

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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A Love Commanded

First John 3:11-15

by

Johnny L. Sanders, D.Min.

SUBJECT: GODLY LOVE

TITLE: A LOVE COMMANDED

TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:11-15

INTRODUCTION. Repetition in a series of messages from First John is unavoidable, if for no other reason than the repetition in the epistle, especially when it comes to the subject of love. Because of the importance of defining the kind of love God commands of His people, we will take another look at the various kinds of love. We will then go on to look at some of the principles involved in the love which God commands.

I know you have never had the problem, but I have a confession that I am not totally comfortable making. When I was a student at Mississippi College, I often heard people talking about how much love they felt for God, and how much they loved everyone else. They seemed to sort of exude this warm fuzzy feeling about everyone and everything. Sometimes, when I heard them talk about the love they felt for God, I wondered why I was not moved by the same type of emotions every time I heard God's name mentioned. When they talked about the great love they had for the Aucas Indians of Ecuador, or the tribesmen of New Guinea, or the natives of remote country in Africa, why did I not have the same feeling they seemed to feel?

I thought of my neighbors back home in the Green River community, seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. I thought of those with whom we worshiped every Sunday, and I admitted that I did have a very warm feeling for them. Well, most of them anyway. Then I thought of some of those in the community who never came to our church. I could still recall some of those lost people for whom I had a warm feeling. And then, there were a few who were obnoxious and offensive, people who not only lived a depraved life but constantly sought to draw others into their lifestyle. They encouraged others to drink, gamble, use profane and obscene language and engage in immoral acts. Then I thought of a few men who knew the Lord had called me to His ministry and they enjoyed trying to shock me with dirty jokes, questions about my morality, and stories about preachers whom they accused of ungodly things. I had to admit that my feelings toward those people were something less than warm and fuzzy. I felt a little guilty about the way I felt toward them when they did this. The Lord called me into His ministry when I was thirteen years old. I started teaching a large class of Junior boys when I was thirteen and was preaching in my mid-teens. I was licensed at age seventeen and ordained at age nineteen.

By the time I was half-way through one of the top Christian colleges in America, I should have had this problem solved. I was getting a double major in Bible and Sociology - I should have had it under control from one side or the other! I knew I ought to love others, I prayed about it, and tried to apply the Word of God in my daily life. Yet, even at Mississippi College I found some people who sort of turned me off, if you know what I mean. Worse than that, I found a few who did not turn me off - they turned something on inside my mind and heart that disturbed me. Every student was not there because of his or her relationship with the Lord. Some were there because their parents had a relationship with the Lord, or because their parents wanted them to go to school in a Christian environment.

There were the girls who asked to borrow my car. I hardly knew them, but since they said they had a medical problem and needed to get to a doctor's office in Jackson, I volunteered to drive them. They didn't seem to be sick to me, but what did I know? At one point they said, "Stop right here." I stopped and after they got out of my car I looked for a doctor's office, but I found none. I watched through my rear view mirror as they walked into a photographer's studio. So that's why they were so dressed up! As naive as I was, I wasn't stupid - and I had a long memory. But was that sinful?

I knew people at Mississippi College who really did not like ministerial students. They like to make jokes about them, and unfortunately, a few may have invited the criticism. But there was an arrogance on the part of some people toward those who had been called into the ministry that rubbed me the wrong way at times. Oh, yes, I could pray for them. The only problem was - well I found it hard to have the same feelings for them that I had for my roommate or the neighbor across the hall. Was I guilty of sin because I did not have a warm feeling toward every person around me? Why did I not have the same feeling for everyone that some claimed they had? Was this a sin? What could I do about it?

How can I love someone I don't even like?!!! Okay, I have finally said it. Well, my mother sort of gave me a way out - "You don't have to like their ways to love the person." I could have used that but let's face it, it is not always easy to separate the man from his ways. I wanted to show the kind of love God commands toward people who are a friendship challenged. Is that possible?

Well, while I prayed about it, I did not actually worry about it. I just put it on the back burner and decided that I would look into it more later. And I did. And, furthermore, I think a few other people have benefitted from what the Lord has revealed to us through His Word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are going to look at God's command to love one another and I am convinced that a right understanding the kind of love God commands may not only help someone deal with any guilt this subject brings to mind, it will also bring a fresh joy to your heart.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE COMMANDED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER, 3:11.

A. This Was Commanded in the Law.

1. God promised loving kindness to those who love Him, Ex. 20:6.
2. God commanded Israel to love Him, Deut. 6:5.

AYou shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. @

B. Jesus Gave Us Two Great Commandments, Matthew 22:37-40.

1. He commands us to love God, Matthew 22:37-38

AJesus 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. @

2. He commands us to love one another, Matthew 22:39.

AAnd the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. @

3. AOn these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets@ (Matt. 22:40).

4. Jesus even commands us to love our enemies, Matthew 5:43-44.

Aye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. @

II NOW, LET US LOOK AT SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL LOVE.

A. There Are Four Types of Love Mentioned or Seen in the New Testament.

1. There is romantic love.
2. There is familial love (love for family).
3. There is friendship love (*phileo*).
4. There is the love which God commands (*agapao - agape*).

B. Our Concern Here Will Be With Two of Those Words.

1. They are *agapao* and *phileo*.

Most Christians who have been in Sunday School and worship services for very long are familiar with the word, *agape*. I have often heard people say that *agape* is divine love, or Christian love. Well, we must remind ourselves that the Greeks were using the word a long time before there were any Christians around to use it. However, in the New Testament, this word is used to denote a very special kind of love.

Sadly, many people tend to under-define and oversimplify *agape*. While I was in seminary, and after I graduated I had the privilege of working with a very remarkable pastor, a man with deep insight into Scripture, a man who could recall the outline of a sermon he heard someone preach at a convention twenty years earlier. I had great respect for him and loved to hear him preach. I even wrote a paper on the preaching of this gifted man. However, when I asked him to preach in revival services many years later I was surprised by something he said about *agape*. He stated that God expects us to love everyone; then he asked, "How can I love a person who is unlovable?" He answered the rhetorical question, "I cannot love him, but Christ, Who dwells in me can. I can let Christ in me love him."

At first thought this seemed to be the answer - and it is part of it. However, God does not command Christ to love everyone. He didn't have to; He already loves everyone (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16 - you cannot distinguish between the love of the Father and the Son). God commanded me to love others. I cannot avoid this fact. God commanded me to love others, and He did not tell me to choose certain people to love, or to love those who love me; those who might be useful to me, or those to whom I may be drawn for one reason or another. People swarm around celebrities. Many people are in awe of prominent people. I have to admit it - there are people I really look forward to seeing. And there are some people I really do not look forward to seeing. I don't enjoy being around an arrogant, obnoxious, vile person any more today than I did when I was a teenager. But, does God not command me to love others? Of course He does! But what if He only intends for me to love other Christians as I love my self? Well, let me ask you this: Have you ever known a Christian who really turns you off? Do you have a warm feeling for every person you know who professes to be a Christian? Maybe you have had some guilt feelings over this. God has an answer for you.

2. *Agape* is a mental attitude type of love.

a. That is the reason it can be commanded.

You cannot command romantic love. Try it sometimes. Tell Jimmy he must fall in love with Susie and see what happens. You cannot command friendship. Command a new church member to become best friends with deacon Jones and see what happens. Yet, it is perfectly logical for God to command us to love one another if He is commanding the *agape* kind of love.

b. *Agape* seeks the highest good for every person.

c. *Agape* is not driven by emotions.

d. *Agape* is directed by the mind - you know you should do it.

e. *Agape* is released by the will - you will do it.

f. *Agape* will then touch your emotions.

3. *Phileo* is Asoulish@ love.

- a. It involves the mind, the emotions, and the will.
- b. This is brotherly love.
- c. This kind of love cannot be commanded.
- d. It is often fed by mutual interests.
- e. It must be cultivated.
- f. This speaks of the wholesome intimacy of a friend who is closer than a brother.
- g. David and Jonathan had such a love for each other.
- h. This kind of love existed between Paul and Timothy.

4. These two kinds of love are not mutually exclusive.

- a. One might have *phileo* type love for others before becoming a Christian.
- b. Becoming a Christian places one under an obligation to *agape* others.
- c. We will develop a *phileo* type of love for some for whom they have *agape* kind of love.

Paul could claim the *agapao* kind of love for all people with whom he had come into contact, especially all believers. He loved Barnabas, Silas, Luke, and Titus with both *agape* love and *phileo* love. And then there was Timothy. When so many others either abandoned him or were simply not available to help him, there was always Timothy. His relationship with Timothy began in *agape* love on the First Missionary Journey, and then when Timothy joined Paul and Silas on the Second Missionary Journey, a close personal relationship began to develop. Their *agape* love for each other never waned as their *phileo* love continued to grow.

When all the Church leaders in Asia abandoned Paul, there is no doubt that he was burdened for them because he still had *agape* love for them, even if they refused to respond to his love for them. There is no doubt that they did not have an intimate love for the man whom God had sent to them with the Gospel. They seemed to be deficient in both *agape* and *phileo* love for Paul. His concern about this shows *agape*, and implies *phileo*.

C. *Agape* Will Lead You Where *Phileo* May Not.

- 1) It is *agape* that leads the Gideons to visit the state penitentiary.
- 2) It is *agape* that leads some to risk their lives working with AIDS victims.
- 3) It is *agape* that leads a missionary to a Muslim country where his family is at risk.
- 4) It is *agape* that leads a believer to get involved with a family living in filth.
- 5) It is *agape* that leads one back to the man who loathes the church.
- 6) It is *agape* that leads one to work with a rebellious teenager.
- 7) It is *agape* that leads one to bear with an obnoxious church member.
- 8) It is *agape* that may open the door to a *phileo* love for some of those people.

D. Now, Let Us Look at Some Lessons on Love from the Bible.

1. God love us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
 - a. He loved you while you were a sinner.
 - b. He gave His Son to die for you.
2. AWe love Him because He first loved us@ (1 John 4:19).
3. God loves His Son with *agape* love (John 3:35).
4. The Father loves the Son with *phileo* love (John 5:20).
 - a. The Father loves the Son with an intimate love.
 - b. When God is doing the loving, *agape* is divine love.
 - c. When God is doing the loving, *phileo* is divine love.
5. Agape does not automatically denote divine love.
 - a. In John 3:16, God loves the world with *agape* love.
 - b. In John 3:19, evil men love evil with *agape* love.
6. *Agape* is divine love when God is doing the loving.
7. *Agape* is divine love when the child of God is loving others as God commands.

E. Now, Let Us See What This Means to Us.

1. You are commanded to *agape* one another.
2. You are not commanded to *phileo* one another.
 - a. *Agape* can be commanded because it is directed by the mind.
 - b. *Phileo* cannot be commanded because it is not directed by the mind exclusively.
 - c. *Phileo* does not needed to be commanded.
3. When you were saved you were brought under God=s maximum love.
4. When you were saved you were given the capacity for *agape* kind of love.
 - a. When you are Ain Christ@ you are placed under an obligation to love others.
 - b. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you are empowered to love others.
 - c. When you know the love of God you are motivated to love others.

5. The source of *agape* is the God who loves you.
 - a. You may nurture or cultivate both *agape* and *phileo*.
 - b. The love God commands has its source in Him.
 6. If you love God, you are not grieved by His command to love others (1 John 5:3).
- F. This Means That In Christ You Can Love People Who Are All But Unlovable.
1. God commands us to love others.
 2. The love He commands is a mental attitude type of love.
 3. Our motivation is His love for us, not just our love for Him.
 4. We learn to see others as God sees them.
 5. We seek the highest good for other people, regardless of their circumstances.
 6. You really can love someone you do not like being around.
 7. You can *agape* people you do not *phileo*.

Now, recall the directions given in the First Psalm:

How blessed is the man who (1) does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor (2) stand in the path of sinners, Nor (3) sit in the seat of scoffers!@

You can avoid wicked people, turn away from the path of sinners, and resist scoffers, and still have *agape* type love for them. You can love those from whom God commands you separate yourself. With fear and trembling I will add that you can *agapao* people you don't even like - you may not *phileo* them, but you can *agapao* them. Again, I recall what my mother told me - I should not say that I didn't like someone - Christians should love everyone, but they do not always like their ways. The problem was that I really did not like arrogant, obnoxious people. I still don't! I am sorry about that, but it is not always easy to separate the person from his ways. Should I carry around a load of guilt because of this? If I do not have an *agape* type love for them, I must repent. If I do not separate myself from drunks, slanderers, and immoral people I must also repent. If I do not pray for those same people, I must repent.

III. THE CONTRAST IS SEEN IN CAIN, 3:12-13.

ANot as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.A

- A. Cain Showed the Very Antithesis of Love When He Killed His Brother.
- B. Cain Hated Abel for Two Reasons.
 - 1. His deeds were evil.
 - 2. Abel=s deeds were righteous.
- C. Just As unrighteous Cain murdered righteous Abel, the Word hates Jesus Christ, 3:13.

ADo not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.@

- 1. The world really does hate Jesus Christ.
 - a. The NEA has provided lessons which portray Islam as good.
 - b. They have opposed anything that hints of Christ.
 - c. Their wall of separation applies only to Jesus.
- 2. The news media continually slants news against Jesus Christ.

A friend told me he sat on the stage with then Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton at a high school graduation. It was the third time they had been involved in a program together, so there was no way Clinton did not know that my friend was pastor of the First Baptist Church in that city - they had even talked about their churches. Then when the procession began the governor sat there and made obscene remarks about girls as they passed by to receive their diplomas.

My friend parroted the mantra spread by the news media, ABill Clinton is brilliant, but...@ Bill Clinton is not brilliant! He is shrewd and cunning, but he has been caught too many times for me to believe he is brilliant. How then did he keep getting away with it? One reason - the world=s media covered up for him - and make no mistake about it, the secular media is not there to glorify Jesus Christ.

Repeatedly, the media has tried to portray President George Bush as slow, ignorant, or lacking Agravitas.@ Some in the media were incensed following an interview with a foreign head of state after his thirty minute meeting with President Bush. They had asked what they discussed and were told that President Bush had spent most of the time talking with him about Christ. The AWall of Separation@ had been violated!

History textbooks have been rewritten to delete the Christian influence on the Founding Fathers. The Founders are dismissed as deists. But, if you will study the original documents you discover that most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were strong Christians. Why is the media and

the NEA afraid for our children to know the truth? They will tell you that their main concern is Athe children.@ Why do they lie to the children when it comes to Jesus Christ? The world to which they belong hates Christ. They throw Christians a bone on occasions just to divert the criticism. For example, they throw in a television program like, *Touched By An Angel*, and many defend it as though it were the last great hope for a Christian message in the media. Many do not understand that the *Touched By An Angel* angels are New Age angels, not biblical angels, even though they quote Scripture at times.

The world hates Jesus Christ, but it loves its own. That would explain why the righteous may suffer while the ungodly prosper in this world. In computer terminology, the world is Auser friendly@ to its own.

IV. LOVE FOR OTHER BELIEVERS PROVIDES ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION, 3:14.

*AWe know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.
He who does not love abides in death.@*

A. We Can Know Right Now that We Have Passed From Death to Life.

1. In 2:3, we see we can have present knowledge of a permanent relationship with Christ.
2. Love for the brethren is a proof that we know the Lord.

B. The One Who Does Not Love the Brethren Is Spiritually Dead.

CONCLUSION. God will not keep you guessing. He wants you to know Him, and He wants you to that you know Him. Loving one another does not produce salvation, but a relationship with Jesus Christ manifests itself in love for other. It manifests itself in compassion for the lost and seeks their salvation. It also reaches out in fellowship and ministry to other believers. The love God commands is not only possible, it is realistic and practical. The more you practice it the more you will understand it and the more you will realize it.

INVITATION. Is there anyone here with the courage to admit that you need some serious help in your commitment to love others - not just the people you like, but all for whom Jesus died? Do you have the honesty to admit that you need help, or that a fresh commitment is needed right now? Please do not leave this service as you came. Let the Holy Spirit grow you, nurture you, sanctify you in the Love of God.