

Negative Love

1 Cor 13:4-6

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. A man who had been the superintendent of a city homeless shelter was asked why he had spent his life working with dirty, unkempt, profane, drunken derelicts.
1. He said, "All I'm doing is giving back to others a little of the love God has shown to me."
 2. As a young man, he himself had been a homeless, drunken man when he went into a shelter for a bowl of chili.
 - a. While there, he met a preacher who had come to help the staff. He and the preacher talked, and the preacher said that Jesus could save sinners.
 - b. That whetted the man's appetite, and he and the preacher soon began to study quite regularly.
 - It wasn't long before he was baptized and went back to the shelter a changed person—this time to help the staff himself.
 - He continued to work in that shelter, and in fact, devoted his life to the men there. The power of redeeming love enabled him to carry on his ministry for forty years.
 3. That story undoubtedly seems so very odd to this modern world, for this world understands love vastly differently. Love, for the world, isn't giving but getting.
- B. It is often the case that love is not what it often seems to be.
1. It's not just the case that love is defined differently in Scripture than it is in the world.
 2. It's also true that love doesn't always act precisely the way we expect love to act.
 - a. Love isn't going to behave the same way in every circumstance.
 - It may be, for example, that our child does something and we respond in love and compassion but the next time he does the very same thing, we may react with anger and discipline.
 - Both actions are going to be motivated out of love, but they may be quite different based on a number of factors.
 - b. In the passage we're studying this morning, love acts in two different ways.
 - One way love acts is positive—as we mentioned a few weeks ago, love actively demonstrates patience and kindness. Love actively rejoices with the truth and bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.
 - This morning, we want to examine the negative aspects of love to see how we can, as the people of God, love one another.

III. BODY.

- A. "Love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing."
- B. Love does not envy.
1. There certainly seems to have been a lot of envying in the church at Corinth.
 - a. Undoubtedly, that was part of the problem over the segregation over preachers. Some of the brethren may have thought, "I wish Paul had baptized me. I had to settle for Apollos doing the baptizing."
 - b. There was certainly envy when it came to the distribution of spiritual gifts. Those who could not speak in tongues were clearly envious of those who could.
 2. Envy runs counter to the basic principle of sacrificial love.
 - a. If I am sacrificing for your benefit, I'm not going to care if you have something I deem as better than something I have.
 - b. We as Christians dare not be envious of one another.

- "If you have bitter jealousy [same word we have in v 4] and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth" (Js 3:14).
 - Envy has no place in a Christian's life, for envy is antithetical to communal life.
 - We can't live together as brothers and sisters and be envious of one another.
 - The church in Jerusalem did not have this difficulty: "All who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45)—No envy, no selfishness, but communal living.
 - "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rm 12:15). How can I rejoice when something good occurs in your life if I'm pouting that it isn't happening that way in my life?
 - c. Do we envy one another?
 - Do I look at you through envious eyes because you make more money than I do?
 - Do I look at you through envious eyes because you have better health than I have? Or, because you married a much sweeter lady than I married, or because your kids act far better than mine....?
- C. Love does not boast.
1. The Gr term here literally means to be a windbag.
 - a. The idea is someone who talks and talks and talks about himself non-stop.
 - b. Cicero uses this word in a letter to Atticus where he speaks of an address in the senate.
 - Pompey, a member along with Julius Caesar of the first Triumvirate, was present.
 - Cicero wrote, "Heavens! How *I showed off* before my new auditor Pompey."
 2. The Corinthians certainly seem to have had a problem with boasting.
 - a. "My spiritual gift is better than your spiritual gift—I can speak in tongues but you can only distinguish between spirits."
 - b. "I have more money than you do, so I can eat more food at the Lord's Supper—see!"
 3. We dare not be a boastful people.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar suffered greatly because he boasted:
 - As he walked on the roof of his palace, he declared, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan 4:30).
 - Because of Nebuchadnezzar's boasting, he lived as a wild animal seven years.
 - b. When Jesus declared that all the disciples would forsake him and flee, "Peter said to him, 'Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!'" (Mt 26:35). We know well the heartache that came upon Peter because he thus boasted.
 - c. I know many of you don't watch Saturday Night Live, but I can't help but think of Penelope as I read of a braggart.
 - Penelope is a habitual braggart/compulsive liar who tells elaborate stories to one up those around her.
 - At the end of the skit, Penelope always says something so outrageous that it's obvious she isn't to be believed. She's say that she can glow in the dark or that she can turn invisible or that she can jog around the world in five days.
 - c. Are we anything like Penelope? Do we always feel a need to one up those around us & tell how great we are?
- D. Love is not arrogant.
1. The idea of boasting naturally leads to the idea of arrogance.
 2. The verb for arrogant means to puff oneself out like a pair of bellows. Just as the bellows inflate to send air where it's needed, so one becomes arrogant in order that he might boast when he wants.
 3. We had better be careful that we are not arrogant.
 - a. "There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov 6:16-17).
 - b. "Clothe yourselves, all you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pt 5:5).

4. Are we arrogant?
 - a. Do we think—whether we say it or not—that our children behave far better than anyone else’s?
 - b. Are we convinced—even if we never say a word—that we can drive far better than our spouse or anyone else, for that matter?
- E. Love is not rude.
 1. The Greek term Paul uses here means to “behave disgracefully.”
 - a. The term could very well mean that if I love you, I’m not going to behave inappropriately toward you.
 - b. The term also carries the connotation in some contexts to feel ashamed. The meaning here could be that in my love for you, I’m going to do nothing to embarrass you.
 2. But, honestly, I wonder if we can’t see a mixture of these two concepts here—if I love you, I’m not going to act inappropriately toward you and I will bring shame to neither of us.
 3. In Corinth, there was a great deal of acting inappropriately.
 - a. Some brethren were taking other brethren to court over some material matter; brethren were eating food sacrificed to idols and upsetting the faith of some; the rich refused to share with the poor in their communal meals; and they had an “in-your-face” attitude when it came to spiritual gifts.
 - b. Do we act inappropriately toward one another?
 - Do we say things to our brethren to offend intentionally?
 - Do we make sure that we get the best parking space, even if someone who can’t walk as well as we will need to walk much further?
- F. Love does not insist on its own way.
 1. Love doesn’t say, “My way is the only way.”
 2. The Corinthians certainly believed that their ways were the only ways.
 - a. Many of the brethren could not fathom that someone honestly believed that others viewed Apollos as a better preacher than Paul.
 - b. Without doubt, it was this “my-way-or-the-highway” attitude that led some of the brethren to sue other brethren.
 - c. Some of the brethren said, “I can speak in tongues, and if you can’t, you’re not a real Christian. You don’t belong in this congregation.
 2. We dare not insist on our own way.
 - a. Diotrephes insisted on his own way.
 - 3 Jn 9-10.
 - Because Diotrephes insisted on his own way:
 - He refused to acknowledge apostolic authority.
 - He not only refused hospitality to traveling missionaries but expelled from the church those who did demonstrate such hospitality.
 - b. Jesus, acted opposite Diotrephes, and refused to insist on his own way.
 - In the Garden, the Lord prayed, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mk 14:35).
 - Even though his very life was at stake, Jesus did not insist on his own way.
 - Not only did he submit his will to the Father’s through prayer, but he also put his own way aside for your & me in order that he might die for our redemption!
 - “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:5b-7).
 - c. Do we insist on our own way?
 - When something’s being discussed in the congregation, are we adamant that what we want prevail?
 - How much would such an attitude reinvigorate our marriages? What if when my spouse really wanted to do something, I refused to insist on my own way? What if we refused in our families to insist that everyone do what we want and that everyone think as we think?

G. Love is not irritable.

1. It is quite unfortunate that the KJV and NIV place the word “easily” in front of “provoked” or “angered.”
 - a. The word “easily” is not in the Gr, and it’s not implied in the word itself.
 - b. The word means “to urge” as in the sense of urging someone on or “to make angry.”
 - This is the word we find in Acts 17:16—“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.”
 - Paul wasn’t “easily provoked” when he saw the idols, but he was spurred to take action against those idols.
2. That is, I’m convinced, the idea here.
 - a. If I love you, I’m not going to be provoked to take action against you. I’m not going to seek a way to hurt you. Even if you upset me a lot, I’m not going to do anything to you.
 - b. The old cliché is: “Don’t get mad—get even.” Love never seeks to get even.
 - “If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mt 5:39).
 - “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rm 12:21).
 - c. Are we provoked to take action when someone makes us angry?
 - If a member of the congregation upsets us, are we going to seek a way to get him or her back?
 - If our spouse says something hurtful, are we going to say or do something we know is hurtful?

H. Love is not resentful.

1. Honestly, the NIV does the best job preserving the original here.
 - a. The NIV reads: “It keeps no record of wrongs.”
 - b. The Gr word means to credit to someone’s account for future payment.
 - The idea is that there is no forgiveness when someone does wrong, but you make a mental note of the wrong and you use it to your advantage when you need it.
 - A few years ago, Tammy & I had one of those “big” arguments.
 - I have no idea what it was about now, but she & I both said things we should never have said.
 - A year or so later, we’re driving in the car and RJ says, “Dad, remember that time you and Mom were arguing and you said . . . ?” I couldn’t turn around to hush him up fast enough.
2. Love doesn’t do that.
 - a. Love isn’t going to say, “Remember that time your hurt me terribly?” Love isn’t going to hold a wrong against someone for years and years to come.
 - b. It may have been that attitude which caused the problems in Corinth at the beginning.
 - Perhaps, some brother wanted to bring Apollos back to preach; another objected because he preferred Paul.
 - They argue & hold it against one another.
 - One is rich & one is a slave—so the rich man refuses to share what he has at the Lord’s Supper.
 - The slave, knowing there’s nothing wrong with eating food in a pagan temple, goes to dine there, because he knows the rich man, being a former pagan, and is going to be troubled.
 - The rich man can speak in tongues & the slave can’t—so the rich man keeps telling everyone you have to speak in tongues to be a true Christian.
 - You understand that’s conjecture.
 - I wish I could say it was pure conjecture, but you’ve known folks to hold grudges for years over the smallest of matters.
3. According to Fox News, Thomas R. Haberbush of Saratoga Springs, New York, held a grudge for more than 30 years.
 - a. He had been a teacher at Caroline Street Elementary School.
 - b. Police say the 72-year-old Haberbush got even with three former school board members, a retired principal and a retired assistant principal.
 - He threw roofing nails in their drive ways, thus damaging their tires, and he threw paint on garage doors.

- It was all over a poor work review he received more than 30 years earlier!
- 4. Do we keep a record of wrongs?
 - I. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing.
 - 1. The Corinthians may very well have had a problem in rejoicing at wrongdoing.
 - a. We know that they were arrogant over the man living with his father's wife (5:2).
 - b. It may also be that some of the strong rejoiced when they saw the weak going in to eat at a pagan temple.
 - 2. Love is not going to rejoice at wrongdoing.
 - a. Do we have a tendency to rejoice at wrongdoing?
 - "I'm so glad so-and-so has gotten caught up in that. He deserved it."
 - "I'm so glad that so-and-so moved in with her boyfriend. They're so close to getting married & I'm terribly happy for them."
 - b. Love never rejoices at wrongdoing.
 - As Christians, we "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rm 12:15).
 - Is it the case this morning that you need to come to Jesus and allow us to rejoice with you?
 - After he was baptized, the Ethiopian eunuch, "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).
 - Do you need to come right now in order that we who love you might rejoice with you?