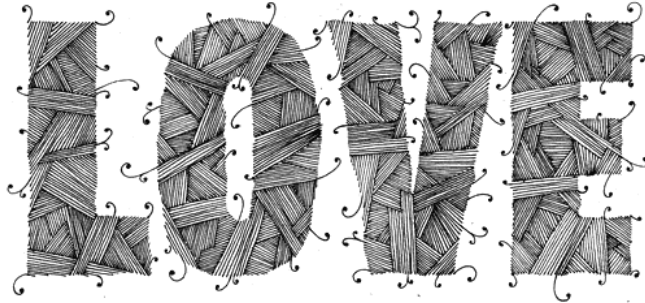


Attributes of Agape

“Love is not Rude, Selfish, or Irritable”



Preached by: Matthew S. Black
(Attributes of Agape, Pt. 4)

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

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Series: Love the Church

Introduction

The year was 1974. It was my birthday – May 22nd. My parents had no ultrasound done, so they had no idea if they were going to have a boy or a girl. What a joy it was when my sister was born. My dad had been wanting a girl after his first six sons. Number seven was a girl. But wait a minute! There was another surprise. Not only did he get his girl. He got a bonus. He got me.

My twin sister and I were 2.5 months premature. We were born at St. Francis Hospital in Blue Island Illinois. At the age of an hour old we took a ride in a helicopter and were airlifted to Loyola University Medical Center where the doctors saved our lives. We had some serious problems. I would need heart surgery. They would need to wait until I was almost three years old, but eventually I had open heart surgery.

My parents say I'm almost normal, but I'm not sure that my wife would agree!!

We are talking about loving as Christ loved this morning, and I believe we all need something more than surgery this morning. We need a spiritual heart transplant. We need the heart of Jesus Christ.

We are looking at what love is. And we cannot know love unless we know Christ and God for *God is love. God so loved the world that he gave...* (John 3:16). Love is not like a doormat or a dictator, but is a heroic self-sacrificing act that always puts others first.

Husbands are told to love their wives “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Self-sacrifice is the ultimate definition of love.

REVIEW...

Last month we learned about five attributes of love.

Attribute 1: Love is patient

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is patient”. “long fused”-under control when hurt or discounted

The Greek word translated “patient” is *makrothumia*. It means “long-tempered” and is the exact opposite of our expression “short-fused.” **Long suffering is the ability to control anger or frustration.** It is learning self-restraint with all kinds of difficult situations, especially with people. The word is used almost exclusively of being patient with people as opposed to circumstances or things. A lack of patience will turn your home into a war zone. Patience refuses to give in to heated emotions. Patience waits for a godly outcome.

Attribute 2: Love is kind

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is...kind”. “useful”

The word “kind” is translated from a Greek word, *chresteuomai*, that means useful. It means useful, to lift a burden, to furnish what is needed. Kindness always puts others needs before one’s own. It is to be useful to others, hence good-natured, good, gentle. It is showing active goodwill to others. **Kindness is the sympathetic sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease, and shrinks from causing pain.**¹ Kindness actively looks for ways to positively contribute to another’s life.

Attribute 3: Love is not jealous

1 Cor. 13:4, “love does not envy”. Love is not zealous for its own rights, things, opinions, ideas, at all costs...

This is the first of 8 (eight) negatives.

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 knows no jealousy”; “Love is never envious”. Love is not zealous for “my ...rights, things, opinions, ideas, way, etc. at all cost.”

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

¹ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 256.

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?*

Attribute 4: Love does not boast

1 Cor. 13:4, "love does not...boast". Love makes no parade of self!

This idea comes from the Greek word, *perpereuomai*. 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.

Attribute 5: Love is not arrogant

1 Cor. 13:4, "love...is not arrogant". Love does not have an inflated view of self!

This word "arrogant" is from the Greek word *phusioo* that means to inflate, blow or puff up. In the N.T. it is used figuratively of pride or self-conceit. This could be translated as follows. "Love does not put on airs." "Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance." It doesn't allow or expect life to revolve around itself. Pride is an issue of the heart. Understanding how God describes you and Himself should help you toward conquering pride by putting on humility. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16-17). Learning to love means that you are humble about your gifts, abilities and place in life. You realize everything you have is a gift from God (Jms. 1:17). *"To whom much is given much will be required"*.

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Love is the pre-eminent mark of regeneration. It is the first named fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. We are made partakers of the Divine Nature through the Word of God. God is love and He indwells us.

I. Love's Attitudes...

A. Love is **welcoming!** (not rude)

If you want to love like Jesus loves, don't be **rude**.

- Examples of rudeness: Judas Iscariot's attitude toward Mary Magdalene pouring out her ointment on Jesus feet.
- The disciples' attitude toward the little children in Mark 14.

Attribute 6: Love is not rude

1 Cor. 13:5, "love is not...rude".

The word "rude" means to act unbecomingly, and unfittingly— to act with disdain for someone else. We as Christians are to take off this filthy garment of rudeness, and we are to put on concern and courtesy for every person.

This rudeness means behave in an ugly way, even to the point of disgracing or embarrassing someone. Love works hard at always saying or doing the appropriate or fitting thing. Love is considerate of other people and is considerate of others at all times.

In Corinth, you have every one vying for the pre-eminence. In love, there's no thought of self but only what is fitting and suitable and honorable and elevating to others,

- **Isaiah 53:7**, *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*
- **1 Peter 2:23**, *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

Example of Meophiboseth.

The next time you want to belittle someone and put them in their place, instead, love as Jesus did. Christ died for unworthy sinners. He dealt with us with respect, not rudely. So we should lay down our lives for one another.

Love does not recklessly kid, joke at the risk of offending another. This idea is related to shame. Love does not act shamefully, unmannerly, impolitely, or crudely. It is thoughtlessness, ingratitude, disrespect for other's feelings. Love is always considerate of others when speaking or acting. We must not justify a lack of consideration with:

- "That's just the way I am."
- "I just say what's on my mind."
- "Everybody knows where they stand with me."
- "You shouldn't be so sensitive anyway."

Jesus was the "Perfect Gentleman" in every situation! He always acted appropriately.

B. Love is **advocating!** (not self-seeking)

If you want to love like Jesus loves, don't be selfish or manipulative.

Attribute 7: Love does not insist on its own way

1 Cor. 13:5, "love... does not insist on its own way".

The idea here is to *strive in any way possible to find its own way*. This goes against the very grain of our culture. Everything in our society is to promote your own preferences. "Do it for you" is the idea.

To love someone else is to be completely indifferent to yourself (MacArthur).

Christ's example

Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ." What's the Law of Christ? The Law of love. How do you love? Be bearing others burdens.

Jesus, all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary, by the way, never insisted on His own way, never insisted on His own way. He always sought the good for others. We should be a voice and advocate for others. "Christ did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

All the way through His life He said, "I do what the Father tells Me to do. I don't do My own will, I do what the Father wills for Me to do." And there in the Garden He says, "Not My will, but Thine be done." Love always and only thinks of others. It is consumed with others and utterly indifferent to its own self.

Love acts in unselfish ways. The question is not: "What's in it for me." The person who is concerned with getting all he can from others is not loving. If you are concerned with only what you can GET, you must ask if Christ, who sacrificed His life for us, dwells in your heart. Christ did not insist on His own way.

"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."

c. Love is **embracing!** (not irritable or easily offended)

If you want to love like Jesus loves, don't be touchy. Be embracing of difficult people and situations.

- **Example:** little children getting sick. You embrace them and clean them up. You don't push them away and shame them. Don't be touchy!

Attribute 8: Love is not easily offended

1 Cor. 13:5, "love... is not irritable".

The Greek word *paroxuno* translated “**irritable**” means to sharpen, whet, incite, to be easily angered or offended.

Love doesn’t clam up or blow up!

Love is not touchy, or moody. Love is not hypersensitive or easily hurt. Love is not sharpened to wrath or aroused to anger. The battle cry of one who is easily irritated is-“Don’t you get it?! **I am the one that matters.**” This person cares for no one but self. This person is upset by anything that is said or done that infringes on their agenda, forces a schedule change, or puts a bad light on their character. Excuses for anger:

- It’s just a weakness.
- It’s just letting off steam.
- It’s just the way I am.
- It’s their fault. I’m the victim.
- It’s the only way I can get results.
- They pushed me over the line.
- I was born this way. I inherited it.

Do others have to “walk softly” around you for fear of an explosion?

II. Love’s Actions...

A. Love is **forgetful** of wrongs.

Attribute 9: Love keeps no record of wrongs

1 Cor. 13:5, “love is not... resentful”.

This term or phrase *logizama* is a bookkeeping term. It means to take account. This could be translated as follows:

- “Love does not take into account a wrong offered.”
- “Love does not keep records of wrongs.”
- “Love does not keep account of evil.”

Love is not in the record keeping business. In the business world this is necessary - in the church of Jesus Christ it is sinful. Love does not retain hurts, sins, etc. for future reference when forgiveness has been sought and granted. Love does not bring up a past offenses to use in making a point. Love does not keep account of evil. Are you a record keeper? Do you desire to keep everyone in your debt by keeping records? **1 Peter 4:8**, *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

B. Love is **forgiving** of failings.

Attribute 10: Love does not gloat over other’s failings

1 Cor. 13:6, “it does not rejoice at wrongdoing”.

Love takes no pleasure in the failings and sins of others. When a friend or a loved one falls into sin, we must grieve with them. When we love someone we must not gloat over their sins or the consequences of sin, but be grieved at them. We should help to restore them. We should seek to help our brother or sister to reconcile. If he or she asks for forgiveness, forgive them immediately.

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is not so much about forgetting. We hear the phrase “forgive and forget”. Well, there are some things we have a hard time forgetting. And even though God forgives us, he chooses to put those sins in the sea of His forgetfulness. In other words, to forgive is to choose *never to bring the offense up again*.

This does not mean that we ignore sin. If someone sins against you, you should deal with the problem. Go after the problem, not the person. Consider two important passages.

- **Matthew 18:15-17**, If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church.
- **Galatians 6:1-2**, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

C. Love **rejoices** in spiritual victories

Attribute 11: Love rejoices in spiritual victories

1 Cor. 13:6, “love... rejoices with the truth”.

John Gill said this has the idea of rejoicing when the truth of the Gospel has its power over someone’s life. Love for truth means having to say hard things at difficult times (Prov. 27:5, 6); confronting sin in others and providing Biblical (truth) solutions. Albert Barnes said this, “The word *truth* here stands opposed to iniquity, and means virtue, piety, goodness. It does not rejoice in the vices, but in the *virtues* of others. It is pleased, it rejoices when they do well.”

Many arguments begin because of a wrong idea of what the other person is saying. They say something, and you are totally offended because you think the worst. They are offended because you thought something so evil of her. And so the cycle goes.

You must deal with life in honesty. Ask the other person to repeat what was said, then REPEAT it back. Ask them: “Is this what you said?” And they’ll say, “No, of course I do not meant that”. “Well, what do you mean...etc. “ If something is wrong in a relationship, you must be careful to establish the truth. Often bitterness arises in the heart because we do not seek out the truth. Truly, much of what separates people is not even true! It is imagined faults. Love rejoices in the truth.

D. Love **protects** the reputation of others...

Attribute 12: Love protects the reputation of others

1 Cor. 13:7, “Love bears all things”.

This Greek word *stego*, translated **bears**, means to cover over in silence. Love treats kindly the reputation of fellow believers. It means to “bear with” the prickliness of people. Love chooses to hide the faults, weaknesses, and prickliness of others. The point is not that love ignores other’s sin but shields and protects from unnecessary exposure. Love refuses to broadcast and flaunt the sins of others – out of love for God and others. Love gets no vicarious thrill out of hearing others’ faults. Love defends and protects the person as if they were right there in the room. Do you enjoy getting the dirt on someone? Do you pump others for that kind of information?

Attribute 13: Love is eager to believe the best

1 Cor. 13:7, “love... believes all things”.

Love chooses to give the benefit of the doubt. Love does not function under a guise of suspicion but trusts. Love believes unless there is hard, concrete, clear evidence to the contrary. One of the most difficult issues to repair in a relationship is broken trust. Do you rush to conclusions, maybe even basing it on a feeling, hunch or similar scenario you know about somebody else?

- Love doesn’t put the worst possible perspective, interpretation or slant on the words and actions of others.
- Love doesn’t assume or accuse without facts.
- Love doesn’t judge motives. No one knows the heart except God (2 Chron. 6:30).

Yes, this kind of love may be setting itself up for hurt, but...it is doing what love does and pleases God. Love is not suspicious of every act; judgmental of every word, and doubtful and distrusting in every scenario.

III. Love’s Longevity...

Attribute 14: Love is optimistic

1 Cor. 13:7, “love... hopes all things.”

Love doesn’t write “hopeless” over **anyone** or **any circumstances**. This biblical optimism grows out of faith in God, not men. Hope is the joyous anticipation of good to come. This hope in God must be woven into the practical fabric of our lives. Hope is not anchored in having things your way, thinking you can bargain with or manipulate God to act on what you think is in your best interest. Hope is attached to God Himself to do what is right, good and best for all and knowing that He will give sufficient grace to handle any situation that His plan has for you (Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 12:9).

Attribute 12: Love never gives up

1 Cor. 13:7, “Love...endures all things.”

The Greek word *hupomeno*, translated **endures**, is a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. This could be translated as follows: “Love endures without limit”. Battles have been won because a small pocket of men refused to quit and run. Love never gives up!

It means to remain under – that is to endure or sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions or provocations in faith and patience. “All things” – every sort of offense, pressure, affliction, difficulty, victory, defeat etc. Love endures! It eliminates attitudes such as: “I can’t take it anymore”; “Things have got to ease up”; “If things don’t change, I’ll crack”.

Attribute 13: Love never fails

1 Cor. 13:8, “love... never ends”.

Love always prospers! To love is to be like Christ, and it will endure forever! Adam Clarke said this, “it [love] cannot *fail*; it is the means of *preserving* all other graces; indeed, properly speaking, it includes them all; and all receive their perfection from it. Love to God and man can never be dispensed with. It is essential to social and religious life; without it no communion can be kept up with God; nor can any man have a preparation for eternal glory whose heart and soul are not deeply imbued with it. Without it there never was true religion, nor ever can be; and it not only is necessary through life, but will exist throughout eternity”.