

Maple Springs Baptist Church

Series: Re:Solution

Week 3: Nothing & Nobody

Self-improvement What should I do about me? What needs to be done around me? Because if you really want to become a better person, do something to make your world a better place.

What breaks your heart?

Problem: **It's going to cost you some life.**

We are all by nature **life preservers, life savers.**

And then Jesus came along and taught: **Whoever devotes themselves to themselves will have nothing but themselves to show for themselves.** And that's disturbing because at the end of your life, you will have leveraged your life for nothing, but you and Jesus said that is a total loss.

But if you devote yourself to more than yourself, you will have more than yourself to show for yourself. What would you like people to line up at the end of your life and thank you for? If you know the answer to that question, you have begun to discover what it is that really has captured or breaks your heart. All of us are better off because of someone in a previous generation whose heart was broken by something and they acted on it.

We as Christians, we have a tendency, if we're not careful, to substitute devotion for action. To substitute devotion, the vertical, for action, the horizontal. In other words, if we're not careful, we are so content to believe and so content to believe all the right things that we think. You know what? I believe? Jesus is the Son of God. I believe He rose from the dead. I believe the New Testament. I believe, I believe. I believe. I believe all the things I was taught to believe. So me and God are good because I believe all the right.

But then you actually open up the New Testament and ask yourself am I really following Jesus, and suddenly you discover that believing is not enough. Now this isn't a message about how to become a Christian. This is about what would it look like if you decided, instead of simply being categorically a Christian, you stepped out and decided to follow Jesus? Because when you decide to actually follow Jesus, personal devotion is not enough, and belief is not enough.

But **believers are often content to believe something rather than do something.** So maybe we should quit calling ourselves believers and call ourselves doers. In fact, that's exactly what James said & that's exactly what Jesus taught. **MATTHEW 7:26-27.** If you hear these words of mine and don't do anything with them. You're like a foolish man who built his house on the sand, and when the storm came, the whole thing fell down.

Unfortunately, **sometimes we are way more content with simply making the point and making a difference.** And we are really good at making a point, aren't we? We are really good at shaking our fingers at culture. We are really good at shaking our fingers about all the things that are wrong in the world. And we make point after point after point after point, but as

we're about to discover, **if all we do is make points and don't make a difference, we are not good Christ-followers.**

1 Corinthians 13, written by the apostle Paul. Paul was such an important figure in the history of Christendom. Paul was the bridge from Judaism to the Gentiles, and most of us are Gentiles. And just a few years after the death of Jesus, the next thing you know there are Jesus followers and churches in Rome, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, all these major port cities. Suddenly there are churches cropping up everywhere. But there are people who are Jesus followers, and they're not Jews. And the reason is because Paul decided it is not enough to believe this. I got to do something with it. And he visited all of these cities, planted all of these churches, and then wrote them letters to encourage them as time went by.

1 Corinthians 13, Paul says some extraordinarily disturbing things. So if you're a Christian and you are not disturbed by the end of the message, I have not been clear because these are very, very disturbing, disconcerting words. If you're not a Christian, you got to love this because this is the reason you resist Christianity, I guarantee, or at least it's part of it.

Paul has just finished in the previous chapters talking about giftedness—the things that God allows a person to be good at to build His church. And then he addresses those who think that God is impressed with devotion. He addresses those of us who basically think that God is all impressed with what we know as opposed to what we do. And so he says in these verses, **put some motion in your devotion.** He says it is not enough to believe. It is not enough to be right. It is not enough to be correct. You've got to do something with what you know otherwise, and what he says on the other side of the otherwise is what's so disturbing.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1. Now what he's saying is, if I had this supernatural ability to speak in different and multiple languages, so people from different parts of the world could understand me because I could speak in their language and it was a supernatural gift. Let's imagine that I was so connected to God that God gave me the ability to speak multiple languages and He even taught me or I was even enabled to speak to angels in angel language, but I don't have love. Now this is that Greek word agape—that action oriented, other centered love. It's the doing love. It's the love where you actually do something instead of just talk about it. He says if I had this extraordinary connection with God, the most intimate, awe inspiring prayer life and connection with God, but I don't do something as it relates to loving other people I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. I'm just a bunch of noise.

But Paul, how can you say that? To which he would say, **if there's no love for others, then it's all about me.** So Paul, are you discounting the importance of devotion to God?

What I'm discounting is trying to measure your devotion to God by this vertical thing and ignoring the horizontal thing. Because if you stop short of devotion to God with personal prayer life sincere, gooey tears during the worship songs, both hands in the air, full on worship. If it stops there, as important and as necessary as that is, if it stops there you need to understand from God's perspective it's just noise.

Then he goes on. **1 CORINTHIANS 13:2.** In other words, he says, even if you're one of those Christians who's got it all figured out. There's a verse for that. There's a verse for that. There's a verse for that. There's a verse for that. There's a verse for that. If you're one of those people

who you study and study and study and you've got it all figured out. I mean you, you just got it all figured out. You know the Old Testament, the New Testament. You just know it all. I mean, if anybody wants to know anything about God and the Bible and Jesus and Christianity, you are the Bible answer man. In other words, you're deep. You're so into it. Even if you, are so educated and knowledgeable that you can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge to what the Bible says.

No, I'm not saying it's not important. I'm just saying if you stop with that, it's still all about you.

And you're so confident and you have to be right. You're the person that can move God, BUT you do not have love...

I'm not saying it's not important. I'm just saying it's incomplete. I mean, you may be the most spiritually minded, experienced person or the most biblically knowledgeable, or both. And you may be a person that when you get up and speak, people are confident because your faith. Your faith in God is so stinking big that everybody just latches on to it and goes in the direction you want them to go. Paul says, even if you're that person, but you do not express yourself in unconditional, servant-oriented, others-oriented love. Now this is the offensive part. He says you are nothing.

Nothing is the Greek word **outhen: I am no one, of no importance**. He says you may be the Bible answer man, you may pray prayers that just are spellbinding, and you may be the most ferocious faith filled leader in the world, but if you don't have love, you're **outhen, nobody, meaningless**. It's no good because it doesn't do anybody any good. Going back to last week, you lacked purpose. Because your experience isn't enough. Your knowledge isn't enough. And then he says not even your public demonstrations of religion are enough to move God. He says, Christians, if you are content making a point but never make a difference, do not think for a moment your Heavenly Father is impressed with you.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:3. If I do something like big and demonstrative, like I'm going to give everything I have to the poor. Once again, the emphasis is on the giver, not the receiver. And then to make his point, he goes like completely outside the realm of reality and give over my body to hardship that I may boast—your translation may say: “And if I give my body to be burned.” He's saying, first of all, if I give away everything I have to the poor, and then I'm not satisfied, so I sell myself into slavery, when they give me the money for me, I give that away too. In other words, if I'm the most demonstratively generous person in the history of generosity. I sold myself into slavery so I could give more money away, but I do not have love, I gained nothing. Different Greek word **Ouden**: nothing, of no importance.

He says no matter what you do, no matter what you know and no matter what you've experienced, if there is not some part of you where you are wading into the messiness of other people to help other people, you are **Ouden** and **Outhen** you are nothing and you are worthless. And your faith has no value because it's all about you.

Don't measure your devotion to God in terms of what you do for you only because it is good. And it is good, but it's **good for nothing**.

Here's his point. Devotion to God does not stop at moral behavioral perfection. Devotion to God doesn't stop at sinlessness. Devotion to God does not end with I have a clear conscience. Devotion to God isn't measured in terms of "God, I made it through the whole day and didn't sin. God. I made it to the whole day and I didn't have a drink." I mean, that's great.

But if all you do is make you a better you, but it goes no further than you, you're nothing more than an annoying version of you. Now that's hard, isn't it? You've got to **put your devotion in motion.** This is Christianity, this is it, this is the essence. This is where the there's a fork in the. **Devotion to God is authenticated by love for others, not love for God.**

When our faith goes no further than private internal devotion, when our faith stops with my attempt to be more godly, our message to the world is: **We know it all and we're better than y'all.**

When we get confused and think that our devotion to God is to be measured in terms that only come back to How am I doing? And am I breaking my habits? Am I getting my life together? When it ends there, then our message to the world is basically we know it all. Come join us and you can know it all too. And we're better than y'all.

That's why Paul said it's good, it's important. It's just not enough. And if you don't love outside your comfort zone, your **Ouden & Outhen.**

What are you most grateful for? God's sinless perfection. ... Is that what you're most grateful for about God? The answer is no. Because the second option is this: **God's sacrificial intervention.** That's what we sing about. That's what we worship about. That's what brings tears to our eyes. It is God's action. It's His doing. And here's why this is important, because if you're a Jesus follower, then we must follow Jesus into that. What we celebrate as Christians at the epicenter of the gospel is not that God believed something, but that God did something. And your devotion to God is incomplete until we put motion with our devotion. Because your devotion to God is authenticated to God and to others by your love for others.

Jesus says you want to be my follower. It's a new day because you can no longer rate, engage, and measure your devotion to God vertically. It's horizontal. Nobody has resisted the church because the church loved too much, because we were too welcoming, because we were so willing to carry other people's burdens, because we're so forgiving and so open and so gracious. What people find easy to resist about Christians is that we know it all, and we're better than y'all. And Paul said if that's your Christianity, if that's your approach to following Jesus—it's **Outhen & Ouden.** You're nothing. Because it doesn't do anyone any good.

So that means we have to step out of what's comfortable for us. And that brings us back to our question. What breaks your heart? And are you willing to put some motion in your devotion?

You don't have to quit your job, but you're probably going to have to quit something. You don't have to leave the country, but you will have to leave your comfort zone. You don't have to give all your money away, but you're probably going to have to start giving more than you currently give. And I hope this bothers you until you do something because you have no idea what hangs in the balance of your decision to embrace the burden that God has placed in your heart. And the only way to discover what hangs in the balance is to decide that it's not just

going to be vertical from now on. You're going horizontal. You're going to find a way to actively love the people who are in the situation that breaks your heart, because as Jesus taught in unmistakable terms, it is doing, not believing, that makes the difference. It is doing, not simply believing that changes the world.

So what breaks your heart? And are you willing to do something? About it. And when you do, and when you do what, you will discover that your **resolution becomes a solution**. And when your new resolution becomes a solution you will have discovered purpose. And once you've tasted purpose, you will never ever go back. What breaks Your Heart?