

Blessings Remembered

God's Word, various images and occasional history as presented on this devotional website page will hopefully prompt memories of many personal blessings from God in your lives. May you always trust in God's promised blessings, past, present, future and for all eternity.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8

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Photo: Bill Van Nostrand

“For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” Isaiah 54:10

The above photograph shows part of a stained glass window in the bell tower of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church of Webster City, Iowa. The window overlooks the main entrance to the sanctuary as Jesus, in His love for each of us, welcomes everyone with open arms.

The day that many in this world celebrate on February 14th, had its beginning long ago in the Christian Church. St. Valentine was a Roman Catholic priest, possibly even a Bishop, who was executed by order of the Roman Emperor Claudius on February 14th in the year 269 A.D. He was executed for his continued evangelizing about the Love of God in Jesus Christ, (he even enraged Emperor Claudius when he spoke to the Emperor to renounce Roman Gods and believe in Jesus.) St. Valentine was told to stop speaking about Jesus and renounce Christianity. St. Valentine refused to do that and was therefore executed.

Legend has it that St. Valentine had given hearts made from parchment to persecuted Christians in order to remind them of God’s faithfulness toward them for the sake of Jesus and their faithfulness to God in response to God’s love. There is also legend that St. Valentine had urgently prayed to God to restore the eyesight of the daughter of a Roman Judge. Her eyesight was restored and it was to this daughter that St. Valentine later wrote a letter, while he awaited his execution, and he signed it “from your Valentine.” Such legends, whether accurate or not, have influenced the romantic expressions of love on St. Valentine’s Day, up to the present day.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 1 John 3

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us..., 1 John 3:16a

While our expressions of love toward others can be considered a good thing, even urged of us by God in Jesus, God never wants us to leave His Love for us in Jesus

*“out of the picture”, in regard to the love we express for others. **“We love because he first loved us.”** 1 John 4:19*

Although so clearly associated with “love” over the centuries, I imagine that St. Valentine would have been the first to deny that there was anything special in him concerning such notions of love and would immediately point us to the True Source of the only real and lasting Love. The True Source of Love, God’s everlasting Love for all sinful humankind, is received and believed, only by faith in Jesus Christ the One who suffered, died and rose again from the dead, laying down His life for us and taking up His life so that we would have forgiveness and eternal life in Him and Him alone. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”** John 3:16 - 17

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’” Lamentations 3:22–24

This coming February 14th, in whatever way you plan to celebrate your love for others, remember what Love is truly all about. ***“...let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”*** Jeremiah 9:24

“For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” Isaiah 54:10

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” John 15:9

“...may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 13

I find it interesting, perhaps no coincidence, that the name “Valentine” is derived from the Latin word *“valens”*, which means “Worthy, Able, Strong and Powerful”.

Do those descriptive words remind you of anyone, perhaps the One who is Love, and Who eternally and wonderfully loves us with a Love that will never end or fail?

I close with prayer from God's Word concerning Jesus, who alone is the source of all true Love.

***"I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,..." Psalm 18:3a "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."* Revelation 4:11**

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever." Amen
Ephesians 3:20 - 21

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Jude 24 - 25

"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!" Psalm 24:7- 8

"Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing." Isaiah 40:26

"The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."
Psalm 29:4

"The Lord utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful." Joel 2:11

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Rev. Bill Van Nostrand

All Scripture quoted from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.