

FBC POWELL, 2-17-19 AM NOTES
"The Cost of Love"
2 Corinthians 11:16-33
21 in Series, "Be Encouraged"

Phileo—A love that is called out of one's heart as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person or object [Kenneth Wuest].

Matthew 6:5 (NASB) "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men..."

Storge—Natural affection, the natural movement of the soul for husband, wife, child, or dog.

Romans 12:10 (NASB) "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor."

Eros—The basic idea of this love is self-satisfaction.

Agape—God's kind of love, or more accurately God's love that flows through those who are His children.

Romans 5:5 (NASB) "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God (*agape* love) has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Acts 20:28-31 (NASB) ²⁸ "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

I. Selflessness (vv. 16-21)

Proverbs 26:5 (NASB) "Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, that he not be wise in his own eyes."

Grace — "God's Riches At Christ's Expense"

II. Suffering (vv. 22-27)

Philippians 3:5 (NASB) "Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee."

> "Far more labors" (v. 23a)

- > “Far more imprisonments” (v. 23b)
- > “Beaten times without number” (vv. 23c, 24)
- > Three times beaten with rods (v. 25a)

Galatians 6:17 (NASB) “From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.”

- > Stoned (v. 25b)

Acts 14:19 (NASB) “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”

- > Shipwrecked (v. 25c)
- > Dangers on his journeys (v. 26)

III. Sympathy (vv. 28-29)

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NASB) “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”

Galatians 4:9 (NASB) “But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?”

IV. Submission (vv. 30-33)

Acts 9:25 (NASB) “But his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket.”

Sermon 21: The Cost of Love

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Multiple times I have made the statement that the most misunderstood word in the Bible is “love”. When we speak of *love*, we typically mean affection or warm feelings for someone who is “our kind of people”. We use that same word when referring to our spouse, our children, or pralines and cream ice cream. But in the Greek language (the original language of the New Testament), there are at least four different words that are all typically translated “love”.

First, there is *Phileo*. This word speaks of companion love, affection, fondness, or just liking someone. Here is the official definition: *Phileo* is a love that is called out of one's heart as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person or object [Kenneth Wuest]. This word for love is used often in the New Testament – Matthew 6:5: “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they *love* to stand [fondness] and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men...”

A second kind of love is *Storge*. This word speaks of natural affection. It is the natural movement of the soul for husband, wife, child, or dog. This word is used a few times in the New Testament. Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” *Storge* is very similar to *Phileo*.

A third kind of love in the Greek language is *Eros*. We get the word “erotic” from that Greek word. The basic idea of this love is self-satisfaction. An example of how it would be used is, “I love you because you are pretty/handsome, and you make me happy.” Sadly, this is the kind of shallow love that often brings a couple together in marriage. The problem is that when the satisfaction is gone or when the wrinkles and expanding waist line start, the *Eros* love tends to fade. This is when many marriages end. The word *Eros* is not used in the New Testament.

The word for “love” that is most used in the New Testament is *Agape*. *Agape* is God's kind of love, or more accurately God's love that flows through those who are His children. *Agape* is the noblest kind of love. In reality it is supernatural love because it comes only from God. It cannot be “worked up”. It is possible to experience this kind of love even for our enemies. The clearest expression of this love is found in Romans 5:5: “and hope does not disappoint, because the *love of God (agape love)* has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Those who do not belong to God, who do not have the Spirit of God in them, do not have the capacity to love one another with *agape* love. [Some of this section is from Precept Ministries International].

In this message, we are going to see the cost of this love, not in marriage, but for other's in the body of Christ (the church) and for those who do not know our Lord. It is interesting that the word “love” is not used in this passage, but Paul gives us a perfect picture of what *agape* love looks like. Paul loved the Corinthians with the supernatural, *agape* love of Christ while they did not love him at all. If you have been here throughout this series, you will remember that they treated Paul in horrible ways even though he was the one who brought them to Christ and who planted the church at Corinth.

Let me tell you who this message is designed for. It is for you who struggle to love another person who obviously doesn't love you. It is for those who have given and sacrificed for others only to be rejected by the one you have given so much. It is for the one who has discovered that there are some people that you cannot work up a feeling of love for them. It is for those who desire our church to grow in our love for one another. If you've never struggled with loving someone that is “unlovable”, then you can take a nap for the next thirty minutes or so. For the rest of us, join me as we look at the cost of love.

Let me tell you what was going on in the church at Corinth. Many of the Corinthians had been swept away by a group of men claiming to be apostles of Christ who had come from Jerusalem bragging about all their accomplishments for Christ. These men (often called Judaizers) were wolves in sheep's clothing. They denied the Gospel of grace and preached that salvation involves keeping the Jewish law. Understanding that will help you understand some sanctified sarcasm from Paul a little further in the text. The Corinthians were in danger of accepting the false

teachings of these false apostles rather than accepting what the true apostle (Paul) had told them. Think how this must have stung Paul. Instead of believing this man who led them to Christ, who taught them, prayed for them, and agonized over them, they were listening to this bunch of false teachers who were trying to mix law and grace. That errant teaching is called “legalism”, and mixing law and grace is like trying to mix oil and water – it is an impossible task. To counter their lies, Paul is forced to participate in what seemed like boasting. In reality, Paul was simply reminding them of the truth he had already laid before them.

It is a heavy burden to be a leader in Christ’s church. This message focuses on a wider group of leaders than elders, but much of the responsibility for leading falls on the elders. Pray for us! Outside my office are three prints in a nice frame. These three prints illustrate the work of the church’s leaders (especially elders). One print shows the Shepherd comforting a sheep. The second print is the Shepherd leading the sheep to the high pasture where the best grass is. In the third print, the Shepherd has his rod and is beating away the wolves that are trying to destroy the sheep that he so deeply cared about. Paul was acting in this third function of the spiritual leader – protecting the church from false teaching and false teachers. These false teachers, these wolves in sheep’s clothing constantly hounded and badgered Paul to try to undermine his work everywhere he went.

Here is the main point of this passage. The enemy is always trying to destroy the church. The enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep. We must all be on guard. Here is the cost of love. Loving leaders in the church (elders, deacons, women’s ministry leaders, choir and worship leaders, and teachers – really every faithful church member) must be willing to let God develop the four qualities of costly love in them. Those four qualities of costly love are selflessness, suffering, sympathy, and submission. This is the cost of loving God’s church. This message applies to every person hearing it.

The first cost of love is selflessness.

I. Selflessness (vv. 16-21)

When we speak of selflessness, we are really speaking of humility. Next to Jesus, Paul was probably the most humble man in the New Testament. Humility or selflessness has traditionally been called “the noblest Christian virtue.” However, humility wasn’t popular in New Testament times even as it is not today. Humility is seldom, if ever, the topic of talk shows or graduation speeches. If you look at the “Self Help” section of bookstores or on Amazon, I doubt you will find many, if any books on humility or selflessness. True biblical humility or selflessness (those two are basically the same thing) is an approach to life that sees God as He truly is and us as we truly are. Because of his humility Paul found boasting abhorrent. Yet these false teachers accused him of being a liar and a phony. The false teachers did nothing but boast and for Paul to speak to the leaders at Corinth he had to establish his credibility which was tied to the credibility of the Gospel he preached. In verse 16, Paul is saying, “Even if you consider me a fool, at least grant the courtesy of listening to my defense”. Paul was obeying Proverbs 26:5: “Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, that he not be wise in his own eyes.”

In verse 17 Paul was certainly not denying the inspiration of his writings. He was simply saying that this “boasting”, this giving a defense was not what he desired. *Paul was doing this uncomfortable boasting to help the church while the false teachers were doing it to help themselves.*

Lest you think that Paul was over-reacting to these false teachers, I want to assure you that he was not. He was forced into defending himself and his message and that was way out of Paul's comfort zone. In verse 17, Paul is in a quandary. The Lord Jesus never responded this way, but Paul must if he is going to defend his Lord and His Lord's word. Paul was willing to be uncomfortable if that was what it took to proclaim correctly who he was. Paul was willing to do anything – even to die to keep the Gospel pure. These false teachers were trying to corrupt the Gospel. There was no compromise in Paul's proclamation of Christ and the Gospel! While the enemies of the cross proclaimed what was not true, Paul was compelled to proclaim what was and is true, even if it made him appear to be boasting. In verses 18-19 Paul is willing to respond in a way that seemed to be boasting, but it was made necessary (v. 19) because of these arrogant false teachers.

In verse 20 Paul is showing the believers in Corinth how foolish they were. The message of the false teachers (the Judaizers) put people in bondage while the true Gospel set them free! He is saying, "Why are you putting up with these false teachers?" Verse 21 is more sanctified sarcasm. Paul says that grace must have sounded weak to these Judaizers compared to their boasting and self-promotion. The flesh, our pride, likes to earn our own way. However, the word "grace" can be simply defined with this little acrostic: Grace is "**G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense." When it comes to salvation, grace and works cannot co-exist! Grace looks to God and His power to save; works looks to man and trusts in man's efforts and man's strength to earn salvation. What a warped view of God and what a warped view of man and his abilities.

II. Suffering (vv. 22-27)

Reading between the lines, it seems that these false teachers were boasting in their credentials – they were the "blue blood" Jews. It is likely that they boasted in being Palestinian Jews and not (as Paul) who was from Tarsus and spoke Greek. Paul makes clear that he was as Jewish as any Jew could be. He defended himself in Philippians 3:5: "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee." This man was "Captain Israel!" These false teachers had nothing on Paul. In fact, he had something that they did not have – a history of suffering for the Gospel! These false teachers went to the easy places, the safe places like Corinth. Their "MO" was to steal away converts and put them back under the bondage of the law. They knew nothing of the persecution that came from teaching the doctrines of grace.

In verses 23-27, Paul gives a short history of His sufferings for the Gospel of Christ. The false teachers had nothing to even remotely come close to the suffering that Paul had experienced. Look at the summary of his suffering:

- "Far more labors" (v. 23a) – There was physical labor as he provided for his own room, board and food. There was labor in the work of evangelism and discipling. One of the most exhausting forms of labor is sharing the Gospel and pastoring God's people. It is not just the physical weariness; it is also the heaviness of spiritual warfare.
- "Far more imprisonments" (v. 23b) – Paul was literally put in prison, time and time again. That was not true of these false teachers – these Judaizers.
- "Beaten times without number" (v. 23c, v. 24) – The NIV says "flogged more severely". These beatings put him constantly in danger of death. Jewish law forbade that any beating would be no more than forty lashes. Tradition was to never go over thirty-nine lashes in case they had miscounted.

- Three times beaten with rods (v. 25a) – This was punishment not from the Jews, but the Romans. We know of one of those beatings with rods. It was in Philippi (Acts 16:22-23, 27). Paul gladly wore the scars from all these beatings. In Galatians 6:17 Paul said this about those scars from his beatings for the sake of the Gospel, “From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body *the brand-marks of Jesus.*”
- Stoned (v. 25b) – We know this happened at Lystra. Acts 14:19: “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”
- Shipwrecked (v. 25c) – This was in addition to the shipwreck on the way to Rome. He spent a night and a day in the sea waiting for rescue.
- Dangers on his journeys – (v. 26) – All of his journeys involved dangers. 2 Corinthians 11:26: “*I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.” Someone estimated that on the journeys we know about, Paul had traveled 5,580 miles (mostly on foot or on the water).
- 2 Corinthians 11:27: “*I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

When it came to credentials, Paul had the credentials of suffering. The Judaizers had no credentials that could even be considered close to Paul’s. All this suffering was in reality the cost of love. We are called to be willing to suffer, ready to be persecuted. Are you? 2 Timothy 3:12: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

III. Sympathy (vv. 28-29)

Paul never made a big deal about all the suffering he endured. In 2 Corinthians 4:17 he called them “light affliction.” Here is what really burdened the apostle Paul – it was 2 Corinthians 11:28b: “Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches.” Paul’s greatest burden was not around him, it was within him. It was his concern, his agonizing over the churches he had planted. He identified with them as a father with his children, and when the churches hurt, Paul hurt. That is actually the thing that deeply burdens every true pastor’s heart. I am so amazed that God would call me as a pastor – especially as the pastor of this church for thirty-two and one-half years. I can truly say that my greatest burden is for the people in this church. When I hear of a marriage breaking up, I wonder if perhaps I had preached harder and more often on marriage that would have avoided the heartache of divorce. When a person or family leaves the church, I wonder how I failed them. When someone swallows false doctrine, I wonder if I preached enough and hard enough on that doctrine as it is presented in the Scripture. The false teachers were using the Corinthians, but Paul loved them and agonized over them.

If you are in a place of leadership in this church – teacher, deacon, prayer warrior, the leader of a ministry – do you sense the pressure “of concern” (v. 28) and the “intense concern” (v. 29)? A spiritual leader has deep sympathy for the concerns and heartaches of the church. The church is called the Bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7. What would happen at a wedding if you went up to the groom and said, “You look stunning, but your bride... really, is that the best you could do?” Things wouldn’t go well, and you would deserve the black eye you got. Yes, the bride of Christ has flaws down here, but for those who are truly the bride of Christ, they will one day be made perfect and they are now the object of His affection.

IV. Submission (vv. 30-33)

At first, these last verses don't seem to fit. Paul goes from talking about his suffering and his sympathy for the church and he jumps right into the account of an incident shortly after his conversion when he became a "basket case." I suspect that Paul may have struggled with his ego right after his conversion. The incident he refers to here is Acts 9:25: "but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in* the wall, lowering him in a large basket." Here is this man who was a rising star in Judaism. He had the equivalence of a Harvard law degree and no doubt looked up to by most. Yet, Paul, after his Damascus Road conversion counted all that "stuff" that drove his pre-Christ motives now as "garbage" or "rubbish" (Philippians 3:8). As Paul closes out chapter 11, he shares a humiliating incident in his early Christian life. He had boldly preached the Gospel and instead of the people repenting and coming to Christ, they plotted to kill him. Paul was spared death only by the Christians hiding him in a big basket (probably used to carry dead fish) and lowering him over the wall around the city. This was good for Paul and drew him closer to the Lord. Now, he has only one thing to boast in. 2 Corinthians 11:30: "If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness."

Conclusion

This is a model for spiritual leaders and those who will be spiritual leaders. I encourage you not to adopt the world's model; adopt Paul's model.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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