

CHRISTIAN LOVE
 First Thessalonians
 Banska Bystrica, 15th May 2016

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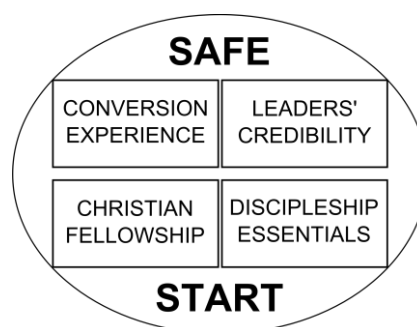
4. TO REMEMBER

0. INTRODUCTION: THE LABOUR OF LOVE

- reminder: method of exposition: theme “clusters”
- Love: “the trademark” of Christian religion (by this you will be known as my disciples...)

0.1. REVIEWING THE PREVIOUS LESSON

- faith & suffering



- impossible to distinguish sharply...

0.2. LOVE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- love... (1) ...& fellowship, (2) ...& discipleship essentials, (3) ...& leaders, (4) ...& conversion
- the three fundamental elements of the Christian life: (1) faith, (2) love, (3) hope → (1) ζῆλον, (2) κόπος, (3) ὑπομονή. (genitives of origin [AUBERLEN & RIGGENBACH])

- κόπος – [Passow] a striking, beating : hence toil and trouble, suffering, ...the pain, disease... toil, weariness,
- Love: the identification sign of Christians: **John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταὶ ἐστε, ἐὰν ἀγάπην ἔχητε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.)"
- **Mt 24:12** And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.
 - **Rev 2:4** But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
 - (Jas 4:1-4; 5:1-6)
- (1) love between all believers (*christian fellowship*); (2) love of the leaders toward the converts (*leaders' credibility*)

0.3. LOVE IN THE 1ST THESSALONIANS [TEXT]

- **1:3** remembering before our God and Father your (1) work of faith and (2) labor of love ... (τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης)
- **2:7-9** But we were gentle (νήπιιοι¹ ἤπιοι)² among you, like a nursing mother taking care of **her own children**.⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you (ὀμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν), we were ready to share (μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν) with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves (τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς), because you had become very dear to us (ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε).⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil (τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον): we worked night and day (νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι), that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- **2:17-20** But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face (τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν),¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, again and again – but Satan hindered us.¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting (ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως) before our Lord Jesus at his coming (ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ)? Is it not you?²⁰ For you are our glory and joy (ὕμεις γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ).
- **3:6-8** But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly (ὅτι ἔχετε μνησίαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε) and long to see us, as we long to see you (πάντοτε, ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς,) – [⁷ for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.]⁸ For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord (ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ).
- **4:9-10** Now concerning brotherly love (φιλαδελφίας) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another (αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους),¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers (εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς [τούς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ) throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more (παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον),...
- **5:14-15** And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle (νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους), encourage the fainthearted (παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους), help the weak (ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν), be patient with them all (μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας).¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil (μή τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τιμὴ ἀποδῶ), but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone (ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε [καὶ] εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας).
- **5:26** Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss (ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ).

¹ "...as innocent (?) as a young child among them..."

² "Most of the ancient authorities, the R. V. tells us in the margin, read 'We were babes () in the midst of you.' If this were correct, the thought would be that Paul stooped to the level of these infant disciples, speaking to them, as it were, in the language of childhood, and accommodating himself to their immaturity. But though this is appropriate enough, the word is not proper to express it. Gentleness is really what is meant." (DENNEY p. 76)

0.4. LOVE THEMES IN 1THESSALONIANS

- A. Source of Christian love
 - a. Taught by God (4:9-10)
 - b. Practice of love (“grow in it more and more” 4:10)
- B. Love Attitudes
 - a. Valuing others (“dear to us” 2:8)
 - b. Desiring (“desirous of you” 2:7; “desire to see face to face” 2:17; long to see... 3:6)
 - c. Enjoying others (“now we live” 3:8)
 - d. Self-giving – gentleness (mother-children 2:7)
 - e. Remembering others (“torn away... not in heart” 2:17; “you always remember us kindly” 3:6)
 - f. Measuring success... (hope, joy, crown 2:19)
- C. Practical expressions of love
 - a. Getting information (“Timothy has come to us from you” 3:6)
 - b. Meeting each other 5:14-15 (1) admonish → the idle, (2) encourage → the fainthearted, (3) help → the weak, (4) be patient → with all, (5) see to ...not revenge... but do good... (stop grudging)
 - c. Hard work (“our labour and toil” 2:9)
 - d. Physical touch (“holy kiss” 5:26)

1. THE SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LOVE

1.1. GOD (4:9)

- The Holy Spirit (**Rom 5:5** God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us)

1.2. CHRISTIAN PRACTICE (4:10)

- **Phil 2:12-13** ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

2. THE ATTITUDES OF LOVE

2.1. VALUING OTHER CHRISTIANS

- “dear to us” 2:8

[NEE] Every worker of the Lord must have not only a love for the brothers but also a love for all men. Solomon once said, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker" (Prov. 17:5). God is the Creator of all men; therefore, every man is worthy of our love. A servant or worker of the Lord is not fit to serve Him if he is lacking in brotherly love or if he only has brotherly love but is lacking in love for all men. He must have a love for all men, a genuine affection for men, before he can serve God. All those who find men to be wearisome, troublesome, or contemptible are unqualified to be God's servants. We must see that in God's eyes man was created by Him. Man certainly has fallen, but he has become the object of the Lord's redemption.³

- Love and value, respect, consideration...
- 2:8 [ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῶν] “Paul verbalizes the depth of his affection by calling the Thessalonians beloved (agapetoi*) using that special word for sacrificial self-giving love”⁴
- ... ἀγαπητός – the word applied to Christ
- “In 7 and 8 one feels in word and figure the tender heartiness and sweet breath of a first, fresh love, such as becomes the firstling of the apostolical Epistles.”⁵

³ NEE, W. *The Character of the Lord's Worker*,

⁴ ELIAS, J. W. *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, Scottsdale : Herald Press, 1995, p. 69

⁵ AUBERLEN & RIGGENBACH p. 31

2.2. DESIRING OTHER CHRISTIANS

- “desirous of you” 2:8; “desire to see face to face” 2:17; long to see... 3:6
- 2:8 (ὀμειρόμενοι)⁶ – ...ardently to long after any one, ...mother’s love; deep (“physical”) longing;
- **Heb 10:25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some...(μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν)
- Love metaphors⁷

LOVE IS A JOURNEY.

We are at a crossroads.
This relationship is not going anywhere.
Look how far we’ve come.
Our marriage is on the rocks.

LOVE IS MADNESS.

I’m crazy about her.
He constantly raves about her.
I’m mad about you.
She’s wild about him.

LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE.

There were sparks between us.
I was drawn/attracted to her.
They gravitated to each other.
His whole life revolves around her.

LOVE IS MAGIC.

She cast a spell over him.
The magic is gone.
He was spellbound/entranced/charmed.
She is bewitching.

LOVE IS A MEDICAL PATIENT.

They have a healthy marriage.
Can their relationship be revived?
Our marriage is on the mend.
Their relationship is in really good shape.

LOVE IS WAR.

His advances eventually overpowered her.
He is known for his many conquests.
She pursued him and fought for him.
He is slowing gaining ground with her.

2.3. REMEMBERING OTHER CHRISTIANS

- “torn away... not in heart” 2:17; “you always remember us kindly” 3:6
- **Eph 1:16** ...I do not cease to give thanks for you, **remembering** you in my **prayers**
- **2Tim 1:3** ...I **remember** you constantly in my **prayers** night and day
- **Philem 1:4** I thank my God always when I **remember** you in my **prayers**

2.4. ENJOYING OTHER CHRISTIANS’ FAITH

- “now we live” 3:8
- **Philem 1:6** ...the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ

⁶ **Job 3:21** οἱ ὀμείρονται τοῦ θανάτου

⁷ McNEEL, J. H. *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother*, p. 15-16

Since Paul would be comforted as to the Thessalonians by the good news of their condition brought by Timothy, the "distress and affliction" must have referred to other matters which disturbed the apostle's rest. These were doubtless the **failure at Athens**, and the troubles which he had at Corinth before the negative protection afforded him by Gallio, when that official refused to interfere, either to aid or hinder him (Acts 18: 6-12). Thus the good news from Thessalonica lightened the apostle's burdens at Corinth – v.8 for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. The good news made Paul relish and enjoy life, just as his afflictions and distress had been to him a kind of death. Comp. i Cor. 15: 31.⁸

2.5. SELF-GIVING – GENTLENESS

- mother-children 2:7
- “The figure implies a special effort to protect and to provide for every need, even to the extent of great sacrifice.”⁹
- **Is 49:15-16** “Can a woman **forget** her nursing **child**, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may **forget**, yet I will not **forget** you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

2.6. MEASURING SPIRITUAL SUCCESS...

- hope, joy, crown 2:19 (ἐλπὶς ἡ χαρὰ ἡ στέφανος καυχίσεως)
- στέφανος *wreath, crown, prize, reward,*

1Thes 2:19,20 appears to be the only passage which indicates clearly that at the coming of Christ we believers will rejoice over other believers whom, by God's grace, we have led to Christ, or have helped spiritually, even if only in an indirect way. (→ Dan 12:3)¹⁰

- **John 17:12** While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost
- [hope] ...Paul views the converts in Thessalonica as evidence or proof of the faithful manner in which he has carried out his apostolic calling...¹¹
- [ATHANASIUS] “He had his converts as his joy and his crown” (1 Thess. 2:19; Athanasius, Letter 49.4; NPNF2 4.559).

3. [PRACTICAL EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE]

- [next lesson]

4. TO REMEMBER

- Love for other Christians is not optional.
- Love is given by the Spirit but must be practiced if it is not to be put out.
- Love begins in our thoughts and attitudes before it is shown in deeds.

⁸ MCGARVEY & PENDLETON p. 13

⁹ *Expositors' Bible Commentary,*

¹⁰ STAM, C. R. *Thessalonians*, Germantown : Berean Bible Society, 1984, p. 32.

¹¹ WEIMA, J. A. D. *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids : Baker, 2014