

Roy And Sophease Blackmon's Love Has Endured

By Loretta Manago
Post Staff Writer

"...Love endures long and is kind. Love is not jealous...It bears everything in silence, has unquenchable faith, hopes under all circumstances and endures without limit." Those words taken from the first letter of Corinthians and written by the apostle Paul epitomize the very essence of the feeling that is so important that books, seminars and even a day out of the year is centered around.

In recognition of that special day, Valentine's day, a love that so aptly fits Paul's description is focused upon. That is the love shared between Roy and Sophease Blackmon. They recently celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

"We were married on Christmas Eve," began Mrs. Blackmon. They spoke their solemn vows after a year of dating. Both had been married before, but Mrs. Blackmon's husband was deceased and Blackmon was no longer with his wife at the time that the two met.

"I was living by myself, having come from Washington, D.C. to Charlotte to live and Roy was the coal and wood man, making deliveries throughout the neighborhood," reminisced Mrs. Blackmon.

She admitted that she had always known that Blackmon was a nice, kind and understanding man, but said that she had no idea that they would later become husband and wife. Even Mr. Blackmon confessed that he had no idea that the two of them would marry. After a while, Mrs. Blackmon admitted: "I got to thinking. Now that's a pretty nice fella."

What has made their marriage so special is that the same thing that attracted Mrs. Blackmon to her husband are qualities that he still possesses today. "He's still as nice and kind and understanding as he ever was. I wouldn't trade nothing for him," she revealed.

Black Leaders

Continued From Page 1A

total Black community." He points out that many groups, clubs, sororities and fraternities are efficiently involved in the community.

Interestingly, Coleman stresses, "Ministers have more influence than anyone in town. If they wanted to they could unite the entire Black community."

Unity is a key issue when dealing with the subject of "Black Leaders." The question of effectiveness sometimes denotes how many people does one such leader have under his or her influence. There is power in numbers.

But you'd be hard pressed to try to find a large body of Blacks who would agree upon one person as their leader. Marsh claims, "People tend to get offended when you start identifying 'Black Leaders.' They will question it."

There is an apparent lack of unity in the black community as the "leaders" are divided up into special interests groups.

And it appears as though the notion of a single effective black community leader has become obsolete. So if you, as a black citizen, need help for your community you may end up with a long list of people to talk to. You may feel confused as to who to begin with. You may be shuttled from one person to another. You may be confronted with a "pass the buck" sort of bureaucracy. Is this the direction in which Black leadership is going?

"There is the need to recognize all the 'leaders' and form a coalition of all of them," suggests Coleman.

"We need to be together. Everyone should sit down at one table and understand each other. This is what is needed in order to help the total Black community to do for ourselves in a constructive way."

This sounds easier than it will be. It will take deflation of egos, generosity of time, openness of mind, compassionate spirit, and logical rationality. As yet, there has been no movement, in Charlotte, to form such a governing body of Black Leaders.

It remains to be seen whether a Black leader will recognize this need and be truly effective by bringing together all "leaders" in a concerted effort to help the black community.

And you, the person with the problem, you should not be excluded from this group. For as Marsh concludes, "Every individual is a leader of themselves. Thus they are capable of transferring their ideas in collective bargaining."



Mr. and Mrs. Roy Blackmon
...35 years of marriage

The bond that Mr. and Mrs. Blackmon share is a much stronger one, than the ones shared by hundreds of couples today. According to Mrs. Blackmon, it's not that she and her spouse haven't experienced tough times, it's just that they haven't been as easy to give up as some of the younger couples seem to.

"With couples today, it just seems like at the least little thing, why they're ready to fly off the handle. They don't seem to be willing to work at their marriage and make it work. In the early years of our marriage, Roy and me had it rough, but now that we're older we're having the good times."

She advises anyone contemplating marriage to consider a few things: "Put the Lord first and continue to ask Him to bless you. Anytime the Lord is upfront, then you're bound to stay together. He's got to be in

the midst. Love one another if you don't have nothing but bread and

butter and try to marry someone like yourself. If you like to be involved in church, then pray for someone who is interested in church, too."

"What is it all boils down to is that marriage is what you make it. And you've got to be able to take as well as give. It's a two-way street."

There are no arguments for the Blackmons. Mrs. Blackmon confessed that on the occasions that she gets upset with her husband, he never argues. He simply goes to sleep. This leaves them plenty of time for all the other things that they both enjoy doing. "I think what has helped us get along so well is that we do everything together. We go out to eat, go shopping and visiting. It's rare when someone will see one of us without the other."

And aside from doing things together the Blackmons have managed to hold on to something else, equally as important as their love - their sense of humor. "Oh, we're always picking at the way each other talks or walks. We just have so much fun together."

Both natives of South Carolina, the Blackmons attend St. Paul Baptist Church. She is a member of the Gospel choir, chairperson of her Missionary No. 2, a Sunday School teacher and a deaconess. Blackmon is a deacon and a Gospel choir leader as well as a part-time custodian.

And where was Blackmon during the interview of this article? Well, he was on his way to the church, but said before leaving the house, "My wife usually does all the talking. She can answer your questions!"

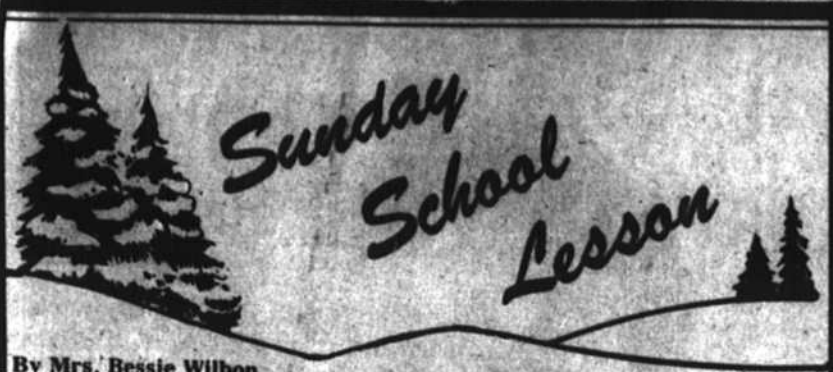
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By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

LESSON BACKGROUND

After the raising of Lazarus, some of those present went to the Pharisees and reported the miracle. The Pharisees were so upset by this news that they immediately convened the Sanhedrin to decide on what action to take. Caiaphas, the high priest, urged the council to kill Jesus in order to protect the Jewish nation and the temple from the Romans. In order to avoid a premature confrontation, Jesus left Jerusalem and the surrounding area and went to the town of Ephraim, which Bible scholars believe was located about fifteen miles north and east of Jerusalem. Jesus then returned for a brief ministry in Perea, east of the Jordan.

It is not known how long Jesus remained in Perea, but six days before the Passover He returned to Bethany. It was while he ate supper there that Mary anointed Him with precious ointment. Jesus' presence could no longer be kept a secret, and soon a curious crowd gathered to see both Jesus and Lazarus. The next day Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Upon entering the temple area the following day, He drove out the merchants and the money changers. The event related in Today's lesson text may have occurred the day after this cleansing of the temple.

THE LESSON

Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. They went to Philip and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains. Whoever loves his own life will lose it; whoever hates his own life in this world will keep it for life eternal. Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honor anyone who serves me."

"Now my heart is troubled - and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me'? But that is why I came - so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to your name!"

Then a voice spoke from heaven, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again." The crowd standing there heard the voice, and some of them said it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spoke to him!"

But Jesus said to them, "It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me". In saying this he indicated the kind of death he was going to suffer. (John 12:20-33)

The Greeks in this Scripture were not Greek-speaking Jews but ethnic Greeks. But they were not pagans. They had come to Jerusalem to worship. They were therefore proselytes, Greeks who had come to believe in one God and to follow the Old Testament, at least in part. As the Wisemen came from the Gentile world to honor Jesus at His birth, so now Gentiles once more came to see Him at the close of His ministry.

Philip, in this Scripture is the apostle Philip. These men may have come to him because he bore a Greek name. It is possible that these Greeks knew Philip prior to this. Because they did not know Jesus, they probably thought it best to approach Him through one of His disciples. "Sir, we want to see Jesus." It is obvious that they wanted to do more than look at Him. They sought an interview with Him. We cannot be sure what attracted them to Him, but it may have been the triumphal entry or His cleansing of the temple.

Philip was a bit perplexed by the request. He didn't go immediately to Jesus because he may have doubted whether Jesus would want to talk to Gentiles, especially in public. As a result, he went to his friend Andrew, and together they carried the request to Jesus.

"The hour is come," Jesus' words were probably addressed to Philip and Andrew and others, including the Greeks, who must have surrounded Him by now. Jesus knew the minds of the Greeks, and he may well have been speaking to their needs without, talking directly to them. John uses this expression several times in his Gospel (John 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). By it he indicates that Jesus operated within a definite time framework established by the Father. Now the time had come for the climax in that chain of events that would lead to the completion of God's plan for human redemption. In speaking of himself Jesus used His favorite title Son of Man. Paradoxically, Jesus' glorification would come through His humiliation. Because He obediently submitted himself to a shameful death. He would be glorified through the resurrection and His eventual return to Heaven.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal: (vv. 25-26) Jesus strengthened His illustrations by using a double paradox. What He had just spoken about himself He now made applicable to His disciples. One who is concerned only for his own interests, who is unwilling to make any kind of a commitment to others, may succeed in protecting himself. He may even exist in ease and prolong his life; but he will never know the joys that come to one who lives for others. Much more - the one who is selfish with no thought of serving Christ, will perish forever.

So much in our world is aimed at causing us to develop an unhealthy concern for ourselves. Advertising is aimed at arousing desires for things that we don't need or can't really afford. It is amazing how quickly a luxury becomes commonplace, which then becomes a necessity. But the very fact that Jesus speaks against the sin of self-centeredness shows that ours was not the first generation to fall victim to it.

Father, thank you for permitting Your Son to be "lifted up" so that we could be drawn to Him. Lead us, Father, to surrender to the drawing power of the cross. May this lead us into lives of service for You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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