

## Love Vs. Selfishness, 5/27/18

We are in 1 Corinthians 13, turn in your Bibles there. We all remember picture day, and it's amazing, even with all the technological advancements, they are still doing picture day exactly the same. You get the pictures back and they come in a package with the big, mantle picture- in our house, that went to grand ma. And then you get all the "wallet size" which of course are mostly useless now, because our pictures aren't in wallets much anymore, but on our phones. I remember it like yesterday- 1994, 6<sup>th</sup> grade photo- just got my new glasses that I thought were so cool, and I picked out the coolest silk shirt. I wanted everyone to have that picture- I was so proud of it, I had my mom double the order so I could give it to more people...

1 Corinthians 13 is like a sitting portrait of love, and the one sitting for the picture is Jesus, because Jesus is love. And he wants to have his church be like thousands of wallet size reprints of Jesus that we give out to the world because as Jesus said, they will know we are Christians (little Christs) by our love! This is the one point we are continually driving home throughout this series as we slowly work our way through the portrait of love, the portrait of Jesus, in this text. Do we resemble our savior? We have talked about Love Vs. Status, Hostility, Envy, Pride... **Love Vs. Selfishness, v.5**  
*Love is not self-seeking.*

And this is fitting for us on Memorial Day weekend to talk about the selfless quality of love that we encounter in 1 Corinthians 13:5, isn't it? Jesus said, there is no greater love than laying down your life for your friends. These men and women of our military have preached a message with their lives that love is not self-seeking.

### A Biblical Perspective on Selfishness

#### The Pattern of Selfishness

#### Jesus, our New Pattern and Power

### A Biblical Perspective on Selfishness

v. 5 Translated many ways- *does not insist on its own way, is not self-serving, does not seek its own interests, is not selfish.*

But I think we need to be more precise when we talk about selfishness. Sometimes I will here preachers talk and act like any thought or desire, or interest that is concerned about ourselves is bad. Like what is most godly is to never think about ourselves at all, our needs, wants or desires. But not all self-interest and self-seeking is bad and evil. Scripture actually encourages aspects of self-interest- Jesus commands us to "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). That we should seek our own growth in spiritual maturity or 2 Timothy, run the race as if to win. Eph. 5 Tells husbands to love their wives as their own bodies- because we should have self-concern- nurture and care for our bodies. To define selfishness as any self-interest or self-seeking will lead us to think that they should abandon all desire for their own personal benefit, which is contrary to Scripture.

So what is the sin of Selfishness that Paul has in mind here? 2 aspects: **A preoccupation with self.** Thinking so much about ourselves that we can't think about others.

**Philippians 2:4**

*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

A life that lives as if we are the sun, and everyone else in our solar system, including God revolves around us. Self-centeredness. People and things become objects in our orbit. How will these things satisfy me? We make God fit our Jeanie in a Bottle, or a nice coping mechanism when we are in pain. I think this aspect we inherently understand this aspect of selfishness as a pre-occupation.

**Self-Seeking at the expense of others**

**Selfishness always has a victim.** Someone else always has to pay and bear the weight of our self-seeking. True selfishness makes our spouse or family pay, makes our parents pay, it makes our neighbors and friends, church family, our co-workers pay. On larger scale, corporate selfishness creates victims of communities, people-groups, or entire countries. Do we not live in a world that is marred by this victim-creating selfishness?

Biblical perspective on **selfishness- Self-preoccupation at the expense of others.**

**The Pattern of Selfishness** in Corinth

In the Greek- this phrase "Love is not self-seeking" is actually elliptical...it ends in a fill in the blank. **Does not seek it own \_\_\_\_\_.** This is quite intentional, Paul didn't lose his train of thought. I think the reason Paul has a fill in the blank here is because the church in Corinth had a pattern of self-seeking that revealed itself in multiple ways so there were many ways to fill in the blank. I want to show you just a few.

**Chapter- 1-3** They were **seeking their own identity at the expense of spiritual growth.**

What was happening is that the church was splitting up into these factions and becoming a cult-of-personality. I follow Paul, Apollos, Peter- it's not just that they liked the way these guys preached...These factions were alienating others, creating exclusivity and rivalry. Their Selfishness had a victim.

**1 Corinthians 3:1-2**

*Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.*

The victim in this case was the spiritual maturity and growth of the whole church. Their selfish identity seeking was holding back the spiritual growth of one-another.

**Chapter 8-10** They were seeking their own rights at the expense of the weak. Paul is addressing spiritual rights and freedoms. Those who had a stronger conscience and were more spiritually mature were exercising their freedom to eat meat from the market that had been sacrificed to idols. Their rationale was that idols aren't real, God owns everything and has made all food clean, so therefore I can eat and not be in sin. And they were right. Except that there were those in the church who were weaker conscience, they were recent converts, just came out of rampant idolatry and all the practices that came with it. And these "mature" Christians who had more knowledge and had been Christians longer were too preoccupied with exercising their own rights to be sensitive toward and concerned for these new Christians and in doing so became a stumbling block for them.

**1 Corinthians 8:10-11**

*For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.*

**Chapter 12** They were seeking their own status at the expense of those less visible. Those with the gifts that were more visible, more external were pre-occupied with their own excellence, leaving those with behind the scenes gifts feeling useless and spiritually insignificant.

**Chapter 11** They were seeking their own indulgence at the expense of the poor. There was a practice at this time in the early church of each Sunday having a meal together as way of celebrating the Lord's Supper. But there was a problem that Paul points out.

**1 Corinthians 11:20-21**

*So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.*

The ancient Roman world at that time ran on a 10 day calendar, while the Jews and Christians ran on a seven-day calendar, and so the Christians often had to work on what we would consider the weekends. The Christians were committed to meeting together on Sunday, the resurrection day of Christ. Many, especially the poor were conscripted to work until sun down on Sundays, but the wealthy had the flexibility to show up to the meal long before the poor were able to get there. The poor, those with the least control of their schedules, the least resources, by the time they arrived often there was little to nothing left. They come into a room full of fat and happy, rich Christians who were supposed to be their brothers and sisters in Christ. Can you imagine how that must have felt? How embarrassing, how forgotten they must have felt?

Experience with Tapas... With selfishness there's always a victim who gets left to pay the bill.

There was a clear pattern of selfishness in the church in Corinth. What is the pattern of selfishness for us? Paul says *Love does not seek it's own \_\_\_\_\_*. Heart check. What would the Holy Spirit have you write in that blank?

### **Career Aspirations? Wealth?**

What happens when we are pre-occupied with our own career aspirations or riches? Our spouse, children have to pay by our absence in the home. Children who grow up with little relationship with their mom or dad. Or a spouse whose emotional and relational needs are neglected. Or an aging parent who you are too busy to visit or take care of? Or at the expense of your co-workers who we may climb over. Or your employees who are not treated well, paid well...Or if we are seeking our own wealth, it will be at the expense of those who have few resources.

**Sexual Gratification?** What happens when we are pre-occupied with our own sexual gratification? It leaves our spouse the victim. Feeling used for only her body. Or we seek gratification by going outside of the marriage and create victims through ruining other marriages. Others becomes objectified and used, not loved. Or use of pornography? That's not at anyone else's expense... you sure about that? Did you know that recent studies have shown a direct link between pornography and sex trafficking? Not only does the demand for pornography indirectly the sex industry in general and is used like a gateway drug, which isn't even debatable. Not only does pornography create victims by dehumanizing, turning men, women and children into objects for our gratification...But in a recent study of 900 women across 9 countries half of them were used to make pornography films.

Or it shows up at the expense of sexual abuse or harassment in some way. I'm thankful for the #metoo movement that is exposing those who are abusing their power by gratifying their sexual desires at the expense of their victims. One in 4 women and One in 6 men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. And if that is you, and you have never talked to anyone about what happened to you, you haven't really dealt with that trauma and abuse- I would to embolden you to do so because it's not OK what was done to you. It broke God's heart and he loves you and wants you to seek healing.

**Power or Control?** What happens when we seek our own power or control? People around you become objects for you to manipulate or become voiceless. Your family becomes a victim. Living in fear or rebellion of your tyranny, in the home, living under your threats that you are going to leave, or you are going to take the money, or hurt them physically. I've seen women who over years living in a controlling household who have become like wilted flowers under the thumb of their controlling husbands. Or men who have become completely emasculated and doubt their every opinion, decision or leadership living with a controlling wife. If you are the iron fist of control- it's not OK and you need to seek help. If you live in a household with this kind of power and control- this is not OK, and you need to get help. Addiction and Drug Use, Identity, Rights...are you pre-occupied with yourself?

### Jesus: our New Pattern and Power

What breaks the pattern of selfishness in our lives? Jesus can.

Jesus shows us a new pattern.

Paul says **Philippians 2:4-8**

*Do not look to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

Jesus gives us a new self-less pattern. We look to Jesus as our model. But he not only gives us a new pattern, but he gives us a **new power**. Entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ, trusting in his finished work for us and making Him Lord in our lives unlocks a new power to love as He has loved us.

**Romans 5:5** Paul says that the result of our justification-

*God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

We cannot self-generate this kind of selfless love, it must be poured into us.

Illustration: The little girl who takes care of her dolls, she gets this because she has experienced this love, and care and tenderness from her mother. It has been poured into her and so she acts it with her dolls.

**We can only give that which we possess, and we can only possess that which we have received from God.**

Love is not selfish. Love is not pre-occupied with ourselves, but is in it for the good of others. Is there a pattern of selfishness so that others are having to orbit around your life? Are you creating victims in your life? Is someone else having to pay?

Pray- Examine your heart and repent. Name what you are doing as sin. As against God and against your neighbor, name your victims. Turn to Jesus- ask him to cleanse you. To help you live a life that orbits around Jesus. That his love for you would fill your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into your heart today. You may need to pray that every day. I do!