

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen ✠

In Lent we consider our faults. These are many, we could spend all day listing them, but we know for a fact we all have them, we all suffer from the weight of our own sin, no matter how much we may try to bury it under our self-proclaimed good works, no matter how much we buck, bristle and fight against the word of God we know that we are sinful. Each of our sins is a symptom of a lack of love. For love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is the epitome of goodness; God himself is love. But we do not like to see our own sin, we do not like to acknowledge our own spiritual state. We are no more capable of showing true love, of fulfilling the law on our own behalf, than the blind man was able to fix his own eyesight. But yet we desire love, we all want to be loved, and so instead of acknowledging our sin, acknowledging and recognizing our pitiful condition and crying out for help, instead of crying out "Son Of David Have Mercy on Me", we dig down deep into our hearts and our sin and proclaim something else as love. We claim that Tolerance of sin is love, that we are fine just as we are, that sin isn't the problem but those who acknowledge it are. In an attempt to make ourselves worthy of love, we end up preventing and twisting, prying and bending love into something disgusting and putrid. Love is selfish; love allows all things, approves of all things. Love gets what it wants without needing to wait. Love is about being happy in the here and now, with no thought about the future.

This is what sin says love is, this is what our world will try and tell you love is. And this form of love will not save us, it does not make us worthy of God's love but only drives us further into sin, and deepens the wedge between God and man, between you and eternal life.

I want you to notice that Saint Paul's description of love is not concerned with the self, it pays no attention to what the self wants, it is focused outward upon others rather than inward towards me. It looks nothing like human love, even the best of human love pales in comparison with true love, with Godly love. This godly love is found only in one man. This love is found in Christ Jesus alone. If we want to know what it is to be loved, to love another, let us learn from our Saviour, let us turn and fix

our eyes on Him. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Christ is the expression of God's love towards us. He is love expressed and tangible.

It was love that motivated our Lord's journey to the city of Jerusalem and the cross. Love of sinners, love of those who are loveless and despairing, those who would mock and scorn him, this drove our Lord to the cross, this drove our Lord to the gates of death and hell. And just as Christ led his disciples to Jerusalem, so now he leads us, as those numbered among his disciples. This is why we celebrate and prepare for Lent. Not as a season of despair but one of love. Focused on the ultimate act of God's love for us. Christ goes before us to Jerusalem, as surely and confidently as he did long ago. Just as he, with a sure foot, led his disciples from Jericho to Jesusalem so now does he lead us from death into life, from sin into virtue. He shows us what true love is and calls us to love with a godly love, not an earthly one. A love that recognizes sin and yet still cares for the sinner. A love that is willing to sacrifice everything for another. He goes before us and shows us the way, he paves the way by his life and death for you so that you, the loveless, might be loved.

The one who didn't stumble as he walked to the cross will not fail you. The world cannot deter him, the world cannot dictate his path. No, only the will of the Father does that. It is only his love that drives him, his concern for sinful humanity that directs him. It is God's love that directs and informs Christ's decisions.

God's love, found in the person of Christ, pushed and drove him to the cross. He knew he would suffer, he said it himself, he would be mocked, spit upon, flogged, and killed. He understood every whipping, every beating, and even the wrath of God. And yet, despite knowing exactly how it would feel, despite knowing exactly what great torment awaited him. He went in the calm determination of love, not counting the bitter cost of sacrifice but looking forward to the joy set before Him. The joy of throwing open the Kingdom of God to men. Here is both our inconceivable motive and our perfect example. In times of dangerous weakness, of alluring temptation, when the dread of self-denial and craving for self-indulgence breaks down our feeble wills, may Christ's example teach us courage. If you want to know how much God loves you, look no further than the cross. God's love

is shown clearly there. There, by love shown upon a cross, are we forgiven and strengthened to show forth true love to our neighbor. Christ's love informs our lives and strengthens us. Christ's love makes us strong for our Christian duty. Let us remind ourselves of this as we enter into this Lenten season.

In Jesus' name. Amen.