

How Love Behaves



The Love of God (Part 14)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we explore together the riches of our theme for this New Year season: The Love of God.

In my two previous talks on this theme I've explained two important facts. First, love is the end purpose of both the law and the gospel. In other words, God has always only had one ultimate requirement of man. At every stage in his dealings with man in every dispensation, whether it was under the Old Testament or under the New, God's ultimate requirement is very simple, it's love. Love for God and love for our neighbor. The difference between the law and the gospel is not the end, but the means to achieve that end.

Then the second fact which I dealt with yesterday is this, there is no substitute for love. Nothing else can take it's place. And ultimately everything else without love is in the last degree, worthless. This is stated by Paul in the opening verses of First Corinthians chapter 13.

Today we are going to look on a little further in First Corinthians chapter 13, in verses 4-6, where Paul paints a picture of love, if I may say so, in action. And as we look in these verses we see how love behaves. What it is like to demonstrate God's love, what it is like when we meet it in others. These three verses make a series of successive statements about love.

Let me read them. First Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4-6:

> "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." (NIV)

Now I took a little while to analyze those three verses and I've discovered something rather exciting. Because this was not written as a piece of theology, it was written as a letter to people whom Paul love and about whom he was deeply concerned. And yet there is a marvelous pattern in these words. If you analyze these three verses, 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 4-6, you'll find that these verses contain fourteen statements which list fourteen characteristics of

love. And if you analyze them further, you will find interestingly enough, that seven of those characteristics are negative and seven are positive. There are seven things Paul says that love does not do, and there are seven things that he says love does do. So you get both sides, the negative and the positive.

We'll look first of all at the seven negative characteristics of love. And I'm going to each in two alternative translations to try to make the picture as clear and as vivid as possible. So here are the seven negative characteristics of love.

First, love does not envy. It is not jealous. It does not see something that others have that it would would use, wrong means or wrong motives, to acquire.

Second, love does not boast or does not brag. Love isn't always making grandiose statements about itself or about anything.

Third, love is not proud or, alternatively, not arrogant. Love doesn't look down on people. Love treats everybody as valuable, every person. Some people are very good to those whom they respect or those who are above them, but arrogant and proud to those below them. I discovered that in the British Army as a very lowly corporal. All my relatives had been officers in the British Army, colonels and brigadiers and generals, but in World War II, I found myself just a corporal. And I discovered that those kind of people whom I was used to as my relatives and my equals, were very different when they were viewed from beneath. They were not the same. But love, true love is the same viewed from any angle to anybody.

Fourth, love is not rude or does not act unbecomingly. If you want to have really good manners, cultivate love. Good manners really are just love expressing itself.

Five, love is not self-seeking. It does not seek it's own. It does not say, "This is mine. I've got a right to it. I'm going to have it no matter what happens. You can't have it."

Sixth, love is not easily angered or not provoked. The moment we find anger rising up in ourselves and we begin to lose control of the way we speak to people and relate to people, we need to stop and remind ourselves that isn't love operating in me. There is a kind of anger that is legitimate, but it's an anger against unrighteousness. It's not really an anger against persons.

Seventh, love keep no record of wrongs. Or the alternative, does not take into account a wrong suffered. How dangerous it is to make a mental list of all the things that other people have done against us. Or the things that they owe to us. So often in a marriage, husband or wife or both will keep a little list of all the respects in which the other partner to the marriage has failed. And their relationship is poisoned because they never see one another just as persons, but in the background they always see this list. "He didn't bring me flowers on our anniversary. He went out and didn't tell me that he wasn't coming back in time for supper." All these things. And they may be very trivial things, but they can completely spoil a relationship that should be one of love and peace and harmony. So if you've got a list, why don't you tear it up right now and adjust that relationship.

If I were to sum up the seven negative features of love that I've just listed in one single statement it was this, Love is not insecure. Any person who acts contrary to those principles Paul lists, is an insecure person. But love is totally secure.

Now we are going on to the positive aspects of love, the seven positive features of love.

First of all, love is patient and that doesn't vary. Each translation says the same. Impatience is basically an expression of a lack of love.

Second, love is kind. Love is never unkind, it's never negative. It always does good, it doesn't harm.

Third, love rejoices with the truth. Love is happy when the people in another church are blessed. Love is happy when another preacher is successful. So long as the truth is prevailing, love is happy no matter who gets the credit.

Fourth, love always protects or bears all things. I prefer the second translation, bears all things. Nothing is too heavy for love. Another translation says, "love never springs a leak." No matter what may be the pressures, love can withhold it. I remember once that a man was praying in a church for a young man who had come forward and he said, "Lord, fill this man with your Holy Spirit." And the pastor of the church lifted his hand up and said, "Don't, Lord, he leaks." You see, so many people get filled but they leak. One way to make sure you never leak is love. Love never springs a leak. No matter how great the pressure, love holds out.

Fifth, love always trusts or believes all things. I prefer the second translation because I think there's this very close relationship between love and faith. Love is the product of faith and love can always believe whatever God says. Love accepts.

Sixth, love always hopes, or hopes all things. Love is optimistic. How pleasant it is to meet optimistic people, isn't it? And what a burden it comes when we're with people who

are always pessimistic. If you want to be popular, be optimistic. I can tell you for sure, that the optimistic people are generally speaking the popular people in this world. Seventh, love always perseveres. It endures all things, it never gives up.

To sum up those seven positive aspects of love I would say: love is infinitely strong. It can stand any pressure, face any situation, meet any challenge. It never gives up.

Let me turn back to two verses in the Song of Solomon which I quoted earlier in this series. Song of Solomon 8, verses 6 and 7:

> "...love is as strong as death... [that's a tremendous statement. Because death is irresistible. There's none of us can resist death. And this says, 'love is as strong as death.' Love is irresistible. And then it says this and this I think so adequately and beautifully expresses what Paul says in First Corinthians 13...] ...Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away..." (NIV)

No matter what comes, love abides. Love is unconquerable. It's irresistible. As a matter of fact, the death and resurrection of Jesus went one step further. It proved not merely that love is as strong as death, it proved that love is stronger than death. When love and death met, love won.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. I'll be continuing tomorrow with this theme: The Love of God.

Radio Program

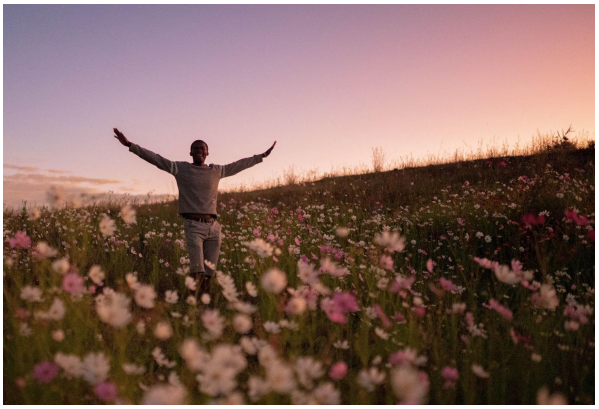
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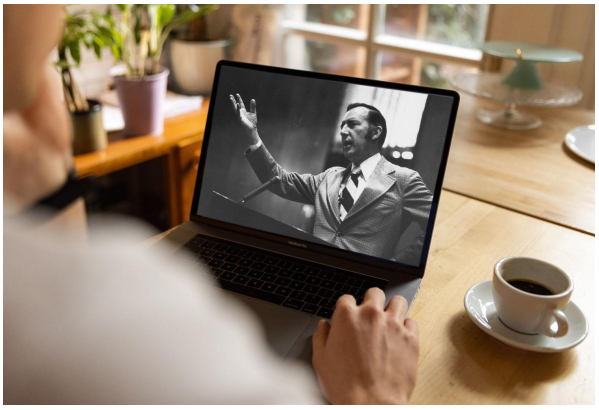
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