



Love God

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

February 1, 2015

Thought For The Week

Scriptures

Jonah 3: 1-5 • Corinthians 7: 29-31 • Mark 1: 14-20

As I reminisce on my years as a young adult, I must admit my embarrassment over the number of times I have changed my mind about what I wanted to be and do with my life. Although my father always told me that I should be an electrical engineer, I knew that, although I was intrigued by electricity and how to control it, I did not want to limit my education and career to that area of study. There was also a time I wanted to become a racecar driver. (This was especially true after I viewed the motion picture “Grand Prix” with James Garner) Most of all, however, from my youngest years, I was determined to learn how to be able to do whatever it took to be self reliant around the house. My father and my Uncle Versal were “experts” at “fixing things”. Not just “jury rigging” but really fixing them. I’ve always thought that was a worthy goal to achieve. I soon learned though, that being able to fix things was worthwhile, but not very lucrative.

It was only after my stint in the U.S. Army that I began thinking about what I really wanted to do (and be). Fortunately, my good fortune, along with some schooling and worthy effort on my part, landed me a career in Architecture. As I reflect on all these changes (dreams) regarding my future, I believe that reality won out over fantasy. Gradually, over the years we become more clear-headed about what is possible and what is merely misguided optimism. Fortunately, for most of us, time and maturity will steer us in the direction of a worthwhile vocation or at least a worthwhile career. Fortunately in my own life, the great desire to become a racecar driver came about later in life and did not interfere with my primary goals. And through all of this dreaming and application of my studies and other efforts, I became a minister for Christ. There was no epiphany or wondrous vision, just a gentle push here and a shove there by my friends and mentors in the church brought about my parallel career in the ministry.

Given that little personal scenario, let’s turn to the scriptures because it is here that we find two stories of some people who found that their original intention in life somehow got turned around but in the end the final decision turned out to be the correct one.

The first story comes from the Hebrew Book of Jonah. I call it the story of the prophet who reluctantly changed his mind. A vision from God invited Jonah to go and preach repentance to the inhabitants of the city-state of Nineveh. Being a dutiful, Torah-abiding Jew, he had no intention of going to these pagan people to preach repentance. It is a long involved story but he was eventually convinced by God’s vision that he had no other option than to change his mind and preach to “sinners.” In this instance, the pressure to change his mind came not by way of his own decision but from God’s influence. It is my sense, however, that many of us, like Jonah are compelled to change our mind about something important simply because we finally get our thinking back on track. Getting life straight sometimes takes considerable time.

The second scripture passage tells the story of three ordinary, hard-working fishermen: Peter, Andrew and John. It is quite

possible that they were simply squeezing out a meager living fishing on the Sea of Galilee but at least we can assume that they could support their families. They may well have been happy enough just being out in the open air to share their stories, until one day an itinerant preacher engaged them suggesting that they might wish to change careers and follow him which eventually is exactly what they did. But we can also imagine that they must have given serious thought to a decision to leave boat, career and family behind. The gospel story makes the whole scene seem simplistic, but my hunch is that it probably took some clear-headed thinking before they eventually headed off to become apostles. The gospels, of course, are sketches of life, not the full-blown story.

Once again, however, we are privileged to view these two scenes from the viewpoint of our own history. We know now how it all turned out; it all seems so logical.

Nonetheless the principle of each story still has some substance to it. Ultimately our life decisions have two elements: God's invitation and our determination to keep our minds open to whatever God seems to be suggesting to us. God, of course, already knows well what will work for us. On our part, however, it takes time to realistically set aside our first choice and wait for God to make his known to us. Patience will usually set us on the right track, God's track.

Prayer Thought for the Week

Lord Jesus,

I give you my hands to do your work.

I give you my feet to go your way.

I give you my eyes to see as you do.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me your Father and all mankind.

I give you my whole self that you may grow in me, so that it is you, Lord Jesus, who live and work and pray in me.

Stewardship Thought for the Week

Most of us remember both the story and the song about Zacchaeus—"a wee little man was he." Bible students remember that Zacchaeus had gotten wealthy at the expense of others. And even more, we remember that Zacchaeus was a short man and had to climb a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus.

But later, after Jesus spent time with him, Zacchaeus stood tall. This is not to suggest that he grew physically, but we admire and rejoice in his change of attitude, his spiritual growth and commitment. He said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8, NIV).

Whatever our physical disadvantages may be, we can stand tall in our willingness and commitment to give. What was Jesus' response to Zacchaeus? "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9, NIV).