

# LOGF NOTES 03.26.17

Building A Bridge: with Patience, Integrity & Strength

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Luke 10: 27 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself." – Jesus

## Building perspectives from the early church

The growth of the Christian church in the Roman Empire is incredible. Why did this minor religion from the eastern Mediterranean – marginal, despised, discriminated against – grow substantially, eventually supplanting the well-endowed, powerful, respectable culture of the empire?

**Building with patience:** Patience was not a virtue dear to most Greco-Roman people, but it was centrally important to the early Christians. They believed that God is patient and the Jesus visibly embodied patience. And they concluded that trusting in God should be patient – not controlling events, not anxious or in a hurry, and never using force to achieve their ends.

However, patience is not passive. The same New Testament word is translated (i) patience, (ii) endurance, (iii) perseverance. Indeed, "through faith and patience we inherit what has been promised" (Hebrews 6:12).

See also Romans 5:3-4 and Romans 15:4-5

**Building with integrity:** History indicates that the early Christians grew in number because their life styles were distinctive, hopeful and life-giving. Christ followers behavior said what they believed; it was an enactment of their message.

Aristides, writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, attributes the Christians' practices to the teachings of Jesus: "They have the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself engraven on their hearts, and these they observe ... they are sexually disciplined, truthful, and financially reliable ... They comfort such as wrong them, and make friends of them; they labor to do good to their enemies ... They love each other, care for the widow and the orphan, and have a remarkable practice of economic sharing especially with reference to burials."

Further, this improbable growth according to Clement was the result of ordinary Christians, not the officially constituted leaders of the church. Contrary to the culture women and slaves were actively involved in building bridges.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distress ... in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love ..."  
(2 Corinthians 6:1-10)

See also Luke 8:11-15 and Colossians 1:3-13

**Building with strength:** The early Christians were uncommonly committed to spiritual formation. Embedded in this formation is the daily strength received from God's Word, prayer & worship.

Irenaeus insisted that the church's overarching goal was "renewing people from their old habits into the newness of Christ." Tertullian agreed commenting that spiritual formation led to spontaneous good.

In response to challenges Paul responds "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8: 31-32)

See also John 15:4-5 and 1 Timothy 2:5