

1CO 13:5 "[Agape love] is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

For most of the world the idea of love is usually relegated to some warm fuzzy feeling they use to determine if they're "In love". Tina Turner sings that it's simply "a second class emotion." And then there are those who measure love by the amount of stuff someone gives them.

And so, you've got the T.V. commercial whose slogan is, "show her you'll love her for the next thousand years." The idea being that as long as you give her a diamond from DeBeers, you have epitomized what it means to love.

Now, there may be some women who would delight in receiving a diamond from her husband, but simply receiving a rock to put on your finger doesn't guarantee love for the next thousand seconds, let alone the next thousand years. Ask Yvonna Trump.

But there is a love which is everlasting, ever active and ever seeking the good of others. As we've seen over the last couple of weeks it is this love, which is the word *agape* in our text, which describes a love of sacrifice, a love which comes exclusively from God, who is love.

It is this love which the Father has for us as He sent His Son to die for the penalty of our sin to bring us back into a love relationship with Him forever. And it is this love which every believer in Christ possesses. And it is this love which our heavenly Father expects us to walk in as we demonstrate this love to each other and the world in the power of the Spirit.

As we come to our text we continue to get a glimpse into what it means to live in the love of Christ as we discover what love is not.

1CO 13:5 "It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

Other translations put it this way.

NASB "[love] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered..."

NKJV "[love] does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil..."

Now, as we've said in the past, the love Paul speaks of here in our text is a love which the Corinthian believers were not practicing as a whole. It didn't mean they couldn't or didn't love, but rather, when they were seeking only self and not concerned with the welfare of others, as they were being rude or self-seeking, or being easily angered, and so on, they were not loving as God intended them to love.

And so, simply because we do not love as Christ intends for us to love, doesn't mean we don't possess the love of Christ; only that in those times where we choose our own way, we are not loving with God's *agape* love.

And so, this section in chapter 13 is a way for us to measure the way we love or don't love in any given circumstance. I dare say, that as we read through this section there have been things this week where we can look back; be it something to do with our spouse, our family or friends, where we can say, the very thing Paul describes as not loving is the very thing I did.

And so, Paul is really encouraging these believers and us to seek to love in a way that looks more like the love Christ gave us at the cross, rather than a love which reverts back to acting only when we have that warm fuzzy feeling, or only when we first receive some form of love from others.

Love doesn't wait to be loved. It simply loves even when no love is first extended to us. Remember, even while we were His enemies Christ loved us and died for us, so as to reestablish a relationship with Himself which is based upon such a love of self-sacrifice.

And so, we come to our text. "Love is not rude, or does not act unbecomingly."

You ever have someone act rude to you? I remember recently going into a restaurant with Cheryle's mom and dad. We were going to have some breakfast, and this hostess went to seat us in an area which really wasn't suitable. We wanted a non-smoking area and when we went to sit down there was this stench in the air of smoke.

And so, we politely told the girl that for whatever reason this non-smoking area was full of smoke and we would like to move to

another section. Well, she went off into this attitude and essentially told us that we didn't know what we were talking about and that we would have to sit back there.

Her reaction to our request was nothing short of rude. It was uncalled for and it was not good business. My immediate reaction in the flesh was to want to be rude in return. But Paul would say, no, don't return evil for evil. Don't return rudeness.

Who knows why this girl reacted the way she did. Maybe she hated her job. Maybe one of her children was sick and she would rather be there with her child than seating a bunch of people who wanted to eat. Maybe she didn't feel well.

Now, that doesn't excuse her to act that way in a business, but it certainly wouldn't excuse us to return the favor and be rude. Love is not rude. It does not act unbecomingly. Rudeness is the opposite of love. Rudeness is only concerned with self.

This was the problem in Corinth. They showed a rudeness to one another in a number of ways.

1CO 11:20-21 "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk."

That's rude. That's behavior which is unbecoming.

They did the same thing with the gifts they received from the Holy Spirit. They would boast in their gift and try and outdo one another as they all spoke at the same time with their gift of tongues. And so, Paul addressed this attitude.

1CO 14:40 "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Now, it should go without saying that we shouldn't be rude with other believers in the body of Christ, but we also shouldn't be rude with those people in the world. Rather we should extend graciousness to them.

One commentator makes the point that, "Love is much more than being gracious and considerate, but it is never less. The messenger can become a barrier to the message. If people don't see the gentleness of Christ clearly in us, they are less likely to see Him clearly in the gospel we preach." (MacArthur)

Paul continues in our text by saying that love is not self-seeking. Other translations include, "[love] does not insist on its own way", (NRSV); "It never seeks its own advantage", (NJB); "it does not claim its rights", (Cassirer)." (Simon J. Kistemaker)

These translations differ slightly but still convey the same message in its most shortened version. Love is not selfish. (NCV). (Kistemaker)

This is contrary to what the world teaches. The world preaches that you are the most important person who should always be pampered first before considering others. You ever wonder why there are so many lawsuits today? Because we're taught early on that you have rights and you should always pursue those rights no matter who you may hurt in the process.

Again, this was going on in Corinth as many of these Christians were insisting on their rights to eat meat sacrificed to idols, no matter who they may hurt in the process, or who they may encourage to sin with their uncaring and unloving attitude.

Love is not selfish. It does not seek its own way. "Bible commentator R.C. Lenski, once wrote. "Cure selfishness and you have just replanted the garden of Eden." Adam and Eve rejected God's way so that they could have their own. Self replaced God. That is the opposite of righteousness and the opposite of love. Love is not preoccupied with its own things but with the interests of others (Phil.2:4)" (MacArthur)

If we are to love as Christ loves then we must not consider just ourselves but also the good of others.

1CO 10:23-24 "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others."

We can do this with our time. We can do this with our money and we can do this with our attitude, which is looking for ways to be a blessing to people instead of only wanting to be blessed ourselves. James sums it up very well.

JAM 2:8 "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right."

We move now to the next in line as to what love is not.

"Love is not easily angered." Again, other translations put it this way. "It is not provoked." (NASB) (NKJV) "It does not become irritated."

You ever become irritated? If you drive U.S. 41 during the winter among all of the snowbirds you can't tell me you don't become irritated. They're always in my way. They're always doing 5 MPH slower in the fast lane. What's up with that? Is it some sort of conspiracy to get me irritated?

Love is not easily provoked. And yet, unfortunately all of us are prone to be provoked at times. Even Moses, who patiently led Israel through the desert for many years, was provoked by the people to become impatient with them.

NUM 20:2-5 "Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. 3 They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! 4 Why did you bring the LORD'S community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? 5 Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"

Imagine an entire nation getting in your face with this stuff. Of course, Moses and Aaron then went to meet with the Lord about this situation and were told to go back to the people and take the staff and speak to the rock so that water would come out for them. Now keep in mind that the Lord literally spoke to Moses. This was a personal encounter with the living God. And yet, here is how Moses responds after that encounter.

NUM 20:10-12 "He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

Moses didn't speak to the rock, he struck it out of anger. Now, we might empathize with Moses, but being provoked to anger did nothing for Moses but keep him out of the Promised land. William Barclay writes, "Christian love never becomes exasperated with

people. Exasperation is always a sign of defeat. When we lose our tempers, we lose everything."

To be provoked to anger is not practicing love. It doesn't mean we've lost our love or that love has taken a vacation in our lives, it simply means we are not choosing to love as does God, in that situation.

In Christ we always have the capacity to love as we flee from the temptation to act on our irritation. But it takes constant vigilance to consider how Christ would handle the situation and then in His power love instead of react. It's interesting to note that of all the times Jesus was personally mocked or mistreated He never lashed out in anger.

It is certainly true that He demonstrated a righteous anger over the abuse of His Father's house of worship as He came to the defense of His Father's holiness and righteousness, but that was dealing with abuses which resulted in leading His people astray which had eternal ramifications for their souls.

Paul also was angered by the things that anger God as it pertains to how false teachers come to destroy what Christ died for. But even in those cases Paul didn't personally attack those people to hurt them. He personally pointed out their sin and their deception so as to cause them to repent while warning the church of their evil deeds.

That is the kind of righteous anger which seeks to help, not to destroy. And though we might wonder how words like righteous and anger can be put together, it does show us that in certain circumstances God permits a type of anger which is designed to show His personal displeasure.

There are certain circumstances in which it would be difficult to convey and identify a problem in any other manner, which in turn demands an immediate response. Somehow I don't think Jesus would have made the same impact had He strolled through the temple and simply requested in a mild-mannered tone that everyone consider what they were doing was wrong.

In that instance it was imperative that He get their attention and teach them the importance of honoring the God who called them out to be a worshipping people.

There was another incident where Jesus conveyed his anger, not because of people provoking Him, but because they refused to see

the grace being extended to them from the hand of God in their midst.

MAR 3:1-6 "Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."

Now granted, you and I need to be careful not to cross the line when it comes to righteous anger. And I suppose we ought to pray as to where that line is under certain circumstances. But, it seems that the line begins with differentiating between a personal attack and defending the faith, or our God, in a way that exhorts people to return to the Lord and His truth.

Anger is one of those things we have to work at to avoid becoming irritated with people simply because we don't like their attitude or what they may say to us personally. But if those same people want to come in here, for example, and begin to spread falsehood and deception without regard for the truth, then my righteous anger will burn to protect the sheep Christ has placed in my care.

But even there we must be careful not to turn a righteous anger into something fleshly.

EPH 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold."

If our anger turns fleshly it will give the devil a foothold which can turn into a stranglehold. We don't want to give him any opportunity to discredit our relationship with our God and Savior.

The last aspect of what love is not is "love keeps no record of wrongs."

The NASB puts it this way. "Love does not take into account a wrong suffered."

The idea here is that love doesn't keep score. It doesn't make a list whether real, or in the mind, of those things which we deem inappropriate from other people which we can then refer back to when we want to even the score.

The term used by the NIV, "no record of wrongs", or the term "take into account" are from a Greek word which was used as a bookkeeping term. It was a term which meant to count, compute, calculate, or count over as "when figuring an entry into a ledger." (MacArthur)

And the intent is that if someone hurts us we put it into the ledger and we don't let it go. Like a bookkeeper we add these things up against their account with the idea of them making good on their account, or else.

We see a similar situation in the gospels.

MAT 18:23-35 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Forgiveness is at the heart of the problem when it comes to keeping a record of wrongs suffered against us. When we consider

what we've been forgiven of by Christ and compare that to what someone has done against us, it's like owing someone a million dollars, and having that debt canceled, and then going out and choking someone who owes you 10 bucks.

In the bigger scheme of things it's simply not worth the effort and aggravation of counting and then putting into our ledger the wrongs of someone against us. Paul says, love will not do that. Love forgives, it covers a multitude of sins. But more than that it demonstrates Christ's love in us for the world to see how His love can forgive eternally.

And what better way for them to see Jesus' forgiveness of our sin than when we forgive others and let them off of our hook by erasing the entries we may have put in our ledger. We don't count it against them, knowing that Jesus doesn't count our sin against us.

2CO 5:18-19 "..... God [is the One], who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

Consider how our sin is dealt with in Christ. Once we have placed our faith in Him His blood has covered our sin, no longer to be brought up against us.

ACT 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, *so that your sins may be wiped out*, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord..."

ISA 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

PSA 103:11-12 "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*"

People will always fail us, even other Christians. But in those times where we can forgive and put it behind us, let's not lose sight of how God can work through that type of love. And in those cases where we feel an injustice has been brought against us, which is beyond our control, we need to give it to God and trust He will work it out.

ROM 12:18-21 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is love. And this is where we begin to grow out of our fleshly approach to life as we consider Christ's love given to us at Calvary. Love is not rude, but shows grace instead. Love is not self-seeking, but seeks the best for others and then delivers. Love isn't easily angered, it is gentle and humble and self-controlled. And love doesn't keep a list of wrongs suffered against us.

I think that's enough for us to consider for this week. But in this week you'll find that the Lord will expect us to practice some aspect of love which will bump up against what love is not. It's a choice, not just to do the right thing, but to honor our God out of thanks and gratitude.

And instead of counting our sins against us the only thing He has put to our account is His righteousness whereby we are reconciled back to the Father and given His love to be practiced in this world for all to see and experience as they see His love in us, to the glory of God.