

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

August 7, 2016

Love's Struggle

by Frank Himmel

Paul wrote the Colossians, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf..." (2:1). It is uncertain whether Paul had ever been to Colossae. How many of these brethren did he know personally, and how well did he know them? None of that mattered. He was an apostle, and they were his brethren in Christ. That meant he cared deeply about them. He was concerned about their growth, their faithfulness, and the challenges they faced.

The church at Colossae was troubled by error that seems to have been part Judaism, part heathenism, part philosophy, with perhaps a dab of homemade religion mixed in. Paul was in prison and could not come to them. He could not teach and encourage them firsthand, as he doubtless would have preferred. He could not meet the false teachers face-to-face. A letter was the best he could do at the moment. Therefore, he wanted them to understand that while he was not with them physically, he was so in spirit, agonizing with them and over them.

That is love, genuine love. It is not self-centered. It is so focused on those we love that it often leads to agony over them.

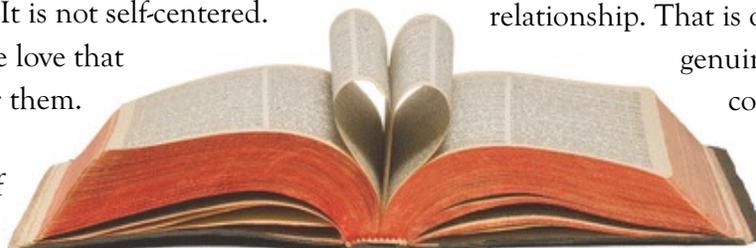
Parents are keenly aware of this struggle. We know

well the anxious moments and sleepless nights spent trying to find ways to help our children through their challenges, whether physical, social, or behavioral. That same struggle occurs in the family of God, too. I am remembering two illustrations.

I once preached at a place where there was a brother who had a good bit of knowledge and ability, but he had some attitudes and mannerisms that frequently got in his way. One of the elders made it a personal project to help develop this brother. That project, which went on for years, cost the elder a good bit of time and occasionally money, and added significantly to his stress level. Yet out of love, he was determined to do his best to help.

At another place, we had a young couple who had major marriage problems. Several of us studied with them, counseled them, and tried to help in various ways. Some provided temporary housing and material assistance. Sadly, we accomplished little. In time it became apparent that those of us who were trying to help were much more concerned about their problems than they were! Evidently, brethren loved them more than they loved each other.

Anyone can ignore or turn away from a challenging relationship. That is often easier. It takes genuine love to give, to remain committed, to continue to help, to persevere. Thankfully, that is the love God has for us. ■



It Is Not Enough

by Frank Himmel

The New Testament is full of examples of people whose effort to serve God fell short. They remind us that it is not enough...

▶ *To be morally upright.* The rich young ruler was that, but he was unwilling to do what Jesus told him to do (Matthew 19:16-22).

▶ *To be religious.* The citizens of Athens were that, but they worshiped in ignorance (Acts 17:23).

▶ *To be zealous in your religion.* The Jews had a zeal for God, but they were lost because they did not submit to God's plan for salvation (Romans 10:1-3).

▶ *To be God-fearing.* Cornelius was that (Acts 10:2), but he still needed to be saved (11:14).

▶ *To have a clear conscience.* Saul had that (Acts 23:1), even while he was the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

▶ *To tremble at God's word.* Felix did that, and then he put off further consideration of it (Acts 24:25).

▶ *To be almost persuaded.* Herod was that (Acts 26:28), but that is as far as he went.



▶ *To believe in Jesus.* Many rulers of the Jews did that, but they would not confess Him (John 12:42-43).

▶ *To confess your sins.* Judas did that – just before he went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

▶ *To pray.* The Pharisees made long prayers, yet Jesus warned that great condemnation awaited them (Matthew 23:14).

▶ *To worship.* The Ethiopian eunuch traveled a long way to do that, but he was not saved until he came to Christ (Acts 8:27-39).

▶ *To give.* Ananias and Sapphira did that, and God struck them dead immediately thereafter (Acts 5:1-10).

▶ *To be a church member.* The churches of Asia had numerous members with whom the Lord was clearly displeased (Revelation 2-3).

▶ *To make some preparation for the Lord's coming.* The five foolish virgins in Jesus' parable did that, yet the door of fellowship with the Lord was forever closed to them (Matthew 25:1-13).

The point of this brief study is not to suggest that we can somehow do enough to earn our salvation. It is to remind us that a limited response to God's gracious invitation of salvation in Christ is not enough. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Chris Brooks	Josh Baucom	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	William Lefort	Bruce Williams	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Carlos Garcia	John Baucom	
LORD'S SUPPER			
BREAD	Gary Hagler	Gary Hagler	
CUP	Adam Wilson	Adam Wilson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Josh Baucom	Ron Cunningham