

Qualities of Love – Not Selfish

1 Corinthians

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

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1 Corinthians 13, if you would turn there please. 1 Corinthians 13. We read beginning with verse 1.

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Let's pray together.

Lord, it is my joy and my privilege to stand before your people this morning and to have the opportunity to declare your word. It is a task, Lord, that I confess that I am inadequate for but I thank you that our sufficiency is in your Son and so I ask you this morning to strengthen and to give ability so that your people would be blessed and so Lord, we ask you to be at work in a powerful and manifest way as your word goes forth and, Lord, be at work in us this morning that we would be able to receive what you have for us. Lord, work in us so that our minds would be alert and engaged, that our hearts would be soft and open and receptive to the truth. Lord, work in us conviction where we are in need of repentance. Awaken us, Lord, alert us to the sin that is in our lives that grieves you and that would destroy us. Lord, also strengthen us with encouragement, Lord, that what has been built in us by you and what is present in us because of your grace would be strengthened and would continue. Lord, where we have done well by your work and activity, strengthen us that we might do better. Lord, work in this hour so that the result would be that your church would be washed and cleansed and built up with your word. And Lord, also we pray for those in our midst today who do not know you, who do not know our Savior, some of whom, Lord, no doubt think that they know you and profess to know you but in truth they are strangers to your saving grace. We ask,

Lord, that even today in your mercy you would bring them to yourself by faith in your Son. We ask you for this this morning in Jesus' name. Amen.

"Why are you wearing my shirt? Who told you you could wear it? Why are you in my room? That's not your iPod, it's mine." Who makes the decisions about where you're going to go out to dinner? Who decides what you're going to watch on television? Who makes the decision about the movie your family is going to go and see? When is the last time you complained about what was served for dinner? All around us every day in a multitude of situations and with a multitude of words, on display is the selfishness of the human heart. We are in our fallen nature, I mean, before the Lord saves a person, mankind is hopelessly selfish. Man has himself at the center of his concerns. What's a problem about that is the Bible tells us that that is not love. Love is not selfish and if we ask why that should concern us, it is because God has commanded us to love. If you are a believer, if you know the living God through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, that should matter to you. I'll be as bold as to say this: if you are a believer, that will matter to you, that God has commanded you to love him and that God has commanded you to love others.

If you're a believer, that will matter to you and that God, your God, the living God, has told us in very clear terms in this chapter what love is and what love isn't. I mean, how are we going to know what love is? He has commanded us to love but how are we going to know what love is? We're not going to discover what love is from the world, the lost and dying world around us, and we're not going to discover what love is in our own human thinking. In fact, people talk about love all the time who don't have any clue as to what love is. Where do we find out what love is? We find it on the pages of God's book. God has told us what love is and what love isn't. He tells us here in verse 4 that love is patient and love is kind but love is not jealous. It does not boast. It is not arrogant. It is not rude. Then we come to this this morning, he tells us that love does not insist on its own way. Love does not insist on its own way. In the New American Standard, the New King James version says, "It does not seek its own." The New International Version says, "It is not self-seeking." One of the lexicons tells us that in this word is a sense of its own interests. Love is not focused on its own interests or as one source has it, its own advantage. Love is not looking out to its own advantage and so if we summarize all of that and group it all together we can say this: love is not selfish.

Love is not selfish. It is not self-seeking. Perhaps there is no clear indication that lost man doesn't get what love is than all of the emphasis we've heard in our lifetime on learning to love one's self. In fact, this made its way into the church through the influence of psychology where all of a sudden we were talking about in churches that you cannot really love someone else if you don't first learn to love yourself. All the emphasis on a positive self image. All the emphasis on learning what makes you happy, learning who you really are. "You know, you can't love someone else if you don't love yourself first," that's what's the teaching said. I hope that you recognize that nothing could turn the truth more upside down than the idea that you have to learn to love yourself. Beloved, all throughout the word of God the Bible assumes you already love yourself and it is not put to us in a positive light, in fact, in 2 Timothy 3:2, one of the signs of perilous times is that

men will be lovers of self. Lovers of self. You see, it's not a good thing to love yourself. That's what we do naturally. It takes salvation to teach us a different way. In fact, all you have to do to know that that loving of yourself teaching is wrong is to search your Bible looking for a commandment to love yourself. Can you find one? Can you find one place in the word of God where you are ever commanded to love yourself? Let me turn that around: can you find places in the word of God where you are commanded to love God? If you can, will you say amen? Can you find places in the word of God where you are commanded to love others? But can you find one place in the word of God where you are commanded to love yourself? It's not there. Why, because that is what we do already in sin and one of Satan's lies is that you will find happiness and you will find meaning through satisfying your selfish heart.

Is there somebody here this morning that you have bought into that lie? "You know, the reason why I'm on happy and the reason why I am sort of confused right now and the reason why my life seems so empty is because I have spent all my time trying to please others and what I really need to do in order to have a satisfied heart, in order to have my heart be where it needs to be is I've got to discover who I am and I've got to begin to please me. And I've got to do some things for me. And I've got to learn what it is to pamper me. And I have dreams, after all. I have things I've always wanted to do and if I can just pursue the things that I have always wanted to do, if I could ever discover the things that I've always been longing for, then I will be a more happy person and, after all, I will then be more beneficial to you." Do you know what that is? That's a lie. It's a lie. The more a person aims at satisfying themselves, the more miserable they are and they are more miserable whether they recognize it or not. There could not be a more despicable life than a life aimed purely at pleasing itself.

We have the testimony of a man, an inspired testimony of a man who did that very thing. He sought to satisfy the emptiness of his heart in his pursuit of everything in this world that he thought might satisfy his heart, the preacher, Solomon, Ecclesiastes 2. Turn over there if you would for just a moment. The book of Ecclesiastes 2. Listen to chapter 2, beginning with verse 1. He writes, "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.' But behold, this also was," what? "Vanity." What does vanity mean? Emptiness. If something is vain, it's empty, right? It has no real meaning. "I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." He says, "this was empty." Verse 2, "I said of laughter, 'It is mad,' and of pleasure, 'What use is it?' I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine - my heart still guiding me with wisdom." In other words he says this was a reasoned search. This was not someone just going out and throwing themselves to the wind. He said, "I'm trying to discover something here. Will the pursuit of pleasure satisfy my heart? And so I'll give the pursuit of something like wine a test. How will this do?" He goes on to say, "and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life." This is a man who had some grasp on the reality of what life is on this planet. He understands it's brief so how do you make the most of it? That's what he's asking.

Verse 4, "I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself." "I mean, there is pleasure in the form of what I take in," in his case he's mentioning wine, "there is

also pleasure in the sense of what I put out, what I am able to accomplish, what I am able to do with my life." So he made great works. He built houses. Planted vineyards for himself.

Verse 5, "I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them." Folks, can I say to you this man had the opportunity to pursue pleasure in a way that you and I will never have. He didn't have many of the constrictions that we have in our lives. He was king and had no limits as to what he could seek to satisfy his heart with. He surpassed them all.

Verse 10, "And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was," what? "Vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun." At the end of my pursuit, I came up empty. Only a fool has to learn by experience what you could learn by instruction. Only a fool says, "Well, I hear you but I have to find it out for myself." I'm here to tell you this morning on the authority of God's word that if you think selfishness is going to satisfy your heart, you will find at the end of the day after you have wasted much of your life, that it will not. It is a lie that says to us that the human heart will be satisfied by fulfilling its selfish desires.

Look back, if you would please, at 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not selfish. We are commanded to love God. We are commanded to love others. We are not commanded to love ourselves, in fact, when we love ourselves, we are not loving God and loving others. Love is not selfish. Now, let's think about that this morning together: in what ways is love not selfish? It's easy enough to state it, love is not selfish. We know in general what it means but let's be more specific in our thinking. If I am to live a life that is not selfish, how will that be demonstrated in my life? I want to mention 3 things to you. First of all, love is not selfish in its desires. That's where we always need to begin. Before we talk about our decisions, we're going to talk about that in a moment, before we talk about our devotions, we're going to talk about that in a moment, we always need to begin with what is going on in our mind and in our heart because whether you know it or not, we're living our lives out of our hearts. We are living our lives out of our soul.

So what is going on in your inner man? What are your aims in life? What are your aspirations? What are your goals? You know, I think it was a soap opera that was entitled "One Life to Live," right? So you have one life to live, what do you hope to get out of it? What do you hope to do with it? For some of us, our life is, if we live to be an average age, we're already past halfway. The truth is, no one is guaranteed to live tomorrow. No one is guaranteed to finish the day. Whenever your life ends, what do you hope, what are

your aims, what do you hope to get out of this life that God has given you? Are your desires, are your aims focused on yourself or can you say that your desires have to do with God and have to do with others? When you think about what you've been planning, when you think about what you've been desiring, are you at the top of the list? Are you front and center? Is it focused on you? Or can you truthfully say that though you have desires, secondary desires and there is nothing wrong with certain desires. We heard young people this morning say, "I want to go to college here. I want to do this with my life." In the proper context, that's appropriate because we're to live to the glory of God here right now and there are things to do here right now and to be accomplished here right now so the right context, there's nothing there to criticize but what must be chief in our desires always is the glory of God and the good of others and can you say this morning that that is what characterizes your chief ambition? The chief ambition of your life is that your life would be spent in the context of glorifying God and being used by God to bless others.

A verse you need to memorize. I want you to memorize this verse. Alright, I've got homework for you today. Memorize this verse, 2 Corinthians 5:9 where Paul writes this, do you want to turn there and look at it? 2 Corinthians 5:9. It's one of the most beautiful sound to my ears, the turning of the pages of the Bible. Look at what it says, Paul writes, "So whether we are at home or away," in context there "at home" means to be in the body, "away" means to be with the Lord. Whether we are here or standing before him face-to-face, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to," what? "Please him." "That's my goal," he says. You notice he doesn't say one of my ambitions. He says it's his aim. I think I memorized this in the New American Standard, I think, "Therefore we have as our ambition whether at home or absent to be well pleasing to him." Therefore we have as our ambition, my single ambition in life is to please the Lord. Can you say that's your ambition? In the midst of all the other things you desire, where you are going to go to school, where you're going to work, your family desires, can you say that in the midst of all your desires your chief ambition is one and that is to please God?

That's what love does so that you know you're not loving when what you are desiring, listen, when what is in your desires is contrary to the love of God, when what is in your desires is contrary to the love of others, then what you're walking in is not the love of God. And there are people who claim to love God, there are people who claim to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose hearts are filled with desires that are contrary to God's will expressed in Scripture and contrary to what is best for them, for their family and for others. Don't imagine that you can have a heart filled with desires contrary to Scripture and you still be a God lover.

The first place we need to ask, "Am I selfish?" is in what I'm wanting. What do you desire? Second, love is not selfish in its decisions. You see, this is where our desires become manifest. I'll say it to you this way: there are a lot of people who say that they desire the right thing but their decisions prove they don't. "Oh yes, Pastor, I desire to please the Lord." Alright, let's look at your decisions. The point of decision is where my desires move into action and your decisions are telling the truth about your desires.

Unselfish desires play out in unselfish decisions. Loving God in the realm of my heart plays out in loving God in the realm of my choices. What choices are you making?

How many times do we make decisions based first on how we feel it will affect us instead of asking how will this affect others? How many times do we make decisions based upon what we feel we will enjoy? What will make things easier on us? What will be most convenient for us? What is sad is, not only do we do this on an individual basis but as parents, as husbands and wives and parents, we end up teaching our entire family sometimes to think selfishly. What is best for my family? What would most please us? What would be most convenient for us? Instead of asking: what is to the glory of God and for the good of his people? This is one of the reasons why we don't know about covenant keeping in our world. This is one of the reasons why we don't keep commitments to one another. This is the reason why people jump in and out of commitments all the time because they are driven by selfishness. They don't think, "Now, how will my decision affect others?" They always think, "How will my decisions affect me?" We do this with trivial things. I mentioned this as we introduced the sermon this morning, we do this where we're going to eat dinner tonight or what we're going to watch on television or where do we want to go on a vacation. We see selfishness operate in those areas but what is frightening is selfishness operates in things that are much more important.

Can you say that you are living unselfishly in your marriage? Can you say that you are living unselfishly in the raising of your children and teaching your children by your example what it means to live a life of love and showing them that love is not selfish? Can you say that in the realm of ministry you're living an unselfish life? And how many decisions, talking about decisions, how many decisions do we make with respect to God's church, with respect to our ministry, that your decisions are reflecting right now that you're not most concerned about God's glory and you're not most concerned about God's church, you're most concerned about you?

Which leads to a third area where this gets displayed: love is not selfish. Where is it not selfish? It's not selfish in my desires, my thinking, my ambitions. It's not selfish in the decisions I'm making. Now, that gets played out in long term commitments so that we can say love is not selfish in its devotions. Where there is love, we can make long term commitments that require sacrifice. That require faithfulness. That require endurance. Selfishness will not make those commitments. Selfishness makes the kind of commitment that says, "I am in this as long as I can see it continues to benefit me but the moment it gets too costly, the moment it gets too painful, the moment it will require me to really sacrifice, I'm out of here." And that gets played out in so many different areas where commitment is commanded and commitment is needed. We can talk about marriage and people jumping in and out of the marriage relationship because this is the mindset, "I'm committed to this relationship so long as I feel like it benefits me but if it's too costly, too painful, I'm out."

We see it in church life. Never probably in the history of Christianity in the United States has there been so much church hopping as we're seeing in the day and age we are living

in. One of the reasons for that is just practical that society is more mobile. We understand that but a lot of it is purely selfishness at work in the lives of people. No long term commitment to anything because, "I am first and foremost in my concerns." What is sad is, though, we have taught that attitude in the Lord's church by gratifying it. What do we want to be? We want to be what you want us to be. How are we going to gear ministry? We want to gear ministry on behalf of the seeker. Let us satisfy the customer. Let us make sure we are what society as a whole desires in a church. Did you ever think you would see a day where men would actually go out and do surveys among lost people to see what are you looking for in a church? Have we forgotten what the church is? It's a body of redeemed people and the desires of redeemed people are not the desires of lost people and the goal is not to make the church a place that is most comfortable for the world, but to see the church be something so different from the world that in the Lord's church you get a taste of heaven and heaven is not like this world. So we have gratified it. We have satisfied that selfish desire in the hearts of people in the way that we are seeking to do ministry.

Where are your long-term commitments? I know sometimes I use the same illustrations a lot but it's because I recognize how many of these issues run through these illustrations and so something I'm dealing with, at least for another year, is my youngest son plays baseball. He's in a baseball program and I can just tell you this, I've seen people make commitments, long-term sacrifices on behalf of baseball that I know some of these people who profess to know Christ will not make, have not made, on behalf of the Lord's church. Money spent. Time is spent. Travel spent. Places we'll go. Things we'll do. Ways we'll sacrifice. To make sure my son plays this sport to the best of his ability. But you ask people to sacrifice on behalf of the church, "We need family time. I need some me time." What's wrong? We're not loving. Love is not selfish. Not in its desires. Not in its decisions. Not in its devotions.

What are you committed to? What will you sacrifice for? What will you be faithful to? All of this reveals whether you're a self-lover or a lover of God and a lover of others. That leads us to another thought: if love is not focused on self, I've mentioned it but I want to specify it, if love is not focused on self, where is love focused? Whose interests are to be foremost in our thinking? In our decisions? In our devotions? Well, let's look at it in Scripture. Look over to the book of Philippians 2. What does love seek after? If love does not seek its own, if love is not self-seeking, then what does love seek after? First of all, love is seeking after Christ's interests. Verse 19, chapter 2 of Philippians, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." What kind of a servant was Paul looking for? Someone not looking out for their own interests, someone looking out for Christ's interests. Is that where your life is aimed? Is that where your decisions are being made? Is that where your devotion is evident? Are you a person devoted to the interests of Jesus Christ? What is best for Christ? What is most pleasing to him? What is most glorifying to him? Is that what drives your life because that's what love is. It's a life focused on the interests of Jesus.

Second, if I'm really loving, my interests are focused on other people. Look at Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others," what does the Bible say? "More significant." Not even of equal significance, "more significant." What's more important? You are. Who is more important, me or you? You. "More significant than yourselves." Verse 4, "Let each of you," you see, this is not some higher level devotion expected of those who are super saints. No, each and every one of you. Verse 4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." That's how love lives, not just my interests, your interests.

So love is focused on Christ's interests, love is focused on the interests of other people and together there is a third way we could express it: love is focused on spiritual interests. What does he mean focused on others? Well, chiefly, chiefly, not entirely but chiefly, we're not talking about the physical interests of others, we're talking about the spiritual interests of others. 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul writes, "I will most gladly spend and expended for your souls." "I will be used up for your soul's sake because I care about your soul. Because I'm interested in your soul. Your salvation, your sanctification and then one day your glorification. Your walk with God from beginning to end. You see, that's my interest." Is that your interest? Is that my interest? What are you most concerned about with the person you are married to? Their soul? What are you most concerned about with the children you are raising? Their soul? What are you most concerned about in the friendships you enjoy? The souls of those with whom you have formed friendships? That's where love is focused, spiritual interests. Oh, it gets expressed in physical ways and it doesn't ignore the physical realm. I can't say I care about your soul if I don't care that you're hungry. I can't say I care about your soul if I don't care about a specific way that I can open my heart and love you right now. But it is possible to be focused on the physical interests of others and not focused on their soul. 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul writes, "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our own lives because you had become very dear to us." I won't just give you the Gospel, I will give you me. That's love.

The interests of Jesus. The interests of others. Taken together, the interests of the soul. That's love. That's different than what the world tells us, isn't it? That's different than what we live out naturally. This is something that is different so that if we ask, "Where do I find a model for this?" I get it conceptually but I want to get it concretely. I want to see it. Where do we get that at? And by God's grace, he does produce this in the lives of people so that we can look at some and say, "There is a model." I mean, the Apostle Paul, there is a model. But for all of us, no matter how many good human examples we have around us that we can see the love of God in action, the chief example for all of us is the Lord Jesus himself.

Look at Philippians 2 and note that he is the model. Verse 3, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." Verse 5, "Have this mind among yourselves." Have this attitude among yourselves, "which is yours in Christ Jesus." You see, God has given us this mindset. He's given us the capacity for it. He has given us this attitude. It's ours. It's ours to possess. It's ours to live out of. It's ours to

grasp in Christ Jesus. Salvation produces it but we have to choose to walk in it. We learned this from the Spirit of God when we were converted to look away from ourselves, to look to Christ, to look to others. I think it's true to say for all of us when we were first converted if indeed you have been converted, there was this immediate explosion of awakening concerning the spiritual condition of other people. "I've been saved and now I've been made aware that there is a world around me that isn't saved and I love you Lord and you have saved me and redeemed me and now there are people whom you love that you are willing to save and to rescue and to deliver but the Gospel has to go out to them." So immediately there was this away-from-me focus to a focus on God and others. We received this in salvation. The question is: are we still walking in it?

What kind of a mind is this? Verse 6, "Who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped," held onto. That is, he stepped out of heaven. Have you ever felt like you were stooping down to help someone? Do you ever think you're moving out of some pleasant position to help someone? Let us not forget that our Savior stepped out of heaven into this sin-sick world to save us from our sins. No one will ever in this room stoop as low to help someone as our Savior stepping out of heaven to save us.

Verse 7, "but made himself nothing." No one ever took a larger demotion in terms of how they were viewed, in terms of how they were treated, that Jesus took when he took to himself a sinless human nature to redeem us from our sins and though he was God in human flesh, people did not recognize him or honor him as God but treated him like the scum of the earth. He endured it for one reason, love. Love of the Father and love of his people. He made himself nothing, "by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself," to what degree? To what end? "By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God." There's your model. There's your example. "Lord, what does it mean to love you? What does it mean to love others?" And he would say to us, "Look at my Son who loved me and loved you to the point of death on a cross. Who humbled himself. Who became as nothing, a servant, God Almighty worshiped forever and ever. This is the one who loved you and this is how he loved you and this is your model for loving."

Let me ask you a different question: how much selfishness are you allowed in the Christian life? Do you ever think to yourself, "Well, listen, I'm owed a little bit of selfishness, aren't I? I mean, can't I be a little selfish?" How much selfishness are you allowed in the Christian life? Don't forget verse 3, Philippians 2, look at it again. What are the first 2 words? Do what? Nothing. "Do nothing from rivalry," that is pitting yourself against another person. "Do nothing from conceit," that is exalting yourself above another person. "But instead in humility count others more significant than yourselves." If I am to do nothing putting me first, then I am to do everything putting you first and that means I am allowed zero selfishness in the Christian life. Is that possible? Is it possible to live a life with God and others first? For we know it's only possible in

Christ. It's only possible where there has been salvation. It's only possible where the Holy Spirit is living in a soul. It's only possible when I am submitting myself to the word of God. It's only possible to the degree that I'm relying on the Lord and allowing him to live his life out through me. In other words, it's not possible in perfection on this side of glorification but it is possible to grow into it as a pattern. Can you say that the pattern of your life and my life can we say, the pattern of our lives is to be unselfish? Can we say that it is the pattern of our lives to look away from ourselves? To look to the Lord? To look to the interests of others? The interests of Jesus? The interests of others? And to spend and be spent on behalf of the souls of others? Is that the pattern of our lives?

Who struggles with selfishness in this room? Answer: everyone. Everyone who has the flesh still dwelling in them. Who's that? Everyone. What does that mean? It means we have to die daily. It means we have to make this choice daily. In fact, it means we have to take this choice over and over again throughout every day. I have been saved to love. I have been given the capacity to love. I have been saved to live not for me but to live for Christ and to live for others and I must daily die and choose that life.

So let me close this morning with practical advice for walking in love and I address this only to children of God for, friend, I know something about you if you have not been converted, if you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not capable of living this life at all. Your need is for the King of love, the Prince of love, to enter into your soul. Your need is for the forgiveness of your sins and a new nature that desires to live loving God and loving others. You see, one thing we cannot create in you is a desire for this. We can tell you about it, we can describe it, we can look at it on the pages of Scripture but no one can make you desire to love God and love others but God. Only where there is salvation will you care about this.

So if you care, if you love him, if you love others by your new nature, how do you walk in it consistently? First of all, aim at Christ-likeness in all things. Ask yourself not some imaginary standard, "What would Jesus do?" Rather we should ask, "What did Jesus do?" Not what would he do, what did he do and then follow his example but not some imaginary standard but from what we know about Christ in the pages of Scripture, ask yourself, "Is what I'm about to say, is what I'm about to decide, is what I'm thinking in my heart, is what I'm devoted to, does this express Jesus? Is this Christ-likeness?"

Second, another way to put it: aim at pleasing God in all things, 2 Corinthians 5:9. That's your homework. Memorize it. "Therefore we have as our ambition whether at home or absent to be well pleasing to him." Can I say that what I'm thinking, what I'm feeling, what I'm choosing, what I'm devoted to, can I say this pleases God?

Third, aim at what is best for others in all things. Can I say that what I'm thinking, choosing, devoted to, is this about me or is this about someone else? Can I say this is best for others? This may be best for me. This may be best for my family but can I say that this is still the glory of God and it will benefit others? This is what is best for others? Aim at what is best for others in all your thinking and all your decisions and all your devotions.

Finally, the last thing I would say is this: aim at the root, not at the fruit. That is, don't ask, "How can I look like I'm loving or how can I produce this kind of love in myself?" Love is the fruit of whose activity? The Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is, what? Love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness. All the things that we are learning about here is the fruit of his presence and his activity so if I want to walk in love, what must I do? I must be filled with the Spirit. I must be submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I must be saturated with the word of God, Colossians 3. I must be submitted to Jesus as Lord and when I'm submitted to him, I am filled with his Spirit and his Spirit will produce in me what I can never produced in myself in a million years and he will lead me and teach me what it is to put me last and to put God and you first just like my Savior did.

What is love? It is not selfish.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank you that by your grace and in your Son you changed our hopelessly selfish hearts so that in Christ we have the attitude that we see in him. You have taught us, Lord, to love you. You have taught us to love others. By salvation you taught us and we see this morning, Lord, that we need to walk in that attitude every day, throughout the day. So Lord, we ask you to convict us where we have been living selfishly. Lord, lead us to repent of our lack of love. Teach us, Lord, to outdo each other in preferring each other. To do nothing from rivalry or conceit or considering others more significant than ourselves. Let us, Lord, in that way demonstrate Christ-likeness. I pray this for myself. I pray this for my brothers and sisters. And I pray also, Lord, for those here today who have yet to be given that capacity because they don't know your Son. I pray, Lord, that the selfishness of their own heart would testify to them of their need for salvation. I pray, Lord, that the emptiness of their soul, though they try to satisfy their selfish heart with everything under the sun, I pray that the vanity they found it to be, the emptiness that they experience in their soul would point them to the only one who could feed our heart and give us thirst quenching drink in our soul, to the Lord Jesus, that they would repent and look to Christ for salvation. Thank you, Lord, for saving us. Thank you for changing us. Thank you for making us lovers of you and lovers of others. We pray this this morning in Jesus' name. Amen.