

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO

# Corinthians



**LOVE  
DOES  
STUFF**



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*Corinthians*



**LOVE**

## And yet I will show you a more excellent way

I may speak in the languages of men or of angels, but if I have not love, I am just a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> I may have the gift of prophecy and be able to fathom all mysteries, and I may have the faith to move mountains, but if I have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> I may give all I possess to the poor and hand over my body to hardship that I may boast, <sup>[b]</sup> but if I have not love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> Love does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.



# Actions that preach the Gospel

- Waiting patiently is love
  - Not needing to be heard first, not having a short fuse, not being touchy ... is love.
- Not keeping a record of wrongs – nursing our anger
  - Not bearing a grudge, not avoiding talking to certain people (inc. in church) who have upset you .... is love
- Paul's list
- If we don't get this right, then all the latest theology, house-group discussions, quiet times, giving money ....is a waste of time

# So **THIS** love is not about feelings

- Feelings are great BUT this ...



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Corinthians. The presence of these fragments by the first century

**This love that DOES stuff ...**

1. Is a single act
2. Can make us vulnerable
3. Will change us

*... let's talk about how SIMPLE this love is*

# LOVE is a single act

- Love is something to do now
  - ... not to think about for later
  - ... not to go and pray about
  - ... not “strategic”
- The world LOVES strategies – big plans
  - Work, Government, even Church!
- We need plans as well, but at the “atomic level” God’s kingdom is built thru loving acts



# Love is a single act ... that requires us to be bold

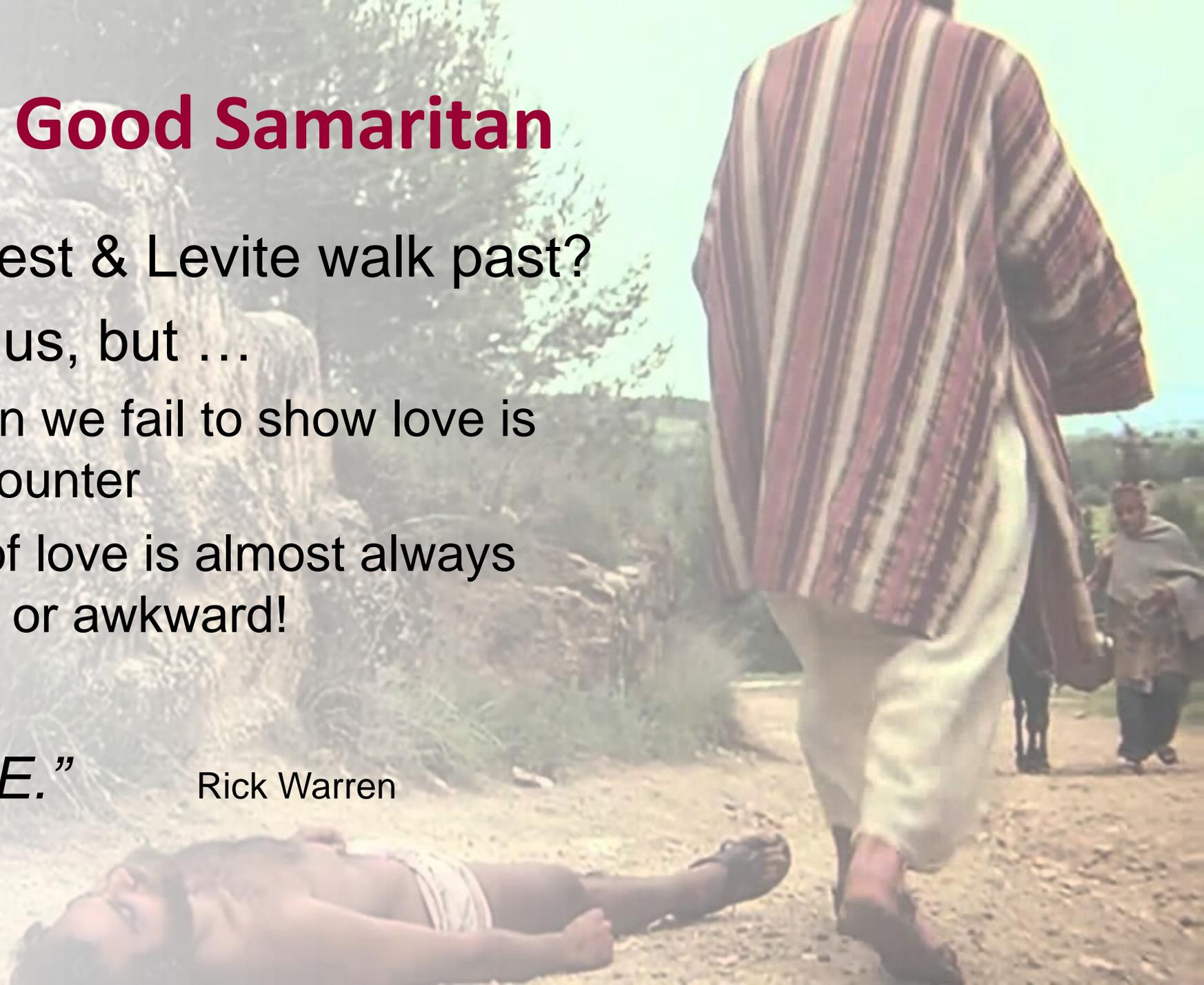
- Doing love takes guts!
- It means saying things we prefer not to say ...
- It means encountering people we prefer not to meet ...
  - The person we don't want to talk to in church
  - The unpopular person at work / college / neighbour
  - The elderly relative with dementia
  - The single mum who can't pay bills
  - Choosing to watch the news from ... Yemen, Myanmar ....
- And we don't have to give money to show love

# Example: The Good Samaritan

- WHY did the priest & Levite walk past?
- Jesus didn't tell us, but ...
  - Often the reason we fail to show love is we fear the encounter
  - The single act of love is almost always inconvenient ... or awkward!
- *“Love is spelt:*

*T. I. M. E.”*

Rick Warren



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# Showing love can make us vulnerable

- Not a doormat
- In an equal relationship:
  - Love is a kind of weakness in our world
  - A world that despises weakness
- We make ourselves vulnerable when ...
  - we say “I’m sorry”
  - we hold back – we don’t shoot an insult back
  - we choose to make a positive comment

# Showing love can make us vulnerable ...

- ... which is to be Christ-like (and it's hard)
- But this is a glimpse of how God's Kingdom works
  - God doesn't need a strategy to dominate the world ..
  - He needs tiny acts of goodness through which he wins the world
- “Mustard seed economics”
  - Don't make sense to the world
  - Like a daisy coming thru the concrete ...
  - ... God's kingdom - engaging in small acts of mercy



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# Small acts of love change us

An old example and new one

- Gleaning [Leviticus 19:9-10](#)

When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing along the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground. Don't strip your grapevines clean or gather the grapes that fall off the vines. Leave them for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the Lord your God.



... WHAT? ... WHY?

- The poor will be doing something as well
- YOU will have to think and you will be changed
- Or foodbanks - Love changes us
- If it's uncomfortable, if it's inconvenient, if it's awkward ...

# Small acts of love change ... *everything*

- This is why people were confused by Jesus
- They wanted someone to sort the Romans out:
  - *“... what’s the big plan? Show us THE STRATEGY Jesus!”*
  - *... “this fellow spends his time eating with thieves and prostitutes and talking about some Kingdom that’s not quite here ...? What good is THAT!”*
  - *“Put away your sword Peter ....”*

A daisy breaking thru the concrete

... a speck of goodness ... in a sea of blackness



# The daisy breaking thru the concrete is

- ... the angry response you could give but choose not to...
- ... the patient smile which is not how you feel ....
- ... your hand on the shoulder of someone who has never liked you ...
- It takes people by surprise
- Doesn't make sense ...seems weak, seems foolish ....but such is the Kingdom of God!

# And as this “weakness” breaks through we see the nature of the Kingdom of God

*Jesus points to a new order of things where outsiders are in,  
while those who smugly believed themselves to be at the  
centre of God's purpose suddenly find they have excluded  
themselves from the party.*

*Where the experts are the fools*

*... Where children are the wise ones*

*.....Where angels visit shepherds*

*.....and where women are the first resurrection witnesses”*

The oblique nature  
of God's purposes

Jeff Lucas

## **And yet I will show you a more excellent way**

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love



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# Astonishingly this is the way that God achieves his purposes, transforming our hearts as he does

- Power seeks to dominate **but love** seeks to woo
- Power seeks to enforce from above **but love** seeks to fascinate from below
- Power says: what's the 5 year plan? **but love** says: do a single act, today
- Power seeks to enforce the established order **but love** seeks to do new thing

