

“Don’t Trample on Love”

Romans 6:1b-11

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Our attention today is focused on a challenge from the Apostle Paul. We’ll find it in his letter to the Romans.

Paul dictated this letter to a scribe while visiting Corinth or possibly in Philippi on his third missionary journey. At that time, Paul was planning his final voyage to Jerusalem.

One reason Paul was going to Jerusalem was to deliver to the impoverished Jewish believers an offering he had gathered from the gentile congregations. This act of solidarity was important to Paul, and another way he could bridge the gap between the Jewish and gentile communities of faith.

It was Paul’s intent to visit Rome after delivering this gift in Jerusalem and then travel on to Spain. He was eager to meet the Jesus followers in the largest city in the Roman Empire and have the opportunity to preach to their friends and neighbors.

Paul used this letter to introduce himself to the Christian community in Rome. He wanted the people to know what was important to him and where he saw God at work in the world. He especially wanted them to know the role Jesus played in the redemptive work of God for all mankind, and now their role in that process.

Based upon today’s text, what did Paul want the believers at Rome to know about being a disciple? I pondered this question for some time last week and came to this conclusion.

You don’t trample on love. You appreciate the ones who love you and show your gratitude by doing your best to be your best.

Prior to our text, Paul told the Romans about God’s amazing grace. He reminded them that God loved them at their worst as well as their best.

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the **ungodly**. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone

might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6-8.

Paul then follows this declaration of God’s sacrificial love for them with this question.

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, may live a new life.” Romans 6:1-4.

It is easy to see Paul felt the most appropriate response his readers could make to God’s immeasurable love was gratitude and a passion to use God’s support to become the best people they could be. Sure, God loved them enough to forgive their sins, past and future, but this was no excuse to keep sinning. To the contrary, it was all the more reason not to sin.

It was inconceivable to Paul that anyone would abuse or exploit God’s love. How someone could hurt God this way after the sacrifices God made on their behalf was beyond Paul.

Paul saw God’s love and support as key ingredients to living an abundant and eternal life. This is life in the presence of God with meaning, purpose, guidance, direction, strength, courage, peace, security and release from fear, guilt, inferiority and worry. How could anyone not desire this kind of relationship and be grateful for the gifts which accompanied it?

Paul wanted the Roman believers to use God’s support to get rid of anything in their lives which was harmful to them and those around them. He knew God would help them rise above their sinful nature to “walk in newness of life.” For someone to squander this opportunity was something Paul could not imagine.

I wonder who feels the same way about you and me. Who feels like you are wasting your opportunities to experience a more fulfilling life?

Whose love are you trampling on these days? Who has loved you at your worst as well as your best? Who has forgiven you and given you chances to redeem yourself? Who has made sacrifices on your behalf and refused to give up on you when others did? Who has opened doors of opportunity for you even after you said hateful things to them? How are you responding to their efforts to love and support you?

It is a wonderful thing to be loved by people who know us well. Since none of us is perfect, this means they love us in spite of our many flaws and quirky ways. How easy it is to forget this, which leads to ingratitude and self-indulgence.

What do you need to do this week to make it easier for the people around you to love you? What changes could you begin making today to begin that process?

Perhaps it begins by identifying what you need to get rid of in your life. In keeping with Paul's "baptism unto death" motif in our text, what do you need to bury so it is no longer a part of your life and relationships?

Could it be a bad attitude, a crippling addiction, a selfish nature, a critical spirit, a lazy work ethic, a lying tongue, a bad temper, a desire to seek revenge, a feeling of superiority, an attempt to control others or a conniving and deceitful way of doing things?

Who can help you do this? Begin with God. Ask God to forgive you and to help you overcome these demons which are bringing the worst out in you. Ask the Lord to release you from whatever is pulling you down or holding you hostage.

Then, ask God to bring other people into your life who can show you a better way to live. Ask the Lord to give you the ability to listen with an open mind and heart, the wisdom to see this better way, the courage you need to pursue it and the discipline to stick with it.

I assure you God will answer this prayer...today...and every day as you pray it.