



Stories of Home in Acts & Paul's Letters

Bible Study

Epiphany Bible Study Guide

Wednesdays, January 14 – February 11
6 p.m. in Nativity or on Zoom



Central Lutheran
MINNEAPOLIS

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the winter series of learning and growing together.

We continue learning through the lens of Stories of Home. For the next five Wednesdays, we'll listen carefully for the stories of home in Acts and in the letters of the Apostle Paul. The stories we'll explore begin in Luke (the author of Acts) and build toward the beautiful vision cast in Acts 2, in which the days were lived with many who gathered at the temple breaking bread and eating with glad and generous hearts.

As Christian communities were established and began to grow following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, there are beautiful images and words to be shared about making our homes in and with God while God is making a home in and with us. In Paul's letters, we will listen for the ancient calls to love one another in order that we are unified in the body of Christ.

As we read these stories, once again, there is much for us to consider. As we think about the idea of home or homing, who and what are we thinking about? Now that Jesus, "God with Us," has come to live and dwell with us, how has the world changed? How has it stayed the same?

In these next five sessions, the pastors will tend to the ways in which the Good News of God's presence continues to form and shape us as we find and hone our homes in an often complicated world. How do we tend to Jesus' command to love our enemies? How do we embrace God's 'ask' to love and serve our neighbors? These are interesting questions, so let's get started.

Attend Each Week, or When it Works
In person or via Zoom

As always, these Bible studies are more holy conversations. No previous knowledge is expected, in fact it helps to seek to enter the study as if for the first time; we call this *beginner's mind*. You are invited to attend in person or via Zoom each week, but the invitation is always open for when it works in your schedule. Remember: always join the conversation, regardless of where you are in your faith journey. For this study, you may want to read the assigned readings ahead of time.

You'll want a Bible for our shared study of "Stories of Home." We recommend a good study Bible and any translation you have is fine. A variety of translations enriches our conversations because of the nuances in language. The study texts are listed in the schedule and at the beginning of each lesson. A basic outline of the lesson is included in this booklet, and the pastors will provide additional information and handouts prior to or in class.

Christ Care Prayers begin each lesson; it is a time when we pray for one another and the needs of the world. If you have a prayer concern that you do not want to share in front of the group, you can send a private chat to the pastor who is leading the study.

Thank you for joining this Bible study, these holy conversations.

Schedule

Wednesday, January 14:	Breaking Bread <i>Luke 24:28-35 and Acts 2:37-47</i>	page 5
Wednesday, January 21:	The Birth of the Early Church <i>Acts 5:33-42 and Acts 9:1-19</i>	pages 6-7
Wednesday, January 28:	Arriving in Rome <i>Acts 16:11-15 and Acts 28:23-31</i>	page 8
Wednesday, February 4:	The Expansiveness of God <i>Romans 5:1-11 and Romans 8:31-39</i>	page 9
Wednesday, February 11:	Stories of Home <i>1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 and Philippians 2:1-11</i>	page 10
Wednesday, February 18:	No Class for Ash Wednesday	

Join Online!

You can join the Bible study online via Zoom.

Meeting ID: 837 6549 2445

Introduction to Learning

The Book of Acts is a unique book. It is the account of the birth of the early Church. The Holy Spirit is the energy as the good news of Jesus Christ moves from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). In his commentary, *Intrusive God, Disruptive Gospel: Encountering the Divine in the Book of Acts*, Matthew Skinner makes the case that in the Book of Acts, God is at work changing people's lives, the world, and shattering expectations. In a Eucharistic reading of Acts, Eugene LaVerdiere reads Acts through the lens of the meal – the meal that Jesus celebrates in Luke's Gospel on Maundy Thursday and in the road to Emmaus account. This meal shapes mission in word, deed, and the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42). Of all the features that define "home," shared meals may be the single most important blessing. After all, when family or friends gather, where do we all usually end up gathering? Yes, that is right, in the kitchen!

In our Bible study we will touch on some of the themes of the book and key moments. More so, we will seek to listen and move beyond the simple meaning of the text into what the text means for our lives, our faith community, and God's world.

Reading through Acts: a Basic Overview

The basic overview sets up the book in the traditionally understood structure.

Acts 1: 1-14: Jesus' Ascension and return to wait

Acts 1: 15 – 5:42: The early community in Jerusalem

 Acts 2: 42-47 – the breaking of the bread

Acts 6: 1 – 12:25: Jerusalem to Antioch

 Acts 6: 1-7: Seven chosen

 Acts 9: 1-30: Conversion of Saul

 Acts 10: 1 – 11:18: Conversion of Cornelius

 Acts 12: James killed – back to Jerusalem, temporarily

Acts 13: 1 - 19:20: Missions from Antioch

 Acts 13: 1 – 14:28: First Journey – Cyprus and Turkey

 Acts 15: Council of Jerusalem

 Acts 15: 36 – 18:22: Second Journey – Syria, Turkey, Greece, Jerusalem

 At table with Gentiles in Philippi (Acts 16:25-34)

Acts 18:23 - 21: 16: Third Journey – Turkey and Greece

 Acts 20: 7 – 12 – Breaking of the bread at Troas

Acts 21: 17 – 28: 31: Journey to Rome

 Acts 27: 33-38 – Breaking of the bread at sea

Breaking Bread

Wednesday, January 14, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Luke 24:28-35, Acts 2:37-47

Tonight's Conversation:

We begin with two lessons that shape the opening of the Book of Acts. The first reaches back into Luke's Gospel (after all, he is the author of the Book of Acts, too). The next lesson is a glimpse of the first faith community after the Pentecost event. The stories of home are woven through Acts, chapter 2. (*Readings found on page 11*).

Christ Care Prayers

Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. How does the breaking of bread create community?
2. How is the celebration of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, the balance in worship after we hear the Word?
3. How does the breaking of bread create community in your daily life, with family and friends?
4. How are meals the opportunity for community in our daily life?
5. How do meals shape our life together here at our church home?

Luke 24:29-31

²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.

Acts 2:46-47a

⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ^{47a} praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

The Birth of the Early Church

Wednesday, January 21, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Acts 5:33-42, Acts 9:1-19

Tonight's Conversation:

Last week, we began the conversation with a look back to the end of Luke and then the grounding moment in Acts 2. Remember that the Book of Acts is the account of the birth of the early Church. The Holy Spirit is the energy as the good news of Jesus Christ moves from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). There are meals in Acts to ponder, beginning with the community of Jews who follow Jesus, and tonight the shift to the ministry among the non-Jews through Paul and his travels.

The conversion of Paul is a significant pivotal point in the history of Christianity, also known as "The Way" in the early years of the church.

Paul is probably the most important person in the history of the Christian church second only to Jesus himself. Paul is responsible for 'transmitting' the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the Mediterranean world so he is often credited with taking the stories of Jesus and sharing them "to the ends of the earth."

It's important for us to remember the origins of Paul and his conversion on the road to Damascus, so we will read and discuss the significance of Paul in this session.

Before we shift to Paul and the vast expansiveness of Acts, we need to ponder one person who may have impacted the whole future of the table fellowship that follows.

Gamaliel: Give It Time

Peter and the other apostles have been preaching. There have been healings, arrests, miracles, and an echo of Acts 2 in Acts 4. Brought before the authorities, they demand that Peter and all the apostles must stop preaching. In Act 5:29, Peter states that they must obey God and not human authority. That does not go well, and the authorities are ready to kill Peter and the apostles. Then, in their gathering, Gamaliel speaks and through his wisdom the world changes. (Reading on pages 11-12. See Conversation and Reflection questions 1-3).

Saul's Conversion

In these next chapters, Stephen is killed for his witness, and Saul appears. When we first meet Saul, he is known as the one who persecuted but will now find a different "home" in God and among all of God's people. The following is an account of Paul's conversion. (Reading on page 12).

Christ Care Prayers

Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. How does the breaking of the bread, the community that has formed, empower the apostles with such boldness?
2. What has the Holy Spirit created that was present at the Last Supper, in the all the meals shared after Jesus was raised, at the early moments of the Christian Church and so at work in our lives today?
3. Gamaliel is amazing in his insight, and there are many theories about his response. He does witness to the staying power of the witness to Jesus Christ, and nearly 2000 years has proven Gamaliel right in his insight. We can all list at least a dozen conflicts in the Church over the past years that boil down to interpretation, agreement or disagreement. How does a vision of a shared meal offer a different path? What does it mean that Jesus revealed in the breaking of the bread unites us, binds us together even with the wide interpretations we may carry?
4. Saul is a most unlikely character to assume the role of the one who will spread to Good News of Jesus to the ends of the earth. How might the story of Saul inspire others to share the Good News?
5. How have you heard God's voice or had scales removed from your eyes when it comes to matters of faith?
6. How does this introduction to Saul shape your understanding of who he is and what he has done?

Acts 9:17-18

¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored.

Arriving in Rome

Wednesday, January 28, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Acts 16:11-15, Acts 28:23-31

Acts 16:14b-15a

^{14b} A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ^{15a} When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home."

Acts 28:23

²³ After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Tonight's Conversation:

Remembering that the book of Acts is the birth story of the church, we move away from Judea and Samaria and begin a journey that will move north and west to the Mediterranean rim. Paul will travel to cities that take him to cities and towns where the people had little knowledge of Jesus. One beloved story is that of Lydia and her conversion. It is a beautiful expression of what's possible when our hearts are open to God, and there is a baptismal moment in which God comes down and claims Lydia and her family as God's own.

And then we'll skip to the end of Acts and hear the last story of the book where there is an account of Paul arriving in Rome. We'll talk briefly in class about the geography of Paul's travels, the challenges he encountered, and the people he met along the way. Together we will think about the ways in which Paul was welcomed into people's homes and how that changed both Paul and the folks he lived with.

Finally, tonight, we'll talk about Paul's arrival in Rome and what he must have thought and felt when he arrived. We'll talk about the grounding and homing of Paul in Rome, as he recounted the words of Isaiah seeking to establish a church that would last. He remained in Rome, teaching and sharing the stories of Jesus and the reality of the Kingdom of heaven come near. (*Readings found on pages 12-13*).

Christ Care Prayers

Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. After Paul's conversion, he left home and travelled the world to share the Good News. How do you imagine this impacted his sense of home?
2. Paul's travels landed him in foreign places with strangers so one could say he was homeless. How does that reality fit into our structure of stories of home?
3. How do you think Paul changed peoples' hearts and their sense of home after he visited? What changed for them?
4. Paul visited large and modern cities on the Mediterranean rim. What might have been the differences between the people he met there and the people he knew in Judea and Samaria? How did his messaging have to change or be altered?
5. Why did Paul's messages have such a lasting impact?

The Expansiveness of God

Wednesday, February 4, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: Romans 5:1-11, Romans 8:31-39

Tonight's Conversation:

This week we are moving from Acts to Paul's letters. We have talked about these before, but as a reminder, there are 13 letters written by Paul and they are written to a particular community, typically around a particular concern or issues.

Paul's letters are of particular importance to us Lutherans as they anchor our understanding of God in many ways. In the letters, you will hear an echo that ties the laws of Moses to the love of Jesus, and in that echo, the expansiveness of God's redeeming work in the world is repeated for all to hear.

As we continue the Stories of Home theme, listen for these echoes in Paul's letters:

1. Jesus is the continuation or the manifestation of God's redeeming love for the world. God gave Moses the law as a guide. Jesus' presence sets the example for how to embody that law.
2. God saves the world by God's presence in and among us. This is a very different paradigm than what the Jewish people believed. Listen for the ways in which Paul writes about this.
3. God's love is for the whole world, not just God's chosen as was the case in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus final command in Matthew is to "go and make disciples of all nations..." Pay attention to the ways in which Paul echoes this throughout his teaching and travels.

This week we will look at a few passages from Paul's letter to the Romans. The depth and breadth of this letter is a bible study in itself, but for the sake of time this season, we will pick and choose key elements to further our consideration of Stories of Home. Romans contains 16 chapters, and if you have time, read all 16. (Readings found on page 13).

Christ Care Prayers

Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. What does Paul mean when he says we are justified? How are we good enough, beloved enough, for God?
2. Are we really saved by grace, and if so, how does that work?
3. Did you notice that Paul asks many questions in his writings? Why?
4. Describe Paul's process of connecting 'the law' to "the good news".
5. Where do you find some of the liturgical language in Romans that we use in worship?

Romans 5:1-2

¹ *Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.*

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Stories of Home

Wednesday, February 11, 6 p.m.

Suggested reading: I Corinthians 13: 1-13, Philippians 2:1-11

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Tonight's Conversation:

It will be a challenge to wrap up these beautiful conversations about Acts and the Letters of Paul tonight. Our Lutheran underpinnings live and breathe in these texts and they are rich in guiding our understanding of God's presence and work in the world. These texts are rich in Stories of Home.

We'll do a deep dive this week into two very familiar texts, 1 Corinthians 13 and Philippians 2. Common as they are, we hear them but we seldom put them under the microscope to look deeply at the words and phrases that make them so special. We will do that tonight, especially considering the ways in which these invitations inspire feelings of home and homing.

As an overview, 1 Corinthians 13 might be referred to as the core text for what Christian love looks like. While it is often used at weddings, the love that Paul is talking about in this text is not romantic; it's universal and all-encompassing. It is "agape." 1 Corinthians 13 shifts focus from performance to the core character of Christ-like love, showing that without it, everything else is hollow. But with it, we become the people God intends for us to be. There is much to unpack here.

Philippians 2, often called the Christ Hymn, is a poetic exhortation of the fullness of Jesus. Written from jail, Paul writes this letter with beautiful words of gratitude and affirmation that the community need not worry and that the Good News of Jesus is spreading. The liturgical characteristics of this text invites us to an indwelling with the person of Jesus who experienced both human suffering and divine praise. (Readings found on pages 13-14).

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹ Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ Care Prayers

Weekly Conversations and Reflection

1. How do these texts help us understand Paul's intentions for the community and the world?
2. How do the words of 1 Corinthians make you feel in light of Stories of Home?
3. Are these texts familiar to you? Have you heard them before and, if so, where?
4. Describe the ways in which these words help you understand the purpose and mission of Jesus?
5. How might the world change if we were to respond to Paul's invitation that says, 'let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus'?

Final Note:

We are grateful for the time you've invested in studying these lessons and texts. The lasting impact of these stories and words are intended to help you find a home in faith and a confidence in your connection with God and God's people. Our life together is anchored in and through the stories included in the scriptures and Bible study is one of the many ways we continue to build life together. Thank you for joining us in these holy conversations.

Readings

Luke 24:28-35

The Road to Emmaus

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Acts 2:37-47

The First Faith Community

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, sisters and siblings, what should we do?" ³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent (turn and mend), and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 5:33-42

Gamaliel: Give It Time

³³When they heard this, they (the religious authorities) were enraged and wanted to kill them (Peter and the apostles). ³⁴But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. ³⁵Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. ³⁷After him Judas the Galilean rose

up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them — in that case you may even be found fighting against God!" They were convinced by him, ⁴⁰and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. ⁴²And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

Acts 9:1-19

Saul's Conversion

¹Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ⁵ He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' ⁷ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' ¹¹ The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' ¹³ But Ananias

answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶ I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' ¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Acts 16:11-15

The Conversion of Lydia

¹¹We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³ On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 28:23-31

Paul Preaches in Rome

²³ After they had fixed a day to meet him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. ²⁴ Some were convinced by what he had said, while

others refused to believe.²⁵ So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: 'The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

²⁶ "Go to this people and say,
You will indeed listen, but never understand,
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.
²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them."

²⁸ Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.'

³⁰ He lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him,
³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Romans 5:1-11

Results of Justification

¹Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,
⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.
⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our

Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 8:31-39

God's love in Christ Jesus

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?³⁶ As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I Corinthians 13: 1-13

The Gift of Love

¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.⁹ For we

know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;
¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Philippians 2: 1-11

Imitating Christ's Humility

¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

Notes



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