

For the past several weeks we've been engaged in a short topical study on Church Life. I've suggested this life takes three directions: upward (in worship), inward (in edification), and outward (in evangelism).

For the past several weeks, we've been considering various activities used of God in the edification of His beloved people. We've seen confrontation and forgiveness, Christian forbearance, spiritual gifts, and intercessory prayer – that brings us this morning to brotherly love.

Now, before we come to our theme, let me point out, all that we've previously seen, forgiveness, forbearance, use of spiritual gifts, and intercessory prayer, are all expressions of love. Love forgives, love forbears, love edifies through spiritual gifts, and love intercedes. Thus, while I want to address brotherly love directly, there's a sense in which we've already been considering it for the past several weeks.

In many ways, love is a summary of all our responsibilities toward each other—all the "one another" NT passages can be reduced down to love. But here I want to address love more directly, seeking to answer three questions—who are we to love, how are we to love, and why are we to love (these are all answered in Jn.13:34-35).

- I. Who Are We to Love?
- II. How Are We to Love?
- III. Why Are We to Love?

- I. Who Are We to Love?

1. V34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another"—let me first say a few words about this phrase "a new commandment."
2. This new commandment goes along with a new covenant—the new covenant has a new commandment.
3. Now, to be sure, the newness of this new commandment isn't love, because love to God and our neighbor were the essence of the OC law.
4. Thus, the question becomes, in what way is love a new commandment—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another."
5. Well, the answer is found in the next phrase—"that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."
6. Thus, the newness of the new commandment is that we love others as our Savior loved His own people.
7. In other words—it's the perfect example of Christ that renders the command to love a new commandment (I will return to this point under the 2nd main heading).
8. Thus, with regards to the object of our love, our Savior twice says—"love one another" (we are to uniquely and universally love one another).
9. (1) We are to uniquely love one another—by this I mean, we are to love each other differently than others.
10. Our Savior taught in Matt.5:44, we are to love our enemies and in Matt.22:39, we are to love our neighbor.
11. But here our Savior speaks about a special kind of love, we might call Christian love or brotherly love.
12. If you notice, our Savior exhorts His disciples to love one another, after Judas leaves and goes out into the night.

13. It's as if our Savior waited to give this exhortation (this commandment), until His disciples were alone.
14. Let me put it this way—though we are commanded to love all men, we are not to love all men identically.
15. God doesn't love everybody the same! I don't love every woman the same, nor do I love every child the same.
16. I have a special and unique love for my wife and children, that I do not have for other women and children.
17. I love all women and children, but I do not love all women and children equally or identically but differently.
18. Gal.6:10—"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."
19. As we shall see in a few minutes, "doing good to others" is a fundamental expression of Biblical love.
20. But notice what Paul says—while we are to love all men, we are to especially love "those who are of the household of faith."
21. Who is this but Christians! All Christians are "of the household of faith"—we are all brothers and sisters.
22. John Brown—"It is the love which a Christian owes to a Christian as a Christian, because he is a Christian. It is the love of the brotherhood."
23. This is why we uniquely love each other—we uniquely love each other because we comprise one family.
24. This is why I'm concerned when I hear so much emphasis placed on race and color of skin—as if this is what unites us.
25. I uniquely and specially love Christians—I don't care about their social statues or the color of their skin.
26. CHS—"A man, who is a Christian, belongs to a very special family. That family circle does not comprehend the whole human race; it is a family inside the larger human family, yet separated from it by an inner spiritual life. The moment a man is born unto God, he enters that inner circle, and becomes a member of a new family. Within that sacred circle of electing love, all bonds of nationality are sundered forever. There, we are no longer Frenchmen or Englishmen, Americans or Russians, black or white, bond or free; but we are 'all one in Christ Jesus.'"
27. (2) We are to universally love one another—by this I mean, we are to love each other without exception.
28. In its originally context, this meant the 11 disciples were to love each other without a single exception.
29. Peter had to love James and John, Andrew had to love Matthew, and Simon had to love Philip and Thomas.
30. Now, keep in mind, these men were very different in trade and personality, and yet they were to love one another.
31. Brethren, simply put we have no right to limit our love to only a few people who look and think like us.
32. Edward Payson—"There are some Christians whom it is not very easy to love, on account of some disagreeable peculiarities about them; but we shall love them hereafter, as we love our own souls, and they will love us, in a similar way. Besides, our Savior loves them notwithstanding all these imperfections; and ought not our affections to follow His? If He were now visibly on earth, and we were permitted to stand by His side, if we saw Him bend a look of love on any individual, would not our affections immediately flow out towards that person, however disagreeable or

imperfect he might be? Such a look our Savior does bend on the most unlovely of His disciples. Let us, then, love them all, for His sake."

II. How Are We to Love?

1. V34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."
2. As I've earlier said, the newness of the command to love is the perfect example of Christ's love for us.
3. Though our Savior describes His love for us in the past tense—"as I have loved you"—He includes all that's He's done and will do.
4. It seems evident He specifically refers to love He will show in a few days as He will suffer on the cross (our Savior often spoke of His cross in the past tense, as it was a certainty).
5. Verses 31-32—"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately."
6. Here our Savior refers to the cross and His subsequent resurrection and ascension (events to occur in a few days).
7. Verse 33—"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you."
8. This again refers to His death, burial, resurrection, and especially ascension (again events that will take place in a few days).
9. Thus, when our Savior says—"as I have loved you"—He's referring to His entire ministry (life and death).
10. All that our Savior did for and among His disciples for 3½ years, could be summarized in this phrase—"I have loved you."
11. Jn.15:12-13—"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."
12. Eph.5:2—"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."
13. Eph.5:25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."
14. Thus, our Savior commands His disciples to love one another, in the same way, as He has loved them.
15. (1) Affectionately—by this I mean, we are to love the brethren with our hearts as well as with our works.
16. We are prone to extremes—we say love isn't a feeling but an action, and so we go from one extreme to another.
17. But love is an affection (or emotion)—Christ loves us with actions that come from perfect affections.
18. Rom.12:10—"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love (ESV – 'love one another with brotherly affection)."
19. Perhaps at this point I need to remind you of the distinction between love of complacency and benevolence.
20. We could translate these into modern terms as love of delight (complacency) and love of goodwill (benevolence).
21. Christ loves all men with a love of good will (benevolence) but only His people with a love of delight (complacency).
22. A love of complacency is an affectionate love you have for those in whom you find delight and satisfaction.

23. Ps.16:3—"As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all My delight."
24. This is the language of complacency—"in whom is all My delight"—this is true of David and Christ.
25. Thus, to put it plainly, Christ not only loves His people with a love of benevolence but also with a love of complacency.
26. He not only gives them good things but He gives them His heart—He loves them with a love of delight.
27. And so too, Christians are to love one another affectionately—they are to love each other with a love of delight.
28. Andrew Fuller (sermon on Jn.13:34-35)—"What is Christian love? It is a complacency in the Divine image; its love for Christ's sake."
29. This is actually how Andrew Fuller defines Christian (or brotherly) love—"a complacency (delight) in the Divine image."
30. This means, at the very heart of brotherly love, is a delight in the image of Christ that all saints share.
31. In other words, we delight in those who bear a likeness to Christ, or, we love them for the sake of Christ.
32. This is why this aspect of love is reserved for the brethren, who alone bear or share in the image of Christ.
33. John Angell James—"Complacency is the very essence of love; and the ground of all proper complacency in the saints, is their relation and likeness to God. We should feel peculiar delight in each other as fellow heirs of the grace of God; partakers of like precious faith, and joint sharers of the common salvation. We must be dear to each other as the objects of the Father's mercy, of the Son's dying grace, and of the Spirit's sanctifying influence."
34. (2) Sacrificially—Christ not only loves His people affectionately, but also with sacrificial and selfless deeds.
35. Jn.13:12-15—"So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"
36. Now, obviously the greatest way our Savior washed our feet, is by bearing our sin and dying on the cross.
37. Remember what I've said many times—true love seeks the good of others at personal and material cost.
38. John Owen—"Brotherly love is a fruit of the Spirit of God, an effect of faith, whereby believers, being knit together by the strongest bonds of affection, upon the account of their interest in one head, Jesus Christ, and participating of one Spirit, do delight in, value, and esteem each other, and are in a constant readiness for all those regular duties whereby the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good of one another may be promoted."
39. Notice how Owen defines brotherly love—first as an affection or delight and then as an action or deed.
40. Love is both an affection and action—it's giving the object of our love everything—our affections and possessions.
41. 1Jn.3:16-18—"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

42. (3) Ongoingly—by this is meant, Christians are to love one another continually and without fail or end.
43. Jn.13:1—"having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"—to the end of mission or life.
44. He loved them throughout His entire ministry—He loved them in life and in death—He loved them to the end.
45. You know, it's relatively easy to love people for a short time, but far more difficult to love them to the end.
46. This is why marriages rarely last anymore—people easily lose interest in people and fail to endure to the end.
47. Furthermore, this is often the same reason why so few people stay in churches for any length of time.
48. People get on our nerve, and it's easier to find another woman or find another church, than to love to the end.
49. But this is not what our Savior did—He never exchanged His people for others, but loved them to the end.
50. True Biblical love lasts—it continues—it's patient and forbears with others—it's kind and suffers long.
51. Our side of the fact that the Lord saved me, one of the greatest mysteries to me is that He continues to love me.
52. He loves me even though he knows everything about me—He continues to love me even though I love Him so little in turn.
53. Jn.13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."
54. Heb.13:1—"Let brotherly love continue"—don't allow it to end—we are to love each other ongoingly.
55. Now before I move onto our final main heading, I want to briefly suggest two helps to foster brotherly love.
56. Help 1—Think often and deeply upon Christ's love for you—that He loves you affectionately, sacrificially, and ongoingly.
57. Help 2—Think often and deeply upon Christ's love for others—that He loves them affectionately, sacrificially, and ongoingly.
58. In other words, Christ's love for us (ourselves and others) is not only the example for our love but the motive.
59. 1Jn.4:10-11—"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."
60. Notice the phrase—"if God so loved us"—if God loved us in this way—"we also ought to love one another."
61. In other words, essential to our loving others, is the knowledge of how God, in Christ, has loved us.
62. He loved us while unlovely—"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us"—in other words, He loved us though we need not love Him.
63. He loved us while guilty sinners—"He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
64. This term "propitiation" refers to "a sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath for sin"—to propitiate is to appease.
65. Brethren, simply put, we're never really going to love others, unless we come to grips with this word.

66. Fewer words are more beautiful! And yet, many people talk about God's love but few truly understand it.
67. Perhaps I can go a step further—you can not truly understand God's love without understanding the cross.
68. Thus, my exhortation to us is rather simple—we must think often and deeply upon God's love for us and others.

III. Why Are We to Love?

1. V35—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"—love prove we are His disciples.
2. This necessarily implies something about Christ—that love, characterized everything he said and did.
3. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"—this is what proves you're a disciple (a follower of Christ).
4. A disciple imitates his master—you can who we follow by our actions—disciples imitate their teachers.
5. J.C. Ryle—"Let us note that our Lord does not name gifts, or miracles, or intellectual attainments, but love as the evidence of discipleship."
6. Thus, in closing, I want to answer this question—who does our Savior mean when He says "all will know"?
7. He says "all will know" we are truly His disciples to the degree we have love for one another—who is meant by "all"?
8. (1) We ourselves will know—by this I mean, true brotherly love argues the fact that we are true Christians.
9. 1Jn.3:14—"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."
10. True Christian love is a flower that only grows in the garden of God's grace—it's evidence of true grace.
11. (2) Other saints will know—by this I mean, other Christians will know we are Christians by our love.
12. Brethren, this is our family resemblance—it's not merely what we believe or whether or not we homeschool.
13. You can be Reformed Baptist in your theology and homeschool all your children and yet be without love.
14. Don't misunderstand—the fact that your Reformed Baptist (confession) means we have much in common.
15. But ultimately speaking, it's not how many puritan authors you've read that tells me you're a true Christian.
16. You know, I've been a Christian for 25 years, and I've known dozens of people who were steeped in theology.
17. And yet, all they were ever concerned about was arguing that theology and in a way that was very unkind.
18. (3) The world will know—I think this is more of what our Savior meant—the world we are different by our love.
19. What a wonderful testimony to a loveless world—the church is a family that's characterized by love.
20. It's a proven fact that most (not all) young men join a gang, in order to find some form of family love.

21. What a tragedy that these dear young men find precious little love from their own mothers and fathers.
22. It's such a sad fact that so many people (young and old) have never truly experienced real and genuine love.
23. This is why the church has to be known for its love, so that those outside the church will say—there's something very different about those people.
24. They truly love one another—they love being with each other and they love helping and serving each other.
25. Now, don't get me wrong—no person can every become a Christian simply by seeing us love one another.
26. But it's very possible, and I dare see even common, for a person to trace back our love for each other, to Christ's love for us.
27. Why do you love each other this way? Because Christ loved us this way! We love others because He loves us.
28. 1Jn.4:19—"We love Him because He first loved us"—or else, as our Savior put it—"love one another as I have loved you."