

Qualities of Love – Not Resentful

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1 Corinthians

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:5

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1 Corinthians 13 and we read beginning with the first verse.

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Let's bow together for prayer.

Lord, I acknowledge again this morning that apart from the working of your Holy Spirit, this time in your word, this time of preaching, would be ineffectual. Without Jesus, Lord, we know that we can do nothing and so we ask that your Holy Spirit would empower this time, both working in the preacher and working in the listener that, Lord, your word would go forth clearly and accurately and that you would strengthen us in our inner man to be able to receive the things you have for us this day. That your word break upon our minds, Lord, like light, enlightening us that we would see and understand and then, Lord, would you work in our hearts so that we are desiring to walk in the things that we learn. Lord, would you awaken us today to the sin that needs to be confessed and repented of in each of our lives that, Lord, you would create in us a true sorrow for that which grieves you and a true love for that which pleases you. Again Lord, we ask that for anyone who is with us who doesn't know you yet, that even today, Lord, they would see their desperate and immediate need of forgiveness of their sins that is found only in your Son, they would see their need for Jesus. We ask you this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The quality of love that we come to examine this morning is one that especially reminds us that we never leave the Gospel behind. I think sometimes it's how we think about sanctification, we think about leaving the Gospel behind. We think about being

confronted with the Gospel when we first meet Jesus. We don't necessarily say this with our words but we sort of say it in our understanding, we say, "You know, I came face-to-face with the Gospel and I was saved when I met Jesus but now what I'm doing when I'm growing is I'm moving beyond the Gospel. I'm learning other things. I'm learning deeper things." So we sort of think of meeting with Christ in the Gospel and then we move beyond the Gospel in the process of progressive sanctification. Well, that's not true and the truth is we never leave the Gospel behind. Sanctification isn't getting beyond the Gospel, it is going deeper in the Gospel. We grow as we have a deeper understanding of what the Gospel means, as we understand the depth of it and the breadth of it, as we come face-to-face with the implications of the Gospel and the ramifications of the Gospel and the deep truths that exist in the Gospel. It's as we live in and out of the Gospel that we grow in Jesus Christ.

The quality that we look at this morning reminds us of that. If we ask, "What is love?" The Bible answers, "It is patient. It is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not arrogant. It is not rude. It is not selfish. It is not irritable." Then this morning we see at the end of verse 5, "love is not resentful." That's what we're going to examine this morning. Love is not resentful. Are you walking in the love of God? Are you living in the love of Jesus Christ? Well, if you are, then you are not a resentful person.

We begin this morning with the meaning of that. What is the meaning of resentment? He uses 2 words here, *logizomai* and *kakos*. *Logizomai*, you may recognize that Greek word. It's used a lot in the New Testament. Paul uses it a lot and it means to take account; to consider something; or to put to one's account. The word *kakos* is the word for evil. So literally this is "love does not take account of evil." Love does not take account of evil. The New American Standard has, "does not take into account a wrong suffered."

Now, the statement actually can be taken in more than one way, 2 ways are reflected in the translations, the popular translations. One way you can take this statement is to mean that love does not consider evil in the sense of devising evil toward another person. Love doesn't think of ways to do something evil to another person and, obviously, that's true. That's not love, that I would plan to do you harm. That I would plan to injure you in some way or take advantage of you in some way. That's not love and that's one way you could understand this statement. The King James Version, in fact, reflects that understanding. The New King James has, "thinks no evil." Love does not think evil or devise evil. When you see how the word *logizomai* is used in Paul's writings, I think it is much more probable that the second understanding is correct which is if I'm loving a person, if I'm a loving person, I'm not taking wrongs, evil done toward me and taking account of it. Gordon Fee commenting on this says this, "Since in Paul this verb very often means to put to one's account, it seems probable that the nuance suggested by the NIV moves in the right direction." So the idea then is that when we are walking in the love of God, the love taught by the Holy Spirit, we will not be a people who take account of the wrongs done to us.

Now, I want that to really sink in this morning and I want us to understand it. The first thing I want to point out is we are talking about wrongs. Real wrongs. Love does not take

account of evil done toward itself. It would be true to say that if we are walking in the love of God, we're not holding on to imaginary wrongs. We would not be a people who walk around with a chip on our shoulder, constantly keeping hurt feelings over things that may not even be really slights toward us and we all know there are people like that. You may be a person like that. People who always have a chip on their shoulder. They are always upset about something. They feel like they are always being mistreated. And a lot of what they feel hurt about isn't even real. It's imaginary. It's made up. It's magnified. It's blown out of proportion.

So one of the things about us as sinful human beings, it's an amazing thing about us, we actually have the capacity to be so deceived about wrongs that are done that we can actually feel like the victim when we are the victimizer. We can feel like we have been done wrong when we are the people doing wrong. Anybody ever see an example of that? Someone who feels hurt, someone who is upset, but if you really look at it from the standpoint of truth and what really happened, they are the ones who did wrong. For example, someone gets fired at their job and they begin to talk about their employer and they tell everyone of what a bad employer this person is or this company is and how wrongly they were treated when the truth is, they were a terrible employee and they deserved to be fired. I mean, what happened is what should have happened but here they are feeling like the victim when, in fact, they were the one who did wrong.

In my time in the ministry, I have talked to people who abandoned their family, who abandoned their marriage, who abandoned their children, and you talk to them and they feel somewhat justified in what they're doing because they have gathered up these hurts, that they feel like they have not been respected or they have not been treated right or, you know, they build up all these reasons why they feel like they are justified in leaving their family. They feel like they are the victim but in fact they are the victimizer. They are the one who is doing wrong. They are the one who is in the wrong. They are acting in a way that is inexcusable but they have built up these imaginary hurts.

So it would be true to say that love would cause us, the Holy Spirit of God, would cause us to get rid of all that kind of stuff. That's true enough but what this verse is talking about goes beyond that. What this verse is telling us is that love doesn't keep an account of real wrong. I mean, evil. I mean, someone has really mistreated you. I mean, someone has really taken advantage of you. I mean, someone has really victimized you. You are really being mistreated. It's not imaginary. It's not something you've made larger than it is, you've blown out of proportion. This is something that you have really been on the receiving end of. Someone has really done you wrong. I just want you to file that away. We're talking about, alright, someone has really been wrong toward you and I make that point because how oftentimes does someone say something like, "But if you really understood what they did to me. I mean, I know you're used to hearing stories and I know that there are lots of people who blow things out of proportion, but what you don't understand about my attitude is, I was really done wrong." Right? "I mean, you just don't know what they did." So the first thing I want you to take note of is whatever this verse is teaching, whatever this statement is teaching, it has to do with real wrong. You have

really been done wrong. There is no denying it. I mean, it's been evil that has been perpetrated toward you. You have been done wrong.

So what does love do with wrong? Verse 5, it's not resentful about it. Logizomai, it doesn't keep a record of it. What we're talking about this morning is no records. No record-keeping of real wrongs. Let me ask you today: are you a record keeper? Do you hold on to hurts? Do you hold grudges? Do you know what the motto is of the record keeper? "I can forgive but I can't," what? "Forget." Which is just a sanctimonious way of saying, "I can't forgive. I'll forgive you but it's going to take us a while to get past this. I'll forgive you and maybe in a few months I won't feel the way I feel. I can forgive you but to be honest with you, I don't know that our relationship will ever be the same again." Is that forgiveness? Is that love? He is telling us here that love doesn't keep a record, it doesn't put to one's account, even when there has been real wrong.

Now, let's acknowledge what this cannot mean. It cannot mean that we have no memory of wrongs that have been done to us. It cannot mean that we don't keep a record in the sense that I have no memory of it, I'm not conscious of it, I can't recall it. That's not what it means. Nor does it mean that sometimes we aren't forced to make some decisions in light of what someone has done. I don't want to get bogged down in specifics today because the verse doesn't get bogged down in specifics but we all know there are some wrongs that are done, for example, that actually represent violations of the law so that even though we can forgive someone, you know, there is a fall-out to what they have done and it could even be that what someone has done represents a future danger to ourselves or to someone else and so we have to make certain decisions in light of what has happened. So this verse does not teach that I am completely unaware of what has happened, that I have no memory of what has happened and that sometimes even wisdom would not dictate that I have to make certain decisions in light of what has happened.

But what does it mean? That I don't keep a record of it. I think it could be described in more than one way. Let me give you a few ways we can describe this quality. To not keep a record of wrong means, first of all, that I grant forgiveness from my heart. It is forgiveness from my heart. I want you to look at Matthew 18. Matthew 18 and look at verse 21, "Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?'" We've talked about this before. Some people say that the standard for that day the Rabbis were teaching was 3. So Peter understands that God's standard is higher than that, doubles it, adds one to it, "How about 7 times? Jesus said," in verse 22, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." And you know he's not saying, "Take out your calculator and figure out how many times before you have to not forgive him anymore." He's saying it's indefinite.

Verse 23, "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants." Let's just stop there. No doubt going on in Peter's mind, maybe in your mind, "How can you say that I am to forgive indefinitely?" How could that be true? So Jesus gives a parable that illustrates why this is the standard. The kingdom of heaven, you see, this kind of forgiveness has to do with the kingdom of heaven. "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle

accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents." It is a debt that he owes to the king that is absolutely completely beyond his ability to pay.

Verse 25, "And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made." The only way payment could be made is the loss of everything. That was justice. If justice is executed, he loses everything. "So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt." He didn't say, "Okay, I'm going to give you time to pay me back," because he knew that payment was beyond this man's ability to give. He forgives it. He wipes it out.

Verse 28, "But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'" This man owed the king 10,000 talents. This man, his fellow servant, owes him a very small amount of money in comparison and yet having just been forgiven this debt that he could not have paid, he wants his fellow servant to pay him back down to the penny.

Verse 29, "So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

From your heart, what does that mean? It means it has to be real forgiveness. It has to be sincere forgiveness. The very fact that he would mention "from your heart" says that when this kind of forgiveness is offered, it changes the attitude of your heart toward the person. You go from anger and bitterness to a place in your heart where you can honestly say that you desire their well-being. You have a love for them, a compassion for them, a desire for their well-being. You release them from the debt in your heart. And how often are we to release our brothers from their debts toward us in our hearts? Seven times? 70×7. How could it be indefinite? Because what you and I must remember is the infinite debt that we owe to God. There we stood at the moment of salvation owing to God a debt we could not pay, deserving if he had given us justice, the loss of everything including our soul. He forgave us of all of our debts, how dare we take a fellow servant by the collar and say, "I will not forgive you until you pay me back every penny"?

What does it mean not to keep a record? It means you forgive sincerely, truly, authentically from your heart a person who has wronged you. You release them from the debt that they owe you. Another way to describe this kind of loving action is it means you

are not accumulating a list. You keep no record of wrongs, it means you're not accumulating a list. Let me ask you this: if you were under investigation for something and we're going to assume you're innocent, you're innocent of the charges, you're under investigation and you know you are in the presence of a prosecuting investigator, are you going to be somewhat guarded in your relationship with that person? Even though you are innocent, wouldn't you be somewhat guarded? Why? Because you know they are looking to gather evidence against you. They are going to look in the most negative way possible at whatever you say, whatever you express, however you act. They are looking for evidence to convict you. To be a person who keeps a record of wrongs means that you're living your life like that prosecuting investigator. You take the most negative angle when it comes to the words of people, the attitudes of people, the actions of people, and you are gathering on your mental notepad a list of things that you can then justify yourself with when it comes to your negative attitude toward them. If anyone does anything that you perceive to be hurtful toward you, you write it down. There is another piece of evidence, another reason why you're not required to have a godly, loving, positive relationship with that person. To walk in love means you don't do that. You throw your notepad away. In fact, as we get further into these other qualities, we're going to learn that instead of taking the most negative attitude toward what they say, feel and do, you want to take the most positive angle on what they say, feel and do. Love believes all things. Hopes all things. We're going to get into that later but the point is: you are not this person gathering evidence that justifies you having a negative attitude toward others. You're not keeping a list. That's not love.

There's another way that we could describe it: it means that you are quick to forgive. If you're not accumulating a list, that means that you're having to get rid of your lists with each and every offense. That means that you offer forgiveness quickly. You don't even allow a list to accumulate. I think this goes back in some way to an earlier quality of love that we studied, that is love is not easily offended. Love is not touchy. It's not surprising when touchy people keep lists because they are not walking in love. Easily offended and then you accumulate your list of offenses. I ask you this morning: are you a forgiving person and are you quick to forgive? Are you the kind of person who says, "I'll forgive you but it's going to take us some time to get over this. I'll forgive you but we won't be the same for a while"? What are you doing when you do that? You are accumulating your list and that means you're not walking in love.

1 Corinthians 13, if you're not there, turn back there, please. That's the meaning of resentment, not taking account of evil. Love does not take account of evil. Love does not keep a list of wrongs. Now, what are the manifestations, here's our second thought this morning, what are the manifestations of resentment? If I'm not walking in the love of the Lord and, in fact, I have fallen prey to this list keeping, sinful mentality, if I am one who has been forgiven an inestimable debt before God, if he has forgiven me of all of my sins but now I want to hold others accountable for everything they do against me, what would that look like? What does resentment look like? Have you ever been on the receiving end of resentment? Or have you ever been that person who was resentful toward someone else? What are some manifestations of that? What I'm going to give you, this is not an exhaustive list but just some things that I've seen at times in my own life and in the lives

of others, some manifestations, some things that show up when we are holding resentment toward a person.

First of all, you're holding resentment if you have difficulty praying for them redemptively. Has someone hurt you? Well, what does your prayer life become with respect to that person? Take your greatest enemy in the world today, take the person who has hurt you most deeply, who has offended you in the largest way you can think about, now ask yourself how do you pray for them? You say, "Well, that's where the imprecatory prayers of the Psalms come in," right? "I pray for their destruction." No listen, we ought to be praying for their redemption. Praying for their salvation. Praying for a change of heart. Praying for reconciliation. Praying that things would change. But do you know what? You cannot pray that way. You cannot pray redemptively for a person while you hold resentment in your heart. Is there someone in the world today that you have trouble praying for?

Second, another manifestation of resentment is: if I bring a host of past issues into the discussion of a present conflict. We meet with conflict, we're having trouble, this especially happens in marriage. We are having trouble and now what do I do? I bring things back from 1856. I mean, I bring it all into the present discussion. "Well, this is just one more time. You always do this. You always say this. You always act like this." What are we doing? We are taking our lists of things we say we have forgiven and, do you know what, in many cases, it's not really related to what is going on right now. It's not. Let's face it, beloved, you can take any issue you want to talk about in your life and if we say, okay, you will never, ever, ever blow it in this area in your life again. Does anybody want to say you are confident you can say that about something you have failed in in the past? You will never, ever, ever stumble in that area again. Now, wouldn't it be untruthful if you stumble again 7 years from now to say that is directly connected to this back here? But that's what we do with one another. Someone fails us in some area and now we pull out our list of every way they have ever, in our minds, sinned against us, dating back as far back as we choose to go. What does that demonstrate? It demonstrates that we haven't really forgiven. It demonstrates that there is resentment there. We have kept a list of their wrongs.

Third, resentment is manifested by communicating negative attitudes and negative words about someone who has offended me. Slander, gossip, is a good indicator of resentment. Wanting to destroy someone with my words because they have hurt me. And beloved, resentment many times is not even reflected in what we say, it's reflected in how we react. One mentions their name in our presence and our facial expression, maybe the rolling of our eyes, maybe a sigh, maybe a looking down. We communicate that we really don't care for that person. Maybe we've said that we have forgiven them but everything about how we react to the very mention of their name indicates that there is still a record there. Again, that is not to say, we see this in Scripture, Paul warning churches about false teachers by name. That is not to say that there is not a place for warning. That's not even to say there's not a place for desiring the protection of godly people from people who are wicked and evil. What we're talking about here is a personal matter of

unforgiveness, that's something different. And unforgiveness is sometimes manifested in what we say about others or how we react to the very mention of their name.

Here's another manifestation: if I have a different heart attitude toward a person than what I know should be portrayed publicly. That is, maybe I do this in their presence or maybe I do this when they are not present but they are being discussed, I put on a positive face, I act like there's nothing wrong because I know that's not acceptable. I mean, this really gets down to the matter of our conscience. This is how we convict ourselves sometimes. I put on a positive face because deep in my heart I know it would be sinful to be resentful but if I'm being honest, I'm seething on the inside. On the outside I act as if all is well but on the inside there is still a record. Is there anyone like that in your life? You're in their presence and they would never know that you are still holding onto that but in your heart you know that you are? Remember Matthew 18, don't forget it, "So our heavenly Father will do to us if we do not forgive our brother from our," what? "Heart." You see, it involves our inner man, from our heart.

Another manifestation we may not run into this one has often but if I find it difficult to deal with a person in a fair and honest fashion based on past difficulties. All of a sudden their fate on some level is in your hands and they have hurt you in the past. Maybe you're in an employer situation and you have a decision to make about a promotion and someone has hurt you in the past and now here they are 3 candidates, you know they are the best qualified, you know that they really deserve the promotion but they have hurt you. Now, can you deal fairly with them, objectively with them? Or do you look for revenge?

Last indication I'll mention, like I said, not an exhaustive list, just some examples but another indication of resentment is: it doesn't take much to set me off toward a particular person. You know, is there someone in your life that it just doesn't take much from them to set you off because you've got this laundry list of things they have already done to you in the past. You say, "Okay, I'll forgive them and I'll sort of clear the slate but one more time and I won't take it." What is that? It's taking account of wrongs suffered and that is not love.

Which leads to the third thought this morning and that is: the mindset for resentment. How can this kind of attitude of resentment, how can it exist in us? What is the context within which resentment exists? What is the atmosphere within which resentment, unforgiveness exists? We live as resentful people when we're not mindful of our failures. Are you aware of your failures? Are you mindful of where you have failed? And listen, not just where you have failed God, are you mindful of where you have failed people? Have you ever been not the best of friends? Have you ever been not the most faithful servant? Have there been times when you let someone else down? When you mistreated someone else? When you were not in the right? Are you mindful of that? I promise you this morning you have been less than perfect. You have sinned. You have failed. You have been the failure. You have been, the question is are you mindful of it? Do you see that? And one of the ways that resentment gets built into our lives is that we're just not mindful of how sinful we are. We expect of others what we don't expect of ourselves.

This gets to another part of this mindset and that is, goes hand-in-hand with that first thing I mentioned and that is: we minimize our offenses while magnifying the offenses of others. "Oh yeah, I know I've not always done the right thing toward you but I've never done anything like that." So what I have done that failed you, that's small but what you have done that failed me, that's big. How would you like for God to keep your record of wrongs? You. Now, draw a circle around you. You. You may think of yourself as living an upright life, a godly life, a man or woman of integrity and faithfulness and commitment. Okay, let's take you then, Mr. and Mrs. Absolutely Upright, do you want God to keep a record of your wrongs? Psalm 130:3 says this, "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" What's the answer to that Psalm's question? No one. How do I keep a record of wrongs? One way is I don't really think I have any wrongs. The second way is, whatever wrongs I do acknowledge, I make those little things but I make your wrongs big things so that I feel justified in keeping my list. I mean, if you were to keep a list on me, I'm sure it wouldn't be very long but what you have done to me, that represents a long list.

A third way this mindset exists is: we don't feel accountable for holding unforgiveness. Is unforgiveness a sin? Have we been commanded to forgive? If we have, and we have, if love forgives, and it does, then if I'm holding unforgiveness toward anyone, what is that called? What is it? It's sin. Do you feel like you're accountable for unforgiveness? Or do you feel justified in holding onto what you're holding onto? God doesn't justify it, beloved. You are not justified in holding onto what you're holding onto. It is sin.

I could ask it another way and that is: do you miss the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit? How does this mindset exist? It has to exist in the life of a person who is willing to forfeit for whatever time they want to live in unforgiveness, they are willing to forfeit the enjoyment of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit. Notice I did not say he doesn't live in your life, I'm saying that if you are a genuine believer but you're holding onto unforgiveness, then you are engaging in something that grieves the Holy Spirit and quenches his activity and I'm asking, does that matter to you? Because there is absolutely no way that you can enjoy, enjoy the close fellowship of the Lord while you walk in an attitude that is absolutely contrary to the Gospel. We who have been forgiven everything have no right to hold unforgiveness about anything and, in fact, if we understand the Gospel, if we are living in and out of the depths of the Gospel, then we recognize that whatever has been done to me pales in comparison to what I did toward God and God did not keep my record of wrongs, rather he nailed them to the cross of his Son. Who am I to keep your record of wrongs against me? And the Holy Spirit of God will not bless us with such an attitude by manifesting his joyful, pleasurable presence in our lives while we hold onto that thing. Has anyone known what it is to hold a bad attitude in your heart and to feel like the Lord is a million miles away? Only in brokenness and humility to confess that and to release that and to know again the refreshing, joyful sense of his presence? How do we hold onto resentment? We're willing to hold onto our hurts while we forfeit clear sense of the Lord's Helper in our lives.

So we've talked about the meaning of it, the manifestation of it, the mindset that exists while we sin in this way, the last thing I mention this morning is the model for forgiveness or we could even say, the model for this kind of love. Who is our model for loving like this? The Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians, I want you to look there, please. 2 Corinthians 5, look at verse 16, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." That is, we don't look at people now in a merely human way. We look at people through the eyes of the Gospel. We look at people through the perspective of what really is versus just what appears to be. "We regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer." Paul said, "There was a time when I thought of Jesus of Nazareth and I just thought of a man and he opened my eyes to his true identity and I don't see him that way anymore."

Verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Folks, let this sink in: when we hold unforgiveness, we're holding to an attitude that is contrary to our mission. What ministry have we been entrusted with? It's a ministry of what? Reconciliation. There was estrangement but now there is reconciliation.

How did that reconciliation happen? Next verse, "that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." What does reconciliation require and involve? The removal of the list of sins. And how did God remove our list of sins? Through the shed blood of his own Son. You see, God's justice required that someone pay for our offenses and God took that penalty upon himself in the person of his Son and Jesus took our place and paid our penalty so that our record could be wiped clean. And it's as people who have been forgiven such a debt that now we are commanded to forgive others. Folks, how could we who could not have possibly brought forgiveness to ourselves been forgiven by such a gracious God? How can we look at all of our debts having been forgiven and then hold someone else to pay us? It's contrary to the Gospel, isn't it? It's contrary to the truth. It's contrary to the ministry of reconciliation because now we, the forgiven ones, have been entrusted with a message.

Verse 19, "that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." We go out and preach a message of forgiveness. How can we who preach a message of forgiveness be a people of unforgiveness? When we hold resentment it is contrary to our very mission in this world.

Verse 20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." God is at work declaring through us this message of forgiveness. Do you think unforgiveness might get in the way of that kind of activity? The Holy Spirit making use of us to declare a message of forgiveness, do you think if we hold onto unforgiveness, that might hinder, quench, grieve the Holy Spirit who is to be at work in and through us to declare that message of forgiveness? "We implore you on behalf of Christ," this is our message, "be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Verse 1, chapter 6, "Working

together with him, then, we appeal to you." Working together with him. And as soon as we begin to hold unforgiveness, we are working contrary to him.

This is the secret of love. This is the secret of forgiveness. You must live like a forgiven person. How do I forgive? You realize you are forgiven. How do I love the unlovely? You realize you were the unlovely and God loved you. How do I release someone from their debts? You realize that God released you from yours. But get this, only forgiven people can live like that and only forgiven people want to live like that so that one of the greatest evidences of your conversion is that you are a forgiving person. Lost men don't forgive, they can't, not in the biblical sense, but those who have been forgiven understand it in a personal and experiential way. "I who have been forgiven of all my debts and now commanded to forgive you." Do you want to live like that? Do you have the capacity to live like that? If you are saved, you do.

Do we ever get beyond the Gospel? Is sanctification getting beyond the Gospel or is it getting down into the depths of it and living out of it? I wonder is there someone here today who needs to burn a list? Is there someone who needs to say your little list and look at it in light of your own relationship with God and see what a sin it is for you who should have been and could have been and would have been rightly destroyed but he set you free from all your debts, what an offense to that grace it is for you to take your little list and say, "I will hold you accountable for it until you pay me every penny"? Are there married couples here today that you need to burn your lists? Every time you have a disagreement you bring up everything from 100 years ago. You insult mama and grandmama and everybody else. You bring it all up. If you have been forgiven, you ought to understand how to forgive. Love does not keep a record of wrongs.

Let's bow together for prayer.

Father in heaven, I thank you for your most precious gift to us of all, your Son. I thank you that he died so that my record would be forgiven and I pray for myself and I pray for my brothers and sisters that, Lord, we having been forgiven as we have been, that we would not keep our lists of how others have offended us but we would see the smallness of any offense ever done toward us compared with what our record was before you. I thank you, Lord, that we who are new creations, deep in our hearts, Lord, we know what this is and we desire to live it. So Lord, strengthen us that wherever those lists exist today, your people would faithfully and obediently and humbly and brokenly take those lists and throw them away. Lord, help us to forgive each other from our hearts and we ask you this today in Jesus' name. Amen.