

“HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL SERVANTS OF GOD #4: THE HABIT OF LOVE FIRST THESS 2:7 (52-13)

William James, in his classic *Principles of Psychology*, put it this way: *Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke or virtue or vice leaves its ever so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying "I won't count this time! " Well! He may not count it, but it is being counted nonetheless. Down among his nerve cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one.*¹

When Paul looked back on his work among the Thessalonians? A life on a daily basis had:

HABITS OF FEARLESSNESS [2:1]

HABITS OF INTEGRITY [2:3]

HABITS OF HONESTY [2:5]

HABITS OF HUMILITY [2:6]

HABITS OF LOVINGKINDNESS [2:7]

HABITS OF PASSIONATE LIVING [2:8]

HABITS OF DEDICATION [2:9-11]

- I. HABITS OF EFFECTIVE SERVANTS #5 LOVE (2:7) The apostle Paul wrote to a city church that mirrored the very culture we live in.
 - A. Graham Scroggie, born in 1877, a noted Bible teacher who pastored in the British world analyzed the Virtues of Love as follows:

¹ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1952), p. 83.

Love is not Hasty, but Patient.
Love is not Inconsiderate, but Benevolent.
Love is not Envious, but Content.
Love is not Boastful, but Unostentatious.
Love is not Arrogant, but Humble.
Love is not Rude, but Courteous.
Love is not Selfish, but Self-forgetful.
Love is not Irritable, but Good-tempered.
Love is not Vindictive, but Generous.
Love is not Malevolent, but High-principled.
Love is not Rebellious, but Brave.
Love is not Suspicious, but Confident.
Love is not Despondent, but Undiscourageable.
Love is not Conquerable, but Indomitable
 William Scroggie, 1877

- B. Lets take a trip to the 1st Century world. Then after seeing the struggles of Century one, stop in Tulsa of 1997...To see the best photo of the ancient way of life turn to the 30 chapter we have on Corinth. More than any other city we have insight into this one.
- C. If we were to scan this epistle in a couple of minutes and grab the big problems they faced in 1st century Christianity, these would be the "sins of the saints at Corinth":
1. DIVISIVENESS 1: 10 divisiveness = following men and movements more than truth.
 2. ARROGANCE 1: 18-20 arrogance = hung up on i-high brow human philosophy rather than the simple gospel,
 3. WORLDLINESS 1:26 worldly = pursuing cultural, societal worldly fame and prestige. Temporal over eternal.
 4. FLESHLINESS 3:1-3 fleshly = carnality, the entertainment mentality of the Christian life.
 5. INDULGENCE 5:1 morally lax = toleration of sexual promiscuity, especially seen in the list of 6:9-11..
 6. LITIGIOUSNESS 6:1 litigious = a vengeful, get even, get all i can, my rights first attitude toward one another.
 7. CONFUSEDNESS 7: confused = they had a low view of marriage, thus confusion over god's principles for a biblical marriage.
 8. SELFISHNESS 8:1 selfish= liberty misused by a selfish lack of love and care for others.
 9. UNDISCIPLINED 9:24 undisciplined = needed strict self denial unto holiness.

10. LUSTFULNESS 10:6 lustful = chasing after worldly things and pleasures.
11. TWO-FACEDNESS 10: 16-22 compromisers = lit. Facing both ways' as they came to the lord's table and also to pagan idol worship.
12. UNSUBMISSIVENESS 11:1 unsubmitiveness = perversion of male/female roles in church, home and society.
13. HOLLOWNESS 12-14 hollow = they had perverted the proper use of spiritual gifts,
14. ERRANTNESS 15:1,12 errant = they had lost their grip on God's truth.

II. LOVE LEARNED IN THE CHURCH --

A. THE PROCESS OF LOVE:

1. FOLLOW AFTER LOVE 1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual [gifts,] but especially that you may prophesy. (NKJV)
2. BE SINCERE IN LOVE 2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. (NKJV)
3. ABOUND IN LOVE Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, (NKJV)
4. BE CONSISTENT IN LOVE (Phil. 2:2) Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. (NKJV)
5. PUT ON LOVE Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (NKJV)
6. INCREASE IN LOVE 1 Thessalonians 3:12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we [do] to you, (NKJV)
7. PROVOKE EACH OTHER TO LOVE Hebrews 10:29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (NKJV)
8. CONTINUE IN LOVE Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. (NKJV)
9. BE FERVENT IN LOVE 1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (NKJV)

B. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOVE: John 15:12-16-- WE HAVE THE ABILITY FOR SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE THROUGH CHRIST (TAPE)

1. Acknowledge it is a command (Romans 13:8-10)
 2. Agree you have the power (Romans 5:5)
 3. Understand it is normal Christian behavior (I John 4:7-10)
 4. Realize it is the Spirit's work (Gal. 5:22)
 5. Practice it. (I Peter 1:22, 4:8) (Hebrews. 5:8)
- C. THE PATTERN OF LOVE: Turn with me to i corinthians 13 and lets Read verses 1-8a Now, lets focus on the solution paul presented them. In essence it was tms- Christ in you is.
1. "patient (makrothumei) = this is patience not merely with circumstances, but with people. When you have the power to avenge and don't do it. Literally long tempered. The ability to be wronged over and over again. See Paul 2 Corinthians 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, (NKJV) every Christian in Ephesians 4:2 and the spirits fruit in Galatians 5:22. Those who can see further than the present.
 2. "kind (cresteuetai) =the other side of patience is here taking any grief, giving anything to be helpful and useful, healing wounds.
 3. "not jealous (zeloi) = never envious. The root word here is to boil, seethe'. This is not the mere i want what you have, its the malignant i don't want you to have and keep what i can't have.
 4. "does not brag (perpereuetai) = is not boastful, the verbalizing of self. The root is the word for which we get windbag.
 5. "not arrogant (prusioutai) = not conceited. The attitude of pride. I am better etc. It is when one becomes inflated with their own importance.
 6. "not act unbecomingly (aschemonei)" =not rude is better. Seen as 'love does not behave gracelessly'. The Greek words for grace and charm are notably the same. As Swindoll put it, in Christ. We become winsome.
 7. "not seek its own " isn't insistent upon its rights = but took upon himself the form of a servant.
 8. "not provoked (paroxunetai) = never flies into a rage. This is the lack of becoming exasperated. As kipling said, master this and you have it all. Better yet Solomon in proverbs 25:28 "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls and broken down." Two kinds of people, those who think of their rights and those thinking of their duties. Our mind set must be selfish or selfless...

9. "does not take into account a wrong suffered (logize- = to remembers no evil. This is refusing to store up the memory of any wrong received. What a liberating truth to grasp a hold of. Like an accountant, clear the ledger.. As Chrysostom said, "love is like a spark falling into the ocean is quenched". As god does not hold our sins against us in romans 4:8, psalm 32.
10. "does not rejoice in unrighteousness = no pleasure in evil reports as do the heathen in romans 1:32.
11. "rejoices with the truth (sugchairei) = in harmony with the truth, partaking of the love of the truth 11 Thessalonians 2: 10, @ch is the joy of god. As psalm 15 says 'speaks truth in heart.
12. "bears all things (stegai) = literally to cover on all sides, to cover in silence. Ties word originally spoke of a watertight boat. As in i peter 4:8. Endures it all
13. "believes all things (pisteuei) = not suspicious, but trusting God's plan knows that nothing happens by chance. Thus is completely trusting
14. "Hopes all things (elpizei) = even after repeated disappointments there is a constant assurance that God has a future and is working all things for his own glory. Thus, never ceasing to hope
15. "endures all things (hupomenai) = bearing everyting with triumphant endurance

Three things we see about love:

- I. LOVE IS DECISIVE There are three words in the Greek language which are translated "love."
 - A. One, EROS, tells of love of passion, of lust, of sensual desire. This word occurs in the OT. In Esther, Ezekiel, Hosea and in Proverbs, but never in the NT.
 - B. The second of these words, PHILEO, tells of the love of impulse, of affection, of natural inclination. We find it in such words as "philosophy" and "Philadelphia." It occurs in both New and Old testaments, and speaks chiefly of our love for one another, of affection among relations and friends.
 - C. But the third word, AGAPE, is the word that is used in chapter. 13 and so often in the NT is expressive of "character determined by will, and not of spontaneous natural emotion." It denotes love which chooses its object with decision of will, so that it becomes self-denying, Christianity took up this word and distinguished it from all that is lustful or merely emotional. This love is absolutely unstained by any evil association. So the first

thing to understand is the DECISIVE quality of this love. Note John's description of this love in *1 John 3:1 Behold what manner [literally where did it come from? Its not from Earth!] of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (NKJV)*

II. LOVE IS DIVINE

- A. This third kind of love describes the moral attribute of God Himself: "God is Love." Therefore when we sing George Matheson's hymn: "O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee!"
- B. we are not singing about an abstract love, but worshipping God Who not only does love, BUT IS LOVE, WHOSE CHARACTER IS HOLY LOVE. In the Word of God we learn this love is discoverable essentially only IN God, displayed perfectly only BY God and is derived only FROM God. And knowing that this love is spiritual and divine, we understand that. This the kind of love described in *1 John 4:7-10 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. (NKJV)*

III. LOVE IS INDESTRUCTIBLE. Here Paul tells us that while other things pass away, love lasts, it never fails. It is not dependent upon, nor is it affected by anything outside of itself. It is content to bestow itself upon the worthy and unworthy alike. In our hearts it moves upward to God and outward to men. In chapter 13 we learn about how this love moves outward to man. Paul says in *1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these [is] love. (NKJV)*

- I. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...PATIENT - (MAKROTHUMEIN) This is patience not merely with circumstances, but with people. When you have the power to avenge and don't do it. Literally long-tempered. The ability to be wronged over and over again. See Paul in *Corinthians 6:6*; every Christian in *Ephesians 4:2* and the Spirit's fruit in *Galatians 5:22*. Those who can see further than the present.
- II. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...KIND - (CHESTEUETAI) The other side of patience is here taking any grief, giving anything to be helpful and useful, healing wounds.

- III. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT JEALOUS - (ZELOI) Never envious. The root word here is "to boil, seethe". This is not the mere I want what you have; it's the malignant I don't want you to have and keep what I can't have.
- IV. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT BRAGGING - (PERPEREUETAI) Is not boastful, the verbalizing of self, the root is the word for which we get windbag.
- V. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT ARROGANT - (PHUSIOUTAI) Not conceited. The attitude of pride. I am better, etc. It is when one becomes inflated with their own importance.
- VI. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT ACTING UNBECOMINGLY - (ASCHEMONEI) Not rude is better seen as "love does not behave gracelessly." The Greek words for grace and charm are notably the same. As Swindoll put it, in Christ we become winsome.
- VII. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT SEEKING IT'S OWN - Or isn't insistent upon it's rights - but took upon Himself the form of a servant.
- VIII. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT PROVOKED - (PAROXUNETAI) Never flies into a rage. This is the lack of becoming exasperated. As Kipling said, "Master this and you have it all." Better yet Solomon in Proverbs 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls and broken down." Two kinds of people, those who think of their rights and those thinking of their duties. Our mind set must be selfish or selfless...
- IX. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED - (LOGIZOMAI) To remember no evil. This is refusing to store up the memory of any wrong received. What a liberating truth to grasp hold of like an accountant, clear the ledger. As Chrysostom said, "Love is like a spark falling into the ocean is quenched." As God does not hold our sins against us in Romans 4:8, Psalm 32.
- X. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT REJOICING IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS - Love takes no pleasure in evil reports as do the heathen in Romans 1:32. The meaning of iniquity is "unrighteousness". Unrighteousness talks about sin. Love never rejoices in sin.
- XI. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...REJOICING WITH THE TRUTH - (SUGCHAIREI) In harmony with the truth, partaking of the love of the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 which is the joy of God. As Psalm 15 says, "speaks truth in heart." Holiness or righteousness is based on truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. One cannot be righteous until he behaves himself in accord with God's truth. Dr. Moffatt translates this, "Love is never glad when others go wrong: love is gladdened by goodness." Love does not delight in exposing the weakness of others. *1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (NKJV)*. Nevertheless, love is

- opposed to sin, grieves and weeps over it. It is the ally of the truth, and in sheltering the sinner it will never fail to condemn his sin
- XII. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...BEARING ALL THINGS - (STEGAI) Literally to cover on all sides, to cover in silence.
- A. DEFINED: When Paul says, "love beareth all things" he is not talking about enduring a trial, he is talking about covering the ugliness in someone else's life. Love out of respect and honest concern for the real value of another person will do everything it can to cover up the sin of that person.
 - B. Scroggie: Love is strong in its silences. It patiently endures what it has to suffer. It is not shaken by any sort of ingratitude. The word used here is highly pictorial. It is employed of holding fast, like a watertight vessel (I Peter 4:8); it is used of a roof which does not leak; it is used of troops defending a fortress, and it is used of ice bearing weight, and not giving way. It bravely stands up to life.
 - C. SPIRITUAL RESPONSE: I Peter 4:8 B "...FOR LOVE SHALL COVER THE MULTITUDE OF SINS" Love is a big blanket that runs around throwing itself over people's faults ... not exposing them. Proverbs 10:12 *"Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins.* Have you ever noticed how easy it is to dismiss the faults of those you love. Your best friend does something wrong and you say, "That's okay. Everybody makes a mistake." But what about when the woman or that church leader you don't like does something wrong? You love it, don't you? Why? Because you want them to do something wrong and look bad. But love dismisses the sins of the one it loves.
 - D. God so loved, that He,; I John. 4:10 B *"sent His Son to be the propitiation (covering) for our sins."*
 - E. Now love will warn, exhort and rebuke and discipline; but love will also cover that sin, not expose it. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS.
- XIII. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...BELIEVING ALL THINGS - (PISTEUEI) Not suspicious, but trusting God's plan. Thus is completely trusting. Love believes the best about others.. Love sees the weakness, throws a mantle of silence over it, and then believes the best.
- A. Scroggie: This confident love is entirely alien to the spirit of the cynic, the pessimist, the anonymous slanderer, the secret detractor. Love takes the best and kindest view of all men, in all circumstances, as long as it is possible to do so.
 - B. REDPATH: When a man has fallen, love will think about the battle that he must have fought and the struggle that he must have had before he went down.

- C. The Lord Jesus never misjudged anybody, because He did not judge by outward appearances. *John 5:6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time [in that case], he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? (KJV)* He asked the worst case at the pool of Bethesda. He became the Friend of sinners. Remember God sees beyond the mere exterior of a person *1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For [the] [Lord does] not [see] as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (NKJV)*
 - D. This aspect of love is often seen in the hearts of parents of an UNBELIEVING CHILD. He may be a source of great heartbreak. Even though they recognize his sins, faults and problems. They throw a mantle of love over him. They believe with all their hearts he will come back to the Lord. Why? Because they love him and love has to believe that. Love cares too much not to believe it.
- XIV. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...HOPING ALL THINGS - (ELPIZEI) Even amid repeated disappointments there is a constant assurance that God has a future and is working all things for His own glory.
- A. Hope knows that God is seeking man and that man is made for God and so love never despairs of anybody. *Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (KJV)*
 - B. When you run out of faith, hang on to hope. Hope is the long line, the long cord, that never gets disconnected. As long as the grace of God is operative, human failure is never final. Is anything too hard for God? Pray and keep hoping.
 - C. This rope of hope is optimistic -- God is still God and He can do it. Love refuses to take failure as final. Jesus wouldn't accept it from Peter, Paul wouldn't accept it from the Corinthians. Many a loving wife has held on to a husband; many a loving parent has held on to a wayward child and many a loving friend has held on to a fallen brother -- just holding on to hope.
 - D. Hope does not try to persuade itself that the thief is honest; but it holds tight knowing that man was MADE for honesty, for purity and the heavenly vision.
 - E. REDPATH: Christ, because He is love, never gives in to dismay or gives up to despair. I am so glad I have a God like that, for when others give us up it is wonderful to know there is a God in heaven who goes on hoping and planning for our good.

- XV. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...ENDURING ALL THINGS - (HUPOMENAI)
Bearing everything with triumphant endurance. Love never fails. Love never dies; it doesn't end. Love cannot be conquered.
- A. This love took Jesus to Calvary. 1 John 3:16 *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.* (NKJV)
 - B. The Greek term translated "endureth" is a military term which has to do with being positioned in the middle of a violent battle. The emphasis is not on handling little, minor annoyances. It refers to love that stands wounded and bleeding against incredible opposition and still loves.
 - C. When the Apostle Stephen was lying on the ground with his life being crushed out with rocks, the Scripture records for us in Acts 7:60b, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge..." Even in death he wanted to throw a mantle over the sins of his people. He believed, he hoped and he preached with the belief that some would listen and come to Christ. When he ran out of faith and hope, all he had left was endurance. Because he loved them.
 - D. The LORD JESUS on the cross threw a mantle over His crucifiers' sin, believed that some would believe, hoped and endured in the end. Luke 23:34a: "Father, forgive them..."
 - E. Paul said *2 Corinthians 12:15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.* (KJV)
 - F. Love bears all hurts, wounds, sins and disappointments; covers them with a blanket of silence and feels sympathetic, redemptive and even bears the pain. Love believes the best about people, is never cynical, is never suspicious -- in spite of the way it is being wounded. And when love's believing is betrayed, love turns to hope because God is still God and He can do anything. And even when hope grows thin and all hope seems lost, love endures. It endures deep hurt that seems so final, never losing the triumphant confidence that God who gives His children peace is still on the throne. Love cares too much to give up.
 - G. SCROGGIE: Look at these four things. Love BEARS, silently suffers and actively hopes, and it does so because it BELIEVES, putting the best construction upon the conduct of others, and expecting much of every one. When this faith is betrayed love still HOPES, looking to man's need and God's grace; and when such hope is sadly disappointed; love continues to ENDURE. This is the very climax of love's courage and optimism.
- A. In that excellent new book "The Discipline of Grace" Navigator theologian Jerry BRIDGES encourages us to put I Corinthians

into personal actions statements. Let me share my personal action statements:

1. I WILL NOT REJOICE IN SIN BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND I KNOW OUR HOLY GOD IS OFFENDED BY SIN AND SIN WILL HURT YOU PERSONALLY.
2. I WILL TAKE PLEASURE IN THE TRUTH BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND WANT YOUR LIFE TO REFLECT GOD'S HOLINESS.
3. I WILL BEAR ALL THINGS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND DON'T WANT TO PARADE YOUR SIN BEFORE OTHER PEOPLE.
4. I WILL BELIEVE ALL THINGS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND WILL BELIEVE THE BEST ABOUT YOU, NOT JUDGING YOU WRONGLY. I WILL HAVE FAITH IN YOU.
5. I WILL HOPE ALL THINGS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND KNOW THAT GOD IS SEEKING YOU AND YOU ARE MADE FOR GOD; I WILL NOT DESPAIR OF YOU BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR NEEDS AND I KNOW GOD'S GRACE.
6. I WILL ENDURE ALL THINGS BECAUSE I LOVE YOU AND THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS ETERNAL; JESUS ENDURED ALL OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION AND PRAYED ON THE CROSS FOR HIS ENEMIES. LOVE NEVER DIES

*"Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.*

*"Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.*

*"Finish then Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let it be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee.*

*"Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!"*

Charles Wesley (1747)