

Since we have been away from this chapter for a week—let me begin with a short review—[1] Paul's description of love is active—he describes love with 15 verbs—8 of the 15 are negative—describing what love does not do—7 are positive describing what love does do—thus we've learned—love is active and not dormant—its lively and energetic...

Notice [2] Paul's description of love is selective—largely describing love as an answer to the Corinthians shortcomings—if we were to examine 1Corinthians—we would find that Paul—in providing this description of love—has an eye to the faults of the Corinthians—if love suffers long—the Corinthians were impatient—if love is kind—the Corinthians were unkind—if love doesn't envy—the Corinthians were envious—if love wasn't proud—the Corinthians were puffed up—if love doesn't seek its own—the Corinthians were selfish—thus Paul isn't here being exhaustive but selective—he's speaking to a specific audience...

Now—this of course doesn't imply that 1Corinthians 13 isn't relevant for us—for we all brethren—to varying degrees—have a little of the Corinthians within us—we are all impatient, proud, envious, selfish, and easily angered...

Now—here I must point out on the front end—this phrase is interpreted (and thus translated) in a couple of ways—thus I want to consider it unto three headings—[1] Explained—wherein I want to suggest three possible interpretations, [2] Expanded—wherein I want to enlarge upon the meaning, and [3] Applied—wherein I want to apply this text—byway of admonition, motivation, and invitation...

- I. Explained
- II. Expanded
- III. Applied

I. Explained

1. Here—I simply want to briefly suggest—the three major interpretations of this phrase—"love thinks no evil..."
2. Notice [1] love doesn't think of evil towards others—this seems to be the thinking of the King James translators...
3. Love thinks no evil—that is—love doesn't think evil thoughts of others—it doesn't think evil about others...
4. Matt.9:3-4—"and at once some of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes! But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts..."
5. That is—the scribes were loveless—as they entertained evil and unkind thoughts without their hearts about Christ...
6. Notice [2] loves isn't quick to impute evil to others—that is—it isn't quick to judge the acts and motives of others...
7. The Greek word rendered "thinks" by the Old and New King James—literally means—to impute or accredit...
8. It's the same word used by Paul in Romans 4:8—"blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin..."
9. Thus—it could be that Paul means—love doesn't impute evil motives to others—it thinks the best of people...
10. This is an old view—held by some of my favorite men—and advanced—by some of the best commentators...
11. For example, Albert Barns—"That is, puts the best possible construction on the motives and the conduct of others..."
12. Jonathan Edwards entitled his sermon on this phrase—The Spirit of love is the opposite of a censorious spirit...
13. Martin Luther—"Love is not suspicious; it puts the best construction on everything and takes all in good faith..."

14. Yet—in spite of these giants—I suggest this is not what Paul means—for this is what he does say in verse seven...
15. V7—"love believes all things, hopes all things"—that is—love believes the best of others—it thinks no evil...
16. Notice [3] love doesn't impute evil done by others—that is—love does impute sins to a record book or ledger...
17. This is the majority view—as advanced by the modern commentators—and reflected in the newer translations...
18. NIV—"love...keeps no record of wrongs" NAS—"love...does not take into account a wrong suffered" ESV—"love...is not resentful..."
19. Furthermore—while this view may not be the most prominent among the older writers—it has its proponents...
20. Charles Hodge—"Love...does not lay the evil that it suffers to the charge of the wrongdoer. Instead of being resentful, it is forgiving..."
21. John Gill—"One possessed of this grace of love does not think of the evil that is done him by another; he forgives, as God has forgiven him, so as to forget the injury done him, and remembers it no more..."
22. J.P. Lang—"This does not refer to the evil which proceeds from one's-self, as though it meant to think upon or meditate on evil...as Luther renders it...but it refers only to the evil done to it [love]...love does not charge the evil inflicted, does not carry it ever in mind, but forgives it..."
23. Lang—"The rendering 'suspect'...adopted by Jonathan Edwards in his celebrated discourses on this chapter is, to say the least, doubtful. It is opposed by the article before evil...the evil...which evidently implies the actual existence of some particular evil that was to be dealt with..."
24. In other words—because the Gk text literally says—love does not impute the evil—it means—the evil committed against it...
25. Love does not—impute or accredit the evil or wrong committed—it doesn't keep a record of wrongs or sins...
26. Or—in the words of the ESV—"love is not resentful"—it forgives—it refuses to be bitter—or hold a grudge...
27. Thus (in summary)—I suggest three reasons in favor of this third interpretation—love does not keep a record of wrongs...
28. Notice [a] the context—that is—if the second interpretation is correct—then it's a mere a repetition of verse 7...
29. V7—"love...believes all things, hopes all things"—that is—it isn't judgmental—it doesn't impute evil to others...
30. Notice [b] the grammar—that is—the phrase literally could be translated—"love does not impute the evil..."
31. Love—does not reckon or impute the evil—that is—the evil done against us—to a ledger or to a record book...
32. Notice [c] the witness—that is—the witness of the newer translators—who without exception agree with this third interpretation...
33. Thus—I suggest—this phrase is best understood as meaning—love easily, continually, and truly forgives—that is—love does not keep a grudge—or—love is not resentful...
34. Kistemaker—"Here is a verbal portrait of a bookkeeper who flips the pages of his ledger to reveal what has been received and spent. He is able to give an exact account and provide an itemized list. Some people are keeping a similar list of wrongs that they have experienced. But love is extremely forgetful when it comes to remembering injury and injustice. When wrongs have been forgiven, they ought to be forgotten and never be mentioned again..."

## II. Expanded

1. Here—I want to digress for a few minutes—and expand or enlarge upon the proposed meaning of this phrase...
2. Yet—before I go any further—I think it's necessary at this point—to define what the Scriptures mean by forgiveness...

3. Simply put—to forgive—is to take away—both the Hebrew and Greek words—literally mean—to remove...
4. To forgive—is to remove or take away sin—it's the refusal to remember sin—in a certain and specific way...
5. Thus—forgiveness entails—the conscious and purposed removal of an offense—from between us and the offender...
6. Forgiveness includes—the refusal to bring up the offense—to remove the offense from being a barrier between us...
7. For example—if my wife commits to forgive me—she refuses to bring up that offense again—against me...
8. Let's say—I sin against her by speaking harshly to her—I confess my sin against her—and she forgives me...
9. Her forgiveness would necessitate—that she removes the offense as an obstacle—that creates tension between us...
10. There is a sense—and it's an important aspect of forgiveness—that she commits to forgive and forget the offense...
11. Now—does this mean that she actually and literally forgets—no—but she is to act toward me—as if she had...
12. Thus—resentment could be defined—as the unwillingness to forgive—the holding or keeping of a grudge...
13. Love is not resentful—it does not hold a grudge—it does not keep a record of the evil committed against us...
14. Proverbs 17:9—"he who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends..."
15. Notice [a] love forgives—"he who covers a transgression seeks love"—that is—they seek to promote love...
16. Notice—to cover a transgression is to forgive a transgression—it is to remove the offense—from sight and thought...
17. Notice [b] love forgets—"but he who repeats a matter separates friends..."—that is—repetition is not forgiveness...
18. Or—put another way—to truly forgive is to forget—or—to refuse to repeat—or—bring the matter back up...
19. Or—perhaps I can put it like this—the person who repeats a matter—or brings it back up—didn't truly forgive...
20. Thus—at the heart of forgiveness—is the refusal to repeat the matter—to the person who sinned and all else...
21. Jer.31:34—"no more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more..."
22. Notice—forgiveness and forgetfulness are synonymous—to forgive is to forget—or to remember the offense no more...
23. Now—obviously—this does not mean that God actually or literally forgets—He knows everything—always...
24. Yet—what this does mean is—He purposes never to bring up our iniquity—in a certain and specific way....
25. MacArthur—"God doesn't forget our sins...He purposes not remember them. What's the difference? To forget something is to have no memory of it. Obviously God, who is all-knowing, has not lost His memory of our transgressions. Rather, He refuses to call them to mind. He promises not to bring them up. And that is exactly what is involved in forgiveness. It is a promise not to remind the person of the offense. Jay Adams characterizes this as a threefold promise: 'You promise not to remember his sin by bringing it up to him, to others, or to yourself. The sin is buried...'"
26. Notice [1] love forgives petty evils—by this I mean—it covers over all offenses—even trivial and petty offences...

27. Love—refuses to be bitter and resentful towards people—even when they've committed—petty crimes against us...
28. For example—let's say for a particular period of time—a person is unusually grumpy, cranky, and irritable...
29. Love—enables a person to dwell with such a person without becoming bitter, resentful, and holding a grudge...
30. Prov.10:12—"hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins"—notice two things about this short but powerful text...
31. Notice [a] love covers all sins—that is—love forgives all sins—it removes the sin from sight and thought....
32. Notice [b] hatred stirs up strife—that is—it fails to forgive—or to cover over the offense—it holds a grudge...
33. Hatred—or unforgiveness—demands a payment for sin—it makes the offender pay for his sins against us...
34. Hatred thinks like this—how dare he/she sin against me—I will make them suffer for it—pay reminding them of it...
35. Every little thing they do—will be a cause of contention and strife—nothing will go unnoticed and forgotten...
36. For example—listen sometimes to the bickering that takes place between siblings—over the littlest of things...
37. Or else—sometimes this takes place—among adults—bickering and arguing over little things—that really don't matter...
38. What's needed?—more love—love that covers over all sin—and refuses to—use the sin—as a source of strife...
39. Notice [2] love forgives serious evils—that is—big sins—or—sins that have brought great harm and hurt....
40. Love—enables a person not only to forgive petty and continual sins—but serious sins committed against us...
41. Prov.10:12—"love covers (forgives) all sins"—that is—all kinds and degrees of sins—love knows no limits...
42. This doesn't deny—that forgiveness is sometimes difficult—but we must remember—forgiveness is first an act of the will...
43. To forgive—is to choose not to allow the sin to create a barrier—we refuse to be bitter—to hold a grudge...
44. To forgive—is to cover and remove the offense—to promise not to ponder it nor punish the offender for it...
45. MacArthur—"Forgiveness is first of all an act of the will. It is not hypocrisy to will forgiveness when the emotions are screaming for vengeance. Be obedient to the Lord regardless of how you feel. If you refuse to harbor spite or dwell on the offense, evil emotions will be starved. Moreover, the Lord Himself will set your heart right. Right emotions will eventually come if you surrender to Him..."
46. Notice [3] love forgives repeated evils—that is—sins committed against us by the same person again and again...
47. Lk.17:3-5—"take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him. 5 And the apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith [Matt.18:21-22]..."
48. Notice [a] rebuking—"if your brother sins against you, rebuke him"—that is—you confront him about his sin...
49. Notice [b] repenting—"and if he repents"—that is—if he acknowledges his sin—owns and confesses it as sin...
50. Now—here I would point out that repenting and apologizing are not—necessarily—one and the same thing...
51. MacArthur—"Genuine repentance always involves a confession of wrongdoing and a willingness to make things right. An apology often takes the form of an excuse..."

52. Thus—in our home—we don't accept the phrase—I'm sorry—but—I'm sorry—do you forgive me—for my sin...
53. The sin then needs to be specified—I'm sorry—do you forgive me—for saying or doing that specific thing...
54. Furthermore—this repentance may necessitate some form of restitution—it may entail—works as well as words...
55. Notice [c] forgiving—"if he repents, forgive him"—that is—remove the sin from dividing you and your brother...
56. V4—"and if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him..."
57. That is—regardless how many times he sins—if he repents—you are to remove the offense from between you...
58. This is contrary to how we think—we are willing to forgive once maybe twice—but beyond this—we keep a record...
59. Yet—our Savior says—seven times—elsewhere—"seven times seventy"—that is—a number without limit...
60. Now—before leaving this second heading—I have to give a necessary qualification—concerning forgiveness...
61. Forgiveness—doesn't always remove all consequences—for example—let's say a deacon is found to be a thief...
62. For the past five years—he has been stealing money from the church—let's say—he repents and seeks forgiveness...
63. Well—if he repents from his sin—we should forgive him—but we should never restore him—to the deaconate...
64. This doesn't deny that we forgive him—for in one true sense—the sin is removed—and he is restored to fellowship...
65. We—don't remember the sin—in the sense that—he's treated as our brother—just like any other member....
66. Yet—this does not deny consequences—his sin (though forgiven)—brings with it various effects or results...

### III. Applied

#### A. Byway of admonition

1. The word admonish means—to rebuke, warn, or caution—thus I'm here warning you—love is not resentful...
2. Thus—I want to warn you—regardless if you profess to be a Christian or not—who are characterised by resentment...
3. If love is essential to the Christian religion—and love is not resentful—then what does this say—about the resentful...
4. Let me put it this way—an unforgiving and resentful person—is an unloving person—and—an unforgiven person...
5. Matt.18:35—"so my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses..."
6. Simply put—an unforgiving person—is a person—who has never come to see how they've offended God....

#### B. Byway of motivation

1. Here—I intend to motivate Christian people to pursue love—that's contrary to a resentful and unforgiving spirit...
2. Notice [1] God's nature—that is—God (unlike man)—is willing and ready to forgive the greatest of sinners...
3. Why should we—as Christians—be willing to extend forgiveness to others—but because it renders us like God...

4. How can we be unwilling or reluctant to forgive others—when God is willing and ready—to forgive sinners...
5. Ps.86:5—"for You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You..."
6. This is nowhere clearer—than in the parable of the prodigal son—and the way in which the Father behaved...
7. Lk.15:20—"when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him..."
8. Oh—my dear brethren—see how quick our Father is to forgive guilty sinners—to blot out their sins before Him...
9. Notice [2] God's gospel—that is—resentment runs contrary—to the very heart and tenor of God's gospel of grace...
10. Why does love—refuse to keep a record of wrongs—but because—God in Christ—has removed our wrongs...
11. Eph.4:32—"and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you" Col.3:13—"bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do..."
12. Oh—brethren—I think we often fail to ponder upon this great fact—that God—has blotted out all our sins...
13. He has committed never to remember them so as to demand payment for them—judicially they are blotted out...
14. Ps.103:11-12—"for as the heavens are high above the earth, *So* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, *So* far has He removed our transgressions from us..."
15. Notice [3] Christ' example—that is—Christ Himself—forgave the very men—who mocked and crucified Him...
16. Lk.23:34—"then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And they divided His garments and cast lots..."
17. Oh—brethren—if there was ever a person who had the right to hold a grudge—it was Christ—the only true victim...
18. When—people sin against us—what are we but sinners—who ultimately deserve it—but Christ—was sinless...
19. Yet—how does He respond to such mistreatment—He does so with a desire to forgive—a prayer of mercy...
20. This becomes—all the more amazing—as we remember what our Savior was presently undergoing or enduring...
21. V33—"and when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left..."
22. Now—brethren—I do not believe that our Savior prayed for the forgiveness—of every one of his offenders...

### C. Byway of invitation

1. Here—I want to speak to you who are not Christian—you who have offended—and are offensive—to God...
2. If—love keeps no record of wrongs—and God is love—what hope you have—who are overwhelmed with sin...
3. God—for Christ's sake—is willing to blot out all your sin—to remove and remember—your sins no longer...
4. Acts 3:19—"repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..."
5. Listen to the phrase—"that your sins may be blotted out"—that is—removed from the record book of heaven...