

THE SPECTRUM OF LOVE—Part 2

We use the word “love” a lot, don’t we? We love **people**—but the love for our family is different than the love we have for friends. Some of us have **pets**—and some people “love” their pets—but love for pets is different than our love for people (I hope ☺). Some of us love **football**—while others love racing—but that love is different than the love we have for our favorite **foods**. Above and beyond all these kinds of love is the love that God has for us—and the love that we should have for Him. But what is love?

Henry Drummond suggested that love, like light, can be broken down into its multiple parts. Several times on our recent vacation we saw normal, “white” light produce beautiful rainbows as it passed through the spray created at the bottom of waterfalls. Just as a beam of light can pass through a prism and reveal the colors of a rainbow, God takes “love” and passes it through the prism of divine inspiration and shows to us the components of love. Please take your Bibles and turn to I Corinthians 13, verses 4-7. Speaking of the verses I just read, Drummond writes: “And in these few words we have what one might call the spectrum of love, the analysis of love.”

A few weeks ago, we looked at part 1 of “The Spectrum of Love.” In way of review, I took the first 9 characteristics and lumped them together in three groups of three: patience, humility, and sacrifice.

--The patience of love is seen in that it “suffereth long” (v 4), “is not easily provoked” (v 5), and “thinketh no evil” (v 5). “Thinketh no evil” does not mean the **avoidance** of evil thoughts; instead, it is an accounting term that means “reckon or count.” Love does not keep track of the wrongs committed; it does not store them. It does not get “historical” and bring up the past when a new conflict arises.

Are you a patient person? Here’s a more direct question: Are you as patient with your **spouse** as you are with everyone else? Oftentimes we aren’t, are we? Steven Cole shares the story of a man by the name of Dr. Thomas Cooper who was editing a dictionary in the late 1500’s. He had been working on the project for eight *years* when his wife, under the pretense that she feared he would kill himself from over-study, burned all eight years’ worth of notes! Men, what would you do if your wife did that to you?

Dr. Cooper came home, saw the destruction, and asked who had done it. His wife told him boldly that she had! The patient man heaved a deep sigh and said, “Oh Dinah, Dinah, thou hast given [me] a world of trouble!” Then he quietly sat down to another eight years of hard labor, to replace the notes which she had destroyed. (Paul Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* [Assurance Publishers, #2350.]

That, my friend, is patience!

--Love is not only patient; it is also **humble**. The humility of love is seen in that it “envieth not” (v 4)—it is content with what it has and does not desire what others have. It also does not **vaunt** itself (v 4)—meaning it does not brag to others—nor is it **puffed** up (v 4)—secretly thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. In many respects, pride kills love. Why? Because pride is about self; love is about others. Love is humble.

--Lastly, love is **sacrificial**. It is kind (v 4), courteous (“doth not behave itself unseemingly;” v 5), and is unselfish (“seeketh not her own;” v 5). How thankful we should be that Jesus was not selfish!

II Corinthians 8:9 “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

He sacrificially left behind the riches of His position, and praise, and power to become poor so that we could become rich.

To recap, the first nine characteristics show us what love **is**; that it is patient, humble, and sacrificial.

Today we are going to look at the last six which seem to emphasize more of what love **does**.

So, what does love do? Notice again verse 6 “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth.”

1. Love Rejoices in Right

A. Love “rejoiceth not in iniquity” (v 6a) Moffat stated it like this: “Love is never glad when others go wrong.” Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.” One of the many ways that the wickedness of the human heart shows its ugliness is in the fact that even Christians can have a strange sort of pleasure—they can be secretly happy—when something bad happens to someone they don’t like. How do we know that? Because the Bible warns us against it! Proverbs 24:17 “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:”

Can Christians have a smug sort of satisfaction when someone falls into sin? They can, can’t they? And if that isn’t bad enough, they turn around and—under the guise of a “prayer request”—gossip about it. To “steal” the words of James, “Brethren, these things ought not to be!”

Love does not do that; love does not rejoice in iniquity. Our attitude toward sin should be that of the psalmist David in Psalm 119:136 that Art pointed out on Wednesday night: “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” Love doesn’t rejoice in iniquity because sin brings chastening from God—not blessing from God. If we truly love someone, we will want them blessed by God—not judged by Him.

B. Love “rejoiceth in truth.” “Rejoicing in truth” here seems to carry the opposite idea of “rejoicing in iniquity.” Love does not rejoice in the vices of others; it rejoices in the **virtues** of others. It is thankful when right is done—when the truth prevails—even if people do it in ignorance or with the wrong motive.

Notice what Paul tells the Philippians in Philippians 1:15-18: “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: ¹⁶The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: ¹⁷But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁸What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

Paul rejoiced that Christ was being preached—that the truth was going out—even if those who preached were hoping that it would make things more difficult for Paul. John, the Apostle of love, wrote: III John 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

2. Love Protects those they Love

We see that in verse 7 in the phrase “beareth all things.” *Stego*—the Greek word from which “beareth” comes from here in verse 7—has a couple of different meanings. One is to “bear” in the sense of *enduring*, but since “endure” is at the end of the verse, I believe it takes on its second meaning here.

“*Stego*” can also mean “to cover, to pass over in silence, to keep confidential.” Stated another way, love **protects the reputation** of those they love. Love does not “air its dirty laundry,” so to speak. Although a different Greek word is used in I Peter 4:8, the idea is the same. I Peter 4:8 “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

I think you’d all agree that this gets tricky at times. We don’t cover sin to the point of ignoring it and pretending it doesn’t exist. Sin hurts those involved in it—and sin affects those around it. If we really love someone, we will not want them to continue in sin. Proverbs 27:5-6 “Open rebuke is better than secret love. ⁶Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

So how do we cover sin and protect the reputation of those we love—and at the same time rebuke them, if need be, to the point of “wounding” them—hurting their feelings?

- Three things: 1) We talk to them about it—them; not Luddy, Duddy, and Every body
2) We pray to God about it
3) We seek Biblical counsel from someone we know and trust.

We do not, however, “broadcast” faults, failures, and sins because love “beareth all things;” it covers and protects.

3. Love believes the best

What does it mean to “believe all things?” Does it mean to be naïve and gullible? I don’t believe that is what God is telling us here. The idea is that we are not to be overly suspicious. We should take at face value what we are told—unless we find out at some point that we can’t. The attitude, however, should not be “prove to me that you are not lying.” Instead, it should be “I believe you—until you give me a reason not to.”

This, too, can be tricky—especially if your loved one has a habit of not being a truth-teller. A friend of mine from the military has a saying he is fond of using: “trust, but verify.” That, I believe, is what Joseph was doing when his brothers came to Egypt to buy corn. He wanted to believe they had changed—he saw evidences that they were sorry for how they had treated him—yet he verified they were indeed different. How?

--By putting them in a position where they would have to abandon their brother Benjamin—and break their father Jacob’s heart—again ...

—OR give themselves over as a slave so that Benjamin would be freed. Joseph revealed his identity to them when he saw their willingness to face imprisonment themselves instead of leaving Benjamin in Egypt.

I think we’d all agree that having someone believe in us can be a huge motivator. MacArthur writes: “...you will find that what you believe about a person eventually will shape that person, either a positive, affirming, honest person, or a defensive, dishonest person.”

Stated another way, what you **hear** about yourself can affect what you **believe** about yourself. And, to a certain degree, what you **believe** about yourself can affect what you **become**. I believe it was Jack Hyles who said that when he was a young boy, his mother often said to others—knowing he was within earshot—“my Jack is such a good boy.” Hearing that would make him **want** to be a good boy; it motivated him not to want to disappoint his mother.

4. Love hopes in God

Notice again verse 7, “...hopeth all things...” I like what MacArthur said about this point, too: “As long as the grace of God is operative in the person, you never give up.... Love is fully optimistic; it just keeps on hoping.... And what is that hope in? Not in the person but in the Lord. As long as the grace of God is operative, human failure is never final.”

I love that last statement: “As long as the grace of God is operative, **human failure is never final.**” How can MacArthur make such a claim? Because of God’s ability to change a person from the inside out! There are literally dozens of examples of changed lives we could look at in the Bible; let’s consider just a few we have looked at during this series on love.

A. People who demonstrated changed lives

- Joseph’s brothers sold him; but were later willing to be imprisoned so their brother Benjamin could be free
- The Apostle John—who wanted fire to come down from heaven to destroy Samaritans—b/c the Apostle of L
- John Mark—a young man who quit the mission field and was “written off” by Paul—later became a blessing
- Saul of Tarsus—aka the Apostle Paul—was changed from a persecutor of Christians to a preacher of Christ
- The Apostle Peter—who denied that he even knew Jesus—later became a powerful preacher and rebuked, I believe, some of the very ones he had previously been afraid of

Let me say it again—human failure is never final because God still works in the hearts of men! We see that in the changed lives of people; we also see that in the promises of God.

B. Promises that God is working to change lives

Many a parent has encouraged themselves in the promise given in Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” I personally get more encouragement that my children—and their spouses—will live for God from this simple fact—God the Holy Spirit lives in them if they are truly born again.

I John 3:9 “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Not an easy verse to understand, is it? What is God saying?

--Does this mean that once a person is born of God—born again—that they will never sin?

If it does, we’re all in trouble, aren’t we?! We know It does **not** mean that from this very same letter.

I John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

--What does I John 3:9 mean then? In the Greek, the tense of the verb is “present” so their idea is this: Whoever is born of God does not **continually practice sin**, because God’s Spirit is in him, and he cannot **continually practice sin**, because he is born of God.

--So how is this verse an encouragement? If we are fairly certain our loved one is born again, the Holy Spirit lives in them—and remains in them.

--We can’t always **be with** that person—but God the Holy Spirit is always with them

--We can’t always **say things** to that person—but God the Holy Spirit can speak even when they don’t want to listen

--We can’t **change desires** in another person—but God the Holy Spirit can. Philippians 2:13 says “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

--And we can’t **bring “events”** into a person’s life to get their attention—but God the Holy Spirit can—and does—“for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” we are told in Hebrews 12:6.

Love “hopeth all things” because we have a great God and human failure is never final! Lastly,

5. Love Endures Eternally

I Corinthians 13:7 again, the last phrase, “...endureth all things.” The word “endure” is a military word and means to hold up—to persevere—in spite of intense, life-or-death, violent kind of opposition. It is more than just the ability to handle a minor annoyance.

--It is the drive to keep loving someone even when it doesn’t seem to **make sense** to do so

--It is the determination to love when your **emotions** are screaming that you should hate instead

--It is the resolve to hang on and love even if your **friends tell you you’re crazy**

--And it is the love that Jesus has for us—the kind of love that will **never let us go!**

O wondrous love that will not let me go,

I cling to You with all my strength and soul.

Yet if my hold should ever fail,

This wondrous love will never let me go. (Page 105, first stanza)

God’s love for us endures eternally. We are called to have that same kind of love toward one another.

What is love? Love is patience, and humility, and sacrifice.

What does love do?

--It rejoices in right—not sin

--It protects those it loves

--It believes the best

--It hopes in God

--It cannot be defeated—it endures forever.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. In John 13:35, Jesus said: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Is your life characterized by the different aspects of love we see in this chapter? We all fall short, don’t we? In fact, comparing our love to the spectrum of love God gives us here can be discouraging. Here’s a suggestion. Pray over this list and ask God to show you which one of these you should be working on first. I have no doubt that He will show you.

2. Second, God’s love for His children is eternal—but God’s love for the **unsaved** ends after they die. Since there is nothing **good** in hell, there is no **love** in hell. If you die without Christ—if you die unforgiven—you will experience **the wrath** of God in hell instead of the **love of God** in heaven. Are you saved? If not, you need to be!