

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Love in Action **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

Keywords: Love, sacrifice, gifts, Spiritual gifts, unity, body of Christ, kindness, patience

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: The supremacy of love over giftedness is shown in a wonderful manner here in this passage. By showing how love manifests itself before God and man, Paul more than adequately shows how the Corinthian church is failing miserably in using their gifts. And in doing so Paul also helps all other believers learn to remember that truly a love for God and a love for mankind are the preeminent callings for every Christian.

I. Introduction.

- A. Two main points have been brought out so far:
 - 1. First: every Christian has a special gift from God for the purpose of strengthening the other Christians in the church. The fancy word for this is **edification**.
 - 2. Second: these gifts are designed to create **unity** not disunity.
- B. It are these two points that we learned that the Church in Corinth was simply failing miserably at.
 - 1. They were filled with a selfish spirit of one-upmanship.
 - 2. Hatred, sin, fighting and all other sorts of problems abounded in this church as a result.
 - 3. Heavily gifted by God, yet utterly messed up.
 - 4. In fact one principle you can take away from all that we see here in 1 Corinthians is that giftedness has no bearing upon spiritual maturity or godliness.
- C. So Paul, in this first letter to the church, corrects their wrong attitudes and actions regarding gifts.
 - 1. And in 1 Corinthians 12:31 he makes a very interesting point.
 - 2. “. . . earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. “Excellent” as in something extraordinary, beyond measure. It surpasses all other things.
 4. So the flow goes like this: the church has a ton of spiritual gifts they use their gifts to stab each other in the back and tear each other apart. . . . Paul rebukes them and corrects them about the nature of the gifts and now he shows them something that is far better than gifts.
 5. And that thing is love.
- D. Review of vss 1-3.
1. Using hyperbolic language Paul shows how gifts, without love, are just a waste of time and effort.
 2. So, then we learned what love is and is not:
 - a. It is not sexual or romantic.
 - b. It is not emotional.
 - c. It is not ecumenical “let’s all get along.”
 - d. It is a love that is self-sacrificing.
 - (1) The point in this is that it is not a feeling or a sentiment.
 - (2) It is something that results in clear, definable action.
 - (3) We saw this in John 3:16, where God loves the world so that He gives us His Son as our savior and substitute.
 - (4) Or in John 13 where Jesus shows the disciples what love is by stripping down and washing each of their feet, the work of the lowest slave.
 - (5) Or in John 21 where Jesus confronts Peter with these words, “Do you love me?” And then His command was the same, “Feed my sheep.”
 - (a) Jesus’ command is simply love applied.
 - (b) "If you love Me, then follow Me. But it will cost you your life."
- E. Well, with all of that in mind, we can now look at vss 4-7.
1. Remember what he is doing here. He is taking the Corinthians to task.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

2. He is showing them what love looks like, how it acts.
 3. And in all of this, he is showing them that they are on the wrong path, pursuing the wrong things.
- F. Read the passage.

Propositional Statement

In this section we will see fifteen actions that either love does or doesn't do. Fifteen ways that true, agape love manifests itself in the life of the Christian. And in doing so, I hope to show you the supreme example of this type of love in the person of our Lord.

II. Love is and is not

- A. Love is patient.
1. This is simply the putting up with others with a gracious spirit.
 2. (Break that sentence down into its parts)
 3. We show tolerance towards others and their weaknesses.
 4. We accept that they make mistakes.
 5. And we help them grow and develop. We do not discard them.
 6. It isn't so much a word that concerns itself with circumstances or events, it concerns itself with people.

Chrysostom, that early church father, said: "It is the word which is used of the man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself but will never do it."

- B. Love is kind.
1. The idea of kindness is a sense of usefulness. True love seeks to direct usefulness toward the other person.
 2. It is the choice to do things that build up and help others. It is not some sentimental thing, it is a clear, purposeful action. It is doing to someone what they need to have done.
 3. Now that can be pleasant or unpleasant, how it feels is less important than what is right and useful to do.
- C. Love is not jealous.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

1. Here we have our first negative. And it is a strong rebuke to this church for they were filled with envy and jealousy. Everyone wanted to be the one up front and heard. Everyone wanted the “good gifts.”
2. But he make is clear that love doesn’t tolerate this type of jealousy.
3. Solomon called it "rotteness of the bones."
4. Jealousy is motivated by what you want and don’t have. It is driven by pride.
5. It shows itself in two different ways:
 - a. The first says that you wish you had it, whatever that “it” is.
 - b. The second resents that others have it.
 - c. Here it works itself out where you resent someone else for doing the same thing you do, only better.
 - d. A jealous spirit finds the faults and the inadequacies in the other person.

You want to know a great evil? Preachers are known to wish that other preachers would fall so that they could get their people. That is jealousy and it is not love.

- e. An example of this working itself out is Philippians 1:12-18.
 - f. Proverbs 27:4 says: "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?" Jealousy is hatred without a cure. Jealousy destroys the man from the inside-out.
- D. Love does not brag.
1. Often a hand-maiden to jealousy isn’t it?
 - a. It hates that others have the recognition or such and so it seeks to build itself up.
 - b. Bragging
 2. One who loves is not interested in this type of silliness. The root for this word literally means “windbag.” It is just empty words that are driven by pride.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. He knows that all that he is and has is nothing more than a gracious gift of God. Therefore there is no room for bragging.
 4. Bragging, at its core, is to enlarge you before others. But the only way that can be done is if you diminish others.
 5. And bragging is the death to genuine evangelism isn't it?
 - a. The braggart is all about himself .
 - b. But the one who loves Jesus more than himself is all about looking for ways to speak of Jesus.
- E. Love is not arrogant.
1. Here we see him again challenging a very basic problem that they possess.
 2. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1.
 3. By now the readers should be quite uncomfortable. Their sin is being revealed to them.
 4. Remember beloved, "Empty trucks make the most noise."
- F. Love does not act wrongly.
1. Another way of saying this is that it does not act rudely.
 2. To be rude, have poor manners, uncaring about those who are around is the opposite of love. It speaks of being defiant of social standards.
 3. Love seeks to act in a right and proper manner. It shows respect toward others and is careful in what it does and does not do.
 4. There are many things in life that we can choose to do or not do. The question is what motivates you as you make your decisions in those areas?

Example of this is how we have consistently taught the importance in parenting to not be picky about what you eat.

- G. Love does not seek its own.
1. This idea is not seeking itself is something Paul has dealt with in other ways in this letter.
 2. Remember that the whole Galatians of spiritual gifts is to promote unity and edification.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. We are not to be consumed with ourselves and our rights. WE are to be consumed with the others who are around us.
 4. And this is what Paul has already dealt with in detail with them in chapters 8-10.
 - a. 8:1ff deals with Christian liberty.
 - b. 9:1ff deals with other types of rights and freedoms
 - (1) Paul has chosen to have nothing to do with them.
 - (2) Eat and drink whatever he wishes, (3).
 - (3) Bring along a believing wife (4).
 - (4) Be paid for his ministry efforts (5-18).
 - c. Chapter 10:
 - (1) vss 23-24.
 - (2) vss 27-33 deals with how self-sacrifice and love interact with freedoms again.
 - (3) The point is in vs 33
 5. William Barclay says: "There are in this world only two kinds of people: those who are continually thinking of their rights and those who are continually thinking of their duties." And your duty is to love.
 6. This is what Paul is dealing with, people who only want to exercise their rights and do their own things.
- H. Love is not provoked.
1. Love tends to cause the person to lose themselves. This makes it hard to provoke them to anger because they are not at the center of what they are and do.
 2. The church is involved in suing each other. They had various factions. Anger and bitterness flowed from this church.
 3. Proverbs 25:28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit.
 4. Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- I. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.
 - 1. Love is not a bookkeeper that records everything that you do.

That is what this phrase means, it is a mathematical notation and speaks of what bookkeepers do. Why do they mark everything down? So that it is never forgotten. A good bookkeeper is able to bring up easily records of sales and debts from years ago. . . . **Love doesn't.**

- 2. I know of husbands and wives who can immediately list off wrongs that their spouse has ever done to them.
 - 3. Here is another great quote by the old church father, Chrysostom, he said: "Love is like a spark that falls into the sea and is quenched. When an injury falls upon a loving Christian, it is drowned just as surely."
 - 4. In this is the great news of the gospel as well.
 - a. That phrase, "take into account" is also translated as "impute."
 - b. Romans 4:8.
 - c. Explain the work of justification through the Cross.
 - d. 2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - e. So on that day of judgment before God, and the book that has all that I have done is opened, what will be written there? "Righteous."
- J. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.
 - 1. Many people gain a measure of satisfaction when one they hate or dislike stumbles.
 - 2. They would never want to act happy. They will cluck their tongues and shake their heads, but really, they are happy.
 - 3. How many times have you seen a little self-satisfied smile come onto the face of a man or woman upon hearing of another's downfall. "Well I knew that there was something wrong. . . ."
 - 4. This also works itself out in what you find pleasurable and fun. Do you laugh and encourage sinful behavior? Do you chuckle at filthy speech?
 - 5. Love aches in the presence of sin. Love weeps over sin.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

6. Sin is what put our Lord on the Cross and therefore it never rejoices over sin.
 7. Love may rebuke, correct, instruct and even be repulsed by unrighteousness, but it will never rejoice in it.
- K. Love rejoices in the truth.
1. Love is always seeking to be in harmony with the truth of God.
 2. Therefore the ends never justify the means if it requires that truth be ignored or diminished.
 3. Love demands that truth be embraced. Love cries “foul” when truth is ignored. And it rejoices when truth prevails.

Transition

Here we make a transition. Just as vss 1-3 were a series of hyperboles, Paul ends this section with hyperboles as well.

We know they are hyperboles because if they were taken in absolute literalness then they would contradict what he has just taught!

Love cannot endure unrighteousness; therefore love would not blindly believe lies.

- L. Love bears all things.
1. This relates to the idea of covering over other people’s faults.
 2. It seeks to get along with the most irritating people.
 3. This attribute of love is focused on the present, the here and now.
- M. Love endures all things.
1. This attribute is focused on the future.
 2. It remembers that Jesus will return and He will make all things right again.
 3. It knows that God will reveal all of our thoughts and deeds.
 4. It knows that God will bring vengeance upon all who have done evil to His children.
 5. And so, out of this, we are free to love.
 6. Cf. Romans 12:17ff.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

7. It is a military term that is not passive.
 - a. We tend to make endurance something that we passively do. We grit our teeth and endure.
 - b. But this term is one of action. It is one where you press on, even in the face of aggression and opposition.
 - c. Whatever your enemy throws at you, you continue to press on in showing them true, Christ-centered love.
- N. Love believes all things.
 1. This is giving the other person the benefit of doubt.
 2. It doesn't assume that they are up to no good.
 3. But of course this can lead to times of great disappointment when that person end up letting you down.
 4. And that is where the last point comes into play. . .
- O. Love hopes all things.
 1. Love is optimistic.
 2. It knows that God is sovereign. It knows that God can change the heart of the most wicked of people.
 3. Therefore it waits upon the Lord. In the face of hurt and disappointment it is always looking upward with expectant faith.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Close with observations on how these qualities are found in our Lord.

Small Group Questions

- What aspect of love most challenged you and why?
- Where are areas in your life that learning to more properly love will result in some serious changes?