

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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LOVING GOD

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

If you were to ask those who claim to believe in God, "Do you love God?", surely they would say, "Yes!" If you were to ask those same people, "How do you show your love for God?", many would probably pause and stammer a little before they could come up with ways by which they believe they **show love for God**. [I am using love for God to refer to either the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.]

Is it all right just to **say** we love God? Should we have to be able to **demonstrate** it? Think about this matter compared to our other relationships. Is it proper for a husband merely to **tell** his wife that he loves her, but never **show** that love? What about a parent-child relationship? Would either the parents or the child experience or feel the love of the other, if all that was ever done was to **say**, "I love you"? **No, but one can demonstrate love by doing for others, even if one does not frequently say the words, "I love you."** Of course, it is nice to hear those three precious words, but without action to back up those words they mean very little. The man often described as the apostle of love said, *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth"* (1 John 3:18). The apostle did not mean one should not say, "I love you," but that love is best shown by what it does.

FOUR KINDS OF LOVE

The New Testament was originally written in the popular Greek language of the first century. The Greeks had four words for love which signify the various types of love. The Greek word for sexual love was "eros." This word is not used in the New Testament, although the sexual love of those who are husband and wife is discussed (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1-5).

The Greek word "storge" referred to the love of natural affection in the family, as between parents and children. In Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3 the apostle Paul

spoke of some who were *"without natural affection."* We can still see this today in the lack of love parents have for their children, abusing them terribly in physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual ways. One of the ultimate examples of being without natural affections occurs over one and a half million times a year here in America when babies in the womb are scalded and poisoned by a salt solution injected into the sack, or torn to pieces and vacuumed from the womb; or allowing them to be partially born only to have a doctor stop the birth, punch a hole in the head at the base of the babies' brain and suck out the brain. Those are the procedures of abortion. Horrible? Certainly! But it demonstrates how far people will go who do not have the natural affection God intended between parents and children.

A third word from the Greeks for love is "phileo," which refers to a love of tender affection, which can be true of marriage relationships, parent-child relationships, dating relationships, and of friends. It is never used in a command to men to love God, but it is used in a warning to us in 1 Corinthians 16:22: *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema,"* meaning accursed. In a "phileo" love of tender affection, we usually show our tender affections toward one who is so inclined toward us, a mutual affection for one another. When we consider the excellency of the character of Christ and His affectionate love for us, how could we refuse Him the same affection to the utmost of our abilities.

The fourth word of the Greeks for love is the one most frequently used in the New Testament. "Agape" is the word for love that is sacrificial in its nature. It is a love that is known by the actions that it prompts us to do. This is a love which God commands us to have for the Godhead, for our brethren in Christ, and for all men. Agape (pronounced, ah-gop-hay) love always seeks the greatest good for the one we love. This love does not al-

ways come from an impulse of feeling or affection toward another, for we are told to *"love (agape) your enemies"* (Matthew 5:44-48).

LOVE (AGAPE) FOR GOD

There are so many great verses on God's love for us that we cannot cover them all in one article. First John 4:19 says, *"We love him (God), because he first loved us."* John also said, describing part of the character of God, that *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8, 16). In a parallel verse to John 3:16 the apostle said, *"In this was manifested (made known) the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him"* (1 John 4:9). God showed us what sacrificial love (agape) is all about! The apostle Paul echoes the same refrain as John when he wrote, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Does such a magnificent love require that we show a like love for God? Indeed it does.

In 1 John 5:2-3 the apostle continues his discourse on love, speaking now of our love for God: **"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."** There you have it, friends and brethren. You absolutely cannot say you love God if you do not show it by keeping His commandments! Notice also that it is as if John anticipates some who will complain and say, "I cannot do what God commands. His requirements are too much for any person." The apostle would reply, "Oh no, God's commands are not too burdensome or too hard. You cannot use that excuse!"

Millions of others have done God's will over the thousands of years men have been on earth. So can we. Not perfectly, but through the blood of Christ we can receive forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Peter 3:21). We can continue to receive forgiveness of sins as we strive to show our love for

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God by walking in the light of His word and living the Christian life. If we walk in the light, we can confess our sins as an erring child of God, and when we repent and try to do better, God will cleanse us from every sin (1 John 1:7-10; Acts 8:21-24).

Jesus also emphasized our need to show our love for God through our obedience to Him. Notice the following commands from the gospel of John. *"If ye love me, keep [you will keep, ASV] my commandments....He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode [dwelling] with him...If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love"* (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10). First John 2:5 also demonstrates that only those who keep God's word can properly say they love God: *"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily [truly] is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in him."* Saying, "I love God," just isn't enough.

DO YOU LOVE THE LORD?

How do you answer this question? Have you shown your love for God by obeying the gospel? Do you have faith in Christ as God's Son who died on the cross that you may have forgiveness of sins (John 8:24; 14:6; Acts 2:36)? Are you willing to repent of your sins, turning from a life of indifference and disobedience to begin doing God's will, thus showing your love for Him (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Luke 3:3-5)? Are you willing to publicly confess your faith in Christ as God's Son (Acts 8:36-37, KJV; Romans 10:9-10)? Have you obeyed God's command to be baptized in the name of Christ that you may obtain the forgiveness of your past sins in Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:21)? These are commands of the Lord you cannot neglect and still try to say you love Him!

Are you a Christian, but one who has been unfaithful to His command that you keep on obeying His commands? As stated previously, if you repent and confess your sins, God will cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7-10). Do you worship God every Lord's Day and heed His command to *"not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is"* (Hebrews 10:25). Or, are you one of the "some" whose "manner" is to forget the worship services of the church? When you forsake the command to assemble every Lord's Day, you also disobey His command to remember Christ's sacrifice by partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-27).

It is also the case that if you love the Lord you will love your brethren. First John 3:17-18 says, *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [heart] of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth."* *"Let us love one another: for love is of God"* (1 John 4:7). Do you have need to seek your brother's forgiveness or extend forgiveness to another? You cannot claim to love God and leave these things undone (Matthew 5:22-24; 18:15-17).

You also show your love for God by the way you live, your manner of life. Mark 12:30 says, *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."* One cannot claim

to love God and so live as to show love for the sinful things of the world. Again the apostle of love speaks, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"* (1 John 2:15-17). If you truly love God you will strive to be holy, as He is holy (1 Peter 2:14-16). You cannot go to heaven if you are continuing to live in sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21). If you truly love God, you will strive to show the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24) and practice developing the Christian graces of 2 Peter 1:5-11. It just will not do to say you love God and not show it!

CONCLUSION

The love of God is such a tremendous thing. He gave Christ to die in our place, that we might live forever in His presence (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). God will forgive every sin of our past when we obey the gospel, and He will keep on forgiving the sins we commit through weakness as Christians. Think of it! God loves us that much! Though sin cost His only begotten Son and though He is completely holy and separate from sin, He keeps on loving us enough to keep on forgiving us when we fail Him (Romans 3:9, 23).

Do you think of how much you can show your love for God by doing His will, or do you wonder how little you might have to do to squeeze into heaven? If it is the latter, you truly do not love God and you will not have to worry about squeezing into heaven. Hell will be more crowded than heaven (Matthew 7:13-14), but if you do not love the Lord there will be room for you (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Please talk with a preacher, elder or member of the church of Christ who you know loves the Lord. He or she will see that you learn what you need to know and do to show your love for Him. God has shown us what love truly is by loving us. Are you showing others by loving God?

"Speaking the truth in love" does not mean speaking it in such a vague way that no one will object to it.

A religion easy to hide is easy to lose.

PLEASE DON'T INSULT US!

by Burl Curtis

There is a question floating around in our brotherhood that is somewhat a mystery. Some are asking, "Since all the churches in the New Testament had faults, which one should be used as a model for restoration?" The implication seems to be (often with an I'm smarter-than-you-are smirk), that restoring the New Testament church is an impractical idea. And since restoring the church Jesus built cannot and should not be done, we ought to follow certain preachers into the "wilderness" of fellowship with certain denominations. No one that we know of has come forth with an identifiable boundary for this interdenominational fellowship. For example, selected denominations and individuals are included but others, just as sincere and clean living, seem to be excluded. Why is a God-fearing Pentecostal accepted while a sincere, holy-living, God-fearing Catholic rejected? Why is a Baptist included while an honest, zealous Mormon rejected?

We find it difficult to answer this false teaching, not because the Bible is unclear, but because the correct words to describe it will appear, at least to some, unkind and uncaring. It is like discipline. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Heb. 12:11a), but some "mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:11a). Perhaps the words of Jesus are most fitting, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Please know the words used here are used with the greatest kindness to those who are sincerely caught up in this heresy and especially to those who "follow their pernicious (destructive) ways" (2 Peter 2:1, 2).

First, it is an insult to the common sense of the common man to suggest we ever thought about restoring the faults of the early churches. What person, in his right mind, would want to restore lying unto God and tempting the Spirit of the Lord as Ananias and Sapphira did, or similar sins (Acts 5:1-11)? It is ridiculous to suggest we want to restore the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews (Acts 6:1). Who would be so dumb to want to relive the Jewish-Gentile problem which resulted in the Jerusalem meeting recorded in Acts 15? The favorite church for these destructive "change agents" seems to be Corinth. It is an insult to those who would restore the church

Jesus built to suggest we would restore the division, fornication, going to law before the unjust, and profaning of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthian church (1 Cor., chapters 1, 5, 6, 11). Please, please! We may not be as smart as you think you are, but we're not that dumb.

Second, these arguments are coming from well educated preachers with master's and doctor's degrees. How can this be? In past years when brethren loved the truth so much, they were willing to have what they believed tested in open discussion (usually called debates). A speaker would sometimes set up a "straw man" and soundly whip it. [A "straw man" was a belief or series of beliefs which were not held by the opposition. For example, we were often accused of believing in "water" salvation. The opponent would completely defeat "water" salvation, but it was a "straw man" because we did not believe it in the first place. We believe, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).] To be perfectly frank, we do not believe the accusation that those of us who would restore the N.T. church have to restore their faults is worthy to be called a "straw man." It is purely a figment of the imagination of those who are ashamed of the teaching of the Bible regarding the church.

Third, as sincere and educated as they may be, those who are teaching this falsehood are placing themselves too closely with the rebellious Jews. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (Isa. 5:20, 21). Have you watched closely the faces of those who ask, "Which church would you restore?" Do they not leave the impression, "I'm clever. I'm smart and you are not." Is this not a clear example of putting darkness for light, and light for darkness? They are a vivid fulfillment of Paul's words, "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools" (Rom. 1:21, 22). They became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" when they suggested we wanted to restore the faults of the early church. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20)? It may bring laughter and applause in some circles, but it is a false accusation which is plainly condemned in the Bible (Luke 3:14; 1 Peter 3:16).

The Bible reveals a clear picture of the church Jesus built. If you, with an honest and good heart, will search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), you will find who built it, when it was established, how to become a member of it, what its organization and worship is to be, and how its members are to live. This church revealed in the Bible is the one God wants for all generations. If you are not in it, you need to get in and if it is not in your community, you need to restore it. We would not presume to tell you the church Jesus built cannot be restored, or not to restore the condemned faults of some members (Matt. 13:41; Rev. 3:16). We know you have more common sense than that.

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[EDITOR'S NOTE: It is a sad affair that those who are so bent on changing the Lord's church will not defend their efforts in public open dialog. They hide behind the guise of being too pious and dignified to engage in such efforts as public debate on the issues. However, they engage in scoffing and ridicule of those of us who oppose them when there is no one in the audience who can expose their "straw men" and false reasoning. Those who follow these men should wonder why they avoid testing their divisive doctrines in open discussion.]

LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH

by Daniel F. Cates

The Bible tells us with words along this line that we have a responsibility to ourselves, and to our Lord, to live faithfully to those commands which are set forth in God's Word throughout not only our entire lives, but further, especially in our lives while we are young (1 Timothy 4:12). Let us take a few minutes and look more closely at this ideal of living faithfully while we are young.

In Ephesians 4:1 we notice that all Christians are to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Paul adds to this very idea in Colossians 1:10, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Paul gives further instruction, but this is the area upon which we will center our attention. As Christian young people, we should, as Paul stated, remember the calling by which we have been called: To serve the King. "For even hereunto

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were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2:21). As Christians walking the way we should, we are to be examples. Let us notice a few areas.

We should be examples in our love. Paul said that God is love, and that if a Christian does not love his brother, then he does not love God (I John 4:7, 8). If God is love then the responsibility falls upon us to love also. Christ tells us in Matthew 22:36-39 that we are to love the Lord and, secondly, our neighbors. When we love our neighbors we will have a more genuine concern for their souls, and that love will make us want to reach out and save them from dying in their sins.

We should also be good examples in our speech. Words can tell volumes about a person, so, is it appropriate for a Christian to use foul language? Certainly Not! In Psalm 19:14 David wrote, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." These are the words which should proceed out of our mouths: Good and wholesome words, pure words (1 Timothy 5:22).

Our speech is just one way that we can be good or bad examples. We could carry this same line of thought into several areas: Our honesty, our choices, our sportsmanship, our priorities, and the list could go on. The point is this: If we want to be pleasing to God we **must** be the proper examples at all times. Never should one see us and laugh at or ridicule our inconsistencies.

Others will always be looking to our examples whether we are aware or not. Let us live with this awareness. Let us remember always our Father in our actions. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example..." (1 Timothy 4:12).

Church of Christ
Mabelvale, AR

When a man sings his own praises, he invariably gets the tune too high.

Prejudice is a great time-saver; it enables someone to form an opinion without bothering to get the facts.

Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.

THINK ABOUT IT!

CONDUCTOR: "I'm sorry, but you are on the wrong train. You want to go to Memphis, but this train does not go there. It goes to St. Louis."

PASSENGER: "What difference does it make? I sincerely thought this train was going to Memphis; does it really matter?"

DOCTOR: "Madam, I am sorry. Your husband took some pills containing poison and he is dead."

WOMAN: "He can't be dead. He sincerely believed those were sleeping pills."

SURGEON: "Sir, you have a malignant growth, which, if not removed, will cause your death."

PATIENT: "Don't be silly, Doc. I feel fine."

PREACHER: "You are traveling on the road that leads to destruction. You must repent or perish."

MANY PEOPLE: "Don't be so narrow. My folks traveled this same road and if it was good enough for them it is good enough for me. What difference does it make as long as one sincerely believes he is right. One way is just as good as another. I feel all right and that's all that matters. I'm satisfied."

JESUS: "Not everyone that sayeth unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father..." Matthew 7:21.

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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