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Sermon Notes

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Love is Not Easily Angered and Keeps No Record of Wrongs

1 Corinthians 13:5

God's perfect law frees us and heals us:

As we have walked carefully through 1 Corinthians 13, our goal has been a careful hearing and application of each phrase. We have not hurried through this magnificent chapter, nor will we. The image I have repeatedly is a therapeutic one... a sense of God healing us from the damage of sin. Listening carefully to each word of 1 Corinthians 13 is like laying under the careful probing of a skillful doctor. He is asking a ton of questions, poking, prodding... seeing where you twitch, where you flinch, where there is pain. For where there is pain, there is likely to be disease or damage. Furthermore, he is running diagnostics on you... having you lie under an X-Ray or under an MRI... he is doing bloodwork, sending in your samples to the lab. In all these diagnostics, he is looking for how you are sick... how your body is NOT HEALTHY... health is defined by the standard metrics of human experience – body temperature, blood pressure, the readings from the CBC blood work (Complete Blood Count – numbers of red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets... to see if any numbers are elevated); elevated enzyme counts to see if there is an evidence of specific diseases... the X-Rays and MRI are all laid alongside the norm... the pattern of HEALTH in this or that part of the body to SEEK OUT DISEASE

So it is with 1 Corinthians 13... our hearts, minds, souls, our behavior patterns are LAID ALONGSIDE the NORM – the standard – which God has given for healthy (holy) human life... the LAW OF GOD

1 Corinthians 13 is a description of the LAW – the law of love

Keep in mind Jesus said all of God's law hangs on two commandments – "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Vertical love – toward God); and the second commandment is like it – "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Horizontal love – directed at other people). This is the LAW

Now, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). The written law of God stands over us and kills us... condemns us... has the power to send us to hell; the written Law alone can never save us or forgive us or show us mercy; that is not its purpose

The law defines health and disease ("You shall" and "You shall not"); and it declares the justice of God over all violations. The law brings us to desperation and humility and ultimately to the cross of Jesus Christ

At the cross of Christ, all the loveless hearts and loveless acts ever done by our wretchedly loveless human race are forgiven by faith and repentance. Christ died on the cross for all the ways we have failed to love – failed to love God, and failed to love others

Forgiven perfectly and completely and eternally!! Justification by faith alone, not by works of the Law!

But now, at the moment we stand perfectly and eternally forgiven, the Holy Spirit also works a transformation in us... he makes us New Creations:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

This transformation is described in many ways, but for our purposes today, hear this:

Hebrews 8:10 I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The indwelling Spirit moves in us to KEEP GOD’S LAW perfectly... that’s the standard of sanctification – perfect love.

Therefore, in powerful tenderness, the Physician of our souls brings us back to the careful definition of love and presses it to us, showing us how we deviate. Not to shame us and condemn us, but to conform us more and more to the perfect love the law describes

Amazingly, then, the law of God speaks what we shall be, and then makes us that way!

“In the beginning is the Word”

God says “Let there be light!”, and there is light!

God says “This is love” and “Let there be love!”, and there is love as God defines it!

So, if it feels painful to go over this meticulous description of the Law, don’t despair. Let Jesus through the Spirit poke you and prod you and run diagnostic tests on you. Let him expose your sins and failings and loveless attitudes and loveless behavior patterns... his intention is to HEAL YOU COMPLETELY from all of them. And just as 1 Corinthians 13 ends up talking about heavenly love (perfect love), so all our contemplations of love should bring our minds with longing and hope to heaven, where at last we will be free from all lovelessness... from all sin

This morning, the specific diseases we will address are SINFUL ANGER and SINFULL RECORD-KEEPING of WRONGS

Oh how great damage has been caused in human history by these two diseases! How many relationships have ended because of sinful anger! How many divorces have had their roots in sinful anger! How many crimes have been committed by sinful anger! And also, how many relationships have soured and waned and ended because of unforgiveness! How much damage is done by judgmental people who pridefully can't forgive, must bring up the past, are bitter and filled with malice because of something that happened years ago!

The Word of God, applied by the Spirit of God, paid for by the blood of Christ, has the power to change everything! So if this morning's sermon makes you twitch and flinch and jerk back and start to feel resentful, it just means you need to hear it... and so do I! Let's let God's Law set us free forever from these sins:

James 1:25 The one who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does.

Let's gaze into the mirror of God's Law... and see all our warts and blemishes and tumors and bleeding sores; and let's bring all of them to the Great Physician, Jesus Christ. Let's let it transform us and heal us and make us genuinely loving men and women... and boys and girls!

1 Corinthians 13:5 ... Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

I. Love is Not Easily Angered

A. What the Word Means

1. Jonathan Edwards: Anger itself “an earnest and more or less violent opposition of spirit against any real or supposed evil, or in view of any fault or offense of another”
2. Simple terms... a passionately negative response to wrong (at least, something we perceive as wrong)
3. Likened to HEAT... like fire that burns; sometimes we use the word “kindle” when our anger is started... like a fire, it can burn low and hot or can rise up to become a raging forest fire

Daniel 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders to heat the furnace seven times more than was customary

The scope of rage can become almost immeasurable:

2 Chronicles 28:9 But a prophet of the LORD named Oded was there, and he went out to meet the army when it returned to Samaria. He said to them, "... you have slaughtered them in a rage that reaches to heaven.

Anger is frequently addressed in the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

Proverbs 22:24-25 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.

Proverbs 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

4. Paul here in 1 Corinthians 13 says love is not “easily” angered... irritable, provoked... the Greek word relates to SHARPNESS; we get the English word “paroxysm” like a fit or rage—face gets red, breathing elevates, voice raises and trembles, body shakes’ and the

sense here is like someone who is HAIR TRIGGERED—goes off at the slightest provocation; but it also in general has to do with all sinful anger

Jonathan Edwards's daughter Emily had a violent temper, and was consistently flying off the handle. A suitor came to Edwards to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. Edwards refused to give his permission. The man was very dismayed, and asked if there was something wrong with him – if he felt he was unsuitable. Edwards answered, "No... she is not worthy of you!" When the man asked why and was told, he said "But isn't she a Christian?" Edwards answered, "Yes, but the grace of God may live with some people with whom no one else could ever live!"

So... the focus here is irritability, easily provoked people, who go off quickly, hair-trigger, and consistently angry for no good reason

B. Not All Anger is Sinful

1. God himself is angry at all evil

Psalm 7:11 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.

2. At the human level, Paul allows some anger that is not sinful

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger

3. Jesus was righteously angry

John 2:14-17 In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

[a man with a withered hand] Mark 3:4-5 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts

4. However, if we're honest, we will acknowledge the overwhelming majority of our anger is sinful... one godly brother I was speaking to about this says "My anger is righteous and Christlike no more than once in a thousand times!"
5. Paul eliminates multiple categories of anger in one verse

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice

C. What Anger is Sinful (leaning on Edwards "Charity and Its Fruits")

Sinful because of its nature, its occasion, its end, and its measure

1. Sinful because of its nature

- a. Any anger that contains ILL-WILL or desire for REVENGE
- b. We are not allowed in Scripture to harbor malice, bitterness or ill-will toward any human being on earth, no matter what

Leviticus 19:18 "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

- c. Even love for a persecuting enemy consists in essentially wanting that person to be blessed with conversion and salvation—to wish them to be forgiven and not condemned

Matthew 5:44-45 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- d. So if your anger contains any poison of ill-will or a desire to get the person back, it is ruled out by Christian love

2. Sinful because of its occasion

- a. Anger is sinful if it is without any just or scriptural cause
- b. Maybe it is that the person has truly done nothing wrong at all
 - i) Sometimes people are just angry people, lashing out unfairly at people who just get in the way of their angry outlook on life
 - ii) So, the victim of this unjust anger might have been ignorant of the situation, or couldn't do something the person wanted done... the action that triggered the sinful anger was not a sin at all—a mistake, an accident, not his fault at all
 - iii) Yet the angry person goes off anyway
 - iv) THAT IS SINFUL ANGER
- c. The worst example is when people are “angry at God”
 - i) God never does anything wrong at all... and yet people get angry at God

Jonah was angry at God for pouring out his mercy and forgiveness on the city of Nineveh

- d. Also people get sinfully angry at others who are actually doing the RIGHT thing
 - i) As all people who persecute Christians for sharing the gospel
 - ii) Or within the church, people who get angry at those who confront them in their sins... who try to get them to change a sin pattern—the angry person can SHOOT THE MESSENGER
 - iii) The greatest example of this is the opposition by the Jews to Jesus Christ who was showing them their sins and their need for salvation... they hated him without a cause
- e. Anger is also sinful when it is caused by minor trivial trifling things... people that get angry over every little fault and failing they see in others... in this case, the victim of the anger HAS failed in some way, has sinned or messed up... through

carelessness or forgetfulness or even willfulness; but the rage monster GOES OFF on the person

Bad parenting: parents who discipline their children in anger... the child HAS violated a rule, and does deserve to be disciplined; but the father or mother might be doing it in carnal anger, not out of love for the child

- f. FINALLY in this category... when our anger is caused MOSTLY because it relates to US, how the incident has hurt US or inconvenienced US... this sinful anger is essentially SELFISHNESS
 - i) They are not perfectly angry like Christ because God's honor was impugned, God's laws were broken, God's glory was forgotten, God's name slandered...
 - ii) NO... they are sinfully angry because they have been personally insulted, personally injured, personally inconvenienced, personally opposed
 - iii) This is well over 90% of our anger... probably closer to 99%

3. Sinful because of its end

- a. Sinful anger is essentially irrational... it has no PURPOSE or END except the venting of the spleen, the injury of the person who has committed the offence
- b. The person going off in rage isn't thinking clearly and has NO PLAN
- c. Edwards: "Such anger is the blind passion of beasts rather than the affections of a rational creature"
- d. Or perhaps there is a plan, and it is evil... namely that, by the anger, we can gain a position of power or dominance over others

Sometimes in a marriage, a sin has been committed – even a grievous sin – and the victim of the sin turns the tables and through

anger and keeping a record of wrongs gains to upper hand and dominant position in the relationship for years to come—perhaps even permanently. The other person is in the DOGHOUSE and has to walk on eggshells (mixing the metaphors!) This is nothing less than a filthy prideful power play by the originally grieved person. They now have the WHIP HAND in the relationship and use their anger as a weapon of their PRIDE

4. Sinful because of its measure

- a. This in two senses: HOW GREAT a display of anger, and HOW LONG it goes on
- b. How great—as we’ve said, sinful anger pays back exponentially for a wrong done; that’s why God established “an eye for an eye” because we pridefully and in rage say, “You took my eye, I will take your LIFE!!”
- c. Sinful anger can be like a DRUG... people can be so angry they are DRUNK with rage and they don’t know what they are doing
- d. Sinful anger can also be held onto WAY TOO LONG through “keeping a record of wrongs” as we just said

Two verses help keep things compartmentalized so this can’t happen:

Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Lamentations 3:23 [God’s mercies] are new every morning

So, if something makes you angry in your family—in your marriage or your relationship with your kids or your parents or your siblings... deal with it quickly, before you go to bed. Give and receive forgiveness. But if you fail to do that at night, do it right away the next morning... as God’s mercies are new every morning, so should yours be!! FORGIVE AS THE LORD FORGAVE YOU!

John MacArthur: "Telling our wives or our husbands that we love them is not very convincing if we continually get upset and angry at what they say and do. Telling our children that we love them is not convincing if we often yell at them for doing things that irritate us and interfere with our own plans. It does no good to protest 'I lose my temper a lot, but it's all over in a few minutes.' So is a nuclear bomb. A great deal of damage can be done in a short time.... Love takes a person out of himself and centers his attention on the well-being of others."

D. How Love Drives Out Sinful Anger

1. Christian love immerses our hearts first and foremost in God himself... it is vertical... so we see all sins as ultimately and primarily committed against God and not against ourselves
2. Christian love drives out that settled, dark, malignant desire for revenge that pollutes human hearts for decades
3. Christian love is contrary to the PRIDE that is at the root of all sinful anger; it is also contrary to the SELFISHNESS that drives so much of the outflow
4. Application at the end!

II. Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs

A. Different Translations, Different Conceptions

1. The KJV (which was the basis of Jonathan Edwards's *Charity and Its Fruits*) took it this way

KJV 1 Corinthians 13:5 "Love thinketh no evil"

From that, Edwards went in this direction: "Love is the opposite of a censorious spirit"

I had to look that up, but it has to do with judgmentalism... Edwards "a disposition to think or judge uncharitably of others."

His entire treatment went in that direction... "Judge not, lest you be judged" and discussing the many ways people can judge others

and think evil motives of others and put the worst possible spin on their actions... probing their minds and hearts while lacking full information

Judging evil of the SPIRITUAL CONDITION of others... thinking they are not Christians or not spiritually mature; if they don't think like you do, or act like you think they should or if they weren't converted like you were or speak the same Christian dialect you do – they are not born-again

Judging evil of the QUALITIES of others... magnifying their bad qualities and minimizing their good qualities; nursing very low opinion of others, seeing everything they do in a very negative light

Judging evil of the ACTIONS of others... without any evidence at all, assuming that someone has sinned or is sinning privately or has done some kind of plot; or just jumping to the worst possible conclusion and believing gossip or slander about others... GUILT WITHOUT EVIDENCE, just from the hint of wrongdoing – to move immediately from suspicion to accusation to conviction in one swift movement of the darkened mind; hungry for the DIRT, drinking in the innuendo and slurs others cast on a person's goof character... so also a certain DELIGHT in the sins of others, not showing the appropriate level of SORROW or GRIEF if someone actually has sinned...

This is what took up Edwards's treatment...

2. BUT many of the other translations go a different direction

Love keeps no record of wrongs

- a. Greek: "logidzomai" is an accounting term, like of a bookkeeper... keeping a record of financial transactions; the purpose of the LEDGER BOOK is to make a permanent record of the transaction so that business can be conducted and no outstanding accounts remain

Picture Ebenezer Scrooge in his cold, drafty office, going over his ledger book meticulously, calculating interest payments, seeing who must pay him and when... then going out from business to business collecting the money owed him

- b. Now obviously, good accounting is very necessary in business... the business is in it to make money, and it is essential to collect what it owed
 - c. But such an approach is devastatingly harmful in loving relationships between sinners
3. Such a person is very meticulously aware of the ways that others have done him wrong, done him dirty... he remembers the dates and the circumstances
 4. So it can be in a marriage or in a family... "You did such and such to me"... bitterly holding onto the past, as we've just discussed in the section on anger
 5. We can remember all the sins, the insults, the things promised that were never carried through on—the hurtful words, the unkind moments
 6. Within the heart is a desire for REVENGE... we even use the accounting term "I'll pay you back for that!"

B. God Does Not TAKE INTO ACCOUNT Our Sins!

Romans 4:7-8 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the lord will not take into account."

Paul uses the same Greek term "logidzomai" – to reckon or take into account... God does not log in his record book our sins for his wrath and judgment... but when we are JUSTIFIED (forgiven) of our sins, God's ledger book read "PAID IN FULL"

When Jesus died on the cross, he said "It is finished" ... he used an accounting term: "It has been PAID IN FULL" ... Jesus blood pays the price for our sins

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord

That is then the basis of our forgiveness for all the sins any person ever commits against us for the rest of our lives

C. The Parable of the 10,000 Talents

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."²³ ¶ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

John MacArthur: “

D. Love Is an Ocean of Grace... Resulting in a Life Free From Bittern Unforgiveness

1. Chrysostom, the great preacher of Constantinople, 5th century

“A sin committed against a loving heart is like a spark that falls into the sea and is quenched.” Love quenches wrongs rather than records them and fans the spark into a flame of bitterness and resentment

2. Therefore, a heart of love that is rich in forgiveness is a FREE HEART... set free from the prison of unforgiveness and bitterness

Someone once said unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping someone else dies.

III. Self Examination, Repentance, Prayer, and Action

A. Self-Examination

1. Two issues, closely related: quick to anger; keeping a record of wrongs

2. Look at your heart, your conscience, your conduct, your patterns

- a. Are you frequently angry? Do you have the kind of easily provoked demeanor? Do you have a hair trigger?
- b. Or perhaps you are on a low simmer all the time? Nursing grudges secretly? Unforgiving to this or that person... looking for a chance to pay them back, do them some harm without it being noticed?
- c. And when you have been angry, is it not true that the overwhelming majority of your anger is sinful, selfish anger, based on your own pride or inconvenience?
- d. You married people: has anger polluted your marriage? Have you expected your spouse to tolerate your personality, your thin-skinned irritability? Have you just accepted that this is just how you are, and you expect your spouse to make allowances

for you? Is your marriage characterized by angry arguments and contentious conflicts?

- e. You parents, have you been given to disciplining your children in sinful anger? Do your kids see you frequently irritable, stomping around the house?
 - f. Older people: having you become more and more irritable as you've gotten older and your aches and pains have multiplied? Have you become the old curmudgeon you used to see in your neighborhood when you were a kid, the one that used to yell "GET OFF MY LAWN" at all the neighborhood kids?
 - g. Teenagers: what about you? Are easily angered? Do you blame your hormones or your parents for your own sins of anger?
3. What about on the issue of keeping a record of wrongs? Do you harbor ill-will toward people who have sinned against you? Do you in your demeanor toward them basically choke them and yell at them PAY ME WHAT YOU OWE ME? Do you make much of the sins of others against you, while you minimize your sins toward God and others? ARE YOU BITTER? DO YOU HAVE ANY UNFORGIVENESS?
 4. Is there someone you have to forgive right now?
 5. As you look inward, ask the Holy Spirit to show you yourself in the mirror of his perfect law... ask him to show you if there is any sinful anger in you, any bitter unforgiveness or a tendency to keep records of wrongs
 6. Maybe there is a different issue: you know that you are NOT A CHRISTIAN... you have never accepted God's payment in Christ's blood for your sins

B. Repentance

1. If you have never trusted in Christ, repent now and find full forgiveness of sins

2. Repentance is to acknowledge that you have sinned toward God and others and you are guilty; you hate the sin and turn from it toward God and toward Jesus Christ
3. If you are a Christian but you see these sin patterns in your life, repentance is a matter of seeing the truth in God's law and the truth of the Spirit convictions of your heart sins and your lifestyle sins... and turning from them toward Christ again

C. Prayer

1. Seek his forgiveness... confess these sins of anger and unforgiveness that you have done for years
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to work genuine love in you by his power; ask him to take the deep anger and bitter unforgiveness out of your heart
3. Don't make excuses for your sinful anger... confess it as evil and renounce it

2 Corinthians 12:10 when I am weak, then I am strong.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the spiritual beggars, for theirs is the Kingdom of God

D. Action: WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE by the power of the Holy Spirit

1. Ask loved ones to pray for you to become a less angry person
2. Confess it to them and involve them in your desire for a new life
3. By the Spirit, live a new live in the pattern of Christ!!