

RESOLUTIONS: Part three Pro-Motion.

RECAP:

- Been looking at the New Year and the questions we ask.
- **It's a season of self-improvement** & the big question is *'What can I do about me?'*
- **But we've been asking a better question** *"What needs to be done around me?"*
- **Because** if you really want to become a better person- do something to make the world a better place.
- And the question that helps us do this is: *'What breaks your heart?'*
- **But last week** we highlighted a problem - if you start doing something about that- *it will cost you some life-* and we are all by nature *'life preservers.'*
- **But then Jesus came to our rescue** to remind us- *"Whoever devotes themselves to themselves will have nothing but themselves to show for themselves"*- and none of us wants that to be true of us!

Most of what we've said so far applies to everybody (Not specifically Xian).

- Examples of people of faith & no faith making the world a better place- spending their life on that.
- But if you are a Christian- there's a part of this that's really important for you to understand.
- Because as Christians- **We have a tendency to substitute devotion for action.**
- We can easily substitute Devotion (the vertical) for action (the horizontal).
- We can be devoted to believing all the right things (Person of Jesus- meaning of the cross/resurrection) & you think that because you believe- you and God are GOOD.

Believers are often content to believe something rather than do something.

- But if you open up the New testament- you discover that believing is not enough (I'm not talking about becoming a Christian).
- To 'follow Jesus' demands more than belief and personal devotion (important though they are).
- **Jesus said-** 'If you hear these words of mine, but don't DO anything with them, you're like a foolish man who built his house on sand- and eventually the whole thing falls down.'
- **Too often-** Christians are content merely 'making a point' rather than 'making a difference':
- **They often say about us evangelicals-** we're known for all the things we don't like- not the things we do.
- And we make point after point about what's wrong with the world.
- But if that's all we do- and never make a difference in the world- we're not following Jesus.

Turn with me to one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. It's your wedding text! 1 Corinthians 13.

- This was written by a man called Paul.
- Now a few years after Jesus death and resurrection (AD 70). Churches sprang up all over the Roman Empire.
- The reason was- Paul realized- "It is not enough just for me to believe this- I've got to do something with it."
- So in an age when sea travel was long and dangerous- he travelled to ports and cities, planting churches.
- 1 Corinthians is a letter he later wrote to one of those churches.
- If you're a Christian- these are challenging- disturbing words.
- And if you're not a Christian- you're going to love this- because this is the reason you resist the Christian faith.

Paul's addressing people here who think that God is more concerned with devotion than motion. What we know- rather than what we do. Here's what he says.

**PUT SOME MOTION
IN YOUR DEVOTION**

Christians! It is not enough to believe- it is not enough to be right- it is not enough to be correct. You have to do something about what you know.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

He's saying-

- if I was so connected to God- I had the ability- not only to speak all human language- but also supernatural- angelic language-
- If when I opened my mouth to pray- other mouths hung open in amazement-
- But If I don't love (Agape- action-centered- other orientated- 'doing' love)- I'm just noise. Because if there's no love for others- in the end it's all about me.
- **Is Paul discounting devotion to God?** 'NO!' What he's discounting is stopping there.
- Because if you worship God- both hands in the air- tears in your eyes- even worshipping in the tongues of angels- but it stops there- from God's perspective- that's just noise.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge

Now he's having a go at people like me- Those of us who say- 'There's a verse for that'- those of us who've studied God's word- the teachers and preachers and home group leaders among us. The doctrine experts.

- **Is Paul discounting biblical knowledge and doctrine?** NO! He's saying if I stop at 'being right' & 'knowing answers'- it's really just all about me.

And if I have faith that can move mountains,

Now he's talking to those people that speak so confidently, everyone thinks what they're saying is coming from the mouth of God.

People who are extremely confident 'they know what God wants'

Is Paul saying faith isn't important? NO! He's just saying that faith alone is incomplete.

He's saying- If all these abilities and strengths do not express themselves in 'other orientated' 'unconditional' 'servant hearted' 'active' love.....(here's the offensive bit...)

I am (you are) nothing.

It's no good- because it doesn't do anybody else any good.

- Fellow Christian: If you are content making a point- but never making a difference- do not think that your heavenly father is impressed with you.
- This is God's verdict on those who put no motion into their devotion.

Then he goes off the chart with Hyperbolae (Exaggerating to make a point).

If I give all I possess to the poor

This isn't about tithing- Let's say I go out and do something monumental- some grandiose public gesture (which draws attention to the giver).

and give over my body to hardship that I may boast

So I sell my self into slavery and give that money away too! And I get voted the most generous person 2016.

but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Paul says- No matter how much you know- no matter how much you do- no matter how devoted you appear- if you are doing nothing about making others lives better. You're nothing and no one- because it's really all about you.

Come on God! I've just managed to keep my quiet time going for three weeks straight- didn't you see that?

God says- that's good- don't stop doing that- but don't fool yourself into thinking that's enough. Cause if it stops there- it's just about you.

Don't measure your devotion to God in terms of just what benefits you.

It is good (and it is good), but it's good for NOTHING.

Here's a modern version of Paul's passage.

If I raise perfect children,

Maintain the perfect schedule

And maintain my ideal weight

But do not have love...

I'm just a car alarm at 6:30 on Saturday morning.

If I drive an electric car,
Wear TOMS, and decline to drink anything
That isn't fair trade, But do not have love...
I'm nothing more than an annoying ringtone
In a crowded cinema.

If I take my family to the holy land
And leave new testaments in every hotel room
On the way, but do not have love...
I am nothing more than a teenage girl's
iTunes playlist.

Here's Paul's point:

- Devotion to God does not stop at moral behavioral perfection
- Devotion to God doesn't stop at a clear conscience
- Devotion to God is not measured in sentences that include "God did you notice *"I didn't- I didn't- I didn't"*
- Or "God did you notice that *'I did'- 'I did'- 'I did'*" (sentences where the focus is "I" and "Me")
- Paul says- do all that- that's good- but it's not good enough to stop there.

Because if all you do is make a better you,
But it goes no further than you
You're nothing more than
An annoying version of you.

This is hard isn't it

- But this is coming from the guy who used to pride himself on all this stuff.
- He devoted his life into making himself a better version of himself.
- And then something wonderful happened. He met Jesus.
- **Paul says- You have to put your devotion in motion.** Because if it's not in motion- it's not devotional at all.

Real devotion to God is authenticated by love for others.

- This is the fork in the road at which all other faiths part ways from the Christian faith.
- And this is where we owe a huge apology- to all those Non-Christians out there.
- Because we've communicated TOO OFTEN- that being a Christian is all about being sinless, and not having any bad habits.
- Because you grew up being told- go to bed at night and pray for forgiveness.
- And we spent our devotional time thinking of ourselves and our sins and how to be a better person.

Here's the deal:

- When our faith goes no further than **personal devotion.**
- When our faith goes no further than "**How am I doing God?**"

- Our message to the world is this.

**We know it all
We're better than you all**

- So the barrier to people coming to Jesus isn't Jesus- it's us.
- I Know that's true- know why?
- Because Jesus is irresistible! Who would resist grace (undeserved- favour)? Who would resist his love? (Unconditional love?). Who could resist Jesus when he says- I love you as you are
- Anything people are resisting about Jesus- probably isn't about Jesus- it must be us they're resisting?!
- If you stop at 'personal improvement'- then our message to the world is not Jesus message to the world.
- If you don't love- sacrificial- selfless- active focus on others- you've missed it.
- Because that's why you love Jesus isn't it- because he first loved you.
- And other people will too- if we love them like Jesus has loved us.

So- Let's get practical - Lent 2016

- Don't give up chocolate- coffee- TV (That's all good- but it's not good enough- All self improvement again)
- **This lent- Love others- 40 acts VIDEO**