

Christian Love in Action (Part 2)

1 Cor 13:1-13 (text: v.4b-5a)

Pre-recorded video message for Members of the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata

For listening on the morning of 10th May 2020 (seventh Sunday after lockdown started)
(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Reading before the service: Ps 46:1-3, *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

START OF SERVICE

- 1 Votum: Our help is in the Name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.
- 2 Greeting: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father & from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
- 3 **SttL 182:1,4,5,6 (= Blue Ps/H 329:1,4,5,6)** “O love of God, how strong and true...”
- 4 Congregational Prayer
- 5 Readings: 1 Cor 13:1-13 (text: v.4b-5a)

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

The Way of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ 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. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- 6 Sermon

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Last Sunday we studied the first *three of fifteen* characteristics of love – in other words the first three things which 1 Cor 13:4 says about love, i.e. that...

- Love is patient
- Love is kind
- Love is not jealous.

Well, this morning we want to consider the next *three* characteristics of love. But we'll do these three characteristics under *two headings*, because the first two go together.

So, here then are our two points for this sermon...

- Love is not Boastful nor Arrogant
- Love is not Rude

Not Boastful nor Arrogant

You might have heard of the four categories in which personalities can be classified!

- First, there is the *Dove* kind of personality, which describes people who are peaceful and friendly.
- Secondly, there is the *Owl* kind of personality, which describes people who are wise and logical.
- Thirdly, there is the *Peacock* personality, which describes people who are showy or boastful – always trying to catch the limelight.
- Lastly, there's the *Eagle* personality – describing people who are bold and decisive.

Well, when our text talks of boasting and arrogance, it talks of the person who is “peacock” to the extreme – an egotistic person who, in real peacock fashion, loves to parade himself;¹ yes, a braggart who *exhibits pride in himself and his accomplishments*.²

And that's exactly how the Greek words of our text describe a person who is so full of himself that there's no room left in his heart to love and reverence

¹ How appropriate the NKJV which renders this as, “**Love does not parade itself.**”

² Cf. Kistemaker, S.J. 2004. Exposition of the first epistle to the Corinthians. (In: Kistemaker, S.J. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.459)

God, let alone loving his neighbour! He's a *braggart* who *praises himself excessively*.³ He is *puffed up* with an *over-inflated* view of himself!⁴ And this was a sin with which some Corinthians struggled quite a lot as they *boasted* about the Bible knowledge and spiritual insights they had.⁵ Look, is that not why Paul says to them in 1 Cor 8:1, "...*knowledge puffs up*,⁶ *but love builds up*."⁷ And earlier in his letter, Paul is very frank with those arrogant Corinthian members, when he wrote (in 1 Cor 4:18-19), "*Some of you have become arrogant*,⁸ *as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant*⁹ *people are talking, but what power they have.*" My brother & sister (and Dear young person), how are you and I doing with arrogance? Are we perhaps like those about whom Paul writes in Rm 12:3 who think too highly of themselves?¹⁰

You see, I know a man – a man in his midlife who is very, very puffed up; very arrogant – dominating every conversation, interrupting you while you're still talking to him. His whole demeanour is, "I have all the knowledge in the world! I know better!"

This man – I have prayed for him many times, because in his arrogance, his marriage broke up! Their children are suffering tremendously from a split environment in which they have to visit dad over there and then mum over

³ Present deponent indicative 3rd person singular of *perpereuomai* (περπερεύομαι): to praise oneself excessively—'to be a braggart, to brag' (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 430). New York: United Bible Societies).

⁴ Present Deponent Indicative 3rd person singular of *physioō* (φυσιόω): (a figurative extension of meaning of φυσιόω 'to puff up, to inflate,' not occurring in the NT) to cause someone to be proud, arrogant, or haughty—'to make proud, to make arrogant, to make haughty.' ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ 'such knowledge makes a person haughty, but love builds up' 1 Cor 8:1 (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 764). New York: United Bible Societies).

⁵ Cf. Kistemaker (ibid:262), "Even though Paul fails to explain the term *knowledge*, we deduce a few facts from the context. The Corinthians believed that idols were nothing and that God is one (v.4). Thus, they knew that this one God is Father, and that the one Lord is Jesus Christ (v.6). Paul soberly reminds them that not everyone knows this (v.7). However, if the Corinthians exalt knowledge, Paul has something to say to them... 'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.'..."

⁶ From the same Greek word as the one in our text, i.e. the word *physioō* (φυσιόω) "... (a figurative extension of meaning of φυσιόω 'to puff up, to inflate,' not occurring in the NT)..." (Louw & Nida, ibid).

⁷ 1 Cor 8:1, "**Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that 'all of us possess knowledge.'** *This 'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up.*"

⁸ From the same Greek word as the one in our text, i.e. the word *physioō* (φυσιόω) "... (a figurative extension of meaning of φυσιόω 'to puff up, to inflate,' not occurring in the NT)..." (Louw & Nida, ibid).

⁹ From the same Greek word as the one in our text, i.e. the word *physioō* (φυσιόω) "... (a figurative extension of meaning of φυσιόω 'to puff up, to inflate,' not occurring in the NT)..." (Louw & Nida, ibid).

¹⁰ Rm 12:3, **For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

here! If only the Lord could humble this man so that he could see that a big part of the problem lies with himself!

You see, a marriage partner who is a “peacock” to the extreme, leaves very little breathing & living space for his wife – and vice versa if she’s the puffed-up “peacock!” And this is true for any relationship!

If only this man could *see* that – see and be moved to repentance, and then be restored to himself and also to his wife – and so that their children could have again a mum and dad living together in peace and unity as God designed it to be!

How true the words of one Christian author: “How can I *love* others if my eyes are only on me?”¹¹

Phil 2:3 says, “***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.***”¹²

And look, is that not what our Lord Jesus did? Did He *not in humility consider others better than Himself?*

Indeed, the same Phil 2 continues saying that our Lord Jesus, “...***made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!***”¹³

Well, here’s a puffed-up-test for you & me: When we do work in/for the church – when we do cleaning/maintenance on the building, and when we do kind deeds to members in need – then test yourself by answering this question: What’s more important to you – that the work be done, or that you be seen?¹⁴

So far regarding point 1: *Love Is Neither Boastful nor Arrogant*

Here is point 2...

Love Is Not Rude

A Christian author explains how he once boarded a plane. Due to some technical problems, the plane’s departure was already delayed by one hour.

¹¹ cf. Lucado, Max. 2002. *A Love Worth Giving*. Nashville, TE : W Publishing Group. p.45

¹² *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Php 2:3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Php 2:7–8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

I have left out the very well-known (familiar) verse 6, because that was mentioned under point 1 in the sermon.

¹⁴ Rom 12:10 says, “***Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.***”¹⁴ Remember what our Lord said when He had washed the feet of His disciples – yes, when He did a servant’s job: “***I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you***” (Jn 13:15).

The air hostesses had their hands full with the usual and unusual tasks when, suddenly, a man in first class got out of his seat shouting at one of them, “Hey! Hey! Lady! How does a guy get another pillow around here? And what about my drink? My wife and I paid extra to fly first-class. I’m accustomed to better attention. I want some service!”¹⁵

How rude!

And I’m sure that all of us have seen such sad behaviour in the public domain – whether you were going by plane or train or bus!

Well, this plane passenger’s rude behaviour is an exact modern example of the meaning of the word in our text. You see, about the meaning of the word for *rude* in our text, the Greek dictionary says, “To act in defiance of social and moral standards, with resulting disgrace, embarrassment, and shame.”¹⁶ Some English versions of our text have translated this word as *rude*,¹⁷ as *acting unbecomingly*,¹⁸ and as *behaving unseemly*.¹⁹

And some Corinthian church members were guilty of this rude and unloving behaviour. For example, when they got together to eat a meal and then to partake in the Lord’s Supper, the rich members discriminated against the poor members.²⁰ Yes, the rich members had no patience to wait until the labourers and slaves arrived. So, the rich were in the habit of consuming the choicest of food & drink which they had brought from their pantries – leaving only the not-so-nice scraps for the poor.

¹⁵ cf. LUCADO, Max. 2002. *A Love Worth Giving*. Nashville, TE : W Publishing Group. p.54)

¹⁶ *Ouk aschēmonei* (οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ) Present Active Indicative 3rd Person singular of *aschēmoneō* (ἀσχημονέω): to act in defiance of social and moral standards, with resulting disgrace, embarrassment, and shame—‘to act shamefully, indecent behavior, shameful deed’ (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 758). New York: United Bible Societies).

What does this mean? To act with shame on yourself, or to shame someone else? I think the latter, because the verb is in the active voice – not in the deponent/middle, which boils down to a shaming/embarrassing of someone other than myself. Besides, everything the Apostle Paul says here about love is directed towards my neighbour. Thus, also this verb must have in mind my rude behaviour towards my *neighbour*.

Thus, if you really love someone, then you will not want to shame/belittle that person – least of all in public!

¹⁷ E.g. the NIV84, ESV, NRSV

¹⁸ NASB

¹⁹ KJV

²⁰ Cf. 1 Cor 11:20-22, ***When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, ²¹ for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. ²² Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!***

Also cf. Jude 12 ***These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.***

And 2 Pt 2:13 ***They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.***

How rude!

And then, by the time the poor arrived, just in time for the Lord's Supper – then the rich had the audacity to go sit at the Lord's Table together with the poor!²¹

How rude! How unloving! How sinful!

Well, where do we see rude behaviour in our day and age?

- Children, don't we see rudeness when a child disrespectfully talks back to mum or dad or to his teacher?
- Don't we see it when a bully hurts others and treats them with disrespect?
- And don't we see it when someone interrupts another person who is still busy talking?
- How about a receptionist at the doctor's practice who takes her stress out on the patients and snaps at them – or patients arriving at the Accident & Emergency department of the hospital throwing such tantrums that the hospital staff had to put up a sign to say, "We will not tolerate verbal abuse, threats or assaults to our receptionists and medical staff!"?
- How about this one: You and your friends have a conversation in one language while there's another friend in that same group who does not understand that language! Now, if this happens just for a minute, then you may be thought of as just inconsiderate, but if you then continue speaking in that foreign language with no regard for those who cannot understand – well, that will be rude! And I, for one, will need to make sure that I don't make myself guilty of this rude and unloving behaviour when I continue speaking in my mother tongue while a Kiwi friend is in the group.

My brother & sister, a person who demonstrates love, always strives for proper decorum in relation to others! After all, our Lord said, "...***do to others what you would have them do to you...***" (Mt 7:12).²²

²¹ For this interpretation, cf. Kistemaker, S.J. 2004. Exposition of the first epistle to the Corinthians. (In: Kistemaker, S.J. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.390), "The practice of sharing food with one another became the hallmark of the Christian church. Christians came together to eat a meal for nourishment and to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7, 11)... The rich people consumed choice food from their larders and left the remainder for the poor. They had no patience to wait until everyone had arrived. Instead they ate without waiting for the day laborers and slaves. We conjecture that some of the poor who were unable to come earlier saw that all food had been consumed. They are the ones whom Paul describes as being hungry. The affluent, by contrast, had used their time to eat their fill and drink excessively..."

²² Mt 7:12, ***So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.***

Love is not rude! Love does not act unbecomingly! It does not behave unseemly!

Guess what...! The word for “rude” in our text does not just describe improper behaviour in general! Yes, it *does* cover *all* improper behaviour, but it also has sexual connotations!²³ In fact, that’s why one English version has translated, “(Love) does not act indecently...”²⁴

And that’s why Paul uses the exact same word of our text also in 1 Cor 7:36 where he says, “***If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly*** (in other words, *If anyone thinks that he is acting unseemly or unbecomingly or indecently*) ***toward his betrothed*** (fiancée), ***if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.***”²⁵

Love – Christian love; yes, love for God which spills over into love for my neighbour, does not act indecently!

Where do we see people sin in this regard?

Well, sadly, in our culture it happens all the time when young couples decide to live together before marriage!

It also happens when people – as I have heard some young people have often done – send indecent text messages (or even photos) to someone else. You see, Google tells me that 95% of people will dare to text words or pictures to a friend which they would never say or show in person to that friend! And this is true of *good* things we want to convey to a friend! But, sadly, it’s also true of *rude/indecent* things people dare to say to one another!²⁶

But, dear children (young people), if you say you love God (fear God and reverence Him), then you will have no part in rude text-messaging!

²³ *Aschēmoneō* (ἀσχημονέω) “... 1) the noun σχῆμα refers to someth. that has a pattern or form, freq. of a type that the public considers standard or laudable; to act contrary to the standard=**behave disgracefully, dishonorably, indecently...**” (Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 147). Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

²⁴ Cf. “Often (if not always) the word has sexual connotations (Winter 1998:78–80). Some translations capture this; the kjv has ‘does not behave indecently’” (Johnson, A. F. (2004). *1 Corinthians* (Vol. 7, pp. 239–258). Westmont, IL: IVP Academic).

²⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Co 7:36). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

²⁶ Cf. e.g. FACTS: Home Psychology at <https://fun-x-facts.blogspot.com/2019/05/95-of-people-text-things-they-could.html>

Also cf. Why do people prefer to talk over text instead of talking in person?

<https://www.youthvoices.live/2017/05/09/why-do-people-prefer-to-talk-over-text-instead-of-talking-in-person/>

Love is not rude! Love does not act unbecomingly! It does not behave unseemly!

Where else do we see rude or unseemly behaviour?

Well, in the way some young ladies dress!

You see, sadly, I have seen how even some girls in our churches – girls from their mid-to-late teens – dress unseemly! And now I talk not just as a pastor and preacher of the Gospel, but also as a man and as a husband and as a father of two adult daughters!

Young people, when our text says, “Love is not rude (Love does not behave *unseemly* or does not act *unbecomingly*),” that means that Christian love will not dress in ways that are against the requirements of propriety!

I could say much more about this, but suffice to say: Young ladies, trust your parents’ advice on the length of skirts – on how much of your shoulders, back and neckline is appropriate and safe to reveal!

You know what, young ladies? It’s not the daring dress which draws healthy attention! No, it’s the modestly dressed lady who catches the attention of the godly young man!

Well, when our text says (that) love does not behave unseemly, it includes also the way we dress!

I want to conclude with this story!

You see, a pastor tells the story of a Christian woman who worked very hard for her church. And so, once at the end of a very demanding and exhausting day at work, she still had to rush through heavy traffic right across the city to pick up a parcel for the church only to meet up with a very rude clerk behind the counter.

Well, just when this Christian woman, in her tiredness, wanted to give the clerk some of his own rudeness back, she remembered that she was wearing the church’s special shirt with the church’s logo on. So, she changed her behaviour.

Says her pastor: “Think well! Aren’t we all wearing a shirt?”²⁷ I mean, does not Gal 3:27 say, “...*for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*”?²⁸

See? All who have received Jesus Christ as their Saviour & Lord, are “wearing” Christ!

²⁷ cf. Lucado (ibid:58f.)

²⁸ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Ga 3:27). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

And not only *you* know it; not even only your *fellow brothers & sisters in Christ* know that. But also some people *outside* the church know you are linked with Christ. And they're watching!

And when *we* are kind, they conclude that *Christ* is kind.

When *we're* patient, they conclude that our *Lord* is patient!

But, what if we're jealous?

What if we're boastful or arrogant?

What if we're rude?

Wow! Imagine what message we leave them with!

What's the solution? What will help?

Well, I know of only one way: is that way not that you & I will sincerely turn to Jesus every day; that you & I will walk closely with Him every day?

AMEN (2,145 words excluding footnotes)

8. SttL 220:1,3,6 (not in Blue Ps/H) "My song is love unknown..."

9. Benediction (Num 6:24-26)

- *The Lord bless you and keep you;*
- *the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;*
- *the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

AMEN