

Loving God

How do we show God our love?

*“This is love for God: to obey his commands.
And his commands are not burdensome”.*

(1 John 5:3)

GOD'S LOVE FOR US

God's love for us is more than we can understand but Jesus showed us that love when He died on the cross for you and for me. Rom. 5:8 tells us that “... *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” and then John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*”. Many other verses talk about God's love and how He has shown this love through Jesus so that now, whenever anyone repents of their sins and puts their trust in Jesus, they are born again and become a child of God. It is an amazing thing to know that the Creator of the heavens and the earth came down from heaven to live among us and to die for us so that we could be forgiven and become His children. 1 John 3:1 says, “*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*” God's love for us is very great and now that you and I have become His children, how do we show our heavenly Father the love that He deserves?

HOW DO WE SHOW GOD THAT WE LOVE HIM?

In John 14:23 Jesus said, “*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching ...*” so we see that we show God our love when we obey His commands. 1 John 5:3 says the same thing and also tells us that obeying God is not too difficult for us to do. It says, “*This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*”. God is not asking us to do the impossible. In fact, through the Holy Spirit, God gives us the power to obey. The Spirit lives in all believers to give us the strength to follow God's commands. So now, let us look at these commands.

In Matt. 22:36-40 Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was and He said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*”. We can see that all of God's commands, that is all of His laws, can be summed up in just two commandments. They are:

- 1) **To love our God** and
- 2) **To love our neighbour.**

If we look briefly at the Ten Commandments, in Deu. 5:6-22, we see that the first four are about loving God while the other six are about loving each other. Let us briefly look at these commandments.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The first four commandments are about our relationship with God. They tell us:

- 1) Not to have any other God because there is only one God and all other gods are demons.
- 2) Not to make an idol or a statue of any person or any thing. This is so that nothing comes between us and God and it includes making idols of money, sport, work or family etc. We must also be careful not to allow material possessions to become like gods or idols to us. God must never come second in our life.
- 3) Not to misuse God's name. That is, we are not to blaspheme God's good name in any way. We blaspheme God's name when we say we are Christian but do and say things that are offensive to God.
- 4) To put aside one day of the week for the Lord. We are told in Ex. 23:12, “*Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed*” and Lev 23:3 says that “*the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly*”. If we work every day of the week then work will become our idol and we will not take the time to worship God nor to spend time with our families. Regarding the Sabbath, we are told in Rom. 14:5-6 that each Christian is free to choose what day of the week is sacred to him and I personally think that we should consider every day sacred. It is hypocrisy to be a saint one day of the week and ungodly for the rest. So, let us be saints every day.

The last six commandments are about our relationship to those around us.

These commandments tell us:

- 1) To honour our mother and father.
- 2) Not to murder.
- 3) Not to commit adultery.
- 4) Not to steal.
- 5) Not to lie and
- 6) Not to covet. To covet means to want things that belongs to someone else.

We can see that when we obey these commands we will not be sinning against God nor against our neighbour. God hates sin so as we obey these commands we are respecting His authority and showing Him our love. Anyone who truly loves God will love their neighbour also because the love of God will flow through them into the lives of others. Also, anyone who loves their neighbour is loving God at the same time because they are obeying His command to love one another. Loving God and loving our neighbour go hand in hand. We are told in Rom. 13:8-10, *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law”*. From these verses we can see that love should be our goal at all times because love is the fulfillment of the law. In 1 Pet. 1:22 God tells us to *“love one another deeply, from the heart”*.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Now I would like to look much closer at what God desires from you and I. The Ten Commandments are really just the starting point of the Christian life. The New Testament gives a much deeper understanding of what God wants from us. For example, one of the Ten Commandments says that we must not murder but, in Matt. 5, Jesus said that even if we are angry with our brother then it is just like murder and we will face judgment. Another Commandment says that we must not commit adultery but Jesus said that if we lust then we have committed adultery in our hearts. We must examine our heart at all times and not allow evil thoughts like hate, lust and jealousy etc to remain within us. 1 Sam. 16:7 tells us that *“The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart”*.

Because God is always looking at our hearts, whenever a sinful thought comes into our life, we should repent of it immediately and call on God to cleanse us and give us a pure heart just as David did in Psa. 51:10 when he said, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”*. David called on God to cleanse his heart and to give him the spiritual strength to resist evil and we must do the same thing when our thoughts are sinful. In 2 Cor. 10:5 we are told to *“take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”*. When we are tempted by evil thoughts we should quickly repent otherwise we may soon sin as James 1:14-15 tells us, *“... each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death”*. In these verses we are warned of the danger of not dealing quickly with temptations that can lead us into sin. So, don't let these thoughts remain within you but instead, reject them immediately.

When we do sin we only need to ask for forgiveness for THAT sin. We do not need to ask God to save us again because we do not lose our salvation every time we sin. Once we are saved, we are saved. We simply need to repent of any new sin that comes into our life. We all sin from time to time and God is always willing to forgive us as it says us in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* so let us all quickly repent whenever the Holy Spirit convicts us. We will risk losing our salvation if we turn our back on God and continue to wilfully sin instead of repenting.

Loving the members of our family is very important. It is normally easy to be kind to people that we don't live with but God is not pleased with us when we are kind to our neighbours but unkind to our family. Regarding children, Eph. 6:4 tells us, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*". Regarding our marriages, throughout the Bible we are told that husbands are to be the head of the household. In Eph. 5:22 wives are told, "*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord*". This does not mean that a wife should be like a slave to her husband but that she should respect his authority. Husbands are given special instruction to love their wives just as Jesus loves us. Eph. 5:25 says, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*" and 1 Pet. 3:7 says, "*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers*". From these verses we can see the importance God places on having a loving relationship with our wives and children as a poor marriage will interfere with our prayers.

God also wants us to help those who are not able to help themselves. James 1:27 tells us that "*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*" and then in James 2:15-16 we are told, "*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*" From these verses we can see that, if we are able, then we must help a brother or sister in need rather than just wish them well and leave them with nothing.

As well as giving to those in need we should also give to the church to support the leaders and missions. This should be done with a happy heart as 2 Cor. 9:7 tells us that "*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*". Also, God does not ask us to give and leave ourselves poor but to give as we are able. 2 Cor. 8:12-13 says, "*For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality*". God does not expect us to give more than we can afford but if we have plenty then we should cheerfully give plenty.

Another very important point is that we must forgive anyone who sins against us, even our enemies (see Matt. 5:43-48). God has forgiven you and I of much sin and He commands us to forgive others. Forgiveness is a very powerful force which can bring down a barrier of hatred and replace it with love. Jesus gave us a very serious warning about refusing to forgive others. In Matt. 6:14-15 He says, "*if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*". So we can see that it is very important to forgive at all times otherwise God will not forgive us, which of course means that we will end up in hell. Forgiveness is the first step to start a loving relationship with someone we have been at war with. Forgiving and loving one another is of such great importance that Jesus gave a new command. In John 13:34-35, He said, "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*". Let us make every effort to be at peace with everyone and when non-Christians see us loving all people, and not hating like the world hates, it will be a good witness to our faith and will draw people to Jesus.

WITNESSING FOR JESUS

The last point I would like to mention is that we should all spread the Gospel and be a witness to what Jesus did for us. In Mark 16:15-16 Jesus told the disciples, "*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned*". Every person you know, in fact every person on earth, is either going to heaven or will be condemned in hell so we need to spread the Good News about Jesus whenever we have the chance.

There are many different ways we can tell people about Jesus. We can:

- 1) Tell them about your hope of heaven.
- 2) Tell them how God has changed your life and delivered you from your sinful nature.

- 3) Hand out Gospel tracts to those we meet.
- 4) Put Gospel tracts in letterboxes.
- 5) Invite them to church.
- 6) Give them a Bible or a Christian CD or DVD.
- 7) Preach in the street.
- 8) Write or phone etc etc.

We should prayerfully ask God to lead us to people to speak to and also for the words to say and, as it says in 1 Pet. 3:15, “*do this with gentleness and respect*”.

If you know a brother or a sister in Christ who is not walking with the Lord then you need to talk to them gently and try to bring them back to repentance. Gal. 6:1 says, “*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently ...*”. It is most important to try to bring them back to repentance because their salvation depends on having a holy walk. This may be a difficult thing to do as the person may feel that it is none of our business or they may be very embarrassed and not want to listen so this is why we must do it in a gentle manner. James 5:19-20 tells us, “*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins*”. These verses show us how important it is to talk to a sinning brother or sister. We must do our best to turn them back to the Lord so that they will be saved from God's wrath.

There is nothing more important than salvation. Let us take every opportunity to witness to those around us. Do not keep putting it off because we don't know how long anyone is going to live. As you meet people, ask yourself, “Is this person going to heaven or hell?” You can be sure that they are going to one or the other. It is not possible to witness to every person we meet but, whenever God gives us the chance, let us spread the Good News of Jesus.

FINALLY

God tells us in 1 Sam 2:30, “*... Those who honour me I will honour ...*”. The way to honour God is to commit your ways to Him and to have faith in Him just as a child has perfect faith in his father. We are told in Heb. 11.6 that “*without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him*”. We all know that God never lies so we can be sure that as we honour Him, by believing what is written and walking in faith, He will reward us in such a way that we will know for sure that He is honouring our faith in Him.

Gal. 5:6 tells us that “*the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*” so instead of keeping a record of wrongs let us forgive each other and follow 1 Pet. 4:8 which says, “*love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*”. 1 Cor. 13:4-8 says,

*“Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast,
it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Love never fails”.

May the Lord bless you as you walk with Him.

Mick Alexander
Email: leeandmick@gmail.com
www.ChristianIssues.biz