

Snapshots of a Disciple

A look at love in action - 1st Corinthians 13 (verse 4d)

Hello brethren and friends - welcome! Today, I'd like to pick up in our study of 1st Corinthians 13 - a study of love - not love's definition, but love in action. :)

This study continues to be a blessing to me in every area of my life and I hope and pray it is to you as well. Hopefully soon, I'll be able to get these series on our website so you can look back at the archives if you want to refresh on something. But, for right now, you can find many of these studies on my FB page - 'Snapshots of a Disciple' - where we try hard to study Jesus' words literally, and apply them to the everyday details of life. ~ Here's a link:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Snapshots-of-a-Disciple/140793325968043>

Okay, so picking up in verse 4 of 1st Corinthians 13. If you need a Bible, here's the NKJV on BlueLetterBible - my personal favorite :) ~

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=1Cr&c=13&v=4&t=NKJV#1>

If you'd like to look the easy-to-use Bible study tool with concordances, etc , that I'm using - you can download that here: www.scripture4all.org

Okay, let's look at verse 4 ~ **“love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked...”** (1st Corinthians 13:4-5)

Okay, so just to recap - we've already studied the part about patience/not giving up. Then we studied how genuine agape/unconditional love (God's love) does not envy in a bad way, but there is a pure jealousy/loyalty to those who He adopts into His family for all of eternity :)

Today, I'd like to look at each of these phrases briefly from a few different angles. As many of you know, I've been delaying this one a few months as I study myself and how this works - really how to understand it so I can explain it well. So, and I'd like to take them one piece at a time.

“... agape love does not parade itself”

To parade yourself is obviously the concept of trying to draw attention to ourselves. That's a good start. And being puffed up is along the lines of thinking better of ourselves than we really are - that's a disease that is distinctly expressed in humankind, and that's not a good thing. So, some really big topics today - and let's dig in :)

First note - I think one falls into the pitfall of being puffed up before they fall into parading themselves. They fall to pride in their heart and mind before they express it in their actions.

Literally in the Greek, this means: “**agape is not bragging/boasting**”. Unconditional love is a pure love - selfless and self-sacrificing, with a strong love of truth to defend it. It does not include any form of self-complimenting. I don't know how many people think about it, but we - by nature, want to think better of ourselves than we ought to. That is why God's Word: “**For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.**” (Romans 12:3)

We live in an age of confusion in Biblical definitions, so we should probably start with a brief review of what pride is so that we can then review what boasting is.

Now, since we're on the subject - let's talk about pride. Is it a good thing or bad thing? Well, our culture loves to blend both a seemingly good definition with a really bad one, so we really have to go to a definition to understand God's thinking.

Pride is actually very well defined by both concepts in that last part of verse 4. So, let's start there.

“love does not parade itself”

Pride - simply put: it is us exalting ourselves above God as more important than anything or anybody. And, it shows itself - from the depths of our depraved hearts - in a variety of ways. Here are just a few:

*** Anytime we believe and say the lie that we 'deserve' anything - yes anything.**

A: *The truth is the only thing we deserve because of our willful and intentional rebellion against God is separation from God for all eternity. That's it. I think we, as self-centered humans, forget how much we threw away and destroyed when we choose to rebel against God. Repentance and committing our lives to Christ restores spiritual relationship with God, but they don't make us holy and pure - we have to grow in holiness and in pleasing God.*

*** Anytime we take in compliments yet do not remind our hearts of the areas that we still need to grow in.**

A: *Romans 12:3 (see above)*

*** Anytime we are doing things to get people's notice or praise, rather than just doing things to please and serve our Master and Savior Jesus, the Christ and to encourage others in following Him.**

A: *Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:23-24*

~ There's more, but I'll stop there for now. Continuing to the next verse and building on this point - not being puffed up.

“not puffed up.”

I think this is probably one of the hardest phrases I've ever come across. And it's halted both my 1st Timothy 3 study and this one for months, because I have not found an adequate way to explain what being puffed up looks like - so I've been dwelling on it in prayer for weeks. I don't want to teach anything too quickly - and I especially don't want to teach something that I don't understand or isn't real to me. I try to

teach out of what God is teaching me. It's fresher and both convicting yet tender that way.

So, what I've discovered is that apparently the reason it is SO hard to teach about not being puffed up, is because we live in a world where being puffed up is, well, 'normal'. How often do we see people showing off their bodies? How often do we see people showing off their token awards here? How often do we see people showing off their possessions (i.e. their shiny pieces of metal they call fancy cars that will go 'pff' when God says this world's done, and burns it up - etc.)? So, with that background as a start, I want to dig into this briefly and then continue looking at the passage, and working our way to the finish this passage on love in action.

Being puffed up is clearly showing off what we think is the area or part of our lives where we've 'excelled' in comparison to worldly, carnal standards and/or better than our neighbor, friend, relative. When we are actively being puffed up, we are trying to ignore an area of sin that we are actively shaking our fist in God's face in rebellion about, and trying to convince everyone around us that we're okay, despite that rebellion, because we've got 'this' to show everyone, and that 'proves' we're ok... Convicting? MUCH! Being puffed up goes to the deepest core of our being. It is what we are without Christ.

What's so amazing about Christ - Jesus, the Messiah, now Master and Savior - is that He set aside all of Heaven's speechlessly-amazing glory, set aside His awesome strength, set aside His being attended to by millions (maybe billions or more) angels, set aside much of what shows He's God, and came down... as a King? An emperor? An world-renowned ruler? No. He came as the lowest of all servants. You talk about the absolute completely clear definition of the extreme opposite of proud - this is it. **"And the Word [*Jesus the Christ*] became flesh and dwelt [*tabernacled*] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14) ~ Talk about awesome humility! That's it. Study that out yourself and you'll find more depth than I can put in words. And when we compare that to what consider valuable - it's all rubbish - doesn't even compare.

Let's look at this a little deeper though - Jesus, came in the form of a baby - completely dependent on humans He created. He put Himself in the care of a carpenter and his wife - one of the hardest, most strenuous trades in that day. He never sought public recognition or human praise in the way we do - only showed Himself to be God in human flesh, and called men, women and children to surrender all and follow Him - turning from their life of active rebellion against God, and giving their whole lives to follow, grow and serve Him. After 3 amazing years of fruitful ministry in the hearts and lives of many He met, He let the hands of his created beings: mock Him, spit upon Him, pronounce curses on Him, call Him a blasphemer, rip His beard out, beat Him to a pulp so that no one could recognize Him, put a crown of thorns on His head, humiliate Him before the most important people of his day, label Him a criminal, and crucify Him where He died in extreme agony (struggling for each gulp of air for several hours), took on the weight of your and my

rebellion against God, and died - murdered, though innocent. Now, you tell me - is that the Jesus you serve today? What about yesterday? Because it's the Jesus that I continue to remind myself, I try everyday, that is Whom I serve. We need no better definition of humility than the perfect Lamb of God. Bold. Honest. Love. Convicting. Holy. Honest rebuke (even strong when needed), and yet, it always came with a tender heart - even hoping that the worst of the rebels (the hypocritical religious leaders of His day) would repent too. Fully human-body (tent), fully God. - Died in our place, for all who receive and commit their lives completely to Him. Yeah - that's the Christ of the Bible. And with His life and death and resurrection, He calls us to a new life in following Him, joining in His sufferings, growing in obedience and turning from every nuance of rebellion, taking up our cross and following, and calling others to join us. Yes, that's the Jesus of the Bible, and that's the Jesus I commit to serve today. How about you?

Well, I've run out of time for now. I'm aiming for these studies to become regular again - would appreciate wisdom and ability to do that.

Praying this encouraged you. Praying that today, you make sure Jesus is your Lord and Master, as I'm double-checking my heart too. And Lord-willing, I expect to pick up on the rest of verse 4 soon.

- your friend/brother, a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH :)