

The greatest love

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die" (Romans 5:7).

Our English translation does not indicate the difference between the two words used here. The righteous man is the just man, the man who is careful to give everyone his due. The good man is the benevolent man, the one who has done us many favors, and who does for us more than we could justly claim. Now, no matter how just a man may be, his integrity of character would scarcely lead one to die for him. Yet it is possible that for a man of great kindness "someone would even dare to die."

That is the highest measure of love among us. One may lay down his life for his friends, "but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [therefore enemies], Christ

died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

God does not need to be reconciled to us, but we need reconciliation to Him. And He Himself, in the kindness of His heart, makes the reconciliation. We are "made near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). How so? Because it was sin that separated us from Him, and made us enemies; and "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Being cleansed from sin, we must necessarily be reconciled to God.

In that Christ shed His blood for us, He gave His life for us. But inasmuch as the blood is applied to us, to cleanse us from all sin, He gives His life to us. In the death of Christ therefore we are crucified with Him. We receive His life as a substitute for our sinful life, which He takes upon Himself."

"From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ

reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing [margin, "reckoning"] their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:18-20). [1]

Note:

1. Waggoner, E. J., Waggoner on Romans, pp. 96, 97.