

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## The Transforming Power of Love

by Dan Trygg

“For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died.<sup>15</sup> And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.<sup>16</sup> From now on, then, we do not know anyone according to flesh. Even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know Him in this way.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.<sup>18</sup> Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:<sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we ambassadorize for Christ, as God is appealing through us.”

II Corinthians 5:14-20a

“If ever you might love Me, you will keep My commandments... If ever anyone might love Me, he will keep My word...”

John 14:15,23a

“But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is fully-completed.”

I John 2:5

“No one has ever seen God; if ever we might love one another, God abides in us and His love is completed in us.”

I John 4:12

Remember when the serpent approached the woman in the garden of Eden to tempt her, he took the good thing God had said and twisted it so that it seemed unreasonable? God had said, “You may freely eat of any tree of the garden, ...*except* from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you may not eat...” (Gen. 2:16). Satan misrepresented God. He asked the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You can’t eat from every tree of the garden?’” (3:1) Undoubtedly, they *had been* eating of the other trees. They were all pleasant to the eye, and good for food. Every one tasted wonderful. Only the one tree God had warned them against, they had avoided. By suggesting that God had kept them from something good, the serpent was beginning to raise the thought in their minds that God was an evil taskmaster, an unreasonable control freak. Even though she was quick to correct the serpent, the suggestion had been planted, and the enemy was able to further assault the character of the God who had graciously provided them with so many wonderful and beautiful things to enjoy. In moments he succeeded in stealing away their joy, creating suspicion and resentment.

The same enemy has twisted our understanding of God’s word, His commandments and His expectations. Even though God has already done so much for us, and He comes right out and tells us that His commandments and instructions are for our good (Deut 10:13; Jn. 10:10; 15:10,11), we still somehow begin to believe that we are missing out on something by following Him. We get all turned around so that, instead of expecting something good, we begin to dread spending time with God in His word, or in prayer, or in a church activity. Though we may know this is not true, if we stop and reason it through, yet we somehow find ourselves thinking of the few “forbidden things”, instead of counting our blessings and enjoying the many incredible things God has given to us. Instead of delighting in God, we begin to resent Him, His holiness and seeming unreasonable demands. I don’t want to give the enemy too much credit, however. He could crawl off and die, and our deceitful hearts, the perversity of the sin which still is within us, would *still* lead us down a similar train of thought. “The heart of man is deceitful above all else, and desperately corrupt,” Jeremiah wrote (17:9). If we are in such a frame of mind, ...a faithless, “stinkin’ thinkin’” kind of state..., we can easily fall prey to the sinful passions which are aroused by this kind of behavioral focus, and we can end up in defeat, even disaster (Rom. 7:7-11).

What can we do to counter this malady? Many of us simply focus on trying not to think of the negative. That is a no-win situation. That is like telling someone, “Don’t think of a purple elephant!” Of course, the first thing they do is picture a purple elephant in their mind. The more they are conscious of trying not to think of purple elephants, the more their mind goes back there. Or, we dutifully attempt to go through the motions of obedience, because we are “supposed to”, ...but there really is no joy or faith there. It is more *self-will* than the power of the Spirit, and we will eventually collapse in an angry word, or a fleshly indulgence, or some other work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). The only way we can resist such temptations is to glory and delight in something higher, something greater and more glorious. For Paul, this was the love of God.

The love of God was a watershed realization for Paul. It blew him away, and he never was the same after he really came to grips with this incredible love. In II Corinthians 5:14, he wrote that the love of Christ controlled him. The literal Greek word there means to “hold together, hold fast” and can refer either to “keeping me together and on target” or “restraining me from defeat” or even “constraining or impelling me to action”. To have that kind of impact on Paul’s thinking and choices indicates that it was more than a passing thought, or a doctrinal

**belief.** He had come to a deeper-level, experiential appreciation of the greatness of what God did for humankind, and especially for him. In the verse, he says that **this was an insight he gained after some thought, weighing of evidence and discernment.** It is translated, “concluding this” or “judging this”. **What did he conclude? That Jesus died for everyone, and that everyone died in Him. The work of atonement is complete and fully paid for. All that is lacking is for people to hear and grasp what God has already made available to them, and choose to embrace it for themselves.** This is incredible! Paul saw himself as the worst of sinners, because he had personally persecuted the church (I Cor. 15:9,10; I Tim. 1:12-17). For God to have already sent Jesus to die for him before any of that, ...and then to have personally called him to *partake* of that finished work, even after he had done such horrific things to God’s people was truly mind-blowing. Then, as Paul looked around, he began to see other people as ones for whom Christ died. **Everyone was put to death with Jesus, whether they know it or not.** Unfortunately, most *don’t* know that. God has done everything on His side to remove the barriers to reconciliation. **Only those who will receive this complete, overflowing gift of grace, and the gift of righteousness which is in Christ, will be able to experience this reconciliation,** and the benefits that come with a relationship with the Creator. **This motivated Paul to action.** He could not allow people to slip away into eternity without knowing God. He could not close his heart to humanity, nor could he allow the incredible grace of God to be unspoken of. **He was impassioned to communicate the grace of God, and to call people to be reconciled to Him and to live for Him.** Salvation, joy and fulfillment are in Christ. Those in Him are new creations, creatures of an unknown, new and fresh quality. This **“higher life” is available to all who come to God and choose to walk with Him.** New things, *incredible things*, are available to them, things that will be discovered and understood as they no longer live unto themselves, but choose to live for Him. He was *compelled* to answer the grace and love of God with a life of service.

**The love of God is the basis for the “higher life”. It is the basis for obedience, for love for others, and for the visible manifestation of God in our lives.** This is another way in which the enemy has often succeeded in turning around our thinking. We are conned into thinking that the higher life, a life of greater holiness, power and evangelistic impact, is the result of self-effort, self-discipline and self-sacrifice. In other words, **we often fall into the trap of trying to change our inner selves by changing our outer behaviors. It actually works the other way: As our inner self is transfixed and transformed, we find motivation to change our outer behaviors** (II Cor. 3:18). As we look at great heroes of the faith, we will often see radical behaviors in their lives. They are often diligent, self-disciplined people. Many times they work hard and make great sacrifices for God. The secret, however, is not in their *self-reliance*, it is in their *self-surrender*. It is in giving up more of themselves to God. Why and how they do that is not out of self-strength or self-will, it is out of a growing love for God. **A deepening awareness and appreciation for God motivates change in their use of time and the focal point of their lives. They find themselves drawn to focus themselves on Him, and to tune in to His activity in their lives, because they want more of Him.** They adjust themselves to draw near to Him, not out of duty or obligation, but out of love. The more they understand His heart and His goodness, the more they want unrestricted relationship with Him. **The habits, behaviors and thoughts that are offensive to God are put aside because of this growing love for Him.**

As we get to know God’s heart toward us, we also cannot help but begin to see His heart toward others. We cannot help but be moved by His compassion, as we see the longings of His heart. **Because we love Him, we begin to love what He loves. We begin to love others.** We are transfixed by the extent of His love, and *something within us is stirred*. When we trust in Christ, and we are born from above, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside of us. Paul says that He is “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5:5). This love of God is poured out of God’s heart into our own. **When we see the love and compassion of God toward others, our own heart is stirred. This stirring is the “Yes!”, the “Amen!”, of the Holy Spirit within us to the love of God expressed toward others.** We begin to resonate with God’s heart, much like a tuning fork will resonate when it is exposed to the same musical tone it is attuned to. **We find ourselves seeing people differently. We begin to feel compassion for them. We see them as lost, and we desire that they might know the Delightful One that we have come to know.** We begin to feel the *urgency*, the need for something to be done, so that they might know. **A longing cry begins to rise up within our soul, wordless at first but eventually pouring forth in intercessions and petitions** (Rom. 8:26,27). Why? Because *our* hearts have been “compelled”, “held together” and “impelled” by the love of Christ which we ourselves have tasted, which is growing inside of us, and which motivates action on our part.

The apostle John understood this. He recorded Jesus’ comments about this. **If ever we might love Him, we will obey, we will love others.** When we do these things it is the very fruit, fulfillment and completion of the love poured out in our hearts. The Greek means “fully-grown”, or “brought-to-completion”. When God’s love is fully-grown in us, or when it has opportunity to express its innate design and character, obedience toward God and love toward others will result. **This is the “higher life”. Love transformation is the best evidence that what we say about Jesus is real. It reveals the God who is living in us. He pleads and reaches out through us to others.**