

# Love Endures and Never Fails

*The Characteristics of Love*

By Dustin Folden

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-4

**Preached On:** Sunday, July 6, 2014

## **Faith Church**

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

At the end of April, the beginning of May, we started this series entitled “The Characteristics of Love” or as some have called it “The Most Convicting Ten Weeks of My Life.” We've all learned a lot. Let's do a little bit of a recap and a review, if you will. Love is patient or it has a long fuse. Love is kind and not jealous. You learned a new word with Pastor Aucoin, “kinding” the verb form of kind and it's based on doing good, based on God's faithful covenantal love. Love does not act unbecomingly, it's not rude. That was the famous nailed-it sermon, remember that one? We sometimes think about love and think that we've nailed it but there is so much room to grow when we analyze it biblically. I remember a quote from that sermon that says, “I love me and I want you.” Love doesn't act shameful in that way. Love does not brag, it is not arrogant. Love just doesn't talk about yourself all the time and the more challenging thing is love doesn't think about yourself all the time. We often do that. Do you remember the line from that sermon, “There's you and then there's me.” Remember that? And we say that and we think that and sometimes we even actually say that. Love does not seek its own. Jesus came to serve, not to be served. That's the core of love, serving others. Love does not rejoice in iniquity but in truth. Remember the contrast between Moses and Aaron and what they rejoiced in and the focus on the truth? How about love is not easily provoked or takes into account a wrong suffered and you saw the prodigal son's brother versus his father and just being provoked and just holding an account against all the wrong somebody else has done against you. Love bears all things. Love is a roof that protects others rather than exposing them to ridicule. Love believes all things. Love chooses to think the best about a person; it doesn't assume the worst. And love hopes all things. Love refuses to take God out of the equation so that there is always hope because God is at work.

You know, one of the ways that I want to encourage you to make the most out of this series is maybe pick one of the characteristics of love that you struggle with the most, perhaps go online and find that sermon and watch it again with a note pad and just take notes of, “How can I apply this to my life? How can I change my thinking each day in this area? How can I pray for God to help me grow in this area? And how does God want me to live out this characteristic of love in my daily life?” I think you'll do well to stick with what you've learned in the series and then connect it to our annual theme, “Loving Our Neighbors.” What about that area that I'm struggling with that I want to grow in, is

there anything stopping me from moving towards my neighbors and loving them? How can I personify some of these characteristics of love and just love my neighbors? Make that connection to the glory of God.

Now, today, we're going to softly land the plane in this series and talk about love endures and never fails. When you think about the word "endurance" I think there is a natural and visceral reaction to that word. I think at the core of our being we don't like that word. We don't like to endure. We love to stop. We have a built-in desire to stop doing things that are hard. One of the best examples in my life that I look back to to illustrate this is lifeguard training. I was 15-16 when I took the lifeguard test to be able to work in a local pool back in North Dakota as a lifeguard. Now, no jokes about lifeguarding and ice fishing and someone told me, "Lifeguarding is really easy because nobody can get to the water because of the ice," and that's not true. We have a full four weeks of summer. But back then in lifeguard training there was something called a brick test. You had to retrieve a 10 lb rubber brick from the 12 foot pool and swim with it 20 yards holding onto it with both hands. Then you had to hold said brick, the rubber 10 lb brick, over your head, treading water for 2 minutes. All the time you're thinking, "How many more seconds do I have? When can I put this down? How close is the edge?" Then your mind begins to stray to a bit more frustrated thoughts, "Who invented this brick test? And if he were having trouble, would I want to even help him if I passed this said brick test?" All you're thinking is, "How many more seconds? When can I stop?" If you passed this written test and the brick test and the swim test, you can now be a professional lifeguard so I can say with confidence that I can save you as long as it only takes about 2 minutes and there's only about 20 yards to go. Does everybody feel safer now? I do as well.

We've all experienced things that we just want to stop doing, don't we? It's just hard. I just want to be done. Think about the words that we so often use: how much longer; are we there yet?; how many more do we have left? We love to stop. We love to be done doing things that are hard. We have a built-in desire to stop doing things that are hard and as we see in the biblical text, love does exactly the opposite. No matter how long, no matter what obstacles, love endures. As we think back on the characteristics of love that we've studied, now we need to think about them from the standpoint of endurance because love endures, it doesn't fail. It's one of its characteristics and it summarizes all that has come before it. All those aspects of love and now we need to think about it enduring in those areas.

So now, think about the idea that love endures and never fails as we read again 1 Corinthians 13. So if you will, please turn to 1 Corinthians 13, page 137 in the back section of your Bible in the chair underneath you. Just let your mind be thinking about the word "endurance" as we read through this chapter.

"1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my

body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

With our remaining time together, let's study “love endures and never fails” by looking at the meaning of endurance. What does it mean biblically? How is it used? Then we're going to look at the challenges of this, why is it so difficult? And then the hope, the encouragement, the motivation for endurance to keep going.

So let's start with the meaning of endurance. Let's start with a definition of the word that is used, endurance, perseverance and steadfastness. The definition: to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition; to stand one's ground; to hold out or endure. Think, if you will, in your mind of a military stronghold that is strategic to the mission of that area and that point needs to be held at all costs. The idea of endurance is that no matter what, we will hold this ground because it's so important to the mission even though there's opposition coming.

Just think about the way that Paul uses it. Let's look at a few examples of how Paul uses this word. A great example is in 2 Timothy 2:10 when he says, “For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.” Notice, he says “all things.” We're going to come back to this verse at the end and see some of the encouragement. But notice he says “all things” just like we saw in 1 Corinthians 13 and if you look at the context around what he says in 2 Timothy, you think of what are the “all things” that he starts to point out. Earlier on in verse 3, he says, “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus,” and then he talks about competing as an athlete and being a hard-working farmer and finally, the hardships that are associated with being imprisoned as a criminal because he is preaching the gospel and he's talking about endure, given all things and those are some of the things he's experiencing as he says to endure and why he endures. Endurance means there is difficulty, there is opposition and there are plenty of reasons to stop, plenty of excuses to stop.

Look at another passage that has really wonderful correlations to the passage we've been studying. Romans 12:9-13, again, look for the use of Paul's word of “endurance.” He uses

a different word here but he says, “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation,” there it is again, the same word Paul uses, we have a different one in our translation, “persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.” I mean, doesn't that sound very similar to 1 Corinthians 13? Is there a lot of overlap? And notice the focus on love and all of the different attributes. Again, the phrase “persevering in tribulation.” “Persevering” is the same word Paul uses in “enduring.” The point is: endurance often has with it opposition or tribulation.

When we think of the word “endurance,” often we think of endurance sports. We think of running long distance and a lot of the pastors have really gotten into this whole endurance sports thing and all that tomfoolery associated with marathons and triathlons and they've sucked me into it and I did not grow up doing endurance sports. I grew up doing baseball and tennis and hockey and golf and hockey, I don't know if you know this, but you play hockey for 45 seconds at a time. If you're out there for a minute, you've been out there way too long so you go as hard as you can for 45 seconds and then you come back to the bench and you rest for 2 or 3 minutes. It's glorious. So, I start running with these guys and 45 seconds in and I want to stop. I'm just like, “What's going on here? I don't want to do this any longer. My 45 seconds is up,” and there's hours remaining.

You think of endurance, you think of how far can I run but it's not just how far can you run, it's how far can you run when people are trying to stop you from running. A good way of thinking about biblical endurance is combining a marathon with a hockey game. You've got to run a long way and people are trying to body-check you all along the way. There is opposition. It's hard.

Just think about everything we've been studying. When you try to be patient, isn't it oftentimes because someone is doing something that requires patience? All of the characteristics of love we've studied usually are behaviors that take place in relationships so the battle of loving with endurance is often two-fold: people or circumstances are making it difficult, that's one battle; the other is, I want to stop. I don't want to stand. I want to be done. I don't want to endure. And oftentimes, we justify giving up the internal battle of endurance because the choices that others are making that make it more difficult. Biblical love endures opposition both internal and external. That's how it's defined biblically. It's enduring opposition.

That kind of transitions well into the challenge of endurance because there is opposition and it is difficult. As I was preparing this sermon, I told my wife what passage I was teaching on and I said, “Love endures all things.” She reminded me that on the inside of our rings we inscribed the phrase “love endures all things” and we kind of laughed and we said, “You should have picked an easier phrase,” because it is hard and it's relatively easy to be patient for a while or to be kind in the circumstances where you are not really hurt or disrespected. You know, I can go the whole day without bragging or being proud

and then the me-monster comes out at the end of the day when now I just want everything to go my way.

There's a challenge and that is why to summarize all the characteristics of love, Paul says in verse 7, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Then just to put the capstone on it Paul says, "Love never fails." It's hard because of the comprehensive nature of what we are called to endure and the undisclosed amount of time we are to endure it. Let's unpack the two challenges to endurance. The first is just the obstacles to endurance. The challenge is "all things," that's really the phrase that is really most challenging and these words, don't they put the Christian life into perspective? God wants us to live for him and see him at work no matter what happens. In Romans 8:28, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose." Or think about 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Give thanks in everything for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." It's almost as if God wants our whole being to be devoted to him all the time because he's worthy of that kind of relationship and we struggle with the "all things."

I want to love you as long as your actions don't fall into a certain category. Let's just take parenting for example. Remember now, "Love is patient, love is kind, not easily angered," and we're talking about parenting. Sometimes we approach the way we love our kids something like this: I will love you when you make a mess at the dinner table; I will love you if you ask me to read two books tonight; I will love you even when you hate your sister. But if you embarrass me in public, if you make a scene at church or in the restaurant, I will speak to you in a tone of voice that is so hurtful it will crush your spirit. I will be loving if you make a mistake unless it really jams me up. I will love you if you talk back to me but not if you talk to me again and again and again and again. We have a threshold, don't we? And our kids are experts at finding our threshold, right? They know where it is almost like right away. They didn't have to try. They're experts at finding it or maybe we're experts at having thresholds.

What Paul is saying by using the phrase "all things" is that love doesn't have a threshold. There is no imaginary line that you cross that justifies my lack of love as a response. We are called to apply the characteristics of love to all circumstances. How about when your children are older and they make foolish choices that impact you? Maybe they post things on Facebook that are inappropriate? Maybe they mock and ridicule your faith? Maybe they have not applied themselves in school or they can't hold down a job? Have you thought through what the "all things" are in your life that you struggle responding to with biblical love?

Here's an application point right in the middle of the sermon, if I may and I will. One of the things you could do to apply this is just write down "love endures all things" on a piece of paper and then under it, list the things that you are reluctant to apply biblical love to and then pray through that list asking God this week to give you opportunity to apply love in some of those areas. Now, I'm not talking about perfectionism, I'm talking about a commitment in our mind to focus on loving no matter what. And I'm not saying there aren't different to show love in different circumstances, "I'm going to love you by

patiently encouraging you to get a job. I'm going to love you by responding to your mockery with kindness and humility but I'm not going to hide my faith." The point is: are we willing to respond to "all things" in a way that is uncharacteristically, unmistakably characterized by love? Patience, kindness, humility. Now, I'm not trying to be demoralizing, it just comes naturally, regarding the "all things." The text just says that, repeats that over and over again, but I'm trying to help us understand the depth of what biblical love that endures looks like so that later we can begin to see with more clarity the depth of our need for dependence upon God to love in this way.

Let's continue to understand the challenge of endurance. How about the undefined time of endurance? There is something about knowing how much longer that motivates us. "Okay, I have to be nice to you for 15 more minutes? 15 minutes? Let me start the timer now. Okay, I can handle that." What if the lifeguard brick test was treading water with a brick over your head until somebody told you to stop and you had no idea when? There'd be no lifeguards. They'd just be like, "I'm not doing that test. Two minutes? Fine, I can do that. I can learn to do that." Undisclosed amount of time? I don't like that.

It's also interesting that one of the words used in the Old Testament to describe enduring is the word "wait." Psalm 27:14, "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD." Have you ever waited for somebody? It's excruciating, isn't it? It is unbearable. You are like so bored and you check how long you've been waiting and it's been like three minutes. You're like, "How can I wait a second longer?" So what do we do? We have preemptive strikes against waiting. We say, "How long are you gonna be? What time are you coming back? Can you text me when you're on your way back so that I know that the waiting is going to be over soon?" But waiting and enduring are not simple passive exercises that we just have to endure and wait out and just not do anything while we're waiting and enduring, it's the undisclosed amount of time we are to be loving God and loving others as we wait for God, as we live upon this earth for his glory.

We have a problem with not knowing how long we have to do this and this is how it usually plays out with guys. Guys, this is how it often looks like. Men, let's say that you've recognized you haven't been loving your wife in the way that you should so you think to yourself, "Alright, I'm gonna take my wife on a date. I'm gonna love my wife and I'm gonna take her on a date night." Then the next day, you feel like you're on a roll, right? You're thinking flowers. Flowers, I'm on my way home, boom, I'm gonna love today as well as yesterday. Getting flowers. So I come home and I give flowers and that's great and then the third day, the coup de gras of your love is I'm now going to pick up my dirty clothes and put them in the hamper, right? That's like, okay, boom, Trifecta of love over three days, right? So three days in a row you did this and you think to yourself, "Hey, I did this for three whole days. Why is she not impressed? Why is she not smiling ear-to-ear, telling me how great I am and making me a celebration cake commemorating my amazing accomplishments of biblical love? Why is she not doing that?"

So then we respond with, "Well, I tried. I'm done. I can't do anymore. That didn't work because she didn't respond the way that I thought she would or that I thought she should."

Sometimes that is our definition of endurance. Waiting on the Lord to work for three days, enduring in love for three days and then getting disillusioned with loving. Seriously though, maybe you have been trying to love in a difficult situation for a few months or even a few years and that is great, keep going. I don't want to minimize the difficulty of loving over time but also take note: when we read the phrase "love endures all things, love never fails," we need to get a better biblical understanding of steadfastness and endurance of love that represent God's character across generations. That's what kind of God we have and we have to admit that sometimes we don't love that way and we have to look at men and women who have faithfully loved God and their spouses for a lifetime so that we can measure our acts of love in decades rather than in weeks or even days or hours.

It starts with admitting that oftentimes we are not waiting for the Lord, we are not loving with endurance. We are loving and looking for a result as soon as possible. A lot of marriages struggle because one or both parties says, "How long do I have to love you? How long do I have to put up with this?" Instead of saying, "I want to love you because it pleases God no matter how long it takes and no matter how you respond." I know there are a number of people in difficult situations where they are doing just that. They are choosing to endure in love even when they're not receiving a lot of love from those around them. I would say keep going, keep enduring. Let the love of Christ sustain you to love with endurance.

This reminds all of us that the Christian life is not a lifeguard brick test where we just need to give the right effort for a while. The Christian life is one where at the core of our being we need to be committed to personifying the character of God forever. Love endures all things, overcoming whatever obstacles may come as well as continue to love even when there is no end in sight. One commentator put it like this: "Love bears what otherwise is unbearable. It believes what otherwise is unbelievable. It hopes in what otherwise is hopeless. It endures when anything less than love would give up. After love bears, it believes. After it believes, it hopes. After it hopes, it endures. There is no after for endurance for endurance is the unending climax of love." Biblical love will not stop loving.

Now, it's pretty easy to say, "Wow. How in the world am I going to love biblically if love means enduring whatever comes my way and for as long as the Lord determines as I'm here on this earth?" I'm not talking about perfectionism. I'm talking about being committed mentally to endure in love as long as it takes and being confident that you can do that because of your relationship with Christ.

That leads us to our last part this morning. If we just stopped there, it would be a bit demoralizing I think but the motivation for endurance is filled with hope and encouragement. I think most of us would say that as we have gone through this series we have a more robust view of biblical love. It's not simply an emotion or a feeling. It's a series of active behaviors that are to be applied in our relationships over time and through trial. So what's going to motivate us to love with endurance? Well, unsurprisingly, the first one is the gospel, particularly how the gospel personifies God's might and our

dependence upon him. The gospel personifies God's might, his power, his strength and our need for his might, his power and strength. Consider Paul's prayer in Colossians 1. He prays that believers would "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." He prays that they would be "strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness," there it is again, that endurance, "and patience." There is no way we can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, no way we can love with endurance through "all things" if we are not dependent upon the Lord to strengthen us. In other words, without a close abiding relationship with Christ, we can't love in the way that God has called us to love so instead of saying, "Wow, this is too hard to love biblically," we need to say, "Lord, help me to love biblically because I need you. I'm dependent upon you each and every day to love with endurance." And all those moments of crying out to the Lord lead up to a life of endurance and characterized by love.

The dependence on God's power points us to the gospel as our motivation. Later on, just a few verses later, he says as motivation to his prayer, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." If you try to love based on 1 Corinthians 13 without a relationship with God that is based on the gospel, there is no way that you can endure in love in the way the text is describing. As you think about loving with endurance, you first need to be forgiven or your sins and that becomes the motivation to keep going because he's forgiven your sins, past, present and future.

I would hope that if someone has been a part of this series, they would say, "I can't do that," and maybe it reveals what your relationship with the Lord is like and that you need to first come to know him as Lord and Savior and you need to recognize his enduring love that cascades across all history before the creation of the world on your behalf by sending his Son to die for you. If that's where you are, I would encourage you to place your trust and your hope in the enduring love of Christ so that you can begin to endure with love because of the gospel. On the other hand, if you're a believer, if you've trusted God, if you have tasted his love for you, if you've contemplated the depth of his mercy at the cross and you've put your faith and hope there in Christ, it's still a fight to endure. It's a fight to go back over and over to your relationship with God as the motivation to keep going and I would say that that is a good thing. "There is no way that I can do this without constant dependence upon God, without constantly being refreshed and motivated by the love of God."

So how do I do that? What does that look like in my everyday life? Well, I know what it looks like to do things that lead you to not endure. If you're not in the word every day, just letting the truth of God's love permeate your thought process, if you're not hiding God's word in your heart, letting his word, his truth of the gospel motivate you, you're not going to love with endurance. If you're not praying in dependence saying, "Lord, I need you. Help me to love. Be with me in the opportunities today that you have before me to love others. Lord, I need your help and I'm going to regularly pray to you in dependence." I know if you don't read good spiritual books that help you change your heart and your idols and what you want, you're not going to want the Lord, you're not going to love him. There are going to be so many things that distract you and just say,



“It's not worth it to endure in love. I want other things instead.” If you're filling your mind with excuses that permeate our entertainment, “Don't love, just live for yourself,” it's going to be really hard to endure. If you're not surrounding yourself with believers who are going to challenge you, who are going to ask you about your relationship with Christ, you're not going to endure. If you're not using your gifts and abilities to serve and see the impact that your loving acts have on others and just the wonderful effect God uses, you're not going to see that success and be encouraged to keep going and endure.

All of those things just reveal, “I need everyday dependence upon God, in the thousands of minutes every day and I need to depend on God and redirect my focus to Jesus, particularly the way that he endured.” Truth about him from just being in his word and meditating on the gospel, preaching the gospel to myself, “What did Christ do on my behalf?” is going to keep me going today and in this moment. Hebrews 12:1-3 is something we should just hide in our hearts to remember whether or not we have a Bible with us or not. It says, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Here it is, “For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” So that you will not grow weary and lose heart because you consider him who endured.

We're to run with endurance the race that God has set before us and there are lots of examples of godly men and women who have gone before us but the person we should most be focused on is Jesus. We are to fix our eyes on him like a runner fixes his mind on the finish line. Jesus, who the joy set before him, endured the cross. But for us to endure, we need to consider what Jesus endured so that we don't grow weary and lose heart and we have to consider that a lot. When you think of finishing a race, you think of the end, you focus on the end, when you get to stop. What the text here is saying is, “Focus on Christ.” That is what's going to motivate you to keep going, not a designated point in time where you get to stop loving or stop enduring but the person who endured faithfully on your behalf. When you think about how difficult it is to endure and love those God has placed around you or how difficult it is to respond in love given the circumstances you are under, consider Jesus who never gave in, never quit, never stopped.

But some might say, “Oh, God doesn't know what I'm going through. He doesn't know how tough it is. How can he expect me to endure?” As we read the Bible, there is something very, very important we have to understand and recognize about Christ and that's that he understands temptation better than we do. He understands temptation better than us. Hebrews 4:15, “He was tempted in all things as we are,” all things as we are, “yet without sin.” In other words, Jesus never paused, never quit, never took a break, never gave in to temptation.” We tend to get relief by giving in to temptation to be impatient or angry or unkind and Christ just simply never did. We stop treading water with a brick over our head and Jesus never stopped. So who understands the weight of temptation better? Christ and he endured for you and for me to the glory of the Father

because that was his plan. He understands what we are going through better than we do and he is calling us unapologetically as the ones that he died for to follow him by love enduring all things and he knows what we're going through. Consider the person and work of Christ as the motivation to endure.

Another motivation is just the impact that a love that endures has on people. Remember the passage that we read earlier? 1 Timothy, Paul says he endured all things for others. 2 Timothy 2:10, "For this reason I endure all things." Why? "For the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." When we love with endurance, it impacts the people around us and directs them to the only reason that we could possibly love with endurance. What kind of explanation can we give for this kind of enduring love other than salvation in Christ and the eternal perspective of God's glory.

I just want to take a moment and say a big thank you to those who served with endurance during the community picnic. It came on the heels of serving in VVS and it required endurance and just loving the people around. There were a lot of people, a lot of ABFs who just stood up and just served and it was hard but they made it a special time for our neighbors. Do you know what? Honestly, that's kind of just the way that people do it around here" they serve kind of year round. They just endure because they know that when they do that, there are many opportunities to impact people with the gospel and so they serve with endurance because the gospel impact that it has on people.

And we need to excel all the more, keep going. We need to constantly be growing in our concern for lost people that God has placed around us so that we love with endurance because you never know the act that God might use, even though it's difficult, for you to show love to someone and he might use it to draw them to himself.

The last motivation I would say would be the permanence of love. We can't forget that the main thrust of Paul's argument here in the text is that love is greater than anything else. It's greater than the gifts; it's greater than all the things that I do. If I don't have love, I'm just a noisy gong and clanging cymbal. It's greater than all the gifts. It's better because love is permanent. He says, "Love never fails." It doesn't mean that when you love, you'll always be successful. This is not our new strategy in four years to win the World Cup, we're just going to love more and then we're going to be successful. That's not how it works, "I just love more and things go my way." What it does mean is this: love is never going to stop. Love is never going to become obsolete. When you commit to loving with endurance, you commit to the course of action that the Lord wants to guide us for all eternity. Love is permanent. It continues forever and so because of the importance of love, its eternal nature comes from the character of God himself, we should invest ourselves in loving and abiding in love.

God is love. Love comes from his character and he is going to eternally define himself by the characteristics of love that we have been studying and he wants his people to represent him in the way that they love because of the finished work of Christ who endured and loved us. Our motivation to love now in the present with endurance through

all things is because God designated love to be a fixture permanently for all eternity and he wants us to glorify him by loving with endurance. 1 Corinthians 13 summarizes the importance, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

I hope you've been challenged and encouraged by the series on love so that you would just cry out to God and say, “Lord, help me to love in the way that you love. Help me bring to bear in mind Christ the way that he loved so this day, this moment, I can love the way that you love and I can trust you that I can do that over time and I can look back at a life that is characterized by love to the glory of God.”

Let's pray and ask God to help us do just that.

*Lord, we come before you and we want to humbly admit that we struggle loving the way that you love and, Lord, this series has been incredibly convicting but, Lord, we have a view of your love that is so robust and so deep that it just causes us to fall on our knees and ask you for help. Lord, I pray that according to your word and on the basis of your Son Jesus you would help us to love the way that we've been studying: with patient, with kindness, with all of the characteristics. But also, Lord, with endurance no matter the obstacles, no matter how long it takes, no matter the result because we want to glorify the person and work of Christ who endured in love and that is the basis by which we can love you. Help us do that, Lord, be with us, we need you. In the powerful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*