

Be My Valentine

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Preface

Today is Valentine's Day. Some of you men are walking tall because you remembered and got your wife a valentine. No doubt some are in hot water because you missed the occasion. It's funny how Valentine's Day is so important to the ladies as opposed to the men.

Illus: I was sitting in the lobby of the doctor's office this week. They had a TV playing in the corner of the waiting area. I noticed a commercial advertising PajamaGrams. It is a place where you can order PJs for the wife and have her name custom embroidered on them. In discrete manner, the commercial emphasizes how you are certain to score big points with the lady in your life if you order her these custom PJs. The valentine gift for the lady is the custom embroidered PJs while the gift for the man is - well let's just say a happy lady.

I started to order Pam a pair and have the word "Perfect" embroidered on them. My mother told me recently that Pam was the perfect wife for me. I foolishly conveyed the compliment to Pam and ever since she has been reminding me that "she is perfect."

While a pair of embroidered PJs for the lady or a new flashlight for the man will make a great Valentine's Day gift, such things will never bring sustained happiness in a relationship. Real love requires much more than material gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 13, God's word gives us the attributes of real love.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 NIV

Introduction

Illus: I recall as a child in grade school how we would pass out valentines. Each child's parents would buy them a box of valentines. We would sit down the night before and write our name on them and then pass one out to each person in the class. It was always fun to open the valentines and look at them although many were identical since the moms purchased them at the local discount store. I would get a card from the latest girl I had my eye on and it might read something like, "You are the best, be my valentine." I would just imagine what she meant by that. Surely she likes me and has had her eye on me too. It didn't matter that I had four more identical valentine cards from guys in the class. This one was special.

As children we have infatuations that last only a few days. As teens and young adults our attractions become much stronger. Often what we feel is a sense of love strongly influenced by physical attraction.

But it is in the long term relationships where our love is tested and we see the depth and sincerity of our love for others. This is true in the marriage relationship as well as with family and close friends.

It is in the trenches of our relationships that our love becomes sifted and our true hearts are exposed. No matter how gifted you are - no matter how successful in ministry - no matter how close to God - there is one dominating principal that should guide everything you do. That's love. Without love, anything good we do for the Lord or others is meaningless.

Let's take a closer look at the attributes of true Christian love.

Content

1. Love is Patient & Kind

The Greek word (makrothumein) means patience with people and not patience with circumstances. It is the word used of the man who is wronged and who has the power to avenge himself but does not. It describes the man who is slow to anger. It is used of God himself in his relationship with men. Such patience is not the sign of weakness but the sign of strength. Love is patient even when it has been wronged.

Illus: No one treated Abraham Lincoln with more contempt than did Edwin Stanton. He called Lincoln "a low cunning clown" and he nicknamed him "the original gorilla". Lincoln said nothing.

President Lincoln made Stanton his war minister because he was the best man for the job and he treated him with every courtesy. The years wore on and the night came when the assassin's bullet murdered Lincoln in the theatre. In the little room to which the President's body was taken stood that same Stanton and looking down on Lincoln's silent face, he said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." The patience of love will conquer in the end. Love is patient and kind.

2. Love Does Not Envy

There are two kinds of envy. The one covets the possessions of others and longs to acquire things. But the other is much worse. The other grudges the very fact that others should have what they have not. It is one thing to want things for one self; it is another to wish that others had not gotten them at all.

True love doesn't rejoice in the failure of others. Love is not jealous of others good fortune. Instead true love genuinely rejoices in the success and good fortune of others.

Before we are blessed with the things we desire, we must first learn to rejoice in the good fortune of others. Love does not envy.

3. Love is not Proud or Boastful

Christian love is always more impressed with its own unworthiness than its worthiness. If you have true love for others, you will not be boastful or proud. Love is not puffed up.

Illus: William Carey, who began life as a cobbler, was one of the greatest missionaries and certainly one of the greatest linguists the world has ever seen. He translated parts of the Bible into thirty-four Indian languages. When he came to India, he was regarded with dislike and contempt by some of the elite. At a dinner party a snob, with the idea of humiliating him, said in a tone that everyone could recognize, "I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once worked as a shoe-maker." Carey answered, "No, your lordship, not a shoe-maker, only a cobbler." He did not even claim to make shoes--only to mend them.

Illus: We all know people with whom we are friends that we almost hate to see them coming because we know what we will get. We are going to hear a conversation dominated by their bragging. We leave the encounter knowing everything that is happening in their life but they know nothing about ours.

Love has no reason to lie or deceive because love is not proud or boastful.

4. Love is not Rude or Self-Seeking

In Greek, the words for grace and charm are the same word. There is a kind of Christianity today which takes a delight in being blunt and almost brutal. There should be graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy, tact and politeness are appropriate.

Love is not self-seeking. There are those in this world who are always thinking of what life owes them and there are those who never forget what they owe to life.

Most of our problems which surround us today could be avoided if we would think less of our rights and more of our duties. Whenever we start thinking about "ourselves" and "our rights" we are drifting outside the boundaries of Christian love. Love is not rude or self-seeking. Love puts the feelings of others above our own.

5. Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs

One of the remarkable abilities of the human brain is the ability to learn what not to forget. Many people nurse their anger to keep it warm and fresh. They brood over the wrong upon them, making it impossible to forget.

Christian love learns to forget the wrongs others have done to us. The word translated keeps (logizesthai) is an accountant's word. It is the word used for entering an item in a ledger so it will not be forgotten. Christian love does not make a ledger entry when we are wronged.

We sometimes hear Christians people say, "I will forgive but I will not forget." That is the flesh speaking not the spirit of Christ in us. Christian love keeps no record of wrongs.

6. Love Rejoices in Truth rather than Evil

Love does not delight in evil. Love finds no pleasure in wrong doing. Love doesn't delight in doing the wrong thing and love doesn't delight in hearing of wrong done by others. Love takes no pleasure in hearing derogatory things about others. It is one of the traits of human nature that we prefer to hear of the misfortune of others rather than of their good fortune. It is much easier to weep with others than to rejoice with those who have reason to rejoice. Christian love finds no pleasure in bad reports.

Love rejoices in hearing God's truth. There are times when the truth is difficult for us to hear. But Christian love understands that the truth of God's word is the best medicine for our lives.

7. Love Protects

Love would rather mend things than publicly display them. Love protects the relationship from injury and insult. Love guards one another from the dangers of evil and sin. Love is ever mindful of preserving the relationship.

Love looks out for the best interest of others. Sometimes that means standing up for others. On occasion this means confronting the ones we love with matters that need to be brought to their attention.

Illus: While raising our children, it was always my firm belief that one of the best things I could do for my children was to show my love for their mother. Pam and worked to build a strong home by protecting the home from negative influences. Love protects the relationship.

8. Love Trusts

Love always trust. This trust attribute of love has a twofold meaning.

(1) In relation to God it means that love takes God at his word.

(2) In relation to our fellow men and women it means that love always believes the best about other people.

We make people what we believe them to be. If we show that we do not trust people, we may make them untrustworthy. If we show people that we trust them, we help make them trustworthy.

Trust is critical to our relationship with God and trust is critical in our relationships with one another.

No relationship can last without trust.

9. Love Hopes

Hope is one of the great discoveries of every Christian. Love knows that God has everything under His control and rests in that promise. Through Christ we learn there is always hope for a better tomorrow and eternity.

Without hope, life is not living! Someone very coarsely once said, "To live without hope is like being pregnant with a dead baby." A soul without hope is a dead soul.

I often see hope missing from the eyes of people. I can see it in the eyes of the homeless as well as the eyes of the rich and famous. With hope, fullness replaces emptiness; "space" becomes "the heavens."

Love hopes for a better tomorrow; not for our self but for the ones we love. Love never loses hope and love never throws in the towel.

10. Love Perseveres

The verb used for perseveres (hupomenein) is translated to bear or to endure and describes the spirit of a conquerer. Philippians 4:13 says, "*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*"

Love always perseveres. This attribute runs opposite to our thinking today. Weddings vows usually go something like this...

Bill do you take Susie to be your wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Do you vow to love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, giving yourself to her, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her so long as you both shall live? I do!

In a few short years we hear comments like, "I just don't love her anymore" or "If he doesn't change I am going to leave him."

That isn't Biblical love. Real God inspired love hopes and perseveres. God inspired love never quits never bails out and never gives up.

Conclusion

If you are like me, you are thinking that the bar is extremely high when it comes to the attributes of real love. None of us have the natural ability to love in the manner outlined in our text.

However, when we are experiencing the love of Christ, we learn to love as Christ loves. When we know Christ we learn to experience and in turn dispense real love; Agape love.

Jesus said, ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* ¹⁴ *You are my friends if you do what I command.* ¹⁵ *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.* ¹⁶ *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.* ¹⁷ *This is my command: Love each other.* John 15:13-17 NIV

Today Jesus says to each of us; "Be My Valentine".

He calls us to experience real love, divine love; His love.