

# Love Always

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[ 0 : 00 ] You know, I, I used to always work New Year's when I worked in the psych hospital I worked for, because I didn't hang out all night.

So, because I had to go to sleep, brother had to sleep. And I always used to love going in on New Year's Day. My patients would be there and so many of them would be depressed.

We're in a hospital, right? Worse, you're in a psychiatric hospital and you're already hurting emotionally. And I'm there with them and, you know, because of where I was, I couldn't preach the gospel to them outright.

All I could do was by the grace of God, love them. Just love them. The staff knew I was a Christian, so I, that was, that was my mission field, talking to them about Jesus.

And they were usually disgruntled because they were working New Year's Day. And they were sleepy and sometimes hungover.

[ 1 : 06 ] How blessed we are to know Jesus and to come into this new year in faith and hope and love in Jesus.

And we are prepared for what comes next. We are equipped because He's equipping us. So let's go into this new year like we know.

Like we know Him. Like we trust Him. Like He's everything. Father, as we come to Your Word, we are struck once again by this passage that we're studying.

It's convicting. You meant it to be so. But it's also hopeful because we know who love is. You are love.

And you sent the son of your love to set us free from death and darkness and hopelessness and lovelessness. Thank you.

[ 2 : 08 ] Thank you for 2023. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. And that's you, Father. And so we come.

Some of us are walking tentatively into this new year. Some are dragging because we're bringing grief and pain and suffering into this new year.

Some of us are coming because we're excited and we see so much potential. However we come, Lord, may we come as your people so that we know that we know that we know that our lives are not only in our hands.

More importantly, they're in yours. You and your son hold us tight. So, Lord, may we come into this new year. No matter what condition we come, may we come in faith, hope, and love according to Jesus.

Bless your word now. And may you use this message to move us along the path of faithful discipleship as a church in this new year.

[ 3 : 15 ] Even as you've been speaking to my heart, I pray you will speak to my brothers and sisters and all who hear this message. Wherever they are, may they hear this word of God from you and be transformed.

In Jesus' name, amen. 1 Corinthians 13 verses—I'm going to read verses 4 through 8, but we will be focusing on verses 7 and 8 and the rest of the chapter there.

Hear now the word of God. 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.

Love never ends. Allow me to read just to end here. So now faith, hope, and love abide. These three.

[ 4 : 25 ] But the greatest of these is love. That is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Thank you once again, praise team.

That was beautiful. Man. Basic theme this Christmas season pass is that Christmas is about love. Christmas is love. And I say to that, show nuff. And we're not talking about that syrupy, puppy, sentimental, hallmark kind of love.

That love is fragile. It happens fast and looks good. But that hallmark love is kind of fragile. The love that Christmas brings is strong, unbreakable, lasting, and transforming.

This is the love that came down at Christmas. As we trust in Him, He causes us to love always.

[ 5 : 34 ] He causes us to grow in love that we may reflect the love we have received from Him. We may reflect that love to one another as brothers and sisters, but even so, beyond that, to all those we call neighbor.

So for the last time, I want to ask you, how's your love life this Christmas, this new year? I want to pick up, without doing much of a review, just want to dive into the passage because we got a ways to go.

But verse 7 kind of comes up like a staccato, like he's just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. He's more than summarizing what he said already about these characteristics of love.

He's moving us forward a bit, but he does it in a very interesting way. Just simply says, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

And notice he keeps saying all. And that can be translated all ways. And so as we come to this passage, remember, this is an ongoing love, not that kind of love that here today, gone tomorrow, not drive-by love.

[ 6 : 48 ] It's that, come on, forgive me, it's the Anita Baker love. It's the same old love. 24, every day, 24 hours a day, the same old love.

That's what we're talking about here, the same old love of Jesus, permeating our lives. So first of all, notice this, love is a covering. Bears all things. Love is a covering.

Bears means to, and it's a big word, it means to keep confidential. It means to cover. It means to pass over in silence. It also means to stand up under difficulties.

The noun form of this word is very important because it means roof, which is also a type of covering. The idea of covering here is very strong. That's the idea, very strong here.

It's what Peter says in 1 Peter 4, 8, above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins.

[ 7 : 51 ] That word earnestly in the passage, that passage has the idea of something that's devoted, that's persistent, that does not waver. We are to have a love like that.

That's the only kind of love that covers. The only kind of love that covers sin is a love that's devoted, that's persistent, and that doesn't waver. By covering sin now, Paul nor Peter mean cover up.

Commenting on this passage in 1 Peter, Dr. Duane Grudem says this, Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offenses, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten.

But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion. Every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound to Satan's perverse delight.

Thank you, Dr. Grudem. Weak love. And you can't let anything go.

[ 9 : 03 ] You feel like your rights are always being violated. You feel like you are owed, and you deserve, and you just can't. It's—it's—it's—I call that hood mentality.

Where I grew up in West Philly, I'll never forget. If you—as a kid, if you slighted someone, they felt that in order to maintain their manhood, they had to deal with you.

That's where I grew up. So, I remember one time I was in the locker room in high school. I was in the locker room, and one of my friends, he was one of the strongest guys in the school. I still remember his name. I'm going to call him Ken.

Ken could do an iron cross, okay? That's—that's on the rings. When you do this on the rings, that is—I've tried that. That is very—almost impossible to do.

This man could do it and hold it. So, he was very strong. I remember one time we were in the locker room, and—and I saw Ken stuffing a guy in a trash can. Literally, he picked him up and was dumping him in a trash can.

[ 10 : 07 ] And I found out later what had happened. Ken had mistakenly stepped on the guy's belt in the locker room, and he was insulted. And he had to make an example.

It flipped on him. He got—made the example. But that's the kind of—I call that hood love. You know, and it's in the church. Christians, we come with all kinds of baggage, right? We all got issues. We all got mess we're dealing with. And some of us are dealing with, we can't let nothing go. That love doesn't cover anything except your enemy's dead body. That's not the kind of love he's talking about. We're living in a culture—brothers and sisters, you see it. You'll know it when I say it. We are living in a culture of suspicion and cynicism. I said this—I mentioned it before, but it keeps coming up. It's just amazing. We are not loving well at all. We're not—this idea of covering.

[ 11 : 12 ] We don't—Christians now, it's hard. It is hard, but we're making it almost impossible sometimes. The very place where the love of Christ is supposed to be revealed struggles to cover.

A baby is crying in a service. Are you incensed? I remember one year at a church my wife and I were at, and we were sitting in the balcony, and we saw this dear African-American woman come in.

We knew she was new. We had never seen her before in that church. It was obvious. Beautiful little baby. And the baby cried the entire service.

And the lady being a visitor really didn't know about our nursery, likely, or maybe she wasn't ready to entrust her beautiful little baby to people she didn't know. Understandable! After service, Sandy, of course, you know Sandy, she made a beeline for her to welcome her.

As she got closer to her, she heard an elder's wife fussing this lady out. She told her she had brought visitors, and her crying baby had ruined the service for all of them.

[ 12 : 29 ] She stalked—after she stalked away, Sandy did her best to try to console—to try to console her, who was a woman who was obviously shaken. Needless to say, we never saw her again. I don't know if she knew the Lord.

I guess that elder's wife did know about this passage in 1 Corinthians 13 or 1 Peter, about love covering, bearing. Maybe she didn't know much of the love of Christmas at all.

I don't know. Does the person next to you have strong body odor? Is your worship ruined? Are you cursing them in their heart? Why you got to sit next to me?

Is the person next to you singing off-key? If you sat next to me, you were given a wonderful serenade. But were you perturbed and hoping you never sit next to me again?

I told you the story, right? One time I was singing, and I was the pastor. I'm singing in our church plant, and the guy next to me who had a voice like yours, Rachel, I mean, he had that really operatic, beautiful sounding.

[ 13 : 38 ] He was gifted, okay? Older than me, gifted, sharp guy from New York. New York—I love New Yorkers. Anyway, he sat next to me, and I could see him cutting his eyes at me going, I'm serious.

I can see he was doing that. I just—Oliver, I kept right on singing. Is that you?

Because everybody don't sing. You know, as a preacher, when I visit other churches, and I get to hear men preach, I have to—I've learned this to do this years ago. I'm not there to critique their preaching.

I'm there to hear the Word of God. I'm there to worship the living God. And so I'm looking for whatever I can agree with. I'm listening for the truth. I'm not there to look at what I disagree with. That's the Reformed world, by the way. No, brothers and sisters, there's something wrong. The cynicism—the cynicism that creeps in.

[ 14 : 44 ] Something's wrong. The culture, I understand. But when the church falls into this—I remember when I passed it in Miami, had this one young man.

He must have been about 17 or so, 16, 17. And I love this kid. But his great ministry to me was pointing out where I got a pop cultural reference wrong in my sermon.

And it was annoying, okay? Because I wasn't wrong all the time. I usually got it right. But whenever I got it wrong, I'd see him in line with a smirk.

And I'm sitting there going, oh boy, what did I get wrong? Now, here's the thing. Love covers. It was annoying, and it wasn't good for him to do that.

But I was just glad a young man wanted to talk to me. Come on, somebody. I was glad a young man thought I was worth talking to. And we had good conversations because of that in.

[ 15 : 46 ] But it was annoying. Let's get more real. Can you forgive your brother or sister small infractions at all? Do people hear how they have offended you from other people because you were

sharing a prayer request?

Prayer requests can be the most gossipy moments of the church. Share your own requests, not somebody else's. Share your own problems, not someone else's problems.

You know what I'm saying? Love covers. Love covers those infractions that can be covered.

Everything can't be covered. Some things have to be confronted.

Amen? Some things have reached that nature. The Bible gives us ways of doing that. It's called Matthew 18. We can confront. But sometimes, and it's done quietly. Listen, love covers. It's still there.

Even when you confront someone about their sin, you're still covering it because the first thing you do is one-on-one. And then, if you have to go again, you only bring a small group, two or three witnesses.

[16:54] Small group. You're still covering. You're not trying to put them on. What are we supposed to say? Put them on blast. Leave loud. That's the difference. Around the churches today.

It's this. That's not. That's not love. Love is like a roof. He's talking about bearing all things.

Love is like a roof. You ever have a leak in your roof? I have. Sometimes the roof will leak and you'll see a bubble. That deadly bubble in the ceiling.

You might hate that bubble. Seen it a few times. Sometimes, sometimes the leak is secret. We had a leak behind some paneling in our sunroom.

You couldn't see it. But I touched the paneling one day and my hand almost went through. Because the leak was behind the paneling and it was rotting out the wood.

[17:52] The paneling looked fine. But inside, behind the scenes, when no one could see, it was rotten. That's what, that's when you don't cover.

That's what can happen to you. You look good on the outside. But if one more person touches you, there's a hole going to be as big as my fist sitting in your heart.

Love protects relationships by covering sins and missteps. This is who we are as the followers of Jesus. This is what it means to love. And here's the wonderful thing.

Jesus put a roof of grace and love over your head. If you are a disciple of Jesus, Jesus is the covering over you. He covers you from the just wrath of God for your sin.

He covers you. He protects you. He bore all things related to God's judgment for you.

[19:08] And when you truly understand that Jesus covers all your sins, you will then be empowered and equipped by his grace to cover others.

So the question remains, do you know that your sins are just that horrible that you needed the Son of God himself to cover them with his own blood? If you do, cover someone today.

Cover someone. Love is also trusting. Best believes all things. Trusting. Now there are two ways to take this expression. And most try to say it's one way or the other.

But I really believe they're related. First of all, when he says love believes all things, it means love always trusts God. When you've been ambushed by the sovereign love of God, you begin to trust him.

You trust what he says about Jesus. It's true that Jesus himself is the truth. He's the truth about your condition. Without him and in him. Without him, he says you're lost, burdened with the guilt of your sins.

[20:18] But in him, you are set free. You are transformed. You are made a son and daughter of God. You have a new family. You have a new kingdom. You have a new life.

You believe that. You know that's true because you trust him. One of the saddest things that can be said about a person is they are, they have no faith in God.

They have no faith in their life. They have no faith in their lives. They have no faith in their lives.

They have no faith in themselves and what they can see. With Jesus, though, trusting in him, you are forgiven.

You are beloved. Jesus is your elder brother who gave himself in love to save you. You have eternal life right now. Meaning you have Jesus and his benefits for living right now.

And when you finally close your eyes, like Mother Ann Elliott and Mother Rena Farmer, when we just sent to be with Jesus, when you finally close your eyes, you know.

[21:27] You know. Fear not, for you are destined for the glory with him. You can always trust him because you know that if he can take care of your immortal soul, he can certainly take care of your finite life.

You trust him because you know you love him because he first loved you. He didn't say to you, you got to love me first. He didn't say to you, you got to trust me first. He didn't say to you, you got to prove yourself first.

No, he did it. And you're just responding to what he did. He removed the blindness from your eyes. This is true. This is the true faith of God.

It's what Hebrews 11, 6 says. It's out on the screen. And without faith, it says, it's impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he, watch this, rewards those who seek him.

King James has it best, who diligently seek him. You see, the true faith that God gives us in Christ is not just a faith that believes for salvation, that God exists, that Jesus is real, but it also believes that he rewards us.

[ 22 : 41 ] He rewards us as we seek him. Despite all the evil that you may be experiencing, despite all the pain and suffering, you know that he is a rewarder of those who seek him and you are waiting.

So, yeah, love here can mean, certainly means trust God, always trust God.

But there's a second way of taking this passage. And to reform this post-itory commentary is helpful here. I want to give that to you. If you love me, I'm sorry, we'll come back to that in a minute.

First of all, I just want to be clear, just be clear what it does not mean. It sounds like when it says, you know, love believes whatever you say. Love believes all things.

Love believes whatever you say. That's not what it means, right? We know that. Someone might say, if you love me, you will believe me. And a lot of times people think that sounds good.

[ 23 : 49 ] I suggest to you that can be a way of manipulating you. It's designed to make you feel guilty if you ask for more information before you make a judgment.

Don't ever tell somebody, if you love me, you will believe me. Give them the benefit of the doubt that they have a brain. Let them think a little bit about what you're saying.

All because you're saying it doesn't make it true. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Hello. Now, that's what our culture thinks. That's the cynicism again.

If someone says something negative about you online, especially online, but not only online, but solely—I see it online a lot. All I got to do is go online and say, Oliver Tremieux is a mean, evil so-and-so.

[ 24 : 48 ] and do you know there'll be tons of people going yep i knew it yeah that's and there will be and then and then if i mentioned he's a pastor oh my gosh there'll be there'll be lines and lines and no one not one of them ever met oliver or even know anything about what i'm talking about but because i said it it must be so we're in trouble here's the connection between these things love doesn't believe anything about someone love is not naively gullible rather love believes the best about others rather than being sinfully cynical here's the connection to the first idea that trust love trust that what god's word says about people is true we are not highly evolved animals living on instinct and merely a herd mentality for ethics and we're not only sinners see here's where we heard we go yeah everybody's a sinner pastor kevin said you can't trust him hold it that's not the beginning of the story the beginning of the story of humanity is we are created in the very image of god unlike any other beings in all creation unlike angels and unlike animals we are unique in the universe we bear the imago dei we bear his character we bear his characteristics in a very positive manner yes fallen but still there why you think in our country we say a man is a woman is innocent until proven guilty we've flipped it around in our cynical ways that a person is guilty until proving innocent that's not love that's not the love he's talking about here love believes until you see otherwise until you know for sure otherwise you give a person the benefit of the doubt can you do that that's risky ain't it that sounds that sounds risky because that's what love does love is risky cynicism doesn't risk anything love risks everything love gives you can't imagine if god was cynical like us he would have never sent jesus i don't know man guys i don't know those folk are evil i mean he would have he would have written us off because he would have said they can't change there's no hope for them but god knew we would change because he would do it culture culture has moved in on us i think and so we have become cynical in our love the most loving people on the face of the planet are the people of love who say their god is the god of the bible because god is love jesus is the love gift of god to the world for god so loved the world that he gave his only son the great love gift of the world comes from god and is no other than jesus we are the eternal family of god should

we not give one another the benefit of the doubt you are my brother and my sister in christ yes i know you're sinful yes i know you're flawed

but you're you're my family i'm not going to believe anything about you unless i know it for myself you can't talk about my sister to me you better come correct my first thought to you you talk about becky to me becky here i'm gonna say listen really becky becky said that she did that and you were you and you saw it huh you were there usually the answer is no and then if it's even if it's yes i'm gonna say you know some beckys are we gotta go talk come on let's go talk and pray with becky you'll see what happens what's going on this is not us this is not us gossip should be repugnant to us Phil Reichen says it this way the cynic refuses to believe anything at all but suspects the worst about other people when he sees people doing something selfless he tends to think they're really acting out of self-interest oh yeah they're doing that now but what they what's really going on rather than taking the risk of loving of being hurt or getting a taking advantage of that's the risk that's love the cynic holds back from truly loving other people

Jesus gave all to love us his people will we not take the risk now i'm saying of loving each other cynicism is not a fruit of the spirit love endure love embraces also god's future love hopes all things hope in the bible is future oriented it is a trust in a good future promised by god it's like when i was a kid my sister and i found out we we found our christmas presents in the closet tucked away if you had asked us are you hopeful that you will get what you asked for on christmas day we would have said sure why because we were certain we were certain here's the thing about biblical love we are certain though we have not seen that's biblical hope biblical loving hope we are certain that god will keep his promises even though in 20 here's the first day of 2023 you know he'll be faithful to you in july of 2023 you know the promises that are written right here right now will be just as good in this year as they will be 10 years from now and a hundred years from now and a thousand years from now you are standing on the hope of the new heavens and new earth you are standing on the hope of the coming of christ you are standing on the hope that everything will be set right you are standing on the hope that your sins are forgiven forever and he will never hold them against you ever again you are standing on the hope that jesus is real brothers and sisters and he does not speak with forked tongue ferguson said we have our underlying confidence that god will be with us and bless us just as he promised even when life is at its worst when when the bottom falls out like pastor jack's priest y'all missed y'all you weren't here last night you missed a wonderful service uh new year new year's new year service and pastor jack's priest god's word when he it's like when the it's like when the when the uh shadrach meshach and abednego we're about to be thrown into the fiery furnace in the book of daniel um you know we look at that and we go it sounds like let's guess a story yeah if you study history you'll find out people did when they wanted when kings wanted to get rid of you make an example of you they did some bad things to you they're gonna throw these men in this furnace and their statement was so powerful and profound oh and they were and they were polite oh king kingy we love you man we respect you but listen our god is able to deliver us from that fire but even if he does not even if he does not we will not bow down see that see that's the kind of hope you know and faith hope and faith go together by the way that's the kind of they knew even in their short term future at that moment they knew that they were gonna be delivered and it didn't have to be the way they saw it they knew that god even though they were about to be burned to a crisp they knew they would be delivered and that was okay because they knew that god is good and what he had in store for them was better than anything they could have carved out for themselves on this side of heaven and earth the sting of death is sin

the power of sin is the law but thanks be to god who gives us the victory through our lord jesus christ therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the lord knowing that in the lord your labor is not in vain one of my favorite verses why are we so hopeless even in our churches why are we so hopeless why are we hopeless christians why are we so cynical nothing will ever change nobody can do why are we so what don't we believe in the power of the resurrection that lives in you don't you believe that god can use you to make a difference don't you believe that if you live for christ you will have an impact it may not be the impact you are thinking but if you're living for christ day by day you god is using you to have an impact it may make some people angry or it may make people rejoice what's your hope where's your hope in you or in that god will get the glory any way he sees fit he will get the glory through you is that where your hope is well that just brings us to the last statement and i just want to say it quickly i call it tough love love doesn't quit endures all things this is the kind of this is the love now he comes to

that's like a it's more than a marathon i call it a marathon at first and then i said no i think the lord gave it to me it's more like the iron man and you live in chattanooga you know about the iron man we have here every year i call it the super marathon that challenges you in different ways different ways you're being challenged in the iron man swimming 2.4 miles in the tennessee river biking 116 miles running 26.2 miles which is an actual marathon if you treat the iron man like a sprint you will quit and likely die don't throw crazy i'm trying to do that stuff now y'all i love y'all wish i could do it the iron man of christmas love that doesn't quit it's the gift of god to us in jesus it's that love that goes on and on and on and on it doesn't stop and and paul is so amazed by it he's he he likes to he's he's he's he's this thing just keeps going on and on and on even to the point where he says it's an everlasting love i mean it's it verse where was i yeah there it is verse 7 says it endures all things then he said it never ends and then he drops down and starts showing us what will end gifts of the spirit prophecy and that kind of stuff will end the part the little knowledge we do have well all that stuff will be fulfilled gifts won't matter in the kingdom of god when christ comes he's the perfect that will come you don't you don't need faith anymore because you have sight faith hope you can see you're experiencing that which you've trusted him that which you've hoped for is now there in your face he's present he love never ends because god never ends and that love will wrap you will wrap you forever forever and ever and ever that love will be with you into the kingdom a kingdom of pure love true love so where's your hope

where's your joy where's your love is it something that's lasting and strong is it easily offended is it easily give up is your love the kind of love that demands its rights all the time or is your love more like christmas love more like the love of jesus the love he has for you the love that bears all things believes all things hopes all things a love that a love that looks at sinful people like us and will not give up on us will not turn its back on us that's the kind of love god has for us jesus came to reveal that love that that kingdom of love he came to reveal is that love in you you know it's funny when i've had the privilege of watching my wife be pregnant four times thank the lord we've never lost a child thank the lord four times she's been pregnant and um it's funny thing about being pregnant ladies you know better than i do but i'm talking as someone on the outside looking in okay why at some point i don't even know she's pregnant she don't even know she's pregnant but after a while things start to change things start to show up you see what's happening on the inside of her begins to show and you can't hide it she couldn't hide it if she wanted to especially with bethany sandy would tell you we thought she was having twins are you pregnant with god's love we'll know everybody will know because it's going to show up you can't it's going to show you can't hide it you you're going to touch people's lives you're going to care you're going to you're going to serve you're going to you're going to help you're going to come on somebody you don't want to hear any gossip you're not part of that crew you listen no no no you watch what you write online you're not easy passing on that's not no that's not love you you care you when a brother sister's hurting you're there if you know about it you're there if your neighbor is hurting maybe even on your street the one that doesn't like you you know sometimes that love can't help but reach out to that person too are you pregnant this year with the love of Christ may God impregnate this church with the profound beautiful transforming soul enhancing building people building love of Jesus and may we speak the truth to one another always but in love to build up never to tear down to build up and encourage father help us the Corinthians were a mess they were the very opposite of what this passage says [ 42 : 16 ] that's why Paul wrote it to tell them you're not like this father keep us from being like them deliver all of us from this horror fill us with your love love from you that's better than anything in Hallmark better than anything our culture our cynical culture would come up with Lord give us the love of Jesus impregnate us together so that this love transforms not just us but so that all men would know that we are your disciples because of that love may it transform other people outside of our church too we ask we plead with you in Jesus name amen easy amen not even a minute sorry but that the membres of oh here you