

## **Love vs. Power--Love Wins**

### **1 Cor. 13:1-8a**

#### **Introduction**

February is love month, "love weekend." This is important. We talk about love but do not understand it. We love love, but do not live love. Faith is the victory; we need a song that says love is the victory. There is victory in love. Contrast love and power. There are two basic approaches to life--we must use the right one. We are in attitude either individual or collective. Also in leadership. It is true at the house and at the church house. We are still arguing in some places about authority vs. Power. Power is not God's way. Jesus taught as one with authority, Mt. 7:27ff, he had all authority, Mt. 28:18, but power is not God's method. Love has authority, love often has more authority than does power. Power plays should not work. Are we a church of love, or a church of authority? Do not be seduced by power--ever, in any place.

#### **The priority of love**

John 3:16, golden text. What the world needs now is love. What the church needs is love. Here is a paradox. This is the foundation of God's amazing grace. We do not know, we neglect. We must think diligently to get to the foundation of the gospel of the grace of God. This saves us, this keeps us saved. Some in church, year after year, have never heard pure gospel. We must preach the whole counsel of God. We must get beyond pet verses and creedal facts. These are right, but there is more. The gospel is not what man does but what God did. The church which will put Christ on the cross will find its drawing power, it will grow, God will bless. This is not promotions and projects, God cannot bless issues. Go back to the cross, Christ, amazing grace.

*"In history, faith has too often been wielded as a tool to divide, or as an excuse for prejudice or intolerance. There is no doubt that the very nature of faith means that some of our beliefs will never be the same. We read from different texts. We follow different edicts. We subscribe to different accounts of how we came to be here and where we're going next — and some subscribe to no faith at all. But, no matter what we choose to believe, let us remember that there is no religion whose central tenet is hate." — President Obama, at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C.*

What do you hate? Cancer? It ravages, even the treatment is difficult. Wouldn't it be great to find cure, thrilled to announce it to work, every cancer patient can be cured. The news would be on the radio, TV, news. Crowds would hear the announcement, reporters. Shout, sing, praise God. If there were a cure, only one job, to get the patient to the cure. What would we do?

Listen! The cure to every church problem is the cure of God's amazing grace clearly in view. Get people to the cure. What you know and do must not interfere with the cure. The church has a problem because we are more interested in what we know than in getting people to Christ. Luke 19:10 is still in the Bible. This is intriguing. We have greater news than a cure for cancer--there is a cure for sin in the cross of Christ. Jer. 8:22.

The Great Commission is to get sinners to the cure—not to the church building, not to the church roll. I cannot tell you about a cancer cure, but I can tell you about a sin cure. Positive, effective, perfect, available to all. This cure is not from humans, but from God. The work of the church is to get sinners to the cure. The cure will cure, 1 Cor. 15:1-4. Bring men who are ravaged, devastated, frustrated to the foot of the cross. Do it by love, this is the victory.

#### **Love vs. Power**

Psychology catalogs appetites and needs--survival, belong, accomplishment. One strong will is the lust to power. Tenacity and will to control, dominate, rule, have our own way, receive recognition. Christ is the

cure, and he did not come with power although he could have. He refused power, he came to serve, not to be served. Christ is love, 1 John 4:8.

Love and power are opposites. They do not/cannot coexist. When we build the church on Jesus Christ we build on love and caring and compassion.

One place it is easily seen is in our homes. Couples marry on a weekend. One avowed bachelor asked, "Why ruin a perfectly good weekend?" Then the question arises, "Who's going to rule the house?"

Answer is easy for a Christian couple--Jesus Christ. He has all authority.

But catch the significance of this theme: does love or power characterize your home? Mates--the one in the home that loves the most has the least power and the most authority. Here is the solution to child abuse, spousal abuse. Eph. 5:21ff. Submit, love. When that love is in the home and the church, there will not be power struggles. Here is a domicile of love, no power struggles. Perfect love casts out fear, does it in part by casting out power. On the contrary, power casts out love, see it in 1 Cor. 13. This is frustrating.

In counseling, one mate still loves. The second mate feels used, abused. One mate is power, lust, selfish, ego, get own way, indulgent. That destroys a relationship. You cannot live in love when power rules.

Dr. Gary Chapman wrote a book entitled *The Five Love Languages*. Eph. 5:21-32 reflects these, and shows how inconsistent are power and love.

- A. Eph. 5:21-22, submit. Submit is the opposite of selfish power. Each submit out of reverence for Christ. Why? What do we communicate? We communicate love, respect, honor, appreciation. Here is self-worth, significance. Here is encouragement, affirmation. When we submit to one another, when we put others first, when we are able to put someone else before self, we are communicating love. Relationships cannot thrive on selfishness, so submit.
- B. Eph. 5:25, 28-29, commit. When I commit to another, I give up my power. Love is communicated in commitment, attention, spending time. These are important, but the overarching principle from the text is love. Love is the golden chain that binds. This is agape love. Good marriages will have other kinds of love present, friendship, family, sexual, passionate, but this is the foundation.
- C. Eph. 5:25, give self. The greatest gift is the gift of self. Christ gave himself. Here is love. Not just any gift, but costly gifts. Here is self-sacrifice. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Marriages are stronger when we learn the communicating power of genuine giving.
- D. Eph. 5:26, serve. Jesus had a purpose in his giving. He was able in giving self to sanctify, purify, make holy the church. He was about provide cleansing. He was able to make ready for the superb presentation of the church as his bride, ready for the groom, ready in radiance, ready in holiness, without stain, wrinkle, blemish. Here is genuine service, meeting the needs of another. The result is holiness and blamelessness. Love is effectively communicated in acts of service. What do you do that you would rather not do? Think of those you love, how do you communicate that love?
- E. Eph. 5:30-32, touch. Communication of love through touch, connect physically as an indication of other connections shared. Couples have the wonderful joy of connections: social, financial, family, spiritual, emotional, physical. No doubt, one of the major aspects of marriage is the blessing of physical touch. This is within the context of Paul's statement, although he also is challenging to commitment, unity, and togetherness.

## Love and Service

So it is in the church--there are the ins and the outs. The church is not a place for power. Mark 10:45, it is not to be so here. People get frustrated with religion, they will not turn out. Let the church learn to love.

When your kids grow up, let them go. The church is not driven, not power, not rule and regimentation, domination, control. The church is for love that is lived, preached, promoted, 1 John 4:19.

Love is God's only attraction. We live in a society with opposing values. The macho approach is wrong, period! No one has the right to put anyone else down. Do not use, abuse. We must learn this lesson, especially we men. We men do not hug our sons. Something is wrong when we are so macho and power hungry and ruled by the world's thought system that there is no emotion or love. Is it hard to say, I love you. Here is weakness, not strength.

Forgiveness is a demonstration of love. Some forgive and then run over you like a steam roller. We fail, we hurt one another. Some preachers like to scold and whip and spank. You cannot build a person, family, or church on power. You build on love.

Phil. 2:6-11, then vv. 12-16. Jesus demonstrated several things by his love.

- No reputation. We want recognition. Get ego, likes and dislikes out of the church. Vital. Forget ego, pomposity, we do not need a religious reputation. Luke 18, why would you want more religion than someone else. Jesus gave up power, came powerlessly. Came as a 19" Jewish lad in a feed trough. Came in love, not power. Herod was the power king, the Messiah was not. This is not force, coercion. Jesus came to put his arms around the world, weep, die. Didn't call 10,000 angels. John 12:31-33. The nails did not keep Jesus on the cross, God's love did. 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 5:8. Cross demonstrates love, 2 Cor. 5:18-21.
- Unselfish. He was willing to obey.
- Willing to serve, humble.
- He won. Not with an army, angels, or a sword. He won by being lifted up, put down.

## Conclusion

1 Cor. 1:17ff says the cross is the power and wisdom of God. Anything we do on this earth that transcends time has a cross in it. Build a home, develop family, mature life, deny self, daily cross. Also, you cannot build a great church without a cross in it.

We need to put the cross back in our homes, our Christianity. Sacrifice, unselfishness, we cannot build anything of consequence without dedication, sacrifice, cross-bearing.

Jesus Christ had to die to build his church--so do we. Church cannot be what God wants it to be until it is powerless. No power will liberate from the lust of power, from the manacles of man's methods, from the chains of human thought.

People are not looking for a friendly church, they are looking for a friend. This is right. Let's be friends. Then we will be what God desires. Be friends, as individuals. Jesus Christ is the only real friend the world has. The glory of Christianity and the church comes from my friendship and fellowship. Meet the only friend we really have.

What a friend.... John 13:34-35. On the cross, without coercion or manipulation, that is love. Love wins.

Jesus won. We can win. This is profound, Jesus loves me....

God out there loved me, came down here, pick up the towel, wash feet, serve. Be ministers of reconciliation, forgive, forget, unify, work, grow, build together, on love, not power.

Love never fails. It conquers where power fails. It is greater force. The cross stands for love. Fill this place with a sweet spirit, amazing grace. The salt of the earth, the light of the world. Offer the love of God!