

LOVE OF GOD

First Thessalonians 2:8

Tonight as you turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (NIV). Let's contrast that love with the world it came into:

"I am entering upon the history of a period rich in disaster, gloomy with wars, rent with seditions; nay savage in its very hours of peace. Four emperors perished by the sword; there were three civil wars; there were more with foreigners, and some had the character of both at once ... Rome wasted by fires; its oldest temples burned; the very capitol set in flames by Roman hands; the defilement of sacred rites; adultery in high places; the sea crowded with exiles; island rocks drenched with murder; yet wilder was the frenzy in Rome; nobility, wealth, the refusal of office, its acceptance, everything was a crime, and virtue was the surest way to ruin. Nor were the rewards of the informers less odious than their deeds. One found his spoils in a priesthood or a consulate; another in a provincial governorship, another behind the throne. All was one delirium of hate and terror; slaves were bribed to betray their masters, freedmen their patrons; and he who had no foe was betrayed by his friend." (Tacitus: Histories I, 2)

Why did Christianity conquer the pagan world? Because God is love. And those who love are born of God and know God !

Love bears all hurts, wounds, sins and disappointments; covers them with a blanket of silence and feels sympathetic, redemptive and even bears the pain. Love believes the best about people, is never cynical, is never suspicious -- in spite of the way it is being wounded. And when love's believing is betrayed, love turns to hope because God is still God and He can do anything. And even when hope grows thin and all hope seems lost, love endures. It endures deep hurt that seems so final, never losing the triumphant confidence that God who gives His children peace is still on the throne. Love cares too much to give up.

*"Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.*

*"Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.*

"Finish then Thy new creation;

*Pure and spotless let it be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee.*

*"Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!"*

Charles Wesley (1747)

Paul is explaining his habit of love in I Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians 2:8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (NIV). Paul learned to love looking at Jesus.

- I. A Brief survey of Paul's Life.
 - A. He was born about AD 4.
 - B. He was born again or saved at about age 28.
 - C. Desert training from the Master Himself and back to home town Tarsus from age 28-40, or AD 32-44.
 - D. First Missionary Journey at the age of 41-43, (AD 45-47): Along the way he is stoned (14:19) and mistreated and threatened (13:50) all along the way. He doesn't stop. Writing the Scriptures all the way.
 - E. Works with the church at Antioch from age 44-45 (AD 47-49).
 - F. His Second Missionary Journey takes him from the age of 45-47 (AD 49-51):
 1. Along the way he is beaten at Philippi,
 2. Run out of Thessalonica, listened to in Berea and then
 3. Laughed out of Athens. He comes home to take off soon on his perhaps final journey in freedom.
 4. I & II Thess After second journey.

HABITS OF EFFECTIVE SERVANTS #5 LOVE (2:7) The apostle Paul wrote to a city church that mirrored the very culture we live in.

- I. **LACKING LOVE:** To see the best photo of the ancient way of life turn to the 30 chapter we have on Corinth.
- II. **SEEKING LOVE:** John 15:12-16-- WE HAVE THE ABILITY FOR SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE THROUGH CHRIST (TAPE)
 - A. Acknowledge it is a command (Romans 13:8-10)
 - B. Agree you have the power (Romans 5:5)
 - C. Understand it is normal Christian behavior (I John 4:7-10)
 - D. Realize it is the Spirit's work (Gal. 5:22)
 - E. Practice it. (I Peter 1:22, 4:8) (Hebrews. 5:8)

III. LEARNING LOVE:

- A. **FOLLOW AFTER LOVE** 1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual [gifts,] but especially that you may prophesy. (NKJV)

1. "patient (makrothumei) = this is patience not merely with circumstances, but with people. When you have the power to avenge and don't do it. Literally long tempered. The ability to be wronged over and over again. See Paul 2 Corinthians 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, (NKJV) every Christian in Ephesians 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, (NKJV) and the spirits fruit in Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (NKJV). Those who can see further than the present.
2. "kind (cresteuetai) =the other side of patience is here taking any grief, giving anything to be helpful and useful, healing wounds.
3. "not jealous (zeloi) = never envious. The root word here is to boil, seethe'. This is not the mere i want what you have, its the malignant i don't want you to have and keep what i can't have.
4. "does not brag (perpereuetai) = is not boastful, the verbalizing of self. The root is the word for which we get windbag.
5. "not arrogant (prusioutai) = not conceited. The attitude of pride. I am better etc. It is when one becomes inflated with their own importance.
6. "not act unbecomingly (aschemonei)" =not rude is better. Seen as 'love does not behave gracelessly'. The Greek words for grace and charm are notably the same. As Swindoll put it, in Christ. We become winsome.
7. "not seek its own " isn't insistent upon its rights = but took upon himself the form of a servant.
8. "not provoked (paroxunetai) = never flies into a rage. This is the lack of becoming exasperated. As kipling said, master this and you have it all. Better yet Solomon in Proverbs 25:28 "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls and broken down." Two kinds of people, those who think of their rights and those thinking of their duties. Our mind set must be selfish or selfless...
9. "does not take into account a wrong suffered (logize- = to remembers no evil. This is refusing to store up the memory of any wrong received. What a liberating truth to grasp a hold of. Like an accountant, clear the ledger.. As Chrysostom said, "love is like a spark falling into the ocean is quenched". As god does not hold our sins against us in romans 4:8, psalm 32.
10. "does not rejoice in unrighteousness = no pleasure in evil reports as do the heathen in Romans 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (NKJV).
11. "rejoices with the truth (sugchairei) = in harmony with the truth, partaking of the love of the truth 2 Thessalonians 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not

receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (NKJV) such is the joy of god. As Psalm 15 says 'speaks truth in heart.

12. "bears all things (stegai) = literally to cover on all sides, to cover in silence. Ties word originally spoke of a watertight boat. As in 1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (NKJV) Endures it all
13. "believes all things (pisteuei) = not suspicious, but trusting God's plan knows that nothing happens by chance. Thus is completely trusting
14. "Hopes all things (elpizei) = even after repeated disappointments there is a constant assurance that God has a future and is working all things for his own glory. Thus, never ceasing to hope
15. "endures all things (hupomenai) = bearing everything with triumphant endurance

- B. **BE SINCERE IN LOVE** 2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. (NKJV)
- C. **ABOUND IN LOVE** Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, (NKJV)
- D. **BE CONSISTENT IN LOVE** Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. (NKJV)
- E. **PUT ON LOVE** Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (NKJV)
- F. **INCREASE IN LOVE** 1 Thessalonians 3:12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we [do] to you, (NKJV)
- G. **PROVOKE EACH OTHER TO LOVE** Hebrews 10:29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (NKJV)
- H. **CONTINUE IN LOVE** Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. (NKJV)
- I. **BE FERVENT IN LOVE** 1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (NKJV)

IV. Conclusion: This love only comes out of us as Christ shines and flows through us!

- A. **CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...PATIENT - (MAKROTHUMEIN)** This is patience not merely with circumstances, but with people. When you have the power to avenge and don't do it. Literally long-tempered. The ability to be wronged over and over again. See Paul in Corinthians 6:6; every Christian in Ephesians 4:2 and the Spirit's fruit in Galatians 5:22. Those who can see further than the present.
- B. **CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...KIND - (CHESTEUETAI)** The other side of patience is here taking any grief, giving anything to be helpful and useful, healing wounds.
- C. **CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT JEALOUS - (ZELOI)** Never envious. The root word here is "to boil, seethe". This is not the mere I want what you have; it's the malignant I don't want you to have and keep what I can't have.
- D. **CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT BRAGGING - (PERPEREUETAI)** Is not boastful, the verbalizing of self, the root is the word for which we get windbag.

- E. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT ARROGANT - (PHUSIOUTAI) Not conceited. The attitude of pride. I am better, etc. It is when one becomes inflated with their own importance.
- F. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT ACTING UNBECOMINGLY - (ASCHEMONEI) Not rude is better seen as "love does not behave gracelessly." The Greek words for grace and charm are notably the same. As Swindoll put it, in Christ we become winsome.
- G. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT SEEKING IT'S OWN - Or isn't insistent upon it's rights - but took upon Himself the form of a servant.
- H. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT PROVOKED - (PAROXUNETAI) Never flies into a rage. This is the lack of becoming exasperated. As Kipling said, "Master this and you have it all." Better yet Solomon in Proverbs 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls and broken down." Two kinds of people, those who think of their rights and those thinking of their duties. Our mind set must be selfish or selfless...
- I. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED - (LOGIZOMAI) To remember no evil. This is refusing to store up the memory of any wrong received. What a liberating truth to grasp hold of like an accountant, clear the ledger. As Chrysostom said, "Love is like a spark falling into the ocean is quenched." As God does not hold our sins against us in Romans 4:8, Psalm 32.
- J. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...NOT REJOICING IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS - Love takes no pleasure in evil reports as do the heathen in Romans 1:32. The meaning of iniquity is "unrighteousness". Unrighteousness talks about sin. Love never rejoices in sin.
- K. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...REJOICING WITH THE TRUTH - (SUGCHAIREI) In harmony with the truth, partaking of the love of the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 which is the joy of God. As Psalm 15 says, "speaks truth in heart." Holiness or righteousness is based on truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. One cannot be righteous until he behaves himself in accord with God's truth. Dr. Moffatt translates this, "Love is never glad when others go wrong: love is gladdened by goodness." Love does not delight in exposing the weakness of others. *1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (NKJV).* Nevertheless, love is opposed to sin, grieves and weeps over it. It is the ally of the truth, and in sheltering the sinner it will never fail to condemn his sin.
- L. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...BEARING ALL THINGS - (STEGAI) Literally to cover on all sides, to cover in silence. Now love will warn, exhort and rebuke and discipline; but love will also cover that sin, not expose it. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS.
- M. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...BELIEVING ALL THINGS - (PISTEUEI) Not suspicious, but trusting God's plan. Thus is completely trusting. Love believes the best about others.. Love sees the weakness, throws a mantle of silence over it, and then believes the best.
- N. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...HOPING ALL THINGS - (ELPIZEI) Even amid repeated disappointments there is a constant assurance that God has a future and is working all things for His own glory.

- O. CHRIST IN YOU WILL BE ...ENDURING ALL THINGS - (HUPOMENAI) Bearing everything with triumphant endurance. Love never fails. Love never dies; it doesn't end. Love cannot be conquered.

In October 1800 John Todd was born in Rutland, Vermont. Soon afterward his parents moved to Killingworth, Connecticut. When John was six years old, both his parents died. A kind-hearted aunt in North Killingworth agreed to take John and give him a home. He was brought up by her and lived in her home until he left to study for the ministry.

In middle life his aunt became seriously ill and feared she would die. In great distress she wrote John Todd a pitiful letter in which she asked what death would be like. Would it mean the end of everything, or is there beyond death a chance to continue living, loving and growing? Here is the letter John Todd sent his aunt in reply:

It is now thirty-five years since I as a little boy of six was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word that you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I will never forget the day when I made the long journey of ten miles to your house in North Killingworth. I can still remember my disappointment when instead of coming for me yourself, you sent Caesar to fetch me.

I well remember my tears and anxiety as perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar I rode off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and as it grew dark, I became lonely and afraid. "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" I asked Caesar anxiously. "Oh, no," he said reassuringly. "She'll stay up for you. When we get out of this here woods, you'll see her candle shinin' in the window." Presently we did ride out into the clearing, and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close about me and that you lifted me -- a tired and bewildered little boy -- down from the horse. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper you took me to my room, heard me say my prayers, and then sat beside me till I fell asleep.

You probably realize why I am recalling all of this to your memory. Someday soon God will send for you to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey or the dark messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting and you will be safe in God's care. I shall watch you and pray for you till you are out of sight and then wait for the day when I shall make the journey myself and find my Savior and you waiting at the end of the road to greet me.

--From the autobiography of John Todd