

2 Actions of Love

1 Cor. 13:1-8a

Introduction:

1. In a previous study we gave consideration to this passage with focus on verse 4.
2. We learned that “agapō” is the word translated “love” (NASB), “charity” (KJV). It is that self-sacrificial love described in Jn. 3:16 and Eph. 5:25.
3. But the word “love” in our society is somewhat abstract. This passage in 1 Cor. 13 describes it in terms of actions, so we can understand what it looks like behaviorally. The description given here takes the concept of love and makes it concrete.
4. With both positive and negative descriptions it fleshes out the concept with particulars. It is more than a “syrupy” emotional feeling. It is not just how we feel about others, but it has to do with how we think about ourselves. Indeed, how we think about ourselves is reflected in our actions toward others.
5. If we diminish ourselves it leads to jealousy, bragging and puffing oneself up. If we respect ourselves we can love more perfectly. Having nothing to prove about our own value allows us to humble ourselves in the selfless giving that “agapō” demands.
6. Notice its description in verse 5: Love “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.”

Discussion:

- I. Love “does not act unbecomingly (aschēmoneō)” (KJV – “doth not behave itself unseemly”).
 - A. This language is rather vague to me. What does it mean to act unbecomingly or unseemly?
 - B. The word translated “unbecomingly” is used in Rom. 1:27 of those who act shamelessly. Actually in the Romans text it is used of men with men in homosexual acts. Homosexual acts are not the context in 1 Cor. 13, but it is saying that love does not act in ways that reflect a lack of shame.
 - C. The same word is used in 1 Cor. 7:36 of a man who gives his daughter in marriage. He is not acting unbecomingly if he gives her in marriage. He may be acting unbecomingly if he refuses to grant her marriage.
 - D. A word from the same word family is used in 1 Cor. 12:23 of our body parts that are “unseemly.” The NASB translates with “less honorable.”
 - E. “Unseemly” denotes that which is not proper, not suitable, unfit or unbecoming. Ex. Laughing out loud in church is unseemly. Lewd behavior is unbecoming of a Christian. So is restraining a daughter from marriage if she is past her youth and she desires to be married. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:36.
 - F. It is unbecoming of Christian love to take each other to court before unbelievers (1 Cor.

6:1ff). It is unbecoming of Christian love to disrespect someone else by encouraging them to violate their conscience. (1 Cor. 8:1ff). It is unbecoming of Christian love to shame those who have nothing (1 Cor. 11:20-22).

II. Love does not seek its own (ou zēteî tà eautēs, lit. does not seek the things of itself).

- A. Perhaps the best commentary on this is Phil. 2:3-5.
- B. An example of seeking one's own is found in Matt. 2:20 when Herod "sought" (zēteō) the life of Jesus. He was plotting as to how he might maintain his position and power by killing Jesus.
- C. Love does not seek its own in marriage (Eph. 5:25; 5:24); in the family (Eph. 6:1, 4, 5, 9).
- D. While this love may be self-sacrificial this does not mean that one diminishes their own value. Instead self value or love for self results in love for others (Eph. 5:28-30).
- E. Out of recognized self value we are able to serve for the benefit of others (Jn. 13:3, 5ff). This is what took Jesus to the cross. Recognizing His value as Son of God He could Sacrifice Himself in service to us. A sound estimation of our own value helps us to humble ourselves to serve others. Contrast Herod (Acts 12:21-23).
- F. In the matters of spiritual gifts, leadership, the Lord's supper, and in the use of their liberties the Corinthians seem to be seeking their own, rather than what was beneficial for the common good (12:7).

III. Love is not provoked (paroxunō; NASB); not easily provoked (KJV); is not irritable (RSV).

- A. The idea is that love is not easily roused to anger, although "easily" (KJV) is not represented by a word in the Greek.
- B. Paul's spirit was provoked when he witnessed the idolatry of Athens (Acts 17:16).
- C. Love does not easily irritated.
- D. Grosheide (p. 307) says, "To provoke is the consequence of the real or the imaginary suffering of injustice." It's generally easy to become provoked when we experience some injustice or some slight, some disrespect or dishonor.
- E. Love can withstand injustice, disrespect, dishonor. Christ is the example of that (1 Pet. 2:21ff). Christians follow His pattern (1 Pet. 3:9).
- F. The Corinthians were called on to love through injustice (1 Cor. 6:7-8).

IV. Love does not take into account (logizomai) a wrong suffered (NASB); thinketh no evil (KJV).

- A. Love does not account the evil done to it.
- B. The idea is that love does not keep count of the evil done to it, like a bookkeeper keeps count of expenditures.
- C. People used to have charge accounts in stores (Credit cards have effectively eliminated this practice.) But to put something on your account meant that it was

accounted against you on the books and you had to pay it later. Love does not put on the books a wrong suffered.

- D. "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account" (Psa. 32:2; Rom. 4:8).
- E. Love doesn't put the violation on the account.
 - 1. It is objected, "But someone has to pay!"
 - 2. Love pays the price even though innocent (1 Cor. 6:7).
 - 3. Love forgives the debt (Matt. 18:23ff). It is not love that chokes and says, "Pay back what you owe" (Matt. 18:28).