

- **\*Read I Corinthians 13:1-3\*** In the middle of a discussion that Paul is having with the Corinthians on the issue of spiritual gifts and their use, the Apostle talks about the manner in which these gifts ought to be used. Really, we could boil it down to the simple idea that Paul is discussing the attitude and motivations behind our use of gifts and our service to others. We have talked multiple times this year about the proper motivations and attitudes that we ought to have when we serve God and those around us. This text specifically mentions that we ought to be motivated by our love for others if we want our service to be pure and pleasing in the eyes of God. The lack of love in our motivations would cause our actions to be empty and void. Therefore, our chief motivation for service ought to be our love for God and others.
- I think it is safe to say that we have a pretty good idea of what our motivations ought to be in our service to God, but what about those things that ought not be our motivations? The truth is that not every motivation to do something is a good motivation. And not every action is automatically good if our motivations are poor according to Paul. So what type of motivations would render our service useless in the eyes of God? This morning as we continue our studies on Serving the Kingdom, let's consider 4 bad motivations for serving God and others.

### **I. We want to be praised by others.**

- A. It might be that we decide to serve God or others because we see an opportunity to better our reputation of character and therefore be praised by others as being a "good person."
- B. It might be that we are people who crave attention and constant complements from others, and we recognize that serving God and others is seen as a good and honorable thing. We might recognize that this would be an easy way to gain that praise that we desire so strongly.
- C. This type of mindset and motivation is completely contrary to what God desires from those who seek to serve Him and call themselves, godly, Christians, or disciples of Jesus Christ. We can come to know exactly how Jesus expects for us to be in regards to our focus in our service with what He says during the great sermon on the mount. **(Matthew 6:1-6)**
- D. Another parable by Jesus in **Luke 18:9-14** puts these concepts from Matthew into very easy to understand and see application. The Pharisee was more concerned about his appearance, while the sinner simply wanted to find the mercy of God. Certainly Jesus recognized the righteousness of one while rejecting the self centeredness of the other.
- E. Our service must be motivated not by self, but it must be motivated by our love for others and God. We ought to desire for God to be praised and not ourselves. **(Matt. 5:13-16 & Phil. 2:3-8)**

### **II. We want to greedily gain something.**

- A. Over the passed few weeks we have dealt with a lot of tension in this country between the general population and those who serve as peace/police officers. One of the chief complaints that some have had during these turbulent times is that those who serve in these positions only do so for the power that they come to possess because of their shield. While it would be foolish to ignore those who only serve with pure intentions, it would be just as foolish to ignore the fact that some individuals do attain to these positions because they do want to come to possess this great power.
- B. As we seek to serve God and others, we must be sure to not seek to serve simply for the power, prestige, or any other benefit that might come with it. Think about some of the positions in which we can serve as Christians. The most noted positions we'd all agree would probably be those that are listed in **Ephesians 4:11-12**.
- C. While there is much due honor that comes with serving in these positions, we must not seek out these positions simply because we desire to gain that which comes along with the position. The position of shepherd certainly does come with a level of power and authority within a local church, but Peter seeks to remind those shepherds who might be reading his letter that they are not to serve simply for power or sordid gain. **(I Peter 5:1-4)**
- D. This means that men who serve in these positions are not to seek to attain to them simply because they want to be able to call the shots or control how things are done. Seeking to serve with these motives will very quickly become evident. These motives will drive those in these positions to do all thing with selfish motives. Again, this is not the will of God. We are to serve voluntarily and with pure motives before Him. Anything else will quickly draw out the wrath of God against us.

### **III. We want to be repaid by those we serve.**

- A. Some would seek to serve God and others simply because they think that in doing so that they will be repaid for their service. They might serve God in hopes that God will grant them good favor because of their service. Some might only serve others with an expectation that those they serve would repay the favor. Instead of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." They live with the idea that "I will do unto others and they must do unto me in the exact same way."
- B. We are all quite familiar with Matthew's version of the beatitudes, but let's take a moment to consider Luke's recording of these famous teachings of Jesus. **(Luke 6:30-35)** Notice that Jesus says that we ought to give without demanding back. We are to treat others the way we want them to treat us. We are to lend (do good/serve) without expecting anything in return.
- C. Jesus expects for His disciples to serve others no matter what. We are to serve others regardless of whether or not they will repay us one day. We are to serve without prejudice. For when we serve with prejudice or when we serve only to expect to receive something in return, then we serve not as Jesus served. We serve with a heart that is shaped by this world and not shaped by our heavenly Father.
- D. We are to do good for the sake of doing good, not just so someone might repay us sometime down the road. Those who serve in this way are not serving for the sake of others but for the sake of themselves. With such, God is not pleased for this is not the way in which Jesus came to serve. **(Phil. 2:3-8)**

### **IV. We want to be accepted by God.**

- A. Sadly, there are some who see discipleship and service to God as a means for God to accept them and therefore be in His good graces so that they might come to have the blessings that are had by those who are children of God. They think that their service will earn them the blessing of being heirs of God's wonderful promises of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- B. Paul obviously had a much different idea about how men are saved. In **Ephesians 2:8-10**, Paul spells out that we are saved solely by grace and not because of works, we cannot earn God's favor through our service. We must recognize that we truly are saved by the perfect grace of God. We must fully accept this and readily admit without any sort of hesitation or clarification. We are saved by God's grace, and not because we serve Him.
- C. Why does Paul stress this to the Ephesians? Notice that he further adds onto the fact that we are saved by grace and not works by saying that part of the reason for this is so that we might not have any opportunity to boast in ourselves. Again, I service to God is not about us. It is about serving God and fully relying on Him. God alone has the power to save us, and we are helpless without Him.
- D. Let me add on, as well, that our service to God still plays a major role in our life on this earth because Paul goes on to say that though we are not saved by works, our works are still important because we were created in Christ Jesus to carry out good works. We were created to serve others. Our service to others doesn't result in our salvation, but because of our salvation we ought to seek to continue to serve God and find those opportunities to serve those who are around us. It isn't about being accepted by God, but honoring God for the amazing gift of grace and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Our motivations play a key part in our service to God and others. When we are pure in heart, intention, and motivation then we can thrive as productive servants in the kingdom of God. But if we fail to be motivated to serve as Jesus served then we will fail in our service. Our selfish intentions will be brought to light, or we will burn out after finally coming to the understanding that no amount of service to God will ever earn us His love and grace. May God help us to have pure hearts as we seek to find the places where we can serve in this life. May we serve well and may we follow the perfect example of our Lord as we seek to live righteous lives that He has called us to live.