

LOVING OTHERS AS CHRIST LOVED US

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

The world had never experienced the love of Jesus before. Such a love could never exist until the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This was a new manifestation of God which demonstrated a new love that left all those who received it speechless. This is why the Lord Jesus gives us a new commandment – love one another as he loved us. Christians must give account to Jesus on the Day of Judgment about this new commandment; hence, we will do well to explore it in light of the life of the Lord as recorded by the apostles.

Matthew 5:44 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

Of all the statements Jesus uttered about love, this is perhaps the most shocking. **How can one love his enemy** in the same way one loves a mother or child? The answer lies in the fact that God does not see the world as we see and experience it. In the eyes of Jesus, every human is his child. We can only fulfil this commandment if we are willing to stop perceiving other humans through human filters. Jesus came to die for the whole world, not just those who loved him. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). There was a young man called Saul of Tarsus who greeted the news of Jesus’ death with great joy; he could not stop hating the Lord and his apostles. Although he declared himself the enemy of the church, Jesus loved him dearly. Many years later, as Saul became Paul, the greatest missionary of the church, he reflected on this inexplicable love of Jesus.

Ephesians 3:19 *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Saints of God, do we love people as Jesus loves them? Have we categorized some individuals as “people to avoid” or “enemies”? God forbid, there may even be people of God whom we may dislike and justify the emotion. Let us return to the new commandment of the Lord Jesus – “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”. When the Lord looked down at the crowd below the Cross, all he could see through his blood-stained and battered face and eyes was faces filled with hatred; faces that waited with glee to

see him breathe his last. These same people demanded that he be crucified. Yet the good Lord said, “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

***Matthew 10:2** Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;*

***Matthew 10:3** Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;*

***Matthew 10:4** Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

The amazing love of Jesus is once again demonstrated in his selection of the 12 apostles. Obviously, we must expect God to select the best and most capable people with the right backgrounds to take his message of salvation to the ends of the earth, we would imagine. On the contrary, it is as if the Lord purposely selected the least worthy and capable individuals for this most important work. Fishermen have no training in oral speech before audiences – silence in the Sea of Galilee while fishing was more to their taste. Matthew was a tax collector – a hated publican among the Jews, and Judas betrayed him. **The Lord Jesus loves us despite our backgrounds. His great love does not discriminate;** everyone, no matter what their mistakes they made in the past, is a potential apostle. Hallelujah!

***1Timothy 1:15** This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

***1Cor 6:9** Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*

***1Cor 6:10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

***1Cor 6:11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

The love of Jesus delivers us from shameful backgrounds. He does not judge us according to the circumstances of our past lives; he does not choose us according to human standards, but his great love. May this aspect of Jesus’ great love challenge us today! Do we look at others and decide whether we will love them or not depending on their backgrounds? God have mercy! Let us be like Jesus! The true love of Jesus will not allow us to look at our brothers or sisters backgrounds. Jesus did not see the shameful career of Matthew the tax collector – he saw the glorious future of Matthew the apostle. This is another vital reason to love one another. We cannot afford to distort and destroy the glorious future the Lord Jesus may have for someone we may fail to love today. Let us proceed further and explore God’s love in regard to forgiveness.

Mat 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Mat 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Peter believed that the number seven meant completion and closure, that God's patience and forgiveness was limited to seven. **The good news is that Jesus' love has no limit on forgiveness** – 490 times is a symbolic number. God's love is limitless and so is his forgiveness. In fact, Peter should have been very grateful for this; he himself needed the forgiveness of Jesus on several occasions. Notice the Lord said that we are to forgive everyone from our hearts (Matthew 18:35). I once heard a minister tell the story of a saint in the church who suffered from a serious illness and was bedridden for several years. One day, as the minister visited her for prayers, she shared that she had always been bitter against her sister. The minister prayed with her as she cried and, suddenly, she was completely healed. The love of Jesus sets completely free; do not bind yourself with a spirit of bitterness. We cannot be like Pharaoh and refuse to forgive and let the people of Jesus go. The Lord Jesus commands us, "let my people go!"

Luke 19:5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

Luke 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

The healing of Zacchaeus began when Jesus abode in his house. If Jesus abides in our houses, if we are truly the dwelling places of his Holy Spirit, we will be unable to cheat, steal and deceive people. Jesus did not rebuke Zacchaeus; he only came to his house. What is a fully-grown man doing in a tree? The need for forgiveness and love was so great that Zacchaeus was willing to do anything to see Jesus. When we make fools of ourselves for Jesus, the Lord will notice and call your name. Everyone else was shocked that Jesus came to the house of a mafia boss, but the love of Jesus is unconditional. Indeed, Jesus is most attracted to his children who are the most troubled – just as parents pay more attention to the child who needs most care and guidance. Let the love of Jesus motivate us to visit those whom no one visits because they are hated by society. We love them because Jesus loves them.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

John 3:17 *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Finally, the love of God is so overwhelming that he gave his life for our salvation.

If we love Jesus, we will also sacrifice for souls to receive salvation – even to the point of death if necessary. See how much the apostles loved their dear Jesus! All, except John, sealed their testimonies with their lives. It is the love of Jesus that reminds, prods, pushes and compels us to go further and sacrifice more so people can receive salvation. Ask any missionary why they leave family, jobs and countries for strange lands. The answer is the love of Jesus. “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (I Cor 9:16). What is this necessity, Paul? It is the burden of the love that Jesus showed him – a love that he did not deserve at all. Do we deserve the love of Jesus that gave us salvation? Absolutely not! Then let us demonstrate our love for Jesus by telling others about his great salvation.

John 21:15 *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

John 21:16 *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

John 21:17 *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*