

A More Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 13

Sermon Two: A More Excellent Way Described: Part One (vv. 4-5)

February 21, 2021

Opening ILL: Love is the theme in so many movies and songs. But do they always describe love effectively? Are these movies and these songs really all that helpful? Examples

I. Introduction

- A. Love is important.
- B. Love is a more excellent way than religion.
- C. Love is a more excellent way than sacrifice.

II. A More Excellent Way Defined

A. After all, what is love?

1. Dictionary definition (from dictionary.com)
 - a. a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.
 - b. a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.
 - c. affectionate concern for the well-being of others: *the love of one's neighbor*.

Quote: “Love is the willing, joyful desire to put the welfare of others above our own.” John MacArthur¹

2. Simplified:

- a. A Disposition of Delight
- b. An Attitude of Affection

B. How might we misunderstand love?

1. We might think it is just a matter of physical feelings.
 - a. “My heart feels warm when I am with you!” Maybe she’s poisoning you!
 - b. We must be diligent to differentiate between cause and effect!
 - c. Physical feelings can change (and they do!)
2. We might think that it is merely external
 - a. “Love” does not equal “do good things”!
 - i. True, godly love always leads to doing good things.
 - ii. True, godly love is always the motivation for good things.
 - iii. However, the good things themselves can be done without love, as was made clear in vv. 1-3.
 - b. ILL: “I told you that I loved you the day I married you. If anything changes, I’ll let you know.”
 - c. ILL: “Do You Love Me?” in Fiddler on the Roof
3. We may think that it is purely volitional.
 - a. I have decided that I will love you. It doesn’t work that way.
 - i. Don’t believe me? Try it.
 - ii. However, we can (and must) choose to pursue love even towards our enemies (Luke 6:27 and ff.)

III. A More Excellent Way Described, Part One (vv. 4-5)

A. First things first—

1. This passage does not define love, it describes love.
2. Word order is really important here.
 - a. ILL: Mashed potatoes are soft, but not everything that is soft is mashed potatoes. Similarly, love is patient but patience isn’t necessarily love. You can be patient with someone because it’s your job or because you are afraid of what they would think if you weren’t, etc.

¹ John MacArthur, “1 Corinthians” The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, page 329.

3. These descriptors are (mostly) intransitive verbs.
 - a. Intransitive verbs are those that do not require a direct object.
 - b. These verbs are, in this context, used to describe the main subject: love.
 - c. Some commentators get confused by the fact that these are verbs and not adjectives.

B. Love is Patient.

1. What does it mean to be patient?
 - a. Dictionary.com definition: “the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like. an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.”
 - i. To look past the present in the hope of a better future.
 - ii. In circumstances
 - iii. Specifically, here, in people.
 - b. Greek word here μακροθυμέω means: with an element of constraint be patient or forbearing.
2. How does this relate to love?
 - a. When you care about somebody, you treat them graciously, realizing that growth takes time and not every mistake needs to be punished or even corrected.
 - i. Ex: Your child sometimes is getting really frustrated with her math homework. Your husband is getting really frustrated trying to fix something around the house. Your wife is getting stressed out because so much work around the house to get done. You know that this frustration is sinful, so do they, but do you really need to bring that up right now?
 - ii. Love covers a multitude of sins—**1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

C. Love is Kind.

1. What does it mean to be kind?
 - a. Dictionary.com definition: “of a good or benevolent nature or disposition.”
 - b. Greek word: (χρηστεύομαι chresteuomai) which means, “be kind, loving, merciful.”
2. What does this look like?
 - a. It is the opposite of cruelty.
 - b. It is the opposite of being critical.
 - c. It is the opposite of being cold.

Point: Garland (BECNT) points out that Tertullian noted that the pagans were so shocked at how nice Christians were that they called them “chrestiani” instead of “christiani”

3. What do we learn from this?
 - a. That if you love someone, you will not abuse them.
 - b. Instead, loving someone leads to treating them with kindness.

D. Love does not Envy (Jealous).

1. What does this mean?
 - a. Dictionary.com definition: “a feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc.”
 - b. Greek word zhlōw which “in a bad sense of hostile emotion based on resentment”
2. What does this look like?
 - a. We always think the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.
 - b. We tend to resent people who have the abilities, opportunities, possessions or quality of life we desire. We not only want what they have, but we resent them for having it.

E. Love does not Brag; Love is not Arrogant.

1. What does this mean?
 - a. To brag
 - i. Dictionary.com definition: “to use boastful language; boast.”
 - ii. Greek word περπερεύομαι meaning:

- a) “This rare word means literally to “behave as a braggart” or “be a windbag.” It suggests self-centered actions in which there is an inordinate desire to call attention to oneself.”²
 - b. To be arrogant
 - i. Dictionary.com definition: “making claims or pretensions to superior importance or rights; overbearingly assuming; insolently proud.”
 - ii. Greek word φουσιόω meaning, “To be puffed up. To be inflated.”
2. What does this look like?
- a. When we exaggerate our greatness or even our goodness.
 - i. ILL: Fish stories or stories from the “glory days” in our lives.
 - ii. ILL: Taking credit for someone else’s work.
 - b. When we exaggerate someone else’s greatness and then take credit for it.
 - i. Ex: Sports parents...the worst.

F. Love does not act inappropriately.

1. What does this mean?
- a. Dictionary.com definition: “adjective. detracting from one's appearance, character, or reputation; unattractive or unseemly: an unbecoming hat; unbecoming language.”
 - i. ILL: I had a friend in High School that used to say, “That shirt doesn’t really become you. Of course if it became you it wouldn’t be a shirt anymore (I had weird friends).”
 - b. This Greek word ἀσχημονέω means: “behave disgracefully, dishonorably, indecently 1 Cor 7:36; 13:5. For the latter passage feel that one ought to be ashamed is probable.”
2. What does this look like?
- a. When we love something that we shouldn’t—an inappropriate object of our affection
 - i. ILL: Some people fall in love with the Eiffel tower or other similar objects. That’s just inappropriate...it is unbecoming a human being who is made in God’s image.
 - b. When we love in a way that we shouldn’t—an inappropriate expression of our affection.
 - i. **Song of Solomon 8:4** "I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem, Do not arouse or awaken my love Until she pleases." (See 2:7 and 3:5).
 - ii. We must remember that even though love is so important, that we must be careful not to use love as an excuse to act inappropriately or immorally.

G. Love is not selfish.

1. What does this mean?
- a. Dictionary.com definition: adjective. devoted to or caring only for oneself; concerned primarily with one's own interests, benefits, welfare, etc., regardless of others.”
 - b. This Greek expression οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς means exactly this, to be devoted to or caring only for oneself.
2. What does this look like?
- a. When someone only talks about themselves.
 - b. When someone only does what is advantageous for themselves.

H. Love is not provoked (cranky).

1. What does this mean?
- a. Dictionary.com definition: “ill-tempered; grouchy; cross.”
 - b. This Greek word παροξύνω means: provoke to wrath, irritate pass. become irritated, angry.
2. What does this look like?
- a. When you get snappy with people. When you growl at people.

I. Love doesn’t keep a list!

1. What does this mean?
- a. The Greek phrase here literally means: “to account wrongs.”
 - b. It refers to a lack of forgiveness or a desire to build an ongoing case against somebody.

² Fee, NICNT, “I Corinthians” page 637

2. What does this look like?
 - a. When you are arguing with your spouse about who drank the last of the orange juice and before long you are arguing about something his/her mother said 25 years ago! 😊 Have you ever had that experience in arguing, where you just stop and say, “What are we fighting about, again?”

IV. A More Excellent Way Applied

- A. Perhaps your heart must be broken to be fixed.
 1. Has anyone in this room heard these things and thought, “Yup! That’s me! I am awesome!”? No Way.
 2. Maybe God has to expose our lack of love before we can really start to grow in this area.
 3. Maybe a dark night of pain must come before the beautiful dawn of love in your life.
- B. Seek the root to gain the fruit!
 1. It would be really easy, here, to focus on the fruits (patient, kind, etc.) and neglect the root. If you want to grow in love, go to the source of love.
 - a. **Galatians 5:22-23**
- C. Remember, Jesus loves you more than you love anyone.
 1. **1 John 4:10-11** 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. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.