

How To Handle Disagreement (before it handles you)

Sunday 12th November 2023

On this remembrance Sunday, we have our annual reminder of the cruelty that can flow from the human heart. Every human heart has been birthed with a darkness invisible in the squealing delight of a newborn baby. But over time this ugly interior finds its way out and infects every relationship we will ever have – both the human relationships on this earth and our eternal relationship with our Father-Maker in the heavens.

As we have remembered those countless unnamed lives – the ones given in selfless sacrifice and the ones taken in acts of war – so we are reminded of the sinful darkness of the human heart that has the power to generate a spark of disagreement and turn it into the raging wildfire of war.

Disagreement is at the heart of every argument and every war. No war was ever started by peaceful agreement. Disagreement, on the other hand, has been the spark that fired every bullet designed to extinguish life in another human and every bomb that has been dropped with the intent of obliterating swathes of human life.

So what has Paul got to say about all this today in Galatians 2? Let's check in with **verse 6 of chapter 2**,

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.


You live in a generation that sees what someone else can add to us and either works out how to take it out of them or works out a way to take them out. And you might think the way to avoid this issue igniting in your own heart is to see yourself and everything you need as completely self-sufficient and in need of no-one.

But at the same time you are saying they are not needed and in that moment they are of no value. **It's just a nice way of declaring war one with another.**

Paul carefully inserts the truth that will set us free if we can bring ourselves to acknowledge it – ‘God shows personal favouritism to no man’! Paul affirms this

 truth in **Romans 2:11-12**,

For there is no partiality with God. ¹²For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law...


 **Seeing all others as your equals will set you free and will extinguish the spark of disagreement before it starts a fire in your heart.**

 Moving forward Paul continues in Galatians 2:7,

But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter...

When what matters most matters to everyone it will be evident. Notice both parties could see what mattered most in the other’s ministry. And if you can’t see what matters most, you might have to look deeper for a seed and small beginning of the same thing.

Notice it is not what mattered most to Paul. He was not looking for affirmation or validation. He had all the affirmation and validation from His Father-Maker he needed.

 **When you go affirmation hunting people will die** – you will work out those who do not give and therefore are of little or no use to you. And that friendship, that relationship, that job...it’s dead.

Here’s how so many of us end up going down this road. In a world full of broken hearts, broken dreams, broken relationships, and broken families, it was inevitable that you would be born into brokenness. Not your fault, no, but born into it, you were.

Here’s where the God who is missing from your life can resurrect it from the deadness of brokenness on repeat. Only God can break the cycle of broken

generations. Because He does not change, you can trust Him. When He says He loves you with an everlasting love you can trust Him.

▶ Paul continues to unpack this solution for disagreement in verse 8,

(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

Paul looked at the evidence and he saw one thing happening consistently – God working effectively. You see when the true, the whole, and the only gospel is shared and preached and proclaimed like nothing else, you will see its power; you will see God work. You will see prodigals return. You will see broken marriages restored. You will see hatred replaced with love. You will see disagreement replaced with peaceful agreement.

The spark of disagreement will create fires of destruction so long as we see ourselves, our ideas, our methods, our preferences and better than others' as

▶ Paul says in **Philippians 2:3**


Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

▶ But **you can extinguish that spark of disagreement in an instant. All you need to do is acknowledge and affirm others** and what God is doing in and through their lives. So what happens when you can't see God at work in someone's life? Simple. Pray for them! Pray God will work. Pray God will change them. AND pray God will heal your eyes and ears with His grace so when He is working in others you can actual see and hear it.

I'm stood here before you saying these things not for my own affirmation, validation or to prove my ideas are any better than yours, but, to proclaim the goodness of God to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ. To tell you the God of the living wants to breath life into your dry bones; to make you truly alive in Jesus Christ.

▶ The final piece of the solution to our disagreements is brought to us in verse 9,

and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

 Did you see it? **One word tucked away as subtle as a light breeze on a spring day yet as powerful as a hurricane reshaping everything in its path.**

Grace.

When the sparks of disagreement rise up within your heart then it is time to look for the evidence of God's grace in the hearts of another. You can look at their past full of hate and anger or you can see how God has enabled them to forgive.

You can listen the way they fumble their words or you can choose to see the power in the simplicity of their prayers.

You can believe the rumours of their reputation or you can acknowledge the changes unfolding in the quiet corners of their hearts.

And when you cannot see a speck of grace, what then? When their heart seems full of anguish and turmoil. When their minds are trapped by the endless powers of addiction. When their hearts do not show the faintest interest in forgiving. When their every word is laced with poison designed to kill the kindest heart. What then?

Give. Them. Grace.

Show them grace.

Be the grace that is so fatally absent from their hearts.

Because when you see them as equal in God's eyes; when you are no longer in search of their affirmation and validation; when you consider them as better than yourself. Then, and only then will you be perfectly positioned to be a channel for God's grace into their lives, and hundreds more lives besides.

And if this grace has somehow all but disappeared from your life or if you have never tasted this grace for yourself, today is the only day you have in your hands in which to ask, seek, and knock. Listen to these words of Jesus from Matthew 7,

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

Will you today ask? Will you today receive that grace that is missing from your life?

This war you've been waging with God, you know the one. The war that started with a seemingly insignificant spark of disagreement over whether you, or God, should be God of your life, can end today, if you will ask His forgiveness and receive the life-giving balm of His amazing grace.

Only in the gospel of Jesus Christ can you find this amazing grace. Only on the cross with a bloodied and crucified Saviour can we find the end of the war we chose to wage with our Father-Maker in the heavens.