

Snapshots of a Disciple

A look at love in action - 1st Corinthians 13 (verse 5a)

Hello brothers, sisters, and friends,

So, we're picking back up in our 1st Corinthians study. As we study this, we need to remember this isn't love's definition, but really more of showing agape - completely unconditional love in action.

I'm looking at 1st Corinthians 13, so you can read along in your Bible, or if you need an online one, I'm using the NKJV from www.blueletterBible.org.

Okay, picking up in verse 4: **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ...”** (1st Corinthians 13:4-5)

In our last number of studies, we covered the first couple phrases in some detail - **“Love suffers long and is kind”** ~ By way of review, we covered that God's unconditional love is so much more patient than our self-centered love, but His love does have a limit, and yet it's just.

“love does not envy” ~ And here, we covered how God's holy jealousy is far different from our self-centered envy.

“love does not parade itself” ~ Here we looked at what it meant to parade ourselves

“is not puffed up” ~ And, here we looked at how we live in a culture that is puffed up (which builds on the previous phrase), and it's very hard to explain what God's teaching us NOT to do in a world where it's so common-place, that it's as hard to explain to the typical American who calls themselves a Christian, as it is to explain to a fish that it's wet because it's in water. A verse that comes to mind on this: **“If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!”** (Job 15:15-16) ~ That passage says a lot, as does Jeremiah 17: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”** (Jeremiah 17:9)

So, why did I review those verses? Because I've gotten some interesting feedback from people I believe to be Christians - as in genuine followers of Christ, and yet they took offense at some of what I was teaching because they're so used to their sin, that they forgot that it was wrong and an extreme offense to God, and that God is trying to teach them to leave it behind. What I think they forgot is that those 2 verses I just mentioned describe all of us! We don't lose our rebellious heart just because we become adopted sons/daughters of God, through His grace and repentance and faith. We still have that rebellious heart.

So, this leads to my next note: as many of you know from my pattern: just because I'm teaching strongly and as accurately as I can, including calling some things wrong because the Bible says they are - that doesn't mean that I condemn you or anyone else because they do those sins. No, God gives grace. We just need to keep making sure we're growing, as He commanded us to. And, I expect that will come out more clearly in the salvation/sanctification study that I'm just starting to work on, since I find it's a gap in the thinking and understanding of believers again. ~ You see, there are again is a reminder of why we need to be reminded! :) I don't remind to condemn, but to inspire, to challenge, to motivate - aiming to do like Peter, Paul and John did. ~ Anyway, please keep that in mind as we continue to study and grow - okay? Thanks :)

With that said, though, let us also remember that God is very gracious and patient with us when we're humble. Remember His Word? **“But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”** (James 4:6)

And: **“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”** (1st Corinthians 11:31-32) ~ The word there for judging ourselves includes the idea of using discernment to examine everything we are doing to make sure that what we are doing is right and not wrong.

Okay, so with that catch-up, let's pick up where we left off, continuing in verse 5 of 1st Corinthians 13.

“Love... does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil...”

Okay, again, let's take that piece by piece :)

First phrase: **“Love... does not behave rudely”**. Remember, we are talking about agape love here - unconditional, pure love - the kind that only comes from God, and is only found in those who believe and follow Jesus Christ. No religion can help anyone attain that, it only comes from God, through Jesus Christ.

As you might have noticed, here in verse 4 and 5, each phrase builds on the next. Love is patient, then on top of that builds - love doesn't selfishly envy (covet), then on top of that builds - love does not parade itself (show off), then on top of that builds - is not puffed up. This next series of phrases continues that, so let's look at it.

“Love... does not behave rudely” is really the next step in this discussion of unconditional love. You see, when we're prideful, we are really ready to fall for any sin - and covering it up and/or denying it is the first our sinful nature does. You probably remember God talks about pride leading to a fall into rebellion - Proverbs 16:18 and 1st Timothy 3:6 are just 2 passages, and we have many examples in the Bible of this as well. So, when we're in pride, we then are, of course, impatient, and short-tempered, and - rude. So, yes, when we see - you or I, or others being rude, we

can see clearly from God's Word that they are in pride. But, that's not a new concept. We see that in several places in God's Word. Here are just 4 of them: **"For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced."** (2nd Corinthians 12:21-22) The apostle Paul here was concerned about coming to find this group of believers walking in pride, rather than humbly growing in obedience to God and His Word, and God at the same time explains ways that we can identify when we're in pride - sort of like red caution flags.

Here's another passage:

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication [*all kinds of immorality*], uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21) ~ sadly some of this describes many among the believers here in the US who have lost track of what God calls sin, because they engage themselves with what the world calls 'entertainment', but merely boils down to exercises in spiritual erosion.

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled..." (Titus 1:8) ~ This is another passage where God lays out the qualifications that all men should diligently aim for.

And here's one more:

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)

You might have noticed that all four of those passages link pride and arrogance to a quick-temper. We need to remember that and grow in it - yes, me too :)

So, I think the Scriptures we just looked at show how pride and rudeness are linked. How about examples of what we should do instead :)

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: [Jesus] Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we,

having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1st Peter 2:21-25)

That’s a pretty good reminder for us all! :) ~

Okay, so let’s pick up on the next phrase.

“**Love... does not seek its own...**” ~ What a powerful statement! As you might have noticed, we live in a culture that loves sin - I mean really loves rebellion! That’s very sad. But, what’s worse is when those who claim the Name of Christ join the world. Some of the saddest words on this subject, include the words of the apostle Paul: “**For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.**” (Philippians 2:20) And, we see this again in 2nd Timothy 3: “**But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!**” (2nd Timothy 3:1-5) And when genuine followers of Christ join the world in sin, they lead to this: “**And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**” (Matthew 24:12) ~ My brothers and sisters, may this not be the accusation held against us. May we daily study His Words - including Jesus’ words so that we don’t become hard-hearted and join the world in their rebellion, but instead keep our hearts soft and moldable to God’s Word and calling those around us to do the same. :)

Well, that’s as far as we can go for now. I plan to pick up and finish 1st Corinthians 13, verse 5 hopefully in the next week. ~ Till then. Have a blessed Sunday, and let us continue to grow in the grace and knowledge and obedience to the Master and Savior, Jesus the Christ! ~ SH :)