

2. The Theology of the Love Commandment

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Introductory Remarks

The book of James warns against leaving the horizontal thrust of the love message to focus on the vertical relationship with God.

What about the unlovely? How do you get started? First start at home: husbands and wives are covenanted to love one another; children have arrived to love you. Start by just smiling.

We are taught not to express our love, but we (and others) need to. Don't fear that you won't make the distance. Get started. Love exists in the church, but it's not expressed, and this makes church a lonely place. Small talk after the service does not show concern for the other person.

Scripture

In **Rom 13:3-15** Paul sends greetings to a long list of people. When we love our brother we fulfil the command to love God. If we love, we will not commit adultery.

1 Tim 1:3-5. Verse 5, "But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith." Paul is telling Timothy the thrust of his message, love. If we turn away from this message (vs 6), we leave Scripture and turn to meaningless talk.

1Jn 4:7-21 God Is Love

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to

love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

We show our love for God by loving others. We fulfil the first commandment by obeying the second.

Gal 5:6. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love." Faith in God expresses itself in love to others (not God).

If we consent that Jesus is the Son of God and God speaks to us in Jesus and he gave one commandment then the only kind of faith that is real is the one that obeys the love message. Why don't we do it? If we did there would be revival.

What can one man do? Satan tells us one man, or one church, can't make a difference. This is a lie. Popular psychology, worldly wisdom, etc. tell us that we are a victim of circumstances. We can't change anything. If we don't do what Jesus asks, why do we call Jesus "Lord, Lord" and do not do what he

says. Jesus was to die on the cross for us, he was not playing with words. Why don't we obey him?

What is wisdom in the Bible?

Is 6:9, 10 Isaiah is willing to go for God (vs 8) but the message he is to take will not be understood because people will not listen.

Paul applies this verse in **Acts 28:26** to the message about Jesus – the blindness of man to who their fellow man is.

Rom 3:11 “there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God.”. Men are religious but they seek for God in their own understanding of God while not showing love to their fellow man.

Is 58 & 59 God does not listen to us because of the way we treat each other.

Prov 1:7 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Prov 3:13. “Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding.” The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Wisdom has nothing to do with religion, and everything to do with relationships.

Prov 6:16, 17. “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood.” Look down your nose at another human being and God hates you.

James 1:5. “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.” Who is wise?

James 3:13-18. ¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition,

there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”

The meek (Beatitudes and **Ps 37:11** “But the meek shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.”).

The laws of **Lev 19** are the love commandment.

1 Cor 13. “¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

Mt 5. The Sermon on the Mount. e.g. “⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”

Wisdom is the God-given art of creative, exciting, adventurous, loving, honouring, truthful, compassionate, ... living.

What is the Kingdom of God?

You need to be born again to see the Kingdom of God. Selfishness out, love in, to your heart.

Luke 9:46 “An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest.”. Don't try to impress with learning.

Mt 18. Who is greatest in the Kingdom of God? (Mt 18:1). The way we treat each other – this is what is wrong with the church. Every person is of inestimable value, do not hurt them. The evangelicals are too individualistic.

We are born into a family. Forgive people 7 x 70 times (everyday), that is, every 2 minutes. Don't let bitterness go more than 2 minutes, its dangerous (Mt 18:22).

The parable about the slave who was forgiven much but did not forgive a fellow slave (Mt 18:23-35). James talks about showing justice without mercy, the beatitudes say "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy" (Mt 5:7).

The Kingdom of God in Micah is where there is justice, mercy, and humility. "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

What is Man?

The genealogy in Luke 3 says that Adam was the son of God (Lk 3:38). Sin does not take away the dignity of man. God's heart yearns for every person (Micah, Hosea, the cross). A dog has a will (a cat's even stronger), intellect, emotions. Man is created in God's image. What does it mean?

1 Jn 3:1-2a – ^{3:1}See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now." We are the sons of God.

When the Jews took up stones to stone him (Jn 10:34), "Jesus answered, **"Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?"**) Every person is worthy of our love and attention. Don't look passed people (Jeremiah 7).

[Notes taken by Derek Thompson from a recording of a conference address by Len Evans given in Australia in 1977. Scripture quotations from NRSV]