

Intro: Paul isn't giving the Corinthians, or us, a checklist on how we can love better. Notice that he isn't saying, “You should not take evil into account”. Rather, he says, “*Love* doesn't take evil into account.” In other words, he isn't teaching how to love, but rather is confronting us with love. This is love. This is love. Love does this. He is showing us love, revealing it, planting it before our faces in a rather convicting way.

So, what we need to remember, and we've talked about a few times during this series, is that we must see love before we can do love. We must be confronted by the fountainhead of love's source before we can join its streams. Only then will we be able to actually become loving.

So, we are first confronted and judged by the definition of love. It is so far different than our norm. It is harder, more death involved, and far more substantial a demand than anything that the Law may dictate. Secondly, we must be embraced by the Man of Love, and only then will be in a position to rest in His love so that we can pour ourselves out in love towards another, including our enemies.

Love does not take evil into account in its decision to work for another's flourishing.

1. Love Does Not Keep Score in Order to Make Another Flourish
 - a. *logizomai* - to reckon to an account for judicial purposes
 - i. It is the same word used in Romans 3 concerning God's imputation of righteousness “reckoned” to us by faith
 - b. Thus, it is to apply a credit or debit to an account, to take such a reckoning into consideration in how we recognize a person, treat a person, whether in blessing or cursing
 - i. "keeping score" - *apply* the recognition of debts or credits
 - c. Why is it we lack patience or kindness towards another? Why is it that our love might “give up” (v7) or “fall away” (v8)?
 - i. It is because our score card indicates that a person is indebted to us: they have not given us something which we wanted, or they have given us something that we didn't want.
 - ii. The greater the score indebtedness, the farther towards giving up that I go.
 1. That person hasn't given me the affection that I want, or the respect, or the affirmation.
 2. So, we only become impatient, and we only give up on someone, when what we wanted was not that person, but what they brought to us!
 - a. Impatience is the first step, unkindness the second step, to resenting, to counting the score, to losing hope, to failing
 3. But if we love *them*, then we don't give up, no matter the score. We *always* hope, we *always* persevere, we *never* fall away.
 - d. Often, what is described as “love” in our world is really a statement that you meet my desire for...and I want this desire fulfilled.
 - i. It's a very selfish motivation, so keeping a record of offenses against me, failures to satisfy this desire, is natural and encouraged.

1. “I don’t need that kind of person in my life.” – often spoken about a person whom one had previously stated such enamored words of amorous feelings
- ii. “The enchantment of unsatisfied desire produces results which the humans can be made to mistake for the results of charity. Avail yourself of the ambiguity in the word "Love": let them think they have solved by Love problems they have in fact only waived or postponed under the influence of the enchantment. While it lasts you have your chance to foment the problems in secret and render them chronic.” – Screwtape, C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*
- e. The only way in which we stop keeping score and love another *for their sake, for their flourishing*, is when our need for affection, respect, delight, belonging, is met by the Man of Love, Jesus.
 - i. We don’t love well when we doubt the goodness of God in Christ Jesus.
 - ii. When our eyes are taken off of the grandeur and glory of the Almighty Holy God who deigned to love the ne’er-do-wells, then my eyes become fixed on my own glory and my own self-satisfaction, and I don’t walk in love.
 1. This is why the apostle spends the first parts of his general letters to the churches expounding theology!
 2. He shows them the glory of God, the holiness of God, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the wrath of God, the character of God, the attributes of God *before* he ever commands them to walk in the light of the truth
 3. Orthodoxy precedes orthopraxy!
 - a. How do we change the way that we live?
 - b. We SEE and SAVOR Jesus Christ consistently with Truth, i.e. who He really is in light of what He has really done.

2. Love Works Contra-Conditionally to Make Another Flourish

- a. Love is *contra-conditional*
 - i. Not *unconditional*
 1. Unconditional love means “without condition”, as if there was a moral neutrality, an intrinsic beauty neutrality
 - a. “I love you without any conditions”
 2. Yet, did God just “love” us without any conditions, ignoring all other conditions in our relationship with Him? NO! A million times no!
 - ii. Contra-conditional means “against the conditions”
 1. In other words, there are conditions to abiding in the love of God, *but they are not met by us*
 2. In fact, all that we brought to the table apart from God’s grace towards us, was idolatrous hatred and despidal of God.
 - a. We reviled Him (Rom 1:30), rejected His authority (Titus 3:3), schemed to shed His chains from us (Ps 2), and walked according to the flesh opposed to God (Col 3:5-7; Titus 3:3)
 - b. So, all the conditions were *against God’s love for us*.
 - i. It’s not there were zero condition, there were negative conditions

- ii. Not only did we not walk uprightly, we were adamantly opposed to God
 - 3. So, His love for us answered the conditions of holiness and purity:
 - a. “He made Him who knew no sin to be [our] sin”
 - b. “so that we might become the righteousness of God”
 - c. Jesus Christ the righteous: the one who lived in perfect harmony with the will and glory of God
 - d. Jesus Christ the sacrifice: the holy pure one who died the death that we should have died
 - i. There were the conditions *that God provided*
 - ii. Did God keep score? HE EVENED THE SCORE AT HIS OWN TERRIBLE COST
 - iii. What, then, is love in the light of conditions?
 - 1. **Love is the inner delight and external action to meet the conditions of a flourishing relationship at its own expense, paying down failures and providing what is needed for the joy of the Other**
- b. “Unconditional love”, frankly, is terribly weak in comparison to the contra-conditional love of God
 - i. Election:
 - 1. God *chose us* before we had done anything good or bad, that His purposes of grace might be declared (Rom 9:11; Eph 1:5,11)
 - 2. This election of God is solely due to the purpose of His will and actually works *against the conditions* which would deserve preference
 - a. That is, the conditions for our salvation (holiness, perfectly trusting God and working for His glory) were not only failed by us, but actively opposed
 - b. Thus, God didn’t merely save us without conditions; He saved us against the conditions by granting the conditions graciously through Christ’s obedience (holiness, perfectly trusting the Father and working for His glory *always*)
 - ii. Justification:
 - 1. God *reckons* or *imputes* our sin to Christ (2 Cor 5:21) and imputes or reckons his righteousness to us (Romans 4:5)
 - 2. It is not our goodness which is reckoned, but only dependence
 - a. Which is not a work, but an “un-work”
 - b. It is an undoing, not a doing
 - iii. Adoption:
 - 1. We behave like orphans, but God never forsakes His children (Heb 13:5)
 - 2. He has adopted us, not on the basis of our strength, perfection, or beauty, but according to the riches of His mercy and the grandeur of His grace (Titus 3:4-7)
- c. In other words, God’s great mercy is completely and utterly beyond the pale of normal
 - i. It takes all the conditions, which were against us, used in our prosecution, and He eliminates them by sending Christ Jesus to represent us

1. He lived the life we should have lived
2. He died the death we should have died
- ii. So that in Christ Jesus, we are completely loved and accepted, so much so that even the faith which God requires is worked by Him
 1. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and even this is not of yourselves; it is a gift of God not a result of works, so that no man can boast.” (Eph 2:8)
 2. “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...” (Titus 3:5)

3. Love Does Not Return Evil for Evil, but Shows Surpassing Mercy

- a. 1 Thess 5:12-18; Rom 12:9-21, 1 Pet 3:8-9 (strong similarities with the love passage of 1 Cor 13, i.e. 'let love be genuine, brotherly love, bless those who persecute you, don't be haughty, associate with the lowly, help the weak, be patient with them all, live in harmony, never be wise in your own sight, etc.')
- b. Note how many actions associated with love have to do with varying forms of mercy and forgiveness!
 - i. The norm of the human heart is to make sure others recognize the *depths* of their sin against me.
 1. We even justify our lack of love by telling ourselves that I'm not making them pay it back, but they need to feel as badly about it as is consistent with the harm done to me.
 2. Thus, when we reveal that a brother has sinned against us, we want them to feel it *all the way down to the bottom*
 3. If we don't feel that they do, even if they apologize, we keep working at it, bringing it up, making them feel it, bringing it to mind in our dealings with them
 - ii. The Spirit of God, however, shows us the depths of our sins and we *never* feel the weight of it proportional to the slander against God!
 1. We will never know the full weight of our sin, by the mercy of God!
 2. This is not because our sins are light or because our repentance is incomplete, but because God is merciful to us, letting the weight fall upon His Son instead of us.
- c. Love does not ignore the weight of sin, it swallows it for the sake of the other
 - i. Love enters into each moment with a willingness to die to its own rights for the sake of the glory of God and the flourishing of the other.
 - ii. It sees the conditions, the errors, the marks of sin and weakness, and it evens the score by absorbing them and not letting them count in this moment.
 1. We love this way because He first loved us this way.

4. We Must See God's Great Mercy Towards Us to Love Others Well

- a. Am I recounting past sins, remembering the score, reckoning wrongs with which my brother needs to deal?
- b. Does it influence my treatment of them, my working for their flourishing?
- c. If they have confessed their sin, do I still let the hurt affect my movement toward them?

- d. How has God treated me in the midst of my wrongdoing against Him? How has he “evened the score?”
 - i. “By this we know love: that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1Jo 3:16 ESV)
 - ii. Brothers, it takes death to love, and we have been called into the footsteps of the Master to die a thousand deaths, bearing up the sins of our brothers, not counting their sins against them
 - 1. How do we do this?
 - a. First, we recognize the great contra-conditional love of God for us. We behold His great mercy to ME, the chief of sinners
 - b. Second, we entrust ourselves to God who raises the dead, restores life, grants grace to the broken-hearted, dwells with the lowly, and has imputed an inheritance to us far beyond anything we could lose in this world.
 - 2. When we know that God can be trusted with our deaths, then we can die daily for the sake of others, and know that He will raise us up.