

Love Never Fails!
Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 4/20/2025

My message this Easter morning is entitled Love Never Fails. My text is found in 1 Corinthians 13:8 which says: ***Love never fails.***

What does that mean? Well, the Amplified Version says it this way:
Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end].

Robertson's Word Pictures says this means that love survives everything! It cannot be extinguished and it can never end.

The biblical word for fail is the Greek word *pipto*. In my study I found that the word *pipto* dates back to classical Greece and generally means to fall from a high position.

It can mean to fall from a position of strength to a place of weakness.
 To fall from a place of victory to a place of defeat.
 To fall from a place of blessing to a place of misfortune.
 To fall from a place of fulfillment to a place of disappointment.
 To fall from a place of success to a place of failure.

Paul uses this word to affirm the eternal truth that God's love never ends, never loses strength, never gets defeated, never diminishes, never disappoints and never ever fails!! Human love will fail you. It will let you down and disappoint you. But God's love never disappoints and never fails. It is a love that can always be depended on and is always reliable.

God's love is not like our love which can be based on fickle feelings. God's kind of love - called agape - is the deliberate desire for the highest good of another, which reveals itself in sacrificial action towards others regardless of their condition or worth.

True love can only be known by the actions it prompts. I John 3:18 says:
Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

God loves in action and truth and today we will look at five characteristics of God's love revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As I preach – my prayer for you is found in Ephesians 3:17-19

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

1- God's Love Never Fails to be Unconditional

It is not I'll love you if, or I'll love you because but, I'll love you period. In other words – God's love is "in spite of" not "because of." God loves us in spite of what we do, not because of what we do.

Most of us do not have much experience with unconditional love. Most of what we call love is conditional. We tend to give love if we receive love and withhold love if our needs are not met. But, agape love is much more radical than that. It is doing what is best for the other person whether they deserve it or not. This is so true that God even loves the unlovable.

When I think about that – I think about how Jesus loved Judas. The Easter story begins with Judas betraying Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And the story of Judas shows us that no matter how much you think God loves you – He loves you more than you can imagine! God loves us when we don't deserve it.

If anyone ever deserved to not be loved, it was Judas. Judas was a thief who stole from the ministry. Judas was the one who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. To my mind – Jesus had every reason not to love Judas. But He loved Him anyway!

Have you ever thought about how lovingly Jesus treated Judas throughout their time together? Jesus chose Judas as a disciple. Judas was one of the inner circle of people who were closest to Jesus. He lived with Him virtually every day of Jesus' ministry. And Jesus did not say, "Okay – I chose twelve, but I'm only sending out eleven with power and authority. Everyone has power except Judas!" No! He gave Judas the same power and authority He gave the others.

Judas was one of the disciples who healed the sick. Judas was one of the disciples who helped feed the 5,000. And you'll never see Jesus treating Judas any differently from the way He treated the others!

You may think Jesus did not know Judas would betray Him. WRONG! John 6:64 says: ***Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.***

Yet Jesus treated Judas with the same compassion as the others.

Think about the Last Supper. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet – He included Judas. Jesus stooped down to wash the feet of Judas and all along He knew that those very feet were about to take Judas down the street that very night to betray Him to those who would kill Him.

And up until the very end, none of the others suspected Judas. Why? Because Jesus never treated Judas any differently than the other disciples. This is the unfailing love of God! Lamentations 3:22-23 says:

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin anew each morning.

Aren't you glad for that! God's love never fails, never ends, never lessens, never falters, never ever can be stopped. His love never fails!

This is the same love that has forgiven you for all the wrong you've done! You are not loved by God because of how great you are – but because of how great your Savior is! This is the unfailing love of God!

2- God's Love Never Fails to Give

The nature of God's love is to give. 1 John 4:9-10 says:

This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

We experience the power of God's love when we receive the gift of salvation through His son, Jesus Christ. That's the greatest gift of all. But that's not all God gives. 1 John 4 goes on to say in verses 13-14

We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

Because God loves us, He sent His Son to die for us.

Because God loves us, He sent His Spirit to live in us.

Because God loves He gives and because God loves He forgives.

3- God's Love Never Fails to Forgive

One of the most amazing examples of the unfailing love of God is found at the scene of the crucifixion. Before I read that, I want to read Matthew 5:43-44 where Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

This is not a natural thing to do - but it's how God's love acts. And Jesus did not just love in word, but in action. He put His command from Matthew 5 into action when He was being crucified. Luke 23:34 says that while the soldiers were nailing Christ to the cross, ***Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they do."***

He did not mean that they did not know they were crucifying someone. He meant

that they did not know who it was they were killing. They did not know that they were crucifying the One who was dying for their sins! Yet, even while they were in the act of killing Him, Jesus forgave them! This is love that never fails to forgive! Isaiah 43:25 says:

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and I will remember your sins no more.

When God forgives, He chooses not to keep a record of our wrongs. Psalm 103:12 says:

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

This means He removed your sins so far that you can't find them! So far that there's no trace of them! They are removed, erased, totally gone, completely taken away! That's the unfailing love of God and that's good news!

4- God's Love Never Fails to Care

In the cultural context of the time when Jesus lived, the oldest son in a family was obligated to care for his widowed mother. John 19:26-27 says that while Jesus was hanging on the cross:

Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing near her. He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.

By entrusting Mary to John, Jesus fulfilled a family responsibility but also demonstrates His unfailing love for Mary and John. Jesus consciously cared for His mother to the end, showing that even on the cross His attention was directed to others and not Himself.

If there was ever a moment when Jesus deserved to be self-focused, surely this was it. He was experiencing the indescribable pain of the most horrific, tortuous form of execution ever devised by man. Yet, because of His unfailing love, He remained focused on others to the very end.

5- God's Love Never Fails to Restore Those Who Fail Him

The resurrection is all about change. Think about it. God took the worst possible situation – the death of His Son – turned it around, used it for good and changed the world. **The resurrection changed history and resurrection power is still changing people today! That is one of the most powerful proofs of the resurrection of Christ!**

Mark 16:1-7 tells about the women who went to the tomb of Jesus after His

crucifixion and found the stone had been rolled away. They went into the tomb and saw an angel who said:

"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples - and Peter - that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

Go tell His disciples AND Peter. Peter was one of the disciples, why single him out? Jesus singled Peter out because of the massive failure he had just committed by denying the Lord. In fact, Peter had failed the Lord many times. I studied Peter's life and found 10 major failings including: opening his mouth when he should have kept it shut, falling asleep when he should have been praying, rebuking Jesus to His face.

But the big failure happened after Jesus was captured in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had said that all the disciples would soon desert Him, but Peter argued with Jesus and said he would never forsake Him. And within a matter of hours, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Luke 22:60-62 says that after the third denial:

Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown Me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Can you imagine that look, that feeling of failure? That shame? Fortunately, failure is not final! Jesus restored Peter – even after all these failures.

Here's how it happened. After the death of Jesus, Peter figured it was all over. He had failed as a disciple and now Jesus was dead. So, what did he do? He did what many people do - you go back to your old life. So, Peter decided to go back to his old life – fishing. And the God of unfailing love met him right where he was.

John 21:7-17 says the disciples were fishing and they saw Jesus on the shore. ***As soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."***

Jesus asked Peter two more times if he loved Him.

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

Many people get on Peter's case because when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me" – He used the Greek word agape – which is the highest form of love – the God-kind of love – unconditional, sacrificial love. But when Peter answered – he did not say, "I agape you" - he said, "I phileo you." Phileo love is a lesser love - the love between friends.

So, when Jesus was asking, "Do you love me more than anything?" Peter responded, "I'm your friend." He was only committing to a lesser love. Why did Peter respond this way? I think it's because he had learned an important lesson.

In the past, He had bragged that he loved Jesus more than anyone. He bragged that he would never forsake Jesus even if everyone else did. Yet, by that fire in the courtyard, Peter did deny the Lord.

Now – Jesus recreated the scene by lighting another fire on the seashore. Jesus singled Peter out and He asked him 3 times if he loved Him - three times – One time for each time Peter had denied Christ. But this time, Peter was humbled broken man. This time he did not overstate his love for the Lord. All he could bring himself to say was, "Yes, I'm your friend."

I believe Peter was braced for being rebuked, chastised, disciplined or even rejected by Jesus. But instead, the God of grace and mercy sought Him out to love on him.

The failure Peter was reliving, Jesus overcame by forgiving. Jesus did not disown him, instead He atoned him. Instead of rejecting Peter, Jesus reconnected with Peter. Peter failed the Lord greatly, but the unfailing love of God restored him.

And a few chapters later in the book of Acts you will find Peter preaching to thousands of people on the day of Pentecost and 3000 were saved. You will see him dragged before the authorities and threatened with death if he did not stop preaching. But he didn't stop!

What changed this impetuous man who failed often into one the greatest influences in the early church? What turned this man who so often blurted out the wrong thing into the one who preached on the day of Pentecost and 3000 were saved? What changed this man with little spiritual insight into the one eventually wrote two books of the Bible?

These changes started when he met the resurrected Lord face to face. Peter started over after he had given up because Jesus sought him out and restored him.

Peter was changed by the power of love and the power of resurrection! And God's love and power are still changing people today. That means they can change you! Romans 8:38-39 says:

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,

neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because of that love, God never gives up on you!
 Even though you've made a huge mess of things, God still loves you!
 Even though others forsake you, He will never leave you or forsake you!
 Even though others' love is conditional, God's love is unconditional!
 Even though other people's love has limits, God's love has no limits!
 God loves you at your best and loves you at your worst!
 God loves you when you're up and loves you when you're down!
 God loves you when you succeed and loves you when you fail!
 God loves you with an unfailing love!

Now some people go to extremes with that. They act like love is the only attribute of God. And they define love as tolerance. Some people believe God will tolerate any belief and any action. Wrong! Some people think because God is love I can do whatever I want with no consequences. Wrong! Some people believe that because God is love all people will be saved and no one will go to hell. Wrong! God's love won't save you. God's love made the way to save you and that way is called faith in Jesus Christ! John 3:16 says:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus did not die in order to make God love us! He died because God already loved us.

The cross is the ultimate expression of God's love for us! So – if you're ever tempted to doubt God's love for you, look at the cross and the empty tomb! Romans 5:8 says:

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The question then becomes: What should we do? Romans 10:9-10 tells us:

***If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.***

The resurrection is true and that same power that raised Christ from the dead can give you a brand-new life.

Jesus already died for you and rose from the dead for you!

Your part is to believe it in your heart and confess it with your mouth.

Do this and you will be forgiven and your life will be made new in Christ!