

## The Great Command

**"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.....love your neighbour as yourself."  
Matthew 22: 37/39**

1 Corinthians 13

John 15:9-17

***Love me, Love my God; Love us, Love our God; Love Church  
Love Jesus' Body!***

***Ultimately such Love would grab the world's attention in a moment.***

This Love, this Grace is the supreme quality of all, without which all our eloquent preaching would be as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. It was, above all, the love of Christ that controlled and compelled the persecuted early church and still does with hundreds of thousands of persecuted Christians today. It was their infectious love that drew people to them, and to the Lord, like a magnet; the poor and the outcast, the sick and the lame, Jew and gentile, slave and free, male and female, even a few who were rich and influential - they all came, apart from those whose hearts were hardened towards God. In so far as those Christians loved one another, others could see both that they were manifestly disciples of Jesus and that God was evidently abiding in their midst. Love is always the greatest thing in the world, and it never fails to be the powerful evidence of the God of Love.

***Do you love me more.....? John 21:15f***

- not phileo or eros..... but agape. Reality check: who's first?
- Can't love me if you don't obey (coin) John 15:10, 14(friends)  
1 John 5:2, 3.

- Can't love me if you hate your brother. 1 John 4:20 (I can't forgive is unacceptable): *Love is a fabric that never fades, no matter how often it is washed in the waters of grief and adversity.*
- Can't love me if you see a need and show no pity: 1 John 3:17.
- Can't love me out of fear. 1 John 4:18 (no to religion yes to relationship)

Illustration: Preacher on Hyde Park Corner: A preacher must a statement in Hyde Park: You must love the Lord your God with all your heart. A heckler replied: That's rubbish. Science has proved that the human heart is just a pump. The preacher said: are you married? The man said: yes. Then go and tell your wife that you love her with all your pump!

***Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12, 17.***

- not love with words and tongue (alone) but with actions and truth. 1 John 3:18.
- Keep on loving each other (love perseveres!). Hebrews 13:1.
- If we do that God lives in us (by His Spirit) and his love is made complete. 1 John 4:12.
- 1 John 3:16 a complete and lasting love!!

***God so loved the world that He gave....John3:16.***

- World has confused love and lust (outward: generous or inward: selfish).
- Love me; love my World....says God.
- Better to give than to receive: Acts 20:35.Generosity!
- No record of wrongs: no judgements v5.
- Not easily angered: no condemnation v5. John 3:17: neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more.
- Perseveres: full of faith, trusting, protecting v7.
- Patient, kind, no envy, boasting, pride or self-seeking. v4/5.

- No failure in love....to the end. v8.

We can never separate this Love, this Grace, from the person of Jesus. We are called by Jesus but we are also called to Jesus. Jewish Rabbis and Greek Philosophers expected disciples to commit themselves to specific teaching or a definite cause. But the call of Jesus was wholly personal: his disciples were to follow Him, to be with Him, commit themselves wholeheartedly to Him, have faith in Him, by repenting of their sin and believing in Him. The two disciples walking to Emmaus were in deep depression because of what had happened to the person of Jesus. He is the theme of their conversation on the way. On the other hand, it is nowhere stated or even hinted that after the death of Jesus His teaching was a source of strength to His followers, or that they had the impression of having a valuable legacy in the word of Jesus.

When Jesus called individuals to be His disciples, he shared his life with them. Although there was a depth of sharing with the twelve that was not common to everyone, in real measure He gave himself to all who responded to his call. By His incarnation he identified fully with them, and in his love he made himself vulnerable by opening his heart to them. Part of his great attraction was that his loving compassion was so real and open that others knew that they could trust him. There was no deceit or guile about him. His transparent openness and integrity drew others into a quality of a loving relationship that they had never known before.

That is why they were all so shattered when such a perfect life of love was smashed on the cross. Indeed after the horrifying events of the crucifixion it took some time for Jesus to restore the faith and commitment of his disciples, but he did this by leading them gently back into renewed relationship with him. After Peters threefold denial comes the threefold question by

Jesus, Simon Son of John do you love me? Repeatedly, in his resurrection appearances, he came to his disciples, individually and corporately, to reassure them of his living presence, and of his love and forgiveness. They were to become witnesses to him: not Rabbis of his teaching. They were to tell everyone about him, and in the sharing of their lives together, to manifest his life of love by being the Body of Christ on Planet Earth.

When Buddha was dying, his disciples asked how they could best remember him. He told them not to bother. It was his teaching, not his person, that counted. With Jesus it is altogether different. Everything centres around him. Separate this glorious Love from Jesus and you will go off beam. Discipleship means knowing him. Loving him, believing in him, and being committed to him for all eternity.

***'The most excellent way' 1 Corinthians 12:31.***

- Faith: foundation and content of Gods embodied love letter!
- Hope: attitude and focus.
- Love: action.
- How does it work? When Faith & hope are in line you are free to love completely because you understand how God loves.
- Lover of my soul: Help me to love extravagantly those that you direct to me.

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