

GraceNotes

A Monthly Newsletter of Grace Christian Church

Grace Christian Church
1713 E. Sevier Avenue
Kingsport, TN 37664
(423) 247-2691

Dr. J. Edward Clevinger, Minister



February 2023
Vol. 5, No. 2

www.gracechristiankingsport.com

GROWING IN GRACE “Syracuse’s Valentine - 1923”

It was a cold winter day in Syracuse, New York, on January 29, 1923. Paul Kyser was walking home from school. It was his 9th birthday. His mother and step-father were preparing a surprise birthday party for the moment of his arrival. Just as Paul got to the third of three railroad crossings on his route home, he simultaneously heard both an oncoming train and the nearby scream of a little girl hung on the tracks near the crossing. As the train quickly approached, Paul ran and desperately pushed the little girl safely to the other side of the tracks. However, Paul’s right arm fell across his side of the tracks and was instantly severed from his body. A crowd of onlookers immediately ran to Paul’s aid. A tourniquet was applied, Paul was taken to the hospital, and he thankfully survived. Recovery was long and painful, but Paul spent his time wisely learning to write left-handed in preparation for school in the fall.

Syracuse named Paul “The Boy Hero.” In addition, on February 14th he was named “Syracuse’s Valentine.” Paul received thousands of Valentine cards, notes, and letters representing virtually everyone in Syracuse. There was enough to fill all the rooms in the Kyser house. The moral of the story is that residents of Syracuse got it right on Valentine’s Day 1923 because Paul Kyser got it right. It was the essence of true love demonstrated and celebrated. Jesus spoke of it in John 15:13 – “Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life (or his limb) for his friend.” It’s known as “agape-love.” The Apostle Paul said that such love “does not seek its own” (I Cor. 13:5). It is the love willing to engage self-abandonment in deference to the needs of others. Someone suggested that “agape-love” is God loving someone else through you. Modern day concepts of accidentally “falling in and out of love” are so often qualitatively inferior to the Biblical “agape.” It is, however, powerfully depicted by Paul Kyser on the railroad tracks in Syracuse 100 years ago.

Incidentally, the little girl Paul saved vanished. As Paul pushed her off the tracks, the passing train obscured his and every onlookers view. When the train passed she was gone. To this day no one knows her identity. She remains an anonymous beneficiary of love’s sacrifice. It’s a curious thought that “agape-love” transcends familiarity. Qualifications and conditions are conspicuously absent from its extension and application. “Agape” is never an ‘accident’ but frequently prevents them. It never seeks notoriety but often inspires the masses. It’s rarely convenient but often costly.

-continued on next page-