

The Greatest Thing in the World

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the paramount importance of love in the Christian life, as articulated in 1 Corinthians 13, over spiritual gifts and knowledge.

Duration: 40:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:6-8

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Simbola emphasizes the importance of God's love in a society driven by power and self-interest. He shares a story of a woman who selflessly gave money to help someone in need, highlighting the impact of God's love in action. The sermon also discusses the rules for private devotions and the importance of edifying the church in public assembly meetings. Pastor Simbola then delves into the famous words of Paul about the supremacy of love, emphasizing the need for patience and kindness in our daily lives. The sermon concludes with a prayer for forgiveness for our lack of love and a desire to be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

If you were to ask somebody what the most famous chapter in the Old Testament was, most people would agree that it's Psalm 23, which begins, the Lord is my what? If you ask Bible students and pastors, what's the most famous chapter in the New Testament, it gets a little harder. Because there are verses that stand out more in the New Testament than there are chapters. But most everyone would agree that the most important chapter probably, or the most famous chapter, some people think you should read it once a month.

Others say at least once a week. And I once heard about a minister who said, I read this every single day, because it is so in another world that it's hard to understand it and to have it register in your life. And that chapter is 1 Corinthians 13.

Does anybody know the name of that chapter, what is usually called the what chapter? The love chapter, very good. What's odd about this chapter, before I just read a few verses, is where it is juxtaposed. It is dropped in in Paul's letter between chapters 12 and chapter 14.

Now Paul wasn't writing chapters, he wrote a letter. When they translated the New Testament from Greek into English, they put chapters. And not originally were there chapters in the first Bibles.

The first Bibles were just words, verses, sentences. But now to find things, they put chapters and verses. But nothing was written with chapters and verses.

1 Corinthians 13 is that middle part between chapter 12 and chapter 14, which is the instruction most specific in the whole Bible about what we call charismata, or the spiritual gifting that God has put in the Christian church. If you were gonna describe the church in Corinth that Paul was writing to, we call the letter 1 Corinthians. In fact, he refers to another letter that he wrote, which we don't have, not part of scripture.

Then he wrote another letter, which we call 2 Corinthians. So he wrote at least three letters. And he spent 18 months in Corinth, which was part of Greece, northern Greece.

And in those 18 months, he gave birth to that church, evangelized, and then stayed to teach the believers. If there was one word to describe that church more than any other church in the New Testament, it probably would be the word gifted. This church was gifted.

Gifted not in talent, but gifted by spiritual gifting. This is the church that Paul said, you come behind in no gift. You're eloquent.

It is in this letter that he says, now God has said in the church, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists. These are callings that God puts on people. Nobody can make someone a pastor.

I was just in South America and met a man who is struggling, who I love, and I've tried to help him. And now I'm facing another reality with the advice of a person who's discerning. This man has been in the ministry almost 30 years, and he has about 14, 18 people in his church.

And the problem probably is that no matter what instruction you give him or what money you pour into it, he's not called to be a pastor. He was sent out by someone and say, you go and pastor and live by faith. And he has, and he's a good man.

But he's probably not called to be a pastor because you can't make someone a pastor. You can't send someone to seminary and make them a pastor or an evangelist. Billy Grahams aren't trained, they're called by God.

They have to be trained and develop and learn by trial and error, but it's a calling. Not everyone who sings well can sing a solo. That's a gifting.

This church was superlative in its gifting. It's in this letter that we hear talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of tongues, glossolalia is the modern word we use, which is speaking in unknown languages inspired by the Holy Spirit, which is very profitable for prayer, but in a public meeting, it must be interpreted so the church can be edified. We learn that in this letter.

There was a lot of tongue speaking in the church in Corinth and interpretations. It's in this book that we learn, this letter, that we learn about prophecy and the fact that it's superior to speaking in tongues because you speak in the language of the people inspired by the Holy Spirit. You become a blessing and you edify fellow believers.

Paul said, I want you to speak in tongues and I want you to know all those gifts, but especially that you can prophesy for those that are given that gift. It's in this book that we learn about the gift of healings, the gift

of miracles, the gift of faith, supernatural faith. It tells us that people can open up their hearts and God can deposit gifts.

It's in this letter that we find out that we're to pursue spiritual gifts. We're not to be dormant and satisfied with what is, but we're to reach out and say, God, whatever you have for me, give it to me. And this church was excelling in these things and was eloquent.

It's in this letter, chapter 12 and chapter 14, that we learn how to monitor, leaders are taught how to monitor meetings and not let things get out of control, emotional, even legitimate speaking in tongues has to be curtailed if it's not gonna be interpreted because if everyone is speaking in an unknown language, Paul says, and someone walks in, they're gonna say, you're crazy, what is this? I don't even understand what you're talking about. So Paul gives rules for private devotions. Yes, you can do one thing, but in a public assembly meeting, there's a different set of rules because everything must be done in this service, hopefully by the grace of God, to build up the people of God, to make us stronger in faith.

The choir should only sing and be anointed by God if they're gonna be a blessing to the people like they were today. Let everything be done to edification. Now, with all this talk about gifting and faith and miracles, Paul drops in, in the middle of that, these famous words which some people think are some of the most beautiful words in the English language, certainly about a very deep subject, and Paul says, starting at the end of chapter 12, and now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal, I'm just making noise. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, in other words, I know this book inside and out, I can understand the deep things of God, but if I don't have love, it's zero, zilch, nada, zero. And if I have a faith that can move mountains, how'd you like to be praying near someone who had the faith that could move mountains and get supernatural answers to prayer? But have not love, I am nothing, and if I give all I possess to the poor, surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing, it's useless.

Love is patient, love is kind. So this is the great love chapter, and Paul is saying something here that we're not used to thinking about. Most of us have come to a place where we know there's a difference between religion and relationship with Jesus Christ.

You can go to Catholic church, Protestant church, come to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, coming in any building and going through any ceremony does not make you a Christian. You have to have a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ, you have to be born again. And the Bible tells us more than that, we know that religious people were the ones, we talked about this a few weeks ago, religious people were the ones who killed Jesus Christ.

They were the ones quoting the Bible. So we found out you can be religious and really twisted, really bent, really mean. Have you ever met a religious person who's meaner than a hornet? Go to church all the time, use the Bible in a mean way.

But now Paul takes us into territory we're not used to thinking about. Because in this letter, Paul says, if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, in other words, granted, I know God is doing something in your church, I understand you're gifting. But if I speak with the tongues and he includes himself, if I, Paul even, or you, speak with the tongue of men and angels, what would be the tongues of men? Probably the tongues that he's speaking about, this ecstasy, this glossolalia, this ability to pray.

He who prays in an unknown tongue, his spirit is praying and he's edified. Or in a meeting, he speaks in a tongue or she speaks and then someone interprets, so the church is edified. He said if you speak in the tongues of men and angels, but you don't have love, it's all for nada, it's for nothing, it's zero.

What would be the tongues of angels? No one's really sure, but some commentators believe that when Paul was lifted up to the third heaven, he said he heard things in heaven and this movement of his body or spirit, I should say, into some heavenly place, he heard things he said that couldn't be uttered, you can't talk about it. Maybe that's the language angels speak. They don't speak English.

They don't speak Spanish. However they communicate, there's some unknown language. Paul said even if you could speak in that language and didn't have love, it's all for nothing.

But he goes further. He's now stopping us and saying it's possible to speak in tongues or in these languages and be eloquent and still have nothing to your credit if you don't have love, but now he goes further. He says and if I understand all mysteries, if I know the book inside and out, if I have discernment from the Holy Spirit so I can understand God's purposes in the earth and even in my own life, if I don't have love, it does me nothing.

It's good for nothing. He goes further and he says if I have faith to move mountains, if I can prophesy, if I can foretell the future, if I can speak a message from God's own heart, if I have the ability to lay hands on a person and see them get well, he said but if I don't have love, it all amounts to zero because anything without love is missing who God is and this is where this is very difficult to comprehend. You can not just go to church, you can understand spiritual things and faith and even move under what we would call an anointing of the Holy Spirit and still be lacking in love in your everyday life and he said the love is more important than the gifting because God is love.

See, God has power, God has knowledge, he knows everything but God doesn't have love, God is love. The nature of God is love. It's possible to go to church and even go on missionary trips and not have love and make sacrifices of money and not have love.

It's possible to preach from this pulpit like I am now and preach the Bible and even be a blessing to people and not have love. It's possible to be eloquent. It's possible to sing in the choir or play one of the instruments well and help the church and not have love.

This is the picture that Paul's giving us that makes us stop and think. When he says the word love, he coins a new word that's unknown up until that point in the Greek language to describe who God is and this divine love which has nothing to do with love that you and I know. I'm not talking about something earthly now.

I'm not talking about something in your heart like listen, when the meeting's over, go out and let's love more. That's not even close. He's talking about another kind of love.

So he uses a word that in classical Greek had never been used before in this way. The word agape, that's the word for God's love that's used most often in the New Testament and in 1 Corinthians 13. The common word for love 2,000 years ago in Paul's culture was a word that had become so debased he wouldn't use it about God's love.

The word eros, where we get the word erotic. It was sensual love. It had been demeaned down to sensuality and lust.

It really denoted also romantic love. When a man falls into love with a woman, he has eros. But it had been debased into just lust and sexual connotations only.

There was another word for love, but that was more the love of friends, not a universal word for love that you had for all people like God so loved the world. This was the love you have for your family, your friends. But people outside that circle, you didn't have that phileo love, brotherly love.

So he coins a new word to describe who God is. And he's saying this is what counts most of all. And if you're gonna be a billboard for Jesus Christ, when Christ went back to heaven and left us here on earth, one of his prayers was, Father, I pray that they might love one another even as I have loved them.

And that you would make them one in love. And they would show the world what I'm like by their love. By this shall all men know that you're my disciples because you love one another, not because you carry Bibles and because you speak in tongues or you prophesy or you're an Arminian or you're a Calvinist or you're assemblies of God or Baptist.

The world's gonna know nothing from all of that. But the world will know what Christianity's really like when we talk about the essence of who Jesus is, love, love. So you can do all these other things and have all these other things and be bankrupt spiritually.

In fact, you can give God a bad name by reading the Bible, preaching the Bible, going to church, talking about morality and the 10 commandments, but you're meaner than a hornet. And that makes the whole world step back. Christianity, in my judgment, is in decline in America, partly it's got a lot to do with pastors and how they preach and what they preach, but it has a lot to do with the fact that the world looks on at people who call themselves Christians and say, what's up with that? What's up with that? They're just as nasty as me.

They're just as prejudiced as me. What are you talking about Jesus and God and all this stuff? You're grouchy, you're in a mood, you blow up. That's what Jesus is about? I pass.

Don't you think that's part of the problem? In other words, we're the only billboards God has. If we're unloving, imagine we're trying to tell people God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son and we don't have love. That's a hard sell.

And blacks don't love the whites and whites don't love the blacks and Hispanics don't care for either and Koreans don't wanna know about anything and on and on it goes. In fact, this was the problem in the church. Now here's another one to blow your mind.

This is the church that had all this gifting and scripture knowledge and revelation, understanding of the things of God and Paul says they're carnal. In the same letter, he says, are you not carnal? Because here's what I've heard a rumor about what's going on at the church, which I started. He says, you know what I've heard? Some of you are gathered around my name, you're of Paul.

Another of you like Peter the best, Peter. Another of you are around Apollos, who is a great orator. So some say I'm a Paul, some Apollos, Cephas or Peter.

Since when did any of them die for you? You're divided, you're carnal. You don't have love. No, but we understand mysteries and we have great oratory from the Pope, but yeah, but you're nowheresville because God is love and without love, nothing profits anything.

Some say I'm Baptist, Presbyterian, Korean, black, white, American, Trinidadian, charismatic, evangelical, divides the body of Christ. Everyone meeting separately, no one cares about each other. You just tell somebody a good report about someone else, another race or another church, and they look at you like, why are you telling me this? I don't care, they're not our group.

And that's happened to me a thousand times. Don't tell me it's not true. I visit some church in Uruguay.

I was just in an Armenian church. And if I tell somebody from an American denomination, oh, God is doing something wonderful in Montevideo in this church, they'll go, what are you telling me for? Well, I'm not interested. Praise God, I'm a Nazarene, I'm a Methodist, I'm whatever.

What are you telling me? I'm not interested. It's not my race, not my country, what do I care? Then we're representing Jesus Christ who prayed, Father, that they might be one even as we are one. So now we got a real revelation.

You can be biblical and spiritual in a way and be zero at the same time. Now that blows everybody's batteries. Just like, what? And Paul says, yeah.

You can speak in the tongues of men and angels, you can understand all mysteries and all that. And if you have love, it's zero, zilch, nada. Now, Paul is telling us here that the only sign of maturity in a church is love.

Not what your calling is or what gifting you have from God because that would be unfair. Not everyone's prophesied, not everyone interprets a message in tongues, not everybody can sing, not everyone's called to be a pastor, not everyone can teach the Bible, not everyone could do that. Well then, whoever's not called, you're left out.

No, that has nothing to do with maturity. The best Christian in this building, I can tell you right now, the greatest Christian in this building is the person who loves the most, who has the most agape love, the one who resembles Jesus the most. That's the best Christian.

They might only know 10 verses memorized or five verses. It doesn't go like that. And I've been jealous of people that I've seen in our church in a godly way because I see they have more love than I have.

So the pastor's not the big cheese here. I don't know about any other church. But everything is measured by love, not Bible verses or how long you've been going to church and I've been faithful in my ministry.

Those are all good things, but it's all about love. Listen, we've all dealt with people, wait. We've all dealt with people who know the Bible well and they can be mean.

When I was growing up, there used to be a lady, she always dressed in black, who came to the church that my late father-in-law pastored. Always sat by herself, never talked to anyone. She wore all black, black stockings, black shoes.

Little Italian lady, didn't talk to a soul. Never smiled, never saw her one smile. If she ever smiled, her face would probably just all come apart because it had never gone in that thing.

And she used to pray and sometimes even give some kind of lead out in prayer or utterance in the meetings, I was little. I just used to watch her because she would come in and then leave, come in and then leave. So one time, I was what, 10 years old, 11 years old, I'm trying to figure this stuff all out, 12

years old.

I said to someone, what's with that lady? She never talks to anyone, has no friends, sits by herself, never smiles and then leaves. And they went, oh, her, she lives close to God. I thought, if that's what you turn into, living close to God, my goodness.

I don't want to get close to that at all, right? Come on, how many know what I'm talking about? There are people who have this outward facade because they go to church and they know some stuff. But that's not where it's at. Paul never then, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he never defines what love is.

Never says once what love is. Because it's indefinable. God's essence is love.

He just starts to give a long list, and I'm only touching on two, of how love is seen and how you know where love is. The attributes of love, the characteristics of love. And the first thing he says is love, God's love, not your love, not my love.

Oh, we're going into very deep water now. You're gonna know this has nothing to do with you and me. Love is patient.

Love doesn't hold grudges. Love doesn't blow up and get angry. Love doesn't punch back when it's punched.

Love suffers long. Literally, the King James has it, suffers long. Love endures stuff.

And I know that is what God is because that's the only reason anybody's in the building here today, is because God is patient. Remember all the stuff that you've done wrong? Look at me, everybody. Wake up, look at me.

Imagine all the stuff that you've done wrong. And then you promised God, and you told him you wouldn't do it again. And then you did it again.

But then you really cried and said, now I'll never do that again. And then you did it again. And then you gossiped, and you got convicted, and you said, I can't gossip anymore.

Then you gossiped worse than you gossiped before you prayed. Verdad, no verdad? True or not? And what did God do? Did he get sick and tired of you? No, did he destroy you? No, I know he didn't destroy you, you're looking at me. And I'm here.

What did he do? He suffers long. Someone defined it this way. This word of patient, love is patient.

This word means that when people in their ignorance, in their meanness, and in their maliciousness, crush us, that we don't react with anger and resentment. That's not in me. That's not in me.

If it's in you, God bless you. But I know it's not in you. It's not in me.

Because somebody does me wrong, I will remember that. I will remember that. And if I don't react, you slap me, I'll slap you right back, right? No, but pastor, you're a pastor.

I said I'll slap you back anyway, even though I'm a pastor. That's who I am. And don't laugh at me, because you're the same way.

Laugh at yourself, you're the same way. That's not in us. Am I correct? No, if someone's nice to me, I can be nice to them.

But somebody out of ignorance, and meanness, and maliciousness, crush and hurt me, or someone I love, but that's what God has done for us. That's why Paul says without that, you're not acting like God. And you can do it every day, and you don't have to be the pastor.

If you live in New York, you can do it 100 times a day. Be patient. Now this word, there's two words for patience in the New Testament.

One is patient with circumstances. The bottom falls out. They lose your luggage on a trip.

Whatever happens, you don't go crazy. That word is never used of God, because circumstances don't affect God. But this other word is not only used of God, it's one of the descriptions of who God is in the Old Testament.

For I am the Lord thy God. Long-suffering, patient. Oh my goodness, has God been patient with me.

I don't know about you. You don't have to say amen. I'll say amen for all of you.

God has been patient with me. Because with all the light that I have, growing up in a Christian home, and all the mistakes I've made, all the things I've done wrong, said wrong, thought wrong. All the things I was so sure of, and I was just full of hot air.

And God, instead of just saying, I am blowing you up, I can't take it anymore. No, he's long-suffering. And that makes it amazing that you and I can call ourselves Christians, and blow up at other people, and resent them, and remember what they did wrong, after God has just shown us decades of patience.

That's crazy. I'm gonna remember what you did wrong to me, while God has forgiven and forgotten 10,000 million billion things. I can't take it.

See, this word patience is only used of people. When God is called long-suffering, he's long-suffering with people, not with circumstances. We have two words for patience.

The one, don't blow up, keep under, is literally what it means. Keep under when things are going wrong. But this is with people.

Like a lady, you know, I'm here to greet people after the service, after praying for people, and a lady is visiting from another country, and she says, may I take a picture with you? I said yes. So I have someone take the picture, she had someone take the picture, I took the picture. She said, one more picture.

I said, okay, there's other people that I'd like to greet. No, just one more, okay, I take the picture. Thank you, ma'am.

So I go to talk to this person, and suddenly I feel her hand on my neck pulling me toward her, and she's going, I need one more picture. And I said, I'm talking to someone, and meanwhile, she's got me in a headlock, and I take the picture, and then I go back to these people, I'm sorry, not even 20 seconds later, she's grabbing me. My son, he wants a picture with you, take a picture with my son.

Oh! Come on, come on, has it ever happened to you? Come on, how many have ever had someone drive you totally nuts? Come on, totally nuts, lift your hand. Boy, if you don't raise your hand, I wanna know where you live. And here, I just had a meeting, but I could feel that like, lady, you are rude, you are unkind, you're out of your mind.

But love is patient, because how many times have we been up in God's grill, and face, and nasty, and unthankful. When I think of my life, the times I didn't thank God, and when he was blessing me, never gave it a thought, and instead of just saying, that's enough with you, that's, it's over for you, no. He's long-suffering, is that why we're all here today? Can we all agree on that, put our hands together? God is patient.

So when God's love is possessing me, and working in me, it will make me patient. Anger and resentment means God's love is not controlling me. How goes it with you today? It's one thing to sing, and go with the choir, and sway, and all of that, it's another thing to ride the number three train, and have some obnoxious person up, doing something, saying something.

And not to not react, gritting your teeth, that's not patience. No, patience is when they spit at him, and they cursed him, and they mocked him, and they drove a spear in his side, and they laughed at him. You know, what's hard is to be mocked, and they mocked Jesus.

Yo, if you're a prophet, why don't you just tell us who slapped you, when they had him blindfolded. And if you're so great, why don't you come down from that tree, and show us, and then we'll all believe. That's a lot to take, and you know what he did? He said, Father, forgive them.

Now, that is patience. What do you think? The first characteristic God gives us of the love that will characterize our maturity, and us being a good witness for him, is patience. An impatient Christian is a contradiction, it's an oxymoron, it can't exist, because Jesus is so patient.

Come on, how many have found him very patient with you? Come on, just lift your hand gently. Has he been patient with you? Well then, what we need to do, do not get psyched up that you're gonna love now, and you're gonna be patient. That is an exercise in futility.

I'm no more gonna be that kind of patient than I could jump over the moon. So, let's give it a rest, and just say, oh God, fill me with your love. Live through me, so that people might know that you're alive.

By the way, one of the best illustrations I've heard of that is about Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln has been voted by, in all polls, as the greatest president we ever had. And Abraham Lincoln came from very poor backgrounds in the Midwest, born in Kentucky, raised a little bit in Indiana, but ended up in Illinois, where he became a politician.

And he was a very homely-looking man, very, very strong. Nobody ever out-wrestled him when he was growing up. Long, wiry, but he had extra-long arms that didn't seem to belong to his body, and they kinda hung like this, and he looked very awkward.

Well, when he began to run for serious office, like the presidents, see, there was a politician, I believe from Ohio, named Stanton, and Mr. Stanton would say the most incredibly unkind things to him, about him. You know how they throw stuff at one another. Like in this next election, let's say it's Mr. Romney against President Obama.

It is what it is. Mr. Obama's gonna try to make Mr. Romney look like less than a human being, and Mr. Romney's gonna make the president look like less than a human being. That's the way it is.

That's the way the game is played. It's the law of the jungle. No one can say in politics, this is a good man.

I just disagree, so let's debate the thing. No, you gotta bury the guy. You gotta bury the guy.

He called Abraham Lincoln a fool, a buffoon, an idiot, backwards person who could never operate in the presidency of the United States, and then he went further, and he named a famous hunter of that day, mid-1850s, and he said, I don't know why this famous hunter is in Africa trying to shoot a gorilla. He could just go to Illinois and shoot Mr. Lincoln, and he could get his ape because of the way his arms hung. Lincoln became president, and he had to fill his cabinet, and he knew that one man would make the best secretary of state or secretary of defense.

He knew who the best person was. It was Stanton, the man who called him that, so he named him to his cabinet. Well, Stanton didn't know what to do.

He knew Lincoln knew what he had called him and all of that. But Lincoln said, no, for the good of the country, you're gonna go. You serve with me.

You be in there. And when Lincoln got shot in April, 1865, Ford Theater, Washington, D.C., when he was shot, and they carried him across the street to that little boarding house, and they lay him on that bed. He was so big that they had to lay him sideways, and he was bleeding to death, and his life was gone.

They called Stanton in the room, and Stanton broke down because he saw this man who had given his life for the country, and he said, that's the greatest leader who ever ruled on the planet of Earth. Why? Because what broke him was he knew how nasty I was, and he never got back at me. Now, see, that's God.

Why do we love God today so much? Because instead of getting back at us, he loved us even more. Where sin abounds, grace even more abounds. Let's give God just a hand clap of praise.

In the passive way, love is patient. In the aggressive way, love is kind. Love is kind.

What God wants to make all of us is kind. Love is always doing something useful, saying something good for the person that it loves. Love is never remembering, like, what I want, what I need from you.

Love is always saying, oh, I love, like, baby Levi. My grandson was just up in my office. I'm not thinking of one thing baby Levi could do for me.

He's two years, three months. I'm thinking of only one thing. Levi, here, take this.

Levi, let's walk over here. Let's look at my fireplace. Let's look at that.

Let's look at this. Ring my little bell that's on my desk. It's all about Levi.

Why? Because I love him. I only want to do things that would help him and build him up. That's the way love is.

God's love, whenever he works with us, he's not looking to destroy us. He's looking to build us up and be helpful and bring blessings to us. This is what separates us from animals.

Animals are not kind. Animals don't know mercy. Animals are not trying to give the other guy a helping hand.

When a lion is chasing some buffalo and the buffalo hits a hole and pulls up with a broken leg and all of that, the lion doesn't slow down and go, yo, you're hurt. Man, that looks bad. There's a hospital about two miles away from here.

I'm gonna bring you to that hospital. They can work on your leg. I'm not gonna eat you because it's not fair.

You got a bad leg. You know, I've had bad days myself when I was, no. Animals only know one thing, you kill.

And if someone shows weakness, you kill faster. That's the law of our society. Under all the pretense and the media covering, it's all about dog eat dog, power and perks.

But God's love is patient and God's love is kind. You know, today you can say something kind to someone. Forget yourself for a half hour.

Just think, what could I do that's kind? A woman came to me today. She'll have her reward at the end of the service. She says, you know, God's blessed me.

I'm working now, but I was without a job. So Pastor Cymbala, would you do me a favor? And she brought out an envelope. She said, here's \$100, two \$50 bills.

Do you know someone who's out of work? I said, yeah. She said, give it to someone who's out of work. Now, who would do that except God's love? What else would do? What else would prompt you to do that but God's love? But that's the way love is.

Love is patient and love is kind. Love is always looking to say kind things. You can even say true things that are unkind.

I shared it with the church. I heard say to another person, this person was fragile, person was hurting, had kind of broken down, their nerves, they were crying, they were not together. They were going through a hard time.

And this other person said, hey, what's wrong with you? God is on the throne. God's always helped me. I don't know what your problem is.

Well, is part of that true? Yeah, God is on the throne. God has helped that person. Is that kind? I haven't seen you in three years.

You got fat. Could it be true? Is it kind? See, love is always measuring everything by is this kind? Will this help the person? If we're gonna be a church that God is happy with, if we're gonna be Christians that God is pleased with, if we're gonna grow and mature, we can only grow in one thing, love. I'm not as patient as I need to be.

How about you? No amens? I'm not as kind as I need to be. If you get angry and you're not kind, it's very hard to represent Jesus Christ and talk about him. Like that roommate I had back in prep school, we would debate about religion.

He was an agnostic, an atheist. I was on the top bunk, he was on the bottom. And we were talking at night at one o'clock in the morning back and forth, and I'm trying to witness, but he's stubborn.

And he gets so mad at me for something I said that he got up in the dark in my little room there in that prep school in Silver Spring, Maryland. I was there to play basketball. I don't know why I was arguing with him.

And he took the Bible on the desk that my mother had given me, a big old Bible. I didn't read it much, but it was a Bible. And he took it and he got so mad, he threw it against the wall, and the Bible came apart.

And he cursed me on top of that. And I came down off the top of that bed, and I beat the living daylight out of him. But all in the name of the Lord, I didn't do anything like nasty.

It was a sanctified beating that I gave him. And literally, as God is my witness, I hit him, and the adrenaline was such, and he got afraid of me. The adrenaline was such that I punched him until I couldn't hit him anymore.

Blood coming all over the place. Just kept pounding him. You beat my Bible? In the name of the Lord, you take that here, right? The next day, he was all discombobulated.

Cuts, bruises, bleeding, and he lied for me, or else I would've got kicked out of that school, because he said he fell down a flight of stairs. I never could talk to him about Jesus again. Because after you give someone a beat down, you can't be quoting verses.

Am I right or wrong? What I didn't know then is more powerful than arguments, or prophecy, or tongues, or healing, is love. Today, we can be patient with someone. If you live in New York, you're gonna have 100 chances a day.

How many find every day a chance to learn to be patient? Yeah, turn the other cheek, just chill. Let it go. You have 100 chances today to be kind.

In fact, you're gonna be kind to someone right now in the next 60 seconds. Let's bow our heads. Lord Jesus, I thank you for your word today, and I ask you to forgive us for our lack of love.

Love is the more excellent way. I ask you to forgive us for being short-tempered. We get riled up, we get angry, we get resentful, and yet, that's not what you did to us.

That's not the way you've been to us. You've been so patient, so long-suffering. We ask you to forgive us.

We don't wanna be Christians in name, we wanna be Christians in spirit. We wanna be filled with love. Yes, give us the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, give us miracles and faith and understanding of your word, but above all things, Lord, fill us with love. Break down all racial barriers, all this nonsense about denominations, all this cultural stuff, tear it down. Tear it down, Lord, in the name of Christ, tear it down by a baptism of love that will help us leap over the wall.

Forgive us for saying unkind things, doing unkind things. Forgive me, Lord, for wasting opportunities where I could have been kind, but I was so into myself, I didn't even realize what the person needed, didn't even give it a thought. Forgive us.

Help us to be like Jesus who went about doing good. Today, we can do good to someone. We can say something, we can pray, we can call, we can treat to lunch, we can do something that's good for the other person, but this love that I need, God, does not come from me.

It's just like your peace that's supernatural, it's just like your joy that's supernatural. We ask you to fill us with your love. Take away grumpiness.

Take away sourness. Take away fake religion and make us like Jesus Christ, who was a friend of sinners, who was so patient, so kind. Lord, as we leave today, I just pray you'll go with us, your face will shine upon us, and that even now, in this next few seconds, you'll give us an opportunity to say something kind to someone or hug somebody.

No one knows the battles anyone's fighting. God, make us sensitive, the sensitivity of love. This we ask in Jesus' name.

And everyone said. Amen.

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