

INTRODUCTION

When you who are NOT in Jesus Christ consider the great day of judgment to come, and the never-ending flames of the lake of fire, hear the good news: there is a Mediator between God and men, by whom sinners can be saved from the wrath to come! Jesus Christ the righteous has died on the cross in the place of the unrighteous---just for unjust---to bring us to God. He was buried, but He rose again to life, and now sits enthroned in heaven. From there, His voice goes out to all the earth: “Repent and be forgiven. Believe in me and have everlasting life.”

When you who ARE in Christ think of those who as yet are still in their sins, the terrible thought of them facing the judgment almost can break your heart. When you think how weak and immature you yourself still are in the faith, and how weak and immature so many other Christians are, also, while the evil forces of this world seem so strong around you, sometimes you can feel overwhelmed. But then comes this beautiful word of hope: When you are diligent to live rightly as a disciple of Jesus Christ; when you always speak what is true about Jesus Christ; and when you continue in these things, you will be an instrument in God’s hand by which He will save sinners and strengthen the church!

You hear in this formula that it is not just the church’s doctrine which must be maintained with all diligence. Because we know that even when we speak the truth in love, people might not want to listen to us. What then? How do we win over those who are not inclined to God’s law and gospel from our lips? We prove the truth of our doctrine by the righteousness of our lives. We prove our talk by our walk. We make ourselves an example, both to unbelievers for their salvation, and to believers, for their edification.

So far, we have considered what the Bible says about being an example in word and in conduct. Today we take up there, where we left off, and consider that the Bible says,

Be an example to the believers in love.

TEXT

1 Timothy 4:11-12 These things command and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 John 3:16-18 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

BODY

To be an example to the believers in love...

- I. Understand What Love Is By Christ Laying Down His Life For Us - 1 John 3:16a
 - A. As a shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, so Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us
 1. David said that when he tended the sheep, he had to fight both the lion and the bear to save the sheep
 2. the Lord Jesus Christ said that He is the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep
 3. this refers to His whole life of humiliation on our behalf, especially what He suffered when died for our sins on the cross
 - B. Rather than exalting Himself, He humbled Himself
 1. Philippians 2:7-8 [He] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
 - C. Rather than looking to be served, He served us
 1. Matthew 20:28 ...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
 - D. Rather than making Himself rich at our expense, He made us rich at His expense
 1. 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.
 - E. Rather than others suffering what they deserved, He suffered it for them
 1. 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

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- II. As Christ Laid Down His Life for Us, Lay Down Your Life For the Brethren - 1 John 3:16b
 - A. Not that you can do what it was the office of the only Mediator to do; but that you can do what is of that same spirit
 - B. Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (4) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
 - C. Do not look to be served, but by love serve one another - Gal 5:13
 - D. Do not look at godliness as a means of gain; but be glad to spend and be spent for the sake of men's souls - 2 Cor 12:15
 - E. Be willing to suffer long, patiently bearing with the weaknesses of your brothers, being slow to take offense or to become angry, forgiving one another even as Christ forgave you - Col 3:12

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III. Watch Against Temptations Not to Love - 1 John 3:17-18

- A. Watch out for the temptation to speak of love, but not to act in love
 - 1. you open your mouth, and speak of love
 - 2. but you shut your heart, and don't act in love
- B. Watch out for the temptation to love only in ways that don't cost you
 - 1. 2 Corinthians 8:7-9 But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also [giving money]. (8) I speak not by commandment, but I am testing [proving] the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. (9) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.
- C. Watch out for the temptation, while struggling to maintain the purity of the church's doctrine, to forget the love you used to have
 - 1. Revelation 2:2-5 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.
- D. Watch out for the temptation that, when sin abounds, love may grow cold
 - 1. Matthew 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
 - 2. zeal to uphold righteousness and justice tempt you to forget love
 - 3. sinfulness among those who go to church tempts you to be afraid to love
 - 4. the prevalence of sin tempts you to sin, also, in which sin you act in hate rather than in love

To be an example to the believers in love,
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-as Christ laid down His life for us, lay down your life for the brethren
-watch against temptations not to love

To be an example to the believers in love

IV. Remember That Love Is Keeping God's Law, God's Commandments

- A. This is very easily overlooked or dismissed
 - 1. you know we tend to substitute sentiment or feelings for actual love
 - 2. you might have wrong ideas about the law, that we no longer need it or use it because now we have the Spirit, or something like that
- B. But the Lord Jesus and His apostles explicitly instruct us that God's law is a law of love; to obey His law is to love; to love is to obey His law
- C. 2 John 1:5-6 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. (6) This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.
- D. Paul wrote this to us Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," "YOU SHALL NOT MURDER," "YOU SHALL NOT STEAL," "YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS," "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

CONCLUSION

To be an example to the believers in love,

-understand what love is by Christ laying down His life for us,

-as Christ laid down His life for us, lay down your life for the brethren

-watch against temptations not to love

-remember that love is keeping God's law

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails...

Rita - Prelude

Rita - Trinity 86 "Now Thank We All Our God"

Haven - Trinity 147 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (Andrew leading)

Rita - Trinity 421 "Rock of Ages" (first tune)

Jeremiah - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Revelation 7:9-12

Thad - Scripture Reading - Isaiah 59:1-21

Dillon - Congregational Prayer

Jeff - Benediction - 1 Peter 4:7-8

- I. To Be An Example in Love, Know Love By How Jesus Has Loved Us
 - A. He laid down His life for us
 - 1. John means that the Lord Jesus died on the cross for us
 - 2. he is referencing what the Lord Jesus said, John 10:11-18 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd ~~gives~~ **[lays down] His life** for the sheep. (12) But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. (13) The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. (14) I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. (15) As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I **lay down My life** for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. (17) "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I **lay down My life** that I may take **it** again. (18) No one takes **it** from Me, but I **lay it down** of Myself. I have power **to lay it down**, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."
 - 3.
 - B. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren
 - C. Is there something you need that I can do for you?
- II. To Be An Example in Love, Recognize the Temptation for Love to Wane
 - A. To grow cold
 - 1. 1 Peter 4:8 have fervent love for one another
 - B. To be faked
 - 1. Rom 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation/hypocrisy
 - C. To be in words only
 - 1. 1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.
- III. To Be An Example in Love, Know Love By How It Equals God's Commandments
 - A. You know we tend to substitute sentiment or feelings for actual love
 - B. Jesus said so Himself Matthew 22:35-40 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, (36) "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (37) Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' (40) On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

- C. Paul wrote this to us Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," "YOU SHALL NOT MURDER," "YOU SHALL NOT STEAL," "YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS," "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
- D. See how John, in his letters, specifies what he means by loving one another in terms of keeping the Lord's commandments
1. 1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.
 2. 2 John 1:5-6 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. (6) This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.
- E. So, to love one another means to treat one another as God has commanded
- IV. To Be An Example in Love,
- A. Gal 5:13 by love serve one another
 - B. Eph 4:2 forbear one another in love
 - C. Col 2:2 knit your hearts together in love
 - D. Col 3:14 put love on like a cover over everything else
 - E.

CONCLUSION

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.