

The Work and Weariness of Love

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Introduction:

A. A 110-year-old Israeli shepherd was admitted to a Beersheba hospital while experiencing a heart attack. In spite of his age, doctors worked hard to save him. The man was thought to be the oldest heart patient ever to be treated successfully with anti-clotting drugs. A hospital spokesperson reported that the shepherd later returned to his tent in the Negev Desert to tend his goats.

The care given to this 110-year-old man faintly echoes the way Jesus responded to those people we consider beyond help. His ability and willingness to go beyond social barriers to help lepers and social outcasts went far beyond the normal expectations of what a good person would do out of love for strangers.

Even in the agony of His own suffering, Jesus reached out to a dying man everyone else would have regarded as beyond help. The man was a criminal, condemned to die, and only hours from entering a lost eternity. In that moment, Jesus responded to the man's cry for help and said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The God of the Bible specializes in giving help to those regarded as so old, so guilty, or so weak as to be beyond help.

B. Love, because it is the most powerful emotive motivator, comes with a price. It costs something to love another. The one who loves must pay a price for love.

1. John 3:16, 14:31; 2Cor. 11:28; Judges 16:15-21

C. Loving others in spite of themselves is work that over time can generate a great deal of weariness

1. The price that is paid for loving others as God has loved us is very high, because it is a higher form of love that does not demand reciprocity or reward, the kind of love that does not take into account the worthiness or unworthiness of the person loved

2. Rom. 5:6-8; 1John 3:16; Prov. 10:12, 17:17

D. Whether loving a family member or friend that has changed toward you or has become chronically ill, or loving a disciple who has left the faith, or loving a fellow human being whose conduct makes him or her unlovable, it will be a work that has the potential to weary our spirits and harden our hearts. What price does unconditional love demand?

I. THE WORK OF LOVE

A. Without pretense - Rom. 12:9-15; 1Peter 1:22

1. How did Jesus look at the mob mocking Him on the cross and say, "Father, forgive them"?

2. That is how we will come to love those who sometimes act unlovable.

3. Our own sins are the barrier to loving others in this fashion; it is not the sins they have committed that make it hard to love them, it is the sins we have committed and the residual effects of those sins that make it hard to love others unconditionally

4. 1Cor. 13:4-7; 1Tim. 1:5

B. In pursuit of good for others

1. Phil. 2:1-8; Rom. 15:1-3

2. Love cannot be detected in the absence of service to others
 - a. How much of my time is spent serving my desires versus needs of others?
 - b. How many of my efforts...?
 - c. How much of my money...?
 - d. Do I make suggestions based on benefit to self or others?
3. 1John 4:9, 3:16-18

C. Diligently active

1. 1Thes. 2:7-12 - No time clock; no sacrifice too great
2. Acts 20:36-38, 27, 31 - Not a show of love, but based on long term service to one another
3. Do I seek opportunities to go above and beyond the call of duty or whiningly justify the minimum acceptable action?
4. Honorable love does not exist in the presence of self interested ease. It is work that extracts a toll of weariness and risk; it requires that we either move out of our comfort and safety zone and get busy, or else stop deceiving ourselves and others with professions of love.
5. At the end of a good days work, we are tired, but it is a good kind of tired. At the end of a lifetime of sacrifice for love, we are weary, but it is a good kind of weariness.
6. Phil. 2:17; 2Tim. 4:6-8