

# Christ's Loving Cure for the Irritable or Resentful

1 Cor. 13:5b

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, October 31, 2021

Today we stand in that Reformation heritage and in that reformed faith we've been singing about. Based on scripture alone, we're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ's alone, to the glory of God alone.

- October 31, 1517, Luther's 95 Theses (spark of the Reformation)
- October 4th, 1535, 1st full English Bible published under Tyndale  
90% of the KJV (and most of your Bible) from his labor
- October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1536 Tyndale was burned at the stake for that work
- October 16, 1555, Nicholas Ridley & Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake for preaching salvation by faith alone. Latimer said, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light a candle in England, by God's grace, that shall never be put out."

**That light is still burning today, may it burn brighter**

Today we worship freely and can read God's Word clearly in our language because of the blood of martyrs. May we never take it for granted or treat it lightly. And may we be of good cheer even when things don't look good on the news. It's been far worse for our forefathers; we need to play the man. We don't need to fear Covid, and we don't need to flee California. We need to focus on Christ and be faithful Christians, give His light to a dark world.

**Today is a reformation and revival theme; we need revived hearts in love**

With the Spirit's help let's look at God's Word in 1 Corinthians 13 and I pray this study lights a fire in us to love and live the gospel. Paul writes in ch 16: *'Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.'* Ch 13 shows us how. As you're watchful of a world drawing battle lines against our faith, don't run from the battle. Rise up, man up, stand up for Him. And lift up His name to this world that needs His love. Don't let headlines make you retreat from the mission. *'An army bold, whose battle cry is love, reaching out to those in darkness'* (Getty).

**Our forefathers stayed firm and made a lasting impact for Christ**

Don't pull out of the public square or pull up stakes to escape the world; it will follow you. And followers of Christ are called to go into all the world with the gospel of His love in schools, senior centers, secular jobs, etc. The world needs Christ and His love in this chapter! And we're His witnesses to show and tell it. Jesus said they will know we are Christians by our love, Jn 13. In Jn 17 He sends us into the world and prays for our love, *'that they may all be one...so that the world may believe...so that the world may know...'*

13:4 *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; **it is not irritable or resentful...***

These are the marching orders for the church, to keep in step with the Spirit and not be provoking each other. In the fight of faith, we're to be strong and let all we do be done in love. The battle here is on the inside, in our hearts, toward our fellow soldiers. The enemy is within, being irritable or resentful. Our battle isn't against others flesh and blood, it's internal spiritual warfare.

*Our call to war, to love the captive soul, But to rage against the captor;  
And with the sword that makes the wounded whole, We will fight with faith and valor<sup>1</sup>*

Our battle isn't against people captive to sin, we love the captive soul and want to liberate them. But we fight our own sin, and the sword of scripture can actually heal and make whole the wounded, even self-inflicted wounds.

Friendly fire is when you shoot your own, but being irritable or resentful is really shooting yourself. And like an army doctor treating wounds, Paul has tests to help us see what's wrong inside, he pokes

to see where it hurts, and where there's infection that can grow, does x-rays, and he treats it to cure it.

The irritable is visibly inflamed, the resentful is inward hurt getting infected

### **Title: Christ's Loving Cure for the Irritable and Resentful**

The Great Physician loves us too much to just tell us what will make us feel good about ourselves. Christ shows us our sin, painfully at times, but then He shows us the cure and gives us a treatment plan to avoid re-infection. So we've studied the rest of v. 4-5 the weeks before, today we finish v. 5 with:

- Outline:**
- 1. Love isn't Irritable**
  - 2. Love isn't Resentful**

#### **For both, our problem, God's cure**

**1<sup>st</sup>, The Irritable – Our Problem** – what are the symptoms to diagnose it?

Symptoms include being 'easily provoked, easily angered, prone to anger, quick to take offence' (those are different Bible translations).<sup>2</sup> Dr. Charles Hodge says it can include the 'quick-tempered.'<sup>3</sup> Another says 'touchy' is the idea, or 'grumpy, grouchy ... cantankerous' or 'crabby.'<sup>4</sup> The world may call that a personality, God's Word calls that a problem He can help.

Even for good people, this can cause serious damage in relations. The root word is used in Acts 15:39, Paul and Barnabas had a '*sharp disagreement*' and ended up going their separate ways. The original language had the idea of something sharp or pointed, and what happens when it pokes or provokes

#### **When sharp words come out, that's a symptom of irritability**

One writer says this irritation or exasperation comes when "*one's self-regard has been dented, wounded, or punctured by some sharp point.*"<sup>5</sup>

If you can think of someone who easily gets under your skin, that's irritable. It's when people can quickly provoke you to anger or you're often annoyed.

We use other words: 'he gets ticked off' or 'she goes off' – that's irritable.

We try to make it sound better, 'I got a lot of pet peeves,' not 'I'm irritable.'

You may call it snarky, snappy, sarcasm, or stressed out, but that's irritable.

#### **Quote from a child I know: "I'm not angry, I'm just mad and frustrated"**

If a button gets pushed and in a second it just sets you off, that's irritable.

For me it can be buttons on my phone, or how text messages are worded, or someone can't understand what I think is clear. I can be irritable at home.

You kids throw tantrums, parents launch into tirades, drivers have tempers when irritated at other drivers, co-workers have angry trigger fingers, and old guys get the title 'grumpy old men.' Grumbling ladies are irritable, too.

When an irritable family member ain't happy, ain't nobody happy. There's irritable Christians here of each sex and stage of life. Some say 'well I just get all hot, but once I explode and let it out, I'm done after a few minutes.' Well so does a nuclear bomb, but there's great damage it leaves to people.

#### **We need to not excuse irritability, we need to ask forgiveness for it**

This is a big deal. Paul says in v. 13 the greatest of all is love and without love we're a noisy irritation to others (don't make me bring out the gong!). Jesus said love is the greatest commandment, so to not love is a great sin. If love is not irritable, being irritable is a great sin. God commands 'be slow to anger,' so when we're quickly angered, that's sin. Irritability is the opposite of love, so irritable complaining is actually a form of hating. Don't excuse your moods. Love isn't touchy or grumpy. Love doesn't explode or unload

#### **Borgman: 'love doesn't make others walk on egg shells around you'**

### **That's a diagnosis of our problem, what's God's cure for the irritable?**

#### **- Look to God's love to you that isn't quick to get angry or irritated**

Ex 34:6: God 'passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger, abounding in love...**"

Israel in the wilderness was irritable and irritating to Moses but here's how he prayed for them: "may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 'The LORD is **slow to anger, abounding in love** and forgiving sin and rebellion...**In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people...**The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked" (Num 14)<sup>6</sup>

Listen to Nehemiah's appeal to God for his people who were disobedient and irritants: 'But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, **slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...**' (Neh 9:17 ESV).

David saw this as what makes God so great: 'Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised... The LORD is gracious and merciful, **slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...**' (Ps 145:3, 8). Ps 103:8 same word for word.

Even Jonah, the worst prophet, knew this about God: 'He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, **slow to anger and abounding in love...**' Jonah 4:2 NIV

Here's what the prophet Joel appealed to when judgment comes: 'Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, **slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love...**And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved' (Joel 2:13, 22). **GOSPEL**

#### **- Look to God's wisdom to help you be slow to anger [turn to Pr 14]**

James 1:18 says 'Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. <sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, **slow to anger**; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

**Proverbs 14:29** Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

**Proverbs 15:18** A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

**Proverbs 16:32** Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

**Proverbs 19:11** Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

#### **- Look to God's Love in Christ [TURN TO MARK CHAPTER 6]**

The world describes the irritable as toxic, but we can be 'made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in – a great love ... the Spirit of Christ, impenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all.'<sup>7</sup> Christ's love cured Peter. He wrote 'Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking ... keep loving one another fervently, since love covers a multitude of sins... (1 Pet 4:1, 8). Peter experienced that. In work situations that provoke, he adds "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so you might follow in his steps" (2:21). How He suffered many sins is key for our love covering a multitude

Mk 6:35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and **the hour is now late**. <sup>36</sup> Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and **buy themselves** something to eat." <sup>37</sup> But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." [And Jesus goes on to feed and satisfy all their needs]

Ryken points out in v. 36 ‘they commanded Jesus “Send them away” ... the disciples tried to tell Jesus his business and then spoke to him rather sarcastically... [in v. 37] Rather than picking up on what he was trying to teach them—namely, that he always has the resources to provide for our needs—they made a smart-mouthed remark instead... If an apostle can get irritated while he is spending time with Jesus, then we can get irritated too... The disciples also teach us when we are likely to get irritated.... at the end of a full day after a long trip, when they were tired and hungry... Physical weakness puts us in the way of spiritual danger... temptations [also often] come right after we have been busy doing kingdom work...

Another lesson to learn from the disciples is how irritability treats other people. Basically, it doesn’t want anything to do with them... putting what we want ahead of what they need... The real problem is us, not them. We need to be honest about this, because often we blame the people around us for the way we respond. “He really makes me mad!” we say, as if someone outside of us were directly and totally responsible for our sinful attitude ... But the spiritual issue for me is not how irritating other people are; it is how irritable I am... we need to confess our own need for more of the love of Jesus... [who isn’t] irritated with me or too tired to deal with me

Rather than wishing the crowds away and getting irritated when they refused to leave, Jesus kept blessing them... Mark tells us that Jesus did this because of his love [v. 34] “*He had compassion on them*”... This is what love does... [the disciples] get irritated with him, he does not get irritated with them but treats them with the same compassion that he had for everyone... Those irritable, irritating disciples were well fed because they too were loved by the love of Jesus... All of my irritating sins are covered by the cross where Jesus died for my sins. [If He is your Savior by faith] your sins are covered too, because of the love of Jesus. Now we are called to love the way Jesus loves, with a nonirritated, un-angry love. Some people are bound to irritate us each and every day. When they do, how will we respond? We will respond with love, if we have asked Jesus to put his love into our lives—a prayer he loves to answer.”<sup>8</sup> [we must pray and obey]

### **Christlike love isn’t irritable and 1 Cor 13:5 adds it’s also not resentful.**

The last verb in v. 5 moves from everyday *irritants* (over things that may or may not be evil) to longer-term *resentments* over perceived evils against us.

The easily angered may blow up, others clam up in resentment. The irritable may snap or be snarky, the resentful may sulk or be seething. Being irritable is outward, but resentful is more inward (and arguably it’s more dangerous). The first is bothered by irritating people, the second is bitter towards people

**Our problem** – resenting others, replaying the wrongs we feel they’ve done against us in the TV screen of our mind. Or think a computer screen saver that comes up when you’re not doing something for awhile, you pause from busyness and this comes up on the screen in color and different scenes that keep cycling through. When your mind is in neutral, like a car at a stoplight, there’s this noise running that lets you know there’s a problem in the engine

### **Who do you resent who you live with? Work with? Worship with?**

This verb from the accounting world means a mental calculation, a charging to accounts payable, even a plan for collections of the debt. NASB “does not take into account a wrong suffered,” NIV “keeps no record of wrongs.” The ledger of love “does not keep books on evil ... keeping records of wrongs with a view to paying back injury ... calculating how to retaliate.”<sup>9</sup>

Love doesn’t throw the book at them. One resentful wife kept a detailed accounting stored up “one-inch thick, on 8½ by 11 paper, typewritten on both sides ... a thirteen-year record of wrongs that her husband had done to her.”<sup>10</sup> Love doesn’t keep a mental ‘file of personal grievances that can be consulted and nursed whenever there is a possibility of some new slight.”<sup>11</sup>

### **That’s the problem as the word diagnoses resentment. What’s its cure?**

- **Focus on the gospel as you love**

Turn to 2 Cor 5. By grace it's possible to turn from resentment to reflection on the gospel. 1 Cor 13 is all about the love of Christ, and His love doesn't resent or record sins against His people. **2 Cor 5:14:** *For the love of Christ controls us...[look at v. 19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ...*

God doesn't count sins against us. **v. 21** *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Instead of counting wrongs to our record, God counts Christ's righteousness to our account and charges our sin to Christ's account. This is the great exchange of the good news! God doesn't keep a record of wrongs against us – He doesn't take into our account a wrong suffered - He sees us in Christ – and we're His ambassadors. We represent that love of Christ controlling us.

Ps 130: *'If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness ... with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption'* (v. 3-4, 7).<sup>12</sup> His love doesn't keep record of sins for those He redeems. Ps 32 says blessed or happy is the man against whom the Lord doesn't count sin because his sin is covered. Love rejoices in this truth

- **Forgive others as God in Christ forgives you**

Romans 4 spends a whole chapter talking about how God doesn't count our sin debt against us in Christ, then Rom 13:8 says instead of insisting on pay back for a sin-debt to us, we have as Christians *"the continuing debt to love one another..."*<sup>13</sup> Col 2:14 says God in Christ forgave and cancelled *"the record of debt that stood against us ... This he set aside, by nailing it to the cross"* (Colossians 2:14), and in turn if we have grievances towards others we're to forgive just as God has forgiven us, as we put on love (3:13-14).

Eph 4:32 forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven us, and walk in love.

This doesn't deny evil, it recognizes the power of the cross for evil, starting with our own. "The gospel reminds us that nothing done *to us*, no matter how wicked, will ever surpass the wickedness done *by us*, to the holy Son of God."<sup>14</sup> The redeemed can choose not to count transgressions against us by looking in faith to Jesus, who "was counted with the transgressors" (Lk 22:37 NET) and lovingly prayed for their forgiveness (23:4).

He taught us to pray for daily bread, *"and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."*

As daily as our need for food, we need to be delivered from the temptation to keep a record of debts for evil done to us, and we must daily forgive and ask forgiveness for our own debts to God. Man's way is to resent someone when there is a record of many offenses and what is owed, but God's way is to settle accounts by mercy (Mt 18:21-23, 33). Forgiveness in the Bible is releasing and not making someone pay what is owed, based on compassion, not based on a calculation of what's "fair" (18:27). We've been forgiven for an infinite records of evil against God (v. 24), we must forgive far lesser accounts of wrongs toward us (v. 27) from the heart<sup>15</sup> (v. 35). See Mk 11:25

Amy Carmichael: 'If I cast up a confessed, repented, and forsaken sin against another, and allow my remembrance of that sin to color my thinking and feed my suspicions, then I know nothing of Calvary love. If I take offense easily, if I am content to continue a cool unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love.'

Kim Phuc was a naked nine-year-old girl in a famous photo of the Vietnam War after a napalm attack near Saigon. Here clothes had been burned off by fire, and over 14 months she had 17 operations on her after the bomb blast. She said 'Our house was destroyed; we lost everything and we just survived day by day. The anger inside me was like a hatred as high as a mountain. I hated my life... I really wanted to die many times... to find a purpose for my life, one of the books that I read was the Holy

Bible. On Christmas 1982 I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior. It was an amazing turning point in my life. God helped me learn to forgive—the most difficult of all lessons. It didn't happen in a day and it wasn't easy. But I finally got it. Forgiveness made me free from hatred. I still have many scars on my body and severe pain most days, but my heart is cleansed. Napalm is very powerful, but faith, forgiveness and love are much more powerful.'<sup>16</sup>

#### FROM A SISTER IN CHRIST HERE AT THE CHURCH:

'Forgiveness is setting a prisoner free, Only to realize the prisoner was me.

People who hold grudges ... [end up] in a prison of despair and anger.

That's why "forgiveness is setting a prisoner free, only to realize the prisoner was me." Grudges devour. Jonah 4... Jonah was so self absorbed in UN-forgiveness, so distracted in his grudge prison, he did not notice that worm devouring his shelter! He wanted to die and give up his own human heart to death rather than forgive the people of Nineveh as God had. And even to forgive God for not punishing them! He was holding a grudge against God! \*Grudges devour because they eat away at my heart...

I told you about the elderly woman who came to the retreat. Very bitter. Many years ago, as a young bride with a new baby, she learned her soldier husband had been tortured and murdered by the Japanese army in WWII...

Sunday morning during a sharing time, she and her daughter stood up and told her story. Years of bitterness, hatred even toward a doctor who was treating her and happened to be of Japanese heritage. She said horrible things to him. If there was a God, she was angry at Him, too.

But that night, back in the bunk room with her believing daughter and other bunk mates who gathered to pray with the woman (she was crying and couldn't seem to stop weeping for the years of her life UN-forgiveness had eaten away). The group got on their knees and prayed. And that bitter old woman prayed, repenting, asking for help from God to forgive as He forgave. Setting her free from her prison of grudges. And she asked Jesus Christ to be her Saviour.' May He take us from resentment to repentance.

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<sup>1</sup> Getty Music, "O Church Arise."

<sup>2</sup> KJV, NIV, NAB, REB.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Hodge, *First Corinthians*, 294.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*, 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> Thiselton, NIGTC, 1052. Note the connection with the prior phrase for "self-seeking."

<sup>6</sup> NIV for both citations, Numbers 14:17-20.

<sup>7</sup> Drummond, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, 24. On Peter's transformation by love to write those words, note Peter's multitude of sins and denying Jesus, then note Mark 16:7 and John 20:17, 21:7-19, Acts 2, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, "Love is Not Irritable," in *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*.

<sup>9</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2003), 618–19.

<sup>10</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1972), 33.

<sup>11</sup> Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 62.

<sup>12</sup> NIV.

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<sup>13</sup> NIV.

<sup>14</sup> Gary and Betsy Ricucci, *Love that Lasts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 99

<sup>15</sup> Heart forgiveness is not full reconciliation or a restored relationship where an interpersonal conversation / confession is needed (18:15 vs. 18:21ff). Ken Sande, in *The Peacemaker* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 209, notes if forgiveness is asked for and granted, “I forgive you” is a promise not to dwell on the incident, not bring it up again to use it against you, not talk to others about it, and not let it stand between us or hinder our relationship. Robert Jones describes this pre-conversation heart forgiveness as “*attitudinal forgiveness* of releasing bitterness from the heart and refusing to usurp God’s role as judge. Yet, loving your adversary may mean rebuking him (Luke 17:3, 4; Matt. 7:5, 18:15; Prov. 27:5, 6). Then, if he is repentant, love involves that *transacted forgiveness* of promising never to bring up that person’s sin again” -- Robert D. Jones, “Resolving Conflict Christ’s Way,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Number 1, Fall 2000* 19 (2000): 17, italics added. See also Chris Braun, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008)

<sup>16</sup> As told by Philip Ryken at the end of the above mentioned chapter.