

A New Commandment

No. 229

Introduction.

- I. Just a few hours before Christ's betrayal, He said to His disciples. (Jn. 13:34,35).
 - A. Jesus taught love is to be the distinguishing characteristic of His followers.
 - B. We are to be known above all else for our love for one another.
 - C. It is the badge of our discipleship.
- II. God's word stresses over and over again that Christians are to love one another. (1 Cor. 13:1-3; Col. 3:12-14; 1 Jn. 2:9-11).

1CO 13:1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

COL 3:12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

1JO 2:9 The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 3:11, 14-16; 4:7,8, 11, 20, 21)

- A. These passages should impress upon our minds the importance of love in the Christian life.
- B. Without love the Christian is nothing. Without love the Christian shows he is not of God and stands condemned before the Almighty God.
- C. This love for one another is to be expressed in many ways.

I. **Forgiving Of One Another** - Love prompts Christians to be forgiving of one another.

A. When we truly love, we are forgiving. When we truly love someone, we do not harbor grudges and malice our hearts. This is a great shortcoming of many Christians. They are harboring a grudge in their hearts against some brother. They expect God to forgive them, but they refuse to forgive others.

B. Those who possess this wicked attitude will never see the gates of heaven.

1. Matthew 18:21, 22
2. They are lost without hope. (Matt. 6:14, 15).
3. James gave this stern warning. (Jas. 2:13).

II. **Harmonious With One Another** - Love motivates Christians to be harmonious with one another.

A. It enables them to peacefully settle their problems and abide together in unity.

1. Brethren who love one another do not fuss and fight.
2. When brethren do these things they show that love does not exist in their hearts.

B. **This absence of love keeps the congregation from growing.** It turns many good people away from the church.

1. A **German philosopher** once considered becoming a Christian. He went to live among some people who claimed to be Christians. When he came away he said, "Those Christians will have to look a lot more redeemed before I can believe it."
2. This man expressed the sentiments of many people. As absence of love also causes many congregations to lose members.
3. One time **a young boy**, who had been converted to Christ, walked past a number of congregations each Sunday to a congregation across town. When asked why he said, "Them people love each other."

III. **Considerate** - Love motivates Christians to be considerate of a weak brother in Christ.

A. The loving Christian does not say, "I have my rights. I don't care about my brother. If he falls of what I do that is just too bad."

1. He is not this kind of person. (1 Cor. 8:4-13).

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. 7 ¶ However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But food will not commend us to God; we

are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. 9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.

2. In this passage Paul dealt with the problem of eating meat offered to idols. He said Christians know that an idol is nothing and meat offered to it is not affected. It is good to eat. He stated, however, that all Christians do not have this knowledge. Some still thought there was something to the idol and if they saw a fellow Christian eating in an idol's temple it might cause them to stumble. He taught that they should forgo their right to eat the meat rather than cause a brother to stumble. (1 Cor. 8:13).

B. Paul laid down a very important principle for Christians to follow. They must be willing to forgo Christian liberties for the sake of the weak brother.

1. Let me illustrate with an example applicable to modern times. Let's suppose a person who believes it is wrong to eat pork is converted to Christ. What should the Christian do until the person can eat the pork in good conscience? Should he encourage the person to eat the pork? Should he go ahead and eat pork even if it might cause his weak brother to stumble? Certainly not! The Christian should be willing to give up this liberty for the sake of the weak brother.

2. I would like to add a word of caution here. Even though Christians are to have consideration for the weak brother, they are not to let the weak brother deprive them of their freedom in Christ.

a. Once I read of a congregation that would not use individual cups in partaking of the Lord's supper. One hundred and fifty people drank out of two glasses. The reason for this was that one brother objected to individual cups. He did not think they were wrong, but he did not like them. He told the congregation if they used them they would offend him.

b. The scriptures do not teach we should yield our freedom in Christ to brethren like this. In such case we have the full right to exercise our freedom.

IV. Do Not Speak Evil - Love keeps Christians from speaking evil of one another.

A. Love produces kindness of speech and causes us to speak good of our brothers.

B. It would be well if Christians would remember the words of this poem.

If you are tempted to reveal
A tale some one to you has told
About another, make it pass
Before you speak, three gates of gold—
Three narrow gates: first, 'Is it true?'
Then, 'Is it needful?' In your mind
Give truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest: 'Is it kind?'

And if, to reach your lips at last,
It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be.

V. **Help One Another** - Love prompts Christians to help one another.

A. It leads Christians to restore the fallen brother and help him bear his burdens. (Gal. 6:1, 2).

B. Love leads Christians to help a brother in need. (Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17, 18).

1. The New Testament contains several outstanding examples of brethren helping one another in time of need.

a. One of the most impressive examples in the New Testament is found in Acts the 2nd chapter. In the city of Jerusalem there were many Christian who were in dire need. Those Christians who had possessions sold them and shared what they had with others. It took a tremendous amount of love for them to make this sacrifice.

b. In 2 Corinthians 8 we read that the churches of Macedonia also helped those in Jerusalem who were in need. The Bible says that they gave of their means and beyond their means to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

2. These sacrifices made by the early Christians remind me of a lecture I heard some time ago given by one of the preachers of the brotherhood. He told a true story of one of his childhood experiences. He said his family was very poor and that on one occasion his mother gathered all of the food they had in the house and gave it to a family that was poorer than they were. That evening he said she had the family gather around an empty table and thank God they were able to help someone less fortunate than they were. Love led her to help the needy family. Love will prompt us to do the same.

Conclusion.

I. In closing I would like to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

II. If this description of a Christian does not fit you, determine today to change your life. Resolve that you are going to fill your life with love. If you are not a Christian, we invite you to put on Christ in baptism. Come as we stand and sing.

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