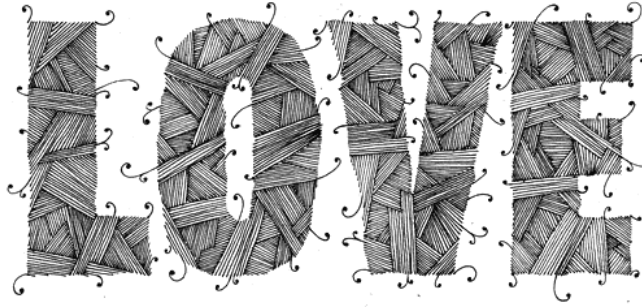


Attributes of Agape, Part 2



Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: 1 Corinthians 13¹

Date: January 2, 2011, 5pm

Series: Love the Church

Introduction: Open your Bible to John 13:35 and 1 Corinthians 13. We begin a series that I hope will be transformational in our church entitled "Love the Church". This evening we continue in our message is entitled: "The Attributes of Agape Love". This is part 2 in our "Attributes of Agape" series.

Remember the striking words of Christ telling us what would mark all of His followers? **John 13:35**, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Love we saw, by definition, is self-sacrifice. It is defined by both John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16.

The essence of love is self-sacrifice

- **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..."
- **1 John 3:16**, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

Love—is the defining mark of a Christ follower! It is the mark that sets us apart and identifies us as Christ's people. We saw this morning two attributes, both positively describing what love is...

Attribute 1: Love is patient (putting up with others)

1 Cor. 13:4, "Love is patient".

Attribute 2: Love is kind (giving to others)

1 Cor. 13:4, "Love is...kind".

Then we read, "Love does not envy". This phrase is the beginning of a list of eight negative factors that Paul contrasts with love; each implies its opposite.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

Attribute 3: Love is not jealous
1 Cor. 13:4, "love does not envy".

Definition: The Greek word *zeloo* means "to be hot, fervent, to be zealous, filled with zeal whether for good or evil." This could be translated as follows. "Love never boils with jealousy"; "Love is not zealous for "my ...rights, things, opinions, ideas, way, etc. at all cost." Jealousy means to be zealous for your own good, your own rights, even to being jealous that anyone has anything better than you.

When one loves another, he has no feeling of jealousy. He isn't sorry but, rather, is joyous to see the other possessing whatever good he has. Again, the focus is on the welfare of the other rather than of one's self. There is no desire to lessen (in any way) the virtues, achievements or happiness of another. A **Christian should prefer to put another before himself.** Few Christians who learn to adopt this attitude toward others will have any serious interpersonal problems that they are hung up on in their life.

A jealous person is zealous (the two words are related) to hold onto and maintain his own rights and possessions at all costs. That is a sign or clear indicator of the presence of this unloving factor that chokes out the tender sprouts of love that from time to time spring forth. Let every counselor look for it and point it out in the lives of counselees whenever he encounters it.

On the other hand, a loving person wants to share what he possesses or has attained and enjoys helping others to attain whatever skills, status, etc., he himself has. Such a positive attitude itself would go far toward splitting apart many of the logjams that occur in Christ's church. Whenever these standstills are experienced in the church, look for a selfish, me-first spirit of jealousy. As in all eight items, the way out begins with confession and repentance. Following the softening of the heart through these, a Christian may begin to a freedom from the slavery of jealousy.

Jealousy is only a slave master that disallows us from rejoicing with the successes of another person.

God is a jealous God

Of course, God is jealous for His own glory, **Exodus 20:5**, "You shall not bow down to them or serve them [idols], for I the LORD your God am a jealous God". His very name is jealous. But God is pure and good. God jealously guards what is good and right. To be jealous for ourselves is to put ourselves in the place of God. For us to be jealous is pure *selfishness*.

Envy is pure selfishness. It means you wish the good things happening to another were happening to you. It means you think you are better than the other person. The Bible

forbids any Christian for having this attitude. Paul says in **Philippians 2:3**, Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Love means you want the very best for others. You do everything you can to help them succeed.

The opposite of envy is selflessness. It means you will sacrifice so that the other person can succeed. Envy (rather than loving by choosing not to envy) is at the root of much sinfulness. It is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It is childish (1 Cor. 3:3). It is a driving force in sinful hearts (Jms. 4:1-2). It is one of the most devastating of sins. **Proverbs 27:4** Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? It is so powerful that it can eat us up.

Examples of someone who was eaten up by jealousy

King Saul—Remember how eaten up by jealousy Saul was when God stripped the kingdom from him and promoted David in his place. Saul was a man after his own selfish ambition. David was “a man after God’s own heart.” What a difference! David picked up the shepherd’s staff so to speak to lead God’s people. And Saul picked up a javelin and on many occasions tried to destroy David out of jealous envy.

Examples of people who not jealous

Jonathan—When God chose David to be king that meant Jonathan would not inherit the kingdom of Israel from Saul. Jonathan loved God’s kingdom more than his own success. When given the opportunity, in private, after David’s slaying of Goliath, Jonathan took off his royal robe and armor and placed it upon David to signify his support of David’s success.

John the Baptist – John 3:25=30. When Jesus’ fame began to increase, John famously said, “He must increase, but I must decrease”.

Our Lord Jesus Christ – Even our Lord Jesus Christ when He walked this earth was not jealous for His own glory but did not count “equality with God a thing to be grasped” or jealously held on to. He set aside His rights as God and was veiled in human flesh. He made Himself nothing (see **Philippians 2**).

Love does not wish to deprive, take away or reduce what another has whether that be ...

- Qualities recognized by others
- Success of one’s children
- Growth of one’s business
- Enhancement of one’s finances
- Opportunities to serve
- Opportunities to travel, go and do.
- Situations or positions in life.

Envy (rather than loving by choosing not to envy) is at the root of much sinfulness.

Attribute 4: Love does not boast

1 Cor. 13:4, “love does not...boast”.

This idea comes from the Greek word, *perpneuomai*. which means braggart. Love does not seek to “promote self” in our words and actions. This could be translated, “Love is not anxious to impress” This phrase has been translated – “love makes no parade.” **Bragging takes the focus and honor off God and places it squarely on “me.”** Love does not parade ones skills, accomplishments, intelligence, possessions, physical appearance, etc., in front of others for their attention and/or approval. Do you want people to discover who you really are? Or do you work hard to just leave “the right” impression; create a false image of the real you? Love is quiet about personal achievements. **Proverbs 27:2** *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

Have you ever been in a difficult discussion with a loved one, and when you were in a corner, you began to paint yourself as the most spiritual person on the planet? You say things like: “I would never do that”. To boast means to be “rash in bragging about one’s own excellences or endowments” (Barnes). This is an attitude of **superiority over others**. It is usually combined with a feeling of contempt or disregard for the other person.

Examples of people who refused to boast

Joseph – In Potipher’s house and in the prison, Joseph did not try to promote himself but humbly served others. In God’s time and way God exalted Joseph over all Egypt.

The Apostle Paul – **1 Corinthians 2:2**, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Paul was treated as the “offscouring of the earth”, but he became the chief of the Apostles in the church in the ages to come because of his writing of 13 New Testament epistles.

Paul said in **2 Corinthians 10:17**, “So the one who boasts must boast in the Lord”.

He said later in **2 Corinthians 11:30**, “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.”

James 4:10, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

An Example of Carnal Boasting

Absalom – Remember when David lost the kingdom to Absalom? Each day, Absalom paraded his credentials outside the palace gate and intimated to the people how wise he himself was as a judge in Israel. He put down his father’s leadership and exalted himself with an entourage fit only for a king, and shamelessly promoted himself. Did he gain the kingdom? For a moment he did. How long did Absalom gain the kingdom? We cannot say exactly – perhaps a few weeks. Maybe a month. That’s about how weak self promotion is. What a poignant illustration of how fragile self-promotion is.

We must remember that it is God who lifts up and who puts down. **Psalm 75:6-7**, "For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, 7 but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another." God is in control of the universe – not you or me. We can trust God. We do not dare boast except in the Cross of Christ or in our own weaknesses!

Conclusion: Remember David – how he was simply seeking to serve God faithfully in the background right where he was. He was just a shepherd boy – the smallest one in his family. Yet one day, the prophet Samuel visited David's family and called the young boy from caring for the sheep, and called him to be the king of Israel. When we humble ourselves, the Lord exalts us. Let's faithfully serve others. Love does not have to brag or promote self. If we must boast, let us boast in others. That is love. Love is not jealous of others' successes, but rejoices in their promotion. That's love.

Also beware that if God uses you in any great way, He's going to put some thorns in your side, because God only uses humble people. Broken, weak people are the kind that love the best and know the Lord most intimately.

You see, God resists proud, unloving, selfish people, but He gives grace to the humble. Love is not jealous and it does not boast. It rejoices in the success and promotion of others, but never seeks its own success. Let's lay our lives down for our brothers as Jesus did. Let us promote Christ's people and not ourselves. This is the most excellent way. It is the way of love.