that you would, Lord, lay us open with the sword of your truth and at the same time that you expose us, Lord, heal us and work in us, Lord, so that our lives are changed. We pray as always for anyone in our midst who doesn't know you. We ask, Lord, that in your grace and mercy, they would hear your Gospel and understand, that they would see the beauty of your Son, that they would turn from their sins to trust in him. Lord, for your church tonight, we ask that there would be edification, where it is needed correction but also encouragement and that, Lord, even this night, the washing of the water with the word would take place in this place. And we ask you for this tonight in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, our

King, the Master, the Chief Shepherd of this church and every church, his church. Lord, we ask it in his name, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this morning we said that true love, God's love, is not just a matter of sentiment and it's not just a matter of words. Throughout this section that we have been studying, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, you see one verb after another: love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy or boast, it does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful. I mean, love is action. Love is practice. It's not just feeling, it's not just words. It gets expressed in deeds and that is true and I want us to remember that but tonight I want to turn around and say that just the opposite is also true and that is: love is not just outward action. Love is not just a matter of our deeds, love has to do, God's love has to do with how we think toward other people and how we feel toward other people. There is a sense in which if we're walking in the love of God, it is true to say that our minds and our hearts are being changed toward other people. That makes authentic love something that is very searching. It makes it something that is very convicting, I think, in each one of our lives.

This particular quality that we look at tonight, we come tonight to verse 7 again where it says, "love believes all things." Love believes all things. You see, this has to do with how you think. This has to do with how you feel about someone. Love believes all things. This gets down to what's going on in our hearts. Someone has said of this section: it is not a lyric, it is a lance. It's poetic, it's lyrical but it cuts us open. It exposes the evil that's in our hearts and God does that with his word. He cuts us open so that he might heal us and change us and I pray that he would do that even tonight.

So we begin tonight as we have with the other qualities of love that we have looked at here and that is by asking what does it mean? When he says that love believes all things, what does that mean? And the first thing I want to reemphasize, we said it this morning but I want to reaffirm this is that it does not mean that love is naïve. When he says it believes all things, it doesn't mean that love is gullible, that love suspends all judgment, that love does not exist in the realm of discernment. We've already seen that. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth so where you have love, there is the siding with truth, the recognition of right and wrong and love is on the side of what is right. So to believe all things does not mean that you just believe everything that someone says. We know that what the Mormons say about God is not true. It is not loving to pretend that they are telling the truth about God. When we think about, for example, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals together for the Gospel, it's not loving to pretend that the Roman Catholic view of the Gospel is the Gospel. That's not loving. In fact, that leads to the damnation of souls. So love is not without discernment.

What does it mean when it says that love believes all things? John Calvin captured it well when he said this many, many years ago. He said, "Not that the Christian knowingly and willingly allows himself to be imposed upon. Not that he divests himself of prudence in judgment that he may be the more easily taken advantage of. Not that he unlearns the way of distinguishing black from white. What then? He requires here as I have already said, simplicity and kindness in judging of things and he declares that these are the invariable accompaniments of love. The consequence will be that a Christian man will

reckon it better to be imposed upon by his own kindness and easy temper than to wrong his brother by an unfriendly suspicion." I think he got right to the heart of it. Here's what it means to believe all things: it means that I would rather be wrong by believing you than to wrong you by not believing you. I would rather be wronged or taken advantage of by judging you with kindness than to hurt you by judging you in an inaccurate way. So in that sense, love is believing of all things.

Love is trusting. In fact, that's the way I think we can sum this up tonight: if you walk in the love of God, you walk in an attitude and spirit of trust. Love is trusting. In fact, we can identify it in a few ways, coming at this from a negative angle. We can say that love is not suspicious. Love does not suspect the worst. Love is not cynical, that is, love does not expect the worst. Do you understand the difference between suspecting the worst and expecting the worst? When you suspect the worst, you say, "Well, there's really something at work here behind the scenes, under the surface." You suspect that something evil is going on. Well, love is not suspicious. It doesn't suspect the worst. To expect the worst is the say, "No matter what your motive is right now, I think that the outcome is going to be negative. At the end of the day when we reach the end of this road I expect that it's going to turn out poorly." That's expecting the worst. Well, love doesn't do either of those things. It's not suspicious and it's not cynical. When you're walking in the love of God, you don't take evil imaginations, evil motives, evil or impure ambitions and impose them on a person and and say, "This must be what is operating in your heart," even though you have no evidence for it. That's not love.

We can say that another way: if I'm walking in the love of God, I have a belief in God's ability in a person's life to believe all things. I think this is an additional element contained in this. To believe all things kind of ties in with the next quality, hopes all things, that is, I believe the best about you in view of God's grace at work in your life. I just don't look at you based upon who you are this moment, I look at you based upon the fact that God is at work in your life and what he can make of you so I consider you in positive terms. I look at you in positive terms, not suspicious, not cynical, not suspecting the worst, not expecting the worst, certainly not wanting the worst. None of that is the love of God because what we're told here is love believes all things.

One of the things I want to drive home tonight and throughout this entire section is, beloved, this is the way it really is. In other words, what we're looking at here, this is the truth. You and I can say we're walking in the love of God but if these qualities we are studying about, if these things are not operating in our lives, we are not walking in the love of God. In other words, if your profession of loving God and loving others doesn't match this list, what's wrong is not this list. What's wrong is your profession of love. So what we need to do is we all need to take a list like this and as I said this morning, it's not exhaustive, it's representative. It's meant to be prescriptive. But we need to take a list like this and do honest assessment in light of it. Am I really walking in the love of God? Well, am I patient? Am I kind? Am I jealous? Am I a braggart? Am I arrogant? Am I rude? Am I selfish? Am I irritable, easily offended, touchy? Do I keep a list of wrongs? Am I resentful? Do I find myself being indiscriminate and setting my approval on things that don't please God, that is, do I rejoice at wrongdoing? Or do I firmly rejoice in the truth?

Do I bear up under that which would attack the object of my concern? As we learned this morning, am I protective in the right kind of way of those I love? Do I cover faults instead of exposing faults? And if I say I am walking in the love of God but this is not operating in my life, then guess what? I'm not walking in the love of God because this is the love of God. This is the love of God. And in the same way, we can see clearly tonight that love is believing. Love is trusting. Love believes all things.

So that's the meaning of it. Now we move to another thought and that is: how is this manifested? If I believe all things in the sense that this verse is talking about, what will that look like in operation in my life? What does someone's life look like who believes all things? We could even put it another way, not only what does it look like, how can I walk in it? How can I be a person who believes all things and, in that way, walk in the love of God?

So, let me give you a few thoughts that we see in God's word. First of all we can say this: we walk in the love of God and we are a trusting person when we have faith in God. I know that that is like, "Duh, that's the most obvious thing of all," but I want you to let that sink in. I am able to love you by trusting you only when I walk having faith in God. You say, "What do you mean, Richard?" Just this: why are people suspicious? Why are people cynical? Why do they sometimes take the most negative view you can take of another person? And beyond the obvious which is just a sinful, proud, ugly heart, one of the reasons people do that is they say something like this, "Do you know what? I've trusted people before in the past and they have let me down," right? "I have made myself transparent only to be mistreated. I have that had people say they are going to do things for me and they never follow through." And on and on it goes and what people end up saying is something like this, "I've just made my mind up, I'm never going to allow myself to be hurt like that again. I'm never going to allow myself to be taken advantage of like that again." In other words, what is it? It is self-protection. "I'm not willing to trust you because I'm going to make sure that I take care of me."

Now, there's a lot wrong with that. That's a self-focused life and that's not what God designs for us to live. That would not be a life that puts God first or others first. That would not be a life for ministry because you'll never be able to minister to others as you put up walls around yourself to keep yourself safe. But what I'm aiming at tonight is for us to understand that when I take that position, I'm in charge of protecting me and then guess what? I'm not entrusting myself to God. I ought to be able to trust you and to make myself vulnerable and open because I realize something, ultimately, I'm not trusting you, I'm trusting him. I trust that I can love you 100%, I can put myself at risk to love you because my life is in the hands of a God who will take care of me. A God who is concerned with what is just, in what is right. The God who says that he defends the widow and the orphan. The God who says that he's aware of the mistreatment of his people. You see, I don't have to protect me because God protects me and where I allow sinful bitterness and suspicion and cynicism to enter into my life, somewhere I have lost the vision of life that is in the sovereign hands of God.

We all remember Joseph, right? Would you say that Joseph was mistreated by his brothers? Do you agree with that? You say, "Yeah, he was really mistreated, wasn't he?" Sold in slavery by his brothers but there he is at the end of his life and is he bitter when his brothers appear before him and they don't even know at first that this is Joseph? Here they are now, their life is in his hands. I mean, you want to talk about the opportunity to execute vengeance if you wanted to, Joseph could have done it. But is he angry? Is he bitter? Is he looking for vengeance? No, why not? Because he recognizes that all of this was a part of God's sovereign plan for his life. Do you realize that even the things that have hurt you, disappointed you, the ways you have been mistreated, do you understand that all of that is a part of God's sovereign plan for your life? And in the case of those who love the Lord, it is never meant to destroy us, it is only meant to produce in us that which glorifies God and in the end is good for us?

Let me give you a good biblical example of this. We always look for models of this, don't we, these qualities? Look over to the book of 1 Peter 2, and look at verse 18. Actually, let's back up to verse 13 because I want you to see how far reaching this principle is. 1 Peter 2:13, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect," notice, "not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called." Folks, do you understand we have been called to suffer for what is right and in some cases to suffer for doing good and being misjudged, mistreated specifically because we did what was good?

Look on, verse 21, "because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." What did our Lord do? Verse 22, "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." Now, just stop for just a moment and let this sink in. When our Lord suffered, he suffered as one who was absolutely pure and sinless. You know, even when we talk about the ways we have been mistreated, it's funny how many times running through our mistreatment are threads of our own disobedience. Never the case with Jesus. Absolutely perfect.

Verse 23, "Yet when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten," but what did he do? "He continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." He suffered all that he suffered in the way that he suffered it as he continually entrusted himself to his Father. Left himself in the hands of his Father, trusting in the justice of God.

So, look back at 1 Corinthians 13. What does it mean to believe all things? How do we live this out practically? To be trusting toward other people to the full degree that we can

be and still be submitted to God? We talked about the exhaustive nature of love this morning, to the full degree that we can be and still be submitted to God. How do we do that? We do that while we trust God with our lives. I don't have to protect myself because he is protecting me. Ultimately our faith is not in humanity. This is not a belief in humanity. This is a belief in God.

Second practically speaking, we do this, we practice this, we are loving towards other by trusting in others because of our righteous desires. You only can practice this if you have righteous desires. What do you mean? I mean this: we often see people the way we want to see people. We view others the way we choose to view others. This is brought home to me many times when I'll hear someone talk about another person that I know very well. I mean, I know this person they're talking about very well and I come to the realization, "Your view of this person is very different from my view of this person. I love this person. I see good things in this person. I respect this person. But to listen to you, there's not much good about this person." How could there be such a discrepancy? Well, oftentimes what happens is the person who is criticizing says, "Well, you just don't know what I know. You have not seen what I have seen." And do you know what? Maybe perhaps at times that can be true but do you know what? In many cases that's not the truth at all. The truth sometimes is you see this person the way you see them because that's how you choose to see them.

Do you know the difference between a portrait and a caricature? If you talk about drawing someone's picture, for example? If you do a portrait, all of their characteristics are in proper proportion, right? You're trying to present them as they are. But if you have ever seen like a cartoon in a newspaper or something and there is a caricature, what happens? Certain features are exaggerated, right? Big ears or a large nose and that's not how the person actually is. Certain features have been magnified out of proportion and what we do sometimes when we're not walking in love is we take what even may be legitimate faults or legitimate things that are wrong, but what we do is we choose to magnify those faults out of proportion. We take what is praiseworthy in a person and we minimize it. We take what is not praiseworthy in a person and we blow it out of proportion and we magnify it because of sin, because we have been hurt, because we are walking in something other than the love of God.

Folks, what the love of God will do is take what is praiseworthy in a person and magnify it and take what is not praiseworthy in a person as we saw this morning and cover it. Not in the sense of excusing it but in a sense of wanting to protect it because the motive is not destruction, the motive is redemption and there is that understanding that God is not finished with this person yet so I'll protect in the present knowing that God has a plan for the future. I'll cover in the present knowing that God is at work in this person's life and he's still developing them and at the end of the day, they will be conformed to the image of Christ so let me magnify what is praiseworthy and let me cover what is not.

I like what John MacArthur said about Grace Community Church. He said this, "In our church, we continually try to develop a spirit of mutual trust within the staff and within the congregation as a whole. We believe that each person is dedicated to the Lord and is

responsible for serving him. We believe each person is living in fellowship with the Lord. When someone fails as we all do, then our desire is to help cover that wrong and help it be made right. Whenever there is doubt, we would rather err on the favorable side." I think that's a great description of what this quality is, that is, if I'm going to err, let me err on the side of believing what is favorable about your life. Is that how you're living? If you are magnifying something about the lives of others, are you magnifying what bothers you? Or are you magnifying what is praiseworthy?

Let me at this point also say something about how we view the local church. You know folks, learning the word of God is a great blessing but it can also in some areas represent a great danger. Let me explain. The more we understand rightly, the more we understand of what the church is to be, the more we understand of what the church can be, should be, is becoming, the more we understand what the church should be, the more we will recognize we are not there and if we take this magnifying glass and begin to keep it on the local church and magnify everything about the local church that is not yet as it should be, what we will do is bite and devour one another. We will become what we preached about several months ago, Christian cannibals. The Bible says, "Beware lest you bite and devour one another," and that's what happens when a church begins to turn inward and we forget we have a mission field that is outward, that there are people all around us who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Folks, hear me: if a church is healthy, it will always have in its midst spiritual children, spiritual adolescents and those who are mature. Always. And if a church has children, adolescents and mature ones, then guess what? You're going to have runny noses. You're going to have dirty diapers. I'm speaking metaphorically now, alright? You're going to have all the things that you have to deal with in a church where it is not dead and static and unchanging and if we take what is negative and magnify it, we are never going to be thankful people. Rather what we ought to do is take what God has done and is doing and magnify it and give him great praise for it and roll up our spiritual sleeves and go to work in the areas where change is needed and do it for the glory of God and not forget that the reason why God has gathered together churches like this one is for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry and the work of the ministry is not just to Christian people but there is a lost world out there in need of the Gospel. Sometimes it's because we're not busy in our outward work, we become over focused on ourselves and the result is we become miserable.

I know it discourages us to think if you look at the churches it describes in the New Testament and they were all perfect, right? They were all perfect, weren't they? I mean, the church at Corinth, that was one you would want to belong to, right? Let's get drunk at the Lord's table. Let's have a man living with his stepmother. And let's have people taking each other to court. I mean, that was just a great fellowship, wasn't it? Perfect. Well, how about those churches described in the letters in Revelation? They were all where they should be, weren't they? You go through every church mentioned in the New Testament and do you know what you are going to find? You're going to find areas in need of growth and change. Why? Because the church is not yet glorified. Not yet glorified. I

think it was Spurgeon who said, "If you're looking for the perfect church, don't join it because you will immediately mess it up."

So what does it mean to believe all things? It means I trust you because ultimately I'm entrusting myself to him. I don't have to protect me. And it means I trust you because I desire to see the best in you. I want to see the best in you. If I'm going to magnify something, let me magnify what is praiseworthy in you. If I'm going to minimize something, let me minimize your faults because God is not yet finished with you. It leads to a third thing that this means practically: to love someone by believing all things. We accomplish that by humble assessments. Humble assessments. Let me back up and just say this: you know, the real reason we sometimes don't look for the best in one another is just pride. It's just pride. We compare ourselves among ourselves and we conclude that we are different from others. Here's what I mean. Have you ever noticed how we put the most positive spin on our failures? I mean, when we have blown it, when we have failed, when we have stumbled, what do we believe about ourselves? You know, I don't often hear someone say, "I'm a dirty, rotten scoundrel. No one should ever trust me." I just don't hear that, do you? What do we always say? We say, "Well, you know, God knows my heart. He knows that I'm doing the best I can do. He knows my heart is in the right place. He knows that I want to please him." We say all of these things about ourselves, we are trustworthy but they are not. We have noble ambitions but they do not. We make honest mistakes but they cannot. We fall short of the standard of our desires but they are not allowed to.

I mean, I think I could put it to you that way: do you ever fall short of the standard of your desires? What do you desire to be for the Lord's sake? How do you desire to live? Do you ever fall short of the standard of your desires? Have you ever found yourself pleading with the Lord about what he knows is in your heart? "Father, forgive me for I have sinned in this area but, Lord, I thank you that you know what my heart is." Have you ever talked to the Lord that way? Well listen, if you know that you can fall short of the standards that are in your heart, why do you judge harshly your brothers and immediately conclude that they are not following short of the standards in their heart? Why do you allow yourself the grace to stumble and still follow after the Lord with a sincere desire but you don't believe your brothers may be stumbling and still following after the Lord with a sincere desire?

Do you know what's wrong with us, folks? We're just proud. We're just proud. We just believe that our motives are pure and our motives are right. In fact, what we really believe is our motives are more pure and more right than someone else's so we judge the other harshly while we judge ourselves favorably. How am I going to love you by believing the best about you? I will love you by believing the best about you, believing all things, when I humble myself and realize that you can love the Lord as much as I do. That you can desire to do what's right as much as I do. That you can fall short of the standard of your desires just like I do. That you can make honest mistakes just like I have. When I stop judging myself in a proud way and judging you in a proud way and I humble myself before God and I realize the wickedness that is in my own heart so that if anything, I prefer you about myself. Now I can't begin to trust you.

Do you have a humble assessment of yourself? Do you have a humble assessment of others? Do you understand about saved humanity, that even though we have been redeemed, the flesh is still dwelling in us and not one of us has yet been glorified? Not yet, not on this side of glory. So that if are going to love each other, we're going to have to love people who are on their way. No one has arrived and that means we have to believe the best about each other as we're on the way.

There is a fourth way we can describe this practically and that is to love each other by believing all things. It not only means that it requires humble assessments, it also means it requires humble remembrances. That is, the way to keep a humble assessment is to call to mind truths that lead to our humility. Let me explain. I want you to look over to 1 Timothy 1. Now, this is going to sound strange perhaps but I want you to grab hold of this and apply it to yourself and let this sink in. There are times in the word of God where God communicates with us in a way that we can understand, it's called anthropomorphism. God communicating to us about himself in human terms so that we can get a hold of a truth that he is wanting to communicate to us. 1 Timothy 1, look at what it says beginning in verse 8, "Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been," what? "Entrusted." Paul says God has entrusted me or we could say it this way, he has trusted me with the Gospel. Here's what I want you to think about: do you understand God has extended trust to you? He has extended trust to you. He has entrusted us with certain things.

Look on, verse 12, how does Paul reflect on this? "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful," some versions I think have right there trustworthy. Does anybody have a New American Standard here tonight? How does that read? Faithful, never mind, alright, faithful. Look on, "appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent." He says, "Listen, God has accounted me faithful. He has entrusted the Gospel to me. He has counted me trustworthy, appointing me to his service." Verse 13, "even though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent." I mean, Paul is amazed that God would entrust him with such a responsibility. Do we think like that? Are we amazed that God would trust us? That he would entrust to us what he has?

Look on, end of verse 13, "But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I was the foremost." Is that what he says? What does he say? "I am the foremost. I am the foremost of sinners."

Verse 16, "But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." There is praise flowing out of this man as he stops and contemplates the fact that God has entrusted him this magnificent responsibility despite who he is, in spite of what he was and even in spite of who he is. He has a humble self-perspective and he remembers that in his relationship with God, God has extended trust to him.

Now listen, if that's my view of me and if I'm amazed that God has extended trust to me, that he has allowed me to preach his word despite who I was and despite who I am, that by his grace he allows me this privilege to share his word with others, how can I then, having been extended that kind of trust from God, how can I refuse to extend trust to you? How can I refuse to believe the best about you and to treat you in a way that would extend trust to you when God has extended such a trust to me?

In John 21:15, you get a sense of this as well. It says, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, Son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, Son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord,'" here's that appeal I was talking about before, "'Lord, you know everything,'" you know, right? Despite the fact that I denied you 3 times when I said I never would. Despite the fact that I fled the scene when I said I would go to the death. Despite my failure that no doubt in Peter's mind was magnified to the point that it broke his heart. "'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'" What is Christ doing? He is restoring Peter to a place where Peter understands, "I am entrusting you with my people. Despite your failure, I am entrusting you with this responsibility." Listen, if the Lord God has extended that kind of kindness to us, how can we refuse to extend that kind of kindness to each other? Love is willing to believe. Love wants to believe. Those whom we love are in that same place that even when they have failed, their hearts are in the right place. They want to do the right thing. That's what love believes.

So how do I walk in this? I have to remember the way God has loved me, the way God has trusted me, the way God has been kind to me, humble remembrances in terms of my relationship with God. But it doesn't stop there. If I want to walk in this quality that says I believe all things, I also need to call to mind those humbling remembrances in terms of my relationships with other people. I can say it this way: have you ever needed someone's trust? Have you ever needed someone's forgiveness? Have you ever said something or acted in a way where now your life is in someone else's hands and they can either believe the best about you or they can believe the worst about you? They can either judge that your heart is evil or despite your performance, they can judge that your heart is true before the Lord? Have you ever been in the place where you were in need of someone trusting you? And I've got news for you, if you've never been at that place, you haven't

lived very long. Sooner or later, we will all be in that place where someone can judge us very unfavorably or someone can believe the best about us. Now, I want to ask you: if you ever end up in that place, what do you want someone to do with you? Do you want them to believe the best about you or do you want them to judge you in the most critical way possible? Why is it that we want others to judge us in a gracious, kind manner but we don't extend that very kind of love to other people? What does love do? It believes all things.

You say, "But Richard, what if there is genuine failure? I mean, what if there's just unmistakable failure? What do we do?" Galatians 6:1 says, "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." Listen, when you look at someone's failure you say, "I would never go there. I could never do that." You, my friend, are deceived. You think yourself to be something when you're nothing. Let us understand clearly tonight that we are only and always upheld by the grace of God and if God withdrew his sustaining grace from our lives, we would all apostatize. The same one who brought us to himself keeps us in himself and the only way we walk in what is pleasing to God is by the power that God supplies. I'm not taking away human responsibility. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. But I'm saying to you that you can be the great pietist who says, "Let me go and do it for God," and apart from God's Spirit, God's grace, God's power, you are going to fall on your face. So that if someone stumbles and falls, what kind of a spirit do we approach them in? One of gentleness because it's one of humility. It's one of self-examination. It's one that says, "But for the grace of God there am I so let me help you up, brother, and let us go on the way serving the Lord Jesus together."

Verse 4 says, Galatians 6, "But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor." How does that verse fit? I think he's telling us what we do sometimes with the stumbling of other people and that is we use their failure to exalt ourselves. We use their failure in our mind to exalt our own performance and to say to ourselves, "I have never been guilty of that. I have never stumbled in that way." Its sinful. It's proud. No, he says, "Look to yourself. Deal with your own sin. Don't magnify yourself by the failures and the sins of others."

Go back to 1 Corinthians 13, if you would please, verse 7. "Love believes all things." Now, I close tonight by asking you this: are you able to live that? I mean, do you have the capacity to live that? We realize tonight the only way that we can live that is to be a person who has been saved, who has been made a new creation, someone who knows what it is to understand, "I have trusted in Christ. He has forgiven my sins. He has extended to me the kindness of forgiveness and now my life is in the hands of the living God." We talked about this earlier, the way I trust you is to entrust myself to him but I can't entrust myself to him if I haven't trusted in his Son.

So are you in the position to entrust yourself to God because you have entrusted yourself to his Son for salvation? And the first step for you, my friend, if you're not a believer, the

first step for you is salvation. Until you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, until you have known the kindness of God and the forgiveness of your sins, you will never know what it is to walk in God's love because God's love is only shed abroad in the hearts of people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. You can't live this without Jesus. Do you know Jesus? And even if you say, "Pastor, I have the capacity to walk in this because I'm a believer," well, then I would ask you though, "Do you have the ability to walk in this in your own strength?" and the answer to that is no. I've got to be filled with the Spirit. I've got to be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I've got to be, as we talked about Wednesday night, I've got to be living out of the Gospel. I've got to be a living out of the truth of what salvation means and what God has done toward me. Those humble assessments and those humble remembrances flow out of a right understanding of the Gospel. You can't do this on your own.

So are you able to do this? Then I would ask you: are you actually walking in it? Are you a loving person or if the truth be known about you, are you a suspicious person? Are you a loving person or are you a cynical person? Do you believe, do you choose to believe the best about the motives and actions of others? Do you extend to others the kindness that you want extended to you? Do you have the belief in others that you have a about yourself? You believe yourself to have right motives, right ambitions, do you trust that in the lives of other people? I wonder if there's someone here tonight that if the truth be known, you need to get on your knees and repent of your sin and ask God for his forgiveness because you have held hard, suspicious, cynical thoughts and attitudes in your heart toward other people. You have not loved them and you may have even expressed it with gossip and slander, even private conversations in your home, maybe even just the meditations of your heart. You see, love is not just what we do, it gets to how we think. How we think about others. How we feel toward others. And love believes all things.

And God's people would say, amen. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, you are so gracious toward us and, Lord, we understand that your love does not require of us or even, Lord, you don't want from us that we would suspend all judgment but, Lord, what you do want from us is that we would not be judgmental. And I pray that wherever we have been guilty of not loving in this way, where we have been unkind and ungenerous and where we have been without grace in our view of others, I pray, Lord, that you would humble us with the knowledge of that and pierce our hearts with the knowledge of that and that, Lord, even now we would confess it as sin and turn from it. I pray, Lord, that we not only individually but as a church body would represent what it means to love with your love, that we would love each other by being generous and kind and gracious in our thoughts toward each other and in that way demonstrate the love of your Son. Lord, we are amazed at what you have entrusted to us, how, Lord, you extend kindness to us by trusting us with responsibilities. Let us remember that, Father, as we choose to trust others even as we entrust ourselves to you and we ask you this in Jesus' name. Amen.