

- f. From patience and kindness as two of love's positive qualities, Paul turned to some of love's negative ones – that is, qualities which describe what love is *not* (13:4-6). Before considering them individually, it's important to note that Paul lumped them together in one very important way: He treated them all as *absolutes*. In other words, love is never, at any time and to any extent, characterized by any of these negative qualities.

The first of those is that love is **not jealous**. Again, because Paul was talking about love as it truly is, he was referring to love as it is in God Himself. God is love, and the implication, then, is that God is not jealous. This raises an immediate problem, for God insists that He *is* a jealous God. So much so, in fact, that He declared to Moses that His *name* is Jealous (cf. Exodus 20:5, 34:14). This implies one of two things: Either the love Paul was speaking of doesn't characterize God, or the jealousy he was referring to is of a different sort than that which God ascribes to Himself. The first option is impossible since there is no authentic love except that which exists in God; *therefore, there must be a jealousy which expresses love and another which contradicts it.*

This is exactly what one discovers from the biblical text. There are indeed two kinds of jealousy and they can be distinguished by the following considerations:

- First of all, jealousy in every form involves an intense inward passion. This passion can be negative or positive. In contemporary American usage, *jealousy* (or *envy*) tends to convey the negative connotation while *zeal* conveys the positive one. Another example of a negative connotation of jealousy is the notion of *covetousness* (cf. 3:3, 14:1, 39 with Acts 7:9, 17:5, 21:20, 22:3; Romans 10:2; 2 Corinthians 7:6-11, 9:2, 11:2, 12:20; Galatians 1:14, 4:17-18, 5:19-20; Philippians 3:4-6; Titus 2:14; James 3:14, 4:2; 1 Peter 3:13). In the case of the Corinthians, Paul noted that they were *zealous* for what they considered to be the greater gifts (12:31, 14:12), but this was but one manifestation of an overall pattern of *jealousy* which fueled the divisions and factions among them (3:1-3).
- Secondly, and suggested by the previous consideration, jealousy has both an *internal* and *external* dynamic. It is first and foremost an internal disposition and only then an external manifestation. Jealous conduct is the outward expression of a jealous heart, and that is the case for righteous zeal as much as unrighteous jealousy (cf. Acts 7:9, 2 Corinthians 11:1-2).
- Third, the nature of a being's inward jealousy (or zeal) determines its outward manifestation, but it also determines what will arouse that jealousy in the first place. That is, jealousy speaks to an inward passion, but one that is provoked and then driven to outward expression by certain stimuli. People's jealousy – positive and negative – is provoked by differing concerns and interests, and what inflames one individual may leave another completely unmoved.

The above observations apply to jealousy in general, whether in its positive or negative form and regardless of its orientation and intensity. They are important because they provide the basis for identifying the essential differences between the jealousy (zeal) which characterizes the Father and Son (and so those who share in the divine life) and that which contradicts love.

As noted, the connection between jealousy's inward passion and outward expression resides in its nature and orientation. Jealousy is aroused and made manifest on account of that which provokes it, and this means that the nature of the provocation illumines the nature of the jealousy itself. And though any number of stimuli can incite a person's jealousy, they can all be placed into one of two categories: *concerns pertaining to God and concerns pertaining to oneself (whether directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously)*.

- In the case of the persons of the Godhead, their jealousy (zeal) is always associated with the former. God is jealous for Himself (His "name") – not because He's self-centered as men are, but because He is goodness and truth and all His ways, purposes and works are true and good. Thus divine jealousy expresses itself positively in deliverance, provision and preservation and negatively in judgment, chastening and even destruction (cf. Exodus 33:12-34:16; Deuteronomy 4:1-40, 29:1-21; Isaiah 9:1-7, 59:1-21; Zechariah 8:1-3). *But in every case, it reflects the same internal passion and orientation of the one God who is love* (cf. Deuteronomy 32:1-35 with 36-43; also Psalm 78:40-72; Joel 2:1-32; Zephaniah 3:1-20).

The Old Testament scriptures highlight Yahweh's jealousy as oriented toward the accomplishment of His design for His creation. His zeal is directed in condemnation and destroying power against that which contradicts and opposes His purposes, but only because He is jealous for the creation's true good and final, consummate perfection. Understood in this way, Jesus is the embodiment of Yahweh's jealousy. *In His person as much as His work, Jesus is the full revelation and realization of His Father's zeal* (cf. John 2:13-17 with Psalm 69:1-9).

- Conversely, all natural human jealousy (and zeal) is tied to personal concerns. This is not to say that people can't be zealous for righteous causes or the well-being of others, *but all such zeal flows from a mind that is nonetheless intractably centered in self*. Only as a person comes to participate in the divine life and mind does he partake in the jealousy which characterizes the Father, Son and Spirit – the jealousy that is born of love (2 Corinthians 7:1-11, 9:1-2, 11:1-3; Titus 2:1-14; Revelation 3:14-19). And even so, such jealousy is not a given; those born of the Spirit can still think and act contrary to love and so fall prey to the jealousy Paul decried. Rather than being zealous for Christ and the good of His body, Christians can be zealous for selfish concerns (though they may appear righteous and God-honoring). Such was the case at Corinth.

These considerations show that there is a jealousy which expresses love and one which contradicts it. The former jealousy characterizes the God who is love, and it is provoked by and exercises itself toward the cause of love. Thus, like patience and kindness which are themselves qualities of love, *this sort of jealousy is purposeful and gospel-oriented*. Unlike the jealousy Paul referred to, this godly zeal is neither self-centered nor self-seeking; defined and driven by love, it is just one more way in which love exerts itself toward the true good of its object – the good which is bound up in Jesus Christ and flows out to men through His Spirit.

Paul's second and third negative qualities are closely related and can be considered together: Love **doesn't boast** and is **not arrogant**. These complement each other in that this boasting is one way in which arrogance manifests itself.

- 1) Paul's verb rendered *boast* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; in fact, neither the New Testament nor the Septuagint contains any cognate form of this Greek word. However, its use outside of the Scriptures shows that it carries the idea of bragging or overt self-promotion. It doesn't connote the person who acknowledges his gifts and accomplishments, but one who "toots his own horn" with great enthusiasm and fanfare.

Obviously people can brag about anything, but Paul's concern in this context was with self-promotion in regard to spiritual matters. The Corinthians were guilty of spiritual boasting in various arenas, including their associations (1:10-31, 3:21-23) and their sense of spiritual superiority (4:6-8) and mature understanding and liberty (5:1-6). And though Paul doesn't explicitly say so, the present context implies that their boasting even extended to the area of spiritual gifts and their manifestations (cf. 12:20-21, 14:18-20, 37-38). The general pattern among the saints at Corinth was to covet spiritual gifts considered to be superior, and the result was that those who possessed these "greater" gifts boasted in them while those without them felt inferior and marginalized (if not envious).

Paul decried the Corinthians' boasting as contrary to love, and yet he'd have readily acknowledged that, just as with jealousy, there is a kind of boasting ("glorying") that accords with love and the mind of Christ. In fact, the two kinds of boasting – as the two kinds of jealousy – are distinguished in just that way: on the basis of their relation to love. Paul condemned the Corinthians' boasting, yet he embraced his own boast – a boast which pertained to himself as well as other Christians. *Paul had no problem boasting, but his boast was merely his "glorying" in Christ and His gospel* (ref. 2:1-31, 9:1-27, 15:30-32; cf. also 2 Corinthians 7:1-9:15, 10:1-12:13; Galatians 6:1-17). This was the marrow of Paul's exultation, so that even when he took note of his own gifts and ministrations it was only as he was Christ's servant for the sake of His gospel (ref. 4:1-13; cf. Romans 15:14-19; 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:15, 11:1-12:13). Paul possessed superlative gifts, but he boasted in them as empowering his servanthood.

- 2) If boasting refers to open, unashamed bragging, *arrogance* speaks to the inward attitude of heart which lies behind boasting. This is the sixth time Paul used this verb in this epistle (cf. 4:6, 18-19, 5:2, 8:1) and, as noted before, it carries the basic sense of being puffed up or inflated. In our contemporary vernacular, it refers to the person who is “full of himself.” This imagery highlights the self-centered frame of reference which defines and determines man in his alienation from God; it is the hallmark of the “natural mind,” and so characterizes those who lack the mind of Christ as well as those who fail to employ it, as was the case with the Corinthians.

Unlike jealousy and boasting, this arrogance has no counterpart consistent with love. It is always negative in its connotation and antithetical to love: Love builds up; it doesn’t puff up (ref. 8:1). Here again Paul was putting his finger on a characteristic malady at Corinth. In context, the Corinthians were “puffed up” with respect to their gifts and their operations, but the Spirit’s *charismata* were simply one more occasion for the arrogance that filled their hearts: The Corinthians weren’t puffed up because of the inherent superiority of their gifts; rather, they regarded their gifts arrogantly because they were inherently full of themselves. They had an inflated view of *themselves*, and simply drew upon what they considered to be their superior distinctions in order to vindicate their arrogance.

- They congratulated themselves for their apparent insight and discernment respecting the men they aligned themselves with (4:6) and those they minimized or spurned (4:18-19).
- Some among them exulted in their open support for the brother who had taken his father’s wife, believing that it proved to the rest of the body (and to themselves) their superior wisdom and mature understanding (5:6). Others might have overly-sensitive scruples dictated by an immature faith and an unsophisticated sense of holiness, but that was not the case with them.
- So also many at Corinth found what they believed to be legitimate ground for their sense of superiority in their mature knowledge and liberty in the matter of sacrificial foods (8:1-2).

But whatever these arrogant and boastful saints could point to – even bona fide spiritual attainments which are marks of Christian maturity, in the end their sense of themselves (and the bad fruit it bore) attested, not their maturity and wisdom, but their lovelessness (cf. 4:6-21, 5:3-8, 8:1-13). And that lack of love neutered the efficacy and nullified the value of all their distinction and giftedness: If a man has all knowledge and wisdom and possesses superlative gifts, but exercises them in the absence of love, it is all to no profit. In a profound irony, the endowments and attainments which, employed in the service of love, would indeed grant the Corinthians a boast, instead left them with only loveless, puffed-up hearts.