**SPEND AND BE SPENT**

***Illogical Love***

The apostle Paul so desperately wanted to be loved by his brethren in Corinth. He had spent at least a year and a half in that wicked city trying to rescue these lost souls. At times he must have been very afraid, for Jesus had to come to him in a vision and remind him, “*Do not be afraid, I am with you, for I have many people in this city*” (Ac. 18:9). Through what must have been very trying times he persevered and established a church in this den of iniquity. Just look at who he converted:

*Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* (I Cor. 6:9-11)

Reading the two epistles he wrote to the Corinthians reveals a very strained relationship. He desired so badly to open wide his heart to them, asking them to do the same for him (2 Cor. 6:11-13). His heart was breaking at the thought of their rejection of him. Just look at his heart: *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you”* (2 Cor. 2:4).

Paul just kept giving and giving and giving them his heart, wanting more than anything else to feel their love in return. He longed to be loved by those he had sacrificed so much to save. He even said these extraordinary words that became the motto of his life: “*I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.*” (2 Cor. 12:15).

That phrase, “**I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls**” is the best description of true love I can find in my Bible. It sums up in one short pity statement the description of love found in the famous I Corinthians 13:4-8 passage known by all of us:

*“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.*

Love just gives and gives and gives and gives. It spends until it is spent. It empties itself on the object of the one loved, not thinking for a moment the necessity of being repaid. Love’s happiness is in the giving, not the getting. The satisfying thing about love is not that we get happiness, but that we give it. Just as Paul’s love for the saints at Corinth would have deeply enjoyed being returned with kindness, it didn’t demand it. He would just love them anyway, for he knew that Jesus had loved him when he was so very, very unlovable himself – in fact he was the “*chief of sinners*” (I Tim. 1:15).

My friend Gary Henry wrote in one of his daily devotional books (I highly recommend you read all five of them) these words about sacrificial love:

Our modern concept of love is so self-centered that the idea of love without happiness seems ridiculous. Why would a person love anyone or anything if it didn’t bring him happiness? This, for example, is why marriage is such a transitory, vulnerable thing in our culture. Most spouses now live under something like the following threat from their partners: “If you ever fail to bring me the happiness I think I deserve, then I will be released from any obligation to keep the vows that have guaranteed my love for you.”

Yet there is a higher path we could follow. It’s an old-fashioned path, admittedly. It’s the way of **joy**.  Joy, unlike happiness, does not depend on whether what happens to us is pleasing. It’s not at the mercy of circumstances. Instead, it’s grounded in deep, unchangeable truth. And the love that flows from a joyful commitment to truth will gladly give itself and keep on giving. All it needs is the privilege of singing some part (just any part) in the great chorus that glorifies God. All it wants is that Christ “will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

* *Reaching Forward* – February 1 Love and Happiness? ***Wordpoints.com*** / Daily Devotions

Paul’s love was illogical. It made no sense whatsoever. At a moment you would expect Paul to just wipe the dust from his feet and say, “I’ll no longer cast pearls before swine,” he instead doubles his efforts to save them. He would give more, not less. He would increase, not decrease, his efforts. Full speed ahead!

When Paul said he would very gladly “***spend***” for their souls, he means that literally and figuratively. He would preach to them without charge as a tent-maker, bearing his own expenses (“*we labor, working with our own hands*” – I Cor. 4:12). And he would spend all his time, energy and talents to save them (“*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat*” – I Cor. 4:13).

When Paul said he would very gladly “***be spent***” for them, he means he would give himself to them to the point of exhaustion, even death. His life was to be poured out as a drink offering to save souls (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He beautifully put it this way: “*to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (I Cor. 9:22).

Paul’s love is Christ’s love is God’s love. It is AGAPE love. And it is illogical love. While they decreased their affection for him, he increased his for them. While they stepped back from him, he stepped forward toward them. He was relentless in showing them the same love Christ had shown him. He would not take “no” for an answer. Rejection meant affection in his dictionary. And it should mean the same in ours.

Brethren, while the world, and often even our own brethren, are pushing away from us, it is an illogical reaction to not give up on them. Instead of walking away we must walk toward them. Their soul is at stake and it is up to us to say “**I will very gladly spend and be spent**” for you. Some Corinthians will be in heaven because of Paul’s illogical love. Some in our day will be there too because of our illogical love.

I’ll see you in heaven. – Rick