

Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL



DEVOTION

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I do not acknowledge or celebrate Valentine's Day.

February 14 comes and goes each year without my giving it a second thought.

Bought With a Price

THE MODERN ITERATION of this ancient holiday is about as romantic as a gun to the head, in which heaps and mounds of guilt are ladled onto the male of the species to purchase expensive gifts for his associate female. This guilt emanates regularly through TV commercials and sitcoms, movies and, I would hazard a guess—since all I *can* do is guess about this bilious environment I have never frequented—social media. So on February 13 I am to supposedly run out at the last minute to buy some over-priced trinket for my wife to prove how much I love her, when there is a pretty safe bet I have been something less than an attentive lover and husband during the other 364 days of the year.

How romantic.

Nope, I will not play that game. Instead, I take a less dynamic, less colorful, but more sincere track to show my wife of fifty-three years my love, my respect, my affection, my courtesy and generosity *every* day of the year. It is certainly less flashy, but a lot more meaningful than a diamond bracelet from *Zales*™.

Today's version of Christianity is conducted much the same as the media's idea of Valentine's Day. Most of the emphasis is on the Sabbath day, typically Sunday. On that day we Christians gather together to fellowship with each other, sing a few songs, fellowship with each other, listen to a sermon, fellowship with each other, and, if we are truly devout, attend Sunday School. Some of us may even worship God somewhere in all of that. Whereas way back near the beginning of it all, God gave Israel His most fundamental, foundational commandment of utmost priority:

"You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Deuteronomy 6:5

That word translated "soul" is the Hebrew *nephesh*, which does not refer to a mysterious chunk of something-or-other that wisps out of our body at death, a la *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. No, *nephesh* means, in simple terms, our life essence, everything we are beyond the flesh. So that commandment from the lips of Yahweh means that He wants each of His followers to love Him with all the earnestness and strength of his or her total being.

No less than that.

Not just at Christmas and Easter. Not even just every Sunday morning. But every day He gives us breath.

Some will say, "But that's the *Old* Testament. That was for Israel, not *New* Testament Christians. We are His by *grace*—not the law." That's right; there *is* a difference. The difference is that the transaction is even *deeper* for those who are in Christ. Under the Law the relationship was based on obedience; in Christ it is based on *ownership*. The new song that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing to the Lamb in the Apocalypse declares it.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

Revelation 5:9

Beyond being owned by Christ, we are indeed to be obedient to Him. If we belong to Him we love Him, and if we love Him we are to obey Him. Jesus told His disciples,

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and

My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.”

John 14:15, 21, 23

Many people today, perhaps most, think of the Christian faith as they do Valentine’s Day: a once-in-a-while sort of a thing. In reality it is to be an all-consuming, life-changing commitment to the One who died for them.

My wife did not receive a valentine card from me yesterday, because *every* day I give her a more intimate and honest love note from my heart. My wife did not receive flowers from me yesterday, because I endeavor to do nice things for her *every* day—not just once a year. I did not do anything special yesterday to declare my love for my wife, because I declare my love for her several times *every* day of the year. That is, she is constantly, daily, always on my mind and in my heart. I am devoted to her, as she is to me. We *own* each other.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

1 Corinthians 7:4

Just so, the Christian does not hold authority over himself, but is wholly owned by the One who died for him, Christ Jesus. To Him belongs regular devotion and adoration; to Him is due all and regular allegiance over anything else on earth. This due worship and service is not to be a sometime thing, regulated only by tradition, or worse, convenience, but to be the focus of every believer’s life. ♦

Or do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20



Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash.