

Christian Love

If you were to describe the purpose of the Bible in one word, what might that be? To one who has read the least bit of scripture, the answer is plain. It is love. God made it possible for us to know His will through the scriptures because He loves us. He wants us to know about Him and what He expects of us to be pleasing to Him. The greatest sacrifice ever made was when Jesus came and died by hanging on a tree, that He might be the "*ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28). God sent His Son and Jesus gave His life willingly because He loved us.

While He was teaching here on this earth, He taught His disciples about love. "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another*" (John 13:34). The words that Jesus spoke here are more than just words. They are a commandment that requires dedication, courage, and most of all, action! The grammatical structure of the word "*love*" here is an active verb. This means that it requires performing action to fulfill the suggested command. We cannot only love in word, and have it be pleasing to Christ (1 John 3:18)

In order to have a love in the way that a Christian should, we need to have a pure heart. Our mind needs to be focused on what is above, where Christ is, and what His motives are, rather than on the things of this world, and what we want (Colossians 3:1). If we continue to carry this mindset with us, then we will be blessed, and we will know assuredly that we truly love the Lord, because we have carried out His commandments.

However, we not only must love Christ, we also must show our love for one another. This message is held forth in Hebrews, where it says, "*Let brotherly love continue*" (Hebrews 13:1). There are certain characteristics that are required if a person is going to act this way, and Romans 12 goes a long way in explaining them. "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion*" (Romans 12:9-16, NKJV).

Jesus is looking for those who show their love by following all that He says, not sitting idle and going through the motions (John 15:12-19)! We must prove ourselves Christians by our actions, because James teaches us we are to be "*doers of the world and not hearers only*" and after all, faith without works is dead, meaning it is no faith at all (James 1:22; 2:17). We can show our love toward one another in many ways today such as teaching someone else the truth about Jesus Christ, opening up your home to someone who is in need, being hospitable, giving your time to someone else, or even going as far as following the example of the good Samaritan Jesus about in Luke 10:25 (2 Timothy 4:2; Ecclesiastes 3:7).

Sometimes we think that we are loving someone by keeping a secret from them, or holding back some information that would we know would hurt their feelings. But, in reality we are only hurting them more by not telling them. Jesus gives us a great example of this. While He was teaching in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, a young ruler who was rich came to Him and asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered him that he needs to keep the commandments, which the ruler replied he had kept them all. Then Jesus told him one other thing, that he had to sell all he owned and give to the poor, then he would have treasure in heaven. But this young man went away sorrowful, he did not want to give up his earthly treasure to follow Jesus. Was Jesus just being mean to this man? The account said that Jesus looked at him, and loved him (Mark 10:21). It was out of love that Jesus told this man the truth. If he wanted eternal life, he must give up his earthly possessions and follow Jesus. The truth was hurtful to this man, but Jesus did not hold back just because it would make him sorrowful, He knew it would! We also, cannot hold back if we truly love someone. If we do truly love them, we will tell them the truth. This will show our true care, no matter how mad, sad, or upset they get.

Love is the glue that holds everything together. We are joined and knit together by it, and also edified by it. If we truly have a love for Christ, we will not let anything get in the way of obeying Him in all things. Neither money, popularity, or recognition will stand in the way of true Christian love. True Christian love will be hard; it is not the easy part. However, the reward that it holds in the end will cover all our suffering here on earth.

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