

**Text: I Corinthians 13:4 (Pew Bible, pg.1137)**

**Title: “The Three-headed Monster”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles to I Corinthians 13. As you’re turning I want to remind you that next Sunday falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend. We’ll have just one service at 10:45, with Bible Study at 9:30. The focus will be for us to understand how the church plays an important role in the destiny of our great nation. There’ll be some incredibly inspiring patriotic music, and I’ll have what I trust will be an informative message from God’s Word to help us as Christ-followers, living in the US, to fulfill our calling.

Now during these summer months we’re studying I Corinthians 13, specifically vv.4-8, where we have perhaps one of the best known, but least practiced portions of the Bible. And we come today to the last part of v.4.

**1 Corinthians 13:4b – (Love) does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.**

We’re memorizing I Corinthians 13:4-8 while we’re studying it. There are a few bookmarks still left, so grab one and begin to hide God’s word in your heart. Let’s review.

This love we’re talking about from I Corinthians 13 is at the heart of what it means to be a Christ-follower. Remember Jesus said...

**John 13:34-35 - “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

This love is the primary way we are known by a watching world ... not that we sing this kind of music or that kind of music ... not that we dress this way or that ... not that we push this particular political agenda or that one. No, Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are Christ-followers ... we love like Jesus loved.”

This has to do with our relationships in our homes as husbands and wives, and as parents and children. It has to do with our relationships with fellow believers in the church and with non-believers in the world.

Now what we have here in the last part of v.4 are three *opposites* of authentic, Christ-like love. And they make up what I will call a three-headed monster called “ego.” And this three-headed monster preys upon relationships.

When we say that someone has a big ego, we mean that they are stuck on themselves. The whole world revolves around them, and no one else matters ... not God, and not anyone else.

The word “ego” is an easy way to remember this last part of v.4.

## **E** — Envy

### **v.4 - “Love ... does not envy”**

Other translations use the word “jealousy,” and that may be a little easier to understand. The word means “to boil.” It speaks of a powerful desire inside, particularly for something someone else has ... maybe their possessions, or their position, or their popularity.

Jealously or envy is not a harmless sin. Remember in the Garden of Eden when Satan first tempted Eve, he appealed to her jealousy or envy of God. God told Adam and Eve they were not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Eve wanted to be like God, to have what he had and to know what He knows. So she ate the fruit, and gave it to Adam to eat. Envy was at the heart of that first great sin, from which all other sin has descended. The next sin mentioned in Genesis is murder. Adam and Eve’s son Cain was jealous of his brother Abel, and Cain killed Abel. Envy is not a harmless or victimless sin.

Back in I Corinthians 13 the word for “envy” is the same word used in I Corinthians 12:31 ... “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” I said a couple of weeks ago that that was really a rebuke to the church. “You are envious and jealous of the greater gifts. You’re jealous because someone else has those gifts, and the notoriety that goes with them.”

### **Proverbs 27:4 - Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?**

Ego is a three-headed monster that destroys relationships. So the E in ego stands for envy.

## **G** — Gloating

### **v.4 - “Love ... does not boast”**

Bragging, boasting or gloating is the flip side of envy. Envy wants what others have. Bragging is trying to make others envious of what we have.

**ILLUSTRATION** – In sports there is something called the “swagger.” It’s the proud way that players walk or strut. Swagger may be admirable for a football team or a basketball team. But there’s no place for a swagger in the walk of Christ-follower.

Now again, many in the church in Corinth had a problem with this. This church had more splits than Braum’s Ice Cream. And some of the division ran along the lines who led them to Christ or disciplined them. Some said, “I follow Paul.” Others said, “I follow Apollos (a famous preacher in the early church), or Peter (the great apostle).” Still others said, “I’m more spiritual than you, I follow Christ.” There was done for no other reason than to boast about their spiritual pedigree. So Paul rebukes them:

**1 Corinthians 3:21 - So then, no more boasting about men!**

When a truly loving person succeeds, they will not brag, boast or gloat about it. You don't have to remind people of who you are, or how great you are, or where you live, or who you're friends with, or how much you pray, or how many Bible verses you've memorized.

You know when we gloat and boast and brag, we're really revealing something about ourselves ... that we are empty.

**ILLUSTRATION** - Truckers say that an empty truck makes more noise than a full truck. Musicians know that drums make a lot of noise because they are empty on the inside. And when people make a lot of noise bragging and trying to impress others, it's usually because they are empty on the inside ... there's nothing of God's love inside of them filling them up.

So the E in ego is for "envy." The G in ego is for "gloating."

## **O** — Overbearing

Ego is overbearing and filled with pride.

### **v.4 - "Love ... is not proud"**

Pride is big-headed. Love is big-hearted.

The Bible has a lot to say about pride.

**Proverbs 8:13 - To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.**

**Proverbs 11:2 - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.**

**Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - When Mohammad Ali was the world champion boxer supposedly he was on an airplane one day and the flight attendant came by and said, "Sir would you please fasten your belt for takeoff?" Ali said, "Superman don't need no seat belt!" The flight attendant shot back, "Right, and Superman don't need no airplane either. So fasten your seatbelt."

Pride says, "I don't need a seatbelt." It also says, "I don't need you," or "I don't need God."

This is the inward attitude that makes one boast. The word for "proud" means to be "puffed up."

**ILLUSTRATION** – Have you ever seen a picture of a blowfish? Their more official name is puffer fish. They are a very slow swimming fish, but they have to compensate. Their back up defense mechanism, used if they are successfully pursued, is to fill their extremely elastic stomachs with

water (or air when outside the water) until they are much larger and almost spherical in shape. They are also the second-deadliest vertebrate in the world.

The Corinthians were puffed up about everything. They were conceited about their spiritual gifts and their famous teachers. They were so conceited that they even proud of the immorality in their church. And they were proud of their knowledge.

**1 Corinthians 8:1 - We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.**

So this three-headed monster “ego” destroys relationships.

**EGO DESTROYS RELATIONSHIPS.**

Specifically, here’s how ego destroys relationships:

**1. EGO HINDERS LISTENING.**

Now if I think I know everything, and it’s really all about “me,” then I’m not going to really listen to you. I may have already made up my mind about what I want, and I don’t care about what is best for you.

There’s an old saying that says, that love is blind. And there’s some truth to that. But what’s even more true is that pride is blind. Ego blinds me to my own faults and my own weaknesses. All I can see are the faults of others.

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, that we shouldn’t try to get the speck out of someone else’s eye until we get the 2x4 out of your own eye. He was talking about spiritual pride that assumes I don't need to repent, I don't need to get right, I don't need to be corrected, I have it all together and I don't need anything or anyone else.

And that leads me to the next way EGO destroys relationships.

**2. EGO PREVENTS INTIMACY.**

It prevents intimacy in a marriage relationship, with our kids, with others in the Body of Christ or in any other kind of relationship. Here’s how it happens: People with pride and a big ego have a basic insecurity, and that is the fear of failing or of being rejected. Now we all know we have faults and weaknesses, but a proud person will not open up and admit it because they’re afraid it will diminish them in the eyes of others. So if we’re filled with pride we’ll go through life wearing a mask, and never really opening up to the others God has placed in our lives.

**3. EGO PRODUCES QUARRELS.**

I’ve already mentioned that the church in Corinth was filled with division and splits. They were known for their constant quarrelling.

**1 Corinthians 1:11 - My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.**

And at the root of it was their EGO.

**1 Corinthians 3:3 - You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?**

And the Book of James addresses this:

**James 4:1-2 - What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.**

Stop to think about the quarrels in your marriage, or with your kids, or between believers ... so often they are due to pride and ego.

#### **4. EGO BLOCKS RECONCILIATION.**

Ego not only causes quarrels, it blocks the reconciliation that should happen after quarrels occur.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I went with my kids and grandkids to see *Cars 2*, the new Disney animation. We love Lightning McQueen and Tow Mater. Well in the new movie Lightning and Mater have a falling out during the first race because of Mater goofs up. And for the longest time Lightning won't reach out to Mater because he was too proud to admit that he made a mistake and that he really needed Mater.

Mark Twain said temper gets you into a lot of trouble, and pride keeps you there. That is exactly right. Many times something happens, and we won't reconcile because of pride.

#### **CONCLUSION**

##### **HOW TO LET GO OF YOUR EGO:**

- **HUMBLY EMBRACE GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU.**

**1 Peter 5:5b - All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**

**1 Peter 5:6 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.**

**1 Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**

If you are absolutely convinced that God can be trusted to take care of you, you don't have to wish you were someone else, or wish you had what someone else had. You don't have to selfishly, conceitedly or arrogantly promote yourself if you have the confidence that your worth is not found in what other people think about you, but in what God thinks about you. He cares for you.

When you and I are so consumed and sustained by God's love, we can set aside our ego because we know God cares for us. We are accepted in Christ; we don't have to prove anything to anyone. Humbly embrace God's love for you.

- **HUMBLY EXPRESS GOD'S LOVE TO OTHERS.**

Another way to let go of your ego is to genuinely serve other people in love.

**Philippians 2:3 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.**

Listen, Jesus had every reason to boast, but He didn't. On the other hand, we really have nothing to boast about, but we do it anyway. So just be like Jesus. Just think about this:

**Philippians 2:6-8 - Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!**

**ILLUSTRATION** – At the very core, this is about your relationship with God. There's a throne in every heart. Who is sitting on the throne of your life? If you are seated on the throne of your life, you will not submit to God, and you will not serve others. It's all about you.

**EGO can stand for something else ... Edging God Out.**