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Sermon Notes

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Love is Not Self-Seeking

1 Corinthians 13:5

1 Corinthians 13:5 Love is not self-seeking

As we continue our study in this magnificent chapter, we come to another negative description of the supernatural love that the grace of the gospel works in all true Christians... “Love is not self-seeking” or simply... “Love is not selfish”

As we look at this one assertion, you may well wonder why I think it worthwhile to spend an entire sermon on this one small phrase. But I consider this topic – love – to be the goal of our salvation, in terms of the massive change that God works on the human heart. He moves us from being fanatically committed to selfish interests, a selfish mindset, a selfish lifestyle... to finding the perfect fulfillment of ourselves in love for God and for others. To be set free into a perfectly loving frame of mind and heart... that is where all of us are headed in heaven. And this may be the hardest part of our salvation, for from birth we have had the monster of selfishness raging within our souls

To learn to DENY yourself daily... and to do so willingly and with delight for the pleasure of God and for the benefit of others... this is the hardest work there is, and the most glorious. It was for this very reason the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write each of these words two thousand years ago, and the same Holy Spirit wants to work them in all of us today. And since this is no light work, we must not hurry quickly through it.

Every Easter, our family takes hardboiled eggs and dyes them various pastel colors, as many of you do. And no doubt you

have noticed that the longer you immerse the white egg in the purple dye, the deeper the hue when it comes out. If you dip the egg in and pull it right out, it will be dripping with the dye, but it will all run off the surface – the eggshell is unchanged. But for the dye to permeate deeply into the cellular structure of the eggshell, it needs to be immersed in the purple dye for a long time. So it is with the minds and hearts as we study the scripture... we are called on to meditate deeply, and let the words permeate into the depths of our beings, so that we will be colored permanently with the rich deep purple color of God's perfect love.

And it is even more difficult in that our hearts are naturally resistant to this message. We are staggeringly selfish. Stunningly selfish. And we hardly see it, hardly realize it.

A number of years ago, I was preaching on Matthew 16

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

To show how difficult it is to obey this command to DENY OURSELVES, I began that sermon with two illustrations... the Alaska King Salmon and the extreme rock climber.

One of the most awe-inspiring journeys in nature is that of the **Alaska King Salmon**

Born in some small stream, perhaps a tiny tributary of a larger stream in Alaska, a King Salmon will swim downstream to the Pacific Ocean, actually acclimating to a salt water existence from the fresh water in which they were born. They swim as far as 2000 miles in the Pacific and Bering Seas as they reach full maturity.

In the summer of their maturity, inner instinct and earth cues guide them back not only to their parent stream, but back to the exact tributary in which they were born.

The journey upstream is an arduous one. The fish batter themselves against rocks while leaping waterfalls. Unlucky ones are eaten by bears and eagles. A great amount of energy is expended in the swim upstream. Salmon in the Yukon River swim up to 2400 miles. Salmon stop eating once they enter fresh water, so their bodies are steadily being depleted of fat. 90 percent of their fat reserves and 50 percent of their protein are consumed in this upstream journey.

After this astonishing journey, the King Salmon reproduce, then die within a week

Who of us has not seen incredible pictures of a King Salmon jumping UPSTREAM against the pounding whitewater of a significant waterfall in northern Alaska? Truly amazing

The King Salmon defies the overwhelming power of Alaskan whitewater every mile of its journey upstream

BUT YET it is NATURAL... all the salmon do it

Jesus Christ is calling His disciples to follow Him in a SUPERNATURAL journey

The Christian life is truly a supernatural life. It cannot be lived in the simple strength of human power – not physical power, not willpower, not mental power... no human power is sufficient to follow Christ for one day.

Why is this? Because Christ calls on us to **deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him** if we wish to go to heaven.

The constant battle against the raging flow of the pounding whitewater represents the difficulty of the journey of discipleship – to learn every single day to say no to selfishness and to love God and others.

It is the same as the journey up the El Capitan or the Eiger Northface made by a rock climber... every single moment, gravity is

fighting the ascent; every move the rock climber makes is against his own weight pulling him down to the valley below.

So it is when we come to the command to love God and love others with a perfectly SELFLESS LOVE

My mentor, my guide here again is Jonathan Edwards... *Charity and Its Fruits*. I am shamelessly borrowing his insights and outline and supporting scriptures. Some of you who are John Piper fans will also recognize some themes from *Desiring God* as well, but Piper will tell you plainly he got those ideas from Edwards

Context:

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, a church deeply divided by factions and selfishness and pride. He is addressing spiritual gifts, which are special abilities given by God through the Holy Spirit that enables each member of the church of Jesus Christ to play a special role in the building of the church to full maturity in Christ. These spiritual gifts, including prophecy, tongues, administration, giving, service, faith, healing, etc. were powerfully active in the Corinthian church. But the people were PRIDEFUL about their gifts, and ironically the gifts ended up dividing rather than uniting the church. So in the middle of describing the gifts by way of analogy (using the human body – one body, many members), he has to address their heart attitude...

1 Corinthians 12:31 And now I will show you the most excellent way.

LOVE is the most excellent way!

Even the most incredible displays of the spiritual gifts are WORTHLESS without genuine love as their motive:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Then, he gives fifteen descriptions of love – some positive (what love IS), most negative (what love IS NOT). We have already begun to look at some of these:

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude

Love is patient = long-suffering; willing to put up for a long time with provocations, attacks, insults, sins... like God does with us

Love is kind = eager to do good – acts of kindness with a kind demeanor... a basic moral GOODNESS resulting in gentle acts of service

Love does not envy = not jealous over the blessings and prosperity that God chooses to give to others, but actually delights in the other person having those blessings and that prosperity

Love does not boast, love is not proud = Love sees every blessing and prosperity we have not as ground to feel superior to others, but as pipelines by which we can bless others... love is essentially HUMBLE... true humility before God results in love toward others, not being puffed up with yourself

Love is not rude = basic manners; not shoving yourself forward; thinking of the effects of your actions on the people around you; the word means to defy moral standards; it certainly includes table manners, holding the door for others, not interrupting, not talking too loudly on the cellphone in a public place... but it extends to a whole worldview of blessing people around you with your behavior

Now, we want to zero in on this one negative statement: LOVE DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN... that is a literal translation; or more commonly, love is not SELFISH

Adam at creation:

The devastating ruin on the souls people began with the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam fell from the moral perfection in which he was created. His heart was corrupted with sin. His

heart was designed to LOVE, to expand to the dimensions of God's own character and God's magnificent actions in creation... to see the greatness of God and to love him; and to see the beauty of all creation, including other people, and to love all of those creatures... especially other human beings, because they were the most perfect displays of God's nature... created in his image and his likeness. Man's heart was made to swell and expand with love in whatever he knew and studied and learned and explored and discovered. To love God in all of it.

But sin acted as a terrible ASTRINGENT... it caused man's heart to shrivel within itself and to contract and to pull inward to a shocking dimension of smallness and narrowness... confined WITHIN HIMSELF

Self-love became the master of the soul of man... and Adam's children were born under that cursed condition; made in his likeness and image in corruption.

But God in his infinite mercy has chosen to enter into man's selfishness and misery, and to heal us by the gospel of his blessed Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He sent his Son into the world to liberate us from sin, and for our purposes here today, to set us FREE from fanatical commitment to seeking self, from selfishness.

This gospel of Jesus Christ will be perfectly victorious in the hearts and lives of the elect, and will save us all from sin. It will bring us in the end to a perfect world of love in which our hearts will expand again and for all eternity to appreciate the dimensions of the perfections of God and of the greatness of his works. We will LOVE PERFECTLY in heaven. But by the deposit of the Spirit, we can LOVE MORE AND MORE PERFECTLY NOW... as we learn to put selfishness to death.

I. What Selfishness Does Love Oppose?

A. Important Disclaimer: Christian Love is Not Opposed to All Self-love

1. Christianity does not cause human beings to cease loving themselves entirely or in all respects
2. Christianity does not tell you to stop trying to be happy or blessed or delighted
3. If Christianity were to do that, it would destroy our very humanity itself... we would cease to be in the image of God, for God made our hearts to love ourselves
4. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born into the world, angels were dispatched to make this announcement

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men

5. This does not destroy our desire for this kind of blessing, but greatly enhances and fulfills it
6. For indeed, the saints and the angels in heaven are perfectly happy, and God is delighted to have them happy
7. God is NOT a “cosmic kill-joy” leaning over the parapets of heaven and seeing any human being feeling any happiness whatsoever and yelling with a grumpy voice: “CUT THAT OUT!”
8. Like the grumpy giant in Jack and the Beanstalk, stomping around his heavenly kingdom forever angry saying “Fee fie fo fum...”
9. Actually, the true cosmic kill-joy is Satan and sin

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

10. The fact that God still desires, even commands self-love is that he uses it in the Old Covenant as a measure of how we should love others

Matthew 22:39 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

11. If God hated our self-love, why would he use it so clearly as the measure of all our love to others
12. Notice also that the command does not say we should love our neighbor MORE THAN ourselves but AS ourselves
13. All the commands and promises and blessings of the Bible appeal to a healthy principle of self-love
 - a. God doesn't want us to experience the misery that sin will bring upon us
 - b. He appeals to our self-love to CHOOSE LIFE rather than death
 - c. The gospel appeals to our desire to be happy

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand

The saints in heaven will spend eternity swimming in a sea of pleasure, an ocean of happiness... they will love their own happiness to a level we can scarcely comprehend; so if self-love were evil, why would God so perfect it in heaven? He appeals to us to find perfect happiness for ourselves in heaven

- d. Even this same chapter appeals to a healthy self-love

1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing

The Holy Spirit is saying, "If you don't want to GAIN NOTHING from all your sacrifices on earth, be sure that you do them in love"

Furthermore, we all know instinctively that for an action to be loving, the person doing it must be GLAD and have some pleasure in doing it...

John Piper: A husband giving his wife "dutiful roses" for their anniversary, who says "I want you to know I get no pleasure at all out of giving you these" is likely to get them thrown back at him! She wants him to ENJOY giving the gift, or its no gift at all

So also a little girl who really loves her daddy is coloring a picture for him for his birthday and humming to herself with the anticipation of the happiness it will bring her to give it to him. Her heart is wrapped up in his pleasure and in the gift.

So... Christian love is not opposed to ALL self-love.

Then what kind of self-love IS Christian love opposed to?

B. Christian Love is Opposed to Unhealthy or Inordinate Self-Love

1. Sin has twisted our hearts and made them sick
2. So the healthy self-love which is essential to our very humanity is twisted to become unhealthy and INORDINATE... inordinate means out of proportion, beyond boundaries, imbalanced, grotesque... like a TUMOR, which is filled with living cells multiplying inordinately, becoming larger and larger and larger until it kills the body
3. So, FIRST, the self-love Christian love is opposed to is love which find our own happiness in a way that is CONFINED to SELF to the EXCLUSION of others; love is not self-seeking means a love that is limited to itself, pushing everyone to the side

2 Timothy 3:1-4 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

4. Now, healthy mature Christians can imitate Christ in pursuing their own love relentlessly in seeking the Kingdom of God and the salvation and blessing of others... Christ did that—it brought him GOOD PLEASURE to give people the Kingdom of God; he was delighted to heal people, to feed them, to tell them the truth, to see demon-possessed people set free, to bring in tax collectors and sinners into the Kingdom... he was not detached and emotionless in all this... he rejoiced with a joy that reached heaven. So also his most mature and loving followers relentlessly pursue their own happiness... but it is always in doing what pleases God and blesses others

By contrast, the selfishness this verse is opposed to is like that of Ebenezer Scrooge:

“He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire.”

His pleasure in money was a perfect display of idolatry... he loved it to the utmost as a creature, without any delight in the God who gave it or in the people it should bless

So also any recluse addict, binging on electronic entertainment, or drowning his sorrows in drugs or alcohol, or a porn addict alone in the dark, or a glutton who eats alone, stuffing the face with rich foods... it is a totally SELF-FOCUSED pursuit of the pleasure of the senses, without any vertical love toward God or horizontal love for others

As Edwards said:

“A Christian spirit is contrary to that selfish spirit which consists in the self-love that goes out after such objects as are confined and limited — such as a man's worldly wealth, or the honor that consists in a man's being set up higher in the world than his neighbors, or his own worldly ease and convenience, or his pleasing and gratifying his own bodily appetites and lusts.”

The wicked selfishness of that heart is to find love in those creaturely things with NO RELATIONSHIP to anyone else

C.

II. How Christian Love Opposes Selfishness

A. The Work of Salvation Moves Us to Seek and Glorify God, and to Seek the Good of Others

1. When the Holy Spirit works salvation in us, he expands our constricted inwardly self-focused sinful hearts first UPWARD

2. We see the beauty and the perfection and the glory of God and move up toward him; we are reconciled to him and delight in him... we are moving UPWARD toward our heavenly Father
3. Essential to that is a growing desire to PLEASE HIM; we increasingly realize that we should desire nothing on earth that does not please God; we would not have the whole world, and love our souls; we would not have a golden bed of pleasure if we knew God were displeased with it
4. Beyond that, we move out also to seek to please and bless other people; we move OUTWARD! We yearn to be a blessing to other people
 - a. We desire to alleviate suffering and bring blessing
 - b. This is especially true when it comes to eternity; we do not want anyone we know to spend eternity in hell's torments or to miss heaven's pleasures
 - c. Many commands show this outward movement from narrow selfishness to expansive love

Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

1 Corinthians 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others

1 Corinthians 10:33 I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved

Romans 15:2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up

5. The Grace of God in Christ works a deeply sympathizing and merciful spirit in Christians
 - a. Selfish people make much of their own sufferings and afflictions as if no one on earth has ever suffered like they are

- b. Conversely selfish people who are not suffering do not have their hearts move out toward those who are to spare their own time, energy or money to alleviate that suffering
- c. But the grace of God heals us from that narrow selfishness and causes us more and more to see the suffering and to make suitable sacrifices to alleviate that suffering
- d. Christian love takes delight in supplying their needs and bringing them comfort

James 3:17 The wisdom that comes from heaven is ... full of mercy and good fruit

- e. The work of grace in Christians causes us to be generous toward the afflicted... to promote their welfare AS WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
- f. Edwards: Christian love is also civic-minded

“A man of a right spirit is not a man of narrow and private views, but is greatly interested and concerned for the good of the community to which he belongs, and particularly of the city or village in which he resides, and for the true welfare of the society of which he is a member”

Jeremiah 29:7 Seek the welfare of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the LORD on its behalf, for when it has prosperity, you will prosper

- g. Christian love will also grieve over the spiritual condition of the lost

Amos 6:6 You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph

Psalm 119:136 Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.

- i) Moses begged and interceded for the sinful Jewish nation and was willing to die that they might live
- ii) Jesus wept over the lostness of Jerusalem

iii) Paul wept with deep sorrow and unceasing anguish over the lost in Israel and was willing to trade his salvation that they might be saved

h. So Christian love will increasingly be willing to make sacrifices for the salvation of the lost... willing to take on persecution, sorrow, deprivations, loss, disease, pain... even death... so that the lost might be saved

B. So the Spirit of Christian Love Moves Us to Make Sacrifices for Others

Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1. This is clearly the opposite of the spirit of Scooge... the stingy, grasping, greedy, selfish spirit
2. Instead, it looks at all earthly blessings as an opportunity to bring pleasure to God by sacrificially giving it to others

III. Evidence That Christian Love Must Oppose Selfishness

A. The Nature of Love Itself

1. Love by its very nature moves outward, it diffuses to those around, it embraces the interests of others

Imagine how bizarre a wedding would be in which the couple didn't look at each other, talk to each other, interact in any way, but each stared incessantly in a mirror – the woman in her spectacular flowing white wedding dress and perfectly coiffed hair with radiant makeup; the man with his expensive black silk tuxedo. Each of them totally self-absorbed. Not talking to any guests either. HOW WEIRD. Love is meant to go outward and it finds its perfect delight in being shared with others...

C.S. Lewis, "A Word About Praising"

all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise ... The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. And just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: “Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?”

Bottom line... love is meant to spill out to others and include them in it

B. The Specific Nature of Christian Love as Opposed to Worldly Counterfeits

1. In the world, non-Christians have a principle of selfishness in everything they do
 - a. It is because people love themselves that they join clubs in which they are with people who love what they do... whose interests and honors are linked with their own... **MUTUAL ADMIRATION SOCIETIES**
 - b. Sometimes in non-Christian friendships, they give expecting to get back...
 - c. Back in the days of the Bible Belt, people would even join the biggest church in town for the sake of self-interest—making societal connections or business connections; they are in these relationships for ultimately **SELFISH** reasons
2. But Christian love is unique... it is **SUPERNATURAL**

Edwards called it “a plant transplanted into the soul out of the garden of heaven, by the holy and blessed Spirit of God, and so it has its life in God, not in self.

3. Thus Christian love soars high above all lowly motives and selfish connections

- a. This is especially seen in God's love for his enemies... his lavish generosity to the unthankful and evil...

Matthew 5:45 He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- b. Christian love moves us to the same pattern; to make great sacrifices for even those who are most hostile to us

Jesus said there's no special merit in loving those who love you... even the pagans and the tax collectors do that; but rather that we should

Luke 6:27-29 Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

Acts 7:60 Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep

Luke 14:13-14 when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

4. Christian love causes us to lay out banquets for people who will never repay us...

Luke 14:13-14 when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

C. The Perfect Fulfillment of the Two Great Commandments

1. The first and greatest commandment...

Matthew 22:37 "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Those who love God properly must devote themselves to him TOTALLY... they devote everything they are, all they have to someone other than themselves... to God the Creator and King

Someone who really does this holds nothing back from God; no reserve

Therefore, love for God has no room whatsoever for a SELFISH PRINCIPLE of the soul... God is infinitely above self, beyond self, superior to self, overcomes self; the ravenous selfishness of our native state can never coexist with this kind of love for God

For we naturally IDOLIZE self, feed it, care for it, love it above all others; the grace of God subdues this and conquers it

2. The second commandment

Matthew 22:39 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

- a. This is the Old Covenant statement
- b. It runs contrary to self as well; it actually looks at the neighbor as being ONE with the self... as though their hearts and their conditions are linked together
- c. We are to consider not only our own circumstances, and interests and well-being, but that of an OTHER... our neighbor; this is totally contrary to the native principle of SELFISHNESS

3. But Jesus Christ upgrades this and makes it into a NEW commandments

D. How the Love of Christ is a New Commandment

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

1. Not saying that the duty to love neighbor is itself new... but that it now has a new pattern, a new standard, a new measuring stick... namely "as Christ has loved me, I must love others"
2. Jesus takes possession of this commandment and actually makes it HIS OWN

John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

3. Jesus' perfect pattern of humble service to everyone he met, everyone who came to him with a need, even to his bitterest enemies... Jesus displays perfect love for neighbor

a. No one loved his enemies better than Jesus Christ

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us

Romans 5:10 ... when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son

Christ gave his greatest display of love while we were still his enemies... he gave the maximum display of love to those who could never repay him

b. Christ has UNITED himself with us... he speaks of us as though we were his own body; to Saul of Tarsus, he said "Why are you persecuting me?" To attack Christians is to attack Christ; to all people on Judgment Day, he will say

Matthew 25:35 I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink

Matthew 25:40 I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me

c. Christ SPENT himself fully for our sakes... for our blessing, he gave absolutely everything he had... his clothing given away to be gambled for, his reputation given away as he was mocked; his lifeblood given away as it poured from his veins

Edwards: "His love did not rest in mere feeling, nor in light efforts and small sacrifices... he gave up his own ease, comfort, interest, honor, and wealth [in heaven]; he became poor, outcast, and despised, and he had nowhere to lay his head... and ALL FOR US!"

d. Christ did all of this without any expectation of ever being repaid by us for his love

4. APPLIED to us:

Edwards: “We shall not only seek our own things, but we shall in our hearts be so united to others that we shall look on their circumstances as our own. We shall endeavor to be interested in their good as Christ was in ours; and shall be ready to forego and part with our own things in many cases for the benefit of others, as Christ did toward us. And these things we will do without any expectation of being repaid by them, as Christ had no expectation of being repaid by us.”

In this alone is the deadly principle of SELFISHNESS defeated at last!

IV. Examine Your Life and Seek a Transformed Heart

A. First, Are you a Christian?

1. For if you are not, you are a slave to self-interest... you will do what is best for you at all times
2. You will not love God with all your heart or your neighbor as yourself
3. But perhaps this morning, you have a movement in your heart toward true love... the love of Christ; you see yourself properly as a selfish sinner—all of us are naturally that way from birth; and you see how in your whole life, you have walked by a selfish rule “What’s in it for me?!” Even if you have occasionally given to the poor and needy, you have not been able to transform that basic bent of your soul toward selfishness... in this, you are like every single person born on the face of the earth
4. But Christ was not that way... he selflessly left a heavenly throne and was born of a poor Jewish girl in a backwater part of the Roman empire; she wrapped him in rudimentary cloths and laid him in a manger—a box where animals feed; he grew up sinless and walked in sinlessness all his life; he did great miracles out of a selfless love for others; he fed people, healed people, taught people, cared for people...
5. But especially he died on the cross for sinners like you and me
6. If you trust in him fully, repenting of your sins two great things will happen:

- a. FIRST: all your sins will be forgiven, drowned in the sea of Christ's love and mercy
- b. SECOND: Christ's Holy Spirit will take out your heart of stone and give you a new heart... a heart built to love God and love others SELFLESSLY
- c. COME TO CHRIST NOW!!

B. Christians:

1. Examine your life to see patterns of selfishness
 - a. Ask the Holy Spirit to expose habits of selfishness
 - b. Ask him to show you how you spend your time, energy, money
2. Acknowledge that you are NOT YOUR OWN... that you neither created yourself nor sustain yourself in this world
 - a. God has made you for himself, and wants you to live daily for him and for others
 - b. He has given you higher and nobler purposes than a selfish life lived for entertainment and food and sensual pleasures
 - c. He has given you everything you need to live a selfless life of love for other people, a life that will shine for all eternity
3. Acknowledge that you are UNITED with Christ and ONE with your fellow Christians
 - a. As we saw plainly in 1 Corinthians 12... we are all one body and each individually members of that one body

1 Corinthians 12:26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- b. So get rid of a independent prideful lone ranger mentality!!
- c. If any member of the human body is in pain, every part does what is necessary to alleviate the pain... If you have a severe intestinal pain, the brain mobilizes the body to find the right physician; the eyes are employed in reading the websites and

assisting with the driving; the feet carry the body to the car and to the doctor's office; the ears listen to the instructions; the hands administer the medicine to the mouth, which swallows it

- d. All members of the Body of Christ should be mobilized to alleviate the suffering of one member... to promote every member's happiness and health
4. If you live selflessly and generously, God will be maximally motivated to meet your needs as well...
- a. you will not be a beggar left to suffer... GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU!!

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you

- b. but if you are selfish, God will leave you to your own devices to care for yourself
- c. Beyond that, if you live for others here on earth, you will be blessed with eternal treasure in heaven forever... a crown of unfading glory will be yours!!

C. THIS IS VERY DIFFICULT!

- 1. Edwards said we will be fighting this native selfishness for the rest of our lives
 - 2. Like the Salmon swimming upstream, you will have to fight the flow of your own selfish nature every single hour of every day
- D. Edwards: "Let all these things incline us all to be less selfish than we are, and seek more of the opposite excellent spirit of Christlike selfless love"