God’s Endless Love

2/14/16

1 Corinthians 7-8 Amplified Bible

*7 Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening].8 Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]. As for prophecy (the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose), it will be fulfilled and pass away; as for tongues, they will be destroyed and cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away [it will lose its value and be superseded by truth]. 13 And so faith, hope, love abide [faith--conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope--joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love--true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Many translations of the Bible use the word ‘charity’ instead of the word ‘love’. To the authors of Scripture it means the same thing, but today ‘charity’ has a more restricted meaning. Love includes all sorts of giving, relieving, and service to God, Humankind and Creation, as well as charitable giving, or charity, as we have come to call it.

Valentine’s Day, in a sense, began with a focus on a particular segment of God’s Love: just one color from the inclusive spectrum of the White Light of Spirit – Eros love. This is the passionate and intense love that arouses romantic feelings. The legend of St. Valentine tells us that this priest continued to marry young couples who were in love, despite the condemnation of the King who was trying to enlist young men into his army. The young married men didn’t want to leave their brides and family to go off to war, so the King stopped marriages.

Although Valentine’s Day has its roots in Eros love, it has grown into a more comprehensive acknowledgement. For many generations, school children and family members have shared gifts and cards to express Phileo love, Storge Love, as well as Eros love. From what I can tell, the unconditional love of Agape is beyond the commerciality of Valentine’s Day card-giving; it is more interested in “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you” than in simply buying them a card.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians they held great esteem around prophetic abilities, speaking in tongues, and knowledge. So Paul tried to point out that while those things are good, they are meant to be temporary assists to a larger goal. Like the scaffolding on a building under construction it is a necessary part of the process, but it is abandoned once the building is complete. It will pass away; it will not last.

The same is for much of the way that we live, and what we hold dear right now. We cling to ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that may play a necessary part of our lives right now, but as we grow in the awareness of Christ these old ways will fall away, and what remains is Love … Faith, Hope, and Love.

Love endures; it has no end. Why? Because God is Love and God endures. The Christ came to emblazon upon our hearts the Great Commission: to love each other. Regardless of who they are, what they think, how they live, or how they behave. Love each other … no matter what.

God’s love for us is endless, and we are being drawn into this endless love, to bathe in it and to share it. The Christ came to show us the way of love. In every instance that involved killing or hurting someone, the Christ gave his followers a non-violent option.

In his first big public sermon he stated: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.”

People were disappointed in Jesus; some thought he was insane. The idea that love could defeat evil was preposterous. That they should love the Romans, wash the feet of their oppressors was abhorrent. To forgive those that were intent upon hurting them, who wanted to squash their way of life, and enslave them was repugnant and demeaning.

What the people wanted from Jesus was for him to take down the enemy, and take back their land and their way of life. Instead, he says, “Love them. Bless them – and if it calls for it, die for them ... even if they have killed your family and friends.”

If we were told this by the leaders of our country it would anger

many of us; at the very least we would be offended. Some of us would move into fear. Don’t they know the pain these people have caused? What a ridiculous idea: to love your enemy instead of kill them. But that was what the Christ was telling the people of his day, and that message continues in our hearts to this day.

British New Testament scholar, Nicholas Thomas Wright, said, “When God wants to change the world, he doesn’t send in the tanks. He sends in the meek, the mourners, those who are thirsty and hungry for God’s justice, the peacemakers, and so on.”

We are part of that “so on”. If we are willing to love each other, then we are part of what is changing the world. Loving each other changes the world. Loving our enemies transforms hearts. Love invites people to look within to Christ, or at least acknowledge that perhaps there is a greater Power available to call upon.

We can focus on ISIS, Paris, bomb threats at Harvard, war declarations, Islamophobia, immigrants and refugees, hydrogen bombs, and all of the other unrest that the world offers globally and personally, or we can focus on God. We will find the answers and solutions to all of our ‘dis-ease’ in prayer and in ‘the quiet’ surrounded by Spirit. Don’t be surprised if the answer sounds like, “Love them; forgive them. Now go out and do something that demonstrates My fathomless, endless love.”

That is what Valentine’s Day has become for me – an opportunity to remember and participate in God’s endless love. The Christ offers us a wonderful Valentine’s Day gift every moment of our journey in these bodies: Come unto me all who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Come unto me – come to me – come inside to me, bring all the things of the world that encumber you – your fears, hurts, concerns, stresses … even the things that you are not aware of that are weighing you down – bring it all to me and I will give you rest; I will give you answers; I will give you peace and guidance. Come to me, my beloved.

Let us pray….

AGAPE

This is an unconditional love that sees beyond the outer surface and accepts the recipient for whom he/she is, regardless of their flaws, shortcomings or faults. It’s the type of love that everyone strives to have for their fellow human beings. Although you may not like someone, you decide to love them just as a human being. This kind of love is all about sacrifice as well as giving and expecting nothing in return. The translation of the word agape is love in the verb – form: it is the love demonstrated by your behavior towards another person. It is a committed and chosen love.

PHILEO

The phileo love refers to an affectionate, warm and tender platonic love. It makes you desire friendship with someone. It’s the kind of love which livens up the Agape love. Although you may have an agape love for your enemies, you may not have a phileo love for the same people. The translation of the word phileo is love in the noun – form: it is how you feel about someone. It is a committed and chosen love.

STORGE

It is a kind of family and friendship love. This is the love that parents naturally feel for their children; the love that member of the family have for each other; or the love that friends feel for each other. In some cases, this friendship love may turn into a romantic relationship, and the couple in such a relationship becomes best friends. Storge love is unconditional, accepts flaws or faults and ultimately drives you to forgive. It’s committed, sacrificial and makes you feel secure, comfortable and safe.

EROS

Eros is a passionate and intense love that arouses romantic feelings; it is the kind that often triggers “high” feelings in a new relationship and makes you say, “I love him/her”. It is simply an emotional, amorous, carnal love. Although this romantic love is important in the beginning of a new relationship, it may not last unless it moves a notch higher because it focuses more on self instead of the other person. If the person “in love” does not feel good about their relationship anymore, they will stop loving their partner.