

Hallelujah Anyway, Part 3

Pastor Steve Berger

March 29, 2015

Hallelujah Anyway

...having a faith that no matter what happens in your life, you continue to trust and praise God, knowing that God, and no circumstance, has the final word over you... this is how Paul lives, this is how he encourages us to live!

LOVE —

How you love people AND How you stand for truth

- Philippians 1: 9-11
- love — agape — the highest form of love
 - an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice — not because of the excellency of its object

**God's love is an act of His will, rooted in His very nature,
NOT due to the excellence of the recipient.
God bestows His love on humanity because it's Who He Is
and not because of what we deserve —
we are called to love others like this.**

How important is love in the life of the believer?

- Matthew 22:37-40 — all the laws and the prophets are fulfilled in loving God / people
- John 13:35 — we are to be known by our love
- Galatians 5:22 — love is the fruit of God's Spirit within us
- 1 John 4:8 — if you don't love, you don't know God

Love is so important Paul prays that we would abound more and more, super abound in love, a perpetual flood of love, an overflowing of love... wait for it...

- in knowledge — in full discernment
- all discernment — with all judgment, NOT condemnation, with understanding

**Our love for people is to be rooted in full discernment and understanding
of the ways of God, will of God, word of God!**

Then... we're able to approve, test and judge the things that are excellent, valuable, godly, holy, and righteous.

Then... we live sincere, pure, unspoiled lives that are without offense, not stumbling in darkness ourselves or causing others to stumble in darkness!

God's Love

***Is not** sloppy agape, where every behavior is accepted, affirmed and celebrated in the name of love... this is where many Believers are suffering shipwreck today, accepting, affirming, and celebrating peoples' sinful behavior in the name of love. Wrong! Damaging! Deceptive!*

- 1 Corinthians 13:6 — love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth

- society and church rejoicing and approving of things in the name of love that are not excellent and pure, that are sinful and shameful
- Romans 1:28-32 — approving of those who practice them

**Love does need to overflow,
God's people are to be known by their love,
a kind love, a compassionate love, a gentle love...
a love rooted in truth — not void of truth!**

**Where can we find an example of love —
overflowing in knowledge and discernment?**

Look to Jesus — you need look no further!

- John 8: 1-12 — story of the woman caught in adultery
 - mean-spirited, religious people, void of love and compassion
 - desire condemnation and death for sinners, not conversion and life
 - sometimes the scariest place for sinners to be is in the presence of people who claim to know God, but have no love for people
 - not understanding their own sin disqualifies them from condemning others

**Don't be a mean-spirited religious person, void of love and compassion,
desiring the condemnation and death of sinners —
that's sooooo not Jesus!**

Jesus

What does love say, and how does love act toward the sinner

- I'm not condemning you. I'm not telling you you're worthless, hopeless and useless.
- I'm telling you you're loved, there's hope for you, you are valuable to God, even in your current condition.
- Romans 5:8 — God initiates and demonstrates love toward people while they are still sinners
- Ephesians 2:4-5 — God's mercy and great love gave us life while we were dead, saved us by His grace

Jesus looks at this woman in her lost condition and loves her, initiates relationship, communication, hope of conversion and salvation. LOVE OVERFLOWING!!!

In Knowledge and Discernment

- "go and sin no more"
- "what you're doing is sin, it's contrary to the Ways, Will, Word of God."

**Love compassionately and courageously calls sin, sin...
in hopes of conviction and conversion NOT condemnation!
Love loves you where you're at in your sin —
but loves you too much to affirm you staying there,
"Go and sin no more."**

- love empowers us to live a changed life, not be dominated by sinful actions

**Jesus can only tell her sin no more
because He gives grace and power to overcome sin!**

- love calls us to walk victoriously in the light, not stumble in the darkness!

**When we follow Jesus we don't walk in darkness,
we have the Light of Life.**

Jesus lovingly and compassionately invites everyone, regardless of their particular sins, to come into a loving, powerful, saving relationship with Him where you become a new creation, old is gone, all things become new!

Love, knowledge, and discernment

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 — Jesus to us: do not be deceived; you were justified
- us to others — do not be deceived; I love you; compassionately and courageously tell the truth
- hope for every type of sinful person

**Let's super abound,
with overflowing love,
rooted in knowledge and discernment,
for everyone!
There's love and hope for all!**

Discussion Questions

1. How is love under attack in the world today, even in ways we might not immediately recognize?
2. 1 John 4:7-8 say that if you don't love people, you don't love God. What does that mean?
3. Are there any people in your own life that are challenging to love? What did you learn in today's sermon that will equip you to love?
4. What does it mean to love with knowledge and in full discernment?
5. What is the difference between being able to love in judgment —and not in condemnation?
6. When Pastor Steve said that "sloppy agape" is destructive, what did he mean?
7. Are we loving someone when we give silent, unexpressed approval to their godless behavior?
8. What are some of the ways that our love "waxes cold"? What can we do about that?
9. Do you have any friends who have been turned off of Christianity because of mean-spirited religious people, who are void of love and compassion? What can you do to love that individual?
10. Do you know anyone who believes that they are too sinful (even though they might not use that word) to be able to receive the gift of a new life? What words / verses that you studied today could help you tell them of God's love?

**Click on "House of Prayer" on www.gracechapel.net to fill out a prayer request.
We will pray for requests for one month, and at our weekly prayer meetings.
See you this Tuesday, March 31, at 6:30 p.m.!**