

## The Greatest Gift – Part 3

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

My, what a taste of heaven to be able to hear the saint sing the songs of redemption, songs that the world could never know, nor would we apart from his grace.

1 Corinthians chapter 13, part three of a series I am entitling, “The Greatest Gift,” referring to the gift of love.

Will you turn there? I will just read the first seven verses. This morning we are going to look at verses five through seven.

1 Corinthians 13 beginning in verse one.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.<sup>1</sup>

For as long as I can remember, every time I have turned on the secular radio stations I hear one song after another on love, thousands of love songs as though the world is obsessed with love. For the fun of it, I did a little search on the internet. One thing that struck my eye was that the Beatles recorded 301 love songs. So they must have been experts on the subject. And yet, sadly, if you examine their sordid lives you will quickly discover that they knew nothing about the kind of love that God would have for us.

Sadly, the greatest purveyors of love today tend to be the entertainers, Hollywood, artists, people who are notorious for their immorality, their drug and alcohol abuse, their multiple divorces and partners, their homosexuality and their utter violence towards biblical Christianity. They are all about love when it comes to saving the whales or saving some animal, but it is perfectly all right to kill an unborn infant. Staggering, isn't it? It is little wonder the world is becoming increasingly unloving.

How often do you hear a news report extolling the virtues of love where they describe some person who manifested the love of Christ that was self sacrificial, self humiliating and self controlled? Certainly this is not the politician's priority nor that of our educators. So the world knows nothing of love. Therefore, beloved, we must show them. We must show them, not just tell them.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

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Let me ask you before we look at the text this morning, would those who know you best agree that you truly manifest the love of Christ? Or would they kind of shake their head and snicker a bit and say, “No, not if you really knew them. Oh, yes, they claim to love God and he puts on a pretty good show when people are looking and she is a good neighbor when everything is going well. But overall he or she lives for herself, himself, not for God, not for others. His checkbook and his calendar will tell you what his priorities really are. He is much more selfish than selfless.” I hope that is not what people that know you best would say about you. But I would implore you this morning to examine your heart very, very closely as we look at the text before us.

And may I also add that because the Spirit of God has gone to such enormous lengths to communicate these truths to us in his Word and even lay upon his servant’s heart to share this with you this morning, it stands to reason that he expects something in return? And may I tell you straight up what he expects is for you to be obedient to what you hear? Because he wants to bless you.

By hearing these things your level of responsibility to obey is going to be increased greatly. So you need to know that. And if you don’t want that you had better leave now. The discipline of a wayward son who fell prey to temptation of sin because of his youthful ignorance would be radically different from the discipline of a son who knew very clearly what the expectations were and then chose to disobey anyway. And, unfortunately, I fear that for some of you, you have done that in your life and therefore the Spirit has been grieved. The Lord is not blessing you. Perhaps the Spirit has just been quenched in you and I grieve for that because without love your relationships are going to fall apart, your marriage is going to be reduced to nothing more than a room mate status. Your families will begin to disintegrate. Your love for Christ will become really nothing more than cliché, not a reality. You will have no habit of prayer. You will end up not having an appetite for the Word of God, no compassion for the lost. Your Christian testimony, dear friend, will gradually wane to the point where it will be neither compelling nor contagious.

For people that don’t love, they just exist. They are surviving, not thriving. I hope that is not you. That is why this is so important. Your joy will be linked to your circumstances rather than to Christ alone. Things are going good, you are happy. Things aren’t going good, you are devastated and can’t function. All of that can be traced to your understanding of love and your obedience to what you know to be true. The fruits of the Spirit will not be hanging on your vine without love, the first of which will be love then joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control and so on.

So I admonish you to humble yourself this morning before these truths. I pray that they will pierce your heart as they have mine as I have meditated upon them. You need to be able to say not so much, “Yeah, I really need to change.” No, dear friends. You say, “I must change and I will change if it takes me to a cross.” That is the attitude.

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So we come to 1 Corinthians 13. I remind you, again, I have outlined it this way. First, the absence of love in verses one through three; then the attributes of love that we are looking at and we will finish up here today in verses four through seven; and then the next time we are together we will look at the assurance of love in verses eight through 12 and, finally, the ascendancy of love in verse 13.

So we come back to the attributes of love here in verses four through seven. Remember, last week we got through verse four. And may I remind you that as we study the concept of love biblically we learn very quickly that it is something that must be described rather than merely defined. And here in verses four through seven the apostle Paul gives the Church at Corinth—and therefore, all of us—15 attributes that describe the kind of love we are to manifest. Unfortunately, these were missing in the Corinthian Church.

He began in verse four by saying, “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant.”<sup>2</sup> That is what we looked at the last time and now we look at the sixth attribute in verse five.

Love “does not act unbecomingly.”<sup>3</sup> The term means to act with bad manners, to be rude, to be overbearing, to be insensitive to others. It is the opposite of being polite. To say it differently, the loveless person thinks only of himself.

Let me give you some examples. This is the self centered husband that humiliates his wife in public by staring at the cute waitress. This is the wife that finishes her husband’s sentences and corrects him in public. This is the guy that cuts in line. This is the woman that takes your parking spot that you have been waiting for at the mall. This is the guy that eats like a pig and usually looks like one cramming food in his mouth like he is starved and then sits back and burps. This would describe the woman with a full cart of groceries that pulls up to the 20 items or less checkout. This is the parent that screams nonstop at the refs and at the coach when things aren’t going right for little Johnny, who probably doesn’t have an athletic cell in his body. Well, you get the picture.

And then we come to church. We bring all that stuff to church. And we get all excited about the doctrines of grace. We get all excited about the doctrine of the atonement, about eschatology and all of these great and glorious things. And yet we have got all of this stuff in our life.

Well, that is what happened at Corinth. There were divisions and factions among them. The love feasts where they would come together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper was a disaster. As you read 1 Corinthians you discover that they would sit in their little cliques. The wealthier people would not share their food, but rather greedily consume it before the poor people would show up. Many of them were getting drunk with the wine. People were ruled by pride, not by love.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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1 Corinthians 11 verse 21, Paul says, “In your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.”<sup>4</sup> I find it interesting. Bad manners typically show up most at the dinner table.

Now we can very smugly say, “Well, I am glad I am not that way.” Oh, really? I have seen some of you fight to be first in line out here when it is time to eat. I have seen some of you turn your kids loose at church dinners and it looks like locusts descending upon a field, no manners, they take more than they can eat and start throwing it away, no sensitivity to others. And sometimes we might just end up sitting with our little group of friends or family and ignore other people who may be new to the church, who may not be part of our little group.

I have seen it on pizza night where sometimes the young people will be first in line and there is 40 or 50 people behind them and, as you know, the pizzas come out slowly. So there might be three or four pizzas on the table and some of you will pile four or five pieces on your plate with no sensitivity to people behind you. You will sit down and eat, cram it down your throat and be in line before some of the others even get their first piece.

Practical illustrations of acting unbecomingly. Love doesn’t act that way. Dear friend, let me ask you as I have had to ask myself. Where are you rude? Where are you insensitive to others? Where are you overbearing?

A seventh attribute in verse five. Love “does not seek its own.”<sup>5</sup> The word “seek” means to crave or demand something from someone. You see, love is the opposite of this. Love is never self seeking. Love is always seeking the well being of others because love is self sacrifice. Jesus, of course, is the perfect example of this. In Matthew 20:28 we read that he did not come to be served, but to what? But to serve. There you have it.

The self seeking person looks out for number one. The world must orbit around him. The family must orbit around him. Like a spoiled child, everyone must jump at his commands. And when he says, “jump” you are supposed to say, “How high?” on the way up. These are the “my way or the highway” folks at church. It reminds me of a sign that I have seen in several kitchens now. It said, “If momma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.” That is the idea.

Does this describe you? Does this describe you maybe at home? Maybe at Church? How do you respond to people when you don’t get your own way, when people don’t agree with your preferences? I remember once some parents absolutely pitching a fit—by the way, this was a number of years ago, so don’t worry—parents absolutely pitched a fit when we refused to let their daughter sing at church in terms of a solo. Mind you, there was very good reason for that.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:21.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5.

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I have seen people get irate because they have submitted a curriculum or a book to me, to the elders, wanting us to do a certain thing and we have discovered that it is inappropriate, maybe has some heresy in it and so we decline. And rather than saying, “Thank you, pastor. Help me understand,” they get angry, because they are seeking their own way. And for some people they seek their own way by just saying, “Just leave me alone. I will come to church, but just leave me alone. I will be there every now and then, but just leave me alone.”

The saints at Corinth were utterly consumed with seeking their own interests. Each little group had their opinion and every group was right. They were the correct group. “Well, we like Apollos better than Paul. Well, Paul is not that hot. Have you heard Cephas?” You know, on and on. These silly types of things. So this must have hit them rather hard and I confess it hits me hard. It should hit you hard. The apostle Paul said in Philippians two verse three:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.<sup>6</sup>

Ask yourself. Does this describe me?

I read about an inscription on a tombstone in a little village in England that read, “Here lies a miser who lived for himself and cared for nothing but gathering wealth. Now where he is or how he fares nobody knows and nobody cares.”

And I also read of another inscription in that same context that was on a tombstone in London in the courtyard at Saint Paul’s cathedral. And the last time I was in London I remembered this and I went and read this. And notice the contrast. On that tombstone it says, “Sacred to the memory of General Charles George Gordon who at all times and everywhere gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God.” There is a man who did not seek his own.

Beloved, imagine what it would be like in this precious church if we were all that way, if we could all somehow set aside our pride and use our gifts as the Spirit has given them to us to serve one another, not ourselves. Imagine what it would be like if this week our number one prayer request would be, “Lord, help me to know how I can build up my brothers and sisters in Christ at Calvary Bible Church. Help me see how I can use the gifts that you have given me to serve them and not myself.” To this end Paul admonished them in chapter 14 verse 12. He said, “Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”<sup>7</sup> That is what we need to be about.

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<sup>6</sup> Philippians 2:3-4.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:12.

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Well, an eighth attribute in verse five is love “is not provoked.”<sup>8</sup> **PAROXUNO** (par-ox-oo'-no) in the original language. We get our English word “paroxysm” from that. You don't hear that word much, but it means a convulsion or a sudden outburst of anger or emotion or some sudden action. It means to easily irritate or to arouse to anger.

If you want to get the picture, imagine the reaction of an irritable baby sucking on a pacifier and you just come up and jerk it out of his mouth. That is the picture here. Love is not provoked. You know, that is kind of cute in an infant, but it is disgusting in an adult. You see, love will not allow a man to have a short fuse and then explode in retaliation against someone when they have been offended. Love doesn't act that way.

I know some of you live with people like this. It reminds me of the old westerns where they get the nitroglycerin, put it in the saddle bag. They have got to be very, very careful because they are subject to exploding a highly volatile liquid and you all of the sudden bump it or jar it and all of the sudden, boom. You know what it is like in a family. There are certain subjects you just don't talk about because if you ever go there, boom. Somebody is going to blow up. Love doesn't act that way.

You know what it means to walk on egg shells around certain people at times? Otherwise they will pitch a fit, throw a tantrum. And usually these people are masters at telegraphing their bad mood. They want to make sure everybody knows that “I am in a bad mood.” That is the idea. “Children, don't upset your father, he is in a bad mood.” “Uh oh, look out. Momma is in a bad mood.” So the kids and the dogs and the cats all go to another part of the house.

By the way, may I say in all love? If you are a moody Christian you are filled with selfishness and pride. You are self absorbed and you are immature. Can you imagine Jesus being that way? “Oh, here comes the Lord. I can tell he is upset today.” Not at all.

You know if this describes you at home, please understand, according to 1 Corinthians 13 what you do at church is worthless to the Lord. It is worthless. So don't think you can act one way at home, one way in private and then come to church and do things for the Lord and expect it to somehow be of value to him because he says that without love, in verse one, you are just a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. It means, again, you are like the pagans. What you do is worthless. Or in verse two, you as a Christian, you are nothing. Verse three, what you do profits you nothing.

In all kindness, if you have a friend or a spouse or a child or whatever that acts that way, they need to be confronted, not tolerated. Proverbs 29:22 “An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.”<sup>9</sup>

In other words, his anger is going to be the tip of the iceberg of his sin. When you see an angry person, you can know for certain that underneath that are a multitude of other sins.

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5.

<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 29:22

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Young people, never date a hot head, never, ever, ever. Proverbs 22 verse 24 and five. It says:

Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, Lest you learn his ways, And find a snare for yourself.<sup>10</sup>

We know how frustrating it is to be someplace and all of the sudden you have a child that throws a tantrum, lays on the floor, kicks and screams and carries on and so forth. I remember each of my children tried the temper tantrum stunt once or twice. But the swift sting of discipline caused them to instantly realize that that strategy of sinful manipulation must be immediately and forever forsaken.

But we all know the little sinful stunts we pull when we want to get our own way, especially the person that is prone to being easily provoked. We have all got those little cues, you know? We come stomping into the room. We have kind of got a tight, you know, teeth are gritted together and we are huffing and we are puffing and we slam the door and kick the cat and say, “just leave me alone.” That is the attitude. Boy, there is an example of love. That person would make a great deacon. Wouldn’t you love to have that person for a Sunday school teacher.

A man who is easily provoked is a man obsessed with himself and has no concern for others. You know, this is behind the rage that we see in our society where people are constantly demanding their rights. They know nothing of Christian love.

I know in the past, a number of years ago, I have had people in this church physically as well as verbally assault me, get in my face and scream and explode in a tirade of rage over things that if I were to tell you, you probably wouldn’t believe me. But, beloved, this is always a sign of self centered pride, of a person who has no understanding of Christian love, because love is not provoked.

Let me digress for a moment and talk about this issue of anger. Ask yourself. Are you an angry person? And I might say that if you really want the answer, don’t ask yourself, but ask those who are closest to you. And if in your heart right now you are saying, “I just wouldn’t feel comfortable doing that,” well, then, you have got your answer. Because, you see, an angry person is too proud to ask and too selfish to repent. They’re masters in justifying their sin. “Well, I have a reason to be angry because, after all...” And then here comes the justification.

In Ecclesiastes 7:9, “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.”<sup>11</sup> At his core an angry man is selfish and proud, typically nursing some kind of a wounded spirit over some real or perceived offense or some series of disappointments, the angry woman that hates men, the angry racist that hates some other ethnic group, the

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<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 22:24-25.

<sup>11</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:9.

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over bearing, jealous, controlling boyfriend, the abusive spouse, the guy with the little man syndrome that feels like he has got something that he has got to prove or the defiant rap artist that hates the whole world and he is walking around with that look, you know. These people are ruled by their emotions.

Guys, you know what it is like. We deal with this a lot in the world. Somebody looks at you and they have that attitude of “what are you looking at?” You know, they are ready to fight. They wear their emotions on their sleeve. Here in the South we use the phrase “they are like an old sore tail cat.” I have never been around a sore tail cat, but I get the picture.

Proverbs 25 verse 28. “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, if you have no rule over your spirit, especially with respect to anger, you are exposed. You are vulnerable to evil thoughts and what you would really see as irresistible temptations. You are easy prey to the destructive marauders of offense. And, unfortunately, you will become increasingly vulnerable to that.

I have never known an angry person to become less angry. They always become more. They become more easily offended. This is unlike the man who guards against being irritated and angry, a man that rules his Spirit described in Proverbs 16:32. It says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.”<sup>13</sup>

May I warn you about this because I know that this is a significant issue in many homes? Let me ask you. What happens to a man who continually yields the members of his body to a particular sin like that of anger? Well, if you go to Romans chapter six and verse 16 you will see that that person will become the slave of that sin. It says you become the slave of the one whom you obey. So the sin will become your master. That is the point.

So as we look at Scripture, when a person, for example, continually gives himself over to folly, the Bible says he becomes a fool. He is called a fool. Proverbs 26 verse 11. “Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly.”<sup>14</sup>

Now, biblically the man who is increasingly dominated by sin and its consequences is ultimately classified by that sin. It is the idea of what we would call characterological sin, the sin defines their character, like a person that drinks all the time biblically is called a what? A drunkard. A person that lies all the time is called a liar. A person that is an adulterer or a fornicator or a homosexual, you get the idea. They are called those things. A fair weather Christian in James 1:8 is called, “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways,”<sup>15</sup> a heretic or a person who causes factions within the church according to Titus 3:10 is called a factious man. And they are to be shunned after they have been

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<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 25:28.

<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 16:32.

<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 26:11.

<sup>15</sup> James 1:8.

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confronted if they don't repent. Or a man prone to anger, as we see in Scripture is called an angry man, a hot tempered man. Ecclesiastes 7:9, is labeled "a fool."

These are the type of people we are called to avoid. And, dear Christians, if you are an angry person, if you are easily provoked, you simply must deal with that because if you don't deal with that sin which is an attitude that is the enemy of love, you are going to see your world unravel because the Lord will not bless you. He will not bless your marriage. He will not bless your family.

A ninth attribute in verse five, love, "does not take into account a wrong suffered."<sup>16</sup>

I think the King James it says, "Thinketh no evil." That is really not a very good translation because the word "take into account" translates the verb **LOGIZOMAI** (log-id'-zom-ah-ee). Now, I know that is technical, but it is going to be very important. I want you to stay with me here. This is crucial.

This verb means to reckon or to count or compute or calculate. It is an accounting term describing something that a bookkeeper would do in recording a transaction in a ledger for future reference. To put it very simply what he is saying here is love does not keep a record of wrongs.

Over the years I have spent thousands of hours counseling people and very often they will begin by wanting to give me their life story. And it is amazing to hear them rehearse in great detail how they have been mistreated over the years by somebody else. And sometimes they are describing things that happened years ago. But they are describing those things as if they happened yesterday. The wound is never allowed to heal. The hurt is always there.

Beloved, think of someone who has hurt you. Now, think in your mind of this ledger that you have where if I were to say, "Well, how has so and so hurt you, what have they done to you?" You would answer, "Well, I am glad you asked!" and you start rattling it all off on that list. Have you got that list in your mind?

Now, will you in your mind take that list and light a match to it and burn it? You don't keep a record of wrongs. Love doesn't do that. Why nurture the thorns and thistles of past wounds that are growing in the garden of your heart? Why do that? Let the Lord deal with them. "Vengeance is mine,"<sup>17</sup> says the Lord.

Do you realize that the Lord does not keep a record of wrongs? He doesn't do that. Psalm 32 verse one and two.

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 1:29.

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How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!  
How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not *impute* iniquity, And  
in whose spirit there is no deceit!<sup>18</sup>

Do you know what? There is that same verb in the Septuagint, **LOGIZOMAI** (log-id'-zom-ah-ee), *impute*. He does not impute. In other words, he does not count.

There, again, the accounting metaphor emphasizing the fact that there is nothing else that is owed. You see, the sinner has been justified or declared righteous by God. The psalmist there covers the whole gamut of sin and, therefore, the limitless breadth and the comprehensive nature of divine forgiveness. Our sins in that text, he says, have been forgiven. They have been covered. He does not impute.

“Forgiven” means literally in the original language they have been lifted. They have been carried away. Our sins, the burden of guilt have been removed. They have been covered.

Remember, we saw the first picture of that in the Garden of Eden with the innocent animal that God killed and covered Adam and Eve and that denotes God’s gracious atonement by which the sinner has been reconciled to him. His justice has been satisfied. Therefore, because of that, he refuses to consider that sin in any further judgment. It is a matter of the past. It is no longer a ground for his displeasure. He keeps no record of it. You see, Christ’s atonement is the covering and he made an end to our sin once and for all. So he does not impute or count our sin. He keeps no records of wrong.

In his magnificent description of the doctrine of justification, the apostle Paul said of Abraham in Romans four verse three, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS [here it is again] RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”<sup>19</sup>

And, again, “reckon” is rooted in the verb **LOGIZOMAI** (log-id'-zom-ah-ee). And here it means to enter into the account book. What did he enter into the account book here? That he is righteous because of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ.

And then in verse eight of Romans four Paul quotes Psalm 32:2. “BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”<sup>20</sup> Isn’t that precious? We see the same concept in 2 Corinthians 5:19. There we read that in Christ God was, quote, “reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”<sup>21</sup> There is the same thing, same verb. The Lord doesn’t keep a record of wrongs. He doesn’t take into account a wrong suffered.

Beloved, don’t you see the comprehensive forgiveness that we have in Christ?

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<sup>18</sup> Psalm 32:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 4:3.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 4:8.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19.

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Psalm 103 verse 10, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”<sup>22</sup> And in verse 12 we read that, “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”<sup>23</sup>

When I was a young man, I remember hearing a revival preacher talk about how that some day we are going to have to give account before the Lord. And he envisioned this big screen type of thing in heaven where it would be my turn and all of the sudden all of the sins of my life are going to be played on that screen. I tell you, I remember as a young man, I thought, boy, I am in for a world of hurt. I thought there was going to be no more tears in heaven, but this is... it really shook me. As a young man I had no idea that this man’s theology was errant. I just kind of believed him.

But, beloved, there is not going to be a big screen. And if there were a big screen, because God doesn’t keep a record of wrongs, the only thing that would be on the screen would be “righteous because of Christ.”

Jude 24 tells us in that great doxology that we are going to stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy. I am so thankful for that because the Lord doesn’t keep a record of wrongs. It doesn’t say that you are going to stand in his presence guilty with great sorrow. It doesn’t even say that you are going to stand in his presence forgiven yet exposed with great embarrassment. You are going to stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy.

Now, practically speaking when a brother or sister in Christ offends you or mistreats you, may I ask you, who is the most offended, you or God? You who are least holy or God who is most holy? Obviously it is God who is most holy. Now if the one who is most holy and most offended does not keep a record of wrongs, may I ask you, on what basis do you keep a record of wrongs? It doesn’t make any sense, does it?

Beloved, burn your little black book. And when you are tempted to pull it out and write it down, “Oh, there, she said it again or there he goes again. Boy, I am going to bring this one back up,” when you are tempted to do that, will you be reminded of the fact that the Lord doesn’t do that to you and rejoice in that! Because love does not take into account a wrong suffered.

A tenth attribute in verse six, love, “does not rejoice in unrighteousness.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, love does not find happiness in sin, whether it is your sin or somebody else’s sin. You see, love will not justify unrighteousness. It will not glory in unrighteousness. It will not flaunt or brag about unrighteousness. It will not delight in unrighteousness. Why would we take pleasure in that which God abhors?

This was happening in the Church at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians five we read that they were arrogant and even boasting about one of their members, a man who was having sex

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<sup>22</sup> Psalm 103:10.

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 103:12.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:6.

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with his step mother. And it was public knowledge. Paul warned them not to even associate with immoral people who have attached themselves to the Church. Instead of bragging about it or talking about those exploits he says in verse 12 to judge those who within the church and in verse 13 to remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

You see, why would I rejoice in something that the Lord finds abhorrent? And you might say, “Well, I am glad I don’t do that.” Oh, really? What type of music do you listen to?

What do you watch on television? For the fun of it, I checked out what was the top rated show right now and it is interesting how many of these reality shows which basically does exactly the opposite of this. They rejoice in unrighteousness. People want to see that stuff. The top rated one was called *Jersey Shore*. So I clicked. I looked on the internet. I had to immediately shut it down. It was pornographic.

And what is interesting, I heard of a Christian person who said it is one of their favorite shows. Beloved, if that is you, you simply must understand you are absolutely in violation of what God has said for you to do. He says right here that you are not to rejoice in unrighteousness.

What type of clothes do you wear? What type of places do you go to? Who do you want to emulate? I was at Walmart the other day with Nancy and I saw a couple of young guys strutting around and they had, you know, all of the multi colored hair and tattoos and piercing and it was so pitiful. The shirts they had on were filled with demonic looking drawings and they both had one hand to hold their pants up because otherwise they would fall off. Their underwear, you know, sticking out. You know the whole scene. The had had to be a certain way to say, “I identify with this group.”

And they had some girlfriends with them and their clothes were... it was just scandalous. They looked like trollups, skin tight clothing, again, the same look, tattoos everywhere, showing off all of their sexuality as well as their cellulite. It was pitiful. And that is kind of the... that is kind of the culture today, isn’t it? And do you know what is really sad are when I see Christian young people look the same way or want to look the same way? Beloved, if that is you, what you are doing is violating what the Lord says right here. You are rejoicing in unrighteousness. You are saying, “I want to be like that.”

We should never allow ourselves to be that way. This will also include our sinful appetite for gossip. Isn’t it interesting how you go to the check out counters and right there you have these tabloid magazines, gossip magazines that feature scandalous stories about the personal lives of celebrities. What are they doing? They are rejoicing in unrighteousness.

I must move quickly on to the 11<sup>th</sup> attribute in verse six. Love, “rejoices with the truth.”<sup>25</sup>

This obviously implies that there is such a thing as absolute truth, though many wish to deny it.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:6.

## The Greatest Gift – Part 3

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Jesus said in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”<sup>26</sup> Proverbs three and verse three. “Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.”<sup>27</sup> Psalm 51:6 we read that God desires truth in our heart. He says, “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.”<sup>28</sup>

You see, genuine love, biblical love is going to rejoice in the truth about God and the duties of man. It is going to rejoice in the matters of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. It is going to rejoice in the truth about the coming judgment and the glory of Christ and the gospel and all of these things. That should be the preoccupation of our heart.

Psalm 119:97, “O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.”<sup>29</sup> Charles Spurgeon said, and I quote, “Clasp the Bible to your bosom, repentant, pardoned sinner, and say to the Lord, ‘Oh, how I love thy law for through this Word my chains have been broken and I have been set free forever.’”

Beloved, what type of message does your life preach? What you wear, where you go, how you act, how you talk, what you listen to, what you watch.

And then, finally, the Lord closes this section with four final attributes of love that provide a marvelous summary of all the rest, a list that employs the power of hyperbole to make his point and each one is actually going to build on the other. Let me go through them for you here in the last few minutes we are together, a 12<sup>th</sup> attribute, verse seven, love, “bears all things.”<sup>30</sup>

Sometimes we get confused here in the English. We think that this means that love puts up with all kinds of things and tolerates them. But that is not what it means. “Bears” is from a Greek word **STEGO** (steg'-o). And the root of that word means thatch or roof. And it means to roof over to cover or protect. And here it means to cover over with silence, to hide or conceal the errors, the sins, the faults of others, to protect them from something that might threaten them. That is what love does.

Proverbs 10 verse 12. “Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.”<sup>31</sup> 1 Peter 4:8. “Love covers a multitude of sins.”<sup>32</sup> You see, genuine love is not going to spread a rumor. It is not going to gossip about somebody else. It is going to protect others from slander and from ridicule and injury. It is not going to gloat over another person’s sin. But it is going to try to correct. It is going to try to love.

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<sup>26</sup> John 17:17.

<sup>27</sup> Proverbs 3:3.

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 51:6.

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 119:97.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:7.

<sup>31</sup> Proverbs 10:12.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Peter 4:8.

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Now, you say, “Well, what if a person is living in sin?” Well, you go to Galatians six beginning in verse one. It says, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”<sup>33</sup>

“Restore” is **KATARTIZO** (kat-ar-tid’-zo). It means to correct. It is even a surgical term that describes the setting of a bone, **KATARTIZO** (kat-ar-tid’-zo). And so the idea is that if somebody is in sin you have got to gingerly come to them and try to help set that bone and correct it so that it will grow properly, in a manner of speaking.

It says, beyond that, “Bear one another’s burdens.”<sup>34</sup> The word “bear” there is different from the one here in verse seven of 1 Corinthians 13. In fact, it means to carry. It means to carry away or to endure. In fact, it is the same term that was used of the Lord in Matthew 8:17 when it says that, “HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.”<sup>35</sup> Carried away, that is the idea.

So what do we do with people who are in sin? We gingerly, we tenderly, we graciously come to them and try to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. And then we help get underneath, it says, “Bear one another’s burdens.”<sup>36</sup> Burdens, a heavy load. Their heavy load of sin. We try to help them with it. We don’t go broadcasting it. We bear all things.

How different this is from those who want to broadcast sin. Then at the close of Galatians 6:2 it says, “And thus fulfill the law of Christ.”<sup>37</sup> What is the law of Christ? The law of love, to love one another. You see, love is always redeeming, isn’t it? It is always restorative. It doesn’t want to expose or ridicule.

A 13<sup>th</sup> attribute, love “believes all things.”<sup>38</sup> “Believe” means to be committed to, to think something to be true. Love is always going to give a person the benefit of the doubt. You know, we need people to believe in us, don’t we? We don’t want people to give up on us. That is exactly how Christ loves us.

A 14<sup>th</sup> attribute in verse seven, Love, “hopes all things.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, no matter how badly I have been mistreated, how severe the wound, I am going to remain optimistic that the Lord is going to do something in this person’s life. No matter how low our children sink into the mire of sin, no matter how bad the marriage gets, “I am going to remain optimistic, God, that you are going to work your work of grace because love hopes all things.”

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<sup>33</sup> Galatians 6:1.

<sup>34</sup> Galatians 6:2.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 8:17.

<sup>36</sup> Galatians 6:2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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And then, finally, because loves bears, believes and hopes, we see a 15<sup>th</sup> attribute love, “endures all things.”<sup>40</sup>

**UPOMENO** (hoop-om-en’-o) in the original language. It means to remain or to abide, to not retreat or flee. It is a military term. It is the idea of you must hold your ground at all costs, to bravely and calmly bear or endure mistreatment and disappointment, to keep loving come what may. That is the idea.

Didn’t John tell us in chapter 13 verse one of Jesus, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”?<sup>41</sup> Remember, we studied that, **EIS TELOS** (ice tel’-os), to the end, to the fullest extent, eternally, to the uttermost. You see, love knows no limits even towards those who offends. Christ’s love ignores offence. It transcends betrayal. It looks beyond the sins of others. It seeks to glorify the Father. It is preoccupied with sacrifice, not revenge. It is an act of the will, not of the emotion.

Beloved, this is what it means to love. This is the heart of love. And I am going to choose to bear your sin if you will bear mine, to help cover it. And I will choose to believe and to hope that all these things will be accomplished in each one of us and even endure to the very end. Let’s do that together, ok?

Let’s pray.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Make them a part of our life that you might be glorified in all that we do and that we might be able to enjoy all that you have for us in Christ, for it is in his name that we pray. Amen.*

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**Transcript Explanation:** Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> John 13:1.