

Friday, November 24, 2017

Love

1 Corinthians 13-14

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

This is called by some "the love chapter." I get asked, from time to time, to use this for weddings and it is an important part of the premarital counseling that I do with couples. It is a chapter that gives a very good glimpse into the love of God and what that looks like and the type of love we can allow to flow through our lives. Because of the absolutes in this passage, we realize that Paul is not talking about human love; this is a description of the love of God. It is a selfless love. I cannot love in this way apart from God. I can allow His love to flow through me. The fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22-23). As part of the body of Christ, I am filled with this love. As I learn to rely and live in the power of the Spirit in my life, this love flows out of me. As it does that, it also transforms my love so that my love becomes more patient, kind, humble, and trusting.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 as a whole today carefully and slowly. Stop often and ask the Lord to reveal whether these are the identifying characteristics of your love for others.

Father, please help Your love to fill me and flow from me to others. You so loved the world, Lord. Love the world through me. Amen.

Saturday, November 25, 2017

First Importance

1 Corinthians 15-16

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

What is it that is of first importance to Paul? It is the gospel. The gospel is the truth that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose again—all according to the Scriptures. This is absolute truth. The gospel is the truth that Jesus makes it possible for a person to be saved. The gospel is also the truth that Jesus gives me the power to live for Him once I am saved. The gospel is the truth that I will live forever with Jesus because He has saved me. The fact that He rose again allows me to know that I will rise again. The gospel is the truth that sets me free. It is of greatest importance. But how does that play out in my life? In my day-to-day thoughts and encounters with others, is the gospel of greatest importance? Paul urges the Corinthian church to live out loud for Jesus. He urges them not to be influenced by the culture, but to influence the culture for Jesus. It is the same urging for me today. I must live out loud for Jesus. I must be distracted by Him instead of distracted away from Him. I must live out the power of the gospel and have it be evident in my life that it is of first importance!

Father, the gospel holds such power for me. It should be that which is of greatest importance, yet many times I act as though it isn't. Please help me to remember the gospel, to find ways to remind myself and my brothers and sisters of the importance it must have in our hearts and in our lives. Amen.

November 20-25, 2017



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, November 20, 2017

Bought

1 Corinthians 5-6

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

So much could change quickly in my life if I could fully understand the concept of redemption. In helping the Corinth church understand the reasons to be different than the world, Paul helps them know why they are different. They have a different Master! The Corinth church would have understood the concept of slavery and redemption because it was a daily part of life. If a slave was sold, they were no longer a slave of the master they were bought from. I am no longer a slave to sin. I have been set free and I am now a slave of righteousness (Romans 6). I have been redeemed at a great price—the shed blood of Jesus. However, not only does that give me a new Master, I also have become the dwelling place of God! The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in me so that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. This is why I should honor God with my body. This is why I should honor God with all that I have. I am not my own. I have been bought and set free from sin. Why would I go back to serving the most horrific master that has ever had control of my life? Why, when the kindest Master has bought me and set me free, would I run away and serve another? There is no reason—other than the fact that sin makes me stupid. Serving sin for so long has caused me to struggle with letting go of the things that cause me such pain. I must remember that I am free from the evil taskmaster of sin and I am able to serve my Savior and my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Father, help me with this. So many times I run back to the things that have wounded me, wondering why they wound me again. Forgive my dullness. I long to serve You and You alone. You have bought me and I am Yours. Let me not bow my knee to sin. Amen.

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Sacrifice

1 Corinthians 7-8

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall. 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

Sacrifice is not easy. Paul is calling for the believers in Corinth to be more mindful of others. He is specifically looking at the issue of meat offered to idols and whether or not this meat could be eaten. What he teaches is that the issue is not so much whether or not the meat can be eaten; rather, it is important to consider how others will respond to the eating of the meat. What will it cause in their hearts? At this point, I can wonder whether or not I am my brother's keeper and Paul is saying that yes, I am—in some regard. The motive for this is love (8:1-3). Love considers others and the needs of others. Love causes me to consider how my actions may impact others who are on the journey of discovering who God is. This causes me to make conscious decisions to set things aside that I may be free to do in Christ, but that will not be beneficial for others who are looking to me as an example. I need to sacrifice my desires, when possible, in order to keep one of my brothers or sisters from falling into sin. There are several things in my life that I deliberately choose not to do—not because they are not permissible, but because I feel strongly that they could cause another to stumble. It is a joy-filled sacrifice. I must be aware if there are more.

Father, please help me see areas where what I do could cause another to stumble. Help me know if this is an area that I should sacrifice so that I can help another know the depth of Your love. Amen.

Wednesday, November 22, 2017

Run to win!

1 Corinthians 9-10

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

There can be no doubt that Paul was a very focused person. He feels strongly that his life needs to be an example to others (11:1). He has a focus and the focus of his life is to run the race to receive the prize. This is not the only place that he speaks of this. Notice Philippians 3:12-15. Paul sees that this world has many distractions, but it also has many illustrations that can help keep one focused. Athletes are focused people. They give themselves fully to the sport; they study, train, and sacrifice so that they can win the prize—the trophy, the ring, or the title—whatever the prize may be. Paul knew that the Christian life was to be lived with that type of focus. There is a prize. It is a crown that will last forever. It is not like the trophy or the ring that an athlete gets that will be left behind. There are important and specific steps I must take if I am going to run in a way that will win the prize. There are steps I need to take so that I am not disqualified. All too often in my life, I have been the “armchair quarterback,” never really in the game. That must be behind me. I must give myself fully to the work of the Lord, knowing that my labor in the Lord is not in vain. I must train. I must sacrifice. I will run to win!

Father, You know me. You know how often I enter into the race of life with complacency and self-centered laziness. Get me off the sofa and get me training for the race. Help me run in such a way that I win the prize—the joy of seeing others in the kingdom of God forever! Amen.

Thursday, November 23, 2017

Body

1 Corinthians 11-12

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... Now the body is not made up of one part but of many... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:12, 14, 26-27

Paul understood what it meant that those who believed in Christ were all part of one body. As Saul, when he was persecuting the church, Jesus appeared to him and said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” It was Jesus that Paul, in his pre-conversion life, was persecuting. As he persecuted individuals, he was persecuting the very body of Christ. And so, each believer is a member of the body of Christ. When we persecute each other we are persecuting Christ! When one part suffers, we all suffer. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. My sin is not individual—it affects the whole body. And then I consider that the body of Christ, of which I am a member, is not just the people that I live with and get along with easily. The body of Christ is every believer of every time. I am part of the whole body of Christ—Jew or Gentile, slave or free. This is so important for me to grasp. The older I get, the more aware I am of how self-centered every one of my thoughts seems to be. Every thought is tainted with my selfish desires. I have to fight so hard to be God-focused. I must fight to see the way that I fit into the whole of God's plan. I must focus on warring, with other members of His body, against the evil one. We are the body of Christ and I am a member of that body. I must remember this well.

Jesus, there are so many layers to this. I am so very self-centered. It permeates every thought I have. I don't even realize the full depth of my depravity. The disease of self is deep in me. Please help me to see that I am a member of Your body and help me stay focused on being a part of the whole. Amen.