

Love One Another

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[John 13: 34-35] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Lord Jesus gave a new commandment to His disciples ‘to love one another.’ This new commandment is in addition to the Ten Commandments, which God gave to the people of Israel through Moses. However, this new commandment is closely related to the Ten Commandments because the agape love of the new commandment can be lived out based on fulfilling the Old Testament commandments. When a person who loves and fears the Holy God above and beyond anything in the world, loves his brethren by following the example of Jesus Christ, he will naturally live out the Ten Commandments of honoring his parents and respecting and considering his neighbors.

Agape love is not human love, fleshly love, not based on self-interests, nor love for charitable purposes. Britannica Encyclopedia defines it as “the love that God has for humanity and is the highest form of love in contrast to eros, which is fleshly love, and to philia, which is brotherly love.” Some people have doubts as to how a human can have this agape love in his/her life when we humans are so limited, whereas the Almighty God, who is all-knowing and all-powerful, can easily afford to manifest such love toward His creatures. As the answer to such a question, God sent His only Son to this world in the form of a human so that He could show God’s agape love to the humans. Note what Jesus said when He gave this commandment.

[v. 34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

He said, “love one another as I have loved you.” The disciples recorded how their Teacher loved them to the end.

[John 13:1] Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

He loved them to the end although He knew that Peter would deny Him in public three times, despite their lack of spiritual understanding and faith, despite their human tendency of wanting to be above the others, despite them being weary and falling asleep when He was in great anguish for the coming hours of trial and death, despite their fear of the politically powerful, etc. He did not reject them despite all such deficiencies and weaknesses. Instead, He continued to teach them, encourage them, and showed heavenly examples before them—examples they would remember and record later in the books of the gospel. He put on a towel and washed their feet. He did not place Himself forward but always pointed to His Heavenly Father. The God-man, having shown such examples, was now telling them to love one another as He loved them.

God suffered the greatest loss when He showed agape love to humanity.

[John 3:16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God’s agape love is the love of good intentions. For the good purpose of not wanting to see any human spending eternity in hell, God sent His only Son to this world as a human and suffered to see Him die on Calvary’s cross so that He could take the place of sinners like you and me. That was the great cost God paid to have salvation available to all repenting sinners. It was not a calculated love but a sacrificial love without bounds. Therefore, if we are to show agape love to our brethren, we must have a similar mindset that is not based on self-interests. If my brother can benefit from my loss, if my sister can be saved through my sacrifice, if my friend can come to the place of meeting God and understanding His heart through my labor, all such prices I will gladly pay. It is such an attitude that is in the depth of every Christian’s agape love.

The apostle Paul expressed this agape love well in 1 Corinthians 13. In addition, he wrote about how the agape love can be lived out as follows:

[Romans 15:1-3] We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

When we intend to help the weak, naturally or spiritually, we are *"not to please ourselves, but please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification."* Oftentimes we find within us the hidden assumption that 'my interests must be guaranteed before I can help others.' That is, we can only help others using any spare time and resources after securing our own needs and requirements. But we must remember, as Paul points out, that *"Christ did not please Himself."* He was always ready to meet the needs of those who sought His help. To live out agape love in our lives, we must also have the mind of Christ who always had the interests of others first before meeting His own needs. That makes the living of agape love difficult for most people. But to those who aspire to have the image of Christ in the fullest measure in their lives, this is a worthy challenge and is a command from our Lord.

Christians must not fight one another, regardless of denomination. In the past, such as during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the Protestants and the Catholics killed and harmed each other a great deal. They were literal enemies. Such acts of hatred were contrary to the Lord's teaching to love one another. Over the centuries many Christians betrayed this teaching many times and their bad conduct became objects of criticism by peoples of other faiths. When such believers stand before the judgment seat of the Lord when He returns, they will be reprimanded and cast out to the 'outer darkness of the kingdom.' Hating and harming brethren for reasons of doctrinal differences is not exemplary to the unbelieving world. Therefore, Christians must not enter contentions over doctrinal differences and consider others, especially those of weak and poor churches. Rather, we should demonstrate the magnanimity of heart toward such brethren. When the Christians of the world start living out the agape love of Christ toward one another from here on, Lord Jesus will be very pleased when He returns. All Christians must love one another. Amen.

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