

Pentecostals of Dadeville
Rev Andrew Salinas
February 14, 2010 - Valentine's Day Message

Written in Blood

On January 26th, 2005 a California train derailed, killing 11 people and injuring over 200. One of those 200 was a 44 year old man named John Phipps. His story is the basis for this message. Phipps was the man who, though pinned in the wreckage of the train, scrawled a message in his own blood to his wife and kids. As he regained consciousness, he felt his head and body and saw he was bleeding profusely. An upended train seat sat right above him, and thinking he might be dying, wrote this message: "I (heart symbol) my kids. I (heart symbol) Leslie." Later he said, "It wasn't a conscious thought. I've always told my wife and kids I loved them, and it just happened. I didn't plan it. I didn't say I have to leave a last word. I just wrote it without thinking.

His rescuers came on the scene minutes later and saw the message. Fire Captain Robert Rosario said, "I've seen some gruesome things on this job, but that moved me. My only thought was, I have to get that seat to his wife and kids." His wife said about the message, "Hallmark is never going to top that. It's moving, it's thoughtful and it's chilling all at the same time."

The story of John Phipps and his message written in his own blood is a moving one, especially at this time in which we celebrate human love, Valentine's Day. There is another moving love story written in blood, one I want us to consider now. That love is the love of Jesus Christ for a lost world.

John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Wrapped up in that little word "gave" is a powerful truth. It means "to furnish, to give forth from one's self," and is the aorist tense, meaning it has no starting point or ending point.

Can anyone tell me how Valentine's Day started?

There was a priest by the name of Valentine. He lived in Rome about 250 AD. That was a long, long time ago! At that time, Rome was ruled by an emperor by the name of Claudius. Some people called him Claudius the Cruel. St. Valentine didn't like Emperor Claudius, and he wasn't the only one! A lot of people felt the same way. Claudius wanted a big army. He thought men should volunteer to join. Many men just did not want to fight in wars. They did not want to leave their wives and girlfriends. So, not many men signed up to fight. This made Claudius mad. So do you know what he did? He had a crazy idea that if men were not married, they would not mind joining his army. So Claudius decided not to allow any more marriages.

Young people thought his new law was really cruel. Valentine thought it was ridiculous! One of his favorite jobs as a priest was to marry people.

Well after Emperor Claudius passed his law, he kept on performing marriage ceremonies – but secretly. He would whisper the words of the ceremony, while listening for soldiers on the steps outside. One night, he did hear footsteps. The couple he was marrying escaped, but he was caught. He was thrown in jail and told that his punishment was death. St. Valentine tried to stay cheerful. And do you know what happened? Many young people came to the jail to visit him. They threw flowers and notes up to his window. They wanted him to know that they, too, believed in love. One of these young people was the

daughter of the prison guard. Her father allowed her to visit him in his cell. They often sat and talked for hours. She believed he did the right thing by ignoring the Emperor and performing marriage ceremonies. On the day he was to die, he left her a note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. He signed it, "Love from your Valentine."

That note started the custom of exchanging love notes on Valentine's Day. It was written on the day he died, February 14, 269 A.D. Now, every year on this day, people remember. But most importantly, they think about love and friendship. And when they think of Emperor Claudius, they remember how he tried to stand in the way of love, and they laugh -- because they know that love can't be beaten!

You know love is very important. The bible tells us in,
1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

And we should show that love by what we do. St. Valentine backed up his belief with action. He continued to perform marriage ceremonies even though he knew he could die for doing it. And he is not the only one. God showed His love for us before we were even born.

John 3 verse 16 tells us, *John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Let's show God how much we love Him, by loving others.

Let's have our prayer. Thank you God for letting me be your Valentine. Amen.

Thesis: Love is both a commitment and a feeling.

This will be a sermon on love, marriage, and commitment.

I. LOVE IS A COMMITMENT.

A. There's an interesting story of love and courtship in Genesis 24.

1. Sarah has died and Abraham is very old.
2. Abraham arranges for his servant to find Isaac a wife.
3. Servant goes to Haran, finds Rebekah, arranges for her to return to marry Isaac.
 - a. That story constitutes the bulk of chapter 24!
 - b. It's the conclusion that attracts our attention--when Isaac and Rebekah meet for the first time.

B. Read Genesis 24:62-67.

1. You could hardly call this love at first sight!
 - a. No engagement ring. No premarital counseling. No Prepare/Enrich marriage inventory. No wedding ceremony.
 - b. Rebekah never got to read Anabel Morgan's *The Total Woman* and Isaac never read James Dobson's *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*.
 - c. Isaac simply took Rebekah into his tent and married her. They changed the name on their mailbox to Mr. & Mrs. Isaac and lived happily ever after!
2. In this simple story there is an enduring lesson. It is found in the phrase, "So she became his wife and he loved her."
 - a. Notice anything unusual here? Shouldn't this read, "Isaac loved Rebekah, then she became his wife?"

b. I'm sure that's how it would read if that story was set in our day. Our society equates love with romanticism. Love is defined in terms of hormones and pheromones. When those are gone, so is love.

3. Not so here. How is love defined? In terms of commitment (covenant!).

Commitment = foundation of marriage; feelings come and go, but covenant is always the baseline (Gen. 2:24; Mt.19:6).

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Matthew 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

b. Illust. George Bernard Shaw once said of the vows two people make at a wedding: It is precisely because those feelings don't always last that we take vows. Excitement and passion will wax and wane in any relationship--in any life.... The Christian covenant of marriage is God's way of bringing order and reason into the exciting, delightful and perilous chaos He himself brought into the world when He created male-female erotic love.

c. Illust. My Grandparents celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. How does a marriage last 50 years? When two people take their covenant seriously! Elwood and Janice Tenison were married after only seeing each other a handful of times! Yet their commitment to each other has lasted a lifetime.

II. LOVE IS A FEELING.

A. Love is a commitment. Unquestionably. However, there's a danger that we might limit our definition of love to just commitment.

1. Love is a commitment, but love is also a feeling!

2. Illust. Part of our problem as English-speaking people is there's only one word for love in the English language. Covers a lot of ground. Greek has four words--words that define love in terms of commitment and other words that define it in terms of feeling.

3. It is wrong to simply say, "Love is commitment. Period." True, but it does not exhaust the Biblical definition of love.

B. Beside all those passages about "leaving and cleaving" and "not putting asunder" are books like Proverbs and Song of Solomon.

1. The Song of Solomon is about erotic love.

Song of Solomon is about feelings--"the spark" that exists between 2 people in love.

2. Two passages which reveal this:

a. Song of Solomon 5:10-16 (Husband appreciated by wife).

b. Song of Solomon 4:1-7 (Wife appreciated by husband).

3. One of the high points of Biblical teaching about husband-wife relationship is found in the book of Proverbs.

a. Read Prov. 5:15-20.

b. Here we are told to enjoy (savor, treasure, cherish) what you have as opposed to being obsessed with what you don't have!

Conclusion: If your marriage has lost its spark--don't be satisfied with that. And please don't say something stupid like, "Love is basically commitment." It's that and more! When you're talking about marriage, it had better be that and a whole lot more!

I. CHRIST'S BLOOD PICTURES GOD'S LOVE

As Jesus and His disciples sat in the upper room during the last supper, Jesus took the cup and said to them, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20) Earlier He had told the crowd, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John 20:54-56) During His earthly ministry, Jesus pictured his love and sacrifice in his blood.

Christ's death shows us love's duty. Jesus said in John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Christ did not shrink from His appointment with the cross, rather He invited it. A writer once said, When duty calls, that is when character counts. So many have failed in their hour of greatest testing, but not Christ. General Douglas MacArthur said to the cadets at West Point about the soldiers which had given their lives on the battlefield, "I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death. They died unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in their hearts, and on their lips the hope that we would go on to victory. Always for them: duty, honor, country. Always their blood, and sweat, and tears, as they saw the way and the light."

Christ's death shows us love's determination. The book of Hebrews gives us insight into Christ's thinking as He prepared for the cross. "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2) The word "endured" means to "abide patiently." The phrase "set before him" is one word in the Greek and means "to be placed in the line of sight." Jesus saw the 'joy,' the "occasion of gladness" yet future and it helped Him press on with determination. In another passage, Jesus makes it clear that His purpose is to die for sinners:

Matthew 16:21 ¶From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Christ's death shows us love's depths. How far will a person go for love? I know personally of a man whose wife left him and their children and moved in with another man. The husband took the role of both mother and father, did the housework, paid all the bills, and waited for his wayward wife to return.

After living with the man for over a year, she decided she wanted to go back home. He had been praying for her, and he gladly welcomed her back. Many of his friends and acquaintances told him he was "crazy" for taking her back. "Jesus doesn't quit me no matter how I treat Him. I can at least try to treat my wife the same way," he said. Hosea was an Old Testament prophet who modeled the love of God for His people. His wife "played the prostitute" time and time again. His children were fathered by other men, yet still he stayed with her. Ephesians 3:17-19 says "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

II. CHRIST'S BLOOD PROVES GOD'S LOVE

John Phipps did not set out to prove his love for his wife and family when he wrote of his affection for them, but it WAS proof, just the same. Real love gives. Someone said, "You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving. John 3:16 proves this as well: "God SO LOVED...that he GAVE..." Likewise, there is ample proof of the love of Christ as we see His blood sacrifice.

There was a legal requirement. In the days of Moses, God instituted the system of sacrifice for His people Israel. There were ordinances and commands to sacrifice lambs, bulls, goats, rams, turtledoves, etc. Hebrews 9:22 has this in mind when it says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Old fashioned Christianity is out of vogue today. Fewer people want to worship a God Who demands a blood sacrifice. It is an offense to them; they call it a "slaughterhouse religion." In the Garden of Eden, after the humans' sin, an animal was killed and skinned to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. Who do you think provided the coats of skins? It was God Himself!

There was a lengthy wait. God allowed the sacrifice of animals all through the Old Testament period as a picture of the sacrifice to come. Read in Hebrews 10:

- 1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
- 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
- 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
- 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
- 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

There was a lasting payment. When Christ came, the old system was fulfilled. Again in Hebrews 10:

- 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
- 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
- 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

- 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

III. CHRIST'S BLOOD PROMISES GOD'S LOVE.

John Phipp's message in blood was not a promise but a declaration. It did not deal with the future, only the present, the moment in which he wrote it. But the bloody words themselves had repercussions in the future. After his stay in the hospital, John Phipps, his wife and children, and his rescuers had a press conference and announced his story to the world. His love, expressed at a given point in time, affected his whole future and that of his family.

Christ's sacrifice brings a deeper relationship. The First Epistle of John tells us, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God..." (1 John 3:1-2a) "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us..." (Eph 2:4)

Christ's sacrifice brings a fuller friendship. In the Old Testament, very few could be called God's friends. But in the New Testament, Christ opened the door to a fuller friendship. John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Christ's sacrifice brings a profitable partnership. In life, many partnerships end badly. But there is one partnership that will never disappoint. When we accept Christ, we become one with Him, in HIm. 1 John 4:16: And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Col 2:9-10 says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." 2Tim. 2:12 "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..." Rev. 20:6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." I have heard some say, "I'm gonna ask God to let me be the mayor of my hometown" but the emphasis should not be on the what but on the who. It's not what we'll be doing; it's who we'll be doing it with.

Conclusion: John Phipps' life has changed forever. He is a production worker in an aerospace plant in Burbank, CA. Before the train wreck, he was a total unknown to the rest of the world. Now he will forever be known as "the man who wrote his love in his blood." His one deed, done in a moment of time, defines him in the minds of most people. His family will never forget the message he sent to them that winter morning. Dear friend, there is One who has written a message to you in His own blood. If you will accept Him as your own, you will never be the same again. You too, will be defined by that one act, Jesus' love written in the blood of the cross.

Romans 3:10-11, 23 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God....For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 10:9-10, 13 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

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