

The Hardest Thing About Love

I. Introduction

- a. Continuing on in the book of Romans. Last week I shared on the urgency of the bride of Christ becoming more unified in Christ and one another in LOVE
- b. **Romans 12:9** Paul says love must be free from hypocrisy. Feeling the Lord is rooting out all forms of hypocrisy and purifying how we love.
- c. But to do that, we also looked at practicing the building blocks TO love found in 2 Peter 1.
 - i. By that I mean we are practicing being a people of moral excellence..etc
- d. 1 Corinthians 13 biblical definition of love (without hypocrisy!)
- e. **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;^[b] 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.**
- d. Today we're going to talk about what may be the hardest thing about love. And I believe its found in the last line: that it bears all things. Love endures all things.
 - a. And we know God is love 1 John 4:8 so we could replace the word love in this passage with God and we see how Jesus is absolutely all of those things
 - i. He **bears** all things with us. He endures all things with us. He never abandons. He never quiet quits...
- e. **Psalm 139:7 where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in ^[c]hell, behold, You are there.**
- f. Another psalmist talks about a time when he was bitter with God and lashed out and then writes the Lord's response to him
- g. **Psalm 73:21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²² I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. ²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.**

II. God never abandons us even in our moments of straying, sinning or lashing out at Him. We are learning how to be like Him in *that* sense.

III. Romans 12 shows us practically what to do when we get **wounded**

- a. **¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil.**
- b. Evil has a broad meaning here like doing anything harmful, causing trouble for someone, being destructive.
- c. It's short sentence but How much does that one instruction not get followed by believers.
 - i. How many petty things happen in the workplace. How many petty things happen in our homes. With our spouses or kids.
- d. 1 Peter it takes it one step further. 1 Peter **3:9 says do not repay evil for evil or insult for insult.**
- e. Sarcasm example

- f. Sarcasm in relationships is disguised criticism or contempt and some experts believe that sarcasm is the single strongest predictor of divorce. Sarcasm functions as a sharp jab that slowly erodes emotional safety and mutual respect.
 - i. Example of King David and his wife
 - g. 1 Samuel 6:20 When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said, "How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!"
 - h. Not trying to shame anyone today. Sarcasm can be normalized in the families we grew up in to the point that we think that's just we are
 - i. Difference playful banter and bitter sarcasm
 - i. When sarcasm isn't mean per se, you're still not saying what you mean. You're saying the opposite. And people who often don't say what they mean are hard to know. There's a bit of a wall there.
 - i. And that it's not who God made us to be, because we are made in His image. And He says what He means. He shows His heart. Which is vulnerable.
 - j. Let's keep reading.
- IV. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ **If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**
- c. *if it is possible, as much as it depends on you.* This implies that sometimes it's not possible, and it's not up to you. Healthy boundaries..
 - i. Sometimes we have to separate ourselves from a loved one and let the Lord do the work that needs to be done in that person's life.
 - ii. Doesn't mean you hold a grudge. Doesn't mean there can't be reconciliation. You can rest and trust that He's doing the work and you are free to move on to the things the Lord has for you.
- V. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
- a. This last verse shows that when you humble yourself and care for someone who has harmed you, you release power in the spirit that directly impacts that person
- VI. The "burning coals" represent the conviction they feel when confronted with undeserved grace.
- VII. **Romans 2:4** God's Kindness leads us to repentance
- a. Why does kindness cause repentance?
 - i. there's something that happens within us when we fall short and experience grace in return. And it's called conviction. That's the burning coals. It leads us to desire to be like the grace we experienced.
 - b. We see this with Peter, there's this continuous tug of war in Peter of whether or not he believes the calling on his life with Jesus. You know this because from the

start Jesus tells Peter he's going to be a fisher of men. An evangelist right. But then Peter continues to go back to fishing while he's following Jesus.

- c. And there comes a point where Jesus purposefully takes Peter's boat that he'd been using all night to try to fish and failed and he uses it to preach to the lost. Jesus transforms the vessel to its intended purpose. A great metaphor. He got Peter's boat to its intended purpose, but can he get Peter?
- d. When Jesus climbs out of the boat after preaching...rather than asking Peter "when are you going to be all in with me?" He instead gives Peter the greatest catch of fish in his life.
- e. And it's His kindness that leads us to repentance. And in the middle is conviction. And we see it with Peter. Luke 5:⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Do you see how an act of grace opens the eyes of the spirit. Grace allowed Peter to see how far away he'd strayed in his heart. He's convicted. How does Jesus respond?
- f. "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." He reaffirms His calling. He reaffirms their relationship. Over and over again Jesus reaffirms Peter's relationship to Him and the calling on his life. So then what does Peter do? He reaches the place of repentance. He changes his ways. ^[a] ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. He left behind the greatest catch of his life. The grace, the love of Christ drew Peter back.

VIII. This form of showing undeserved grace also works for evangelism though it may be one of the most difficult forms to walk out

- a. Personal story film team and corrupt cop, blessing him

IX. Scripture says Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more. Grace MUST abound more.

X. Navigating betrayal by family members

- a. A good biblical story to turn to, to ready slowly, with Holy Spirit is the story of Joseph.
 - i. If you're not familiar with the story (recap)
- b. What's happening in Joseph's trials is he flips them on their head and rather than letting the trials break him, he uses them to walk out all of the building blocks of love we read about in 2 Peter 1. He becomes a man of moral excellence, self-control, steadfastness,
- c. Genesis 45: ...4...And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me** before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷And **God sent me** before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸**So it was not you who sent me here, but God.**
- d. No matter what trials happen in your life, if you're a believer following Jesus, God will turn it for good. No one else has a hope like that in their life. Those who don't know the Lord, don't actually know if the trial they are facing is just misery and nothing else.

- XI. Towards the end of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers is when you see he's a true man of love. He sets up land and food to be given to his brothers and father.
- XII. Joseph was too busy serving the Lord being used by Him to be wasting time brooding on the wrongs he suffered by his family.
- XIII. **In these moments we MUST lift our eyes to our Father and look for how to serve, how we can walk with Him, because All other paths are misery and bitterness.**
- XIV. When you are hurt by fellow believers
- a. When Jesus was on earth, he showed us that the bond that believers have with each, other runs deeper than blood.
 - b. Matthew 12:48 But Jesus replied, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?" 49 Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."
 - c. The bond is deeper than blood. And that's because There's an eternal quality to it. And that's why when it's broken it can often hurt the most.
 - d. Jesus knows betrayal better than anyone (Judas)
 - e. I want us to read how Jesus treats Judas in his final hour before the betrayal
 - f. **There are a couple perspectives Jesus carries that we need to get a hold of**
 - g. John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
 - h. First, let's look at the order of how this story is being told. It highlights the coming betrayal by Judas, then it shows Jesus's perspective, and ends with action- the Lord washing the disciples feet.
 - i. Coming betrayal
 - i. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,
 - j. THEN it goes into Jesus's perspectives and let's break those down.
 - k. John 13 ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands
 - l. In this difficult moment we see how Jesus draws upon what He knows to be true. And the truth is that He is a man of victory.
 - i. Yes, he was actively being betrayed, but that did not make him a loser.
 1. Nor would the fact that this betrayal would lead to torture and death on a cross.
 - m. He was not a loser, He was a victor.
 - i. He was a victor, washing the feet of a broken man

- n. And for us, BECAUSE Jesus is victorious, scripture says in 1 Cor. 15:57 “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- o. If you want an unoffendable heart, you must understand your identity in the Lord. Nothing anyone says or does can cut you down or touch the victorious stance you hold in Christ
 - i. That’s what enables you to get your eyes off of yourself- because you’re good, and THEN you can look clearly with eyes of discernment at the person doing you harm and seeing the brokenness behind it.
- p. The **second** perspective is where it says Jesus knew that He **had come from God and was going back to God.**
 - i. Jesus knew His relationship with the Father. They belong to one another
 - ii. Because of Christ, we too belong
- q. And then after we read of his 2 perspectives we get to action. It says He ROSE from supper and then knelt down to wash. He ROSE up in His identity as King and THEN knelt down as the suffering servant.
- r. I just don’t see how we can truly keep our love pure and endure and bear all things with other believers if we don’t carry this kind of identity in the Lord.
- s. Third perspective (for believers to hold): Aren’t you so grateful that the Father doesn’t hold our sin against us? So grateful that though Jesus was the lion of the tribe of Judah, he made himself like a lamb that was led to the slaughter for us?
- t. When we are wronged by others and it hurts, we enter into the **sufferings of Christ**. We enter into a way of knowing Him that we wouldn’t know any other way. Scripture promises that when we suffer with Christ we experience His comfort like we’ve never known, it promises we will be glorified with him, and we will see His glory revealed.

HOME GROUP QUESTIONS

(for groups who also met last week, skip the first Q)

1. Read through **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** (the biblical definition of love) and **2 Peter 1:5-7** (the building blocks to become a person of love) and discuss the differences, especially in light of **Romans 12:9** *Love must be free from hypocrisy*. How do we become a people who love without hypocrisy?
2. When we get wounded by family or closest friends it can hurt deeply. Read **Genesis 45:3-8** discuss the perspective coming forth from Joseph as he reunites with his brothers.
3. Read through **John 13:1-5** and discuss the perspective Jesus held in the midst of betrayal by Judas...and how we can carry that same perspective today.