

Living In The Overflow of God's Love

Love never fails

Lesson 15

Scripture reading- Deuteronomy 7:7-8

We have taken 15 weeks to look at 1 Cor. 13:4-8a to think about and to be challenged by what love is and is not. Before we conclude this series though, think for a few moments about the people in your world. You might even want to take this time to list them... your husband, wife, children, teachers, friends, parents, work pals. Who is it that populates your little circle in the world?

As you continue to ponder the people in your life, let me ask you... Aren't these people valuable? Aren't these relationships worth a lot... even worth whatever it takes to keep them healthy? I know what some of you might be thinking... Some of the people on your list might be difficult people. But, what's more important than people and relationships?

Have you ever thought about what your final days might look like (when death comes knocking on your door)? What do you think you would want in these final days? Where do you think you would turn for your comfort?

- Could you see yourself lying on your death bed holding to your college degree for comfort?
- Could you see yourself asking to die in your car that's sitting out in the garage?
- Could you see yourself lining your death bed with all the money you could get your hands on?

No! What will matter most will be people. If relationships will mean a lot at the end of your life, shouldn't they mean a lot now?

So what can you do to strengthen your relationships now? How well do you love the people in your life? Here's a good question to ask in light of what it means to live in the overflow of God's love: Does the way I treat people reflect the way God has treated me?

We've already established that loving people isn't the easiest thing in the world. In fact, my hope is that the lessons we've looked at have been a challenge to you. That some of you have been forced to think again about some of the people in your life and in particular those that you find hard to love (for whatever reason). So what do we do with those we find hard to love? Our modern wisdom tells us that a lack of love reflects a lack of effort on our behalf. So we tend to try harder, dig in a little deeper and strain more. But could it be that it really has very little if anything with lack of effort? Could it be that the struggle we have in loving others is connected to something else? Is it possible that we are trying to give what we don't have? Are we forgetting to receive love first?

The woman that crashed Simon the Pharisee's dinner party didn't forget. Do you remember in the first lesson in this series how she expressed her love for Jesus. How she washed his feet with her tears and then dried them with her hair?

Max Lucado says: If love were a waterfall, this woman would be a Niagra.

"And Simon, well, Simon was a Sahara. Dry. Parched. Hard. His arid heart surprises us." Simon was church goer, he was the pastor, a seminarian. However, this woman is... and we have a name for women like this... The kinder name is "prostitute."

Simon new his bible! But this woman didn't... however, she discovered one truth Simon failed to see. **That God's love has no boundries.**

God's love is what Paul says it is in 1 Cor. 13:8a- "Love never fails."

Video Clip- I have never been unloved

This word "fails" (ekpiptei) carries a rich meaning; one which describes the withering flower that falls to the ground as in the dying (perishing) of the flower.

"Love will last forever" - NLT

"Love never dies" - MSG

"Love never ends" - NRSV

"Love never disappears" - Moffatt

"Love never fails"

There are a lot of things in this world that fail...

- Lot's of jobs end but God's love lasts forever
- Many marriages die but God's love never dies
- All governments come and go, but God's loves is eternal
- Your money will run out, but God's love never will
- Every person fails, but God's love never fails

Unlike our love, God's love never fails. God's love is completely different from our love. The problem for us is that our love depends upon the receiver of the love. Our love is controlled more by appearance (I went to a spiritual formation program were I was confronted by my partner who admitted his didn't like me the minute he laid eyes on me... come to find out, my appearance reminded him of his father-in-law.) Our love is controlled more by personalities. Our feelings for people can move all over the emotional scale. Our love for people is affected by how others treat us. The receiver of our love many times controls our love for them.

But thank God that his love isn't human. We have no impact on whether or not God loves us. Here's something foreign to us: **The love of God originates in God and not from what he finds in us.** Now that's different from our human perspective. God love is not motivated by what we do or don't do.

Questions:

- Does God love us because of our goodness? No!
- Does God love us because of our kindness? No!
- Does God love us because of our great faith? No!
 - *Does God love us because of his goodness? Yes!*
 - *Does God love us because of his kindness? Yes!*
 - *Does God love us because of his great faith? Yes!*

The apostle John says: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us" 1 John 4:10a, NIV.

Song: "Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord"

God's love is not dependant on your love. The more you love or the less you love does not change the love God has for you.

The words we heard from Moses to the Israelites in the reading this morning are the words God speaks to his people... and we are his people!

“The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” **Deuteronomy 7:7,8, NIV.**

GOD wasn't attracted to you and didn't choose you because you were big and important--the fact is, there was almost nothing to you. 8He did it out of sheer love, keeping the promise he made to your ancestors. GOD stepped in and mightily bought you back out of that world of slavery, freed you from the iron grip of Pharaoh king of Egypt. **Deuteronomy 7:7,8, MSG**

God's love for you is about him (his choice). You can take this to the bank... God loves you even when you feel unlovable, when no else will love you, when others abandon you, and ignore you.

God's promise to Israel and his promises to us: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" **Jer. 31:3b**

Do you remember the story of the bouquet of flowers?

In your house is this beautiful lone flower. And today you plan to wear this flower. It's a special day. But as soon as you leave the house, people start picking petals off your flower.

You remember that story?

The scenario changes... The kind man who lives next to you runs a flower shop.

- Every night on the way home this man gives you a fresh, undeserved bouquet of flowers.
- Let someone mess with your flower-- you have a basketful to replace it!**

God loves you!

Remember, love is a fruit! When you walk with God on this journey, the first fruit you'll see is: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* Gal. 5:22

This fruit is not a product of your own hand and hard work... Love is a fruit of the Spirit of God... It is the Spirit who produces the fruit.

I began this lesson with "Could it be that the struggle we have in loving others is connected to something else? Is it possible that we are trying to give what we don't have? Are we forgetting to receive love first?"

The more we let God do his work in our lives... the more we live in the overflow of his love. And when we let his love overflow through our lives... what a love it will be!!

Patient. Kind. Does not envy. Does not boast. Is not proud.

How about we rewrite 1 Cor. 13:4-8 one more time. Last time we tried our names... but that didn't really work all that great. Then we tried only using Christ's name... and that worked pretty good for us. But I wonder what happens when we insert both names.

Christ in Scot is patient, Christ in _____ is kind. Christ in _____ does not envy, Christ in _____ does not boast, Christ in _____ is not proud. Christ in _____ is not rude, Christ in _____ is not self-seeking,

Christ in _____ is not easily angered, Christ in _____ keeps no record of wrongs. Christ in _____ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Christ in _____ always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Christ in _____ never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

We know that Christ's love is perfect and on this side of heaven only God can love like this. But I am convinced if we let God's love in our own lives, we can love more than we have.

My hope and prayer is that you've experienced enough of God's love that when you find it difficult to show kindness to someone else, you'll remember the kindness God has shown you and ask God to make you more kind. When patients is hard to come by, I pray that we'll remember his and ask him to make us more patient. When we find ourselves struggling to forgive, I pray that we will not make a list of all the times we been given grief by another, but that we'll make a list of all the times we've been given grace and then pray to God to become more forgiving.

Receive from God first, then we'll be able to give later. When we come to the fountain of God's love and drink from it until it overflows, then we'll have a love worth giving.

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