

The Greatest Gift of All – Part 2

1 Corinthians 13; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 11-5-2023

Christian love is desiring the true good of another and doing good to another, even at great cost, and even without any good reason for it in the one loved, all because of God's love for us in Jesus.

Is God's love, true Christian love, the real goal of your life in all your relationships?

Love is “patient” (13:4). It is interesting that Paul puts this first. Maybe because you can't love someone if you've kicked them out or written them off. Point: *Don't give people what they deserve for their sin and failure.* (Matthew 18:23-30) God is perfectly patient! (Jeremiah 7:21-26; 1 Peter 3:20) God did not immediately give sinners against Him what they deserve but was patient with them for hundreds of years. So, we should be like God, suffering long with those who do not love us back. (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 5:22) This 'patience' of love is the *anchor* that makes our love steadfast and the *platform* on which all the other aspects of love are displayed. Are you like Abraham in the story who kicked the fire-worshipping old man out of his tent? Are you quick to tell people what you think and give them what they have coming to them? Are you easily fed up with people and just 'done' with their sin and failings and shortcomings? Or are you reluctant to give people what they deserve and are willing to wait and hope for God's mercy on them and to continue in relationship with them and to continue pursuing their good?

Love is “kind” (13:4). Secondly, Paul highlights that though love begins in the heart, it quickly moves to the mouth and fingers and feet. Point: *Do good to others regardless.* (Luke 6:27-36) God is perfectly kind! (Psalm 78:5-8, 12-20, 21-32; Psalm 145:17; Romans 2:4) God is kind and does good to those who do not love Him. So we should be like God in being kind and doing good to others, regardless of whether they are kind to us. (Ephesians 4:32) The 'kindness' of love is the *shovel* that gets to work to make a difference for the better in the life of another. Are you like Lincoln who appointed as his war minister a man who ridiculed him and called him a gorilla? Are you reluctant to do good to those who don't do good to you? Do you tend toward the principle: 'I will do to you as you do to me'? Or are you ready to do good to those who aren't good to you? Are you ready and willing to serve those who don't serve you? Are you ready and willing to give to those who don't give to you?

Love is “not jealous” (13:4). It's not surprising that Paul moves to the issue of jealousy since kindness requires that we actually desire the good of another and rejoice in their happiness. Point: *Don't be unhappy that others have what you don't.* (Genesis 30:1; Acts 7:9) God is perfectly 'not jealous'! (John 15:1-11) God does not want to take our happiness away or to selfishly have our happiness; instead, He wants us to have His own happiness and joy! So, we should be like God, rejoicing in the happiness of others. (James 3:16) There are things that can't exist together and love and jealousy are one such combination. Jealousy is the *thief* that desires to steal what it thinks it needs to be happy and what it wants to deprive others of so they won't be happy. Are you like the shop owner who would be glad to lose an eye if it meant that his rival wouldn't enjoy sight at all? Do you look at what other people have and wish that it was yours? Do you resent the fact that others have what you don't have? Do you ever wish you could take away what others have for yourself? Are you ever unhappy about the happiness of others? Or are

you happy when others are happy? Are you glad when others enjoy what you don't have? Are you happy with having less or having something different, whether people or possessions or positions or experiences in life?

Love “does not brag” (13:4). Next, Paul highlights the reality that pride, which focuses us on ourselves, is a great hindrance to noticing the needs of others and caring about their happiness. Here he focuses on the outward pride that others can see. Point: *Don't lift up yourself for all to see.* (Revelation 13:1-6) God is perfectly ‘not a braggart’! (Isaiah 66:1-2) It is not boasting to speak the truth! And God always tells us the truth of His glory and greatness! So, we need to speak the truth about ourselves and be careful of empty boasting. (Proverbs 25:14; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 1:31) Boasting is the *elevator* that lifts up ourselves and puts others down. Love and boasting don't go together. Are you like the frog who fell and lost his life when he opened his mouth to boast of his achievement? Do you feel like you need to let people know your past successes or present achievements in order to gain their approval and feel loved and accepted? Do you feel like you need to elevate yourself in respect to others in order to feel better about yourself? Are you more focused on yourself in your everyday conversations than other people? Or do you desire to encourage others in light of their gifts and successes? Do you desire to lift up the downcast rather than lifting up yourself? Do you focus on the other person rather than yourself? Are you using your words to lift up others or to lift up yourself in the eyes of others?

Love is “not arrogant” (13:4). Next, Paul moves to mention the inward pride that is unseen and may be undetected even by the person in which pride resides. Point: *Don't have an inflated opinion of yourself.* (Ezekiel 28:1-17) God is perfectly ‘not puffed up’! (Matthew 11:28-30) God does not think too highly of Himself, but thinks rightly about Himself which actually makes Him tender toward those in need of Him. So, we should be like God, thinking rightly of ourselves so we will be tender toward others. (Romans 12:3; James 4:6; Ephesians 4:1-2) Arrogance is the *inflated bounce house* that fills a tiny yard that eliminates room for anyone or anything else. Are you like the woman who assesses her beauty and is convinced that no one compares to her when she could not be more mistaken? Do your thoughts tend to ‘peer down on others’ and look down on them whether you say anything or not? Do you often wonder how other people could do some things or not do some things and think that you are glad that you are different? Are you privately happy that you are not like other people? Or do you see how you are like those around you? Do you see the log in your own eye? Do you recognize yourself as the ‘chief of sinners’? Do you recognize that you are not beyond doing or saying anything? Do you see your desperate need for a Savior like everyone around you?

Key to Love: Faith (1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:6)

What do I do if I fail to love like this?

- Rest in Jesus** (trust in His life and death for us) – Galatians 2:20
- Hope in God** (believe the love of God for you and His promises) – 1 John 4:16-19
- Pursue love** (repent and seek to obey His Word by the Spirit) – 2 John 1:6