

## **Love is not irritable or resentful**

August 9, 2009 - 1 Corinthians 13:5

### **1 Corinthians 13**

#### ***The Way of Love***

13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

I was just about home after a long drive. I wanted one more coffee to accompany me on the last couple of hours. I stood in line at a Tim Horton's in Airdrie thinking it would be only a few moments. But the line did not move. Finally, I noticed the drive thru was empty.

I hopped in my car and tried to race to the open lane. But just before I got there an older style green car pulled in front of me.

Inside were four people, never a good thing when they're in front of you at a drive thru. I pulled up right behind them anxiously waiting to place my order. Meanwhile, I could see people now whipping through the line inside. In fact the girl who stood behind me in line was now getting her order filled. My frustration began building. I leaned out the window and overheard the order. "I'll have three sandwiches or should we get meal combos?" There it began. "White or brown; toasted or not toasted; what kind of drink;" minutes ticked away while the steam in my brain intensified. Finally, I heard the speaker say, "Is there anything else?"

"NO! NO! NO!" I screamed inside. "Please say no." Instead I hear, "Susie, are you sure you don't want something?" "Umm, maybe I will have a sandwich combo." Immediately new thoughts entered my mind. "I'll just follow them until we get near a cliff with a long drop. I'll just give them a gentle push with my bumper. No one will know when they discover their car at the bottom of the cliff that I pushed them over."

Finally, they moved on and got their order. Of course, they follow the exact route out to the highway I'm going. So the green thorn in my flesh continued until I finally passed them. Then I began to think, "Tom, you'd never seen those people before. You'll probably never see them again. Yet you got so irritable with them. What gives?" I realized they had gotten in the way of my agenda to make a quick stop. So my anger flared up in an instant because they didn't fit into my plans. I never pondered the possibility that God might have placed them there to protect me from an accident further up the road. I just got irritated and was ready to blast them.

Is it okay to be irritable or easily angered? What about harboring grudges or keeping up family feuds? Is that just normal human nature? "That's just the way he is; she is; I am. What's the big deal?"

I'm here to tell you today friends, that irritability and resentment pose a very serious danger. They can reveal something deeply wrong in our souls. When we're irritable and resentful, we are not showing love to people around us. How do I know that? Because, the Apostle Paul identifies irritability and resentment as having no part of Biblical love. When we fail to love, we fail to show the most important

character trait Christ commanded. "This is how all men will know you are my disciples; if you love one another." So irritability and resentment threaten our witness.

I hope by the end of this message, we will see our need to cry out to *Christ* and the *Holy Spirit* to kill irritability and resentment in us before *they* kill us.

This continues Paul's discourse on Love. We've been looking at this love chapter this summer. Paul began by describing great acts that if done without love amounted to nothing. Then he used two positive descriptions of love. Love is patient, Love is kind. He has now followed those with descriptions of what love is not. Love is not envious, not boasting, not proud, not rude and not self-seeking. Those five dealt with the evil we find within ourselves. But now Paul addresses what love looks like even when we see evil in others or when we're on the receiving end of evil from others.

So to dig into this we're first going to look at irritability and resentment. What are they? What do they reveal about us? Then we'll look at how we can overcome these deadly perils. Finally, we will pray prior to the Lord's Table to ask Jesus and the Holy Spirit to

root out any of these sins from our lives. Paul addresses irritability near the end of 1 Corinthians 13:5.

**Love is not irritable.** 1 Corinthians 13:5. The New International Version translates it (Love) is not easily angered. The word in Greek is *paroxuno* from which we get our English word “paroxysm,” a convulsion or sudden outburst of emotion or action. Some Bible versions translate it “easily provoked.” I would define this irritability as “a sudden outburst of anger at the slightest provocation.” If we allow ourselves to get easily angered or irritable, we are not showing Biblical love to others.

What does easily angered or irritability look like? You say something or do something and all of sudden the person is angry at you. You feel like you’re “walking on eggshells” around this person. The slightest thing and they’re ticked.

Now sometimes this can be caused by a medical condition. The person actually has little or no capacity to tolerate some of the common inconveniences of life. We were visiting with Lori’s grandfather on our vacation. He is in a care facility. We went out of his room into the hall to talk where there was more room to sit down.

After a few minutes of conversation we hear “Shut Up!” come out of another room. We weren’t sure if that was directed toward us but after another minute or two we heard another “Shut Up!” If there was any doubt these two words were directed towards us, there was no doubt the third time. “Shut up and go somewhere else.” Now it could be that this gentlemen was simply irritable. Or it could be that they had no physical ability to tolerate any disturbance of the peace. We can be more prone to irritability when we’re tired or stressed.

But many times irritation or easy anger indicates we have an agenda we want to accomplish. Anything or anyone that gets in the way of that agenda is an irritant. How can that show lack of love? The agenda becomes more important than the person.

Or say we have one set of values. “Men should always wear ties when they come to church.” We come to church and see a man without a tie. They don’t believe men need to wear ties to church. We can be immediately irritated by that tie-less person. How can that show lack of love? We have just communicated that my values are more important than tie absent person or in engaging in dialogue with person B.

Think about how irritability might have manifested itself in the Corinthian church? They were divided around certain leaders. Some followed Apollos. Others followed Paul. Some followed Christ. It could have gotten to the point that if a person from one camp even spoke up to the other camp, immediate irritation manifested itself. “Oh there they go again on their soap box about what Paul said.”

Irritation or easy anger show itself in a variety of ways; rolled eyes; sarcasm; contorted faces; raised voices; physically waving off the other person; yelling; ignoring. All can communicate a lack of love.

Now we might feel quite justified in our irritability. But how would we be doing if God treated us the same way? Ps. 103:8 – The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Where would we be if the Lord was easily angered and irritable with us? Where might we be if every time we crossed His agenda, He snapped at us or every time we chose a value contrary to His, He blasted us or disowned us?

Telling our wives or husbands or family members “I love you” is not very convincing if we continually get upset and angry at what they

say and do. Telling our children that we love them is not convincing if we often yell at them for doing things that irritate us and interfere with our own plans. (MacArthur)

Some people protest, “I lose my temper a lot, but it’s all over in a few minutes.” So is a nuclear bomb. A great deal of damage can be done in a very short time. Temper is always destructive, and even small temper “bombs” can leave much hurt and damage, especially when they explode on a regular basis. Some people have great difficulty relating to God as Father because their earthly father was angry and irritated with them so much.

There is, of course, a place for anger (Eph. 4:26). But that is passionate opposition to evil, not a selfish concern for our own rights. (Morris) To be angered by the mistreatment of the poor or by the mocking and contradiction of God’s Word is righteous indignation. But when it is truly righteous, anger will never be easily provoked by something done against us personally. However, we still might think that irritability is not that big of a deal.

Friends, people are probably in Hell today because they never recognized their irritability warned of lack of love. The key identifying

characteristic of a Christian is love. Love is not irritable. It is not easily angered. It's a warning sign to be taken seriously. Biblical love is not irritable. The second one is found in the last part of verse 5.

“Love is not resentful.” Now we have a translation issue here. The phrase literally states “thinks no evil” or “reckons not evil.” So the New King James translates it “Love thinks no evil.” But ESV says “love is not resentful.” NIV says “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” The translators face a decision. Who is doing the evil here? If we're doing the evil, then “thinks no evil” is the correct translation. That would mean “love does not think evil about others.”

But if it's the other who has done evil, then the ESV or NIV translation make sense. One meaning of the word translated “think” is “to reckon, to take into account, to calculate.” Some commentators argue this is a bookkeeping term that means to calculate or reckon as when figuring an entry in a ledger. The purpose of the entry is to make a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed.” (MacArthur). So if that was Paul's intention “love keeps no record of wrongs” is a good translation. “Resentment” is a one word translation of the NIV version. Resentment is “an ongoing, deep-seated, below-

the-surface anger directed at another person whom we perceive has wronged or offended us.” It's keeping a record of wrongs.

In business, it is important to keep permanent records. In personal matters, it is not only unnecessary but harmful. Yet sometimes we do that.

“Oh we might be in the same room as we sing songs. But I wouldn't trust them as far as I could throw them.” “Once you've crossed me or done something wrong, you're in my bad books forever.” What are “bad books?” Bad books refers to the books that listed bad debts; people who have failed to pay the debt. That is how the world operates. You write off people who have done evil against you or offended you. You hang out only with the people in your good books. .

But we're not the world. We're the body of Christ. Christians do not keep a record of wrongs. Christians do not show love by carrying on with resentment. After all, where would we be if God kept entering us in His bad books? Consider these texts about God's view of forgiven sinners.

Psalm 103:11-12 - “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Romans 4:8 “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not *take into account*.”

2 Corinthians 5:19 “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not *counting* their trespasses against them.” (2 Cor. 5:19)

Just as God in Christ does not “reckon our sins against us” (2 Cor. 5:19), so we who love do not keep records ready to be pulled out against others.

But Tom, are you saying we should just sweep sins under the carpet? Are you saying ignore the offenses committed against us and put on a happy face? That’s what the church said to victims of abuse for years! Are you saying those churches were right?

Certainly not! Scripture instructs us to speak truth in love, Ephesians 4:15. It lays out the pattern for loving confrontation in Matthew 18:15-17. God commands His people to defend the cause of

the fatherless and widows. I in no way want to minimize the depths of pain and wrong caused by abuse. God always condemns abusers.

But He never commends resentment. He never allows harboring of grudges. We must guard against quickly jumping to defend our right to keep records of wrongs.

This doesn’t mean we act foolishly and put a pedophile in junior church. But it does mean we imitate Christ. We show grace. We grieve over sin and call it to account. But we don’t walk around with our list of things everyone else has done wrong to justify our resentment.

I recently listened to a podcast where a woman described her relationship with her mother-in-law. For 20 years, this woman had born with the slights, digs and hurtful comments from her husband’s mother. About 7 months ago, things blew up. This woman had it. She unleashed 20 years of pent up resentment and frustration in a nuclear blast that sent shockwaves through the family. She and her mother-in-law do not speak to this day.

She wrote into this program to ask for help. She described her bitterness. She was frightened at all the thoughts she had and the vile

words she easily spewed out about her. “I’m scared to be this bitter,” she wrote. How can I overcome this?

Now a secular talk show host might respond by saying she has every right to be this bitter after the way her mother-in-law treated her. They might counsel her to move forward in life and set boundaries about what would and would not be tolerated in conversations in the future, should there be any. Some of that stuff might certainly be necessary.

But the pastor hosting this program, John Piper, approached this from a profoundly different direction. He said the way to overcome our bitterness and anger is to ponder the depth of our own sinfulness before God. A person full of resentment and full of easy anger may not have gripped the greatness of their own sin and how much they’ve been forgiven by God.

He went on to say “most of our bitterness and anger is rooted in our inability to be profoundly amazed at what Christ has done for us and our sin. Perhaps God has allowed this season of rage in this woman’s life so she would see the quality of her own sin and forgiven

state. When we are stunned by the grace of God to us His grace can flow from us. So the solution is *not* to fix the other person.

The key to rooting out anger is to discover the exceeding sinfulness of our sin; owning it; being broken by it; tasting as never before the sweetness of the cross of Christ, blood of Christ, forgiveness.

Once we taste this sweetness two things happen: One - A future is opened to us because Christ takes away all sin and condemnations that should justly come to us.

Two – We realize that whoever is making us mad hasn’t done anything remotely close to what we’ve done to God. Nevertheless God has treated us with mercy and broken our heart. With brokenhearted hopefulness about the future, you can’t get mad as easily. You can’t hold a grudge against a person that has mistreated you if in fact you have really tasted how big your faults are against God, how great the forgiveness; how huge the price. When we grasp the magnitude of our own sin and come to Christ for His forgiveness, we taste sweet grace. You can’t be easily angered and resentful when your heart overflows with the grace of God.

How do we overcome these sins?

If you are not a Christian here today, to overcome easy anger and resentment, you must personally trust Christ and His Work to save you from your sinful nature. By placing your trust on Christ alone, the power of God's Gospel flows into your life. Your sins will be forgiven. You no longer stand condemned before God but become His child. The Holy Spirit comes in to begin that work of transforming your mind to think the things of God which leads to behavior honoring God. It starts with trusting Christ. Will you today put your trust in Christ as your Savior?

Christians, we must call out to Holy Spirit to kill sin in us. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil, guilt, and danger of the corruption, lust or sin that is to be mortified.

Let God's overwhelming grace in your life overflow into the lives of others. Let the grace of God overflow from your life into the lives of others around – including the people who make you mad.

There is hope and relief from relentless disappointment, angry outbursts and slow burning resentment. Jesus came to free us from these through His death and blood. These sins are worthy of God's

just wrath. But in trusting Christ, we are protected from God's wrath. Instead we become a child of God. God gives us the Holy Spirit who works in us to offer true deep seated Christian love.

If we have harbored resentment towards someone or kept a record of wrong against them, we need to confess that before we take communion today. We might even not take communion today because the Holy Spirit is speaking to us right now about our need to make this right. We have harbored this against our brother. It is time to make it right and stop drinking and eating judgment upon ourselves. Or we might have shown great irritability and easy anger to someone close to us. We must confess that to the Lord and to them before we take communion. Then we can enter into a time of remembrance and celebration at the Lord's Table.