

“Love never Fails” 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 8

With these three words, Paul puts a huge weight of expectation on love. How can we live up to it? We fail all the time, and Paul knows that. But of course, he is not saying that human love never fails. In all the verses we have been looking at recently, the love that he is describing is the love of God, and not human love at all. All human love would fall short of any of the qualities he has been describing.

This is because human love, even the best kind, is always conditional. It always demands that the other be deserving of our love in some way, or that our love for another fulfils some need in us.

The phrase “never fails” the Paul uses carries the additional meaning, “never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end.” How hard it is to maintain love for others when we become weary, or when the job becomes a chore and devoid of the excitement that there was in the beginning, or we seem to be making no progress, or the romance and the passion starts to ebb. We can go an awful long way with human energy, motivation and determination, but who has the will to continue to act in the best interests of another person when there is no joy in it and it is no more than an exhausting, soul destroying, sacrificial duty?

We may have been called to minister to someone who is in need, or infirm, and we start out full of faith, hope and expectation that they will come to a better place, but as time goes on it becomes clear that they will not. Did we only offer that love and care on the understanding that they would get better? If so, were we not setting a condition on our love for them? And if we were setting a condition on it, was it really God's love, or was it our own? Only if the love in us is rooted as has its source in God will we be able to continue to love when there is no prospect of an obvious result, or when our own need for affirmation and appreciation is not being met, or when the subject of our love is unlovable and unlovely.

Real love does not depend on loving feelings. It does not depend on the other's loveable qualities. It does not depend on their response to our love. Only the love of God in us can carry the burden of expectation that Paul lays on it. Love that does not fail is a world away from the things that human love demands of it. It is a love that accepts that to truly love is hard.

Prayer.

Father, when you call us to a love that does not fail, you are calling us to the possibility that we will one day have to love sacrificially out of your love in our hearts rather than out of our limited, human ability to love. We accept that your love is not a feeling that comes and goes, but a deliberate decision to will and act in the best interests of another person, and continues to do so for as long as you require it. Please show me, Lord, how to be rooted in your love so that it will flow into and through me into the lives of others. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.