

Reference: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Introduction

We've been going through a series exploring what love is and what it is not. So far, we've discussed patience, kindness, and how love neither envies nor boasts. This week, we focus on two more key aspects: **love is not arrogant or rude**.

The Gospel and Love's Power

One of the central thoughts emerging from this series is that love represents the "more excellent way" of living (1 Corinthians 12:31), which surpasses even the spiritual gifts outlined in chapter 12. Love is the **primary marker of a gospel-transformed life**, and where love is lacking, the gospel is working itself out in the recesses of our hearts. Given that we cannot manufacture love on our own, this raises the question: where do we find the capacity to love?

Source of Love: God in Christ

We must look to God as the source of the love we lack. Romans 5:5 teaches us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts. This love, given to us in Christ, is not something that "leaks" from our hearts. So if we find that love is lacking in our lives, it's because there are "things" cluttering or displacing that love. Therefore, the **source of love** is God in Christ, and where love seems to be absent, the problem lies in the clutter of our hearts, not in the absence or insufficiency of God's love.

Love and the Corinthian Church

The facets of love Paul highlights in 1 Corinthians 13 are not an exhaustive list of what love entails. Rather, Paul is focusing on aspects of love that were particularly **lacking in the Corinthian church**. Specifically, as we will see today, their love was being diminished by **arrogance and rudeness**. This was apparent through their behavior. Paul previously addressed this in his letter and at least two areas we can see are the following.

1. **Spiritual Hierarchies:** The Corinthians created a hierarchy based on the perceived value of their spiritual gifts, leading to pride and arrogance.
2. **Inconsideration in Gatherings:** During church meetings, some members would act selfishly, leaving others out, and valuing themselves above others. These behaviors directly opposed the love Paul describes.

Love as an Expression, Not Just a Feeling

This gets at an important aspect of what love is. Love is not just a feeling, though it can evoke feelings. The primary mark of love is that it is **others-focused**. If love is only about how someone else makes you feel, it is not love—perhaps you are being loved, but you are not loving in return. Love must manifest itself in actions that prioritize others.

As one commentator notes, while other types of love, such as those promoted by society, "can remain hidden in the heart, it is essential for Christian love to manifest itself, to demonstrate itself, to provide proof, to put itself on display."

Self-Examination and Arrogance

Paul's message is not only for the Corinthians but also for us. Just as he challenged them to identify areas where arrogance and rudeness were at work, we too must ask: **Where do we see arrogance or rude behavior in our own church or, more specifically, in our own hearts?**

Love, as modeled by Christ, has a "for another" quality. **God's love for us in Christ** is the ultimate expression of this others-focused love. We see this in **Romans 8:38-39**, "**38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*Therefore, we must examine our relationships and ask: **Can we see Christ-like qualities in those we follow?** Are we close enough to those we look up to, not to admire their quotable moments, but to see how they love others even when the pressure is turned up?

Arrogance and Rudeness in the Church

Paul uses specific language to describe arrogance. The word for "**pride**" (translated as "puffed up") is a rare term found in the New Testament, and Paul uses it seven times alone in this letter, emphasizing its significance. As Thiselton asks, "**How much behavior among**

believers and even ministers is actually 'attention-seeking,' designed to impress others with one's supposed importance?"

Love does not dishonor others.

The only other place where Paul uses the verb for "dishonor" is in 1 Corinthians 7:36. Here, it refers to acting against a standard of decency or behaving disgracefully. Paul contrasts love's decency with the selfish, egocentric behavior prevalent in the Corinthian church, particularly in worship services.

Thiselton highlights how the **thoughtless pursuit of self-interest** often disregards the courtesies and respect that should define interpersonal relationships. This behavior shows up in various forms, from **sexual misconduct**, addressed earlier in Paul's letter, to the **exclusion of the poor** at the Lord's Supper. All of these offenses reflect the type of "acting shamefully" that Paul condemns as unloving, causing the world to question why we are not all that much different than them.

Love in Christian Community

Paul's vision of Christian community is one that reflects the love of God in Christ Jesus. This kind of community stands in stark contrast to the world's values—celebrity culture, cancel culture, and sexual liberation. **Love in Christian community** is marked by humility and selflessness, qualities that point back to Christ's love for us.

We do not graduate from the gospel or move on from it. Instead, we need to allow it to **master our lives**. When we truly grasp the depth of God's love for us in Christ, we realize that the call to love is not about trying harder but about letting the gospel transform us from the inside out.

As Paul emphasizes, **love is not proud, arrogant, or "puffed up."** The more we understand the love of God in Christ, the more we will reflect that love to others and to the degree that we lack love, we misunderstand or even underestimate God's love for us.

Conclusion

In closing, the focus of these past few weeks has been to reveal how little we grasp the **depth of God's love for us in Christ**. The call to love is not a burden but an invitation to live out the gospel's transforming power. As Paul contrasts the behavior of the Corinthian church with true love, we are challenged to examine our own hearts, our relationships, and our church community.

Ultimately, **Christ is the model** of perfect love, and we are called to follow His example. As Paul said, "Try to imitate me as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let this be our prayer—that we would not merely understand the gospel but let it transform every aspect of our lives, making love the defining characteristic of our hearts and actions.

There are two examples I would like us to consider, the first being the story of Eustace Scrubb from C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Eustace Scrubb was a young boy, not only in age but also in his attitude. His arrogance and rude behavior ran so deep that, at a particular point in the story, after having 'dragonish' thoughts, Eustace fell asleep on a dragon's treasure, and when he awoke, **he had become a dragon himself (Slide with Dragon)**.

Actually he only became a dragon on the outside because he was already a dragon on the inside.

After being cursed by the dragon's gold Eustace tell's his cousin Edmund about his encounter with Aslan:

"...I looked up and saw the very last thing I expected: a huge lion coming slowly toward me (Slide with dragon's eye). And one odd thing was that there was no moon last night, but there was moonlight where the lion was. So it came nearer and nearer. I was terribly afraid of it. You may think that, being a dragon, I could have knocked any lion out easily enough. But it wasn't that kind of fear. I wasn't afraid of it eating me, I was just afraid of it—if you can understand. Well, it came close up to me and looked straight into my eyes. And I shut my eyes tight. But that wasn't any good because it told me to follow it."

"You mean it spoke?" said Edmund

"I don't know. Now that you mention it, I don't think it did. But it told me all the same. And I knew I'd have to do what it told me, so I got up and followed it. And it led me a long way into the mountains... there was a garden—trees and fruit and everything. In the middle of it there was a well... The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must remove my scales first..."

So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place... But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as they had been before... Then the lion said—but I don't know if it spoke—'You will have to let me remove the scales for you.' I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the scales off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt.

The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know—if you've ever picked the scab off a sore place. It hurts, but it is so fun to see it coming away."

"I know exactly what you mean," said Edmund.

"Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off—just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt—and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly-looking than the others had been. And there I was more smooth, soft, and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me—I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on—and threw me into the water. It hurt like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again."

We could easily replace Eustace Scrubb's name with our name because all of us have dragon hearts and need Aslan to remove the scales even if it hurts so that he can heal us and restore us back to our true nature.

The second illustration is found during the Passover in John's gospel, where we see Jesus, like Aslan, doing for his disciples what they could not do for themselves—washing them of their sins (Painting of Jesus washing feet). This act foreshadows the events to come: Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. With the mental image of our Lord and Savior washing the feet of his disciples, I want you to reflect on how this kind of love is so radically different from the kind of love we as the church often display. It's simply incomparable. If you feel convicted, as I do and have throughout this series, remember that you are not condemned. Instead, allow your Savior to wash away your guilt and shame, and realize that God has indeed poured His love into your heart. Like Eustace, I believe you'll find that you have been made new again.

The Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26