

Love One Another

*"A new command I give you: Love one another.
As I have loved you, so you must love one another".
(John 13:34)*

Jesus gave us a new command to love one another. When we honestly look at how we react to some people at times we find that we fall short of this command, to say the least. Loving others is Jesus' number one command yet we can think of it as being just too hard to do or something that is done only by people we read about. In our blindness, we can put love at the end of our list of things to do and still believe that we are a good Christian. The fact is, love is not an option but a command and if we want to be obedient to the Lord then we must make every effort to love as He loved.

What is love?

The Bible never describes love as a dizzy headed, love at first sight feeling but rather as caring and doing for others and real love is usually at our own expense. Jesus is the perfect example of love. He gave up the comforts of heaven to become the greatest servant ever by denying Himself to the point of willingly dying on the cross. He set aside every personal desire as He went to the cross and put His love for God ahead of all else. Rom. 5:8-10 say that Jesus showed His love and died for us when we were His enemies. Now He wants us to follow His example by loving our enemies but, as we all know, loving those who hate us does not come naturally.

How can we love our enemies?

When Jesus said, *"as I have loved you, so you must love one another"*, He knew very well that there was no way, in our natural state, that we could love those who hate us. It's far more natural for us to curse an enemy than it is to love him but God gives us His Spirit so that we have the power to do what He commands. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 say that *"His divine power [the Holy Spirit] has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... so that you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires"*. Through the Holy Spirit, every believer has the power to escape the corruption of sin and to love those who hate and persecute him. But because we are inclined to follow our sinful nature, rather than the Spirit within us, the following often occurs -

- ⤴ We get angry and critical because others are not doing things our way.
- ⤴ We become jealous when another person is in first place.
- ⤴ We are envious when someone gets the glory that we believe should be ours.
- ⤴ We lose peace over little things and say, "I have every right to be upset because he /she ... etc".
- ⤴ We make cruel remarks that deeply scar people.
- ⤴ We judge hypocritically or without even knowing the truth.
- ⤴ We refuse to apologise when we are wrong or we won't accept someone else's apology.
- ⤴ We can strongly criticise or even condemn people when they disagree with our doctrine.
- ⤴ We get bitter saying, "I can't help getting angry over these things. It's part of my nature".
- ⤴ ... plus anything else that puts barriers between us.

The fact is, our sinful nature prompts us to do all of the above but God has given us the Holy Spirit so that we have His Divine Power to resist and be holy. Jesus has not given us a command that cannot be obeyed yet, instead of striving to be obedient, we make excuses saying things like, "Oh, I know I should try more but it's just too hard to change". We should take the command to love much more seriously as Gal. 5:19-21 make it clear that anyone caught up in lasting hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions or envy will not get to heaven. This includes brothers and sisters in our churches as 1 John 4:20, 3:15 say, *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar ... anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him"*. Most of us would know brothers or sisters caught up in hateful relationships. The best advice we can give them is in Luke 13:3 where Jesus says, *"unless you repent, you too will all perish"*.

To sum things up, God commands us to make every effort to love one another and to be at peace with all men. It goes against our nature to love those who hate us but if we repent of our hatred then God will change our heart of stone into a heart of flesh and we will come to love those we once hated. I know this to be very true as the Lord has changed my heart on more than one occasion. The first time it happened I was a bit overwhelmed as one moment I didn't like a particular Christian lady and the next I cared for her. It happened after a simple prayer asking the Lord to help me to love my sister as He said I should. After this very brief prayer I visited her and God changed my heart the moment I began speaking. It was really amazing and this event showed me the power the Lord has to change our sinful ways, if we will only repent and call upon Him for help.

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