



## BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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# Love in Action

## 2 Thessalonians 3 – "

### ~ Brent Russell ~

### Never tire of doing what is right

- One of the **tensions** that we face as believers in God is the **distinction between faith and works**
- Much of the **book of James** is dedicated to fleshing out and talking about the **contrast and also the unity of faith and works**
- Literally the idea of **faith in action**
- And much thinking about God since the **reformation** has been to change some of the churches ideas about faith and works
- For many years the church had given great weight to good deeds – as if they would save people
- **The church now agrees that doing good does not equal eternal life – The idea that we made right by faith was what drove Luther to get the church to change**
- But we also understand quite clearly that **real faith cannot help but express itself in doing good**
- **The idea that faith is proven real by it's action**
- And Paul has this command from Jesus for us clearly stated in vs. 13 of Chapter 3 **'As as for you never tire of doing what is right'**
- And it on this that I want us to spend some time today
- **We serve a God who is a God of action and activity**
- The **Bible is testament to over 4000 years** of God's activity on earth
- And on every page, in every story, we see a God who moves
- **A God who is always in action**

- **Touching and changing lives in all sorts of places, across the history of human time on earth**
- **A God who SHOWS his love for and does just TELL of his love for us**
- We believe in a God who is a God of action and a God of interaction
- He **saves** us
- He **guides** us
- He **judges** us
- He **helps** us
- He **comforts** us
- He **disciplines** us
- He **blesses** us
- He **heals** us
- He **protects** us
- We can go on and on for the next hour
- God is **not a statue** that sits and stares silently into the distance with folded arms
- He is **not a distant God** who watches earth from far-off, leaving us to our own plans
- **God interacts with us constantly meeting us where we are**
- **Interacting with our lives**
- **Involving Himself with us**
- And SHOWING how much he LOVES us
- **The fullness of God's activity finds itself expressed in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth on earth**
- If we look at the person of God in Jesus we see a God once again who is active in interactive in every way
- Jesus **touches**
- He **cries**
- He **leads**
- He **helps**
- He **laughs**
- He **hugs**
- He **shouts**
- He **reaches out**
- He **heals**
- He **teaches**
- He **blesses**

- **Christ as the Son of God reflects the fullness of God's activity to us**
- He is God with us, in our midst living with us and like us
- **Making God's love for us something TANGIBLE and REAL**
  
- **God is a God of love, passion, energy and motion**
- **And Jesus was a man of great love, passion, energy and motion**
- **And the Church called to reflect the character, spirit and nature of Christ is called to be a people of love, passion, energy and motion**
- **We are called to DO**
  
- **A great Spanish Philosopher relates a story about a Roman aqueduct that had been built in the second century to bring water to a village**
- It had served the village well for 16 centuries and was still working well
- But some people decided that they should preserve it and so constructed a system of pipes to get water to the village
- The pipes worked wonderfully but the aqueduct began to crumble as the mortar used to build it dried up
- And soon it was in a state of terrible disrepair, unable to do the work for which it was designed
  
- **One of the biggest lies that the evil one has sold to the church is the lie that church is something you come to**
- A **place or a building** where you come to receive and where you come to listen
- Something where someone **preaches to you**
- A place where you come to **receive blessings from God**
- And a place where you **come to get**
  
- **Whilst this is part of the church it is so much more than that...**
- **You see the Church is something you are part of not something you go to**
- **You ARE the church**
  
- **Church is not something you go to**
- **Church is something that you DO**

- The lie is that church is something you can be a **spectator** to
- An **onlooker** standing on the lines quietly **observing from a distance uninvolved, untouched and unchanged**
  
- **The Christian faith is NOT like a rugby game, where some watch the game and where some play the game**
- **If you are part of the Church you are in the game boots and all, whether you realize it or not**
  
- And I must confess that we as **your ministers have at times and places helped reinforce this false concept of church**
- We have sometimes done too much not allowing you to be stretched
- Not allowing you to find your own place of ministry
- Not allowing you to do things which in fact you do better than us
  
- **The church is supposed to a place and a people of action**
- **A place like a bee hive**
- **Where each part of the whole has it's own place and purpose**
  
- **Worship is something to be joined not watched**
- **Church is something you do and are part of not somewhere you come to**
- **Fellowship is something you participate in not something that you receive**
  
- What I am saying is that if you are part of the church you need to be part of the churches love in action
  
- The church is not a place for **pew warmers**
- I promise the pews don't mind being a little cold at times
- They don't need your bum to keep them warm

- **Let me be careful here**
- There is always place in the church for those who are **uncertain and questioning** their faith
- Trying to **find a path to God** as life deals it's difficulties to them
- **The churches doors should and must always be open to those who are on the outside**
- A place that is **open, friendly and accepting** to those who are not part of it
- **Who allows those on the outside a place to watch our activity and in time to be drawn in**
  
- There is also always place in the church for those who are in **low or testing times**
- **People who because of crises in their lives don't have the time, energy or resources to serve and so find themselves in a place needing to receive**
- The Church should and must always be a place where the hurting can find healing
- **Where the despondent can find hope**
- And where the **tired and run down can find energy and passion once again**
- **We will always have place for those who simply cannot at this time give because they are empty**
  
- **But there is little place for those who remain in a place of apathy simply because of laziness or misplaced priorities**
- **There are few people who do not have the time or the energy to serve God in the life of the church**
- **There are many who because of skewed priorities in their work or social lives do not have the time or inclination to serve Jesus in the way that he has designed them to work**
- **There are too many who claim they love God, but their actions betray the truth**
  
- **"Never grow tired of doing what is right"**

- **I firmly believe in the grace of God**
- The **undeserved goodness** of God in our lives
- It is one of the **pillars of our understanding** of God and how he interacts with us
  
- **I also believe that if we think our faith is a free ride then we are sadly mistaken**
- **Whilst God is gracious to us when we are in our sin**
- When He calls us we are **called to great responsibility**
- **He loves us just the way we are, but he will not let us stay that way**
  
- In the movie Spiderman The main character at one point says about his superhero powers, 'With great power comes great responsibility'
  
- And so to believe that there is **forgiveness without repentance** is absolute stupidity
- And to believe that your **faith can exist without exhibiting itself in good deeds is to fail to have faith**
- **To claim to love God and to not to show it is to lie**
  
- **Let me put this into human terms**
- Everyone here has know or knows what love is like
- **And we feel loved not when people just SAY that they love us but SHOW that they love us**
- **Real love reveals itself in the small ordinary ACTIONS of living together**
  
- Because of the power of God within us there is also the **responsibility to allow that power to reveal itself in God-like actions**
- And because of the Love of God within us there is the **responsibility to show Him and world what love is**
  
- If you are happy you cannot help showing it to those around you
- If you have faith and love it should be bursting out of your life and one way in which it does this is through action and good deeds

- **Part of where Rod was coming from with his contentious sermon some weeks back about SuperSchool, was that we as your ministers believe that far to many people in the church are not living up to their promises, or to the expectations of God on their lives**
- **Too many are claiming to love God but the actions of their lives show this to be a lie**
- They have been **given the power of God**
- They have been **given the love of God** and the **ability to love Him** in return
- **But it often seems that some define love by empty words**
- So let me practical for a moment
- **Let me give you some absolutely simple, practical things that we ought to be DOING as part of Christian faith**
- **ACTIONS of love that Show that the Spirit of God lives in us**

### SuperSchool

- Teaching our children about God and ensuring that they come to SuperSchool is one of simplest ways to make our faith practical
- Parents taking some of that responsibility on themselves, not leaving the job to others
- Having **dinner time devotions** as a family
- Sharing with each other good and bad news from the day as God has helped in tough situations
- It is the parents responsibility to help our children understand the life changing truth of Jesus
- Please do NOT let them make this decision for themselves
- But be involved in their spiritual growth
- **If you LOVE God you will show that love by helping your family love Him too**

## Practical actions of Love

- **In a marriage love shows itself in simple actions like cooking meals, taking out trash, mowing lawns and doing laundry**
- In our relationship with God our love for Him reveals itself through simple actions
- **Caring for the poor;**
- **sharing with those in pain;**
- **helping the sinful find forgiveness in Jesus**
- **Standing up for truth** even if means our families/friends/colleagues will mock us
- Finding out what our **spiritual gifts** are and then using them as Jesus designed them to be used
- **Reading our Bible**
- **And spending real time in prayer**
- Many Christians are being heavily persecuted in Sudan and other countries where Christianity is not the faith of the country
- If we were persecuted would they be able to prove that we are Christians
- Would there be enough evidence to convict us here on earth

## Small Groups

- **Being involved in a small group – the basic unit of ministry within the life of BPC**
- Our small groups are places where **people grow in faith** faster
- Like a **seedling in fertile soil** with heaps of water and fertilizer will grow astoundingly fast
- So small groups are the fertile environment where we grow in faith faster than ever
- They are places where we can serve others and help them to grow
- **Where people can tell others how much they LOVE Jesus**
- **Where some of the practical aspects of our LOVE for God can find expression**

### CONCLUSION

- **Friends, Jesus will come again**
- **It is one of the essential beliefs of the church that Jesus will come again**
- **And I want us all to be ready If Jesus comes tomorrow**
  
- If there is a Job to be done there are three kinds of workers. For example, when a piano is to be moved, the first kind gets behind and pushes, the second pulls and guides, and the third grabs the piano stool.
  
- **It might said of people who love;**
- **There are the TALKERS and DOERS**
- **There are poets who make great song and dance about love**
- **And then there are the real lovers those who show their lovers how much love they love them in absolutely ordinary everyday actions**
  
- **If Jesus comes again soon I want him to find me DOING the simple actions of Christian love not talking about how much I love Him**
  
- **"With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith"**
  
- **Our faith and our love for God should prompts us into service**
  
- **And So let us never grow tired of doing what is right**