

# 31 - Loving Your Neighbour as Yourself

by Ben Torrey

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*Jesus requires us to love one another as He has loved us, a supernatural love that requires us to love even those who are unlovable, and this love is the key to unity and the concrete expression of our love for Christ.*

**Duration:** 9:18

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-32, John 13:34-35, Romans 5:8

**Topics:** "Loving Neighbour"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love and unity among believers. He highlights how our actions and attitudes towards one another can either draw people to Christ or push them away. The preacher reminds us of the sacrificial love of Jesus, who left his glory in heaven to die for us, even when we were sinners. He then explains that Jesus gave a new commandment to love one another, which is a fundamental expectation of God in our relationships with others. This love should be a reflection of the supernatural love that Jesus requires of us and will cause the world to take notice.

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## Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey with you once again. Today, I'm starting a series of programs about fundamental things that God expects of us in our relationships with others. In John chapter 13 verses 34 and 35, we read a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. Jesus calls on us to love one another in several passages. Specifically, we read in Matthew 22, 37 to 39, and in Mark 12, 29 to 32, Christ summarizing the law in the following words.

And he said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

In that last statement, he was quoting Leviticus 19, 18, which decrees that we love our neighbor as ourselves. So why did Jesus say he was giving a new commandment when he told them to love one another? Nothing new about that. Ah, but there is in the qualifier that he used.

What we read in John are these words, love one another even as I have loved you. And he repeats, love one another. It's that as I have loved you clause that is the key and the stumbling block.

Conceivably, we could in our own strength love another as much as we love ourselves. In fact, we have many examples of men and women whose love for each other is so deep that there seems to be no separation between them. It is a beautiful thing to witness in a marriage as well as between close friends.

The feelings of love and friendship grow stronger and stronger until it is clear that each one is thinking more of the other than of himself. This is human love at its finest. But it is not new commandment love.

When Jesus said, a new commandment I give you, he went on to say, love one another as I have loved you. Let's think for a minute what this might mean. On the one hand, we have Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word of Creation, sitting in heaven with the Father in all glory and majesty.

On the other hand, we have a world of ungrateful, spoiled wretches who give glory to their own flesh or follow false gods out of lust and fear. Not only that, these worthless ingrates are creatures of flesh, subject to all the sufferings of a world filled with hatred and jealousy. And what did this great Son of God do? Of course, we all know.

As Paul writes in Romans 5.8, God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He came down into this sorry, pitiful, painful, sin-wracked world, leaving his glory behind to become just like us and to die for you and for me, even when we did not know nor love him. This is a glimpse of what he means when he says, As I have loved you.

It is the love that has no face to save, no dignity to preserve. It is the love that gives everything for Judas the traitor, just as for the beloved disciple John. It is the love that uttered words of forgiveness from the cross.

What does this mean for us then? What is Jesus requiring of us? Simply this, that we love the dirtiest, lowest beggar on the street, that we love the creep who beats up his girlfriend and love the poor, abused girl as well, that we love the tyrant, the murderer, the adulterer, the prostitute and her pimp, that we love to the end the business partner, that we love to the end the business partner who cheated us, the man who seduced our wife or stole our girlfriend, the elder in church who despised us and spoke down to us, the teacher who unfairly gave us a failing grade, that we love Kim Jong-il, that we love them all with Christ's love, the love that takes us into the gutter with them, into their fear and misery, into their well-deserved imprisonment, wherever they are, and that we be willing to serve them, to cleanse their wounds, accept their disease, cover their sin with our love, accept punishment on their behalf. He did for us. Are we willing? Who of us would be willing to stand before an international tribunal if Kim Jong-il is ever put on trial and say, Execute me, but let him go free.

Honestly, I would find that a bit hard to do. In fact, I know that I failed to meet this test. I do not love with New Commandment love.

I can't. And the truth is, you can't either. It is beyond us, as far beyond us as the Holy and Divine Son of God is beyond us.

Then why would He command it of us? Because He makes it possible. Since He did it for you and me, dying on the cross in our stead, then rose from the dead, instead of destroying the hold of sin and death over us, we can now take on that supernatural love and make it our own as we make Him our Lord. By

submitting ourselves totally to Him and receiving the Holy Spirit that He promised to give us, if we ask, by this we then become capable of New Commandment love.

But there is one very important caveat here. We must be willing, no, more than willing, we must want to love as He loved, even knowing that we cannot. If we are willing, He will make us able.

However, on the way to the point of receiving this love, we also need to confess our failure to love, our unwillingness. We confess it to the one whom we have offended, asking their forgiveness, and we confess it to the one who loves them so deeply and desires that we love His loved ones just as much. We have despised those who are so precious to Him.

We need His forgiveness. Then we can begin to hope to love as He loves. As Jesus said this to His disciples, He added one more clause, by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

This New Commandment love is a fundamental requirement for the world to know about Jesus. It is the love that makes us one, that gives us the unity that Jesus longs that we have. A few chapters over in John, we see Him praying for this.

In John 17, 20-21, we read, I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in Me and I in you, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. He wants us who came after the apostles and all who come after us, who come to believe in Christ through our words, to be one. By this the world will know.

Our unity with each other is the concrete expression of this supernatural love that Jesus requires of us. It is also that which will cause the world to sit up and take notice. We love the great love stories and reports of selfless sacrifice, but how often do we hear of true stories of this kind of love? Not very often.

It is this that will grab the world's attention and draw them to Christ. On the other hand, what will the world think? What will the people of North Korea think when all they see is our jealousy of one another, our talking behind the back, our gossip and our fights? What do they see when the church is a great competition for numbers, money, honor and praise? They do not see Christ, that is for sure. They see a weak, twisted and torn body in deep need of restoration.

The restoration begins with you and me as we get serious about New Commandment love for one another. As I leave you tonight, I encourage you to pray for the grace to love as Christ loved. Good night.

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