

Helping Each Other
October 8, 2017

How would you describe God? When the apostle John was trying to describe God in one of his letters, he summed up God by writing, "God is love." John did not write, "God is loving." He simply wrote, "God is love." If you want to know what love is, look to God.

This is the best love. This is a giving love. This is not selfish love. This is not self-centered love. When a man tells a woman, "I need you." That is a self-centered love. He is thinking about himself, not her.

God's love is a giving love. God's love is always thinking of us. God's love is always doing for us. God's love meets our needs. It was with this kind of love that God sent His only begotten son. It was with this kind of love that Jesus volunteered to die for our sins. It was with this kind of love that He suffered and died.

It is this kind of love that Jesus wants in His followers. So it is this kind of love that the Holy Spirit is working to grow in us.

This is the kind of love that was lacking in the false teachers in the church of Ephesus. Last week we read Paul urging Timothy to command certain men to stop teaching different doctrines, false teaching. As a result, they were causing controversy and division in the church. All we do should unite the church, draw the church together, not tear it apart. These men were hurting the church. So Paul writes the following.

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NIV) As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.

This week we need to look at how these men changed. These are Christians who are causing these problems in the church. If we do not learn from their mistake, their sin could become our sin. We need to learn what led these men to become a problem to the church. We discover the problem in the next verse of Paul's letter.

1 Timothy 1:5 (NIV) The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The goal of this command was to call these men back to Christian love. These men had lost their Christian love. They were not acting out of love for God. They lost their love for the other members of the Ephesian church. They were only interested in themselves. They were hoping for personal financial gain. We saw this in last week's sermon.

This morning we need to determine how they lost their Christian love. Paul writes that such loves comes from a sincere faith, a good conscience, and a pure heart. I will address them in that order.

Our Christian life starts with faith. Faith is both belief and trust. We must believe the facts of the good news and act in trust of them.

The facts of the good news are:

We are sinners deserving of hell.

A day of judgment by God is coming.

We need a Savior.

Jesus is the Savior God sent us.

Jesus died for our sins.

The resurrection is the proof.

We must receive Jesus as Savior with repentance, turning from our sins and to obedience to Jesus as Lord.

These men had believed these facts. But they had neglected them. And that neglect had made them less important to them. We must not let that happen to us. We must keep them at the center of our lives. Let me recommend the following way to do so.

1. Reinforce your faith by reviewing the gospel daily.

Start your day in the humility of a sinful heart turning to God for salvation. Remind yourself of the facts of the gospel. Pray them to God as you start your day.

"Lord, I am a sinner. The proof of that is the sins I committed yesterday. I would be lost without Jesus my savior. Thank you Lord for saving my soul."

Admit the truth of the good news. Do NOT take them for granted. Have you ever taken a person for granted? Maybe you have taken your parent for granted. Maybe you have taken your spouse for granted. You failed to appreciate their love. You failed to thank them for their work, work that has benefited you. They do their chores, fulfill their responsibilities to the family, and you just receive their efforts with no thought of gratitude, no expressions of love back to them.

The proper response would be to thank them. We take God for granted when we fail to give Him thanks for our salvation. And this failure can become a habit. It is best to be in the daily habit of reminding ourselves of our place in the universe, a sinner saved by grace.

Pray your blessings. Give God thanks for them, in humility and submission.

The faith of these men was no longer sincere. They were faking it. They were talking faith, but it was empty talk. They were no longer behaving out of a genuine faith. They had become cold to the good news. It was no longer important to them. Do not let this happen to you. Don't take your salvation for granted.

2. Keep your conscience in good working order by repenting when you feel guilty.

God has given us a conscience to help us choose to do what we know is right and avoid doing what we know is wrong.

A man described getting a dog and how he taught the dog not to leave the yard. He installed an "invisible fence" around his property. He buried an electric wire a few inches deep in the ground around the edge of his yard.. The wire was connected to a small box that sent out a signal to a receiver in the dog's collar.

Whenever the dog walked near the property line, the collar chirped, which warned him to back away. If he ignored the warning and started crossing the boundary, he received a mild electric shock from the invisible fence, which taught him to stay inside the yard. After a few chirps and shocks, the dog learned where he could and couldn't go. If he wandered near the road, he would hear a chirp. He didn't want to get shocked again, so he would move back into the yard.

God has put an "invisible fence" inside everyone called a conscience, which warns us when we're about to do something wrong.

A good conscience is one that is working. If you ignore your conscience when you do wrong, you become a little bit insensitive to it. The more often you ignore your conscience the less good it works. Eventually you will fail to do right and avoid doing wrong. We maintain a good conscience by repenting of sin when we become aware of it. A good conscience comes from doing the right you know you should do and avoiding the wrong you know you should avoid.

How about you? Are you listening to your conscience? Or are you ignoring it. To ignore it is to lose some sensitivity to it. If you keep ignoring it, you lose more and more sensitivity until you are totally unfeeling towards right and wrong, towards God, towards the things of the kingdom. You become self-centered and selfish.

That response is trust and repentance. If you are repenting of your sin, turning away from what you know NOT to do and doing those things you know to do, you will have a good conscience.

3. Root out of your heart any sinful desires.

(1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Lamentations 3:40)

James 1:14 (NIV) "...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed."

All sin comes from some sinful desire in our hearts. Selfishness, ego, pride, conceit, covetousness, and more are the sinful desires that reside in the human heart and cause us to sin.

We need to examine ourselves for these desires. When you commit a sin and have felt guilty for it. Confess it to God and ask Him to show you why you sinned this sin. Ask Him to show you what evil desire in you caused this sin. Then sit down and think about why you did what you did. What was it you wanted? What were your expectations. What were your desires. What were your beliefs.

For example, when I lost my temper with one of my sons I went through this process and realized that I expected his respect. I did not deserve his respect, but expected it. And when I did not get it, I reacted with anger. My anger surprised me. It was then that I went through this process of trying to discover why I got so angry. That led me to look at my expectations and desires.

Once I figured that out, I could modify my expectations and desires, which then modified my reactions to my son.

These are the things these men in the Ephesus church had stopped doing. They had neglected their faith, resisted their conscience, and stopped working purifying their hearts. In such a person even the Holy Spirit can do very little. This is what led these men to lose their Christian love. Their love for others grew smaller and smaller while their love of self grew larger and larger. Eventually they acted out of selfish motives instead of Christian love.

The result was devastating. For the church it meant controversy and division. For these men, it meant they had failed Jesus. But more, they had failed themselves. They hurt their faith. Paul writes of this result in verse 19.

1 Timothy 1:19 (NIV) Some have rejected these (faith and a good conscience) and so have shipwrecked their faith.

Can you picture that. Picture your faith as an object, a boat, that you ride in. In this boat you float above a sea of sin. You avoid getting into sin. You need this boat in order to avoid sin and please God with your life. And then, because you become lax with the boat, lax with your faith, the boat crashes on the rocks and is useless. That is the picture he paints here.

These men shipwrecked their faith. They lost their sensitivity to God. They lost their love for their church members. They were acting worldly. They were acting like unbelievers. The controversies in the church were evidence of this.

They shipwrecked their faith. They were living as enemies of God's church. They were in danger of receiving God's judgment.

How about you? Your sin makes you an enemy of God. It is time to get right with God. It is time to put your faith in Jesus. It is time to receive Jesus as savior and Lord. It is time to repent of your sins.

Christian are you failing in one of these three? Are you maintaining your faith, heeding your conscience, purifying your heart? If not, then you are slipping back into a sinful life. You need to get right with God this morning through Jesus.