

# The LOVE Test

## “Love Never Fails”

### Part 7

## Scripture Reading

*“And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (1 Corinthians 12:31)*

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. 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. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.”*

***“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”***

## Prayer of Blessing

### Introduction

Today, on this most glorious Resurrection Sunday, we come to the final section of The LOVE Test. We’ve been climbing a mountain. Today is “summit” day.

For the last seven weeks, we have been examining God’s definition of love and His call on our lives as Christ-followers to love Him and others.

This love the Apostle Paul is defining for the Corinthians, as well as us, isn’t ordinary, self-seeking, worldly, lustful love. The Corinthians, just like you and me, had mastered that kind of love. Paul wanted to show the Corinthians a more excellent way.

The love Paul describes is radical. It’s counter-cultural. It’s supernatural. It’s a love that suffers long toward people. It’s a love that’s humble and meek. It’s a love that puts the needs of others before our own needs. It’s a love that refuses to seek revenge and vindication, even when we’re right. It’s a love that is joyful, not irritable. It’s a love that refuses to keep score. It’s a love that rejoices in truth. This is how we are supposed to love each other.

Put simply, this love Paul is commanding us to live-out is nothing other than God-love. It’s the way which God has loved you and me.

- God’s love isn’t short-tempered. No! His love suffers long toward us.

- God's love isn't irritable. No! It's patient and kind toward us.
- God's love isn't selfish and self-centered. No! His love is selfless and sacrificial toward to us.
- God's love doesn't keep score of our sin. No! His loves forgives and forgets our sin and failures.
- God's love does not rejoice over failures. No! God rejoices in the truth and longs for us to succeed for His glory. God doesn't bask in our sin; our sin breaks His heart.

The Apostle John wrote...

*"For God so LOVED the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)*

Agape love is the compassionate, pursuing love that sent Jesus to infiltrate a wicked and depraved world. It's the unimaginable love of a Father nailing His Son to a Roman cross for depraved and sinful people like you and me. It's the selfless and submissive love of a Son freely choosing to give up His life for you and me. And...it's the all-powerful love that resurrected Jesus from the dead – a love that refused to allow sin and death to reign victorious over you and me.

## **Transition**

There are glorious prophecies, challenging truths, and Gospel accounts that promise us, challenge us, and introduce us to God's love displayed thru Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected.

Yet, of all these verses, none provide a more succinct and powerful summary of Easter than 1 Corinthians 13:7-8. In fact, many commentators often point out that 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 seem to best capture the life and ministry of Jesus.

In verse seven, we see the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. What we see is God's love manifested in the Cross.

In verse eight, we see the future. What we see is God's love manifested in the Resurrection.

Let's look at verse seven more closely. As we do, I want you to look at it thru the lens of Jesus Christ – His life...His ministry...His death.

The Apostle Paul writes...

***"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."***

## Love bears all things..."

**Have you ever considered what Jesus bore for us on the Cross?** Make no mistake about it; Jesus bore much for you and me.

Some seven hundred years prior to the birth of Jesus Christ, a prophet named Isaiah prophesied about a coming Savior. Here's what God said thru Isaiah...

*"He was despised and rejected by men; **a man of sorrows**, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely his has **borne our griefs** and **carried our sorrows**; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; **upon him was the chastisement** that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all**. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:3-7)*

In 1 Peter 2:21-25, the Apostle Peter, an eyewitness to the ministry and death of Jesus Christ, wrote...

*"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself **bore our sins** in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."*

Did you hear what Isaiah and Peter said Jesus bore on our behalf? Jesus bore our grief and sorrows. Jesus bore our sins, our iniquities, and our transgressions. Jesus bore God's chastisement and punishment for our rebellion and sin.

I want to ask you a question. **What is the most regretful, heartbreaking, sinful, shameful thing you've ever done in your life?** It's that one thing that, if given the chance, you'd go back and do over again.

Can you see it? Do you remember it? Can you feel the pain, sorrow, grief, regret, and guilt associated with that sin and failure? It may be a moral compromise when you were a teenager. It may be an adulterous relationship in your marriage. It may be a pornographic addiction. It may be an ethical compromise at work. It may be cheating on your taxes. It may be a drunk-driving accident that injured or killed someone.

Whatever it is, here's the glorious truth of the Cross – Jesus bore that specific sin and all the grief, sorrow, pain, guilt, and punishment on the Cross so that you could experience forgiveness of sin and freedom from guilt.

Do you know what this verb "bears" literally means? It literally means, **"to cover over something."**

The Cross of Christ is the greatest “cover-up” of all time.

Have you ever tried to cover something up so that another person couldn't see it? The word picture here is taking a blanket and covering something so another can't see it. It's an attempt to conceal and hide from the sightline of another person.

That's what Jesus did for you and me on the Cross. Jesus bore our sins on the Cross and His sinless blood covers those sins – every single one of them - from the holy and just gaze of God.

Isn't that just an extraordinary promise and truth? WOW!

By grace thru faith in Jesus, the love of Christ covers over your sin - no matter how heinous, no matter how embarrassing, and no matter how shameful it was or still is.

This is the most excellent way!

### **“Love endures all things...”**

Now...let me ask you another important question. **Have you ever pondered on what Jesus endured for us on the Cross?** Make no mistake about it; Jesus endured much for you and me.

Do you know what this verb “endures” literally means?

Endure is a military term used to describe an army's refusal to give up its strategic position – regardless of the cost. It means to refuse to surrender, even if it costs you your life. It means to persevere in the face of pain, torture, deprivation, hatred, loss, loneliness, and death.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Bible says...

*“So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of the this man's blood; see to it yourselves.’ And all the people answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having **scourged** Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.”*

*“And they **stripped** him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before Him, they **mocked** him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to **crucify** Him.” (Matt. 27:24-31)*

In the Gospel of Luke, the Bible says...

*"Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were **mocking** Him as they **beat** Him. They also blindfolded Him and kept asking Him, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?' And they said many other things against Him, **blaspheming** Him." (Luke 22:63-65)*

In the book of Hebrews, the Bible says...

*"...look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, **endured the cross**, despising the **shame**, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such **hostility** against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted." (Hebrews 12:2-3)*

It's hard to grasp someone enduring what Jesus endured, isn't it? Think about for a minute. The love of God was so great for us that Jesus endured the unimaginable.

Jesus endured rejection and abandonment by His own people and His very best friends. Jesus endured false accusations. Jesus endured the betrayal and cursing of one of His dearest friends, Peter. Jesus endured the mockery and blasphemy of the Roman guards. Jesus was stripped naked and endured public humiliation. Jesus endured the horror of the Roman scourging. Jesus endured a crown of thorns embedded in his scalp. And...Jesus endured the torture of the Roman of the cross.

That's what Jesus endured for you and me.

Jesus had perfect knowledge of every sin we'd commit in this life. Before Jesus ever took on flesh and became human, He saw our rebellion, our lust, our greed, our materialism, our selfishness, our pride, and our immorality. What Jesus saw was our total depravity. And...with full knowledge of this depravity, He came and endured so that you and I might receive salvation and enjoy an extraordinary life in Him.

Isn't that just an extraordinary promise and truth?

It was because of love that Jesus bore all your sins. It was the love of Jesus that believed in God's salvation plan. It was the love of Jesus that hoped that you would embrace His cross and surrender to His lordship. It was the love of Jesus that endured the unimaginable.

Verse seven is the love of Jesus exemplified in the Cross.

### **"Love Never Fails!"**

But...guess what?

God love did not stop at the cross. God's love did not end with the death of His Son Jesus. The light of God's love was not overcome by the darkness of Friday. God's love could not be suppressed by sin. God's love could not be thwarted by the evil plotting of Satan – no matter how hard he tried. God's love could not be defeated by the sting of death. God's love could not be contained by the hopelessness and despair of the grave.

God's love DID NOT fail!

The radiance of God's love overcame the darkness of Friday. The supremacy of God's love overcame the evil plotting of Satan. The holiness of God's love overcame the sting of death. And...the glory of God's love overcame the despair of the grave.

### **God's love RESURRECTED His Son!**

The Bible says...

*"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins....But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by one man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:20-22, 54-57)*

Jesus told His disciples...

*"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)*

The Apostle Paul wrote...

*"If God is for us, who can be against us? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, **who was raised** – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the **LOVE** of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the **LOVE** of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39)*

### **What does this mean for us?**

So...what does this mean for you and me?

It means we have **HOPE**. Prior to God's supernatural display of love thru the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, we had no hope.

We were destitute. We were depraved. We were slaves to sin and unrighteousness. We were shackled by death. We were children of wrath, doomed for eternal separation from God. We were dead in our trespasses. We were burdened by guilt and shame. We were objects of God's chastisement. Our lives were full of sorrow, grief, and shame.

Because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are none of these things any more. The sacrifice of the Cross and the victory of the Resurrection have radically changed everything.

By God's grace, and thru our faith alone in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ...

- We are no longer lost – we have been found.
- We are no longer depraved – we have been made holy.
- We are no longer slaves to sin – we are slaves to Christ and His righteousness.
- We are no longer orphans without a home – we are God's adopted children.
- We are no longer destined for Hell's fury – we have been guaranteed Heaven's glory and riches.
- We are no longer burdened by a guilty past – we have been made new creations and old things have passed away.

We are overcomers! We are more than conquerors! We are co-heirs with Christ!

No matter how challenging things get on this earth. No matter how deep our economy sinks into recession. No matter how many jobs are lost. No matter how high unemployment skyrockets. No matter how many homes are lost to foreclosure. We do not – we must not – despair.

The cross and resurrection of Christ do not promise us easy lives. No! The cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ promise us victorious lives.

Because of the cross and resurrection of Christ, we can face even the greatest of challenges – a broken marriage, a lost job, an empty retirement account, a rebellious child, or a dying parent – with the hope that we will, thru Christ Jesus, overcome.

How did all this happen? **LOVE!**

It happened thru the amazing, unconditional, supernatural, glorious love of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are conquerors because of God's love. We have great hope because of God's love.

It is with this love that we are commanded to love each other. Here's the final two questions of our love test:

- 1. Is your love for others bearing all things, believing and hoping in the right things, and enduring all things?**
- 2. Is your love failing or persevering?**

### **“The Gospel”**

If you are a Christian here today – you have an enduring hope and guaranteed victory thru the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

If you are here today and you've not experienced that hope and victory of the cross and resurrection, you can have this hope and victory I just described.

Jesus said...

*"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*  
(John 11:25-26)

The Bible also says...

*"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9)

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and trust in your heart that He is the crucified and resurrected Savior, then God promises to save you from your sins, cleanse you of your unrighteousness, remove the burden of sinful guilt, and give you an extraordinary, new life that has purpose, significance, and victory.

God loved you so much that He nailed His Son to cross for your sins. God loved you so much that He resurrected His Son from the grave. He longs to know you, save you, forgive you, heal you, restore you, and empower you with His love.

The Bible says...

*"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends."*  
(John 15:13)

Jesus laid down His life for you. Will you embrace the cross of Christ and all He bore and endured for you?

God resurrected Jesus from the dead. Will you believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead? Will you surrender your life to the lordship of Jesus and be saved?

This is the most excellent way!