

Have We Love One for Another?

What must we as Christians have above all else, if we wish to serve the Lord effectively, please Him, and further His kingdom here on earth? Certainly, we must have faith, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11.1) in order to serve a God whom we cannot physically see. We need hope, especially in a world that has turned its back on its Creator, and where things seem to be growing ever darker and more desperate. If, however, we truly wish to serve the Lord and to be witnesses of His Gospel of Light and Truth, we must abound in Love: love for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ; love for the lost in need of Salvation; and especially love for Him who has cleansed us with His own precious blood.

While faith and hope are vital to a Christian in this life, it is love that will endure into eternity, after faith and hope have vanished away, having found their fulfillment in the presence of the Lord. God’s Word makes it clear how important it is for us to have His love while we are living in this present world. In fact, love is to be the foundation for all of our relationships: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another:” (Rom. 13:8a)

During his ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ emphasized the supreme importance of love to anyone who wishes to serve God aright. Jesus’ answer to the lawyer in Matt 22:34-40, indicates that love is the key to obeying all of God’s commandments. In response to the lawyer’s question “which is the greatest commandment of all?”, Jesus answered that the two greatest commandments are to love the Lord with all one’s heart, soul and mind, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself. These are the two commandments on which “hang all the law and the prophets.”

Christ made it clear to us that this love ought to extend to everyone we encounter. When another lawyer asked him “who is my neighbour,” Jesus responded with the very telling parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). Our neighbour, as Jesus defined the term, is anyone in whom we see any sort of need, whether or not we like that person, share the same beliefs or opinions, or are of the same nationality. Since all are in deep need of the saving grace of our Lord, it naturally follows that we are to love everyone, however daunting a challenge that may seem at times. Christ made sure to stress that we must even love and pray for our enemies: those who hate us or seek to destroy us (Matt. 5:43-45).

In the beautiful words of the well-known “love chapter,” (1 Cor.13), we read that if we lack love, nothing we do, none of our talents or strengths, and none of our works will benefit us at all. No act of charity, no evangelistic effort, no self-sacrifice however great, even if undertaken in the Lord’s name, is worth anything unless it has, as its starting point and foundation, a deep-rooted and enduring love for the Lord God and others. Love must always be our motivator if we wish to please the Lord, and to further his kingdom.

The apostle John records that the Lord Jesus gave a very important and special commandment for all of us who wish to follow him. The commandment was so important, that it was repeated thrice: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34); and again “This is my commandment, that ye love one another.” (John 15:12); and a third time: “These things I command you, that ye love one another.” (John 15:17)

How would the Lord have us love one another? Jesus himself showed us the ultimate example of love in suffering for us, physically, mentally and spiritually, and in dying in our place on the cross of Golgotha. He did this not out of obligation, not because He had to, but because He loves each one of us, and does not want to see any of us perish eternally in the unquenchable fires of hell. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

Thus, we see that if we truly love one another, we must be ready to sacrifice for one another, to give our time, talent, wealth and strength to help one another. If need be, we must be willing to suffer physically for one another. Christ gave up everything for us. What are we willing to give up for our brother or sister in Him? True love is not passive, but requires a determined effort.

If we love one another, we will also be tolerant of our fellow believers if they disagree with us in matters of faith. Rather than condemning one another outright, we will strive to see each other's point of view, and we will make every effort to come to an agreement based on a reasonable understanding of God's Word.

Love also requires that, if we see a brother or sister behaving in a way that endangers their walk of faith, we point this out to the individual in a humble and loving way. If we do this, we must keep in mind that our objective is not to exalt ourselves, but to help our fellow believer stay on the path of salvation. If we have love one for another, we will receive any such admonition humbly and without offense, since we will be secure in the knowledge that our brother or sister has a genuine concern for our spiritual welfare.

Why did the Lord Jesus so strongly emphasize the importance of love between his followers? In John 13:35, we can read one very important reason, especially if we wish to witness to the lost in the world around us: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

We can preach the Gospel to everyone we meet, but if they do not see evidence in our fellowship that we practice the Gospel of love that we preach, we cannot hope to lead any to salvation in Christ. When they see evidence of this love, when we give of our time to help a brother in need, when we visit an elderly sister no longer able to attend services, when we pray together on our knees around the bed of a terminally ill young believer, then we will show that Christ's love lives in us. Then those who do not yet have the saving knowledge of Christ will see the profound beauty of this love, and they will desire to have it in their hearts as well.

May Christ help us to overflow with this love, the "greatest blessing given" by the Holy Spirit.

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