

Children Loved By Grace-Energized Mothers

Titus 2:4

God is love, the greatest of all Christian virtues is love, and love energized by God lasts forever.

What can the most powerful aspect of a wife and mother's life on earth obeying God's calling to her life? God wants it to be her grace-energized love.

What does God say will last forever from all the endless and mostly unseen hours of work that being a wife and mother entail? All the deeds offered in obedience to the Lord produced by grace-energized-love.

In Titus 2:4 we find the key that produces eternal reward from every day of a grace-energized-wife's marriage and a grace-energized-mother's family. Paul explains that the key is love. The first calling of a wife and mother is in God's Word to be LOVE.

[Our] gifts, [and our] ministries... all one day will cease to exist because they will cease to have purpose or meaning... But our showing love [to our husbands and children], practicing [that] love, [and] living [that] love now--are of utmost importance, more important than having any of the other virtues or gifts, because love is the link God gives us with His eternal Self¹.

God is love (I John 4:8), and everyone who is born of God loves (I John 4:7)—so the greatest of all the virtues, the one that will last forever, is love (I Corinthians 13:13).

The key to grace-energized lives, marriages, and families is love.

Just as love that is prompted by the Spirit and energized by God's grace as Peter said, "**covers** a multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8), so the absence of that love **causes** a multitude of sins. Love is eternal, love is supreme, and love is most like God for God is love!

As we study Titus 2 this morning we are looking back into a world where so few had ever known or felt real, Biblical love. The culture of Rome was driven by mighty armies, over-powering architecture and engineering, and Emperors known for their power.

¹ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 13:13*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

To Romans and Cretans, those who were loving, sensitive, and caring were viewed as being weak. Only the tough could endure all the hardness of the day. So the entrance of love as the top-two qualities that wives and mothers were to possess must have been shocking to these early church believers in Crete.

Love was rarely seen in every day life and culture in the Roman world. So this gentle, sensitive, grace-energized love was to become a powerful witness in the culture of century one. Jesus had already said that by this shall all know that you are My disciples, by your love. So that is why Paul says... Grace-energized-mothers love their children. That is the second phrase of Titus 2: 4

v. 4c "to love their children"

This characteristic is one word in the Greek text, ***philoteknos***; and it means to be a lover of children, so grace-energized-mothers love their children. That is what God says through Paul. And this love is ***phileo*** love that can be felt. That is a grace-energized-mother's special ministry in Christ's church²!

Just the fact that these words were inspired by God to come to His saints means that this was not common, this was not easy, and this was not normal. This type of love just doesn't "happen" because God wants it, it is a choice, it is a lesson to be learned³, and it is a factor that determines a believer's eternal reward in Heaven.

The Bible clearly explains and illustrates this love that was modeled by Christ. This special ***phileo*** love is demonstrated by Jesus Himself. This type of close, companionship and friendship, emotional love is how Christ's relationship is described with Lazarus (John 11: 3) and with "the disciple He loved" named John (John 20: 2). This is also the word used in Revelation 3: 19 for Christ's love for true saints in His church.

Jesus demonstrated His love to Lazarus and all who saw that friendship knew how close they were. The same was seen in Christ's closeness to the Apostle John. That is how Jesus loves us, and wants us to know He loves us, feeling His closeness, and enjoying His friendship.

And that ***phileo*** love that is emotional, close, and visible is what the Lord asks from grace-energized mothers towards their children.

Give the Priceless Gift of Love⁴

² Christ's church has ***a mission*** that Paul summarized as pleasing God (I Thessalonians 4:1). This mission is accomplished by the proclamation of ***a message*** Paul summarized as the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). The message of gr+ace—that God did everything possible to be done and anyone can come to Him merely by faith seems impossible. But the most amazing part of all that the Lord is doing is His plan to do all this by ***a method*** is spelled out in Titus 2:11-14—Paul summarized as energized by God's grace to live in a way that is otherwise impossible.

³ From time to time it becomes so very hard to take care of children that a mom of any century in history no longer "feels" positive feelings towards her children. So how did God instruct Paul to prepare Christ's church for these great social challenges and family pressures? Again, Titus 2 has the solution. God says that the way that tired, burned out, and depressed mothers get relief is from the faithful army of Titus 2 grace-energized role models.

⁴ These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

Do your loved ones in your family *feel* your love?

Many husbands think that their wives admire other men more than them as they relate how, "So-and-so's husband does this and that with his children or for his wife". Those ***men do not feel the loving respect and admiration*** of their wives.

Likewise, many wives feel that their husbands think other women are either better at caring for their husbands, prettier, or better at caring for their families than they are. Those ***women do not feel the love*** of their husbands.

But most importantly for Titus 2 mothers energized by grace, we need to consider that many kids hurt because they sense that their parents don't even *like* them.

We already saw how Paul cultivated this type of love with a needy young man named Timothy. The mighty pastor of the church at Ephesus was also a young man with many physical and emotional needs. Paul loved Timothy with a love that could be seen and felt.

Paul loved Timothy with love he could feel. Paul "affirmed" Timothy, and used tender and encouraging words to help him as his son in the faith Timothy. These exhortations were tenderly given to a struggling man.

Without attending the actual classes Paul helped Titus begin, where would we start for a way to understand in a practical way this love that was to be characteristic of those energized by God to live by His grace in the homes and marriages of Crete? I believe that--

Jesus Showed us How to Love

Who would be the best example of a person who modeled this love that was considered humanly impossible? The answer would be the only One who ever perfectly lived out God's will. You see, Titus 2 living is God's will for every one of us today and all the yesterday's back to when Paul wrote these words.

But only One ever lived out God's grace-energized love and that was Jesus⁵.

Christ's life reveals a perfect example of love. That is why Peter, writing just after Paul wrote to Titus, tells us that Jesus Christ's life is an example that we should follow 'in His steps' (1 Peter 2:21). As we consider how grace-energized mothers love their children, we can learn so much from the ways that our Lord Jesus Christ loved those He came to serve during His earthly ministry.

⁵ Jesus and phileo love are seen in the New Testament as: the love God has for Christ (John 5:20); the love Jesus had for Lazarus (John 11:3, 36); the love God has for us, and that we have for Jesus (John 16:27); the love Jesus had for John (John 20:2); and the love Jesus has for believers (Revelation 3:19).

Jesus communicated His love to the disciples and others in several ways. He told them that He loved them. He showed them that He loved them (like serving them and touching them). Jesus is the perfect model of showing love that could be felt. One of the clearest ways Jesus showed His love was when He spoke and blessed His disciples.

What was the last memory all the disciples had of Jesus? As we turn to Luke 24 lets remember some details about when Jesus ascended into Heaven. What was He doing as He left? Have you ever noticed that little insight Luke gives us?

We already know from Acts 1:8-12 that Jesus took the disciples to the Mt. of Olives and then ascended up into the clouds and out of their sight. That is the picture of Christ's final moments with the disciples we remember most, but there is a second account that gives some precious details we have often missed. Turn back to Luke 24:50-53, and stand with me as we read this precious event:

*Luke 24:50-53 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and **He lifted up His hands and blessed them.** 51 Now it came to pass, **while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.** 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and **blessing God.** Amen. (NKJV)*

Pray

Those men would never forget walking with Jesus for 3 ½ year, they would never forget Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; but what would be riveted in their minds? It would be that incredible moment of the last time they saw Him here on Earth.

Their friend, their Savior, their most precious Lord of all left them in a most touching way.

Jesus lifted up His hands and gave them the most unforgettable expression of His personal love as touched each of them with His blessing!

Think about that. Jesus was very careful what He did as He left His disciples, and the picture they would have deeply etched in their minds is Christ's loving, prayerful blessing raining down upon them as He was lifted upward and out of sight.

Christ's Words Powerfully Expressed His love

Those words of blessing raining down upon them must have been remembered over and over in the days ahead. Words have such power for good or evil. What kind of words do you "rain down" upon those you are speaking to in life? And what are those who listen to your words remembering? Are they "blessed" by what you said?

Turn back with me to what Peter told us in I Peter 3. After talking about the basic building blocks of society and the church (marriage and family) he concludes with an incredible postscript:

*1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling (spoken curses), **but on the contrary blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

In the New Testament a "blessing" we offer to a loved one is basically a prayer of encouragement for them. So, energized by grace--

Loving Mothers Bless Their Children

Blessing (2127 **eulogeo**) is a verb used 44 times in the New Testament that means: "to praise [your loved one], to celebrate [them] with praises [that] invoke [God's] blessings and consecrate [your loved one] with solemn prayers [that] ask God's blessing on [your loved one] to cause [them] to prosper, to make [them] happy, to bestow blessings [that they be] favored by God." 6

That is why Peter says to the church so strongly, watch out for how you "rain down" your words upon others.

*1 Peter 3:9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, **but on the contrary blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

So Peter basically says those who love with Christ's power, "sow words of blessing and you will reap a harvest of blessing." What a powerful motivation to primarily use our words, mouths, and voices to bless others in Christ's Name!

And that is what we get from nearly every one of the 44 times the work "bless" is used in the New Testament (14 x in Luke). Here are some of the key verses:

- **[blessing often involves touching]** *Mark 10:16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and **blessed them**.*
- **[blessing often points to the future]** *Luke 2:34 Then **Simeon blessed them**, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*
- **[blessing is usually hard but always very rewarding]** *Luke 6:28 "**bless those** who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*

⁶Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

- [lest we miss it Paul repeats the habit of blessing as part of Christ's church's mandate] *Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*
- [there was a Spirit-prompted work of blessing in the early church services] *1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?*
- [heroes of the faith made it their last act like Christ's to stretch out their hands and bless those they loved] *Hebrews 11:20-21 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

Why should we learn to share a blessing with our families? Because a blessing shared, and the whole expression of love that it gives helps those we love know in a visible way that we love them. Blessing those we love is a memorable way they can remember feeling and hearing our love.

Do you ever remember your mother or father telling you out loud, in a clear and loving voice that they loved you and admired some qualities they had seen in your life?

Those words just stay in our hearts for a lifetime. My own mom and dad often told me how much they saw the Lord's Hand in my life and what great things they believed God would do in my life—and my dad who is still alive continues saying that on a weekly basis! This type of love expressed is actually a reflection of what God taught as--

Old Testament Blessings

One of the key descriptions of how God wanted His people blessed comes from the instructions to the priests. In the Jewish community the priests were the public servants, they inspected for disease, they protected the food supply, housing, dealt with domestic issues, and of course represented the people to God. In the New Testament we are to all be priests, and in a real sense, we are called like them to bless those around us.

Numbers 6:23-27 (NKJV) "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." ' "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

This idea of the blessing of the people was so woven into the fabric of the life of God's chosen people of promise the Jews that they began to make a specific verbal blessing time to be part of the private family Sabbath meal.

One of the most moving Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) traditions is the blessing over the children given on Friday night. There are many variations on how the blessing is made. The most common custom is for the father walks around the table, puts his hands on each family members head, and blesses them.

Go back in your mind to where we started.

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