

Learning to Love

Living like the Redeemed, 1

I. An Ongoing Struggle.

A. Even after all of Jesus' teachings, they still struggled.

- Acts 6 – Widows being overlooked.
- Acts 15 – What did Gentiles have to do to come to Jesus?
- Acts 15:36 – Paul and Barnabas – Should we take John Mark along?
- Galatians 2:11 – Peter and Paul – Peter is being prejudiced.
- Ephesians 4:1-4 – Paul's instructions to the saved
- ¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—
- Ephesians 4:25-32 – Be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another just as in Christ, God forgave you.
- Philippians 4:2-3 – Euodia and Syntyche – Start agreeing and working together.
- Philippians 2:1ff; Colossians 3:12 – More instructions for the redeemed.
- James 4:1ff – What causes fights? They come from you wanting to have what you want. You want your way and you can't have it so you fight others.

The abiding question – What do we want most? Our way, to win arguments, to always have things happen that make us comfortable... or

Do we want love, peace, oneness, joy, and fellowship?

B. It is manifested in the church today by splits and battles and hard feelings and impatience and demand to have ones way.

C. The worst for last – The church in Corinth

- Division in the Body
- Acceptance of sexual immorality
- Marriage conflicts
- Conflicts over eating meat
- Lawsuits among members
- Pride
- Selfishness

All these concerns are answered in one passage – I Corinthians 13

II. Living like the Redeemed.

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

A. The ultimate answer to disunity - love.

- Love gives all things meaning. Without love all activity in the name of Jesus is invalid.
- Love reacts to others in patience, kindness, lack of envy, no boasting, no pride and never any rudeness.
- Love never is self-seeking, easily angered, keeps a record of wrongs, or delights in evil.
- Love always rejoiced in truth, protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.

Everything else will pass away but love endures. It is the way things are done in the new heaven and new earth.

B. How love is demonstrated.

- Towards those living in sin – Matthew 18:15-17
- ¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
 - It has to be a personal sin against you.
 - The person must have not repented.
 - 1st level – You go alone and keep the matter between yourself and the other person.
 - 2nd level – Take one or two others with you so that every word can be verified.
 - 3rd level – Take it to the church.
 - 4th level – withdraw all association with that person.

- Towards those who have an incomplete knowledge of the truth or an immature attitude –
- II Timothy 2:23-26
- ²³Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.
 - Pick your disagreements. Not everything is worth fighting over. Many are foolish and stupid (his word not mine)
 - Never quarrel – quarrel literally in Greek means to “fight.” Christians are never to do this. In English the word quarrel means “an angry dispute or altercation.
 - Remember II Timothy 2:14 –
 - ¹⁴Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.
 - Paul tells the redeemed to be “kind” to one another. Literally in the Greek this means to be mild and gentle. We are to be this way to everyone. In English “kind” means “of a friendly, generous, and warm-hearted nature. Showing sympathy or understanding to everyone. Forbearing and tolerant, agreeable and beneficial.
 - Along with kindness be apt to teach or able to teach.
 - And don't be resentful or literally in Greek – “endure evil.” In other words you are able to take the immature stuff that comes from someone who is off base scripturally.
 - Please note – Someone has to be mature to avoid real conflicts. Someone has to show kindness. Someone has to break the cycle. Someone has to stop the bad words.

- In the face of an opposing (those who stand in opposition to truth) understanding of things we are called to gently instruct, literally in the Greek you are to “gently instruct the child (*paideusonta*).” It is not a literal child here but it is the one who is acting like a child who is to be instructed gently. It is often the case that the mature or the strong are to bear with the weak or immature.
- The hope is that God will grant repentance for the weak from their immature actions and understandings and that they recognize the truth.
- Note there is no time limitation here, specific sin against another person in a relationship is not involved.
- The goal is for the mature to gently lead the immature to mature understanding and action. You gently instruct, you never turn these individuals away or avoid them. You are called to help them grow.

III. Turning things around – Keeping it on the Sunny side.

A. The Power of the golden rule. It is not about what you don’t do, it is what you do. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It means that we are proactive in the way that we act in our relationships. Do just keep from quarrels and fights, do something positive to help the Body of Christ to grow and become stronger.

- Be a mentor to a younger person. If you are older you have a responsibility to those who are young. Instead of saying negative things about the young act in a positive way.
- If you are younger show true respect towards those who are older in the faith. Treat them as parents and grandparents. Seek their advice. Honor their faith.
- Make it your goal to build others up. Think of ways you can encourage each other by your kind words and actions. Honor your family members.
- Refuse to listen to those who gossip, quarrel, and slander. These are ungodly things and the redeemed do not do such things.
- When you see others being hurt by the words or actions of others step in and protect. Protecting is a part of the definition of love.

B. Determine to respond in a godly way and not to react. Paul writes that we should not sin in our anger. We should never let the sun go down on our anger (Ephesians 4). If we are truly people of the Book, it is high time we start obeying the book. When something is wrong between you and your brother and there are hard feelings, don’t go to bed until you work things out with your brother. You many need to apologize for some

confrontation or for the way you reacted to a comment. You might need to seek forgiveness for treating a servant of God with disrespect. You might need to seek forgiveness for gossip or slander. Jesus says that if you love him, you must do what he says, and he also says that if you don't forgive others, you cannot be forgiven. It is time that the redeemed start acting redeemed.

C. It is time that we all **grow up** into the image of Jesus.

- We don't have to always say what is on our mind at the moment. In fact, as our shepherds encouraged us last week, it is most often good to keep our mouths shut until we are past the emotion of the moment.
- Don't always take the actions or the words of your brother or sister as a personal affront. First, think the best of everyone, not the worse. Thinking the worse of others and trying to see horrible motives in the actions in a member of your spiritual family is of the devil and it is time we stop allowing ourselves to be tools of Satan. Your brothers and sisters in Christ are not the enemy, but the enemy prowls seeking who he might devour. Don't allow him to use you to devour a child of God.
- It is time for the mature to act mature. It is regrettable to say that in many churches these days if the mature would just act mature and gently instruct and not become offended with the immaturity of the immature many of the things that have caused splits in the body of Christ would have been avoided totally. I am speaking now to those of us who are my age and older. So much of the peace of the church depends on us.
- We should be loyal to our family. Yes, I believe with all of my heart that my primary loyalty belongs to Jesus Christ and that if my spiritual family leaves Jesus they have left me behind. But, short of leaving Jesus and being unfaithful to him, I have a deep and abiding responsibility to the church where I am a member. I am a part of the Meadowlark Family and I owe my family my loyalty. I should get involved and love my family members and commit to work through difficult times without a threat of leaving if things don't go my way.
- And if I am a part of the problem, then it is time for me to be a part of the solution. If you have not been acting in love. If you have been rude or contentious; if you have responded to others in anger; if you have been quarrelsome and have not been submissive to leaders. It is time to get right with God.

- One sin can cause incredible damage to the Body of Christ. Remember Achan's sin?
- The church in West Texas.