**“SEE HOW THESE CHRISTIANS LOVE ONE ANOTHER”**

*By Chuck Durham*

Tertullian, who lived in Carthage around 200 A.D., wrote considerably defending

Christianity against pagan attacks. He is claimed to have quoted the pagans of his time

as saying, “See how these Christians love one another.”

Jesus had a profound effect on early Christians transforming them into people who the pagans clearly saw were different from what paganism produced. Jesus told his disciples: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Jesus’ apostles would teach and practice this wherever they went. Paul wrote: “...through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). Peter said: “...love one another earnestly with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). John, the Apostle of love, said: “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11). Unmistakably Christians “loving one another” was a central tenet of Christianity.

But not just Christians loving Christians as brothers. Christians loved pagans, too. This

was noticeably what set Christianity apart from ancient paganism. In Galatians 6:10,

Paul wrote: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good unto everyone...”. The

Christians were noted to bury their own dead, especially the poor – to show honor to the

body that God created. But they buried the poor pagans as well. The pagans often threw

out such bodies to be consumed by wild beasts and birds of prey. Bruce L. Shelley writes

in Church History in Plain Language: “The impact of this ministry of mercy upon

pagans is revealed in the observation of one of Christianity’s worst enemies, the apostate

Emperor Julian (332-63)... ‘Atheism (i.e., Christian faith) has been specially advanced

through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of

the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the

godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who

belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them’”(35, 36).

The present crisis of the coronavirus will provide opportunities for modern-day

Christians to shine forth love as well. Could it be by our individual service to those in our

sphere of influence, that when this crisis passes, they will want us to tell them more

about Jesus whom we serve? They will see one thing or the other: either the love of the

early Christians for their brothers and for pagans, or they will see a dead and

hypocritical modern church. Which will it be? This is all about what you and I will do as

servants.

Go check on the elderly who live in your neighborhood. Talk to them at their door (with

proper social distancing to preserve their health). Take them a meal and leave it on their

steps. Pray with them over the phone. *Think. Look. Serve. Love*.

Write “thank you” notes to the elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, young mothers, the

infirmed and shut ins. We have been given “extra” time to do things we always should

have been doing, but now can really do. We can call the widows on the phone. *Think.*

*Look. Serve. Love.*

There are those who live in our neighborhoods that will lose their jobs. If we are blessed

with work and an income, then share what we have with others. It may be in the form of

groceries or a gas card. It may be a meal left at their door or pizza delivered by Door

Dash from our pocketbooks. *Think. Look. Serve. Love*.

We are dealing with a virus that has profoundly impacted our world. We can be His

shining light in this world of darkness. Who knows what good may come when the

present crisis is done? *Think. Look. Serve. Love*.