

Love One Another

by Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson's sermon emphasizes the imperative of loving one another as Christ loves us, highlighting its truth, extent, and practical applications in the Christian life.

Scripture: 1 John 3:18

Topics: "Christian Love", "Brotherly Kindness"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches on the importance of Christian love, emphasizing the commandment to love one another as Christ loved us. He highlights the need for genuine, sincere, and heartfelt love among Christians, pointing out that love is essential not only at feasts but also in everyday interactions. Watson explains that Christians should love all people, especially fellow believers, and even extend love to their enemies, following the example of Christ who prayed for and showed compassion to those who persecuted Him.

Transcript

Love One Another

Thomas Watson's Forenoon Farewell Sermon, Preached August 17, 1662.

"A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you." John 13:34

You are this day called to a love-feast; and nothing can be more suitable than to speak on, than Christian love. Jesus Christ has given us a great evidence of his love to us, he bled love at every vein; therefore we are to imitate him, and as befits Christians, to love one another. It is a general complaint, how true I know not, "That Christian love is the grace which is greatly defective among Christians. Although they pretend much love to Christ, yet they have little love one to another."

I have, in former sermons, discoursed concerning faith; and now I shall speak something of love. Love is needful at a feast, it is requisite when we sit down at our own table. I remember it is said of Augustine, "He would not allow any to eat at his table, who came in a spirit of rancor, and sat down in passion." I am sure that they are not fit to be guests at Christ's table, who do not come in a spirit of meekness and love. It is true, we are to eat the Passover with bitter herbs, but they must be the bitter herbs of repentance -- not the bitter herbs of malice, wrath, and fury. We must come here with bitter tears, not with bitter hearts: hear what the text says, "A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you."

Wherein, first, you have the command: "A new command I give unto you." It is not left to our discretion, but we are bound to it by virtue of a command, "A new command I give unto you."

Secondly. This command is enforced by Christ's own example, "as I have loved you." It is called a new command, but love is an old command -- this law is written in the nature of man. It is engraved in every man's heart by nature. And it is an old command, because it is found among God's ancient statutes, the ancient records of his law. Yes, but it is a new command too, because illustrated by a new example of Christ, "As I have loved you -- so do you love one another."

DOCTRINE. Christians ought to make conscience of this duty of loving one another. I am confident that we shall never see religion thrive in the world, until we see this grace of love flourish in the heart of Christians.

For the illustration of this proposition, I shall do these two things.

First, show you the truth of this love.

Secondly, the extent of this love.

First, The TRUTH of this love. If you love one another, says Christ, see you do it purely, sincerely, and from the heart. 1 John 3:18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Pretended love is like painted fire that will never warm. We must not be like the bee, that has honey in her mouth, but also has a sting in her tail. We must not pretend to love, that is -- to have honey in the mouth, but also have the sting of malice in the heart! No, said the apostle, "Let us love in deed and in truth."

Secondly, EXTENT of our love. This fountain of love must run in three streams.

1. We must love ALL people. We must love their persons, although we must not love their sins. We have all the same make, the same lump and mold, and, therefore, must love. There is a natural love, that every creature bears to his own species and kind.

2. Our love must especially stream out to the SAINTS of God, the household of faith. It is with our love, as it is with our fire. You keep fire all the day upon the hearth, but upon special occasions you draw it out larger, so our love must always burn to all. Yes, but to the saints you must draw out the fire, enlarge your affections. We must love as God loves -- and he does especially love the saints. Love every creature with a common love, but especially the new creature; and indeed there is that in every true saint, which may excite and allure our love. What are the graces of the spirit -- but so many pearls to adorn the bride of Christ? What is holiness in the heart -- but the embroidery and curious workmanship of the Holy Spirit? Here is enough to entice and draw out our love. And, beloved, if we love the saints for their graces, then we love all the saints.

And here I beseech you consider these six particulars.

First, We ought to love the saints in whatever condition they are in, although they be poor in the world, and low in their condition -- for commonly so it is. Those who have the lowest hearts, often have the lowest condition too. I read of the king of the Moors, that he despised the Christians because of their poverty; and truly when wicked men fleece the saints -- it is no wonder if they are poor. Methinks grace in a poor man, is like a pearl that lies in the dust; or like a cloth of gold that is hid under rags; you must love the gold, that

is, the grace, notwithstanding the rags. The poorest saint alive has the angel's riches; the poorest believer is a member of Christ -- and shall we not love him? We love the picture of a friend, although it is hung in a poor frame; just so, we must love a rich Christ in a poor man.

Secondly, We are to love the people of God, although they have many weak infirmities. Show me the man that is perfect, and let him throw the first stone, even the best. Saints like the stars -- they have their twinklings -- that is, they have their blemishes and their failings. In some there is too much pride, in others too much censoriousness, in others too much rash anger and passion -- but we must love the grace that is in them, notwithstanding the infirmities that are in them. You love gold, though in the ore, and mixed with much impurity.

A Christian is like a diamond which has its flaw; or like to the rose which is sweet and perfumed -- but yet has its prickles. The best saints have some mixture and infirmity, and we must love them for the grace that is in them. This is our great fault: we are apt to overlook all the good -- and so take notice of the spots and blemishes in them; as those who see a little stain in a piece of scarlet, despise the cloth for the stain's sake; so do we. But God does not do so by us; he is pleased to overlook many sad failings; he sees the faith -- and winks at the failings of his people. You who cannot love a brother because you see an imperfection in him -- would you have God do so by you? Would you have him damn you for every blemish of sin?

Thirdly, We must love the children of God, though weak in abilities. But though the saints have not always such good mental abilities as others -- yet if they have good vitals, and the life of faith in them -- love them for that grace. You do not despise your children because they are weak -- but you love them because they are your children. Oh! do not despise a saint because he is low abilities -- but love him as he is a child of your heavenly Father's.

Fourthly, We are to love the saints of God, though in some lesser things they differ from us -- if they keep the foundations of religion, and hold the head, Christ; yet we are to bear other things. One Christian has more light than another, and shall we unsaint all who cannot come up to our light? It is great wisdom to separate between the precious and the vile. O what a blessed place will heaven be, because there our light shall be clear, and our love shall be perfect.

Fifthly, Love the saints of God when they are reviled and persecuted. A bleeding saint should be the object of our love. Onesiphorus, says Paul, was not ashamed of my chains -- this is a sign that he loved Christ's graces in Paul. Christ Jesus loves no saints more than his persecuted saints. His martyrs have the highest thrones reserved in heaven for them. We must love to see Christ's livery upon a man, though sprinkled with blood. He who is ashamed of a persecuted saint, will never suffer for a crucified Jesus.

Sixthly, We must love the saints of God, though their graces may eclipse and outshine our graces. Beloved, in the sweetest fruits, worms are apt to breed; just so -- in the best heart, the worm of pride is apt to be breeding. If God does not keep us, we shall not only envy another's graces, if they outshine us -- but their persons too. What though another's graces outshine yours? Yet love him, because the eminency of his graces brings much honor to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And thus, my beloved, I have shown you how you must love all the saints. 1 Peter 2:17, "Love the brotherhood, love the whole fraternity of believers." Oh! that this sweet spice of love might send forth its perfume among Christians, that we could turn all our heart-burnings into heart-breakings, and quench the fire of divisions and contentions, and keep the fire of love burning upon the altar of our hearts. And, my

beloved, as we must love all the saints -- so we must show this love by the fruit of it; for God does not value that love that is invisible. The fruits of our love to the saints must be these four.

Four FRUITS of Love to the Saints:

1. We must show love to them -- by prizing their persons above others. Psalm 15:4 is spoken of a godly man, "who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord." The wicked are so much rubbish -- but the saints are called the jewels, (Malachi 3:1) and we must prize these jewels above all the rubbish in the world; as they said of King David, "your life is worth ten thousand of ours." 2 Sam. 18:3. So is a godly man above a wicked man. God will give kingdoms to ransom his saints, Isaiah 43:3, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for you;" and thus should we set the highest rate upon the saints of God, for that is to love them.

2. We must show love to all the saints of God, by vindicating them, when they are traduced and slandered. It is a great sin to slander a Christian, it is to go to pollute Christ's image. The throats of the wicked are open sepulchers, to bury the names of the righteous in. Now you who are Christians, must not be ready to receive a false and groundless report of a saint -- but rather vindicate them, for that is to love them.

3. We show our love to the saints by praying for them. You know not what good your prayers may do them. Ministers must pray for their people, and the people must pray for their ministers; for prayer commands God himself, Isaiah 45:11. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks the heavenly treasure of God's heart! "Oh pray one for another." We should not strive one with another, as is too frequent -- but pray one for another.

4. Show your love by being ready according to your abilities to relieve their needs; to love one another is to do all the friendly offices we can one for another. There are, my beloved, many of the dear servants of God in the ministry who have been already reduced to misery and poverty, and many more are like to be reduced to great poverty. Now I beseech you to show your love to the household of faith, for that is a sign of your true love to God, and to the brotherhood. As myrrh drops freely from the tree -- so works of mercy drop freely from the heart. If Jesus Christ should stand in the midst of the congregation, and say, "show your love to me -- by your good works to my people." I believe no heart here would be so hard as to deny Jesus Christ. Why, remember whatever you give ministers, and to his members -- he takes it as given to himself.

That is the second section, "Our love must extend to all the saints."

3. Our love must reach to our ENEMIES, we must love those who do not love us, Luke 6:1. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." I confess that I would be reluctant to make a mortal enemy -- into my bosom friend. But though wisdom teaches us not to trust our enemies -- yet piety teaches us to love them. Christ prayed for his enemies, and shed tears of compassion -- for those who afterwards shed his blood.

So much for the doctrinal part. Now for a word of APPLICATION, and I am done.

USES. Firstly, this may serve to reprove those who seem in other things to be excellent, and profess much love toward Christ and his gospel -- but have no love to the saints of God. But let me say this to them, surely such kinds of Christians are a shame to their profession! What, does not the gospel teach you charity and love -- as well as faith? Surely that Christian has no grace in his heart, who lives in malice

towards his brother. For as the philosopher says, "All the virtues are linked together, and tied as with a string; and where there is one -- there is all; and where one is lacking, there is no virtue." Just so, I say of the graces, they are linked together, and where there is one, there is all; and where one is lacking, there are none at all.

Says Augustine, "You brag of your faith in Christ -- but show me your faith by your love to Christ; for faith and love cannot be separated." For as in the sun, there is light and heat, and these cannot be separated one from the other -- so faith and love are twisted together, and where there is one lacking, the other is lacking. Faith and love are so inseparable, that if you go to take away the one, you spoil the other. Oh! remember and mourn for it, you who do not walk in love. It is a sad sign that you are not in a state of grace. Titus 3:3, "Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other;" that is, before conversion we were swelled with the poison of malice and wrath; but when once the grace of God came, then it was otherwise. That man who has not love and charity in his heart -- surely he has nothing of God in him, for God is love; he knows nothing of the gospel savingly, for the gospel is a gospel of peace; he has none of the wisdom which comes from heaven, for that is meek and gentle, and easy to be entreated.

If there are any who do not walk in love -- and yet will come to the Lord's table, remember this, you get no good by the ordinance, you do but defile the ordinance. The apostle calls it "the leaven of malice;" it only sours all your holy duties, sermons, prayers, and sacraments. A little gall, embitters a great deal of honey. So where there is a little of this gall of malice and hatred, it embitters and spoils all the honey of your graces and duties. The apostle bids us in prayer to lift up pure hands without wrath. 1 Tim. 1:2, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." What the apostle speaks of the duty of prayer, I may say of the Lord's supper; when you come to see the body and blood of the Lord, lift up pure hands without malice, bitterness, and wrath.

That is a sad speech of Augustine, "He who is full of rancor and malice, he is a man-slayer; nay, the apostle says it in the 1st epistle of John 3:15. "whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Do not think this ordinance will profit you, if you do not come in love to the saints. Suppose a man drinks down poison -- and afterwards takes down a cordial, surely this cordial will do him but little good. Just so, you who drink down the poison of wrath and malice into your soul -- and then come to drink down the cordial of Christ's blood in the sacrament -- why certainly, this cordial will do you but little good!

EXHORTATION. Therefore, to conclude by way of exhortation. I beseech you in the Lord, that you would remember this text this day, when you come to the Lord's table, read over this lesson, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Come to the sacrament in love to Jesus Christ, and in love one to another; be not full of bitterness -- but full of affection. The primitive saints were of one heart. You all expect one heaven -- and will you not be of one heart? This I believe is a great reason why the sacrament has no more profited many receivers.

You know that if there is a blockage in the stomach, that the food taken in will never digest and nourish. Why you who have wrath and anger, and malice at your heart -- there is an obstruction as it were at the stomach, and therefore it is that the bread of life does not nourish your soul.

Why, Christians -- are not we all soldiers in one regiment, under Jesus Christ, "the lion of the tribe of Judah," and the captain of our salvation? Are not we all branches of the same vine? And are we not all

members of the same body? And shall there be a schism or rent in the body?

I shall only say this -- we should do all as the serpent. Naturalists observe the serpent, that before he goes to drink at the waters, he casts up his poison. Just so, before you come to the table of the Lord's supper, cast up your poison of bitterness, wrath, and malice, and then Christ's blood will be both a medicine to heal you, and a cordial to refresh you!

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