

The Love of God

During Our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry one of the Pharisees asked him "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" and Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37 - 40).

These two commandments had previously been revealed by God through Moses, at least, in Leviticus 13:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5 and 10:12. St. John the Apostle explained these further, by stating, "he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us (1st John 4:8-12). St. Paul also mentioned in his first epistle to Corinthians "...if we do not love others but speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we are nothing" (Cor.13:1-13). The main lesson from this verse is we should love each other, and we should be concerned about others' needs. That is why Christ says, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us to love not only our close friends but our enemies too (Mt. 5:45). He showed us, by personal example, how to react to those persecute and negatively challenge us. St John Chrysostom described how Christ suffered in the hands of his accusers and how he was reserved from revenge... "They took hold of him who takes hold of all, bound the ruler of all and shackled the Son of the living God; they drew him in wrath and he followed them in **love**, they took him and he went after them like a meek sheep which is dumb before its shearers. They knelt before him, mocking him whom the hosts of angels worship in great fear. Oh what humility is this! Oh what patience is this! Oh, what a silence is this! Oh, what a kindness is this!" oh what a love of man is this!" (Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, paragraphs 46 to 52)

The depth of our love for our beloved God is measured by loving other fellow human beings. This unique love shouldn't be just words but has to be practical. That is why St James, in his epistle, says "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (James 2:14 -18)

Christ himself said on Mount of Olives that on judgment day all of us will be judged on the following, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee and hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer

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and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, ‘In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’” (Mt. 25:35 -40)

This spiritual love we have for others has to be absolute and long lasting. If that is the case, we will do all that our Lord instructed us to do for others. St. Peter says in his first epistle “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently” (1Pet. 1:22).

In order to maintain this heavenly love and be blessed, we have to live according to the scriptures not as we wish. We have to pray constantly to be blessed and receive divine guidance to love and forgive those who offend us. We have to develop the habit of forgiving others, and also, quickly apologizing whenever we offend others, whether wittingly or unwittingly. When our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, one of the Apostles, Peter came to him, and asked, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus answered him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven. (Mt 18:21 – 22) In this same Gospel, Chapter 5, beginning at verse 22, Christ said, “But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (colloquial term of utter disrespect i.e., ‘worthless one’), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has something against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Hence, we should love and respect each other but restrained from disclosing others sin and live with the love of Christ and be concern about other needs.

One of the other factors that affect love is slandering others. Therefore, as St. James said “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge (James 4:11)

Love is the head of all the laws. For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:9).

Love is the key, and the omnipotent God showed us how much he loves us, by sending his only Son Jesus Christ to the world to be crucified on the cross for our sin. We should follow Christ’s footstep and flourish in brotherly/sisterly love. We should strive toward that perfection that Christ indicated that our heavenly Father expects of us (Mat 5:48), or as St. Paul put it, “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephes. 4:13).

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