

# **LOVE IS HUMBLE**

## **1 Corinthians 13:4**

**Sermon for Peace Church**

**October 19, 2008**

**PURPOSE** – to call people to repentance and faith before God’s perfect love in light of pride’s desire to envy or boast.

**MAIN IDEA** – The call of love leads to a journey of repentance of pride and faith-healing in God’s perfect love as our security and significance in life.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This morning we continue our lessons in love:

*READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7, 13*

1. We often hear those words read at weddings. We marvel at their beauty & insight. For many people, it’s their FAVORITE passage in all of Scripture.

- (i) But when we look closely at what love is, as we’re doing these Sundays, maybe we should give second thought to that evaluation.

For is there any passage in all of Scripture that more clearly reveals the presence & IMPACT of sin in our life?

- a. Love is patient – I get frustrated.
- b. Love is kind – We get irked.
- c. Love hopes – We despair
- d. Love perseveres – we’re prone to give up
- e. Love trusts – we’re steadily anxious

- (ii) As we learn what love is, we might rightly want to call this our LEAST FAVORITE passage of Scripture – because of what it EXPOSES in us.

2. Yet learning to love we MUST do for this reason, above all:

*God is love. (He is patient, kind ...) Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him ... In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence for the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. – 1 Jn. 4:17*

= Love alone COUNTS! Love REMAINS – from this age to the next

- Love is SUBSTANCE! Love is eternal life! God is love.

(i) Therefore we MUST pursue the journey of love, even as it exposes the uglier parts of our nature

FOR here's the good news ... AMAZING GRACE!) – It's THOSE VERY PARTS of our nature that God invites us to give to Him in repentance. (Who else would want them?! – anxiety, frustration)

God wants them - to forgive; to heal; to transform; to make love complete among us. *“Whoever humbles himself (in this way) in the journey of love will THUS be exalted (in that grace).”*

3. So we journey on - today we're looking at 3 things LOVE IS NOT!

Last week we studied 2 things love IS: patient (long-suffering), and kind (helpful, fitting – love languages)

Today – Love does not envy, does not boast, is not proud.

## II. LOVE DOES NOT ENVY

1. You recall the context of this chapter. The apostle Paul was addressing the MISUSE of spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth.

The Spirit was manifesting Himself in powerful ways there – healings, words of knowledge, tongues, prophecies ... love doesn't envy, boast; it isn't proud.

(i) Some people are SO GIFTED! Love envies not ... not other's gifts ... not other's honor / possessions / success / children / education / knowledge / status

What tends to make you envious?

What do you notice that other people have that you don't?

Or, more exactly, WHOSE success do you tend to notice? (... cause more than gifts, envy's about another person)

## 2. LOVE REJOICES in another person's prosperity.

*"Rejoice with those who rejoice" – Rom. 12:15*

But how often don't we struggle with that? ... or the Flipside - someone whose had success that caught attention on our envy radar-screen FAILS – doesn't that smirk come so easily to your face? (I knew they couldn't handle it!)

... *weep with those who weep* – the verse continues

### ENVY:

I.e. – Joseph's brothers envied his status and threw him in a pit.

- The Pharisees envied Jesus' popularity and determined to get rid of Him.
- We envy another ministry's success and look to speak ill of it.

*"Envy is the art of counting the OTHER PERSON'S BLESSINGS, instead of your own."* – Harold Coffin comments.

(i) We tend especially to envy friends, colleagues, family members – people we can more readily compare ourselves to.

## 3. But WHY? What goes on in the heart with envy?

Is it not somehow that we feel LESS of a person for NOT having that success?

= less significant, less valued, less loved

Envy reveals that you and I somehow feel personally DIMINISHED when another person is honored.

- So we CRAVE their success in order to feel important.

(i) But where does that CRAVING come from? Why do I not feel complete as a person for who I uniquely am? Why do I feel like I have to be someone else to matter?

Envy reveals an EMPTINESS in the heart that THINKS another people's gifts & success will fill.

Envy cannot love because it COMPARES.

It does not SERVE, it USES that other person – to feed IMAGES to stuff the emptiness within.

### III. LOVE DOES NOT BOAST

1. BOASTING TOO reveals that empty center.

- It's the FLIP-SIDE of the same coin as envy! But instead of being "below" (the tail), now you're ABOVE (the head):

You have the gifts, status, abilities, experience, possessions, success ... and "they don't"

(i) Boasting is calling attention to yourself.

The Greek word literally means, "to behave as a windbag" – someone who talks a lot, but really says nothing.

- (i) Lew Smedes writes, *"Boasting is our private advertising business, our little campaign to publicize an image of ourselves ... Effective boasting is not only about words, it too is done through clever use of the right symbols – clothes, cars or boats; people – the friends we cultivate, the names we drop, the people we want to be seen with; or actions – like the parties we go to, clubs we join, offices we try to win."*

2. Have you ever noticed how subtle boasting can be?

Jesus taught us to do our good deeds in private – *"Let not even your left hand know what your right hand is doing"* ... BUT ...

- After we've gone to help fix our neighbor's fence – that deed so easily pops up in conversation later!

- We so readily boast about our activities and accomplishment – our children / grandchildren!!

(i) And, of course, the person we most often boast TO is our OWN SELF.

- In our own thoughts (but before the God who hears all):

- > "I'm glad I'm not like that ... I can do that better ... I give ... I know more than she does ... I've do more ..."

WHY THE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN ... to others? ... to ourselves?

(ii) Boasting is not love because it also USES people – to stand upon – and make myself a little higher than.

3. Boasting again reveals an EMPTINESS within that we try to fill – not with longing after other people’s successes (that’s envy) – but by drawing attention to our OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS or EXPLOITS.

(i) Boasting builds one’s sense of importance on the SELF.

A. What an AFFRONT that is to God.

God says, “You’re important because I love you. You don’t have to boast about yourself – nor to yourself. You matter because I love you – not because of who you are or aren’t.”

B. Boasting reveals INSECURITIES within – that need to be healed in God’s love ... so that we can love others – and not use them to compare ourselves to.

#### IV. LOVE IS NOT PROUD

1. Both envy and boasting are rooted in PRIDE. Third, LOVE IS NOT PROUD.

- When, in envy, we feel diminished by others’ success – it’s our pride disturbed
- When, in boasting, we speak of our own gifts or success – it’s pride expressed.

(i) BOTH USE PEOPLE TO MEASURE OURSELVES BY

C.S. Lewis writes, *“Pride is essentially competitive – it gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.”*

2. Theologians call PRIDE the ROOT OF ALL SINS – because it was pride that led Adam to reject God. *“You shall be as God”*, Satan tempted him to eat of the forbidden tree.

- Pride was invoked. – “Look who you can be!”
- Pride which then rejected God & His love at the center of our being
- Pride which put SELF there – “who I am / who I can be” ... leading inevitably to the need to boast & envy.

#### V. HEALING

SO HOW DO WE GROW IN LOVE?

1. Today's descriptions of love remind us that we must first go back to that original rejection – to say, “Lord, I’m sorry ... That rejection is my story. Please forgive me ... Let your love in Christ return ... be the center of my being.”

We need to be HEALED of that emptiness within – which leads us to SHOVE SELF in there with pride, envy and boasting.

We must be REBORN with God’s love at the center of our being.

2. That begins our healing. That begins personal salvation.

SALVATION IS NOT ASSENTING TO CONCEPTS ABOUT GOD!

The Greek word for salvation – “sodzo” – means healing

That begins a life where we can be OTHER-CENTERED, because God’s love has released me from the bondage of SELF-CENTEREDNESS.

That starts the process of growing in love. Salvation is having our THOUGHTS changed by His love.

1 John 4:10 – *In this is love – not that we loved God, but that He loved us and gave His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

That’s where love STARTS. Then it GROWS IN US!

(i) 1 John 4:18 describes that process:

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love (God’s love) drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

A. We reject God - so there’s a vacuum of identity within.

We’re afraid! What can I build my life around?

We put SELF there – in boasting & envy are SYMPTOMS.

So we use others, rather than serve them.

... But then we meet God in Christ. We meet perfect love and say: “You are the Rock. You are the One to build my life on ... Be my center, my Lord.”

Then love is made complete in us, as we continue to confess pride & envy – those vestiges of our natural (old) and self-centered identity. (= that’s not who I am ... be gone!)

Thereafter, every proud thought calls us deeper into God’s healing love. This is SANCTIFICATION. Salvation is growing in God’s perfect love that frees us and makes us whole to love others – because He has first loved me!

3. Are you on that journey? It never ends in this age.

Are WE on that journey? As a church, we don't want to be proud of ourselves, our gifts, our past success ... we want to be "proud" of one thing only – that God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our life.

That's freedom & joy!

## VI. CONCLUSION

1. I've titled this message, "LOVE IS HUMBLE" – because that's the outcome of taking this journey of repentance & healing in God's perfect love.

HUMILITY – has been defined this way (Dan Wilt): *It is freedom from a sense of one's own importance, with total dependence on God and honest concern for others ... It is an accurate perception of your strengths and weaknesses, given in submission to God for the benefit of others."*

(i) Love is humble toward others.

But humility is not something you can work on it.

You can PRAY for it – I heard someone once say – but you can never give thanks for it!

A. Humility is just the natural result of taking God's perfect love deeper and deeper into our being.

- a. That's the journey of salvation
- b. That's growing in love.

2. And we do that by dismantling pride & envy in our life, understanding its sources, repenting and claiming God's love in faith.

WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

AMEN!