

June 9, 2005

A LABOR OF LOVE FOR PASTOR DOUGLAS WILSON & CHRIST CHURCH

He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. — Proverbs 9:7–9

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1–2)

A burden weighs heavily in the town of Moscow, Idaho, and it has national effects. It is not entirely caused by Pastor Douglas Wilson and his church. Many others have added chaos or evil to the unpleasant mix, and perhaps they, too, will benefit from this word. Many of these do not believe in Our Lord, and maybe this will inform them better as to what Jesus Christ continues to be for His Church. The primary purpose of this short study is to address Pastor Wilson and those who sit under his leadership. I believe that you, the saints of Christ Church, can hear the rebuke of God's word. It is also addressed to those who need help holding fast to that which is important in this discussion.

This correction is *not* addressing the wide array of controversies, such as civil complaints, doctrinal or academic disagreements, or ecclesiastical canon law divergences. This essay denies that the problem faced at this time involves which side of any issue Pastor Wilson occupies. This paper, in fact, asks the defenders of Pastor Wilson to continue to assume, throughout their reading, that they are absolutely right in every arena of contention that has embroiled the town and Body of Christ. You may not be right on any of them, but you need to hear something else from God. For now, correcting those other issues is not necessary. I very much want you to hear the Word of God without those issues rising up to draw us away from the demands of Scripture.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be

the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. (I John 4:7–13)

The Word of God demands love. Regardless of your own reactions to those who love poorly or with suspect definitions, you must admit that love is required of you. Echo, with the rest of the Body of Christ, that love is the evidence of our real belief in the Incarnation of love and His death for our sins. The problem is that you have not loved. The work of our Lord and Saviour is cast into doubt because of the way you, Pastor Wilson, and your church have treated your detractors. It is not only the Kingdom of Heaven that you hurt. Your own world has been hit with calamity, antagonism, and general disfavor because you have not been kind, loving, or gentle. You have not been nice to those you have met on the field of your conflicts.

And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. (II John 5, 6)

This behavior is in spite of the fact that love is clearly the great and new commandment of Christ, heard from the beginning. You have not followed the Lord Jesus Christ. It is hard, I imagine, to hear this declared so directly, and I know that many defenses rise to your mind immediately. Take heed to the Scripture from Proverbs at the beginning of this paper. Hold off on defending yourself long enough to hear what the Scripture says. Realize that those who justify themselves hurry to do it. As you resist the urge to defend yourselves, realize also that I know, and others surely do as well, that much of your lives are filled with the experiences of joy and good fellowship with each other. God bless you in that!

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43–48)

So, while we know you love some people, what credit is that to you when you do not love your enemies? There is an illusion created in our churches. We gather together people with whom we agree and whom we like. The love we have with the brethren suggests that we have all the love we need. “How can we be bad when we feel so good?” says your mind. When a pastor holds himself out as a leader in the Kingdom of God, he needs to understand what God thinks is “perfect” or mature. When a group or its leaders want to protect their bad behavior with a tone of authority, they attempt to reset the definitions and, by that, justify their behavior and control the discussion. This is not a discussion, it is a sermon to your hearts. You may be tempted to pigeon-hole it as “pietistic” and dismiss it because it employs the words “love” and “heart” in the same sentence. But this love is what you were told to do by Christ and His Holy Apostles in the teaching portions of Scripture. It is not some narrative allegorized into an instruction that conveniently allows you your natural desire to be mean to your enemies. (It looks so biblical to “mimic” Jesus all the while not obeying Him.) With love we already have God’s very corrective definition and instruction.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For

now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13:1–13)

You might choose to define things differently. You probably already have. You might say that love is “speaking the truth.” You might object to what sins and heresies much sillier Christians hide under the pieties of love. This essay is not to them. This is to *you* and *your sin*, the sin that infects your church body from pastor, to publications, to parish.

This biblical definition has perhaps been on too many evangelical refrigerator magnets to still be powerful, but it oddly has punch when we think of how you, Pastor Wilson, have spoken to and of others. In fact, when the believing world considers your efforts contending against your enemies, reversing the passage from Corinthians is, tragically, an exact definition.

Douglas Wilson writes and preaches with brilliance. Some have said he is a prophet and his understanding of mysteries and knowledge is legend. He has an absolute belief and faith in what he pursues, so as to remove mountains, but Pastor Wilson is nothing. Even though he is known for his self-sacrifice, his lack of personal greed, and even his willingness to die for what he has served, he has failed before God. This is because Douglas Wilson is impatient and unkind; Douglas Wilson is boastful; He is arrogant and rude. His life is lived on the principle of insisting on his own way; all the while, when people cross him, acting irritable or resentful; He has written a book to defend this wrong, and mocks those who wish for the right.

Many of you who sit under his teaching know this and you say nothing out of fear of retribution. Don’t tell me you “fear” his kindnesses. You stay in the church and say that Pastor Wilson is “anointed.” The truculence of your pastor does not declare the anointing of God. Sinfully, many of you who sit under his teaching imitate this “pick a fight” mentality. It might be “manly.” It might be “medieval.” It might be in the “tradition of the Church.” It is not obedience to the Holy Spirit. It is *sin*.

Pastor Wilson, every one of those failings should be confessed and corrected. If you wish to be an asset to the Faith, representing Jesus Christ, well equipped to be a minister of God’s Holy Gospel, you must stop trying to be the leader of a movement, and you must become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. You do the former well, and are successful at it. You have failed in the latter.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight

of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore

If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14–21)

You, Pastor Wilson, must answer some questions without qualifying or molding the definitions to fit your urges. Why do you curse your enemies when you were told to bless them? Why is it that people can recognize that a person is a member of your fellowship by his haughtiness and conceit? Why are your actions continually described as less than good or kind? (You will note that it is in the sight of all others that "your regard for good things" is measured.) Why do you pursue your enemies rather than leaving it to God? Why do you attempt to verbally punch them down? Why don't you surprise your worst detractors with acts of true kindness? You have been overcome by evil. You were overcome by the worldly urge to answer because you defended yourself, not the Living God. Your Lord and Christ said, "Father, *forgive them* for they don't know what they do."

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. (Romans 15:1–8)

You please yourself and promote the agenda you have set out. Your neighbor's good is secondary to your purposes. But Christ's example in this is to set His own pleasure aside. He was willing to bear the reproaches directed at others. You have not even borne your own. St. Paul says that the prophesy of Christ's manner was written for instruction, and that instruction, once learned, calls us in the Body of Christ to live harmoniously with each other. The model for the kind of reception we give one another is found in Christ and His sacrifice for us. You have *not* learned from such instruction, and harmony is not the description of your relationships.

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through

love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:13–26)

From what I gather, your church and its doctrine is oriented to the Covenant. Any application of the Old Covenant in a New Covenant way should include St. Paul's comment on love. While love would fulfil all of the Law, you choose to bite and devour. If you don't heed this and St. Paul's warning, you will be consumed. Your ministry, which could have been a light in the Kingdom, is under examination by evil men, misguided men, concerned men, and now, most importantly, by the Word of God. You built a philosophy of church PR out of the "works of the flesh."

Your enemies may be guilty of all the same things I am saying to you, but what is that to you? Is your sin the less because of that excuse? Your Lord calls out for you to repent of this evil. If the Spirit is active in you, reject the enmity, the strife, the anger, the party spirit, and live. If God's Holy Spirit in fact dwells in you, He offers you the fruit of repentance in love, peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness. Refresh us with kindness.

You have had many opportunities to be kind but instead you have provoked the world and the saints. You have polarized every institution in which you had any participation. Though God has told you not to, you have persisted in self-conceit and impudence and are incurring the natural wrath of those hurt by it.

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But

when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:1–11)

Avoid foolish disputes? Speak no evil of anyone? Gentle? Showing all humility? In repeating these words and phrases, I pray your heart and mind will reflect on your actions and words. The work of Our Lord was, to us who are saved, God's loving kindness. We apply ourselves to love and good works because we believe. We must avoid the perversion of valuing the advancement of our views more than love and good works. Everyone thinks their views are valuable, but none, mine nor yours, can be compared to the manifestation of love in Christ and our overwhelming desire (if we are saints) to imitate it. It would be perverted and sinful to think otherwise.

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money. (Titus 1:5–7)

Pastor Wilson, you know that Bishops *must be* blameless. I know “blameless” is a vague, undefined term, but you must know it means something. You, yourself, have applied this term to other pastors in recent and distant history. When good Christians the nation over shake their heads and sigh over your unloving behavior, you should disregard any notion that the available vagueness of the term “blameless” has a possibility of another useless “controversy” over its definition. I know that is your temptation and it should tell you that you have crossed the line.

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his

own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (I Timothy 3:1–7)

The uncollected, loose concerns of this nation's saints have reproached you. Always having an aggressive argument to the contrary does not effectively avoid the reproach. You are not above it. You have been reproached here in this paper, and the reproach is getting louder from more sources. We know much of it can be coming from the reprobates and envious. Having seen the unrighteous assail you, you have come to think that being assailed is a sign of your holiness. When will you be able to see past their sins to your own reproach? You also think that any critic of your ministry is likely unrighteous. How will you know, in your conscience, when this reproach comes from the saints? You have built a strong wall of justification around a quarrelsome kingdom.

You fell into this snare, into this reproach, because you did not think it important to be well thought of by those that did not belong to your groups. The outsider is precisely he whose opinion of you must be good, or the snare of a pastor under reproach will be sprung by the devil. Pastor Wilson, you are *not* qualified to be an elder, bishop, or presbyter. The organizations who suffer attack because of your association with them would be advised to consider these qualifications. *An honorable man would remove himself*, seeing the reproach he has brought, the reproach that disqualifies him from leading in the Faith.

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. (I Timothy 5:17–25)

You are gifted and worthy of honor for your talents and for your wide range of beneficial teaching. Yet you have not ruled entirely well, and this is public correction, in front of the many who have witnessed your sins. The wide circulation of your works and the public forum of your attacks on others

have made any demand for witnesses moot. This has been written to you and your fellowship, but sent to the Church of Jesus Christ at large. You have been warned before on this. You mocked and redefined. You have persisted. This rebuke goes out publicly, for the Scriptures tell us that they, your audience, need to hear it. I trust that this will get wide circulation so that other pastors who share your purposes or sins would be terrified. I am praying that you, Pastor Wilson, will hear God's correction and fear Him as well.

Those of you who see Pastor Wilson as your overseer, and are naturally fond of him, ought not let your partiality decide whose side you are on. Neither should you participate in these sins, no matter how good it feels to be part of a successful ministry. If God does not praise it, no amount of mutual admiration shared by the agreeable will save you.

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. (II Timothy 2:23–26)

This world of debates and antagonisms is not the world of the Church. Christ's servants avoid quarrels by being kindly, choosing our words well, being patient with our enemies' shortcomings, and, should it rise to correction, doing it gently. I have labored in this statement to apply what I see the Scriptures demanding from you, Pastor Wilson, so I hope that this whole declaration, while firm, is gentle. I know that you want to, and could, raise a long argument on how you actually devote yourself to these demands of Scripture. The anonymous nature of this piece is intended to keep the focus on the Scriptures, and not on the weak points of their collector. I don't want the Scriptures to be set aside by my identity, so whether I am a concerned evangelical, an embarrassed member from your own church or the CREC, or a Presbyterian who just wants to edify the Reformed world, it should not matter, as you answer the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Should it matter more to find out who has spoken this way to you, and should the powers at your disposal grant that effort success, then I must, if an attack come back on me, take it patiently. Such would be obedience to the Lord Christ, and it would be gross hypocrisy if I did not. I must "look to myself lest I too be tempted."

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth;

who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (I Peter 2:19–24)

I have already said what the Apostles delivered to us that Christ is love manifest in His incarnation. He is our example of love and patience, and our definitions of those graces and others grow as we keep our eyes on Him. I believe firmly that you are a man who seeks God's commendation. You have been called to love and patience, so no more reviling responses to the enemies of the Faith would be in order. God will judge those that do not see, if you offer them good when they continue to hurt you. Pastor Wilson, I admonish you to work for God's approval, not Douglas Wilson's victory.

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For

He who would love life
And see good days,
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking deceit.
Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.
For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.

And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (I Peter 3:8–17)

God's approval would be good to have. You will want His blessing on what you do as well. Seek peace, not your vindication. Peace is there for those who give blessing for cursing. You can't get the blessing otherwise. Goodness has its own power, which you have replaced with a reviling that tries to humiliate and shame with lampoon and mockery. If you love, if you are kind, when the abuse arrives (and it will), the shame the abuser receives is not because you mocked him in an ad or editorial or speech or blog. It will be because it is evident to everyone's conscience that the abuser has harmed a righteous man.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (James 3:13–18)

There is no doubt that you are smart, and that many of your congregants are gifted intellectually. The question asked in James 3 is not answered in any appeal to those admitted high qualities of your minds. You are asked to show it in deeds. Those deeds will be guided by a wisdom that is defined by its meekness. When you have “bitter envy and self-seeking” about who is going to win this turf war, you have a mighty temptation to boast, puff up your good qualities, and brag about your great cultural advance. You become impudent. You become unwilling to be modest, and don’t wait for your merits to advance you, but you turn to self-advertisement. This is not from God, but is worldly. It might not be “trendy worldly,” like postmodernism, but it follows what all men want, and nothing could be more of this earth. You have loved what First John tells you not to love, “the things in the world.” And what have we here in the company of saints and sinners? We have “confusion and evil things” just as the Bible promised.

If you are to harvest from your congregation righteousness with peace, you cannot have these wars and fightings among you. You must set aside the passions that wage war in your members. “Peaceable” means you will add peace to a difficult situation, not a serrated blade between the ribs. “Gentleness” will hold up and carry things that are weaker and fragile. It doesn’t harangue them for their weakness and apply the forces

that hope to break them. “Willingness to yield” welcomes the opportunity to hear thoughts or directions that are other than your own. A saint, if he is surrendered to God, knows that God’s wisdom expects him to surrender at times. Only the impudent would not. Instead of demonizing the opposition, the wise man, knowing his potential error, finds it his manner to naturally welcome the contrary because the wise man loves reproof. This goes back to love not “seeking its own.”

This is the work of a member of Christ’s Church who is sick to death of the conflicts carried out as if the Church was a political party in the midst of an election season. Our hearts should be having a referendum that focuses on the real issue of who is being made more obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:43–46)

God may perhaps grant that you, Pastor Wilson, would find peace in repentance, that you would seek out all those that you have treated in a way unbecoming to a Christian and ask their forgiveness.

God may perhaps grant that others, who have sinned against Pastor Wilson in similar unloving ways, in seeing this would repent of their own disobedience in this conflict.

God may perhaps grant that I will keep my heart clean. *May God have mercy on us all.*