

# Kenny Moorner - The Struggle of Love

I'm going to just get out at the very beginning today that what I want to preach on this morning is hard. It's hard for me. It's hard for me, because I think that as I think about this lesson, it gives me trouble. Because it is hard I struggle with the struggle that we're going to talk about today. And so, as you've heard me say before, the reason I'm preaching on it is because I need it. So again, I'm talking to myself, and if by chance it helps you then so be it and I'm confident today that it will.

This is a picture of a young lady, reading the Jewish Shema that is found in Deuteronomy six, verses four through nine. It is a passage that is familiar to us. That talks about loving the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength, and with all of your mind. Devout Jews who pray in the morning, and in the evening, quote this prayer as a statement of faith, really, if you will, enter the central creedal declaration of what a Jew would say that they are about. It is about their faith. This is a common statement. Jesus mentioned it several times in the gospels and even in the book of Deuteronomy, it is mentioned multiple times. But in Luke 10, Jesus said this, "a certain lawyer stood up and tested Jesus saying, Teacher What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said to him what's written in the law? And what is your reading of it? And he answered, it said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. And he said to him, you've answered rightly do this, and you will live." Sometimes, these references and sometimes in different texts talk about a two-word dichotomy. Sometimes it's referred to as heart and soul. You will love the Lord with your heart and with your soul. Sometimes, a third word is added: your heart, your soul with mind. It's a trichotomy. And sometimes, as is the case here in Luke 10. It's a Tetrachotomy. It is a four-part statement about the kind of love that we should have for God. There may be some distinction between the words. I think there are. I think there probably are some distinctions and if you really got into the etymology of each of these words, it may have a nuance to itself but the overall, really, theme about this is as you need to love God with all you've got. You see why I said what I said in the beginning? Consider the idea of loving God with everything you have. Doesn't that give you pause? Just having this on the screen. And knowing that what Jesus said is, is that if you're going to love God, what I'm asking you to do is to love me with all of your heart. Doesn't that give you some pause? Yet it is the kind of love that is demanded of us. It's not suggested, it is the kind of love that is demanded of us.

So, when I asked this morning, are you giving to God all you have or all you've got, you may be sitting there this morning, not quite sure how to respond. I'm hoping this lesson helps all of us understand better how to respond to the question: Do we love God with everything we have? I want to go to a passage that you probably expected me to go to. Because love is a struggle. And the passage that we're going to go to this morning identifies it as a struggle. It's a passage, that partially Kiefer, just read from us from First Corinthians 13. But before I go there, I want you to think about something that First Corinthians 13 really does. In the context, First Corinthians 13 is about Christians who don't love like they should. Their motive in establishing and carrying out the spiritual gifts, which evidently some had been given; it was not done out of the right motive. It was not done with love, and it's affecting their relationships with each other. And the end result of what Paul says is that if you're going to have these

gifts, and you don't have love, it's as if you really have not done anything and you don't have anything. So, Paul says that's how important what we're about to talk about is and I would suggest this morning as we think about this struggle of love, that that's how important what we're about to talk about is. So, beginning in verse one, Paul says "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love I had become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, but I have not love I am nothing. Do I bestow all my goods to feed the poor? And do I give my body to be burned and have profits mean nothing. Love suffers long, and is kind, love does not envy, love does not parade itself, it's not puffed up, does not behave rudely. It gets not provoked, thinks no evil. Does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things." I want you to notice what he said. Three times: verses one, two and three, "but have not love." If you don't have this, it's pretty clear what he's trying to say. If you don't have love, first of all, it's like a loud noise. It's like a, this passage says, it's like a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal, none of us want to hear that. Verse two, he says, if you don't have love, I am nothing. You're nothing. And in verse three, if you do not have love it profits, you nothing.

So, let's get a bit more practical. I want you to think about love for God, I want you to think about love for family or love for your spouse, or love for your friends, or love for brethren or love for your enemies. It is hard. Loving as we ought is hard. That's part of the problem with preaching. When you preach and you try to find all of these things that practically are going to help people and you start thinking about how you want to say it. The problem is you're having to hear it yourself. This would be great if I could just talk to you and say y'all need to get it right. But that's not the way this works, you see. So, I'm not just talking about a struggle that you have, or the struggle that I'm having. I'm talking about a struggle that everybody has because this is something that is very hard to do. So, let's look at what he says in verse seven. Before we look at what he says in verses four through six. First of all, he says that "love bears all things." It's able to sustain a relationship. It's able to maintain love in a relationship regardless of affliction or persecution, I want you to think about how hard that is. A relationship is maintained, and love is maintained in a relationship regardless of the affliction, or regardless of the persecution. Now, that's hard. You make the application like you need to make the application, but that's hard to do.

And then Paul says, "love believes all things." This is not saying that love is gullible. It's not saying that you believe everything you hear, but it is saying that love believes the best about someone when there is no evidence to the contrary. When it's clear somebody's had evidence against them, don't believe that. But if it's unclear, then give them the benefit of the doubt. Love refuses to yield itself to unfounded suspicions. And that's hard. It's hard in a relationship to believe, to believe the best in a person sometimes. That's hard to do.

And then Paul says that "love hopes all things." Let me just talk to you about this. It hopes for the best even when evidence would lead one to believe otherwise. Let me tell you a characteristic of love that is outstanding: love is not pessimistic. I just want you to think about that, my friends. And I want you to think about it in this context. Are you? are you pessimistic? Love is hopeful. Love is not pessimistic. And don't you love people who love you with hope? Don't you love people who love you because they see the best in you, and they know what you can be even if you're not that. Don't you love that kind of person? Sometimes it's hard to be hopeful. But that's exactly what Paul says love does. It is hopeful.

And in this verse, particularly he says, "love endures all things." It is brave and is steadfast. It is patient when circumstances are trying hard. I'm talking to people this morning who live, some of you, live in circumstances that are hard, and they are difficult. Maybe do even a point that I don't even understand I can't even begin to understand. And I can't empathize with what you're going through. Yet, love presses on. You've not abandoned relationship. You've not abandoned the situation that's hard and difficult. You said I'm going to press on because you know love endures, love fights on because love lasts. And that's hard to do. I find love hard. I know you're not going to believe me, but sometimes it's hard to love you. And sometimes it's probably hard to love me. Let me rephrase it. Sometimes it is hard to love me. Sometimes it's hard for my wife to love me. And, I'll say it softly, sometimes it's hard for me to love my wife. Love is hard. First Corinthians 13 he's talking about love that brethren have. Have you ever thought about it? Why? Why does Paul use and why does he Why does he state these things in the context of brethren? Aren't brethren the easiest people love? Why does he have to talk about loving brethren and treating each other the way you should? Why does he have to say what he says? And when do you hear verses four through six this, if you stop and think about this as amazing, when do you hear these verses most other than the pulpit? At a wedding ceremony. At a ceremony in which everybody's talking about love, and the fact that here are two people that have fallen in love. And life is just going to be wonderful from this point on because they're in love and yet what Paul says Love suffers and you're going well maybe I need to rethink what I'm about to do. Sometimes the very things that are hardest to do are hardest to do with the people that were supposed to love.

We're not going to look at all those. Look at "love is kind." Love is kind. Now let me step on some toes. If you're married this morning, is your love always kind? Is love always kind? I know the answer to that. I know what's supposed to happen. But I know the answer to that. Sometimes love is not kind. Love is not to behave, are you ready for this? It's "not to behave rudely." Not to behave rudely. How do you treat your neighbor? How do you treat the people around you? How do you treat your friends sometimes? "Love thinks no evil." You want me to go on? You feeling pretty good right now? Thinks no evil. Just take love is kind, love is not rude, thinks no evil. You just ask yourself, if you're a husband, how you doing in that? If you're a wife, how are you doing in that? If you're a son? How are you doing? If you're a daughter? How are you doing? If you're a neighbor? How are you doing? If you're a member here? How are you doing? If you're a boss? How are you doing? If you're an employee? How are you doing? If you go to the gym, and you treat people there as you should? How are you doing in that? If you were at the store? How do you treat people in that? Or how about this? When you get in your car and drive? Are you kind? Or do you behave rudely? You don't have to answer that out loud. I can tell by the looks on your face.

See, I told you love is hard. And here's what I want to tell you about that: it's supposed to be hard. I want to tell you something else. Speaking of hard though, things that are hard. When you when you want to be a Christian, there are the things that are hard like denying yourself. You think that's easy. Jesus said, if you want to come after Me, you need to deny yourself. You need to take your pure cross and you need to follow me - that's hard. Or how about what Paul said in Romans six, don't obey your sinful passions. That's hard. I know it's hard. But that's what he said. So, there are some things that are hard for us to do. Or "doing nothing from selfish ambition and counting others better than myself," Philippians 2:3, is that hard? Don't do anything from selfish ambition. But count others better than

myself. Is that hard? Sure, it's hard. Or don't repay evil for evil. First Thessalonians 5:15, don't repay evil for evil. Or how about this love your enemies? Matthew 5:44.

How then do I love? Doesn't really doesn't matter about the relationship. But how then do I love with all I've got, because we're loving God with everything ultimately filters down into loving in all these relationships that I have. It's loving the way God wants me to love. So how do I do that? I want to offer what I think's interesting. So, I've got some good news and some bad news. And it's found in Matthew 19. I'd like for you to turn there this morning if you would. And you remember the rich young ruler, you remember that story? Young man comes to Jesus: Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he asked Jesus, what good thing was it that he needed to do? And what Jesus said is you go and sell everything you have, and you give it to the poor. Now I want to tell you something. If you had asked Jesus that question, and you were rich, and you were young, and you were a ruler, and you got all this going for you when you ask the question, and what Jesus said is, I want you to go sell everything you have and give it to the poor. You would have done exactly, I think, maybe I'm talking about myself, but I think I might have done exactly what this man did. Because the text tells us in verse 22, "but when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." I can't do it, in other words, is what the man said. You could have said about anything else, and I could have done it. But I cannot do that because I have great possessions. And the one thing you're asking me to do, I cannot do. Why? Because it's hard. It's hard. And then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you, that is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." And just let that sink in just a minute. We're talking about hard things. Jesus said, it's hard. If you're a rich man, it's hard for you to enter the kingdom of heaven. "And again, I say to it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Listen to that. Do you know how hard it would be for a camel to go through the eye of a needle? It's a bit of hyperbole, I understand that. But that's the point. Jesus is saying, you think that's hard? It's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And I'll tell you how hard it is. And when he said that the disciples heard it, and they were greatly astonished. And they said, well, then who can be saved? Who in the world, Lord, can do that? And Jesus answered the question.

And this is our answer this morning. The answer that Jesus gave to this man and to His disciples about how you do it is the same answer He's giving us this morning about how we love like we ought to. In chapter 19, in verse 26, "Jesus looked at them and said to them." I hope, I don't think, I'm reading too much into this. But isn't there a difference in talking to someone kind of randomly, and looking at them directly and talking to them? You ever had a parent say, Look at me. That's not good. When your daddy says, Look at me. Let me just give you a little friendly advice. You need to look at your daddy. Jesus looked at them. And here's what he said, "with men, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible." Here's the key. Here's the key in loving like you ought to. Here's the key in going to heaven like we want to. If you're depending upon yourself, and what you want, to make you love like you ought to do, you're going to fail. And if you're depending on what you want to get you to heaven, you're going to fail. If you're depending upon yourself. Do you want to love God more? Here's the key. Here it gets down to what I call "practicalization." Do you want to love God more? Then listen to Him. You want to love your spouse better? Then listen to God. You want to be a better friend? Then listen to God. You want to have a better relationship with your parents, son or daughter? You want that? Then listen to God. Why? Because if you're going to do what you want, strictly what you want, and you're going to

guide yourself, you're not going to end up in a good place. That's why the rich young ruler evidently did not end up in a good place. Because he did what he wanted. He didn't listen to God.

So, this morning, may I just suggest to you if you're having some trouble in any relationship, loving as you are, in being the kind of person that First Corinthians 13 describes. If sometimes you find yourself behaving rudely. If you sometimes find yourself being unkind. If you sometimes find yourself not being patient. Listen to God. Don't do what you want, do what He wants. Because with God, all things are possible. If you don't have the kind of marriage this morning that you want to have, then stop trying to have the marriage that you think you ought to have, do what God said, and it will be what you want it to be. It's very clear. But it's hard. Because we prefer oftentimes to do what we want to do, and to act, how we want to act. And if those brethren in first century - as Paul talks to them about having the kind of love that they ought to have - if they would have kept not having the kind of love they should have had, if they had kept doing that, they would have completely destroyed that church and Paul said you got to change. You got to do it out of love. You have got to change how you treat people. You have got to change how you act toward people.

So, the application this morning is broad, right? I don't know what kind of relationship you have. I don't know about the different relationships that you have. But in every relationship, the foundation of that needs to be a love that we have for God that permeates every facet of our lives. And that's hard to do. I'll be the first one to admit it. That's why a lot of the thought that I've given this lesson is okay, what am I going to do about this? How am I going to react to what I'm talking about this morning? Well, I'll tell you what I ought to do, and I'm planning to do and that's to do better. Or, as Paul says in chapter 14, verse, one, "Pursue love." And I don't think it's just unintentional that he says pursue love. I think he says, You've got to move toward love. Pursue means to move towards something. If you're pursuing someone, you're moving toward them. And Paul says you need to pursue love, you need to move yourself toward the love that I've just talked about. And if you aren't loving this morning, like you should, then you need to get busy pursuing love like you should. If you want to write something down this morning, write that down. If you're not loving, like you should then get busy pursuing love like you should. And the Lord will help you. The Lord to help you do that. And stop making excuses about why you can't love like you should. And start loving like you should. We have so many ways to apply this lesson. And I hope that that what you'll do this morning is just think about it and evaluate and begin to make adjustments as you need to.