

Christ Community Covenant Church
Spirit filled living in a broken and fallen world: You get what you pay for!
Pastor Dave Scherrer - February 12, 2017

There is always a battle for me. I have a high value for high value. But I'm pretty cheap. Ok really pretty very cheap. I think I have bought something spontaneously only a handful of times and once was when I was recovering from kidney surgery and I was on pain medication. I ordered these cool pens from a late night TV infomercial. I got two sets for the price of one. It made sense at the time . . .

And the test for me on purchases is not whether it's the best or newest but if I need it and it's a good value. Now usually my default is always the cheapest. Throughout my life my default has been to typically buy the cheapest paint and the cheapest soup and the cheapest car . . . you get the idea. Now in my old age I'm getting a bit more thoughtful. My last set of cheap tires was not a good idea. This winter I am currently the most dangerous person on the road. If you see my car on the road, you'd best steer clear quite literally! It wasn't worth it. Apparently, it is true . . . you get what you pay for.

You get what you pay for . . .

Actually this adage is pretty good advice come to find out. If something is of value and important to you, it will most likely be a bit more pricy in some way. Money or time or some other cost. Generally, the things of life that are really valuable cost more . . .

Good friendships cost more. Good grades in school cost more. Good health is costly in regular exercise and disciplined eating habits and prioritizing sleep. That all has a cost.

Your relationship with Christ, if it is of value, will cost you. If it is of high value, it will cost you more. Increasingly as you put Christ first in importance other things that have taken your time and money and social energy must be sacrificed if you are to have the vibrant and abiding relationship with Christ that you long for and value. The Bible calls it dying to self. Dying to self in order to live to Christ has a way of recalibrating your life. In this case you get what you pay for. If your relationship with Christ is dry and distant, the first place I look in my life is to ask myself "Am I getting what I'm paying for?" Usually I have let my old self push Christ out of his rightful place as King and Lord of my life.

Most often this happens when I believe an old lie that comes from the very lips of the evil one. Satan has used this one lie to bring down marriages, destroy friendships, ruin finances and even bring down churches. It is a pretty simple lie really: Usually it comes in the form of a whisper and it goes like this . . .

I have my rights!

It is a common outcry these days. Human rights, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, immigrant's rights. People want their rights. And that's fair. We have a Bill of Rights in our country that we're pretty fond of, and I must say that politically and economically and socially in this broken and fallen world they go a long way toward creating equity and protecting the people of our country from an over reaching government.

The Bill of Rights was ratified by the last state in 1791 and is a list of limits on government power. For example, what the Founders saw as the natural right of individuals to speak and worship freely was protected by the First Amendment's prohibitions on Congress from making laws establishing a religion or abridging freedom of speech.

Let me be clear, I'm for our Bill of Rights. However, when you step out of this temporary world that is indeed broken and fallen and then you step over into the Kingdom of God and become first and foremost a citizen of that Kingdom, the Bill of Rights no longer seems that important to me. As a Christian, I now have a new set of values and a new set of freedoms and responsibilities. My individual rights don't mean what they once did.

This was a problem in the church of Corinth in 57AD. There were some who claimed their freedoms in Christ in ways that became a stumbling block to others and Paul was adamant. Using his own life as an example of a mature walk in Christ he challenged the strong believers in that little church to give up what they are arguably entitled to for the sake of the less strong – the ‘weak of conscience’ who are still finding their way in Christ. His claim is that we as Christians must relinquish our rights for the sake of the church and for the sake of the gospel.

We must relinquish our individual rights

1 Corinthians 9:1-2 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

9:12b . . . Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything *rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.*

9:22-23 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Paul notes that other Apostles and traveling evangelists had wives (v5) but that he did not. He points out (v6-12) that other Apostles took offerings from the fellowships they served and others had positions of authority that were unquestioned. Paul and Barnabas did not – he had given up expecting payment for preaching the gospel as he feared it would compromise him or his message. It just wasn't worth it to him. Paul is making a case that he who had already given up so much was still denying himself for the sake of the church and for the sake of the gospel. Paul is bringing this up not to complain or to gripe. He is making a point. “If I can give up my rights as an Apostle for your sake and for the sake of the gospel, then you believers in Corinth can too. Especially the believers with the so called knowledge that they liked to shove in other's face.”

Theologians call part of this letter the “Apostolic defense.” He establishes that he is free in Christ, that he has the unusual status of having been with Jesus and set aside for ministry by Him directly, just as the other apostles. He establishes these rights only to denounce them. He seems to be using the arguments of the strong Christians in Corinth as straw claims against them. Like he is using their own words to make them feel the weight of their sin.

Then he uses various common analogies or word pictures to drive home his status. A soldier, plants in a vineyard, even an ox, seem to have more rights than Paul. In verse 15 he makes the statement “I have never availed myself of any of these rights.” He says in that verse “I would rather die!” Why . . . because (v 12) the gospel of the Kingdom is supreme. Nothing else matters like this matters.

Paul put on whatever was necessary to share the gospel without hindrance. He said “I have become everything in turn in order to bring some to salvation” (v22). It is not easy and this lifestyle demands a costly sacrifice and supreme effort and devotion. Paul understands that you get what you pay for!

Trying to make his point he uses a running race metaphor. Run to win with endurance.

We must run with endurance

9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Paul is letting the Corinthians in on a secret. He dressed like them, learned their local figures of speech, learned their culture and the famous personalities of Corinth, not because he was that kind of guy. He did all that so that, becoming like them he could then, with authority, share Christ into their very lives. It was a strategic plan on his part and it required prayerfulness, flexibility and adaptability. Not because he liked to be on stage and dressing up, but because, whether slave or free, Jew or Greek, Paul was willing to sacrifice his own personality and sensitivities – his rights – so that the gospel would be released with full power.

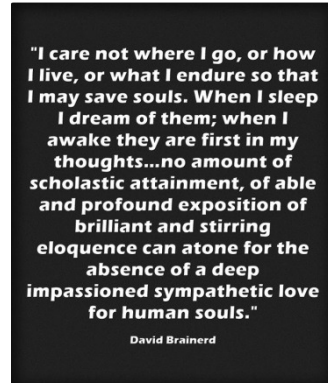
Take this example for instance. Paul uses this example of running a race knowing full well that the people of Corinth had the Isthmian Games (similar to the Olympic Games of Rome) right in their home town every two years. They were held in 49, just before Paul arrived on the scene, were held again in 51 when he was there and then again in 53 and 55, right when this letter came to them. Paul hammers home the point in the final two verse of this chapter. He keeps his eye on the goal, just as any good competitor does. He will not be distracted. He is deadly serious about what is at stake.

In Paul's day to day life he does not indulge himself but instead he treats his life roughly, bearing the lack of luxury and the hardships of life usually experienced by slaves. He want his life to stand the test. Paul said "I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." This being the rudest of thoughts on earth for us who are called to proclaim and live the gospel.

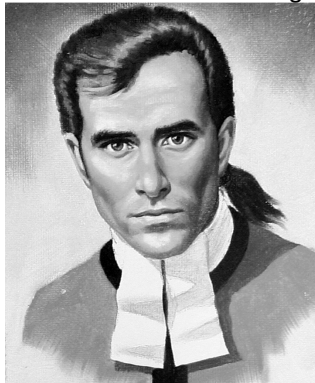
Why go through it . . .? For the sake of the gospel!

For the sake of the gospel

Look at the cover of your bulletin for a moment. It is a quote taken from the journal of a young man written in 1746. The man's name is David Brainerd. Let me show you the full quote:



This is a modern drawing taken from a portrait of him.



Good looking fellow, with lots of potential.

But his life was anything but spectacular by most standards. He was the sixth of 9 children. His mother dies when he was 5 and his strict, almost severe father died when he was 14. He went to live with his aunt and was destined to become a farmer. This was the time of the great North American Enlightenment a period of great revival. David thought he would go into the ministry but his life was one of legalism and passionless obedience to law and ritual. But then one day, out in a forest, he was set upon by the Holy Spirit and after what seemed like hours of divine presence and confirmation, David was saved to Christ. His life completely changed in purpose.

But he was a good student and really a scholar by attribute and he enrolled at Yale hoping to be the minister of a Presbyterian church. However, many students at that time, in the light of the enlightenment, were criticizing the instructors and administrators of Harvard and Yale for not being truly saved. David spoke rashly one day when asked about one instructor and stated "He has less grace than a chair" and he was expelled from Yale Divinity School, even though he was at the top of the school's academics. It was law at that time that only Harvard or Yale graduates could be ministers and so his life calling was destroyed by one youthful statement.

Despondent, he became a traveling missionary to Native American Indians. He traveled 15,000 miles by horseback, mostly alone over a four year period. He refused pastorates in affluent and comfortable New England towns to go to these tribes, learning their language and living as they did. The first two years preaching to two different tribes resulted in no converts. His third effort fared better and 130 gave their lives to Christ. He started a school for the natives and was hoping for more when the tuberculosis of his life at Yale flared up again. He went to live with Jonathon Edwards, taken care of by Jerusha Edwards, Jonathan's seventeen-year-old daughter. They seemed to have fallen in love but on October 9, 1747, David died of consumption and one year later so did Jersuha, as a result of contracting tuberculosis from nursing Brainerd. David Brainerd was 29.

His journals tell us that he suffered under the weight of severe depression, as many of his relatives did. He traveled mostly joyously, ministering to Indians that he struggled to love. In his four years of ministry he was despondent for Christian fellowship but had almost none. His first love was his last and only...and his ministry seemed to amount to little more than a small mostly feeble flash of light, noticeable for a moment, and then gone.

Want to hear the rest of the story?

In 1749, Jonathon Edwards, so taken with the passionate and devoted and sacrificial man who died in his home that he laid aside his important writings to edit one year the Journal of David Brainerd. In it he spoke of sacrifice and the love of the gospel and an undaunted desire to burn out his life for Christ. The journal became perhaps the most read account of that century, a sterling source of inspiration to Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, William Carey and Jim Elliot, and Brainerd's cousin, the Second Great Awakening evangelist James Brainerd Taylor and countless others. Many admired him and hated that Yale expelled him out. As a result of his expulsion The 'College of New Jersey' later known as Princeton, was founded, due in large part to the dissatisfaction of Presbyterian Synods associated with Yale and their expulsion of Brainerd and subsequent refusal to readmit him driving individuals such as Aaron Burr to act on this dissatisfaction. Dartmouth College originated from a school founded by Eleazar Wheelock for Native Americans and colonists in 1748, Wheelock being inspired by Brainerd's example of Native American education. Hundreds came to Christ. With David Brainerd's journal as their inspiration, the Enlightenment went from luke-warm to red-hot, and tens of thousands came to a saving knowledge of Christ. John Piper in a paper reports that some years after death a building on the campus of Yale Divinity school was erected in his name, the only building named for a student expelled from Yale.

What seemed to be a flash of light was really the spark that was the lighting of a fuse.

We cannot tire or retire. We cannot lose heart. We cannot coast or faint. Too much depends on our faithfulness. We cannot see what is happening in the purposes of the Kingdom of God. We must run with endurance the race set before us and let God deal with the results. We do not know, we only know that by giving up our rights and taking on instead obedience in Christ for the sake of the gospel. There is an eternal weight of glory being set aside, to the glory of the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Spirit.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Maybe a better way of putting it isn't you get what you paid for but rather . . .

We get what He paid for!