

LOVING LIKE JESUS

Luke 10:27 *And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.*

Luke 10:28 *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

Luke 10:29 *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

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.*

John 15:12 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

There are two categories of people Jesus commanded us to love unconditionally after God: our neighbors and the people of God. Sometimes the commandments that appear to be the easiest to understand turn out to be the hardest to implement. Let us go back to the basics of God: “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (I John 4:16). The question is: have we known and believed the love that God hath to us? In other words, we cannot love others if we have not experienced the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. What was the overpowering force that drew the apostles to leave everything and follow Jesus? What is the power that still attracts millions worldwide to follow Jesus? The answer is his love.

There was something totally new and revolutionary about Jesus’ commandment. He himself called it “a new commandment”. Never in the history of the entire Bible did God demand that his people observe such a commandment. The Old Testament had no blood for salvation. The blood of animals was not poured out of love for us, but against their will and in much agony. The Old Testament hence was not one where love was demanded because love was not given, even by God. “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Exodus 23:21). However, with the advent of the New Testament, God himself put on flesh willingly and with his being pulsating with love beyond human comprehension. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12).

The first and main reason for this new commandment is that God has now come in flesh and blood with salvation for all – hence we must love everyone with this knowledge. In other words, unless we love all of humanity with this understanding, we will be unable to

bring salvation to them. When we look at our fellow-humans, we must not allow labels to affect our love for them. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the thieves did not bother with the fact that the victim was a Jew – the Devil does not care for national boundaries. The Devil’s job is to steal, kill and destroy. “And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:32). What Jesus was teaching us through this story is that we too, like the Samaritan, must not consider a person’s ethnicity, language, and other identity markers, but love everyone in order to bring salvation to them, as the Lord did.

What is the nature of Jesus’ love? Let us study it through the lens of the apostle Paul’s description. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (I Cor 13:14). The Lord Jesus was and is still patient with us all. He is always consistently kind, never envied anyone and was the personification of humility itself. God has a right to boast. After all, just look around at what he had created. And, yet “he made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7). This is incredible! Paul goes on to describe the love of God further. “Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (I Cor 13:5). Love is consistent; it is stable and can always be relied upon. Children who grew up with alcoholic parents have often stated that the worst thing was to see how alcohol changed the love of their parents. Love towards their parents would turn into fear. The Lord Jesus Christ is the everlasting Father. His fatherhood and love are everlasting and never change. In the story of the prodigal son, the father always had a fatted calf prepared because he believed that his son would return one day. The father’s love never changed.

Luke 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.

We may have given up on some backsliders, but the Lord’s love never changes; his love prepares a fatted calf. “...seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (I Cor 13:5). If there ever was one person whose entire life – body, mind, spirit and soul was made for others, that person was the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing if our parents shower us with love as a reminder of our value but what can we say when we realize how much God loves us in Christ Jesus! I have heard of evil people who broke down and changed because of the constant unfailing love and sacrifice shown by their parents. How much more will the knowledge and experience of the love of God change our lives! See what the love of the Lord did to Mary Magdalene, Zacchaeus and Saul of Tarsus, for instance.

Mark 16:9 *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

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.*

1Tim 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.*

What the testimony of Mary, Zacchaeus and Paul tells us is that we are saved and serve Jesus because the Lord forgave us and extended unconditional love towards us. Let us never forget this lesson which the son who was faithful to his father appears to have forgotten. “And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends” (Luke 15:29). Is it possible that because we have lived in the Father’s house so long we have forgotten how we were loved and saved in the beginning despite our sins? The love of Jesus should humble us once again to remember how we were loved and saved in the beginning. More importantly it should motivate us to reach out to new unsaved souls. This is what Paul meant when he said that love “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (I Cor 13:6). The elder brother should have rejoiced in the fact that his younger brother no longer chose to live in sin. Finally, in the great chapter about love, which few could understand better than the Apostle Paul, who received incomprehensible love and forgiveness through the Lord Jesus who appeared to him on the Road to Damascus, he writes:

1Cor 13:8 *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

In the beginning, there was only love because God is love. In the end, too, there will only be love. The hatred which leads to wars and killing, the bitterness and envy that has created a cold world which reduced life quality for many and even the failure to acknowledge each other’s humanity and need for love will be a thing of the past. The new Constitution of the world will be love because Jesus will rule over all. The world will know only to love and bless.

Isaiah 2:4 *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Isaiah 11:9 *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*