

## A New Commandment

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35). Some have wondered, since "love" has become a relative term in our culture, why Jesus would choose such a characteristic as the one thing about which He said, "By this will all know that you are my disciples." First, Jesus used the Greek word "*agape*" which goes beyond affection to unconditional devotion (see 1 Cor. 13:1-8), as in, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)." Second, Jesus defines the love of John 13:34 "...as I have loved you." The love that is to be between Christians, which testifies of true discipleship, is to be of the same nature as that of Jesus for His disciples. He left the glory of heaven for them (Phil. 2:5-8). He was born, He lived and He died for their benefit (Mat. 1:21; 20:27-28) and for all who would obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). It is only by examining the love of Jesus for His disciples that we can understand love at all (1 Jn. 3:16). If faithful and true Christians have a testimony to give to the world, this is it: the Christ-like love that they have for one another.

Since it is understood that this evidence of discipleship is to be demonstrated so that it may be observed, let us consider a few ways that Christians may accomplish this: (1) "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom 12:10). (2) By treating one another fairly and equally (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 12:23-26). (3) By not judging one another in matters of opinion wherein there is liberty. (4) By accepting one another to the exclusion of none (Rom. 15:5-7), excepting the disorderly and divisive (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14-15) whom we must admonish and seek to restore in love (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20). (5) Being filled with goodness and knowledge, willing to admonish one another when sin threatens (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16). (6) Being considerate and attentive to the needs of one another (1 Cor. 11:33). (7) Through love serving one another rather than biting, devouring and consuming one another (Gal. 5:13-15). (8) "... with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). (9) By being kind, tenderhearted, forgiving (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) and submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21). (10) By comforting and building up one another (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11). (11) By considering "one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another..." (Heb. 10:24-25).

In summary, faithful Christians want to please God by serving one another, they want what is best for one another and willingly sacrifice of themselves to achieve that end, they want to be together at every assembly and will allow nothing of lesser importance to keep them apart, and they are satisfied with nothing less than the church as Jesus would have it to be. Loving one another as Jesus loves us presents undeniable evidence that He has disciples on earth today and will draw more attention to the Lord and His church than anything else could do. Nothing will substitute for love and without it nothing else has enduring virtue (1 Cor. 13:1-8; Rev. 2:1-5). "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 Jn. 3:18-19).

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