

Proven Love – 5 /03/17

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom.5:8

Beloved in The Lord,

There is a vast difference between stated love and demonstrated or proven love. True love manifests itself in action. True love is sacrificial and places the other person above oneself. Many people today profess to love each other, but at the first hint of a problem they walk away from their spouses and families. Where a person can allegedly be madly in love one moment and then fall out of love one must question the timbre of that love. Was it really love at all? True love does not seek its own good.

Our text today is a very powerful one. Paul writes that God has demonstrated His love for us. God has not merely said that He loves us, He has proven it beyond doubt, through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. That means that in six weeks we will be celebrating Easter, the greatest festival in the Christian calendar. Easter is the clear demonstration of God’s incredible love for us.

Christ died for us! That is the essence of Easter, it is God proving His love for us. It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. He suffered the punishment that was due to us. He took our place on the cross so that we would not have to bear the penalty for our sin, so that we would not be eternally lost, but could live forever in Heaven with Him in the Father’s Kingdom.

The Bible very clearly teaches that the wages of sin is death. Also, we are told that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God’s justice demands that sin be paid for by a blood sacrifice, because without the shedding of blood there can be no atonement for sin. Because of His great love for us, God did not want to punish us, yet He cannot change his own Law, because then He would not be Just.

God found a solution, He gave us His own dear Son, to die in our place, to take our punishment. Jesus was totally without sin. He was perfect and Holy. During Lent, we sing *“O sinless Lamb of God, You bore a heavy cross, you humble Son of God, You suffered so much for us. You swam in death’s sea, from sin to set us free, have mercy upon us O Jesus.”*

Paul writes: ***“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor.5:21***

Jesus knew no sin, He was perfect, He was without blemish, He was Holy and pure. When He died upon the cross, He took all our sin upon Himself. Every sin, every evil thought and

deed, every sinful word, every lie, every murder, every theft, every wrong doing. He took it all upon Himself and bore the punishment for it.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote:

***Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed. (Is.53:4-5)***

This is so clear. Here in two verses of Scripture the word “Our” appears 5 times. Do you understand? It was our sin. Jesus suffered and died for our sin, He died in our stead, in our place, taking our punishment upon Himself. He did it because He so loved us. Can you comprehend this fact? I cannot. Not fully anyway. God so loved us, that He let Jesus suffer hell so that we would not have to.

Every single soul, every single person is precious in the eyes of God. Jesus died for all people. The Gospel is very clear: ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Jn. 3:16***

For God so loved all people that He gave His Beloved Son, to sacrifice His own blood to redeem us. This is something we need to remember every day. We should be thanking God every day for our salvation and we should live our lives in a manner that is pleasing to Him. He has loved us with an everlasting love.

God has proven His love to us, how can we reciprocate? Jesus gives us the answer:

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” (Jn.14:23-34)

Jesus says that love and obedience go together. If we love Him, then we demonstrate that by keeping His commandments. Love obeys. To disobey is not to love. It is that simple. Again, Jesus says: ***“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (Jn.14:15)***

When we truly love Him, then it is not difficult to keep His commandments, because the more we love Him, the more we understand that everything that He commands is for our benefit and His glory. His commandments are good. His ways for us are perfect and wonderful. Everything that God designs for us is good. He loves us.

God is love and He is motivated by love. The more we love Him and the more we obey Him, the more we want to. True love is not static. Love must continually grow stronger with every day that passes. I can honestly say that I love Linda today more than I did 29 years ago, when we married. Over the years our love which was strong to begin with, has grown and matured and become even stronger. This should also be the case with our relationship with our Heavenly Father. As time goes by our love should be more mature and deeper and stronger.

Sadly, this is not the case for many Christians. Many never grow into a mature love for God. Some find that their initial love for God wanes and they become cold and distant and some even fall right away. That is a tragedy. In His words to Laodicea Jesus said:

***“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”
(Rev.3:15-16)***

The Church at Laodicea was in a bad way. The people had become lukewarm in their devotion and service to God. They were half baked. A half-cooked sausage is no good.

Jesus died for us. How can we be lukewarm in our love for Him, in our gratitude to Him? He has saved us from eternal hell, from utter darkness. How can we not love Him with all our heart?

To protect ourselves from becoming lukewarm, we need to constantly remind ourselves of what Jesus has done for us. We need to be grateful and thank Him regularly. God’s Word comes to our aid. Psalm 103 is perfect for this purpose.

***Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;
3 Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
4 Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
6 The Lord performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
9 He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,***

Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

Ps.103:1-11

This year, during Lent, I challenge you to find some time to read these words every day. You will find that your love for God will grow. Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.