

“DO ALL THINGS THROUGH LOVE”

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I. Introduction

Paul says that Jesus has called us “. . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). In this short statement, he tells us much about the character of a Christian. First, the Christian is to be *humble*. To ask a Greek and Roman to act in humility was an insult. No self-respecting citizen of the empire would ever think about being humble. Humility was something that slaves, servants, and the poor exhibited. It meant to be weak, faint-hearted, and to have a servile mind. The writers of the New Testament took the word and turned it into a “virtue” accepted by God. They use it to describe a person who is not arrogant and who willingly serves the church and his fellow men.

A second aspect of a Christian is to be *gentle*. It is a quality shown by friends. It is the opposite of anger, harshness, brutality and self-expression. In other words, it means to be considerate and thoughtful toward others. A third quality of the Christian is *patience*. It is the idea of choosing not to become angry or provoked. Patience is shown when we actively try to meet someone halfway and try to share our life with another person. A fourth characteristic of a Christian is that of *forbearance*, which carries with it the idea of endurance. In other words, we are to put up with any insult or hurt done to us by someone else – whether real or imagined. This does not mean that we are to be a doormat. It means choosing to be like Christ. Jesus was not a doormat. He challenged His enemies to change their attitude and behavior. When they did not, He did not try to force them. He allowed them to kill Him so all men might have salvation.

What ties these characteristics together and strengthens them is . . . *love*. Love provides the motivation to want to be humble, gentle, patient, and forbearing. Love perfects us and draws us close to God and man. John tells us that . . .

**“ . . . perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment,
and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”**

[First John 4:18]

Fear is one of the greatest tools in the Devil’s bag of tricks. He uses fear to control us. It is fear that keeps us from forming friendships and intimate relationships. It is fear that keeps us from reaching our potential. It is fear that keeps us from escaping Satan’s chains and becoming *truly free* in Christ. Fear causes us to become defensive and resistant to others. One reason is that when we lie or deceive others, we live in fear that our lies will be discovered. We resist any attempt to get close or trust others because they threaten us in our lies. Love – on the other

hand – creates in us a feeling of trust and assertiveness. When we are honest and open, we have no need to fear that others will expose our faults and sins.

II. Loving Versus Lovable

Often people get the ideas of loving and being lovable confused. *Lovable* is having the qualities that attract affection or love. *Loving*, on the other hand, is displaying love. “Lovable” and “loving” are two different ideas. God never demands that we be lovable. He does demand that we be loving. As we look at Jesus’ life, we never see Him as lovable. Instead, He is loving. In Luke 9:22-27, Jesus declares that He will suffer and die so those He loves can have eternal life. To Jesus, it is not important how much money we have, what kind of academic degrees we earn, or even how many good deeds we do for others. What is important is what kind of relationship we have with God. When we live in Jesus’ reflected love, we – in turn – will love others. Our social status, personal wealth and careers mean nothing without Jesus. These earthly things are not worth all of the money in the world! If we have Jesus in our lives, we have something worth more than all the riches in this world.

Paul (in Colossians 3:17) expresses it this way . . .

“ . . . whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

As long as we live a life of holiness and purity before God, we are acceptable to Him. Jesus calls us to live as His witnesses to a sinful and wicked world. When we live a life of purity and holiness, we condemn wickedness and sin. It is dangerous if the people who live in sin and service to the Devil see us as lovable because that means that we are just like them – living in sin. Instead of living in sin with them, we are to love them. We are to love them enough to try to bring them to knowledge of Jesus and the eternal life He provides. In Romans 12:2-3, Paul tells us that we are to reject the values and behaviors of the world. Instead, we are to submit to God and allow Him to turn us into mature, complete people. It all gets back to what we want out of life. If our goal is to receive God’s gift of eternal life, we will submit to God’s love and – in turn – we will love and obey Him and love our fellow man.

III. All in Love

A. Rooted and Grounded in Love

In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul tells us when we are “rooted and grounded in love” that by faith we will allow Christ to live in us and we will be strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that when we turn our lives over to Christ and make Him the foundation – the source of our being – He will make us into the complete, mature people who we were created to be. God created us to live with Him and to reflect His love, power, and glory. When we follow Adam and Eve’s example and sin, we are rebelling against God as they did. Instead of reflecting God’s love, power, and glory – we are reflecting the rebellion and sin of the devil. We have the choice. We can either reflect God or the devil. Paul tells us that when we choose to reflect God’s love and glory, we are accepting His offer to live a life of holiness and purity (Ephesians 1:4). Before God created the world, He chose those who would be His people. This does not mean that He picked only certain people *by name* for either salvation or damnation. It means that He chose all those people who would accept His Christ as the Savior of the world and who would devote their lives to living in holiness and purity to please Him. Because God so loves us, we – in turn – are to love Him and each other.

B. Forbears One Another in Love

“Forbear” carries the idea of service to one another. When we show one another forbearance, we are acting in an unselfish way (Ephesians 4:2). Normally, people act in a self-centered, selfish way. They care only about themselves and their wants. When we act in love for one another, we are putting their needs above our wants. In Philippians 2:5, Paul expands on this subject. He tells us that we are to act in a selfless way because that is the way Christ treated us. God never demands that we do something that His Son has not already done.

C. **Speak the Truth in Love**

Paul tells us not to act like people who are reflecting the Devil. When we deceive someone or tell a lie, we are following the Devil. Somehow, people have developed the idea that it is “OK” to tell a lie if it does not hurt anybody or if you are trying to make someone feel good. The devil tells us that it is “OK” to tell a “little white lie” so we will not hurt somebody’s feelings. A lie is . . . a lie. God says this is just another of the devil’s tricks to get people to follow him. God says that if we lie, we will not inherit eternal life (Revelation 21:8). He did not say that we can lie as long as it does not hurt somebody, but not to – IF it will hurt someone. He says that a lie, whether big or a “little white” one, is still a lie.

D. **Edifies the Body in Love**

The body Paul talks about in Ephesians 4:16 is not our *physical* body. It is Christ’s body – the church. Since the 1960’s we have heard many people claiming they believe in Christ and are good Christians but they regard the church as a “road-block” to faith and service to God. That might be true when churches leave their First Love and sink into heresy. Christ and God do not look at the church as unimportant. To them, it is very important. Jesus Christ loved the church so much that He died for it (Ephesians 5:25). To “edify” is the idea of “building up” or improving someone by teaching and imparting moral and religious knowledge. We are to show our love for the church – Christ’s body – by teaching and helping individual members (and the church as a whole) to grow and develop into a glorious witness of God and His Son.

E. **Walks in Love**

When the Bible uses the phrase – “walk in” – it means to live a certain kind of life. In Ephesians 5:2, Paul tells us to *walk in love*. He means that we are to live a “life of love” for all our fellow men. The reason we are to live a life of love is that we are following the example of Christ. Jesus loves us so much that He died for us. This is the same type of love that we are to live. In Colossians 2:2, Paul explains this idea of “walking in love” when he tells us to be – knit, joined together, united, connected together – in love. When we walk in God’s love, we will love all men, especially those who are walking in God’s love (Galatians 6:10).

F. **Is Unfeigned in Love**

We are to demonstrate true, genuine love. Out love is not forced, phony, or false. We love others because God’s Spirit lives in us (Second Corinthians 6:6).

G. **Increases in Love**

Jude tells us to *keep* ourselves in God’s love (Jude 21). The way we do this is to live a life of obedience to God’s Word. I know that is not a popular idea – that God actually has a law. Many people like to simply talk about a “relationship” with God. They forget that our “relationship” with Him is based on *obedience to Christ* (John 14:23-24). Our love is not unchanging. It must either grow and increase in power or it will deteriorate and die.

IV. The Christian Fights Against . . .

A. Loving the World

John tells us not to love the world nor the “things” in it. Why such a strong command? Because if we do, we do not have God’s love within us (First John 2:15). This means that if we love the world, we have rejected God and have become His enemies (James 4:4).

B. Loving Mammon

Jesus used the word – *mammon* – to mean “earthly riches and possessions” (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). He tells us if we love riches and possessions, we will not love God. There is nothing wrong with being wealthy. What makes it “sinful” is when we make “things” more important in our lives than God. Also, the amount of money and possessions we have do not have to be large. The main point is that we love it more than we love God.

C. Loving Self Over God

This is the concept of being *self-centered*. We see “self” as so great, wonderful, and important that we become our own *god*. Jesus told His disciples if they wanted to live eternally, they had to “lose” their lives for His sake (John 12:25-26). God created us as both physical and spiritual beings. There is nothing wrong with taking care of the physical part of our being. What makes it “sinful” is when we love ourselves more than we love God or others (Matthew 6:5; 10:39; 16:25-26; Mark 8:35-36; Luke 9:24-25).

D. Loving Satan

Few people admit that they love Satan. They might not realize it, but the life they live shows that they do. Loving Satan is the same as loving *sin* over righteousness, darkness over light, or the flesh over the Spirit. We show our love for Satan when we do his deeds. We show our love for Satan when we continue in our rebellion against God. We show our love for Satan when we refuse to accept God’s Son as our Savior (Luke 15:11-32; John 3:19-20; 12:33).

E. Hating a Brother

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the crowds that when we hate someone, it is the same to God as if we had *murdered* him (Matthew 5:21-26). What Jesus is telling them is that the “attitude” that causes us to hate someone is the same as the attitude that causes one to commit murder. *Hate is the first step toward murder*. John expanded on this idea when he wrote that we cannot “love one another if we do not love God” (First John 3:10-16; 4:20-21).

F. Feeling Fear

Why do we experience fear? For some, it is about having the necessities of life (food, water, shelter, safety, clothing, etc.). For others, it has to do with not being accepted or loved by others. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the crowds that feeling fear and anxiety was ungodly (Matthew 6:25-34). We become free from fear when we love and trust God to fulfill His promises to protect and provide for us (First John 4:18).

G. Loving Chief Seats

In Jesus’ day, the “chief seat” was a place of honor and power. So loving them means that we want to believe that we are so important that others must accept us as their superiors.

Arrogance, pride, and greed are the deeds of the flesh that make us believe that we are more important than we are (Matthew 23:6; Luke 11:43; 20:46).

H. Loving One Over Another

Today, we call this *favoritism*, prejudice, and bigotry. This is the idea of showing partiality to someone because he is rich, powerful, good looking, or can do something for us. James tells us that when we show prejudice, we are acting in an evil way and committing sin (James 2:1-9). Instead, we are to accept and treat all men as being created in God's image. We are ALL people of significance and worth (Romans 2:10-11; Philippians 2:2). When we discredit and demean others, we are dishonoring God in whose image they have been created.

V. The Christian Works to Show that . . .

A. Love Is an Active Principle

God's giving of His Son to save the world is the model for the active practice of love (John 3:16). God did not show His love for us by waiting for us to come crawling to Him. This would have been the *passive* principle of love. Instead, God took the initiative and actively seeks to demonstrate His love to us. This is the *active* principle of love. Throughout the Bible, we see God taking the initiative and showing His love for mankind. His greatest example was to send His Son to show us how to live on earth and to die for our sins so we might live with Him in eternity (John 14:15; Galatians 2:19-20; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 13:1-2).

B. Love Fulfills the Law

Romans 13:10 says, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." The "law" Paul is talking about is the second greatest commandment – "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-40). So when we love others, we are obeying God's law (Mark 12:23; Luke 10:28; First Corinthians 13:1-8). In our fallen world, love is not a natural virtue. It is something that we must learn. As Paul told Timothy – ". . . the goal of our instruction is love, from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (First Timothy 1:5). True love comes from God and we reflect it to others.

C. Love Is the Fruit of the Spirit

We can either perform the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-21) or allow the fruit of the Spirit to grow within us (Galatians 5:22-23). It is our choice. We decide whether we will serve God or Satan (Matthew 7:16-20; Romans 5:3-5; 6:21-22; 8:9; First Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:8-11; Colossians 3:12-14).

VI. Conclusion

Biblical love is more than a warm, fuzzy feeling. It is a feeling, a way of thinking, and a type of behavior (Proverbs 23:7). Paul calls it *a more excellent way* (First Corinthians 12:31). The greatest example of God's love for man is the sending of His Son into the world as our Savior (John 3:16). It is through Jesus that we are able to return this love to God. There is no other way. God loved us first. When we accept His love, we love Him and we love our fellow man.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

1. Love provides the motivation to want to be humble, gentle, patient, and
(a) boastful (b) forbearing
(c) overbearing (d) none of these.
2. Having the qualities that attract love is called
(a) lovable (b) unlovable
(c) being rich (d) being physically attractive.
3. "Loving" is displaying
(a) envy (b) lust
(c) love (d) jealousy.
4. As we look at Jesus' life, we may not see Him as lovable but He is
(a) judgmental (b) condemning
(c) loving (d) all of these.
5. Because God loved us, we love
(a) others who love us (b) each other
(c) our close friends (d) none of these.
6. We "keep" ourselves in God's love is by being
(a) incarcerated (b) in deep debt
(c) making large donations to the church (d) obedient.
7. Jesus said we cannot love God if we love
(a) this world's riches (b) His Word
(c) other lost souls (d) none of these.
8. We show our love for Satan when we
(a) go to church (b) read the Bible
(c) pray (d) do his deeds.
9. We dishonor God who made others in His image when we
(a) love them (b) pray for them
(c) discredit and demean them (d) all of these.
10. We must decide if we are going to serve Satan or
(a) Belzebubba (b) the Dragon
(c) the father of lies (d) God.