“Selfless Service”

2 Corinthians 12:11-19
11/27/2011

Introduction: v. 11a

- ***Be challenged by Paul’s example of <u>unselfish ministry</u>***

5 examples of <u>Paul’s unselfishness</u> in ministering to others:

I. He was great, yet viewed himself as <u>NOTHING</u> (v.11b)

II. He had Apostolic Power, yet didn’t minister for <u>MONEY</u> (v.12-13)

III. He was willing to “<u>SPEND</u> and be <u>SPENT</u>” for the souls of others (v.14-15a)

IV. He was able to <u>LOVE</u> and <u>NOT BE LOVED</u> (v.15b)

V. He ministered to <u>BUILD UP</u> and <u>NOT BURDEN DOWN</u> (v.16-<u>19</u>)

“Selfless Service”

2 Corinthians 12:11-19
11/27/2011

Introduction: v. 11a

- ***Be challenged by Paul’s example of <u>unselfish ministry</u>***

5 examples of <u>Paul’s unselfishness</u> in ministering to others:

I. He was great, yet viewed himself as _____ (v.11b)

II. He had Apostolic Power, yet didn’t minister for _____ (v.12-13)

III. He was willing to “_____ and be _____” for the souls of others (v.14-15a)

IV. He was able to _____ and _____ (v.15b)

V. He ministered to _____ and _____ (v.16-<u>19</u>)

"Selfless Service"

2 Corinthians 12:11-19
11/27/2011

Introduction:

The essence of sin is <u>selfishness in the heart</u>!

All forms of sin have their <u>root</u> in selfishness (cp. Strong, p. 569). Selfishness is the <u>underlying factor</u> behind all sin.

There is selfish <u>motivation</u> behind every sin!

Why is selfishness sin?

Basically: selfishness is a violation of the greatest of God's commands (a breaking of the all-encompassing requirement of the Law) -- to <u>love God</u> (Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

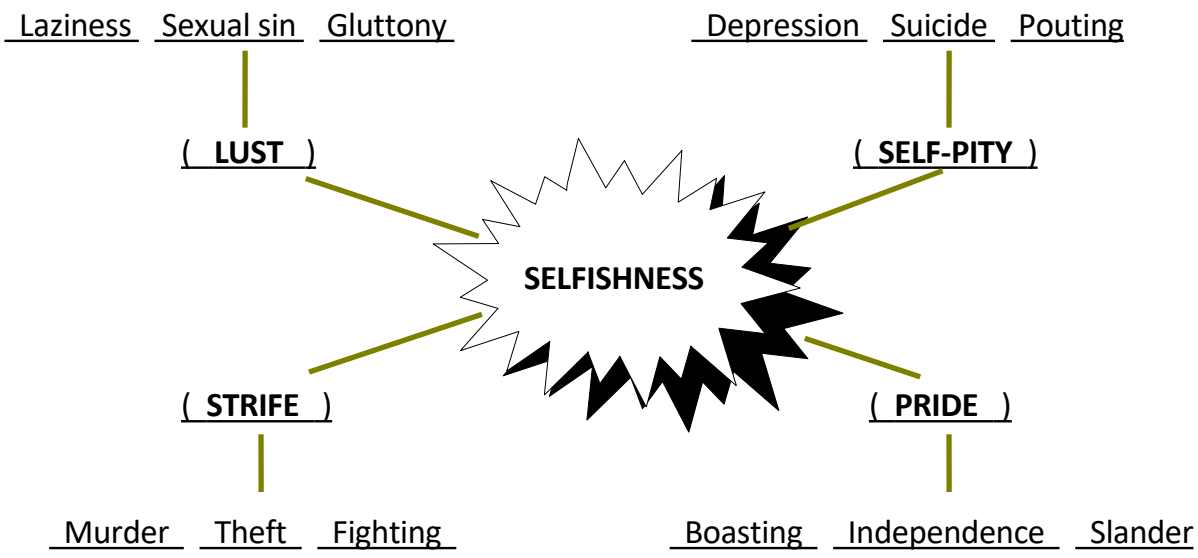
Selfishness places self ahead of <u>God</u>.

Selfishness says: "<u>Me first</u>" not "Thee first."
(Luke 9:57-62; it is actually <u>idolatry</u> - Col. 3:5)

Selfishness says: "<u>My will</u> be done" not "Thy will be done" (Mt. 6:10)

2) Selfishness places self ahead of <u>others</u> (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 10:24)

<u>Diagram</u> of selfishness being the core, cause, or source of every other sin:



v. 11
Although the apostle Paul was not a fool (11:16), he would do a bit of sanctified foolish bragging (not to promote himself) but to answer his critics' criticism of him and to bolster the Corinthian's confidence in his apostolic authority so that he could minister to them again.

"Glorying" - Paul had previously reminded the Corinthians of his religious pedigree (11:22), labor and persecution endured for Christ (11:23-33), his abundance of visions and revelations received (12:1-6), and his thorn in the flesh (which kept him humble and reliant upon God's power) (12:7-10).

"For I ought to have been commended of you" – Because of all Paul did for the Corinthian believers, he should not have to "blow his own horn" or commend himself. Rather they should have (out of appreciation and respect) highly esteemed him with honor and praise.

- ***Be challenged by Paul's example of <u>unselfish ministry</u>***

5 examples of <u>Paul's unselfishness</u> in ministering to others:

I. He was great, yet viewed himself as <u>NOTHING</u> (v.11b)

Though Paul was on par (equal) with the premier apostles (like Peter, James and John), he humbly viewed himself as "nothing."

"In nothing am I behind" - In no way am I inferior to the "super apostles." Paul did not lack any quality that they had. He could match (or surpass them) in:

1) spiritual wisdom
2) diligent labor
3) persecutions and troubles endured
4) supernatural displays of power and authority
5) souls saved and churches established

Paul by the Spirit's inspiration wrote more of the New Testament than any other apostle.

"Though I be nothing" - In and of himself, Paul knew that he (like all men) was nothing to brag about. He had an accurate self image. Paul testified, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

He previously had said to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

He knew that without Christ's working in him and through him, he could do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

Paul viewed himself as just a "bond slave" who planted the seed of the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

As long as we think that we are "somebody" great, God cannot use us. We must realize that He is everything and that without His power and enablement we are like an unplugged power tool – useless. He can use us to the degree that we walk with Him and rely on Him.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

II. He had Apostolic Power, yet didn't minister for MONEY (v.12-13)

Only a select few could claim to be an "apostle" (an official "sent one")
The New Testament office of apostle was reserved for certain men who met very demanding qualifications.

1) He must have been an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (I Cor. 9:1; 15:7-10)

2) He must have been personally commissioned by Christ (Gal. 1:15-17)

3) He must bear fruit in his ministry (Jn. 15:16; I Cor. 9:2; II Cor. 3:1-5)

4) He must manifest the miracle-signs of an apostle (II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4)

v.12
Though Paul performed many miracles, he would not boast about it(so as to promote himself). As he says in Romans 15:18-19 –

Romans 15:18-19
For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Paul had all the signs of an apostle, as God vindicated him with **"signs**" (miracles that pointed to God's supernatural intervention); **"wonders"** (miracles that produced awe and amazement); and with **"mighty deeds"** (displays of divine power).

v. 13

The Corinthian church planted by Paul apparently struggled with an inferiority complex. They may have erroneously thought that because their church as not started by a "super apostle," like some other churches were, that they didn't measure up. As Ryrie paraphrases Paul's question: "Do you think I made you inferior to other churches because I didn't sponge off you?"

To which Paul with a bit of sarcasm responds: "Forgive me of this wrong" (i.e. this wrong of not ripping you off financially).

"Forgive me for working to support myself so that I would not be a financial burden to you. Forgive me for attempting to do good to you. Forgive my selfless sacrifice." (Hughes, p. 219).

Paul would not throw his spiritual weight around by demanding that his apostolic gospel preaching be requited financially.

1 Corinthians 9:18
What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Paul could have "soaked" the Corinthians for his services; yet he chose to minister without personally taking a lucrative salary from them.

Paul's refusal to receive financial remuneration from some churches was not because he lacked apostolic "power" (2 Thes. 3:9), but to be an example of diligence and to strip them of any accusation that he served Christ for shekels.

Paul's motive was not filthy lucre (cp. 1 Tim. 3:3; Ti. 1:7). He warned about those who pedaled false teaching for money (Ti. 1:11).

Many Christian singers, speakers and evangelists will not even consider coming to a church to minister without requiring a certain dollar amount in their honorarium. Now, it is understandable that matters like travel expenses and living expenses must be covered; and the Scripture says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5:18), but many ministers seem to live like kings off of God's people. Paul was not this way!

Though it is perfectly Scriptural for a full-time minister to be remunerated for his labor (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; Phil. 4:14), one should not minister for dollars.

The minister's motive must be the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14) and the glory of Christ (1 Cor. 10:31) and not money. As Peter writes, ***1 Peter 5:2***
Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

I think I have discovered at least one reason why so many churches grow to a point and then stop. It is because the pastor's salary is covered and he does not feel the pressure of having to reach more people, as a new church planter would. Rather, the bills are paid, things are comfortable, and there is no carnal reason for ministerial expansion!

III. He was willing to "SPEND and be SPENT" for the souls of others (v.14-15a)

v. 14
"Burdensome" - a financial burden is in view in context

"I seek not yours" – I am not zealous for what belongs to you (i.e. your material possessions), but I am zealous for you (i.e. for your soul and its spiritual prosperity). People, not possessions, are what Paul lived for!

Children don't start savings accounts, college fund accounts, or sign up for life insurance for their parent's sake; rather, parents do so for their children. Paul was the parent (father who planted the Corinthian church) and they were his spiritual children. Therefore, he laid up for their blessing and didn't expect them to do so for him.

He would **"gladly spend and be spent"** lit. for the sake of your souls! (…for your spiritual lives!)

v. 15
As a spiritual parent to the Corinthian church, Paul was willing to give of his resources (**"spend"**) and of himself (**"be spent"**) for their souls!

"Paul willingly spent everything for the Corinthians – all his material resources and all his energies. The price he paid was impoverishment, poor health, premature old age, and as we know, a martyr's death. It was the logic of this example that led the wealthy, privileged Victorian athlete and scholar C.T. Studd, upon graduation from Cambridge, to spend his life in the Congo with this motto: "If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." (Hughes, p. 220)

IV. He was able to LOVE and NOT BE LOVED (v.15b)

Paul would continue to spend his life on the Corinthians. And it would seem that the more he would love them, the less they would love him in return. Such lovelessness would not extinguish his love for them, however. (because he was loving with God's love – unconditional and eternal)

Just as a good parent would love his child, even though the child may not appreciate it, so Paul would love God's children with an unstoppable, inseparable love.

Are you willing to love the unlovely?

V. He ministered to **BUILD UP** and **NOT BURDEN DOWN** (v.16-19)

v. 16

"I caught you with guile" - Answering their accusation that although Paul did not minister for money for himself, he might in a crafty way ask for an offering for others (the Jerusalem church) and then put it in his own pockets. This also was not the case.

". . .from their abundance Paul lined his own pockets. Paul's refusal of Corinthian support was nothing more than a clever psychological ploy to extort more money, they charged." (Hughes, p. 221)

v. 17-18

Neither Paul, nor Titus, nor the unnamed brother who requested an offering for the needy, suffering Jerusalem church would make a personal **"gain"** out of them. There was nothing inconsistent between any of them.

v. 19

Paul's whole discourse about giving (2 Cor. 8-9) and his whole speech about his ministry style and testimony (2 Cor. 10-12:18) were not for the purpose of defending himself, but those words were for their edification!

Paul's personal words in the book of 2 Corinthians had nothing to do with him building himself up in their minds, but rather to teach them spiritual lessons so that their spiritual lives could be enhanced.

Authentic ministry is always about the edification (building up) of others! (cp. 1 Cor. 14; Ephes. 4:12-13).