

Life in the Local Church, Part 6

Selected Scriptures

Another of these is in 1 Peter 4:9, it's one of these service-oriented one another commands. 1 Peter 4:9 says, "Show hospitality to one another," and get this, "Without grumbling." Without grumbling. Anyone who opens their home to others understands this. Allowing people to stay with them, even just having someone over for a meal, there's a lot that goes into that. There's a lot that stretches, hospitality stretches you, it starts to expose your selfishness, and that's where the, without grumbling, thing comes into play. I don't like to see that. That's kind of ugly. You start to look in the mirror of God's Word and realize you've got some growing to do. We need to grow in our selfless service to other people, and Peter says do that by showing hospitality to one another. Look, if you're not inviting anybody into your home, if you're not bringing anybody near, if you're not giving of yourself to them, start to look at yourself in the mirror, ask some hard questions. Why is that? What is it in my life, in my thinking, that is preventing me from showing hospitality?

And we need to embrace the fact, folks, that there is no territory in our lives that is off limits to God and his Word. God has the right, as your Lord, to speak into everything in your life. He can get into your home. He can get into your thinking. Even your thoughts are not your own thoughts. Your feelings, you don't have a right to feel whatever you want to feel.

Now, all those specific commands, all of these are going to grow out, they're going to stem from, they're extensions of Christ's most fundamental command, Love one another. That's why back in Galatians when Paul said, "Bear one another's burdens," he said, "And so fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? It's to love one another. It's to love one another. This attitude of love it's going to produce an action of love. If it's an attitude only, just some warm sentimental thoughts about somebody else, that's not love if it's not accompanied with action. It's got to show action. If there is no action, you know what? There is no love. Jesus said in John 15:12, "This is my commandment that you love one another," and get this, "as I have loved you." His life, his love is an example to us, right?

John 13:34, in fact, turn in your Bibles back to John 13. I want to show you something there, John 13. But as you turn there, listen to this. We want to set Jesus' example before us in how he loved because that's the comparison, "As I have loved you." John 13:34, Jesus said much the same thing. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." And says it again, "just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another." He's getting emphatic about this point. Twice he gave the command, "Love one another." John 13:34, John 15:12, twice he pointed to his own love as the basis of the comparison. That's the standard. You're to love one another "as I have loved you." Right?

If you're there in John 13, let me get there, as well, John 13. Look at John 13, verse 1. I want to show you there. It was before the Feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, so he's, he's anticipating just in a few hours his crucifixion, his arrest, just this kangaroo court of a trial that he went through before Rome, before Herod.

So he knew his hour had come, verse 1, "to depart out of this world, to the father, having loved his own who were in the world," that is, his disciples there, "he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that his father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from the father and was going back to God, he rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him." Stop there. The way Jesus loved is the standard by which we measure our love. That's the example that is our standard set by Christ. We need to love in that way. Verse 1 says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." That's what my translation says there in the ESV. He loved them to the end, *eis telos*. He loved them to the uttermost. He loved them to the fullest extent. He didn't hold anything back in loving them.

The Apostle Paul helps us grasp the significance of what Jesus did there for his disciples that night in the Upper Room. In Philippians 2:5-7, he writes this, "Have this mind among yourselves, which was yours in Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God." Stop there for a second. Though he's "In the form of God." Look there in your text, there, verse 3, John 13:3, "Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands." Jesus has all authority, all power, all honor, all

things are given into Jesus' hands and that he had come from God and he was going back to God. Jesus knew where he had come from, where he was going. He was face-to-face with the father. What does he do?

Philippians 2:5, 6 and 7, "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped," or held onto, or clutched onto, "but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." The Greek word there is *doulos*. He took the form of a slave, a lowly slave. He took up a towel, filled a basin with water, stooped down, washed dirty feet; is that incredible? I mean the, the highest that you can go is God himself and Jesus is God. And he was face-to-face with the father and then he comes down. The lowest you can go is to wash dirty, stinking feet in the Middle East. That's the lowest form of service and slavery. It doesn't seem fitting, does it, to see the Lord of the universe to stoop to take the form of a slave? It doesn't seem fitting, does it, that he would stoop down and wash the filthy feet of proud, dull-hearted, argumentative disciples, but he did. He did.

You know what, Jesus went even further than that. His love was not only demonstrated in the superficial cleansing of dirty feet, but his love became manifest deeply, very deeply in fact,

in the next verse. Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." There's no more humbling, more exposing death than to die on a cross, stretched out, all your power taken away, all your dignity taken away, stripped away, and you're exposed, bare before the watching, mocking world. Jesus' love went to the very bottom of the barrel, dealing with the most profound defilement of mankind, the ugly stain of human sin, your sin, my sin. That sacrifice is our salvation through penal substitution. But that sacrifice has also become our example.

So there in John 13, skip ahead to verse 12. Take a look at verse 12, "When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.'" Stop there. Jesus' command to us to love one another, it's based on his own example of loving us. That's what he said. You should do just as I have done to you. The way Jesus loved is the standard. His example is the example we follow. His example is the goal we continually pursue.

Now clearly, we can't replicate the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. We are utterly unqualified for that. We are eternally, infinitely unqualified for that, but that is the good news of the Gospel. It's not up to us. Turn over to Romans chapter 10, Romans chapter 10, Romans 10 in verse 5, this good news of the Gospel is that it's not up to our striving, it's not up to our attaining, it's not up to our own self-atonement, it's not up to our own good works, it's all up to God. It's up to Christ. He did what we cannot do, and that is the good news of the Gospel. Look what Romans 10:5 says, "For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them." You want to be righteous according to the law? Do all the commandments. Do them perfectly. Do them internally and externally without fail. Don't even falter in one command for one second, even in your thinking. Okay, we've all blown that.

So Moses says, the righteousness is based on the law, if you want to get righteousness based on law, you've got to do everything perfectly. "But," verse 6, here's the good news, "The righteousness based on faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." So don't say in your heart, how am I

going to attain all the law? No, Christ came for that very purpose, to attain the law. He's the one who fulfilled everything on our behalf. Don't say in your heart either, how am I going atone for my own sin? That's to bring Christ up from the dead. You know what? He already did that. So don't try to do that. Don't try to think about that on your own, how am I going to atone for my sin? How am I going to pay the penance or the penalty required? How am I going to do enough good works to atone for my sin, to cover it over? Don't do that. Christ has already been risen from the dead. That means he died as a perfect sacrifice. God raised him from the dead showing his approval of that sacrifice. That's been accomplished. That's been accomplished. Don't try to do this yourself.

"But," verse 8, "what does it say?" What does the Scripture say? This is in Deuteronomy, quoting from Moses, "'The word is near you, it's in your mouth and in your heart.'" That is, the word of faith that we proclaim; because "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." That is just a summary statement of the Gospel right there. As we unpack that, we believe in that, we confess it with our mouth, we profess it, we cling to it; you will be saved. He'll save you. "For with the heart," verse 10, for the heart, "one believes and

is justified," that is, declared righteous by God. "And with the mouth one confesses and is saved." For the Scripture says, 'Everyone,'" that is everyone without exception, "'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Stop there. Do you believe in him? You will not be put to shame. Isn't that a comfort? That's Gospel, folks. That sacrifice by Jesus Christ has already been performed. The fulfillment of God's perfect law has already been accomplished, so don't say in your heart, how am I gonna ascend to heaven with my good works? Don't say in your heart, how am I gonna get down to the very depths below and atone for my sin? Already been accomplished, already been performed, already accomplished, already accepted by God. Trust, believe your redemption has been accomplished. Romans 6:10, "The death he died he died to sin, once for all," one time.

Christ's death on the cross is not a repeatable sacrifice, which is why the Roman Catholic mass is such a blasphemous abomination and a blow against the sufficiency of Christ's perfect atoning death. It offends Jesus Christ whenever the mass is performed. We can't die for someone else's sins. We can't perform this thing over and over. We can't make salvation happen. Only God in Christ could do that, and that said, that said, we still look to Christ's sacrifice as our ultimate example, not of atoning for our own sins, not of atoning for

somebody else's sins, but an example of love. Here's what love looks like. Here's what love did. In serving one another, we look to the sacrificial life and death of Christ. The way he served us has become the gold standard of how we serve one another. Let me ask you, would you be willing to die to save the life of one of your brothers and sisters in Christ? Would you? Look around the room. Look to each other. Look to your right, to your left. Would you die for that Christian man or that Christian woman next to you?

Jesus said John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Serving one another through ultimate sacrifice, giving our lives Christians; would we do that for one another, if push came to shove? Would we do that? Listen, let's lighten it up a little bit here, okay? If we compare our acts of service with the ultimate act of love and service dying for one another, pretty much everything else we could do in the church, is pretty much pales by comparison, right, pretty tame. I mean, sure I'll teach the K-3 Sunday school class, sign me up. I'll clean up after the barbecue. I'll help counsel someone who is struggling in their marriage. I mean no one's shooting at you, right? Get to work. Fine, no problem. Next to giving our lives to serve one another, everything else is just a piece of cake, right?

We can, Galatians 5:13, use our freedom in Christ not for our own pleasure, but to serve one another. We can, Galatians 6:2, bear one another's burdens. Why wouldn't we? We love. We can, 1 Peter 4:9, show hospitality to one another and without grumbling. We can, 1 Peter 4:10, use our gifts to serve one another because we want to be good stewards of the grace God has given to us. Husbands and wives, can, 1 Corinthians 7:5, give themselves to one another fully, intimately, sacrificially. Jesus expects us to humble ourselves in love, to serve one another in love even in the lowliest acts of service. In fact, we could even say, especially in the lowliest acts of service. If you think about it, any act of sacrificial service for one another, this isn't a burden to us. It's a joy. Look, look to Jesus, Hebrews 12:2, "The founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the" what? "joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and he's seated at the right hand of the throne of God." You know what? It all worked out well for Jesus in the end, didn't it? What looked like an ultimate failure was actually an ultimate victory, and Satan didn't know it. He fell right into the trap.

Why did Jesus endure the torture, the cross, the shame, the slander, the mistrial? Why did he go through all that? Joy. For the joy set before him. He knew the joy of pleasing the father,

and he is now experiencing the reward of the father, sitting in the highest place of honor, at the father's right hand. You know people, people serve in the church for all kinds of reasons. Not all of them are good reasons. Some serve to alleviate their guilt, to remove some burden of conscience they have. Some people serve to create a certain perception about themselves. Some people serve to earn favor, they're man-pleasers and so they just want to do whatever somebody says, they want to put themselves under somebody. Some people do it out of pride. They want pride of place, pride of title, pride of influence, whatever. Some people do it out of some kind selfish ambition. Some people just do it out of fear, fearing what God's going to do if they don't or whatever. Jesus doesn't want any of that for us. What Jesus wants for us is to learn to serve like he did, for the joy set before him. Serving one another is the greatest freedom and joy and satisfaction we can ever find in life. And get this, Christ is commanding us to pursue it. He's commanding it, to find our joy in serving one another. So we serve from hearts filled with gratitude in what God has done for us. We serve with hearts filled with joy. We serve because we have compassion on people in need. We love them. We serve out of a desire to please God because we want to obey Christ's commands

and follow his example. Those are all very good reasons to serve one another. There's joy in duty.

Just one quick illustration of that over in Luke's Gospel. It's a simple illustration, very short, but one you might easily miss if you're reading over it quickly. It's a picture of, really, the simplicity of Christians serving one another. This is kind of how it goes. It says that Jesus "arose and he left the synagogue and he entered Simon's house." Simon is Peter, the Apostle Peter. He entered Simons' house, "Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to Jesus on her behalf. And he stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them." How about that?

Peter's mother-in-law here, sick with a fever, which in those days a fever could very easily and very often did lead to death. Jesus heals her. And the text says, immediately, she sat back, relaxed, and got a Pepsi. No, it doesn't say that; "She rose and began to serve them." I mean, interesting reaction, isn't it? She didn't just sit back and relax, get some iced tea and chill. She didn't do that. She jumped up and she started serving. What compelled that? Well, the text doesn't spell it out exactly, but we can fill it in with what we know from the

rest of the New Testament. We can fill it in from what we know from our own experience of having Jesus heal us of every malady, starting with our sin. What, what, what is our reaction? Joy, gratitude, love. When you consider what Jesus has done for you, when you really think about it, what it cost, what he saved you from, what selflessness he demonstrated, don't you want to rise up and serve others, as well? Look, as a church, let's commit to this, to embracing this mindset, which was also in Christ Jesus. Let's do the lowly tasks, stooping low before one another, figuratively speaking, being willing to take one another's dirty feet in hand and wash them with soap and water. Why wouldn't we?

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." For every true Christian, it is not about self. It's about serving Christ. It's about serving each other. We serve Christ by serving each other. We're seeing that right here, folks; such an amazing examples of joyful service and sacrifice. So encouraging to see that. You know what? Excel still more. Excel still more. Main purpose of the church is to make disciples, right? Starts with evangelism, continues with edification. We spread the good seed of the Gospel. We baptize those in whom the Gospel takes root. We teach them so that they'll grow up out of that seed of the Gospel. They'll bear fruit. That's the pattern. We all need to



be involved serving here in the church in the disciple-making process.