

8-30-20

Sermon- Hold On!

Scripture- Romans 12:9-21, CTW- Psalm 105:1-6

Hymns- 299, 97, 455

Theme- God calls us to hold on in the storms of everyday life and still be able to do our duty as Christians. Paul says that requires us to have genuine love which requires much concentration, effort and understanding on our part. It means that we need to also help others to become better people. In this passage, Paul gives us good examples and reminds us that this all requires time, and personal involvement. Do you have the capacity and drive to achieve that in your life?

Introduction:

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

I think that is one of the most powerful phrases in the Bible...it punches me in the chest with its simple power.

A. The Greek word for "sincere" literally means "without wax." And it comes from a situation where dishonest pottery merchants would fill in the cracks and flaws caused when a piece was fired in the kiln. They'd fill in the flaws with wax, paint over it, and sell it as perfect.

Real love isn't like that...real love doesn't try to appear to be something it's not...Real love is without wax...it's sincere.

B. Confession Time: Here's my problem...I don't like when people can see how cracked and flawed I am...I want to hate what is evil and cling to what is good...but sometimes I do the exact opposite.

In Romans 7, Paul told the Romans exactly that truth about Himself:

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (v. 16) He goes on to say "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this I

keep on doing...I find this law (truth) at work. Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me." (Romans 7:15, 18, 19, 21)
And then he makes an amazing plea - "What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body subject to death?" (7:24).
This is one of the most amazing Christian servants of all time. He wrote over half the New Testament...He planted churches throughout the known world...and went through persecutions we could never imagine...and yet he reveals his struggles...He shows us his flaws...and he also lets us know the one who has rescued him from this struggle.

"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord." (7:25)

Jesus has saved me...He doesn't love me less because of my flaws...He doesn't take away my salvation because I struggle, He gives me the victory over it.

I believe people who try to cover their flaws with wax make it impossible to love sincerely...because it's a preferred version of what they want you to see...not the truth.

C. I found a poem called THE SCARS NO ONE CAN SEE, that might shed some light here:

"The scars no one can see are the most painful ones of all
They fester deep inside me and are the ones that make me fall
The abuse and the pain were real and yet, the scars aren't visible.

And my heart fights to hide their reveal until it just gets way too full.

I'm grateful for a Savior who cares about the hidden and deep pains,

And the scars hidden way down there. I'm glad His grace is greater than those things.

I want to be healthy and free of the scars created by sinful souls...
People, just like me.

I'm thankful for a God that fills up all those holes!"

This poem shows us that if we want Christ's love to flow from us with sincerity we'd better learn how to deal with emotional scars... the marks that no one can see and Satan keeps handing us wax to hide...we'd better let God fill those holes with His grace...

This passage from Romans 12 gives us 3 ways to do just that...

I. FOCUS ON OTHERS

But Pastor Keith, "You don't know what they did to ME!" "As for myself, I'll never forgive them."

A. "I can't let that go." The center of all those statements is "Me, Myself and I."

I'm not trying to minimize what has scarred you emotionally...or say I understand completely...but there are only two choices...you stay imprisoned as a victim...or you move forward in Christ's victory toward freedom.

Put simply, Satan schemes to keep us chained to the past and our pain...Jesus breaks chains and His truth sets us free.

Satan would have us be narcissists who can't stop looking at ourselves...focusing on Me, Myself and I.

And Jesus says..."Whoever wants to save their life will lose it...but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." **(Mark 8:35)**

B. Here's the gospel truth... "It's not about you." "It's not about me." It's about Jesus and the gospel.

If you want to emotionally heal and grow in your faith...focus on others.

"Be devoted to one another in love...honor one another above yourselves...share with the Lord's people who are in need."

Practice hospitality...rejoice with others...mourn with others...live in harmony with others...don't be proud...be willing to hang around with lost people...Don't be conceited...live at peace with everyone if you can...

To begin to heal from the scars no one can see...Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me..." **(Matthew 11:28-29)**

C. Coming to Jesus is the first step in healing...and learning what it means to be yoked to Him is next. This yoke isn't a drudgery or a burden...its a bond that's easy and light.

Jesus always served others...He loved the outcast and the broken...He healed...He called...He LOVED...His focus was always on the Gospel and OTHERS.

He said its how the world will know we belong to Him... "Love one another, even as I have loved you and the world will know you are my disciples." **(John 13:34)**

By the way...This was a **new commandment**...not a request.

Love becomes sincere when we are "yoked" to Jesus...because that bond is through His Spirit united to ours.

Romans 12 also lets us know if we want to deal with our emotional scars we must:

II. FORGIVE THE DEBT

A. Here's the hardest part of following Christ...It's the real difference between church attenders and sincere followers of Jesus.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Do not take revenge...leave room for God's wrath. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink." (And I love that Paul throws in there..."If you do this its like heaping hot coals on his head.")

By the way...if you try to love your enemy **so God can get them,** I don't think it helps you heal, **LOL!**

Either God's grace is greater than whatever has been done to us... or its not. If you believe its not, you will live always expecting someone to pay you back the 10 dollars when Christ has forgiven you 100 million.

B. Let me state...that this level of forgiveness is impossible for you and me on our own...It doesn't make

sense...It's not fair and it will never guarantee you get even...but it will guarantee you believe Jesus is bigger than the hurt and it will eventually set you free.

Many have crushing financial debt...it debilitates many struggling families... The only thing worse is when someone is in debt to you...That feeling of "Man...when are they going to pay me back", changes the relationship and I don't recommend it...and yet sometimes it happens.

When Jesus prays "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." I think He is talking about being set free from the emotional jail sin causes...ours...and those who have trespassed against us...**It's not easy to let go of "They owe me" and change it to "I release you."**

They might not even respond how we'd like...but truth be told... forgiveness is about **our freedom...not theirs.**

Let me end with one final truth from Romans 12:

III. FAITH WINS

A. When it comes to the scars no one can see...healing takes place when we focus on others...forgive the debt and allow Faith to win.

When we choose to be yoked to Jesus so the world's evil doesn't overcome us...and instead we overcome evil with good...**FAITH WINS!**

I have a pastor friend who tells this story as a testament to the power of Faith:

He had a really good friend that he baptized into Christ years before.

The friend developed an inoperable brain tumor. The church prayed continually for God to heal him...and God had not chosen to do so.

The friend had to get to a place where he dealt with the unfairness of this situation...It just didn't seem fair, no matter how he looked at it. He shared with the pastor that he had been

writing legacy letters which would be given to his family when he passed.

He said the hardest letter to write was to his 13 year old daughter for the occasion of her wedding sometime in the future. But he said,

“One of the benefits of knowing you’re going to die is that you don’t waste opportunities...and I know that if I have the faith to give her away in this letter, in her heart she will know that I am in Heaven watching on that day.”

Paul is telling us the truth here folks, Faith wins.

B. Paul is calling all of us to deal with this issue in our lives because it can really stunt our faith and separate us for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Remember the series we did on relationships...the triangle where we were to be UP with Christ, IN with one another, and OUT with the rest of the world.

The issue of forgiveness threatens to hurt or even destroy every one of those relationships. Let us be resolved to deal with it in the way that Paul has prescribed for the Romans!

Amen? Let Us Pray