

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

#495, Week of 2-4-2018

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Love is a complicated thing. We think in terms of feelings. Hormones get the best of us. When the feelings, flee love vanishes. We respond by saying, "I don't love her any more." Love is a lot more than palpitating hearts and flushed faces. The Bible defines love in terms of God. "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

A further definition is helpful. "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments" (2 John 1:6). God's commandments are ten. They circumscribe the loving righteous life. Jesus Christ is the supreme demonstration. He kept the whole law perfectly. We come full circle. "The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).

Love respects parents. Love preserves life and wards off death. Love shuns affairs and is chaste. Love respects the property of others. Love values truth. Love is not greedy or lustful or jealous. This is concrete, objective, and measurable.

Young people with regular unmarried bed partners speak of making love. They fall far short of God. "Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). By the grace of God, couples working on marriage in terms of truthfulness, respect, and fidelity live much closer to God's standard.

ENDURING LOVE

#496, Week of 2-11-2018

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

An elderly couple strolls through the park hand in hand. We watch. It's better by far to be a couple walking together clasping hands. Similarly, it's not enough to carefully observe God's love. We must also experience it. On one side, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). On the other, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Once God embraces us in love, are there grounds for divorce? The Bible puts the question differently. "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:36). The answer to this rhetorical query is negative. Nothing can sever the bond of love God establishes with us.

Earthquake like upheaval rocks our lives. Teachers, parents, coaches, or employers unmercifully apply pressure. Circumstances relentlessly chase us from one duty to another. We lack adequate food and clothing. We are forced too quickly into perilous decisions. We even have close encounters with death. How does the helter-skelter of life affect the bonds of God's love? "In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). God continues to hold us by the hand.

NO CONDEMNATION

#497, Week of 2-18-2018

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

All her accusers walked away. Jesus asked, "Did no one condemn you?" The answer of the adulteress was simple. "No one, Lord." Jesus then said two astounding things. "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more" (John 8:10-11). Jesus Christ did not come to bring condemnation.

Adultery already violates God's standards. "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). The penalty for adultery was death. "If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:10). The New Testament adds these solemn words, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The Old Testament penalty reflects the awesome spiritual reality.

At the same time, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Jesus did not condemn. He did not condone the woman's sin either. "Sin no more." Salvation means new life. God removes guilt and the propensity to sin. God also provides a new bent of heart. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1).

PERSPECTIVES TO PONDER

#498, Week of 2-25-2018

by Dr. Dennis Prutow

Does each day greet you with an unwelcome chill? Do your circumstances frown? Here is some perspective.

Look ahead in hope. Because of God's work within your heart, you confess "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). God's glory at the resurrection of the dead is powerful, immense, and full of splendor. All human suffering pales in comparison. There will be no more crutches or canes, trips to the pharmacy, hearing aids, or homes for old folks.

Rest secure in the prayers of the Spirit. Circumstances overtake you. You do not know what to say or what to pray. You need not succumb to fear or be dismayed. “The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit lifts perfect prayers to the Father for us. His prayers are heard and answered.

Trust the overriding power of God for good. The storm clouds of life may be dark. There may be no silver lining. Yet, “We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).
