

Sunday, May 16, 2010

Living Hope EFC

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Be Devoted in Love to those in the Church? You've got to be Kidding!

(Rom.12:9-13)

Story: 19 year old G.I., WW 2, in the Congressional Record.

He was awarded a medal for bringing in a large group of Japanese prisoners. He tells his side of the story.

"I want someone to know that I don't deserve that medal. It happened this way. I was captured by the Japanese with 5 of my pals. We were marched through the jungle with bayonets at our backs. I had to see my comrades one-by-one killed and mutilated. I said the 23rd Psalm. I said the Lord's Prayer. Die I must, but I determined not to let my captors see my fear. Trembling from head to foot, marching in mud up to my ankles, with a bayonet sticking in my back, I began to whistle, the way I used to when I was a small boy and had to go through a dark street. So I whistled, 'We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing; He chastens & hastens His will to make known; the wicked oppressing cease then from distressing, sing praises to His name, He forgets not His own.'

"Suddenly I became aware that someone had joined in my whistling – it was my Japanese captor! He too, was whistling the hymn. Soon I felt his gun fall back into place. He walked beside me then & suddenly I jumped when, in perfect English, he said to me, 'I never cease to wonder at the magnificence of Christian hymns,' A few minutes talk revealed that the Japanese soldier had learned English in a mission school to which I had contributed in my Sunday School days. The Japanese boy spoke of war & how the Japanese Christians hated it. We both agreed on the power of Christianity & **what would happen if people really dared to live it; &** then we began to talk of our families & our homes. Finally, at the suggestion of the Japanese soldier, we knelt in the mud & prayed for suffering humanity around the world and for "His peace that passes understanding" among all men on earth.

"When we arose, he asked me if I could take him back as a prisoner to the US headquarters. He said it was the only way that he could live up to his Christianity, & help Japan to become a Christian nation. On the way back he found in various foxholes other Japanese Christians, and they too joined us. I'll never forget the hope & joy that came into their eyes as my friend unfolded to them, one-by-one, how we found each other & why & where they were being taken. All the way back we talked of the Christian religion. When we neared camp, by mutual agreement they put on poker faces & somber looks & I, gun in hand, marched them into camp. So you see – I don't deserve a medal for the most wonderful experience in my life." - St.

Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Church Bulletin

What would happen if people really dared to live it?

APPLY: There are many who want to push Christianity aside as being outdated, archaic, feeble, "a crutch," **not relevant in the "real world."**

- ...**The real world** of murders, rapes, child abuse, wars, lawsuits...
- Rather than being **irrelevant**, might it not be "ALL TOO RELEVANT?"

- Might not the real issue be that people don't want to fix problems if it means submitting their personal lifestyle & behavior to God?

It is evident that Christ, The Prince of Peace, is the ONLY answer to man's great desire for peace, unity, forgiveness, & the end to war.

ILLUS: Modern Day Example = Mosab Hassan Yousef

- The son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, **a founder and leader of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.**
- Secretly embraced Christianity, *became one of the top spies for Israel's internal security arm.* "There is a logical explanation," he says. **"Simply my enemies of yesterday became my friends**
- Christ turns killers into Apostles, prostitutes into pure women, thieves into citizens of paradise, fearful – into martyrs, enemies into friends.
- Christianity, lived out, is counter- cultural to man's natural inclination
- **The answer to our deepest desires as a church can be realized to the extent that we enter into the life that God designed for us to live.**

PROGRESSION OF THOUGHT:

Rom.12:1-2 – Paul challenges us to live fully committed to God.

Rom.12:3-8 – He tells us that functioning as the church is a team sport.

Rom.12:9-21 – Now, he describes what a transformed life looks like.

- 12:1-2 = Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and will.
- 12:9-21 = Love one another as I have loved you!
- *What loving God looks like when it is applied to relationships.*
- Spiritual graces make room for gifts to be effective.
- We may question what our gifts are. We cannot question God's will!

SO WHAT DOES GOD SAY A TRANSFORMED LIFE LOOKS LIKE?

1 -VERSE 9: Love without hypocrisy – sincerely, genuinely.

- **αναυποκριτος** (υποκριτος = hypocrite).
- This word was used of **actors** on the Greek stage; a pretender, someone who plays a part, who wore a mask, not his true identity.
- Jesus used it in **Matt.**6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7; (23:13,23,28,33).
- The hypocrite pretends he is *giving* when he is actually *buying* praise.
- His heart is not connected to his lips. His actions have dual purpose.

POINT: Christian love is to be like God's love; true & honest. God never pretends, never lies or says one thing then acts another way.

- **You can't have a real relationship with someone playing a part!**
- Hypocrisy lines a person up with Satan, THE liar & murderer.
- THIS ONE VIRTUE – fulfills God's law & fixes our world's evils!
- PROBLEM: None of us can do it perfectly! But we must try!

Question: "What is this LOVE Paul is talking about?" = **αγαπη**

- **μεν:** Paul is going to describe it as he continues writing.
- **δε:** It is love that is known as *doing what is right & best for another, not tailored by treatment we may receive from others.* (Rom.5:8)
- **1 John 4:**10-12,19-21; 5:2-3; 1 Cor.13:1-13. HOW? Rom.5:5.

10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and *sent his Son* as an atoning *sacrifice* for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but *if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," yet *hates* his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

²¹And he has given us this command: **Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**

1 John 5:2-3

²This is how we know that *we love the children* of God: *by loving God and carrying out his commands.*

³**This is love for God:** to obey his commands.

JESUS: Our Great Example of doing what is best for another!

ILLUS: Peter's denial and restoration – **John 21: & Luke 22:28-34.**

²⁸You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ³¹"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." ³³But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." ³⁴Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

John 21 "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

- **Why** do you think John included this story in his gospel?
- If you were one of **the other disciples**, how would you be feeling about Peter? How would Peter be feeling about himself?
- How would **the history of the church** be different if this hadn't happened? Would you have **nominated Peter** to be key leader?
- How does it make you feel – that Jesus has forgiven your sins?
- That there is no betrayal that He cannot reconcile you?
- **How will history be different because Christ loves unhyprocritcally?**

John 13:34-35. ³⁴A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

2- Hate evil, cling to (be glued to) what is good. (13:10)

If we do not hate evil, its because we don't understand how evil, evil is.

APPLY: What would this "irrelevant" command do for our community?

3- VERSE 10: Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

φιλαδελφια εις αλληλους **φιλοστοργοι** = Love one another with family affection, affectionate fondness. -**1 Peter 1:22.**

²²Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love (**Φιλαδελφια**) for your brothers, love (**αγαπη**) one another deeply, from the heart.

John 21: ¹⁵When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly **love (αγαπας)** me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I **love (φιλω)** you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly **love (αγαπας)** me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I **love (φιλω)** you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you **love (φιλεις)** me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you **love (φιλεις)** me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I **love (φιλω)** you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

NOTE the use of agapa & fileo in John 21. Why?

In Vs.15 & 16: Jesus asked Peter if he really had an "at any cost I'll die what is best for you and God's purposes" love for Him.

- *Peter answered:* "Lord, you know I have an *affectionate fondness* for you." But he knew from his recent failure that he did **not** have the "I'll die for you and never fail you" type of love that he had professed. None of us does! We all fall short and fail God with our feeble attempt at loving Him. We *want* to do better, but we *can't*

So the third time, Jesus asks, coming down to where Peter's level of devotion really was, "Do you love me affectionately? Then let's start where you are. Serve me where you are, "feed my sheep," and I'll take you on toward the kind of love where you are finally ready to give your all – even if it means dying for me.

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

POINT: It is the same with us. We want to serve Christ. We make our pledges and promises, but fall so short. Christ does not reject us. He knows "we are but dust." And He accepts us where we are, and He will lead us and transform us "from glory unto glory" into His likeness.

- At the Last Supper – Jesus predicted both Peter's failure, and his future seat on a throne in His kingdom. Failure did not negate a future for Peter, either in His place in the church or Jesus' K'dom.
- Trust in the love of Christ – which will always act in our interests.
- Never doubt that Christ can bring us to recovery after our failure, restore us, and put us back into His service. He is our Savior!

POINT: God expects both kinds of love in the church; agapa & filia.

- We sometimes say: "**I love him, but I don't have to like him.**" But this falls short of how God loves us, and His expectations for us.
- Christians are to affectionately, sincerely care about one another.
- Every relationship is a process & takes work. The Church is to be determined to be family, not allowing problems to break relationship

APPLY: What difference would this make in divorce rates? Crimes of hate

- Do you think God loves you – with this family affection? **Jn.16:27**

The Father himself loves (**filei**) you because you have loved (**filw**) me and have believed that I came from God.

QUESTION:

What would happen if we really dared to live this way?

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