

THE CREDIT WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT

A Devotional Meditation on Korach (Korah)

Numbers 16:1-18:32; 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22; Ezekiel 36:24-28;
Luke 17:7-10; Romans 13:8-10

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Why should we love our neighbors? Paul puts that commandment in context in his letter to the Romans:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.



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Romans 13:8-10 ESV

If we don't understand love, we are in danger of missing the godly power contained in this commandment. Consider, for example, this 20th century American proverb:

“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.”

This bit of folk wisdom is often attributed to President Harry Truman. President Ronald Reagan had his own version of the proverb inscribed on a plaque that rested on his desk in the Oval Office. Neither of them originated the quote, but both had a hand in popularizing it. It's a solid observation on human nature, but in typical American fashion, it reduces the matter to the question of productivity.

If all we want are results, then we're going to miss what God is doing in our lives and the lives of others. We're also in danger of missing the larger perspective of God's plan of redemption and our part in it. This is why we can't get away from that divine concept of love.

It's not a design flaw that people want to get credit for what they have done. Praise and recognition motivate us to do better, and that is as God intended. As in all things, however, self-love can be toxic if we indulge in it. That's why we must learn to love our Creator, the Author of love.

It's really a matter of who is at the center of our esteem. That place is reserved for our Creator, not for ourselves or for anyone else. That's the point of this lesson from Messiah Yeshua:

Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and recline at table”? Will he not rather say to him, “Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink”? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that

you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.”

Luke 17:7-10 ESV

If our Creator isn't in the picture, then we're simply doing the work for the work's sake. Taking pride in our accomplishments, whether we get the credit or not, is commendable, but it's not enduring unless it's done in honor of the Creator. We live and breathe for his sake, not our own. We hope that he will give us credit, and we rely on his promises of eternal reward in a better place, but he is worthy to be served regardless of what we get out of the bargain.

This is the kind of attitude that helps us endure tremendous adversity. We'd like to walk immediately into that land flowing with milk and honey, but would we know what to do with such a paradise? In our present fallen state, we might think it was made solely for our comfort. Before long, we would squander its resources and begin fighting one another over what's left.

That's exactly what happened to God's Covenant people of Israel in the wilderness. Things didn't turn out the way they expected, and instead of rising to the occasion, they chose time after time to grumble, complain, and rebel. Men like Korah took issue with Moses and Aaron, asserting that they could do a better job at leading the people. They cared very much about who got the credit for whatever good things happened, and who got the blame for the bad things. Of course, they had their own ideas of what was good and bad – meaning that things would be bad if anyone other than themselves were in charge.

That's the problem of having anything or anyone other than our Creator as the focus of our lives. He is taking us somewhere and he wants to make sure we succeed when we get there. That's a big reason why troubles and trials happen. It happened to our Hebrew ancestors in the wilderness, and it's happening to us right now. In fact, we're going through the process God explained to Ezekiel long ago:

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezekiel 36:24-28 ESV

This process has been happening to both halves of God's Covenant people of Israel for quite some time. It's how God is redeeming his holy Name, even after we have brought shame to him. Which means that he alone gets the credit for all that's being accomplished, and that's what we should really care about.