

**What is Love? – Love Rejoices With the Truth**

*1 Corinthians 13:4-8a; Ephesians 4:11-16; Proverbs 15:1; Matthew 7:1-6*

**Is this the sermon you've been waiting for?**

Our culture and our world have taught us one way of speaking truth. But is it the right way? \_\_\_\_\_

This approach may be why Christians and churches are facing more \_\_\_\_\_ than they have in a long time.

It's because we're so focused on \_\_\_\_\_ people to hear it whether they want to or not.

We completely ignore the relationship between true principles and \_\_\_\_\_. So, people run from us like crazy.

**Learning from the Early Church**

Here are some insights into how the early Church spread the Gospel from, "*The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*," by Alan Kreider.

"...being good and being visible were the Christians' primary means of attracting outsiders... 'As for the daily increase in our numbers, that is no proof of error, but evidence of merit; for beauty of life encourages its followers to persevere, and strangers to join the ranks.'" (Pg. 123)

"...when the Christians talked about loving your enemies, their neighbors had been interested. But when they found that the Christians didn't do what they said, they dismissed Christianity as 'a myth and a delusion.'" (Pg. 124)

"...the church in the Roman Empire was growing. This growth was not because 'evangelism was the prerogative and duty of every church member.' Rather, it was primarily because the Christians and their churches lived by a habitus that attracted others. The Christians' focus was not on 'saving' people or recruiting them; it was on living faithfully - in the belief that when people's lives are rehabilitated in the way of Jesus, others will want to join them." (Pg. 129)

"The president [preacher] knows that the community must live the gospel if outsiders are to find the gospel credible." (Pg. 146)

"...the apologists wrote to convince their readers of the innocence of the Christian communities' behavior... But more generally, the apologists wrote extensively on behavior because of their Christian conviction that the way people live expresses what they really believe... Justin began his *First Apology* by stating his aim: 'It is for us, therefore, to offer to all the opportunity of inspecting our life and teachings.' For Justin, life is as important as the teachings..." (Pg. 94)

Robert Wilken, "*The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*," 198, "The reason Christianity succeeded in making its way within the Roman world was due less to what Christians believed than to the way they lived." (TPF, 96)

Or perhaps more simply, "No one \_\_\_\_\_ how much you \_\_\_\_\_ until they \_\_\_\_\_ how much you \_\_\_\_\_."

**How can we faithfully speak the truth in love?** By meditating on the following:

(1) *Can you hear difficult truth yourself?* (Matthew 7:1-6) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) *Can you speak the truth in a way that others can actually hear it?* We're not talking about \_\_\_\_\_!

(3) *Now consider Jesus, the One who is the Way, THE TRUTH, and the life.*