

Friday, December 1, 2017

Generosity

2 Corinthians 8-9

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

God's message to the early churches was the message of the gospel. It was bearing fruit and growing all over the world (Col 1:6). At the same time, opposition to the gospel was bearing fruit and growing; false apostles followed behind to distort the truth. This was the case in many of the churches, but it seems that the church in Corinth was especially susceptible. They were led astray from the truth. As they returned to the truth through Paul's letters, he reminded them of things they had apparently forgotten along the way. Generosity is one of those things. Paul reminds the church that to receive a generous harvest they must sow generously. As they give generously, cheerfully, they will discover the love of God in new ways. God is so amazingly generous. As I become more like Christ, I become more generous in how I sow—not just my money, but all that I have. I will be made rich in every way so that I can be generous on every occasion. Then, my generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. God makes this change in my heart. I look to give away what I have been given so the gospel can reach others. This means that I need to be generous with all that I have been given: my time, talents, energy, resources, relationships, and yes, my money.

Father, please help me to sow generously, with a joyful, cheerful heart, from all that You have given to me, to be generous, as You are generous. May it be one more way that people see You in me. Amen.

Saturday, December 2, 2017

Demolish

2 Corinthians 10-11

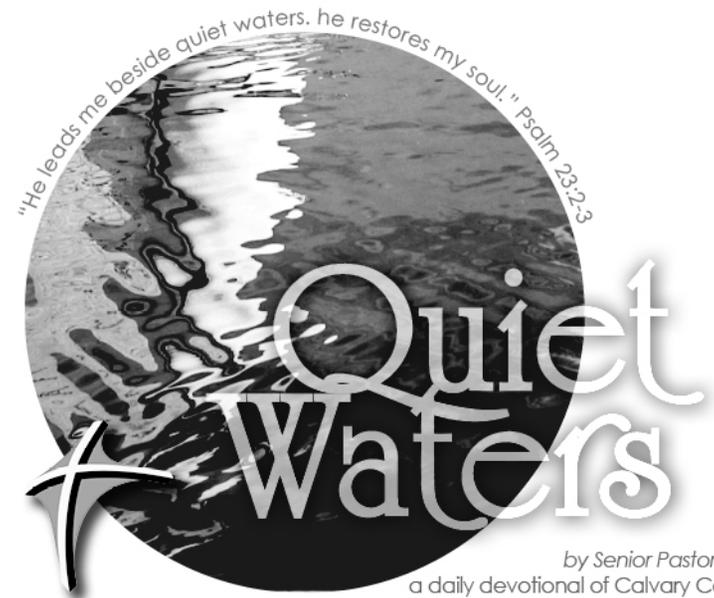
For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

The power of the Spirit and the truth of the gospel are weapons that demolish the strongholds that set themselves up against the knowledge of God. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul is not so much defending himself as he is defending the power of the gospel. It is the gospel that allows one to belong to Christ. He is not listing all of his accomplishments so that they will be impressed with him. That is what the false apostles did. Rather, he was letting them know that he does not do battle using the things of this world, like self-commendation. He battles using the truth of God and boasts in the Lord. What matters is that the Lord commends him, not that he commends himself. A life that is lived with the integrity of the truth of God is a life changed by the gospel. The truth of the gospel changes a life. It has changed the thoughts of my mind. By God's grace, I have come to a point where I realize that it is not all about me. It is all about God. As I seek to have that identify my thoughts more and more, my thoughts become obedient to Christ and His leading in my life. My obedience is an indicator of my deep love for Him. I must remember that living in this world is a battle. I am not on a cruise ship, I am on a battleship. The battleship is loaded with weapons, which are at my disposal. The weapons of the battleship have divine power that will assure victory. They will demolish the enemy.

Father, please have the truth of the gospel continue to change my life into a life of integrity. Remind me of the battle that is raging around me. Prevent me from going through my life without engaging the enemy with the powerful weapons that You have given me. Help me use those weapons to break free from thoughts that would keep me from You. Help me gain individual victory so that I can go and help others! Amen.

November 27-December 2, 2017



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

Monday, November 27, 2017

Comfort

2 Corinthians 1-2

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.
2 Corinthians 1:3-5

The second preserved letter to the Church in Corinth portrays a pastor's heart toward a church that he loves deeply (2:4). He begins by talking about the comfort he has received from God. There was conflict between Paul and this precious church. God brought reconciliation and comfort. Paul begins the letter with a celebration of the comfort that only God can bring. There is such great and deep truth here. I will share in the sufferings of Christ. Those sufferings overflow into my life. I have been crucified with Him and so I can expect to share in the sufferings. What are those sufferings? In some ways, it is just the suffering of living in a world that has been distorted by sin. Just the very environment of this world brings sufferings. But there are also the greater sufferings that occur. These are the sufferings of injustice. Sin ravages the world and brings injustice into every life. Some of those injustices are much more severe and painful than others. Some of my greatest pain comes from the injustices of a fallen world and the consequences it has on my life—and those all around me. Yet I serve a God of comfort! While many may try to blame God for all the pain, it is He who brings peace and comfort into the pain. It is as I embrace that comfort in the midst of my suffering that I am able to reach into the lives of others who are suffering with that same source of comfort. I praise God that He has chosen to trust me with sufferings so that I can reveal His comfort.

Father, please help me remember to look to You for comfort. But help me want it not only for myself, but so I can show others the amazing comfort that is found in Your love. Thank You that You are the God of comfort and that You comfort us in all our troubles. Amen.

Tuesday, November 28, 2017

Eternal

2 Corinthians 3-4

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Paul understands what it means to suffer. He knows the pain of living for Jesus in a world that largely rejects Him. He also knows the pain of a body that is wearing out. Outwardly we waste away. That becomes more and more apparent to me every day. This body is not what it used to be. Age is starting to take a toll. Also, the choices that I made of what to do to my body when I was younger did not help greatly. The cancer that I have and the chemo that treats it cause this body to waste away faster than I would like. But I am an eternal being. Every day—indeed, every moment of every day—I am being made new by the Holy Spirit who indwells me. So, I do not lose heart. I realize that many of my thoughts are focused on a very small timeframe. Any troubles that I have here are light and momentary—even those that may feel major! The injustices that I suffer here achieve for me an eternal glory. I pause to consider the depth of that statement. What is eternal glory? One day the body that houses my soul on this earth will die. It is a temporary dwelling for my eternal soul. It will then be fashioned anew and redeemed and I will be reunited with that redeemed body for eternity in the presence of God. I will be free from the presence of sin. I will be in glory. So I fix my eyes on that which is eternal and I realize that the temporary is just that—temporary. It causes me to focus my attention on things above. I want to be heavenly minded (Colossians 3:1). I want my thoughts about eternity to influence every one of my conversations and relationships. Eternity must become my focus!

Father, keep my eyes fixed on that which is unseen. Man, it is tough. So much of the temporary seems so important and feels as though it should have priority. Please keep me focused on You and Your plan for my life and all the lives I come into contact with. Amen.

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

Reconciled

2 Corinthians 5

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.
2 Corinthians 5:16-20

When I keep eternity in view, I get a much better perspective of people and God! I no longer see people from a worldly point of view but as eternal beings who will spend eternity separated from God if they are not reconciled to Him. Once I become reconciled to God, I see Jesus differently as well. I no longer see Him in light of what I think He needs to do for me. I see Him as the One who makes reconciliation possible. So what is reconciliation? What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Basically, reconciliation is bringing two parties together that are in dispute. It is an exchange of enmity for friendship. To be reconciled to God only happens as God (the injured party) reaches to those who have offended Him (me) with the love of Jesus. In this way, I am brought into a right relationship with God—based on nothing but His grace. I am now a new creation. The old is gone and the new is come. This does not mean that I am now perfect and that my sinful nature is gone. Rather, it means that my standing before God is now in Christ as opposed to standing before Him in Adam. I have a reconciled relationship with God. That now makes me an ambassador of that reconciliation. I am to be one who broadcasts to the world the possibility of salvation through Jesus Christ. God makes His appeal to others through me. I get to be His representative.

Father, I'm new! You have reached into my life and reconciled me to You. I love the relationship I have with You. I am so grateful that I am no longer Your enemy. Please make Your appeal through me. Make me a great ambassador for You! Amen.

Thursday, November 30, 2017

Purify

2 Corinthians 6-7

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1

Paul tells his readers to purify themselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit. That is pretty much all-encompassing. It is through this purification that the Corinthians will be able to perfect their holiness. The motivation is their reverence for God. It is out of reverence for God that one goes through this process to perfect holiness within themselves. The follower of Christ seeks to be holy because God is holy. It is His holiness that invokes awe—reverence. It is as one comes to see the holiness of God more and more that one desires holiness to permeate their life and they seek to eliminate everything in their life that would contaminate them. The moment I came to trust Christ as my Savior, I became positionally holy. But positional holiness is much different than practical holiness. What Paul is speaking about here is practicing holiness. It is not that this will make me more acceptable to God, as He sees me as already positionally holy. Rather, it is me living out the truth of who I am! If I am indeed declared to be a holy being, I may as well act like it. When this process begins in my life, the kindness of God leads me to repentance (Romans 2:4). This repentance comes as I am able to view things that are sinful in my life with godly sorrow instead of worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow leads me to turn from sin and turn toward holiness. This leads to life without regrets. Worldly sorrow brings regrets over what was lost and traps me in the past desires of those things that contaminate me. Godly sorrow leads me to repentance and freedom from regret.

Father, help me put off all the things in my life that are contaminating me and keeping me from holiness. Help me do this out of my reverence for You. May I seek to live my life being holy as You are holy. May I see myself the way that You see me and may I live like that! Amen.