

The Greatest Gift – Part 2

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1 Corinthians 13:4-7

We return once again to our study on the heart of love. Actually this is the second part of a series in 1 Corinthians 13, if you will take your Bibles and turn there. We have been focusing on the greatest gift which is the gift of love.

This has been a very practical study, thus far, and it will continue to be so, a study that leaves none of us unscathed by sacred rebuke as many of you have already indicated to me. But we, nevertheless, feel the love of the Spirit of God who continues to teach us these things that we might experience all of the Lord's blessings.

If you study the Lord Jesus' sermons what you will find is that he spent much more time speaking about our duty than he did doctrine. That is not to mitigate the importance of Bible doctrine. We are to teach that as well. But it is interesting that he spoke more about duty than dogma. He spoke more about loving our neighbor and our enemies than he did about the doctrines of grace, the doctrine of the atonement or whatever. And there was a reason for that. And the reason is so that man could see his duty, his obligation before the Lord before the law and recognize, through utter despair, that there is no way he could live up to that and then in his despair be driven to the good news of the gospel of Christ.

You see, God's holy standard exceeds not only our will, but our desire. Apart from the Lord's transforming grace, we have absolutely no desire for God. Therefore as we see repeatedly through Scripture, had he not chosen us, we would have never chosen him. And no man can possibly be like Christ and love the way we are commanded to love unless God does something to him, unless God transforms his heart. And only when the heart is transformed will a man be able to understand the glorious doctrines of the Word. Otherwise all of it is foolishness to him.

And, likewise, believers must be reminded that love fulfills the law. You will recall the apostle Paul said in Romans 13 verse 10, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."¹

So we come together, once again, to be reminded of the priority as well as the power of love. So, following Jesus' example, I am compelled to preach our duty in the acts of love. So we come, again, to 1 Corinthians 13.

You will recall that the apostle Paul here is speaking to what I would call Calvary Bible Church of Corinth where the dear saints there were immature. They were carnal. Of course, we would like to believe that we are much more spiritual than they were. But, nevertheless, we look at the written record and we see that they were factious. They were carnal.

And yet they were the recipients of the very best teachers. They had Apollos as one of their teachers. They had Cephas. They even had the apostle Paul. We read that they were not lacking in any spiritual gift. They had all that was necessary to edify the Church, but

¹ Romans 13:10.

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the Church was in chaos because they were misusing the gifts. They were not walking in the Spirit and therefore they were not manifesting the most important fruit of the Spirit, namely love.

Rather than humbly serving one another with self sacrificial, self humiliating, self controlled love, they were not content with the gifts they were given. They wanted to seek the more showy gifts and it was bedlam. It was chaos. People were pretending they had gifts that they didn't have, especially the gift of languages, the gift of tongues as well as the gift of prophecy. And so these gifts were being counterfeited.

Basically, the Church had descended into an abyss of selfishness and pride. They were ruled by their flesh, not by the Spirit. So the Spirit was grieved. He was quenched. Christ was dishonored. Their testimony of the gospel was compromised and the Church was in disarray. There was no unity within the Church and, obviously, they had lost their power. The saints, therefore, were forfeiting blessing in their life. They were living under a cloud of divine chastening, like, perhaps, some of you.

We all must learn that the greatest and most important gift is that of love. It is crucial for unity in our family. It is crucial for unity in the Church. In fact, Peter says in 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers [what?] a multitude of sins."² And, boy, there are a multitude of them in this room. You will have your hands full just with mine. And without love that is quick to forgive and to forget sins that are committed against us, we would be in a mess.

So Paul was teaching that without love nothing that we do is of any value. We are just merely noisy gongs and clanging cymbals. In other words, we are just as worthless as the pagan worship that is out there. As a person we are nothing. We are a spiritual nobody. We have nothing to contribute, nothing really worthy of praise.

So in 1 Corinthians 13 I have divided the chapter into four sections. We, last week, looked at the absence of love in the first three verses. Today we are going to look at the attributes of love in verses four through seven even though I won't get through all of them. And then later on we will look at the assurance of love and the ascendancy of love.

So, once again, let's humble ourselves before the Holy Spirit and examine our lives in light of his holy standard, his righteous standard instead of our own biased standard that always favors us. I want so much for us to see Christ and for Christ to be formed in us. So, the attributes of love.

First of all, may I remind you that the word "love" in English can be used in many different ways. And, because of that, it is sometimes difficult for us to understand God's meaning of the word "love."

I might say, for example, that I love my horse. You might say that you love your shoes. You might say, "I love my Sunday school teacher or I love my country." But that kind of

² 1 Peter 4:8.

love is a very different love than I would have for my wife or for my family. I could say that I love my church family. But I also love my biological family and you all know that there is a shade of difference there.

In the original language there are different words to make these distinctions. Unlike in the English, the word love just kind of covers it all. And this makes it extremely difficult for us to understand the self sacrificing kind of love that we see here in the text before us.

For example, in Greek, some of these different words to differentiate love would be like the word **EROS** (e-ros). We get our word “erotic” from that and it is the love a man and a woman would have for each other embracing all aspects of sexual desire. It is a term, by the way, that is not even used in the New Testament. But the Greeks would have understood that kind of love.

There is also the **PHILEO** (fil-eh'-o) love. We get “Philadelphia” from that, the city of brotherly love. And that is the most common word for love used in the Greek language and it is used frequently in the New Testament. It defines the kind of fondness and friendship that develops amongst people who are attracted to each other and build relationships. It was especially used to describe things like hospitality and a common concern for one another. However, in Greek, it had no religious connotation.

And then there is the **AGAPE** (ag-ah'-pay) love, the word that is used most here in the New Testament to describe that self sacrificing love, that love of the will that acts, the type of love that would describe the overwhelming depth of the love of God for sinners and the love that we are to have even for our enemies. And that is the term that you have here in 1 Corinthians 13.

We must understand that this kind of love that is required of us is not a feeling. It is not an emotion, but an act of the will, a decisive, determined choice. God commands us to love our neighbor, not feel good about them. Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” He didn't say, “Have an emotional affection towards them.” Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, et cetera. You see, again, love is action. It is not an abstraction. It is a determination, not an emotion. It is a choice, not a feeling. And I might also add it is a command, not an option.

In Ephesians five beginning in verse one the apostle Paul reminds us saying, “Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”³

Now, it is fascinating here in verses four through seven as we look at this text we see that in the English primarily there are the use of adjectives to describe love in our English translation. But they are all verbs in Greek because they all indicate action, indicate deeds, behaviors.

³ Ephesians 5:1-2.

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Think of it this way. Love must be described rather than defined. This is why I am calling this section, “The attributes of love.” What does love look like? How does it act? What are its characteristics? And in verses four through seven there are 15 attributes that Paul uses to describe the kind of love that we should manifest, 15 specific behaviors the Corinthian believers were admonished to do and likewise that we are to do.

And I might add that if these, dear friends, are missing in your life, then what you do for Christ amounts to nothing. You will simply forfeit blessing in your life. You will be working in the flesh and what you do will be of the flesh, not of the Spirit.

Let me read to you how this section would be interpreted as verbs rather than adjectives. Verse four. “Love is [being] patient, love is [acting with kindness].”⁴ Again, keep in mind, love is... He is not saying love is a feeling of patience, but rather love practices patience. He is not saying that love is a feeling of kindness, but rather love practices kind actions towards others.

He would go on to say love is not acting with jealousy or envy. Love is not bragging. It is not being arrogant. It is not acting unbecomingly. It is not seeking its own things. It is not acting provoked or you might say irritated. Love is not taking into account a wrong suffered. Love is not rejoicing in unrighteousness, but love is rejoicing with the truth. Love is bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.

Now, some of the Corinthians, at this point, hearing this read would have said, “Wow. We are really missing the boat.” And then there would be others who would kind of fold their arms like this and kind of set back and say, “Boy, I hope Mildred is hearing this.” And you look over at Mildred and Mildred is giving her husband an elbow, hoping that he will hear it.

And it is easy for us to fall into that category. But I want you to examine your life very closely as I have had to do mine. And if you are brutally honest, you will see on every one of these you will be just like me, guilty, in need of repentance, in need of more work.

First of all, the first attribute in verse four. “Love is patient.”⁵ This, again, is another fruit of the Spirit. It means suffering long or to be long suffering, to be long tempered as the old English would say. To make it even more practical it means to patiently endure difficult people. It is the opposite of having a short fuse. Get the picture?

Sometimes I hear people say, “Well, yeah, she is impatient and she got that from her mother.” No, she didn’t. She gets that from her sin nature, all right? It is choosing to bear offenses over and over again without retaliation. In other words, it is just the opposite of what we see in our Hollywood movies all the time. It is not the “go ahead and make my day” kind of attitude. It means to be repeatedly insulted and injured without striking back even though you may have the power to do so.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:4.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:4.

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We can be thankful that God is the prime example of this. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read the Lord is, quote, “patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”⁶ And Paul summarized this well in Ephesians four beginning at verse one where he entreats us to, quote,

Walk... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I ask you. Are you a patient person? Ask those who know you best. Think about those little cues that you give people around you when you are impatient, things like blowing air, rolling your eyes, tapping your fingers, shaking your head, stomping out of the room, barking orders. We snap at each other.

Aren't you glad that we are aren't living in one of those reality shows where people could see all of that? Of course, we can always justify our impatience because if people would just get with the program, we wouldn't have to do this. That is the idea.

Impatience can be seen in the WalMart mother who all of the sudden unloads on her child without realizing that she has no idea how to discipline that child and has left that child unto itself since its birth.

Some things really try our patience. Let me be honest with you. I will give you the first few in my list. I cannot stand bullies and I get impatient with them very quickly. I have a hard time with bad drivers that cut me off, that take my parking spot. I have a very hard time with controlling people and with undisciplined children that cry and scream in order to manipulate the people around them. Now, I am sure that some of you would agree with my list, and I am sure that you have your own list. But the Lord gives us many opportunities to deal with our patience, or the lack there of.

Well, let me give you a more subtle example, but one that is even, perhaps, more trying, especially in the Church. Think how you feel when someone in the Church is constantly criticizing you or your children. The flesh says, “I am going to get even. I am going to show you.” And then we begin to see little ways to kind of show out. We look for an opportunity to slander that person, to malign them. We can't wait to get to some friend and say, “You are not going to believe what so and so said.”

This is what was happening in Corinth. But, beloved, love does not act that way. Even though the flesh demands otherwise, love will patiently endure.

I might also add that in the Greek culture of that day, this was absolute foolishness, because it was a virtue to get even. It was a virtue to retaliate. And so naturally the culture understood it that way and the people brought all of that into the Church. And, I believe, things are very similar to this day.

⁶ 2 Peter 3:9.

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A second attribute in verse four we read that love is kind. In other words, love acts with kindness. You see, this is how patience will express itself, with acts of kindness. The word “kind” in the original language means to show one’s self useful or to act benevolently.

Think about it. Patience will endure injustices and then kindness will come behind that and graciously serve the perpetrators of the injustice. Kindness desires the welfare even of an enemy. Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. And this, again, is a behavior. We read in Matthew five and verse 40 he says:

And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.⁷

Now, can you imagine being in a church like that?

Beloved, our lives are to be living examples of people who will not only endure persecution and endure injustice, but then turn right around and respond with acts of kindness, with benevolence.

Again, Christ is our example. Paul tells us in Titus three verse four, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.”⁸

I can hear it now. Some of you are saying, “Ok, now wait a minute, pastor. You know, it is one thing for me to hold my tongue and try to bite my tongue when somebody chronically and consistently mistreats me. But you are going over the top to say that I have got to turn around and do kind deeds to these kind of people.”

You know, if you are saying that, you are not doing this from your heart. Even your love and your patience that you think you have is really nothing more than of the flesh, not a fruit of the Spirit. You are just gritting your teeth rather than that being something that flows from you because you are surrendered to the Spirit of God and you realize, “Lord, these people that are doing this, yes, it is difficult, but I understand that you who are most holy are the one who is most offended rather than me is who is least holy. So, Lord, this is all about you, not about me. Therefore you are asking me to respond in a way that may raise the probability that this person begins to see you in a fresh way. God, I want to be that kind of a person that you can use in order that this person can begin to see the glory and the grace of Christ.” That is the attitude.

Beloved, are you kind to those you claim to love? Husbands, how about it? Are you kind to wife? Wives, to your husband? Parents, to your children? Children, to your parents, to your friends? Are you kind to the weird guy in church that nobody wants to be around? Or do you just kind of ignore him or her?

⁷ Matthew 5:40-41.

⁸ Titus 3:4-5.

Aren't you glad the Lord is kind to us? The Lord said in Matthew 11 verse 30, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me... for my yoke is easy."⁹ The word "easy" is the same word for kindness. Jesus is saying, "Come to me. I want you to submit to me and experience my kindness towards you as I demonstrate to you my love for you and as I serve you with my generous acts of grace." That is the idea.

A third attribute in verse four, he says, "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous."¹⁰ **ZELOO** (dzay-lo'-o) in Greek. We get our English word "zeal" from that. It means to earnestly desire something. It is the same term used in chapter 12 here in 1 Corinthians, verse 31 where it says, "But earnestly desire the greater gifts."¹¹ Actually, that is in the indicative. It reads better, "But you earnestly desire the greater gifts." It is a statement of fact, not an imperative command. You see, the people were wrongly desiring the greater gifts. And so here in chapter 13 we should interpret the same term in the same way. And so this idea of jealousy means to covet something earnestly. It has the sense in other places where it is used in the original language to describe being heated to the point of boiling with envy and with hatred and with anger.

This is the first of eight negative attributes of love. These are the things that love will not do.

We are all so prone to this, aren't we? This is just such a metastasizing corruption. It is such a wicked sin. And it is interesting in Scripture very often where you see the word "jealousy" it will have a word right after that, jealousy and strife because jealousy always produces strife.

In Proverbs 14 verse 30 we read envy is "rotteness to the bones."¹² In other words, jealousy will produce a suffering in you like a painful and incurable disease. In Proverbs 27 verse four we read, "Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, But who can stand before jealousy?"¹³

You think that this doesn't apply to you? Just check your heart the next time the coach lets the other kids play while yours sits on the bench. Just check your heart the next time other kids receive some accolade in church and you feel like your kid is being overlooked. Just check your heart, young people, when a very attractive young lady enters the youth group and you hear some of the girls saying, "I don't think she is that cute." Just check your heart when someone less qualified than you gets the position of prominence, when someone is more gifted than you is asked to teach the Sunday school class you have been teaching for years. You gradually begin to boil with jealousy and with envy.

⁹ Matthew 11:29-30.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:4.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:31.

¹² Proverbs 14:30.

¹³ Proverbs 27:4.

In James four verse one we read, “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious.”¹⁴ There is the same word. You become heated. You begin to boil with desire. “You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”¹⁵

As I think about it and jealousy is always fueled by two things: pride and discontentment. It really moves through four stages of increasing severity. Let me give this to you for a moment because I think this will be helpful. The four stages are: I want, I demand, I resent, I take.

It starts with I want. I want what you have. And then your teeth begin to grit together and grind and you begin to demand it. I insist I have what you have. And then you begin to resent. You say to yourself, “I resent you for having what you have.” And finally those attitudes lead to the behavior, the verb, I take. I am going to take what you have. Three attitudes lead to an action. I, I, I and then finally I am going to take.

You see, this is not love. Love is not jealous because instead of pride there is humility. Instead of being discontent there is contentment. Instead of saying, “I want,” we would say, “I am thankful. I am thankful for what I have.” Instead of saying, “I demand.” We would say, “I am content. I am satisfied with what God has given me.” Instead of saying, “I resent,” we say, “I rejoice! . . . rejoice with what God has given you.” And instead of saying, “I take,” we say, “I give. I give you congratulations. I give you my support. I give you my assistance.”

You see, that is what love does. In James three and verse 14 we read, “But if you have bitter jealousy...”¹⁶ It is interesting. The word “bitter” in the original language has with it the idea of a piercing, harsh, virulent, acidic type of thing. In other words, a jealousy that is eating at you and begins to eat at other people. If you have, he says, “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.”¹⁷ For we know that demons are a most common source of false wisdom. He goes on to say, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”¹⁸

Beloved, jealousy can be one of the most vile of all sins. Think about it. It was because of jealousy that Eve succumbed to Satan’s temptation. You want to be like God? Yeah, I would like to be like God. Because of jealousy Cain slew his brother Abel. Because of jealousy Korah sought to overthrow Moses. And you will recall that the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed him and his whole family whole. Because of jealousy the

¹⁴ James 4:1-2.

¹⁵ James 4:2.

¹⁶ James 3:14.

¹⁷ James 3:14-15.

¹⁸ James 3:16.

brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery. Because of jealousy Saul tried to kill David. Because of jealousy some of you don't like each other.

Jealousy is rampant in the church. I have seen it over the years in my life and ministry. I have seen it even with pastors, those that think they have got to have something bigger and better. They resent those with larger congregations, with greater prominence.

You know, it has been this way from the beginning. In the first century, some of the young preachers began to serve in the churches founded by Paul and others and some of them were jealous of the apostle Paul because of his accomplishments, because of his great giftedness, his reputation, his power, his apostolic authority. And in Philippians one verse 15 Paul said, "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife."¹⁹ There it is again, envy, jealousy and strife. The strife is the idea of rivalry that leads to discrediting somebody.

When Paul was in a Roman prison we learn that some of these new preachers that were gaining prominence began to say bad things about him. We don't know all that they said, but I am sure it was things like, "Well, finally, that little hunch back is, you know, out of commission. You know, God has put him in his place. He is in prison now."

That caused great distress to Paul. But what did Paul do? He acted in love with patience, with kindness. And there was no envy in him even though they were gaining the prominence and he is now kind of put out of commission. With that, here is what he said in Philippians one verse 15.

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then?²⁰

In other words, what am I supposed to do? How should I feel? How should I act? He answers it, he says, "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice."²¹

In other words, let the Lord deal with them. This is not my thing. The main thing is the gospel. It is about God in his glory, not me and my needs. Paul didn't allow his joy to be diminished by his critics or by his circumstances. He was just glad that the gospel was being preached, even if it was being proclaimed by some men that were envious, that were at times even slanderous.

You see, that is how love acts. It just doesn't become jealous towards another person. It never resents or envies the success of someone else.

¹⁹ Philippians 1:15.

²⁰ Philippians 1:15-18.

²¹ Philippians 1:18.

A fourth attribute in verse four, “Love does not brag and is not arrogant.”²²

“Brag” means to extol one’s self excessively, to talk conceitedly. It is to put yourself on display through boasting. If you ever get around a braggart, you will quickly learn that the conversation will always end up eventually about him. He cares nothing about anyone else, only about himself. He is not thinking in his heart, “I want to know about you.” But rather he is saying, “Let me tell you about me.”

You see this a lot in politicians. I have been around some of them. I have been around a lot of celebrities, a lot of Christian artists, sad to say. It is prevalent, it is common, this prima donna type of attitude.

It is also interesting. The braggart has no use for people who are not impressed with him or his accomplishments or his children or his possessions or whatever. The braggart is the one who is constantly running to find a stage and a spotlight so he can take his bow. He is not happy unless he is the center of attention.

Well, this was what was fueling much of the chaos in the Church at Corinth. They were seeking the showy gifts. They were the kings and queens of drama, especially when it came to speaking in tongues and prophesying, most of which was counterfeit. “Look at me. Look at me,” rather than “look at Christ.” So there was no edification, just self exaltation.

To give you the scene, do you remember when you were in kindergarten and it was time for show and tell and everybody can’t wait to show and tell and you are going to out do the other kids. How pitiful to see that in a church. Paul described this in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 26. “What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.”²³ In other words it was chaos, a cacophony of braggarts.

Bragging can take subtle forms. You know, we have turned it into an art form, I think, these days. Let me give you one of the subtle forms, parents that can’t wait to turn the conversation towards their kids. Have you ever read any of those Christmas letters? You all smile. People go down the lists of their child’s accomplishments.

“Yes, Mary is second grade, reading at a sixth grade level. We plan on maybe having her skip two or three, four grades. Johnny is in the sixth grade now. He is doing well, MVP of the soccer team. He has just written his second symphony, hopes to be president some day.” You know, you get all this stuff.

Friends, love doesn’t act that way. Love doesn’t brag.

²² 1 Corinthians 13:4.

²³ 1 Corinthians 14:26.

Ask yourself. How do I manipulate conversations so that it is all about me, so that I can put myself on display?

A fifth attribute follows this. “Love does not brag and is not arrogant.”²⁴ **PHUSIOO** (fo-see-o’-o) in the Greek. It is an interesting term. It means to blow up or to cause to swell. That is why the King James version translates it “puffed up.” “Love does not brag. It is not puffed up.” It means to inflate yourself. It means to be conceited, to be, as we would put it, full of hot air or to have the big head.

You see, this is more than the speech of the braggart. This is now describing the character of the braggart, the person who perceives himself to be superior and, therefore, acts that way. When you see it in the Church it is a terrible thing, a person who is conceited about their wisdom of spiritual things, their knowledge of Bible doctrine. It is the person who is typically quick to criticize, quick to correct.

I remember a man who was constantly talking about the gift of giving and would drop little things all the time about how much he was giving and then follow up with how important it is to be humble about our giving.

Or people that launch into teaching mode, especially when defending some pet preference. I can’t tell you how many times I have heard from dear, but arrogant people concerning everything from how I am a heretic because I don’t preach from the King James only to why guitars and drums are from the devil.

Recently one person launched into a diatribe about why churches need to meet in homes and do everything as a family unit. I got raked over the coals the other day when somebody accused me of being hyper Calvinist because we don’t have altar calls. The clear message is, “I am superior. My way is right.”

Beloved, I could give you many examples of me, but it would be far too embarrassing. We are all guilty here. Proverbs 16:18. “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”²⁵

Paul had to admonish the saint in Corinth about this and he warned in 1 Corinthians 4:6, he says don’t exceed what is written in other that no one of you “exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”²⁶

In other words, what makes you think that your position, that your group, that your guru is superior to everybody else?

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:4.

²⁵ Proverbs 16:18.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 4:6-7.

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He then goes on to speak in sarcasm. He says, “You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and I would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”²⁷ And then, in contrast to their love for the spotlight and their feelings of superiority, he goes on in verse 10 and he says, “We,” referring to the apostles, “are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.”²⁸ And then he strikes the final blow in verse 18. He says, “Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.”²⁹

And, of course, all of this is contrary to love and nothing more than a function of pride. I love the way John MacArthur put this. Quote, “Nothing is more self deceitful than pride. We are inclined to believe almost anything about ourselves if it is favorable,” end quote.

Spurgeon said, quote, “Of all creatures of the world, the Christian is the last man who ought to be proud. And yet, alas, we have had mournful evidence both in past history and in our own observation and worst of all in our own personal experience that Christian men may become lifted up to their shame.”

William Carey, the great English Baptist missionary was raised in a poor home in the late 1700s. He worked as a shoemaker to earn money for his family. He started when he was 15 years old. By age 25 he had taught himself a number of languages including Latin, Hebrew and Greek. He eventually became one of the greatest linguists in all of the world. He went on to India as a missionary and in that caste system he was frequently belittled because of his, quote, “low birth” as well as his former occupation.

It is interesting. There he translated the New Testament into Bengali. He translated the Old Testament into Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Urdu and many other languages. He wrote a number of dictionaries and grammars in numerous languages. He was considered to be the father of modern missions. And yet there was a fascinating story about him. At a dinner party an arrogant snob tried to publicly humiliate him and he said, quote, “I understand, Mr. Carey, that you once worked as a shoemaker,” to which Carey responded, “Oh, no, your lordship. I was not a shoemaker, only a shoe repairman,” end quote.

Beloved, when your only boast is in Christ you will find that you will be impervious to your critics and you will never be jealous towards others and your character will reflect the humble love of Christ because “love does not brag and is not arrogant.”

Our time is up. I think we will stop here. I think we are all sufficiently convicted of our own sin this morning. The next time we get together we will continue.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:8.

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 4:10.

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:18.

The Greatest Gift – Part 2

13

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Aren't you thankful, though, that the Lord chastens those he loves and that by the power of the Spirit we can grow in this wonderful grace of love?

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our life, for our good and for your glory I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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