

“What True Love Is and Does,” Part 3 - 2 Corinthians 13:7-10 – June 4th, 2017

- Today’s teaching will be part three of a series I’ve titled, “What True Love Is and Does.”
- I have to confess I’ve really been looking forward to today’s text in anticipation of what I believe the Lord has for us as a church.
- For the benefit of those who were not with us on Thursday night, I did a topical teaching after having completed 2nd Chronicles.

- After seeking the Lord in prayer, I sensed the Holy Spirit was leading me to teach on prayer, before studying the book of Ezra.
- As such, we went verse by verse through one of my favorite Psalms, in chapter 6, in a teaching I titled, “The Power of Prayer.”
- By way of introduction, I think it would be good to take a little time to provide you with the back-story of sorts that led up to this.

- Over the last several months, the Lord has been ministering to me concerning the power of simply praying and even fasting.
- I’ve been walking with the Lord for over 35 years and I’m realizing that my prayer life is the most powerful weapon I possess.
- Years ago, I heard Pastor Chuck describe prayer as the deciding factor by way of an illustration of two opponents in a fist fight.

- Back in 1992 Mike Macintosh and Raul Reis produced a video documentary about the Calvary Chapel movement in the 60’s.
- I’ve watched this video several times over the years and one of the things that had really struck me was the centrality of prayer.
- When some of Pastor Chuck’s mentors were asked what they would do differently, their answer was that they would pray more.

- In 1994, a friend gave me a VHS tape of Jim Cymbala speaking at a conference titled, “My House Shall be a House of Prayer.”
- In it he shares very openly and candidly about the power of prayer related to his first-born daughter getting away from the Lord.
- I’ve watched this video, like Venture of Faith, several times, and as a result, they have both had a profound impact on my life.

- Enter the text before us today and with it the Apostle Paul’s example of love for the Christians there in the Corinthian church.
- What we’ve seen up to this point is what’s often called tough love on Paul’s part such that he’s seemingly very harsh with them.
- So much so, he deems it necessary to write them this harsh letter in advance of what will be his third visit to the Corinthians.

1. True love speaks truth to others (Verses 1-3)

- Here, Paul very bluntly tells them that when he comes, he will not spare those who sinned earlier as well as any of the others.

2. True love is honest with others (Verses 4-6)

- Paul in his honesty with them tells them to be honest with themselves by testing themselves as to whether they are in the faith.

3. True love will pray for others (Verses 7-10)

- v7 Paul prays that they won’t do anything wrong not so others see they stood the test, but because they must do what’s right.
- v8-9 He says he cannot do anything against but for truth and he’s glad when he’s weak, as they’re strong, which is his prayer.
- v10 He says why he’s so harsh in writing to them in his absence, so when he comes, he builds them up, not tears them down.

- In order to better understand what Paul is saying here, we first need to view it through the lens of “speaking the truth in love.”
- Here, Paul is speaking the truth in love to them, because of his love for them, which is why and how he prays concerning them.
- It’s for this reason that I would like to take the remainder of our time together today in 2nd Corinthians and talk about prayer.

- It’s my hope that the simplicity of prayer doesn’t lead to the dismissiveness of prayer in the sense that it’s simply talking to God.
- Sadly, many a Christian, and certainly a pastor have unnecessarily complicated prayer and in so doing created prayerlessness.
- This because, seeing prayer as something that’s complicated removes it from being a “get to” and turns it into a “got to” instead.

- I think of Peter, when he took his eyes off of Jesus, this while he miraculously walked on water, and as a result began to sink.
- As he’s sinking, he cries out to the Lord and simply prays a three-word prayer, “Lord save me,” and Jesus answers his prayer.
- As one aptly said, it’s not the length of the prayer; it’s the strength of the prayer. Please know this does not apply to sermons.

- I find it interesting that the disciples never asked Jesus to teach them how to preach; rather, they had asked Jesus how to pray.
- From this we have what’s known as the Lord’s Prayer, which isn’t really the Lord’s Prayer as much as it is a template for prayer.
- Actually, we do have a record of the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospel of John in chapter 17, and I would like to read verses 20-26.

John 17:20–26 (NKJV) — 20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Matthew 5:43–45 (NKJV) — 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- Here’s the bottom line in closing, you can’t stay angry at someone you pray for because Prayer always changes the pray-er.”