



The Kingdom Perspective

Tertullian's Defense of the Gospel

Transcript:

Hello, this is Pastor Don Willeman of Christ Redeemer Church. Welcome to The Kingdom Perspective.

The early church was distinctive for many reasons, but one of the most powerful was the quality of loving community found in it.

Tertullian, the 3rd century church leader, wrote a number of works defending the gospel in the face of persecution (see, *To the Gentiles and Apology*). In one of his more famous statements, he directs his pagan detractors to look at the quality of love among Christians, as compared to its lack among non-Christian pagans. He writes:

“Look . . . how they love one another (for they themselves [pagans] hate one another); and how they are ready to die for each other (for they themselves are readier to kill each other).”

Tertullian knew that the love of Christians for one another was incredibly powerful and persuasive. Not surprising, since this is exactly what Jesus taught.

In His famous prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus not once but twice says that it is this unifying love among Christians, in spite of their many differences, that shows to the world the truthfulness of the gospel. Jesus prays:

...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. [And again a few verses later, Jesus prays...] The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (John 17:21-23 NASB, emphasis added)

The quality of our relationships as followers of Jesus Christ is our strongest and clearest witness. Twentieth century thinker Francis Schaeffer called this love, “the final apologetic”—that is, the final proof of the veracity of the gospel.

The kindness, mercy and grace of genuine love may be in short supply in the world, but it must not be in the church.

Is your life dripping with love toward your fellow Christians?

Something to think about from The Kingdom Perspective.

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

~ John 17:17-26 (NASB)