

LOVE VERSES ACCEPTANCE



"Love The Sinner, Hate The Sin" has meant different things to different generations. Sometimes, it's been used as an excuse to essentially ostracize people we view as "sinners" from the Church. But we often see

our generation leaning too far the other direction: most of us take the phrase to mean, "Accept the sinner and their sinful behaviors, and just secretly hate the sin."

THE TRUTH IS, LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE ARE NOT THE SAME THING

The even bigger truth is that love is messy and hard, while acceptance is clean and easy. Love says, "Your actions are hurting you. And because I love you, I am going to hold you accountable."

Love sometimes means telling your friends they're wrong. It sometimes means calling them out on their behavior. Love sometimes means disagreements and arguments, but those ultimately lead to personal and spiritual growth.

The alternative would be allowing your friends to participate in behavior that is harmful to them and their salvation. I think we often forget the reality of Romans 6:23, which says that the consequence of sin is death. It is very straightforward and clear about that. It then goes on to say that in spite of this, our gift from God is eternal life. I say that acceptance of a friend's sin is allowing them to go down a destructive path because of this truth spoken in Romans.

True love does not simply accept sin, because true love wants the best for our brothers and sisters. True love doesn't just accept because true love cannot accept destruction for our brothers and sisters. So yes, love can get messy. It can be painful because it makes for more vulnerable relationships. But these are the relationships that are real. These are the relationships that encourage change and foster growth through the promotion of truth in love.

REMEMBER, THE FATHER DISCIPLINES AND CORRECTS HIS OWN

"My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by Him; for the Lord disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every child whom He accepts." (Hebrews 12:5,6)



Christian love will show itself in a believer's readiness to bear evil as well as to do good. It will make us . . . Patient Under Provocation, Forgiving When Injured, Meek When Unjustly Attacked, Quiet When Slandered. It Will Make Us Bear Much And Forbear Much, Put Up With Much And Look Over Much, Submit Often And Deny Ourselves Often--all For The Sake Of Peace. It Will Make Us Put A Strong Bit On Our Tempers, And A Strong Bridle On Our Tongues.

TRUE PATTERN OF LOVE

Would we like to know where the true Pattern of love like this can be found? We have only to look at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, as described in the Gospels, and we shall see it perfectly exemplified. Love shone forth in all His doings. His daily life was an incessant "Going About" doing good. Love shone forth in all His bearing. He was continually hated, persecuted, slandered, misrepresented. But He patiently endured it all. No angry word ever fell from His lips. No ill-temper ever appeared in His demeanor. "When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when he suffered, He made no threats." (1 Peter 2:23.) Love shone forth in all His spirit and conduct. The law of kindness was ever on His lips. Among weak and ignorant disciples, among sick and sorrowful petitioners for help and relief, among publicans and sinners, among Pharisees and Sadducees--He was always one and the same--kind and patient to all. And yet, be it remembered, our

blessed Master never flattered sinners, or connived at sin (To cooperate secretly in an illegal or wrongful action). He never shrank from exposing wickedness in its true colors, or from rebuking those who would cleave to it. He never hesitated to denounce false doctrine, by whoever it might be held, or to exhibit false practice in its true colors, and the certain end to which it tends. He called things by their right names. He spoke as freely of Hell and the fire that is never quenched, as of Heaven and the kingdom of glory. He has left on record an everlasting proof that perfect love does not require us to approve everybody's life or opinions, and that it is quite possible to condemn false doctrine and wicked practice--and yet to be full of love at the same time.

AGAPE LOVE

Agape (**Love**) is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible. Agape perfectly describes the kind of love Jesus Christ has for His Father and for His followers: "Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love them and show Myself to them." John 14:21 Love, such as I have described, is certainly not natural to man. Naturally, we are all more or less selfish, envious, ill-tempered, spiteful, ill-natured, and unkind! We have only to observe children, when left to themselves, to see the proof of this. Let boys and girls grow up without proper training and education--and you will not see one of them possessing Christian love! Mark how some of them think first of themselves, and their own comfort and advantage! Mark how others are full of pride, passion, and evil tempers! How can we account for it? There is but one reply. The natural heart knows nothing of true love.

"The Heart Prepared By The Holy Spirit"

Christian love will never be found except in a heart prepared by the Holy Spirit. It is a tender plant, and will never grow except in one soil. You may as well expect grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles--as look for love when the heart is not right. The heart in which love grows, is a heart changed, renewed, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. The image and likeness of God, which Adam lost at the fall, has been restored to it, however feeble and imperfect the restoration may appear. It is a "**Partaker Of The Divine Nature**," by union with Christ and sonship to God; and one of the first features of that nature is love. (2 Peter 1:4) **Such a heart is deeply convinced of sin--hates it, flees from it, and fights with it from day to**



Acts 13:52

"And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

day. And one of the prime motions of sin which it daily labors to overcome, is selfishness and lack of love. **Such a heart is deeply sensible of its mighty debt to our Lord Jesus Christ. It feels continually that it owes to Him Who died for us on the cross, all its present comfort, hope, and peace.** How can it show forth its gratitude? What can it render to its Redeemer? If it can do nothing else, it strives to be like Him, to drink into His spirit, to walk in His footsteps, and, like Him--to be full of love. "**The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit**" is the surest fountain of Christian love. Love will produce love.

"CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY"



Romans 5:6-10 "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since,

therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."

"Love Is An Act Of Your Will"

These verses are so rich in love. God's love is no better displayed than on the cross because Jesus died for us while we were still sinners and enemies of His. Certainly we would die for our family but for someone who was our enemy? That is exactly what Jesus did for us. The wrath of God we deserved was placed on Him Who didn't deserve it so that we would get what we didn't deserve (Grace). **This proves that love is not a feeling or an emotion but it is active in His blood shed for us.** 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 "**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**" Love is best seen as devotion and action, not an emotion. Love is not exclusively based on how we feel. Certainly our emotions are involved, but they cannot be our only criteria for love. True devotion will always lead to action--true love.

"We Must Cultivate The Fruit Of The Spirit"

If you think you can love like this, think again! It takes the power of God through the Holy Spirit to love the unlovable. That is what God did. **He loved us first when we were unlovable.** When Paul uses the word "is" this word is like the mathematical use of the equal sign. So think of this; **Love is equal to patience. Love is equal to kindness. Love is equal to humility** (in not boasting or envying others). **Love is not acting in arrogance or rudeness.** It's not irritable or resentful, even though we are at times. It doesn't rejoice in sinful activities but rejoices in the truth. Finally, **love bears all things** (puts up with people), **believers all things** (gives people the benefit of the doubt), **love hopes all things** (expects the best in all situations) and **love endures all things** (like when people are rude to you, irritate you, resent you, brag to you, or envy you.). **Even though these are things that we should be emulating, these are impossible in our own strength and their source is God, therefore they reflect the love of God and God is their source.**