

1 Corinthians Series #36  
“Love’s Portrait” - 1 Cor. 13:4-7

I. INTRODUCTION

[Read text]

A. Light

1. As a youngster, loved playing with light
  - a. fried a few bugs with a magnifying glass
  - b. shined sun in other’s eyes with a mirror
  - c. most favorite - prism; breaking up the white light of the sun into all it’s colors
2. As I got older, started reading about light
  - a. fascinated by the physics of light
  - b. never ceased to amaze me how light figures so centrally in just about every area of life
  - c. to this day, I get a profound feeling of awe just seeing light shining through a prism

B. Text

1. These verses are a prism through which the white light of love is broken up into different colors.
2. Different events in life call for different expressions of love and here Paul shows love’s different hues and shades

C. Love Is An Action

1. Our English translations miss something vital that is brought out in the original Greek in these verses.
  - a. some of these descriptions of love look like adjectives
  - b. but in the Greek, they are all verbs
  - c. Paul is not so much telling us what love IS so much as he is telling us what love DOES!
2. Love is ACTIVE, not passive or abstract
  - a. it is not a thing of emotions but of actions
  - b. it doesn’t feel patience, it practices it
  - c. it doesn’t feel kindly, it performs kindness
  - d. it doesn’t just recognize truth, it rejoices in it
3. 1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

II. TEXT

A. **Love suffers long**

1. So Paul tells us that love is patient, it suffers long

- a. the word almost always means to be patient with people
  - b. not circumstances or events
    - not red lights or traffic jams
    - guy who cuts you off
    - slow poke who won't pull over
    - guy at work who seems to live to make life hard for you
    - the obnoxious neighbor
    - the pastor who goes on too long with illustrations
  - c. it means to be inconvenienced or taken advantage of by someone over and over again, and still not grow angry or upset
  - d. Chrysostom said, "It is a word which is used of the man who is wronged and who has it in his power to easily avenge himself but will not do it."
5. The old KJV translates the word simply as long-suffering; and that is probably the best way of rendering it.
6. Long-suffering was a virtue unique to the Early Church.
- a. not only was it not a virtue of the Greek and Roman worlds, it was considered a serious weakness
  - b. Aristotle, one of the founding thinkers of classical morality said that the greatest virtue of all was a refusal to tolerate insult or injury but rather to strike back in retaliation for the slightest offense.
  - c. the world has always tended to make heroes of those who fought back
7. Love does not retaliate it does not exact revenge
9. The supreme example of this facet of love is of course, Jesus Christ
- a. in the Garden - a whole legion of angels
  - b. the whole time of His passion
  - c. on the cross
    - Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing
10. Robert Ingersoll, a well-known atheist and critic of Christianity of the last century, was fond of saying during one of his lectures, "I'll give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I've said against Him."

- a. after 5 mins. he would grin at his audience and say, "See, there is no God!"
  - b. another well-know pastor of the time poked fun at Ingersoll by saying, "Did the man think he could exhaust the patience of the eternal God in 5 mins.?"
13. 2 Pet 3:9 tells us that there is only one reason Jesus Christ hasn't come back already: God's patience
- a. He is waiting for the lost to be saved
  - b. maybe He's waiting for you!
14. Showing long-suffering with those who wrong us is difficult in the extreme
- a. it seems almost like instinct to lash out at those who harm us
  - b. the world expects it
  - c. in school; would watch to see HOW someone reacted to a put down
15. In fact, while we may be able to be patient for a time, we will eventually lose it and strike back
16. That is why patience is not a virtue that can flow from our own strength
- a. long-suffering patience can come only from God
  - b. only the Christian can be truly long-suffering
  - c. because it requires the indwelling of the Spirit of Love

**B. and is kind**

- 1. Being kind is the counterpart to being long-suffering
- 2. Being patient with people is a restraint of revenge
- 3. Being kind actively goes out to help others; it is active goodwill
- 4. The word comes from the same word we get the word "grace" from
  - a. the kind person is gracious
  - b. he or she makes themselves useful by helping others when that help is undeserved
  - c. it's having some guy cut you off and then when you pull up behind him at the stop light and his car stalls, you help push him out of the intersection and take him to the nearest phone.
  - d. it's being rammed by someone's shopping cart at Price Club, but latter when you see them in the parking lot, you help them load that 50 lb.

- bag of dogfood into the trunk of their car
5. I've noticed that kindness is infectious
    - a. when you are in a place where tempers are rising and people seem about to come to blows, show an act of kindness
    - b. and watch how the tension subsides
    - c. people start to be more kind to each other
    - d. often happens; car stalled,
      - at first, no one helps
      - then one guy will get out and start pushing
      - pretty soon, three or four guys are huffing and puffing
      - it is as though they were waiting for someone to show kindness.
    - e. I think there is a spiritual principle that makes this so
    - f. I think that when people see love visibly, they get a glimpse beyond the material realm into the glories of heaven and it draws them
  6. In Rom 2:4 we read, "Do you not know that it is the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"
  7. Long-suffering and kindness are dimensions of love that are essential to family life
    - a. marriage
    - b. child-raising

**C. love does not envy**

1. It has been said that there are only two types of people in the world; those who are millionaires and those who wish they were
2. Jealousy is that green eyed monster that not only wishes, it hates it when others have more than it does
3. Oscar Wilde wrote, "Anybody can sympathize with a friend who is suffering, but it requires a great soul to sympathize with a friend's success."
4. There are two kinds of envy;
  - a. the first is the more common
    - it says, "I want what you have."
  - b. the second kind is outright demonic
    - it says, "Not only do I want what you have, but I want to take what you have away from you."
    - it says, "No one should have more than I."
    - example of two women and Solomon
5. Envy is so common to the human condition that we may tend to think that it isn't all that important of a vice
6. On the contrary, envy is one of the greatest of all sins

- a. Satan fell due to envy
  - b. it was envy Satan used to tempt Eve
  - c. Cain murdered Abel because of envy
  - d. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery due to envy
7. Prov 27:4 Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?
  8. Jealousy is the fuel of selfish ambition, and becomes the motivation for a whole catalog of evil deeds
  9. The writings of the Puritans still stand as the best devotional literature ever produced in the history of the Church
    - a. over and over again in their writings one finds warnings against envy and selfish ambition
    - b. they considered envy to be one of the baser evils yet one to which men and women seeking holiness were most often given
    - c. a fable they used to warn of the sin of envy went:
      - a man had moved to the wilds of Northern Africa to live as a hermit
      - time after time the agents of the devil came to him to try to get him to sin
      - but they were all frustrated in their attempts
      - the devil grew impatient with their incompetence and said, "You are all too crude in your strategies. This holy man is ready and waiting for your obvious tricks. Watch and learn."
      - the devil disguised himself as a messenger who ran up to the hermit's cave and said, "Your brother has just been made the Bishop of Alexandria." Instantly, the holy man's face showed that Satan had been successful for a great scowl came over his features.
      - then the devil turned to his minions and said, "Envy is often our best weapon against those who seek holiness."
  10. The way of love rejoices with others when they prosper
    - a. when a friend is promoted, there is joy
    - b. the greatest ex. from scripture = Jonathan's love for David
  11. When we are jealous, we are accusing God of being unfair in the way he has dealt with us

- a. yes, envy distorts our view of God
- b. therefore, we must resist the green eyed monster

**D. love does not parade itself**

- 1. Some versions translate this; 'love does not brag'
- 2. It is the only time the word is used in the NT
- 3. It means to talk in a conceited fashion
- 4. In other words, love is not full of itself
  - a. it is too busy with the needs of others than to be concerned with tooting its own horn
- 5. It's amazing = No one likes a braggart; but all too often, we fall into the trap of telling others how wonderful we are
- 6. How many times have you heard someone begin something by saying, "I don't mean to brag, but . . ."
- 7. True love is too concerned about others to be given to any boasting in it's own accomplishments

**E. is not puffed up**

- 1. Love is never arrogant or inflated with its own importance
- 2. William Carey, known as the father of modern missions, was a brilliant linguist.
  - a. he translated the bible into 34 different languages and dialects
  - b. he was not born to an English nobleman's family, but rather to a common home
  - c. his first trade was to repair broken shoes.
  - d. later in his life, after many successes on the mission field, he attended a fancy dinner at which many nobles were invited
  - e. one snob thought it fun to belittle Carey and said, "I understand Mr. Carey, that you once worked as a shoemaker."
  - f. "Oh no, your lordship," replied Carey, "I did not make them, I only repaired them."
- 3. Very simply: Love is never prideful
- 4. There is a very subtle manner in which pride manifests itself in our lives
  - a. it is by thinking ourselves superior, not only to other people
  - b. but to the rules of life
  - c. it is amazing how many people want everyone to live morally upright lives of honesty and integrity
  - d. but when it comes to them, they think they are

- e. free to live by a looser set of rules
- e. Napoleon always advocated the sanctity of the home and the importance of public worship - for others
- f. of himself he said, "I am not a man like other men. The laws of morality do not apply to me."
- g. we can laugh at Napoleon for his obvious hypocrisy
- h. but this is really the attitude most people have
  - they want everyone else to live moral lives
  - but they have a special exemption
- 5. The way of love does not allow a person to elevate themselves

**F. does not behave rudely**

1. It is amazing how much Christianity today is rude
2. As Christians are feeling more and more the pressure of a hostile world, they are pushing back
3. Too many times I have watched reports of abortion protests where pro-lifers have shouted and screamed at pro-choicers
4. Some, in the name of God, have even shot abortionists
5. Love does not behave rudely
  - a. the Greek words could better be translated
  - b. love does not act in a way that is unbecoming
  - c. or - it does not act without charm and politeness
6. The chief virtue lauded by the world today is to be nice
  - a. that's sad because being nice is nowhere held out as a virtue in the bible
  - b. what we find here is much better
  - c. love is not merely nice, it is filled with charm
  - d. it is polite
  - e. it doesn't intrude, barge in and order others around
  - f. rather, it is winsome
  - g. it makes others feel safe and secure
  - h. it seeks to make them realize they are loved
7. As Christians, we are called to live in a difficult tension
  - a. on one hand, we are spiritual warriors
  - b. on the other hand, we are called to be peacemakers and medics
  - c. we are to resist evil, but not evil doers
  - d. we must shine as lights, but cannot curse the

darkness

- e. we must pray that God will give us the wisdom and courage to live gracefully
- f. the world will not be won by an ugly, angry Christianity
- g. only by a lovely one

**G. does not seek its own**

- 1. Little comment is needed here
- 2. The word for love is “agape”
- 3. To seek the highest good for the one loved with no concern for what one gets in return
- 4. While this facet of love is the simplest to understand, it also provides the very greatest challenge to us
  - a. for every decision we make, we make based on either what is best for others or for us
  - b. it turns out that many times, what is best for others is also best for us
  - c. the hard decisions are those in which what is best for others costs us something
  - d. what we fail to realize is that what is best for others, is in fact, really best for us too.
- 5. Ex. of Jesus
- 6. Husbands - love your wives

**H. is not provoked**

- 1. The word “provoked” is the Greek word “paroxuno”
  - a. we get the word “paroxysm” from it
  - b. as in a paroxysm of anger
  - c. it is a sudden outburst
- 2. Love guards against being irritated, upset, or angered by things
- 3. Eph. 4:26 = “Be angry, but do not sin!”
- 4. There are many of us who have a short fuse
  - a. we go off at the drop of a hat
  - b. rather than repenting of our sin before God
  - c. going to those we’ve hurt with our tirade
  - d. we justify ourselves by pointing to whatever it was that set us off
  - e. very simply; there is nothing in the world so evil that it justifies the hurt we do to others by our temper

**I. thinks no evil**

- 1. The word for “thinks” here is a technical word which means to make a mark in a ledger
  - a. it was an accounting term

- b. often used in taking inventory
- 2. Some versions translate this, "Love keeps no record of wrongs." and that is exactly what the phrase means
- 3. Love does not keep inventory on what others have done to harm it
- 4. It forgives and let's go
- 5. Chrysostom said that a wrong committed against love is like spark falling into the ocean = it is consumed and leaves no trace
- 6. This same accounting term is used to describe God's forgiveness of us in Christ.
  - a. 2 Cor 5:19 "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses to them."
- 7. This is another aspect of love that needs to be a part of our marriages

**J. does not rejoice in iniquity**

- 1. May I say that this facet of love really challenges me personally
- 2. Very simply = love takes no pleasure and finds no sense of entertainment in what is unrighteous
- 3. I confess that I am all too often entertained by what is just plain evil
  - a. I laugh at the wrong jokes
  - b. I find the irreverent humor of the ungodly funny
  - c. I join in the mocking of the sacred
  - d. I find a certain satisfaction in off-color jokes
- 4. It isn't merely that I don't want to be a prude
- 5. I like the world!
- 6. What are the most popular TV programs, radio shows, and magazines today?
  - a. mostly, those which glamorize sin
  - b. and Christians are not immune to this
  - c. the entertainment habits of most Christians fits easily into the world's profile
- 7. Love does not take delight in the ways of sin

**K. but rejoices in the truth**

- 1. This is not as easy as it sounds
- 2. There are plenty times when we do not want the truth declared
- 3. There are many times we wish the truth was hidden
- 4. But love rejoices in the truth, because it knows that when the light of truth is shed on something, it is the first step toward healing and restoration

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. V. 7

### **7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

1. As many of you know, I love to go backpacking in the Sierras
2. As I read these words, I got the mental image of someone who came alongside of me as I was toiling up a steep slope with a heavy pack. He lifted it off my shoulders, slipped it over His, took me under the arm and walked by my side up the path to the summit.
  - a. all the way He engaged me in cheerful conversation and every time I despaired of the trip, He encouraged me with hope
  - b. until we stood on top and looked back down the way we'd come
3. This is what love is
  - a. it bears the burdens of the weary
  - b. it believes that there is an end worth living and working for
  - c. it fills life with hope
  - d. it presses through every obstacle until the end is reached
4. This is the love that God loves you with
5. And it is the love that He wants to live through us