

## Love One Another, As I Have Loved You

John 15:9-17, Easter Sunday II

April 6, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....Long ago, in a land far, far away, there was a brother and sister who often fought with each other. On a certain day they had a bad fight saying angry words, and it grieved their father to see his own children angry with one another. He scolded them and told them how the Lord does not want His children to fight. And then the father commanded the brother and sister to give each other a hug and make amends. The brother and sister then had to do what the father said. Awkwardly they gave each other a hug. But as they stood there holding one another, they couldn't help but realize the person they were holding was their own flesh and blood. This was their own brother.....this was their own sister. As they held each other, there was a change in the heart. Their anger and wrath toward one another melted away, and in its place there was love. They both apologized and made peace.

In our lesson today, Jesus said to His disciples, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus wanted His own disciples to love one another. I Peter 1:22 says, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." But can love be commanded? And even if God commands us to love one another, is it just a matter of flipping some switch and suddenly we turn from anger to love? Why then does God command us to love one another? The answer is: brotherly love is God's will. Just as any good father wants his children to get along and be at peace, so it is the Father's will that we love one another. The other reason God commands brotherly love is so that His disciples realize what a great sin it is when they don't love one another, with a pure heart, fervently.

But our lesson today contains much more than a commandment. Listen again to the words of Jesus, "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus says "as I have loved you." In these words of your Savior you will find the love and strength you need to love the brethren. The Gospel love of Christ moves the believing heart to love all men, even our enemies. When Jesus says to His disciples "as I have loved you", the Holy Spirit suddenly brings to our remembrance the compassion Jesus has shown to a world of sinners. Though we have done nothing worthy of His love, His thoughts toward us are only thoughts of love and peace. God through Christ has justified us, and healed us of our wounds of sin. His mercy toward sinners than works in us, so that we love our brother with a pure heart,

fervently. There is no switch we can use to turn from wrath to love. But when Jesus through the word says, "as I have loved you", Jesus Himself turns our heart away from anger toward love. It is the love of God within us that produces a god-pleasing love toward the brethren. Wherever the faith of the Gospel lives in the heart, there is also brotherly love. Where there is no Gospel faith, there will be no brotherly love. But the fruit of brotherly love is not only forgiveness of their sins, but repentance of our own. As Christ has reconciled Himself to us through His blood, so we reconcile ourselves to our brother by apologizing, by repenting, by speaking words of peace to them from our heart. When we do so, our God-produced love for our brother will turn their heart from thoughts of anger toward us, to thoughts of peace. So the Bible says, "Finally, brethren,.....Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

Jesus sets the example of brotherly love. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." The love of the Father toward the Son, and the love of the Son toward the Father is perfect and without flaw. God is love, and there is a perfect union, a perfect communion, a perfect agreement of will between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each person of the Holy Trinity wants and desires the same thing. Each person of the Holy Trinity works toward and in the same direction. God's greatest and highest and most noble will is the salvation of sinners. We call God's undeserved love toward sinners, grace. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." When nailed to the cross by His enemies, Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!" THAT IS GRACE!

When God reveals His grace and mercy to the broken and penitent heart, the heart of man is turned, changed. A godly love begins to live within. His grace, His love works within us to forgive our neighbor and our brother. When we are treated poorly, we do not hate them, but we love them. Jesus desires that we forgive our brother, till seventy times seven. As God's forgiveness to us is without end, so we forgive others, without counting seven or seventy times. The Bible says, "charity shall cover a multitude of sins." We cover their sins, we have the grace to overlook their common faults and weaknesses. If they are weak, we will be strong. Who knows, perhaps we are the weak ones and they are the strong ones? Or perhaps we are weak, but we foolishly think we are strong. It has been my experience in life that the stronger and more

compassionate Christian will always be the first to repent and make amends.

In our text today Jesus tells us, "Continue ye in my love" likewise, "Abide in His love." We are to continue, and not stop, in the love of the brethren. If we don't continue loving the brethren, we forsake the Christian faith and lose our own salvation. Therefore dear brother, if you find a struggle in your heart between loving your brother and hating him, be thankful. It shows you still have the old man and the new man within, battling it out. If you struggle to forgive, if you want to forgive, there is still faith. But if you have stopped loving your brother, and you don't care to love him anymore, you have fallen from grace, and except you repent, you will perish.

Jesus doesn't want us to perish. He wants us to continue in His love. We continue in His love, when we look away from the sins of our brother, and look to the love of Christ on the cross. We need that love, we need that mercy from God. We cannot be saved without God's grace. And so if we separate ourselves from Christ, if we cut ourselves off from His mercy thinking we are more righteous than our brother, we will go about establishing our own righteousness. When a brother fails to forgive a brother, in his heart it is because he is making himself more righteous. The problem is, we have no righteousness of our own. So we must continue in the love of Christ, we must return and remember we are saved by grace alone. We have no righteousness of our own, but in Christ we find perfect righteousness. He is called "The Lord OUR Righteousness." And our righteous Lord has forgiven our unrighteous mountain of sin. Shall we then look at the mole-hill of our brother's unrighteousness, and not forgive?.....even though Christ has forgiven our entire mountain of unrighteousness?

Therefore let us throw away and reject this self-righteous line of thinking that we are better at obeying God's law than our brother. The law condemns us all, equally. Instead let the love of Christ prevail within that brotherly love continue. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In a way, there is no such thing as the TEN Commandments. There is only one commandment God wants us to follow: His law of love. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law."

Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Naturally our first and greatest joy is in the knowledge that the love of Christ is continually upon us by God's grace. We joy in that He has united Himself to mankind by His body and blood, and has

redeemed us through the same, setting us free from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. There is also great joy in the understanding that the law no longer has any dominion over us. The law cannot condemn us for Christ took our condemnation upon Himself. Jesus has set us free! We are free to serve the Lord with gladness! We are free to do all things in love, for "love is the fulfilling of the law." When we live by the strength and joy of the Gospel, we will find little need for quarreling or being at odds with a brother. It is the Gospel which moves us to do all things, not the law. The law works death but the Spirit gives life. Galatians 5:18 even says, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." The Gospel comes first in the believers life, for it is the source of our justification, THEN comes obedience to the law. Our Savior therefore says, "By love serve one another" and "Love one another, as I have loved you."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus our brother, laid down His life for His friends. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Obedience here is the fruit of faith, the fruit of the Gospel. Therefore if the Gospel lives in your heart by faith, Jesus calls you His friend, a friend of God! And if God is your friend and ally, who can be against us? Oh what a privilege it is that Jesus does not call us servants, but friends. He has chosen us to be so. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit!" And isn't that the truth! God has chosen us, He has ordained us, that we be fruitful in every good works. We then are workers together with Him, we work with God toward the salvation of sinners. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We do and endure all things for the sake of the Gospel. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." We walk in His path, not our own.

Therefore brethren, God's commandment is that we love one another, as He has loved us. Let us therefore rejoice that He has forgiven our sins of anger, our lack of love. In its place God has given us His peace, His own peace, His own righteousness, that we might be saved. Let us ever treasure and hold dear this Gospel and believe it with our whole heart. For God has not freed us so that we can sin and strive and be angry, He has freed us so that we can follow that one and only commandment He has given, the law of love. And "LOVE is the fulfilling of the law." Amen.