

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:5-7

### INTRODUCTION

We have been dealing with this wonderful passage of love and noted that all these verses that describe what love is are verbs because biblical love is seen rather than felt. We didn't finish verse 5 last time so let's start where we finished last time?

#### 1. LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED (v 5)

The Greek word translated "not easily angered" here means to arouse to anger. A loving person in the biblical sense of that word, guards against being irritated upset or angered by things said or done against them. Now Paul does not mean that the Christian can never show righteous anger for true biblical love does not rejoice with evil (v 6).

It is possible to be angered by the mistreatment of others or by the way that people blaspheme and mock our God but we must be careful for the line is thin between righteous anger and sinful anger. But Paul is talking about those times when things are done against us that make us angry in a sinful way. Now Jesus is our great example here once again. When Jesus cleansed the temple he was angry because his Father's house of worship was being abused for selfish and sinful means. He was angry yet without sinning (Matthew 21:11-13).

However on many occasions when he was personally maligned or abused he did not become angry and there is no better place to see this than on the cross. Jesus was being crucified for crimes He did not commit He was insulted and abused and yet Jesus was not angry but instead prayed for forgiveness for those who were carrying out such activities against him. How could he do that?

The answer is self-giving love; He gave himself for others and in particular for the sins of others (1 Peter 2:21-24).

So biblical love does not get angry with others when they say or do something that displeases us or when they prevent us from having our own way. Love never reacts in self-defence or retaliation. Now churches would be more gracious and loving if God's people could love in this way.

So often we get angry far too quickly, we often want to defend ourselves when under attack from others or when unjustly criticised or when we don't get our own way. You know in many ways not being easily angered is the other side of seeking one's own way for the person who is self seeking and is intent on having his or her own way is often easily angered when they fail in their quest.

We can be so easily angered when other people get privileges or recognition that we want for ourselves. We get angry when our rights are not respected or recognised and in a society that is obsessed with personal rights it is so easy to be sucked into thinking that our rights matter more than our duty to love others. To put their rights and their interests and their welfare before our own is never easy.

But the biblical loving person is more concerned about doing what we should do and helping where we can, rather than on insisting what we consider to be our rights and our due.

It's so easy to lose our tempers and although we might quickly bring it under control again the words that we spoke and the things we did while we lost our temper could have done untold damage to individual members in our church or to the church as a whole. The only cure for controlling our temper is to increasingly love others with this God given self-giving self-sacrificing

love. It involves us bringing our lives constantly under review and asking God by his Spirit to increasingly bring every aspect of our lives under the Lordship of our Saviour.

## 2. LOVE KEEPS NO RECORDS OF WRONG (v 5)

The word translated “keep no records” is a bookkeeping term in Greek that means “to calculate” as when putting an entry into a ledger. The purpose of that entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed. In business that practice is necessary but in personal matters it is not only unnecessary but also harmful. Keeping a mental record of things done against us is a sure way to unhappiness and hatred.

It is a sure way to cause dissension and division in the church of Jesus Christ. It is a sure way to break friendships and to encourage the holding of grudges etc. The same Greek word is often used in the New Testament to represent the gracious act of God for those who trust in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:8 & 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Once sin is placed under the blood of Christ then there is no record kept, it cannot be traced and it is completely wiped out (Acts 3:19). The only record that we have with God Christian is on the credit side of our account, which simply reads the righteousness of Christ. The reason why God does not keep records of our many sins is because of his love that sent Jesus to the cross to pay the price for our debt so that it could be cancelled and wiped out.

That is the sort of love that Christians need to display if we are going to love like Christ loves. When we are sinned against, offended or hurt by words or actions done against us Christian love refuses to keep a record of it. That is what it means to love in Christ’s way. We will refuse to drag up the record in the future when that same person hurts us again. Biblical love forgives; it refuses to bring up the past.

Now this is so hard to do for when we are offended or hurt for it goes so deep and many churches have been divided and remain so because of past hurts. But no one can say they love in any biblical sense of that word if they constantly dig up the past and hold it against people or constantly remind us of our past sins and failings. That is resentment not love.

Resentment is careful to keep clear records of wrong committed against us. Resentment reads and rereads these records and then acts towards the people in their record book in ways that are anything but loving. But love never acts like that it has no records it has no place for resentment or grudges. And that is how love should act for God is love and that is how He acts towards us. He completely and permanently erases the record of our many sins, which we committed against him.

## 3. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL (v 6)

Love never takes satisfaction from sin, whether our own sin or that of others. Sinning is bad enough but bragging and rejoicing in it makes those sins much worse. To delight in evil is to justify it. It is making wrong appear to be right it is turning God’s truth upside down (Isaiah 5:20).

In the various magazines and books that people read and on our television screens sin is glorified. There literally is rejoicing in evil. Violence is glamorised, immorality is applauded and lying is presented as an attractive option. Christian people are tempted to delight in evil when we listen to those unclean jokes or stories that exalt sin in one-way or another.

Delighting in evil is often presented to us as entertainment and we can be sucked into thinking that it’s only entertainment when in truth it is delighting in evil. Delighting in evil can take the form of rejoicing in other people’s sins and even laughing at their sins because it might make us look good in certain situations.

But delighting in evil is always wrong because all sin is an affront to God. When we delight in evil we are rejoicing in something that grieves the God who has saved us. If we truly love God then what offends him will offend us and what grieves him will grieve us.

Now one of the commonest forms of delighting in evil is gossip. Gossips would do no harm if it weren't for the fact that they have so many listeners. This sin which sadly many Christians engage in and treat far too lightly is wicked in God's eyes because it unlovingly reveals the sins and weaknesses of others and in doing so exalts oneself. It can be that we delight in the evil of others because it will throw light on our own supposed godliness.

But it is unloving, for sin always has consequences and even when Christians sin it will have consequences for that believer, for example broken fellowship with God. It also has consequences for the church. One of the reasons why the church is to discipline its sinning members is to show how serious sin is and to make the sinning Christian understand their need to repent.

#### 4. LOVE REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH (v 6)

Now having listed eight negatives that love does not do Paul now lists five more positives. The first one is contrasted with the last negative. At first glance it might seem strange to contrast "do not delight" in evil with rejoice with the truth. But the truth that Paul is speaking about is not simply factual truth but he is speaking of God's truth.

Love always rejoices in God's truth, which means it never delights with evil.

That is why the contrast is made. Now if love rejoices with the truth then it rejoices in right doctrine. We live in a day when people say it does not matter what you believe love is all that matters. That is the view of the ecumenical movement. But that sort of love is not biblical love for biblical love is concerned that we should believe the right things.

If we love others we want them to have right doctrine for what we believe affects what we do. It is not biblical love not to be bothered about what people believe. We as a church have a statement of faith and we want every member to understand it and to live those truths out in their lives. It should affect us if we discover our fellow Christians have faulty theology and if we love them we will do all we can to help them come to a better understanding of the truths of God's word.

We ought to be patient in teaching people the truth of God's word, we ought to pray that each member in our church understands and is able to apply in their lives the great doctrines of the bible. We must never be satisfied with simple faith, or be content that someone is a Christian but seems to make little progress because they fail to understand and apply God's word appropriately.

No! Love rejoices with the truth and therefore works with others to teach instruct, encourage rebuke correct and train them so that they also rejoice with the truth.

Of course we will never get others to rejoice with the truth unless we love God's truth ourselves. Unless it is central to our lives and practised daily then we do not love, as God desires. Jesus loved the truth and lived by the truth and practised the truth and taught the truth and encouraged others in the truth. The reason why he did all that was because of his love for us. Surely if we love as Christ's did then we will love God's truth and seek to promote it for the welfare and good of others.

#### 5. LOVE ALWAYS PROTECTS (v 7)

The word always does not mean in every situation and circumstance but must be seen in the sense of what is in accord with God's word. It does not protect sin but exposes it. The word protect

means to cover or support and therefore to protect. Loves always protects others from exposure, ridicule or harm. Genuine love always sees the best in people and seeks to protect the reputation of others even of sinning brothers and sisters.

Love never protects sin but always tries to protect those who sin. Love will not expose the sins of others by gossip but will always try to deal with sin quietly and with the least fuss possible. There is something perverse about human nature that loves to gloat over the sins of others and we often rejoice when someone's sin is exposed.

But love will always try to protect others; love always tries to deal with sin in others without necessarily exposing it to others. Love will always try to cover the shortcomings and failing of others rather than expose them for all to see. Love always sees the best in people when others are criticising them for their failure. Let me say it again in case we misunderstand this point, love does not justify or compromise with sin but it warns corrects exhorts rebukes and disciplines. However love does not expose or broadcast the sins of others but will try to protect those involved.

This is why church discipline is actually the last resort within churches. According to Jesus instruction sin is dealt with as quietly as possible and only if the sinning Christian refuses to listen or heed the warning of others by failing to repent then the church gets involved. Even then the sinning Christian should know that their sin will never get outside the church but their sin and hopefully repentance will remain firmly within the membership of the church (Matthew 18:15-20).

## 6. LOVE ALWAYS TRUSTS (v 7)

Love is never suspicious or cynical of people but always believes the best and always gives people the benefit of the doubt. They will regard people as innocent until proven guilty and even then will consider their actions to be from good motives. This trust needs to be seen within the church, it ought to be encouraged and developed, so that when people have positions of responsibilities we simply trust each other to fulfil their responsibilities. When we have positions of leadership we trust our leaders to do their very best and to be committed to their task.

When someone is given a job to do in the church we ought to trust them to do it without checking up on them or even checking to see if they are doing it in the way we might do it.

Those with positions of responsibilities ought to have a sense that the church as a whole trusts them and are not suspicious of their motives or methods. Trust believes people will do their best and will do it as unto the Lord. When they fail then love wants to cover over their failure and help them to carry out their responsibility better next time.

It is a loveless church that is suspicious of other people or who are always thinking the worst of others and are always checking up on others. Such churches are easily divided and are usually full of very uneasy and nervous people who are always looking over their shoulder for fear of getting it wrong. We then need to ask for the Lord's help to love people in such a way that we trust them. We need to be prepared to check ourselves when thoughts of suspicion or doubt about others come into our minds. Some people are easier to trust than others but we must ask God to help us to trust all God's people even the ones who have failed us and let us down in the past.

## 7. LOVE ALWAYS HOPES (v 7)

Love hopes even when it seems all hope has been removed by the behaviour of the people that we are hoping for. Perhaps a brother or sister falls into sin so that their Christian testimony is shattered. What does love do? Write that person off as a disaster as a hopeless case. No! Biblical love still hopes for the best outcome when there is no evidence to support that hope.

Love still hopes in the knowledge that as long as God's grace is still in operation then no human failure is final. God did not take Israel's failures as final but continued to work with them. In many ways Paul did not write the church at Corinth off even though they had committed many sins and had serious failures and weaknesses.

Now this love that hopes should encourage those who have unsaved family members who seem to have no interest in gospel things. The wayward son or daughter, the unsaved husband or wife who refuse to talk about Christian things. If we really love them with this biblical self-giving love then we will hope that they will be saved for love simply refuses to take their failure to believe as final.

Love hopes that the wayward Christian will return or the apathetic Christian will become committed or the weak Christian will become strong or the doubting Christian will be given assurance. Likewise loving churches will hope that their church will grow or mature or that they will be able to call a Pastor or that many will be saved through the church's ministries.

Love simply refuses to accept the normal as normal it always hopes and expects something more.

## 8. LOVE ALWAYS PERSEVERES (v 7)

The Greek word "to persevere" is a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. Every hardship and every suffering is to be endured in order to hold fast. Well in the same way love perseveres and holds fast to those it loves, it perseveres with them at all costs. It will stand against the overwhelming opposition to give up on them it refuses to stop loving them even though it seems to make no difference to the person who is the recipient of that love. Now have you ever thought about those weak and fragile and sometimes awkward Christians that we all know? Have you ever thought of giving up on them? Have you ever thought how much better the church would be without them?

Have you ever thought that they are a hopeless case for no matter what we do they simply refuse to respond? Well love would never do any of those things; it simply perseveres with such people bearing with them, believing what seems to be unbelievable.

Perhaps it is someone in our community that we have shared the gospel with and have gone out of our way to help them but the response we see from them is one of negativity and one of hopelessness. It is tempting in those situations to give up on them and start to seek other people who might be more responsive to the gospel message and to our kind acts. But love never does that it always perseveres.

It might be a Christian who seems to drift from one week to another. They might come to church or they might not we simply cannot depend upon them. No matter how hard we try to encourage them it seems to make no difference upon them. We have tried to rebuke them and correct them but everything stays the same. What do we do? Give up on them? Not if we love them we continue to persevere with them hoping that soon they will be changed by the grace of God.

We persevere year after year working with them in order to bring about the necessary change. We work in supporting and helping them in their drifting but whatever else we do we must persevere with them never give up on them and always love them.

So we have listed things that love does. We know that only God by his grace can enable us to love like this and to do so consistently. We know that there will be things in our lives that will hinder love from flowing so we must repent and plead with God to deal with us so that love will flow from our hearts. So that we will be people who are not easily angered or who keeps no record of wrong or who does not delight in evil.

We must pray that God makes us into a people and a church that rejoices with the truth, who, protects, trusts, hopes and always perseveres. If that was true of each one of us then how much would our church be changed and how much of an impact would this church have upon our community? Only the Lord knows but our duty is to seek to love in these ways by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We must pray that God will work through us as we pour out his love to other people whether that is to Christians or unbelievers.

Amen