

WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS

Romans 5:8

transform us from rebels into friends Christ died for us, because of God's love. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross did not change God's attitude. It shows what God has always been like, what his attitude has always been and always will be. Always and forever, GOD IS LOVE.

- If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
- Do good anyway.
- If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.
- Succeed anyway.
- Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
- Be honest and frank anyway.
- The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
- Do good anyway.
- The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest minds.
- Think big anyway.
- People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.
- Fight for some underdogs anyway.
- What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
- Build anyway.
- People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.
- Love them anyway.

That is what God does.

CONCLUSION

A college man walked into a photography studio with a framed picture of his girlfriend. He wanted the picture duplicated. This involved removing it from the frame. In doing this, the studio owner noticed the inscription on the back of the photograph: "My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you forever and ever. I am yours for all eternity." It was signed "Diane," and it contained a PS.: "If we ever break up, I want this picture back."

We who have been baptized have professed our love for God and for others. We belong to Christ. There can be no PS. in our life given to God. We can never break up with Him. We are His. We belong to Him—forever.

INTRODUCTION

A Tale of Two Cities is a novel by Charles Dickens, set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. The novel depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralized by the French aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution, the corresponding brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the revolution, and many unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same time period. It follows the lives of Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton. Darnay is a French aristocrat who falls victim to the indiscriminate wrath of the revolution despite his virtuous nature, and Carton is a dissolute British lawyer who endeavors to redeem his ill-spent life out of his unrequited love for Darnay's wife, Lucie Manette. At the end of the book Carton switches places with Darnay and goes to the guillotine in his place. His final words are, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

Rom 5:6-8 ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Here is the final proof of love.

THE SINNERS

God's love is for sinners. The Bible is quite clear that we are all in that category: **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** In the first story in the Bible, Adam and Eve yield to temptation and disobey God. They sin. They live in a way that is less than God intended. They fall short of the glory of God. Men and women are capable of high and noble deeds. Even the best of us are also capable of the worst offences.

The Apostle Paul failed; Peter failed; every one of the twelve apostles failed. David, Israel's greatest king, "a man after God's own heart," failed. Moses, giant among the Israelites, giver of the law, deliverer of his people, failed. Jacob, father of Israel, failed; Isaac, son of promise, failed. Abraham, ancestor of Israel, father of the faithful, prototype of those who are righteous through faith, failed. Even our first parents, in their human perfection, failed.

Sin is missing the mark. King David is described as a man after God's own heart. Yet he was a sinner. Those who do not know the whole story of David always seem to know of his adultery with Bathsheba.

¹ CCC February 12, 2012

A gentleman once took exception to a message that both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God. The preacher remarked, "But the Word of God distinctly says, 'There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' ". The preacher's friend then replied, "Do you mean to say that there is no difference between an honest man and a dishonest one, between an intemperate man and a sober man?" "No," the preacher remarked, "I did not affirm that there was no room for comparison between such cases; but my position is, if two men were standing here together, one an intemperate man and the other a sober man, I should say of the one, 'This man is an intemperate sinner; the other is a sober sinner.' "

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about the difference Christ makes in a person's life, he lists some of the ways of living men and women practiced before they became Christians. His list includes: the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers. We may not be guilty of any of these, but bad temper, gossip, deceit, impure thoughts, bad language, laziness, taking people for granted, a critical spirit, prejudice are still sins. Could any of us check all the Ten Commandments? We are helpless to do anything about it. Yet God loves us.

THE SACRIFICE

We are helpless, powerless – unable to do anything to make ourselves righteous. But God is not powerless.

God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him. (The Message)

Over the centuries the law had shown how helpless man was to measure up to God's requirements for righteous living. Then, at the right time, God acted. By the right time, Paul is not speaking in just a chronological sense. He is not saying that Israel, and the world in general, was weaker or more sinful in C1 than at any other time. It was the right time in the sense that the moment had come for God to bring his plan for salvation to fulfillment. The expression **die for** is used four times in three verses. It can be used in a substitutionary sense – in our place – but it also means *on behalf of*. This is the good news: *Christ died for us*. Here is God's love in action. It involved the greatest sacrifice the world has ever seen. How God must have grieved to see his Son insulted, flogged and crucified by wicked men in a frenzy of hatred. Yet this is the sacrifice that was made for our sakes.

Rom 5:8 ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

A very dedicated Christian woman working in an amazing way with underprivileged people in London, England. What inspired her Christian faith and action? She was a Jew fleeing the German Gestapo in France during World War II. She knew she was close to being caught and she wanted to give up. She came to the home of a French Huguenot. A widow lady came to that home to say that it was time to flee to a new place. This Jewish lady said, "It's no use, they will find me anyway. They are so close behind." The Christian widow said, "Yes, they will find someone here, but it's time for you to leave. Go with these people to safety—I will take your identification and wait here." The Jewish lady then understood the plan; the Gestapo would come and find this Christian widow and think she was the fleeing Jew.

The Jewish lady asked the widow why she was doing that and the widow responded, 'It's the least I can do; Christ has already done that and more for me.'" The widow was caught and imprisoned in the Jewish lady's place, allowing time for her to escape. Within six months the Christian widow was dead in the concentration camp.

This Jewish lady never forgot that. She too became a follower of Jesus Christ and lived her life serving others. She met God through the greatest love a person can give—personal self-sacrifice. In faith, an authentic Christian lives his life serving others, saying, "That's the least I can do considering the great sacrifice Christ has made for me."

*"In peace let me resign my breath,
And thy salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me."*

THE LOVE

What God did, freely and gladly, demonstrates a love far beyond anything human love can attain.

Rom 5:8 ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The whole saving process, the coming of Christ and his sacrificial death on the cross, is because of God's love; the final proof of God's love.

It all happened to show how much God loves us. (W. Barclay)

Listen: God loves us. Think about what we are saying: God loves us. Do not let yourself be deceived. Some people see a loving Christ on one side and an angry God on the other. They picture *Gentle Jesus, meek and mild* then point to a Bible verse such as **For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God**. They then go on to say that in some way, what Christ did changed God, changed his attitude towards us, changed him from being angry to being gracious and kind. Nothing could be further from the truth. To deal with sin once and for all, to