

The New Commandment Love One Another, Preparing the Body of Christ

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“Love one another as I have loved you.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” – John 13:34**) That is the subject of this series of presentations—first, to understand what was meant and second to see how it is meant to be lived out. I’m satisfied that this is the preparation through which the Body of Christ is being taken presently in order to emerge to a state of readiness to encounter the evil one and to demonstrate to principalities and powers in the heavenly realms the truth—that is that God made the right choice when he chose from among humans those who would be His heirs as opposed to what His choice could have been, which was the angelic.

As we continue to pursue the matter of the meaning of “Love one another as I have loved you” we have centered our discussion in **I Corinthians**, the **13th chapter** which by all indications is the definitive passage in all of the Scriptures on the subject of love. What we are seeing is that in this passage there is quite a concentration of things that are just behind the scenes. There are three categories that Paul addresses in **I Corinthians 13**. The first category is “what love is”, the second category is “what love is not” and the third category is “what love is always”. In his discussion of “what love is” Paul says, **“Love is patient, love is kind”** (Inserted – **I Corinthians 13:4a**) and we looked beyond the surface of this to the understanding that this is possible—for love to be patient and kind. And the time when love needs to be patient and kind involves you being able to see someone becoming who God made them to be and the patience that’s required and the kindness that’s required—these are essentially terms of encouragement. To encourage someone you must have a vision of who they are and even if you see that they are not yet that—because you have clarity about where they are going—it is possible to engage in those kinds of conduct and behavior that will encourage them and not frustrate them.

The second category concerning “what love is not” moves deeper into the picture, and the depth of movement indicates a growing sense of integration with the rest of the Body of Christ. So when he says, **“It [love] does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude...”**(Inserted – **I Corinthians 13:4b-5a**) all of the statements made within the category of “what love is not” have to do with understanding your need

for “the other”—in short, our need for the whole Body of Christ and to see that everyone in the Body brings something of value and it’s that value that they bring that *extends* the value of who we ourselves are. So you do not envy someone who brings the very thing that you need. You’re not rude to someone who—though different from you—brings a complimentary virtue, even if that virtue challenges you.

Notice this now: Paul had just concluded, in **I Corinthians 12**, a discussion of the parts of the Body. If you see **I Corinthians 13** apart from **I Corinthians 12** you will miss this whole context. First Paul began to say that every member was put into the Body as Christ apportioned their place. In fact it wasn’t just **I Corinthians 12** where he began that notion. It began actually in **chapter 2** where he said that the Spirit of God searches the deep things of God and knows what’s in the mind of the Lord. (Inserted – actual verse—**“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” – I Corinthians 2: 10b-11)**)

He chastised the brethren in Corinth early on for being young and immature when they ought to have been older and more mature so he had a vision of who they were. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.” – I Corinthians 3:1,2)**) He saw that they were not living up to that vision and in that case he was neither patient nor kind with them even though it was clear to him that they were and they had certain destinies that needed to be fulfilled. He actually made the statement in **I Corinthians, chapter 2**, he said, “When I came to be with you I chose to “dumb myself down. I chose to be less than I was.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” – I Corinthians 2:1-5)**)

You see, in Christian circles we have the tendency to completely ignore context and just center on the thing that was said. But way back here in **chapter 2** Paul said, “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquent speech...I resolved while I was with you to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” And then in **chapter 3, verse 1** he says, “I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants.” Being carnal Christians doesn’t mean that they were living in sin. Carnality was merely a reference to their immaturity. You hear people constantly talking about carnal Christians as if people who are living in sin are carnal Christians. No, people who are living in sin are sinners. Carnal Christians are Christians who are immature, that’s what Paul is

saying, and he said that they ought to have been mature... by that time that they ought to have been teachers. So he said, “I dumbed myself down when I came to you because I knew that there was more to you but I knew that you had not laid a hold of that yet.” (Inserted - **I Corinthians 2:1-5**)

So by the time that he comes to **I Corinthians 13** he is fully vested in the understanding of what is meant by these three categories. That is why he doesn't just say, “Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy, does not boast...” and then, “Love always protects, always hopes...” (Inserted – actual verse—**“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.”** – **I Corinthians 13:4-7**) These aren't just accidental things, he isn't just picking out ways to make comments about love. He knows *exactly* what he is talking about and the set-up is from as early as **chapter 2**—arguably the entire twelve chapters before.

In **chapter 12**—before he speaks in **chapter 13** of love not being competitive—in **chapter 12** he had just completed a presentation of the need for the Body to be comprised of many members and the need for each member to value the role and the function of every other member. That's not accidental. So when I say to you that there are these three categories and that he doesn't mix and match them there is a deliberate mind behind the way that these things are framed. So he does not discuss love as just statements that he has thought up. When he talks about what love is he clearly is looking at people's destinies and understands and knows that everyone has a destiny and says that he himself treated them with great patience and great kindness even though he knew that they were immature and knew that they should then, by that time, have been mature. So he was patient and he was kind with them. In the letter to the Thessalonians he would embellish that statement of patient and kind by saying, “I was as gentle with you as a mother with her children.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.”** – **I Thessalonians 2:6b, 7**)

So he is clear; he saw their destinies, knew they weren't there yet, knew what their condition was and yet chose to be patient and kind with them. Then he addresses the intricate connection between the members of the Body. So the second category has to do with a keen sense of the corporate Christ and the membership of the Body of Christ. As I have said, one of the reasons why we have no serious ability to appreciate this truth—the truth being that we are one Body and that all the members belong each to the other and what each member of the Body of Christ brings is valuable to the whole. And therefore there is no need to envy, there is no need to be boastful, to puff up *your* part over—and in competition with—the value of another part and so on. The reason for this is that there is a true sense of the Body of Christ, what the Body means. Do you see that

if we take these things out of their context and just try to apply them that they really do not make any sense apart from their context; and in fact we don't apply them properly because we have contexts like a congregation.

It's in this very **I Corinthians, chapter 11**, just one back from **chapter 12** that he's also talking about some who say, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ." (Inserted – actual verse --**"You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men?"** – **I Corinthians 3:3, 4**) In fact he actually begins I Corinthians on that note and then in chapter 11 he speaks of the Body being divided and condemns the division of the Body of Christ. (Inserted – actual verse—**"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it."** – **I Corinthians 11:17,18**) So in chapter 13 it's no wonder that he gives an entire category of "what love is" that is dedicated to promoting the appreciation of every member of the Body. His manner of promoting this appreciation is by telling us plainly that every one of us belongs to the Body and therefore all that is in the Body is valuable to us and each of us in the Body is valuable to all of the Body.

This is strongly a rebuke of the competitiveness that is in the Body of Christ today and my point is that when there is competitiveness in the Body of Christ today it diminishes the Body and makes it vulnerable and susceptible to all forms of attack—both natural and spiritual. "Love is." Part of what "love is" is what "love is not": it is not envious, it is not competitive and it does not entertain all of the forms of savagery that might be practiced against the Body of Christ. That's what is inherent in this second category of "love does not envy, love does not boast, love is not proud." Why would you be proud? Why would you be boastful? Why would you be envious if what somebody else is and what they bring to the Body is freely available to you and personally useful to you?

If you think of the Body of Christ as the human body what would happen if the heart suddenly became very proud and boastful of its role and at the same time it envies the mouth that gets to speak? Do you see how ridiculous that would be, that one part of the body would consider *its* role, on one hand, so valuable that it would trumpet its value and it would have to—by that same frame of reference—it would have to diminish the value of the rest of the parts of the human body. That would be absurd. A human body, in competition with itself in this fashion would be at *least* sick and probably would not survive. The same thing is true of the Body of Christ, so when he speaks about what "love is not" he wants to drive home the point that we need to have a changed vision of who we understand the Body to be. When we are talking about the Body he now is talking about the individual *parts* of the Body so he is inherently talking about relationships and when you see the relationships within the Body of Christ you see

clearly his point of view.

So the reason that in your relationship with another you are not envious of their ministry, of their call; you're not envious of their wealth, you're not envious of their possessions—they have a bigger house than you, a better car than yours, they are better educated than you, all of these things—you don't envy *that* because they are *also* in the Body. And it's not that because they are wealthy you will have access to wealth, it's that the whole Body of Christ is to be blessed by what they bring. In this way you have a vision of the total presence of Christ in the world and it allows you to begin to relax and enjoy the fact that because you cannot do a particular thing doesn't mean the thing cannot be done. It simply means that it is somebody else's call, it's somebody else's role, it is for somebody else to be or to do.

Now here is what the Lord says about that: He says, “To whom much is given, much is required.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” – Luke 12:48b**) If you happen to not be given much then it's also true that much is not required of you. For a person of five talents to be considered faithful he has to be operating at the level of someone who was capable of receiving five talents. If he operates at the level of someone who received five talents but only handled two he is unprofitable. So the point is that your value is not related to what gifts you have been given or what call you have or what ministry you've been given or what possessions you have or what status you've acquired and so on. Your value has nothing to do with any of that; that's just how you are allowed to serve.

Now it is the *Living* God and it comes down to this—this is the essence of it—the Living God lives as personally through you as He does through another. Therefore, His choice of *you* and your circumstances—your gifts, your calling, your training, your abilities in the Lord—He intends to live fully through you. He is the one who lives in you and He is the one who is seen through that outlet that you are. How could this be more valuable or less valuable than Him doing exactly the same thing through another vessel, but differently? What do I mean by exactly the same thing? Exactly that He created *that* vessel in which for Him to live like He created you out of whom to live. He gave *that* destiny to *that* vessel like He gave you that destiny that He intends to live through. He prepared that vessel with circumstances and experiences like He prepared you with circumstances and experiences that were unique to you. When it's all done, He lives through the heart as He lives through the lungs but the function of the heart and the function of the lungs are different—different but not competitive.

If it is the same Lord Jesus Christ who lives through you as lives through another how could He be more valuable living through another than He is living through you? See, the moment that you begin to think of the Body of Christ as what you could do for God you've missed the point. “Love one another as I have loved you” has *always meant and*

only means: give your body to me, give your person to me, I will inhabit you, I already have a destiny for you, I've already trained you and given you experiences and I intend now to take all of that and inhabit it and through your face, through your language, through your person I intend to be seen. That's how the Father lived in the person of Jesus Christ and it's how the Father lives in you but it's also exactly how He lives in another. The only difference is that He prepared another *differently* so that He could live in a unique way through them and He prepared *you* differently so He could live through you uniquely.

The key is that He lives through everyone uniquely but He lives fully through you like He lives fully through the other. Therefore tell me this: what is the basis of competition?

What is the basis of envy? What is the basis of jealousy? What is the basis of strife? Look at the categories again. Is it not ridiculous that if it is the same Lord Jesus Christ who is fully living through you as He is fully living through another that you have an equality—an equality of value, an equality of perspective, an equality of destiny, an equality of being. It's only humans who say, "Well, if you stand in the pulpit you are *more* equal than others (to coin a phrase from George Orwell)." That's ridiculous because He is the one who is living through you and He is the same one who is living through another.

How could He be *less*, living through you, than He is, living through another? How could He be *more*, living through you, as opposed to living through another? It's all by the way of equality—it's He who lives in you. It doesn't mean that your situation is going to be the same as another's. It doesn't mean that everybody should have the same of everything. Everyone shouldn't have the same amount of money, everyone shouldn't have the same house in which to live, everyone shouldn't drive the same cars, wear the same suits and so on. That's ridiculous. The heart doesn't have the same function as the brain or as the lungs. The equality is that He equally lives in you as He equally lives in another. It's the same He who lives in you as lives in another—*that* creates the equality. If you can see that, then you will be excused from the competitive climate of the present church.

So, here is how it is: love does not envy Christ living in another in the same manner in which Christ lives in you. The same Christ who lives in another lives in you, therefore why should you envy? The same Christ who lives in you lives in another fully—as fully as He lives in you, He lives in another—therefore, what do you have to boast about in respect to another? The same Christ who lives in another lives in you so why should pride enter into your evaluation of yourself over another? Why should you be rude to the expression of Christ in another? Why should another be rude to the expression of Christ in you? Why should the Christ in you seek to promote himself through you at the expense of promoting himself through another? It's not self-seeking. Why should the Christ in you be easily angered by the expression of himself in another? Why should He keep a record of your failings as He is working through you, or should He keep a record

of failings of another through whom He's working? Why should the Christ in you delight when the other is being dealt with in difficult circumstances or why should another be equally disposed to being delighted when you are having difficulties, and so on?

You see, the point is that there is no need for competition because the same Christ who lives in you, lives in another and He is just wanting all that He made you to be, to be available to Him so He could be all of that in you and He wants to do exactly the same in another. When you begin to see that, the one you actually love is Christ, who lives in the other, and it is your love for Christ, in the other, that breaks down all of these barriers that are normally the expressions of competitiveness. We have one more category to go, so I hope that you will join me as we talk about what "love is always". I'm Sam Soleyn and I'll see you then.

Scripture References:

John 13:34

I Corinthians 13:4a

I Corinthians 13:4b, 5a

I Corinthians 2:10b-11

I Corinthians 3:1, 2

I Corinthians 2:1-5

I Corinthians 13:4-7

I Thessalonians 2:6b, 7

I Corinthians 3:3, 4

I Corinthians 11:17, 18

Luke 12:48b