



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 1399

1 Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant"

Love is. Those two words have started many songs. Love is a many splendid thing, and love is all you need, are a couple examples. The apostle is describing and defining this highest form of love known as "agape." This is the "God so loved the world," type of love. It is a choice, not a feeling. It is based upon the betterment of the other, not what self gets out of it. It is shown by actions.

In the setting this is found, Paul is instructing the Corinthians and answering questions concerning spiritual gifts. They were torn, divided and jealous over these gifts. It was just another of multiple things that was splintering that congregation. Three chapters are devoted to understanding the proper use of spiritual gifts. In the midst of those instructions, we come across Heaven's definition of love. These words were not given so a preacher would repeat them at a wedding ceremony, but rather, they were given to remind, teach and help brethren understand how they ought to treat one another. They were on the same team. God was the bond that connected them. Yet at the moment, they were not acting very godly in how they felt about one another. So these words, this reminder, love is, given to pull these brethren together in Christ.

Paul's description of love is based upon how others are treated. It is not feeling based but action based. Paul uses both the negative and the positive in his description, love is not and love is. Our verse sets forth the pattern, patience, kindness, not jealous, not bragging and not arrogant.

Love is not arrogant. Love does not brag. Pride. Love is not prideful. Love doesn't look down on the other guy. Love doesn't see himself as better than the next person. This is helpful in a torn congregation when some thought one spiritual gift was superior to others. Not every person had a spiritual gift. Those that did, the gifts were different and for different functions. Wrong attitudes, misinformation and a spoonful of pride and you have all that is necessary for folks to get stirred up and upset with one another. Instead of good being accomplished through those gifts, folks were pointing fingers, getting mad and pulling apart at the seams.

Pride, arrogance and bragging-the ugly triplets of someone who thinks that they are better than others and they are seeking attention and praise from others. In church, instead of singing, "How great Thou art," some would rather sing, "How good I am." They have to toot their horn and let everyone know what they did. When Jesus said, "don't let the left hand know what the right hand is doing," the proud person doesn't understand that. First to say something, even if it has already been said. The first with an opinion, even if it's not a good opinion. The first to shoot down an idea, if it is not their own. Pride doesn't fit well on any of us. Preachers struggle with this. Week after week, folks praise the sermon and tell the preacher how great he is. The ole' head swells. That's why most church buildings have double doors. They must fit the preacher's head through it. He can begin to think that the church can't get along without him. He can think that he's the best thing to come along since the apostles. Mr. big head will soon do more harm than good.

Here are some things I've learned.

The prideful do not listen very well. They always have something to say, but they don't do well in the listening department. In fact, when they've had about enough, they interrupt the conversation and steer it in their own direction. Listening is important. It is the key to a healthy relationship, whether we talk about marriage, friendships or fellowship. Arrogant leaders in the church have little time for problems. They will lack the tenderness and compassion that sheep need. They tend to become pushy, bossy and demanding.

The prideful do not take suggestions well. This is true in many areas, home, work and church. This is especially true if the suggestions come from someone younger, someone new, someone still wet behind the ears. A teen making a suggestion to his dad, a new member making a suggestion to the leaders, an young preacher making a suggestion to an older preacher, those situations don't go well if pride is involved. Age doesn't give one the corner on the market of ideas. What happens with the proud person is that he has limited himself and doesn't realize it. By failing and refusing to take suggestions from others, his ideas become the only ideas. He sees things only from his perspective. He has put himself in a corner and will not consider the thoughts of others, even though they may be helpful and even better than what he knows. The company hits a ceiling. The church is limited. Growth is stunted because the kingdom is larger than any one of us. This pride is demonstrated by the older set rejecting what younger folks have to say. The church becomes a "good-o-boy" club and if you are not in then what you think doesn't matter. I've seen and I've experienced that before. The keepers of the kingdom stifle progress and it becomes stale, dull and lifeless. I've walked into church buildings that looked like dumps. Papers everywhere. Dark and dingy lights. Men standing around telling old stories and folks just staring at the new person walking in. UNCOMFORTABLE. Would they change things? Are you kidding? Never. They are content, even though many others attending there are not. The others are afraid to say anything. They've tried in the past and were mocked, patted on the head and sent back to their pew. Their suggestions immediately rejected. Not even considered. The keepers of kingdom KNOW what is best. Just ask them.

The prideful do not take correction well. None of us are always right, none of us. That means sometimes the boss is not right. That means sometimes the husband is not right. That means sometimes the teacher in a class is not right. That means sometimes the preacher is not right. That means sometimes the shepherds are not right. There are various levels of things that come to my mind. It may be just misusing a passage. What the person said isn't supported by the verses he used. He meant well, but the text doesn't say that. It may be an idea that just wasn't thought out very well. Maybe something is presented by the leaders but they didn't take in mind the effect it would have on young families. It may be an absolute that someone states that actually is not an absolute. So the honest heart tries to correct. The proud doesn't take correction well because that means he was wrong. The proud are never wrong. Just ask them. He could not admit a weakness, a failure. So, the proud instead of being humble and admitting a mistake or considering a thought that they failed to look at or even changing, the proud goes to excuses. He hides himself behind excuses. It's not his fault. He wasn't wrong. It was the excuses problem. The proud will throw anyone under the bus, as long as it is not himself. His attitude will discourage those who want to do right and stand for integrity of the Scriptures. The proud will continue deeper on the wrong path because he refuses to be corrected. The husband who refuses to admit that he doesn't know a think about plumbing, will mess things up so bad that it will cost hundreds to fix his prideful mistakes. The same goes at work and at church. Instead of calling out for help, the proud will fix it themselves. And most times, they do make a mountain out of a mole hill.

Love is not arrogant. Love does not brag. The arrogant wouldn't go to the home of someone like Zacchaeus. Jesus did. The arrogant wouldn't include a Matthew among the apostles. Jesus did. The arrogant wouldn't make Samaritans heroes of stories. Jesus did. The arrogant wouldn't, and Jesus did. That is the difference. Today, the arrogant wouldn't go over and sit by the visitor who is sitting alone. Jesus would. The arrogant wouldn't go talk to the teenagers and let them know that he loves them. Jesus would. The arrogant wouldn't talk to the widow. Jesus would. The arrogant wouldn't encourage the guy who is a little different. Jesus would. Jesus would.

Arrogance keeps us from dropping to our knees and admitting, "God, I really need you." Arrogance stops us from saying, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner." Arrogance makes us feel that we have all the answers, we are all together and we are doing great. Arrogance never sees the band-aids holding our hearts together.

Love is not arrogant. It's hard to walk that way in a culture that thrives on arrogance.

How are you doing with this stuff? Honestly? Would your family agree? Roger Shouse