

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What prophet cried when he realized what Hazael of Syria would do to the people of Israel?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Saul - 1 Samuel 31:5

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Loving as God and Christ Love Us

Sewell Hall

When you think of God's love for mankind, what do you think of first? Do you think of the marvelous body which He designed and made for us? Do you think of the gift of sight and the color of sunsets and flowers which He made to be seen? Do you think of the gift of hearing and the song of birds and the harmonies of music which He designed for us to hear? Do you think of food, clothing, shelter—the necessities which He has provided for us through all of our years? I think not. In fact, when we thank Him for these things in prayer we usually add: "But most of all, we thank Thee for the gift of Thy Son."

The gift of Jesus is the expression of God's love that is featured in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ..." (John 3:16).

And why did God give His only begotten Son? That the sick might be healed and the lame made to walk? That multitudes might be fed and the dead raised? All of these are expressions of love, but God did not give Jesus to the world for these things. "He gave His only begotten Son that whoever

believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God’s love is concerned first for our souls.

It is the same with the love of Jesus. He said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus did lay down His life for His friends. But was it for their financial, physical, social or political welfare? Ephesians 5:25 answers: “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). Not only is the degree of Christ’s love our ideal, but so also is the spiritual quality of it. When we think of loving others, our tendency is to think primarily of being tolerant toward them and then, perhaps, helping to supply their temporal and material needs. This reverses God’s priorities. If we love one another as He loved us, our first concern will be for the spiritual well-being of those we love. From a negative viewpoint, such love will avoid all offense. “Knowledge,” Paul said, “puffs up, but love edifies” (1 Corinthians 8:1). “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself” (Romans 15:2–3).

Positively, such love will sacrifice self for the salvation of others. Imagine a love that could write: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3). It was this love for Israel, and for the Gentiles, that sent Paul preaching throughout the Mediterranean world.

Some Applications

Godly love between a husband and wife will be concerned first for the spiritual well-being of the other. If only one is a Christian, he or she will make every effort to influence the lost companion to obedience (see 1 Peter 3:1–6). As Christians,

each will encourage the other to faithfulness and to sacrifices for the Lord.

As loving parents, our first concern will be for the souls of our children. Regardless of how much we might want to see them popular, or prosperous, or educated, we will never agree to anything that might jeopardize their souls. We will follow God’s example of chastening so that they may possess “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:5–11). We will make certain that from their infancy they are taught the sacred writings that will make them wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15–17). Anything less is counterfeit love.

Even boyfriends and girlfriends, exercising godly love, will strengthen one another spiritually and be eager to avoid anything that might tempt the other to lasciviousness or to a compromise of virtue.

A God-like and Christ-like love will reach out to all men. This is difficult. Oh, we may be moved to liberality by news of starvation in Ethiopia or earthquakes in Turkey, of monsoons in the Philippines or hurricanes in Jamaica. We may even search diligently for channels through which to send material relief. But we do not hear the cry of lost souls in such places as clearly as God heard the call of a lost world. We are neither disposed to go ourselves with the bread of life, nor do we encourage our sons to do so. And if one decides to go for that purpose, all too often he must canvass the brotherhood literally begging for support. This is not the love with which God loved us.

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:8–11).