

Eternity Daily Bible Study

The Importance Of Love

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Number: 29

Verses: Romans 5:6-11

Topic: Love Graciously Values The Person

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Love graciously values the actual person, not what the person has to offer as a benefit of some kind. Love imparts value to the eternal soul, the deep, real inner human being made in the image of God. Love certainly acknowledges, but does not primarily focus upon, the externals. Love is not "after something" such as money, social status, being with a cool person, good feelings, a service of some kind, or an ego trip.

Now these external things (such as good feelings) are part of life and relationships but they are not central or primary to agape love. The Good Samaritan did not do what he did out of any desire for good feelings, personal benefit or for long-term gain. It was not cool, safe or profitable to hang out with and help a guy who had been beaten up by robbers. In fact it was dangerous, expensive and inconvenient. The Samaritan even had to get off his animal and walk all the way to Jericho.

The Good Samaritan did what he did because he recognized a valuable human being in the image of God, who was in need of help. This manner is also how God loves us:

Romans 5:6-11 *6 For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For rarely will someone die for a just person — though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. 8 But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! 9 Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life! 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have now received this reconciliation through Him.*

First lets take a look at how we are described from God's viewpoint: helpless (v.6), ungodly (v.6), still sinners (v.8), and enemies (v.10).

Secondly lets look at what God does for us: Jesus died for us (v.6,7,8), loved us (v.8), declared us righteous (v.9), saved us from wrath (v.9,10), reconciled us (v.10,11), and saved us by His life into blessing (v.10)

Thirdly lets "do the math": We had zero to offer God and we got everything in return. We were helpless, hostile and condemned and we became saved, reconciled and justified. There was nothing in us, that God wanted from us. We were not attractive propositions to God. In fact He saw us as useless, ungodly, sinful, and at war with Him and still He loved us, and sent Jesus to die for us!

Agape love reaches out to the inner person, to the needy, helpless, lost beaten-up soul. Agape heals the lame man, resurrects the dead girl, feeds the hungry, comforts the afflicted, and visits the prisoner, asking nothing in return.

Thus agape love is the exact opposite of the "I will minister to you as long as you donate (or tithe) to me" mentality. Sure the worker is worthy of his/her wages but they should not love people who pay more. People who cannot donate, or who do not tithe, should not be treated as second-class citizens within the household of God. Jesus did not die for us so that we could tithe to Him!

Much modern ministry is based on a "business plan" and I am frequently asked "What is your business plan for the sustainability of your ministry?" That is almost an anti-Christian question. Neither Jesus, Peter, Paul or any of the apostles had such a silly notion. You minister because it is what you have to do after God has called you and sustainability is not even a consideration:

1 Corinthians 4:9-13 *9 For I think God has displayed us, the apostles, in last place, like men condemned to die: We have become a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 Up to the present hour we are both hungry and thirsty; we are poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless; 12 we labor, working with our own hands. When we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we respond graciously. Even now, we are like the world's garbage, like the dirt everyone scrapes off their sandals.*

Paul was hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed and homeless. Obviously he was in this economic condition because he did not have a "business plan". Rather Paul ministered in agape love, giving out the gospel for free and expecting nothing in return.

Why take such a crazy and impractical path in life? And why do this for years and years? Because for Paul the people who could not pay were just as valuable as those who could pay! Every lost and confused soul was valuable regardless of their net worth.

The gospel is often preached last of all to the poor. The nations with the least gospel proclamation are generally also those with the least income and the greatest danger. People are rushing to set up churches in Newport Beach but not so keen on Asia's urban slums! In fact Jesus considered the gospel reaching the poor as being in the same category as some of His major miracles:

Matthew 11:4-6 *4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended because of Me."*

Notice that Jesus starts with the lesser miracles of healing, then goes up in difficulty and just after "raising the dead" (a very low probability event) is the phrase "and the poor have the gospel preached to them". We need to get back to the apostolic attitude to ministry as outlined by Jesus when He commanded: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Which, by the way would probably be dismissed as a impractical business plan!)

Matthew 10:7-8 *7 And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*

Agape love gives freely and loves freely because it sees the intrinsic eternal worth of the person, and does not focus not extrinsic factors such as rank, appearance and ability.

Love values the image of God in Christ dwelling in the soul of the believer. This great glory dwells within each believer regardless of social factors and makes us equal in God's Kingdom (neither male nor female slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile ...).

Agape love takes the long view and tries to see humanity from an eternal perspective. That is as potential brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ. This vast vision of our perfection as sons of God is a huge part of why God acts toward us as he does:

Romans 8:28-30 *28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 Because whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Hebrews 2:11-13 *11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing praise to You." 13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Behold I and the children whom God has given Me."*

God loves us because in His eternal view of things God sees us as His sons and daughters and as younger siblings of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 2:11-13 above), for Whom God made the worlds (Col 1:15-20)! Your value to God does not consist in what you know, or even in what you do now, but instead in what you will become as the process of sanctification and glorification does its work (Rom 8:28-30 above).

This ideal and eternal view of human worth can only be understood by faith! We need God to open our spiritual eyes and ears to see the great value that He places on even sinful, helpless and ungodly persons so that we may love them as Jesus loves them and thus fulfill the commandment to: "Love one another as I have loved you".

This kind of love can only begin with a proper valuing of other people and an appreciation of the worth to God of even the most broken among us. People are never a waste of time or money. Jesus judges us by our attitudes toward "these, the least of My brethren..." and considers an action against them as an action against Himself (Matthew 25:40,45) and persecution of His Church as persecution of Himself (Acts 9:4,5)

Jesus identifies totally with those who are of faith, those who are His brothers and sisters in the Church. We should love our brothers and sisters in Christ because when we love them, we are also loving Jesus. This awesome and terrifying fact of Christ is us the hope of glory, is invisible to the world, but is clearly visible to those who desire to live in love, by faith, and in obedience to God. Let us love one another as Jesus Christ loves us!

Blessings,

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