

Jason Upchurch - 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 - The Supremacy of Love - Part 2

We are continuing in our look at love this morning. Those who follow Christ are called to follow in love.

Rom. 5:8: God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

And because of the great love with which God loved us, we are to love other people.

I don't know about you, but I often think of this list fondly, It's beautiful and poetic in its own way. But when you read this and dig down a little - it's calling us to a high standard. The love that Paul has in mind - gospel love - is love that is costly, and difficult. And at the same time amazing.

And in light of the context, I think it's a good reminder. No matter how gifted a person is - how many spiritual gifts they have or how great those gifts are - what matters the most is love. And in order to love properly, we have to know what love is.

Remember that in this list are descriptions of what love is as well as what love is not. It's helpful to have both.

I want to say that with each of these I'll throw in a little caveat because just like anything else, we can take these to extremes.

1) Love is not rude. **Read 5**

I mean, let me just ask: are we rude to people? Usually rudeness is expressed by what comes out of our mouth but it can also be expressed by our actions.

And I think we all have a basic idea of what rudeness is. But sometimes it is helpful to think about what it means to be rude. The word used here means to behave in a way that's disgraceful or dishonorable or indecent (BDAG).

It's saying something or doing something that is out of place in light of our call to walk worthily as Christians.

Now, this is where we need to balance some things out. There are times when people would say to talk about sin is rude. Or to bring up certain topics is rude. The reality is that it sort of depends on our setting, our attitude, and expectations.

Some things we don't talk about in the open, other times we do. If I had someone come up to me on the street and just start asking me how much was in my IRA or how much my house payment was that would be rude. That's not proper for the setting.

But we did one of those Dave Ramsey financial classes years ago and still to this day one of the aspects of the class that is always interesting to me is how open every is talking about their finances: debt, salary, expenditures, you name.

You go to one of those classes and it's just common for people to be like: "Oh, yeah, we're paying off 3 credit cards we've got \$28k left to go. I make \$52k a year but we're snowballing it. I've only got \$80k in my 401k but we'll bump that up once our emergency fund is fully funded to \$16k." And I'm like, "Hi, my name is Jason."

Normally, a conversation like that would be off limits. Love is discerning enough to know when and how we talk about certain things. Love is never rude.

2) Does not insist on its own way. **Read**

NIV: self-seeking. NASB: Seek its own.

I have to be honest with you, this is one of the more difficult aspects of love. Mostly because my way is the best way and I'm always right and how could any reasonable person not come to the exact same conclusion I arrived at?

That's joke of course. But that's basically what our opinion is. We have our opinion on something because from our vantage point it's the best possible solution. If we honestly thought there was a better one, we'd hold it. The problem is that these are just...opinions.

This one failure of love is the cause of so much difficulty in the church - which is the context here - but also just in life itself. This is the infamous church that splits over the color of the carpet or couple that divorces because they can't agree on financial decisions. This is the self-righteous person who just can't understand that not every issue is a nuclear level issue.

There's no give, there's no allowance for the other person to not only have a different opinion, but to be able to act on that opinion and expect grace and charity from us.

Sometimes it's expressed in giving no ground at all. Never conceding an inch for anyone else. But sometimes it's the "fine, you want to do it your way...go ahead." There's an "I told you so" coming.

If your response when you don't get your way is to punish someone else by cold shoulders, threats, or demanding your way - it's just not love.

That's not love. Love celebrates diversity of opinions and ideas and ways of doing things. I don't mean it celebrates sin. Diversity has a lot of negative meaning these days.

It celebrates that the carpet could be blue or grey. That maybe we go out for Chinese tonight because that's what you're craving. Maybe it celebrates watching this movie, or going to your place for vacation. It celebrates that you have different spiritual gifts than I do and that's a good thing because that's how God designed it.

Insisting on our own way is not love.

And just to be clear, this does not mean that love is passive. A lot of people think that this means we no longer have preferences or ideas. We can't speak our opinion. That couldn't be further from the truth. We should have opinions and ideas but we have to be able to recognize that those are not always supreme. And even good ideas can be checked.

When my kid comes to me and wants to spend his hard earned money on candy and I'm thinking "You could invest that \$5 in an IRA and in like 60 years have \$100k." And really all they want is a lollipop it's okay that they have a lollipop.

I'd encourage all us to evaluate how often we insist, in some manner, on our own way.

Jesus - our example - never insisted on his own way. He said: I do all things I see my Father doing. Everything he says, I say. Everything he does, I do. He did not come to do his own will, he came to do the will of the Father. Even in the Garden, as the weight of God's wrath for our sins was about to be poured on him, he said please let this cup pass - but not my will, but yours be done. Even facing the wrath of God the Father he didn't insist on his own way.

3) Love is not irritable. Read

We could say love is not touchy. Love does not have a short fuse. Love doesn't have a low grade anger that hovers around it all the time just waiting to blow up.

One of the chief attributes of God is that he is slow to anger. We often think of the wrath of God being poured out in the Bible, but really God's wrath comes only after years and decades of provocation. He is patient and calm.

And since we are called to be like God in love, we have to ask: Are we slow to anger? When someone comes to you with an issue do you burst forth with grace or burst forth with anger?

Are people afraid to talk to you about sensitive issues for fear of how you will react? Are people afraid to talk to you at all? Here's a tough pill to swallow: are people reluctant to talk to you about you? How do you react when someone rebukes you or points out something in you? Are you defensive? Do you get angry and make excuses and point out all their flaws?

Or, like God, are you generally easy going? I don't know about you but I am thankful for a God who is not irritable. I'm thankful for a God who is easy going - slow to anger. I mean think of Jesus with the disciples. How many bone-head moments did he have with them and yet he was patient and kind and gentle to teach them. That's how he is with us.

Now, listen. There could be a lot of reasons we're irritable. I struggle with irritability. Sometimes it's because I need some sleep. One of the most God-honoring, spiritually refreshing things Christians can do is take a nap. And I'm not even kidding. Taking a nap means we have to trust that God will uphold the universe while we close our eyes for a few minutes. You know what, I think he can manage.

We're in the middle of winter and winter's are dark and cold and hard and maybe you need to get your vitamin D levels checked. You think I'm joking, but we call them happy pills at our house.

Maybe you're overcommitted in life - you've spread yourself too thin and any interruption in your life results in bursting forth in anger. Maybe you need to drop some things. Maybe you need to drop a lot of things.

There's a lot of reasons people struggle with irritability: pride, envy, discontentment.

But whatever the underlying reason, if you struggle with irritability it's good to step back and evaluate your life. "Well, so and so always does this to me." Well, we can't change so and so, we can only change us. So how do we address those situation?

Look at 1 Tim 2:1-4. I like this passage because it gives us a simple game plan for life. God's not looking for us to take over the world. We don't need to carpe diem and turn the world upside down. Look at our goal.

Read

Did you know that God's perfectly fine if you just live a peaceful and quiet life? That's why we pray for kings and people in high positions: so that we can just live quiet lives in godliness. Paul says: that pleases God.

You don't need to have so much going on in life that you're ready to pull your hair out and other peoples' hair out and be irritable all the time. No, Go about your quiet life of godliness and other people watching us will see the difference. That's what will win them to Jesus because then we'll have the opportunity to tell them about the truth of the gospel.

4) Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Read

Uh oh. This one hurts. Do you keep record of wrongs? Do you have a mental list of everything that everyone has ever done to you? Some people I think have a mental excel spreadsheet with formulas built in for all the things everyone has ever done to them and they can recall them with sickening accuracy.

They keep adding to the list of wrongs, they keep adding people to the list. What comes out of their mouth is continual criticism, continual disgust at those who have wronged them. That's not love.

They're like the people in the parable of the unforgiving servant in **Matt. 18**. They've been forgiven 10,000 talents of debt by the king but they'll wring anyone's neck who owes them the slightest debt.

And part of the problem is it becomes this infinite settling of scores. They always view people in relation to how much others owe them for their hurt or being wronged.

And it's a functional denial of the gospel. That's point of the parable in **Matthew 18**. Someone who only remembers wrongs, who can recall every problem with everyone at a moment's notice has forgotten the gospel that they claim to believe.

They've forgotten the all-knowing God has remembered their sins no more through faith in Jesus.

Can you imagine showing up to judgment and God's like "Hey, let me pull up my excel spreadsheet here. Give me just a minute, your file is rather large."

Can I tell you something? For some believers, that's exactly what judgment will be like.

Talking to believers **Jas. 2:13**: For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

Those who refuse to show lavish mercy in this life will not experience lavish mercy in judgment. Because they misunderstand what the gospel has done to them.

And to be clear, I'm not saying God will send believers to hell. That's not a thing. But believers will experience various degrees of judgement.

Jas 3:1 says that teachers will be judged with greater strictness. What we say and teach will be evaluated more strictly.

And you're thinking: that's why I'm not a teacher. Well, news flash, if you're unmerciful you get a stricter judgment too.

But did you know there's a way to show up at the judgement - which, by the way could happen any moment - and God say, "Let me pull up your file here...huh, not seeing anything here."

I don't know about you, but that's what I want. Jesus tells us how to ensure that's the conversation we're having with one simple verse:

Matt. 5:7: Blessed are the merciful for they shall be shown what? Mercy.

You want lots of mercy on judgment day? Show lots mercy until judgment day. How do you do that? Jason, I've been wronged so much, I've been wronged so deeply.

There are some deep wounds, some big sins. We don't ignore those. We don't just pretend those didn't happen. We don't just suck it up.

But through the gospel, we can. There is no one who has sinned against us more deeply and more severely than we've sinned against God. And if the infinitely holy and righteous God can treat us with mercy, we too can show mercy to others.

5) Does not rejoice at wrongdoing. Read 6

So back in the day, Jonathan Edwards talked about our affections. Our affections are those things that make us happy, what do we secretly rejoice in? What do we secretly get excited about?

What we rejoice in, what we find pleasure in, will tell us a lot about the state of our heart. Do we find pleasure in the things God finds pleasure in or do we find pleasure in the things that Satan finds pleasure in?

Love, as defined by God, does not find pleasure in the things that God hates. It does not find pleasure in evil.

What are some evil things?

Prov. 6:16-19 gives us a list of some things:

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him:

haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Do you secretly love drama and dissension? God hates that.
Do you love people who boast and brag and tell other people off? God doesn't.

A few weeks ago it was amazing to see how excited some believers were on social media to see the half time show at the Super Bowl. These are performers who make millions celebrating drugs and sexual immorality and violence and greed. I know this because I used to delight in their music. I used to memorize their songs. I have a hard time finding verses in Romans, but listened to so much filth when I was younger I know lyrics to songs I haven't heard in decades. Because my heart delighted in evil.

One of the reasons we like evil is because it feels good to us. It gives us immediate pleasure. Whether it's pornography or filthy rap songs, or lying, violence, or greed or arrogance, selfish ambition.

Proverbs says that there is a way that seems right to a man but in the end, it leads to death. We think it's right, we like it and rejoice in it, but we have to look to the end. Where does it lead us?

The Bible is clear that sin is pleasurable. There's a reason we're tempted to it. We like it, it's good. It causes immediate delight.

But what God calls us to is to love those things which have eternal delight. Eternal satisfaction.

And you say, "Well, I just love what I love. I can't change." Sure you can. You remember in **Proverbs 7** where Solomon says he's looking out his house and he sees this kid. This dumb kid. And this dumb kid loves prostitutes. And he keeps walking by their houses and his warning is that they will die.

So you know what he says to do? This is revolutionary, if you're taking notes write this down. You ready? He says: go a different way home.

Remove the temptation from your life. Part of the way we change our heart and wean ourselves off the world and sin is to remove it.

Maybe you listen to a different radio station. Maybe you cancel your Netflix because you're watching stuff you shouldn't. Maybe you sit with other people at work so you don't fall into complaining. Maybe we turn off Fox News and CNN so we stop hating people who have a different political view than we do.

Part of sanctification is simply removing the influences of the world in our lives and replacing them with influences toward godliness.

To give an example, I don't love going to the gym. Not a lot of immediate happiness in lifting heavy things and putting them back down. I'd rather be lifting spoonfuls of ice cream. But I know the long term effects of both of those. And so I pay money to go pick up heavy things and put them back down for the long term benefit.

This is how we change our heart. We remove influences of evil in very practical ways. And we ask forgiveness that we delight in those things that God hates.

So love doesn't rejoice in evil, what does it rejoice in?

6) Love rejoices with truth.

This is the very opposite of rejoicing in wickedness. We rejoice in the truth of what God has revealed to us.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Truth flows from who God is because God is truth.

Do we rejoice in the truth of the Word of God? Do we rejoice in truth in general? Or do we prefer ignorance or lies?

When we were studying Christian ethics last year one of the most striking quotes I heard was that Christian ethics - more and more - is simply telling people the truth about the world.

People don't like to hear the truth about heaven or hell. I was talking to someone this weekend who is afraid to evangelize because people don't like to hear about Jesus. I told her unbelievers rarely like to hear about Jesus. That's how it's always been.

People need to hear the truth about gender, immorality, racism, honesty. Some of these things that we talk about are not fun, they're not exciting or immediately gratifying. But they are true. And that's what

God's Word is a lamp unto our path - everything else is darkness. And so we rejoice in the light of the truth.

The last few are given by Paul almost as a rapid fire close and it's a little poetic.

The first and last are parallel and the middle two are parallel. They're basically synonyms.

7) Bears all things / Endures all things.

The idea is that it endures. It doesn't give up.

Are you weary in life? Are you tired? Do you have a proverbial thorn in the flesh that comes back over and over? Keep going. Keep walking in faithfulness. Not because it'll get better in this life - maybe it will. But because we look forward to the next life where God rewards us for faithfulness.

Someone: Faithfulness is a long obedience in the same direction. Often bearing some very hard things.

8) Believes all things/ Hopes all things

NIV: always trusts. I'm not sure either one of those translations are helpful.

Love is not naive. It's not that we just believe anything anyone tells us. That's not it.

The idea here is that love is hopeful or believes the best. We could say love is optimistic. Not in a giddy, uninformed way. But love believes the promises of God in Christ and is excited about them.

Love looks at people like Jesus looks at them. He takes 12 foolish fishermen and makes them into the pillars of his Kingdom as apostles.

Love sees that people can change, that people can repent, that people can grow.

Love also looks at situations knowing that this isn't the last say. Sometimes things seem hopeless and frustrating. They don't endure forever.

Solomon reminds us that there's a time for war and a time for peace. There's a time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to weep and a time to laugh. Love remembers that. Love remembers that there are just seasons we go through - hard seasons - that God uses for his glory. And we just trust him in hope for the better outcome on the other side.

So much more we could say about love. But this is the love that Jesus calls us to. A love that should pervade our lives and a love that will bring God glory.