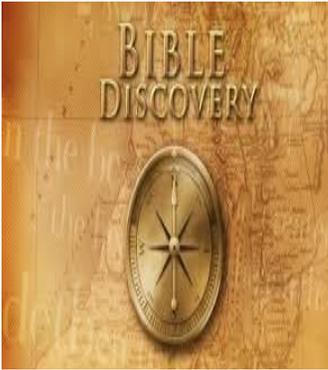


10 Apr 16  
John 13:1-17; 31b-25

## Love, the New Commandment



Let me share these fitting words from Eric Gilmour, Associate Editor for *Voice of Revolution*,

"I believe 'love and power' evangelism's the only evangelism there is. The reason's simple; we don't want the faith of individuals to rest on the cleverness or wisdom of our arguments but on the *demonstration* of God's love and power. We seek to embody these things to the world, first of all in our lives, & then in our outreaches."

Isn't that to be our goal? Isn't serving God our proper response for the great love He's poured into our hearts? Because we differ so in our ideas from that of the world – or at least if we differ, I believe our love demonstrates (to coin a phrase) "compassioned power" against anything it can throw at us. Because of Christ's love at the cross, because He willingly died for sin, He has completely destroyed the enemy's power over us. This "compassioned power" is the undeniable demonstration of God's unquenchable love. Remember proud, self-righteous Saul, confronted with Jesus on the road to Damascus, only to fall to his knees, seeking mercy? Then see Paul receiving a new life, a transformed commitment to Christ, carried through a suffering we graciously will never experience. Neither Paul nor any of us has done anything to earn that privilege of being supernaturally transformed by love, but God's care for us who profess the name of His Son Jesus extends in the midst of our rebellion and ignorance.

Beginning with John 13:1, John's Gospel declares Jesus loved His own in the world, even to the end. Clearly the saving mission of Christ was to love us, and His final commandment was for us to love one another. The Gospel demonstrates God Himself – revealed to us in His beloved Son, *Jesus*. It's evident who God is through His love and power. As Jesus gathers for Passover, being aware He will soon bear the weight of the world's sin through His physical death on the cross, He uses the moment to teach His disciples – and us. "*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another*" [vs. 34]. There's therefore no agenda we ought to have save sharing His love! Amen? God's agenda is always to love, though not in the way Hollywood depicts love. In fact His reaching down to humanity found its climax in His love giving us His Son, Jesus who came to die in our place, for our sins. That's why Paul testifies at 1 Corinthians 13 in essence, "*Without God's love we're nothing, because love never fails.*" So let's drop all other agendas, all selfish expectations, which block our responding to others through God's love *by our actions*.

Its action Jesus teaches when He focuses on acts of service. During supper, Jesus takes off His outer robe, wraps a towel around His waist taking on the nature not only of a servant but of the lowest servant in a household. Usually, the youngest, most inexperienced of servants was charged with washing the guests' feet as they entered the home having traveled dusty roads. It's not His intent to embarrass His friends for their lack of hospitality, not His intent to have them feel uneasy – though they probably experienced both emotions. No, as He poured water into a basin and began washing their feet, wiping them with His towel, *His plan was to teach* that humility above all is our acceptable response to our Father's love. But it was when Jesus finished washing their feet that the real teaching moment began. "*So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet*" [vs. 14]. Jesus is modeling how He wants His disciples, including us, to treat each another as we serve. We're called into relationship with God, and as such we're reminded we're not greater than others, we're mere servants.

If we trust in the same love of God that causes melted hearts within those He brings across our paths, then it will only be through our sacrificial acts as servants not our high-minded life style or virtuous behaviour. Even those who don't receive the gospel initially will never be able to ignore that we loved them; that we showed them

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His irresistible love through our caring support and helping hands. After all Jesus came to *save all of us* through His grace so that we would no longer be bound by sin. Therefore our task is to simply live lives spreading the good news of Jesus' salvation which is the greatest expression of God's love. How empty our testimony of God's amazing love must be if we fail to demonstrate that very love in our actions!

We're left with a couple of options. We can respond like Peter who seems to have spoken for the remaining disciples. *"You will never wash my feet."* [vs. 8] Peter's response is one of pride, of demanding Jesus must be served rather than serve, leading to an attitude we too have arrived; that we too deserve being served rather than serving but Jesus says we're wrong! Jesus says, *"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."* As we've celebrated the great compassionate act of love demonstrated at Calvary, we've the benefit of witnessing this lesson of servanthood through the revelation of the cross. If we continue to follow Peter's example, challenged by Christ, we can then ricochet, wanting to serve in ways unnecessary. For Peter it was washing Jesus' whole body. For many of us it comes by becoming a burden to those we desire to serve, even becoming a dependency, stunting their own growth in Christ.

Our second option's to be lead to selfless acts, gaining power as our service flows from foundational love for one another. In fact, Jesus says if you live this way, *"everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* [vs. 8] Real love's best defined as "selflessness," because *"greater love has no man than this, that He would lay down His life for His friends."* [John 15.13]. That's why John writes, *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear."* [1 John 4:18] Fear is based on our self-consciousness, on valuing our self-worth, on worrying about what we stand to lose. Conversely imitating God's love is selfless, being conscious of and serving others before ourselves. *Leonard Ravenhill, an English Christian evangelist best known for challenging today's believer to emulate the early Christian Church reminds us "The world out there is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity but a new demonstration."* The Apostle Paul wrote by imploring God's faithful, *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."* [1 Corinthians 2:4-5] This shows us we're not only to *believe*, we're to care enough to put our belief into action. It means we follow the example of Christ, accepting His new commandment to love unconditionally, remembering *"...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit"* [Romans 5.5] thereby also recognizing it is the Holy Spirit's work in our lives *leading us to know God makes us to be like His Son Jesus in His righteousness, and Jesus laid His life down for others.*

That brings us to seek understanding "HOW" this is accomplished in our lives. Serving others as Christ serves is more than simply acting out of just any love, follow the good deeds of the world, feeling good about ourselves, behaving through our own strength. It's acting through His *abiding love* even as Jesus loves us through the abiding love of *His Father*. Therefore Peter spurned divine love in refusing to be washed by Christ. So do we! *"Unless I wash you,"* said Jesus, *"you have no share with me"*. Divine love motivates us toward acts of love, revealing our relationship with Christ. Such love expands our hearts letting our self-consciousness burn away. God extends His hand to the world through us. Love's the goal. Love's the incentive. Love's the inspiration. Love's the gospel. *Love doesn't delight in evil. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

Such love gives us power! But it's Godly power! It is not designed to exalt us over others or to cause us to some way subdue our world for our own will. Godly power equips us to act as servants of our Lord extending His love and care to a hurting, dying, scared world that needs a loving Saviour. In Acts we see that the power



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of love “*is for the delivering of the captives*”, [Acts 10:38] The Apostle Paul wrote the gospel is the “*power of God unto salvation*”. [Romans 1:16] Paul shows he wasn’t ashamed of the gospel, because it’s the power of God. Unfortunately, today many are ashamed of the gospel because they’ve never seen its power. To see the Gospel as the power of God not only destroys shame but transforms us into ambassadors of Christ carrying His love to the world with authority and power. That’s why Isaiah tells us, “*The power of the Holy Spirit is for the preaching of the gospel.*” [Isaiah 61:1]



Prior to his own death Jesus taught how we’re to live. Jesus modeled service to and loving of one another, extending His lesson beyond the temporal world. To live in Christ is to have eternal life. Jesus would soon be glorified, yet in His final commandment He demonstrated an act of service: His message is clear, “if we want to live with Him forever, we must *love one another as He has loved us!*” Such demonstrated power forces us to make a decision, first: we open ourselves to God knowing He presents us to the world as an undeniable force. Then, as we walk with the One who healed the sick, set the prisoners free, brought forgiveness to wretched souls with evidence God has touched them; we see triumphant hearts won for Christ. Without His power we end up as phony as door to door salesmen whose products don’t work. With Him we recognize the power within us is all God - coming into lives as we reach out with a servant’s love. And what amazing love! Love’s power is the gospel demonstrated in the presence of God. That power is love intimately tied to His great command that we love one another.

It’s an easy command yet one we must obey! Where we spend eternity depends on it. Have you made your decision today? Let us hear from you.

***Blessings,***

***Pastor Dave***