

Priority of Love
1 Corinthians 13:1-3

March 22, 2020 am

HDBC

This morning I want to start a 4-part series called *Calvary Love*. This series will lead us right to and through Easter Sunday. We will be looking at 1 Corinthians 13, which is the Love Chapter. Why **Calvary** love? If you are unfamiliar with the Bible this word **Calvary** made be a strange one. Let me explain. Simply put, the word refers to the geographical location where Jesus died on a cross outside of Jerusalem about 2000 years ago. So, when I speak of Calvary Love, I am speaking of the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated when He died for us. It is the greatest form of love. Jesus was the ultimate master of showing it.

I've taken the title from a phrase found in the little book, *If*, written by Amy Carmichael. She was an Irish missionary who spent 53 years in South India, without a single furlough. She founded the Dohnavur Fellowship, a refuge for children in danger. Elisabeth Elliot has written a powerful biography, entitled, **A Chance to Die**.

I was introduced to her little book, *If*, while in seminary and it made a profound impact on my life. It is a series of statements and observations about the love that Jesus displayed on Calvary. This is the kind of love we are called to practice, as well. Here is the introduction.

One evening a fellow-worker brought me a problem about a younger one who was missing the way of Love. This led to a wakeful night, for the word at such times is always, "Lord, is it I?" Have I failed her anywhere? What do I know if Calvary Love? And then sentence by sentence the "If's" came, almost as if spoken aloud to the inward ear. The book is a compilation of those "if" statements. Here are a few examples:

If I can easily discuss the shortcomings and the sins of any; if I can speak in a casual way even of a child's misdoings, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I can write an unkind letter, speak an unkind word, think an unkind thought without grief and shame, then I know of nothing of Calvary love.

It is a powerful expression of Calvary love, the kind of love that is describe in 1 Corinthians 13. Calvary love is not of the wimpy, syrupy, emotional. It is tough, painful and costly.

This morning we consider **the Priority of Love**.

READ THE TEXT - 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Without Calvary Love . . .

1. My Words are just noise (1)

Note two phrases . . .

A. Tongues of Men

The world is impressed by great communicators. But God isn't impressed. He says words without love are nothing, ineffective.

The Greek culture was proud of its orators. Oration was considered to be one of the highest arts. All Greek leaders were great speaker.

Paul was criticized on exactly this account. In a second letter to these Corinthians, Paul had to defend his leadership. Even though he had started the church at Corinth and had led many of them to faith in Christ, he had to defend his leadership because of what they believed to be his lack of eloquence. They reasoned . . . ***Paul isn't much of a speaker, so he must not be much of a leader.***

B. Tongues of angels

Corinth had serious problems - Spiritual Gifts - Gift of Tongues was getting high billing. Sign of spiritual maturity. Have and Have-Nots. Maybe that is why Paul begins with it. Some were saying gift of tongues was actually angel talk. No evidence whatsoever. Even if it were it is not enough.

Without love it is just noise. It does not matter what you say or how you say it, it is only noise if not accompanied by Calvary love. Communication without love is really a useless thing. Never more true than during this mega-information age. We are great a exchanging information. But are we really loving?

2. My spiritual abilities are nothing (2)

Remember that this chapter is in a context of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians had elevated the gift of tongues. Paul will point out in the next chapter that even if you are going to elevate one gift over others, tongues would not be the one. Prophecy was much more important. But even the one Paul would choose, is not preeminent over love.

A. Prophecy

Preaching the word of God. In Paul's mind, it is more important than tongues because more effective in leading people to Christ and building up the church. But even prophecy without love is nothing. Great preaching without love is worthless. I have known men who were really good preachers, but who seemed to be deficient when it comes to love.

B. Knowledge

Mystery refers to truth that was once hidden, but now has been revealed. OT to NT. If you could get clear handle on all the mysteries of God, and have complete grasp of the observable, knowable facts, it would be useless without love. I've known some like this, not fun to be around.

Knowledge puffs up, but loves builds up. It's better to have a right heart than it is to have a right head. **We're in a knowledge explosion.** The world is exploding with information and knowledge. You can't keep up with it. Yet are any of man's basic problems being solved? No. The world is not looking for more knowledge; the world is looking for love.

C. Faith

No one appreciated faith more than Paul. **It was his battle cry.** Even mountain-moving faith is no good without Calvary love. **Jonah had great faith, but no love.** Don't be like him! Love is what makes ministry stick.

3. My sacrifices are meaningless (3)

Paul mentions two kinds of sacrifices.

A. Giving to help the poor

Word means *to dole out in small quantities*. Giving is good, but it's not all the Lord requires. He wants our giving to be motivated by loving hearts.

B. Dying as a martyr

Ultimate sacrifice. Even giving life for another or for the Lord will be of no Heavenly profit if it is not motivated by love.

I can rack up a list of impressive achievements, I can succeed in all kinds of great accomplishments, I can even sacrifice my life for the greatest cause in the world -- the kingdom of God -- but without love it won't matter zip! It's wasted effort.

These first few verses remind us of the **Priority** of love. They remind us that people are more important than accomplishments. Jesus said the entire law could be summarized by this: love God and love your neighbor. Success without love is empty.

God is saying I can have the eloquence of an orator, the knowledge of a genius, the faith of a miracle worker, the generosity of a philanthropist, the dedication of a martyr, but if I don't love it doesn't count.

Everyone needs love. The people around us who are the most difficult to love are typically the ones who need it the most. The ones in your life or in your arena of influence who are the most difficult to love are the ones who most need to be loved.

No one wears a sign on his chest, saying "love me, please." But if you look closely. If you dare to get involved in the life of another person, you will know.

Jean Vanier, told the following story about persevering in our practice of unconditional love:

I know a man who lives in Paris. His wife has Alzheimer's. He was an important businessman—his life filled with busyness. But he said that when his wife fell sick, "I just couldn't put her into an institution, so I kept her. I fed her. I bathed her."

I went to Paris to visit them, and this businessman who had been very busy all his life said, "I have changed. I have become more human."

I got a letter from him recently. He said that in the middle of the night his wife woke him up. She came out of the fog for a moment, and she said, "Darling, I just want to say thank you for all you're doing for me." Then she fell back into the fog. He told me, "I wept and I wept."

Sometimes Christ calls us to love people who cannot love us in return. They live in the fog of mental illness, disabilities, poverty, arrogance or spiritual blindness. As we serve them, we may only receive fleeting glimpses of gratitude. But just as Jesus has loved us in the midst of our spiritual confusion, so we continue to love others as they walk through a deep fog.

Bombs have a blast-radius. That's the distance from the source that will be affected when an explosion occurs. Every Christian should have a love-radius. Anyone within our sphere of influence should be positively affect by the Calvary love that is experienced by us.

You can only give Calvary Love if you have experienced Calvary Love

You can only experience Calvary Love by receiving and embracing the love of Jesus.

You can only receive and embrace the love of Jesus by repenting of your sins, trusting His sacrificial death and resurrection as payment for your sins and receiving him into your life as Lord and Savior

You receive express your trust in Him and receive Him into your life in a commitment of faith generally expressed in prayer to Him.

Would like to experience His incredible, unconditional love for you, right now?

Pray prayer of salvation.

Contact me or a staff member of our church to let us know. We want to pray for you and send some information to you and will help you know how to take the next step in your faith journey.