

Monday, November 28, 2016 - Remember, You are Loved

Each week, my brother, Philip Davis, ends his bulletin article with the phrase, "Remember, you are loved." Beautiful words that should help remind us that being loved means we are NOT alone! An understanding that we are loved and not alone is critically important to so many people especially this time of the year. Depression, despondency, etc. reach epidemic proportions as people incorrectly reason that all there is to life is what we experience here on earth. How wrong they are.

God so loved the world that he gave His only Son (John 3:16). This sacrifice was not just for those of the first century. It is for ALL mankind. Jesus Christ dies for you and for me even, as the scriptures describe it, when we were enemies to Him (Rom. 5:6-10).

The depth of that love is seen in the events of the cross. Betrayed and rejected by those He came to save, Jesus is passed back and forth between "leaders" who should bow down before their King. As each witness perjures themselves regarding the Son of God, the "verdict" of the people is to have our Savior crucified. When the verdict is passed, the following occurs:

- The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head.
- The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes so the Roman soldiers generally quit after 39.
- This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. It might also contain bone, etc. Anything that can cause damage to the body.
- The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs.
- At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.
- The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows.
- Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

Christ, beaten to the point of death, is further mocked and forced to carry His cross to the hill called Golgotha. His body is so ravaged by the scourging another is ordered to carry the cross for Him. Nailed to that cross, he must pull himself up by the nails in His hands to breathe. Finally, His final breath leaves His body and the Son of God is dead. Does Jesus love us? Can there be any doubt?

The Father's love extends past the events of the cross. Our sin demands punishment yet God provides us with His mercy because He desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

The Father's love provides His grace. While His grace does provide for us, it also demands of us. It demands our love, our obedience, our ALL just as our Savior gave His all.

The Father, the Son, who gives us all these rich blessings: would they ever truly leave us alone? Maybe we feel alone because we haven't done our part. Communication with God begins with a study of His word. God, the father, whose thoughts are down in writing for us to learn and obey. Do you pray? Prayer, our avenue to God to confess sin, ask for encouragement, strength, knowledge, comfort, and peace. Do you attend church regularly? God provided the church for His family so that we might be there for each other. Do you feel

alone? Maybe it's because you continue to neglect the meeting together of the saints? It's hard to have a relationship with those you never see, hear, or study with.

Remember, you are loved. But we have a part to play in that relationship. Our relationship with God begins in the waters of baptism. Just as those on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) and as Paul did in Acts 22:16, each had their sins washed away and went about the Father's business.

Feeling lonely and unloved? Work on your relationship with Christ and His body. Your life will suddenly become very full!