

JOHN

Stories Related To The Last Days Of Christ

March 17, 2019

I. Introduction

- A. **John 15:12-17** . . . “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are My friends **if** you do what I command you. [15] No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. [16] You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. [17] This I command you, that you love one another.”
- B. Prayer

II. Love commanded, friendship, chosen and appointed, love commanded.

- A. **John 15:12** . . . “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”
 - 1. In this gospel, John records three occasions when Jesus clearly states that He is commanding us to love one another.
 - a. The first occasion is found in **John 13:34**, where Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
 - b. The second is found here, in **John 15:12**, and the third time Jesus says these words is in **John 15:17**, “This I command you, that you love one another.”
 - 2. The first two times Jesus commands us to love one another, He includes the standard for love that we are to practice and the example of love that we are to follow.
 - a. In **John 13:34**, Jesus confirms the standard and model this way: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **EVEN AS** I have loved you.”
 - b. And in **John 15:12**, Jesus confirms the standard and model with similar words: “This is My commandment, that you love one another, **JUST AS** I have loved you.”
 - 3. Being made aware of love’s standard and having a quality model of love to follow is vital for us humans for a variety of reasons, but let me give you just one.

4. Given the weaknesses of our humanity, we have a propensity for selfishness – which is not just the opposite of love, it is an enemy of love – an enemy that gets the focus off of “WE” and puts it on “ME” so that I look out for my interests, needs, and wants without a loving regard for the interests, needs, and wants of those around me.
 - a. You see, by putting the emphasis on my interests, needs, and wants, selfishness generates a competition with, or an inattentiveness to, or even a disinterest in the good of others – which is not just the opposite of love, but the enemy of love.
 - (1) In addition to that, selfishness makes us hyper-sensitive – *in an unhealthy way* – to such things as being corrected, criticized, rejected, and mistreated. In other words, selfishness generates an unhealthy sensitivity to feeling unloved, which often results in withholding love and tenderness, becoming cold and indifferent, pulling away, and ultimately justifying returning evil for evil in one form or another.
 - (2) Therefore, selfishness damages and even breaks relationships – and especially our relationships with those who are the nearest and who ought to be the dearest to us.
 - b. I could go on, but the point is, **selfishness is the enemy that destroys love**, and because we are inclined to be selfish, we need a standard and model of love that we can measure our thoughts, choices, words, and behavior against in order to determine if we are operating according to the standard and model of love.
5. In the past, we have talked about loving those around us, not on the basis of how they love us, but according to love’s standard. So it is not as if we need a whole Sunday teaching on this again.
 - a. Nevertheless, given that too many of us are still clinging to and/or struggling with various forms of selfishness, I do want to reinforce two aspects of love’s standard seen in the life of Christ.
 - b. **First**, love’s primary focus is never on receiving love or being loved, but on giving love or being loving. In other words, to love according to love’s standard and model, your primary focus must be on giving love, not receiving love.
 - (1) Now let me be clear here. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be loved and being aware of who is loving you and how well they are loving you.
 - (2) What is wrong – because it feeds selfishness – is making how others are loving you **even a smidgen more important** than how you are loving them. Once you make the love that is

coming toward you more important than the love going out of you toward others, you have stopped operating within the boundaries of love and started operating within the boundaries of selfishness.

- (3) Therefore, our primary focus is not to be on receiving love or being loved, but on giving love or being loving.
- c. **Second**, how to love someone in any given situation or at any given time is never to be determined by how he or she is loving you, but rather by love's standard, that is, by how God has been and continues to love you.
- (1) For example, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. This is why Paul says that God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (**Romans 5:6-8**). In other words, it was not on the basis of our love for Him that God showed His love toward us, but rather on the basis of giving love that God showed His love toward us.
 - (2) Without question, loving according to love's standard and God's example can be challenging. Therefore, figuring out how to apply God's standard and example of love to individual people in your life requires serious thinking and pondering about the ways God love you.
 - (3) It requires much prayer for wisdom – especially when you are just beginning to figure out how to apply love's standard to specific individuals and in specific situations.
 - (4) It requires carefully observing the effects your words, choices, and actions have on those around you to see if you need to make some adjustments in how you are showing love.
 - (5) And it ought to include asking those around you if they feel loved, and what they think you could do different or better to love them.
 - (a) Of course, asking children and blatantly selfish adults this question requires sorting through their answers to pick out the truths you need to attend to as opposed to the things you can do nothing about.
 - (b) And though they may blast you with unfair accusations and criticisms, you still need to ask them the question because their answers may provide information that will help you love them according to love's standard and God's model of loving you.

- d. You see, loving according to love's standard and God's example is simple and yet complex, easy and yet challenging, unnatural to our old nature and yet possible because of who God is in us, what He teaches us, and what He can do through us.
 6. The last thing I want to say about love's standard and God's model comes from **1 Corinthians 13:8**, "Love never fails." Never fails at what? Love never fails to be love. If there is any failure when it comes to love, that failure is with us. Therefore, let us love according to love's standard and God's model, by God's help and empowerment.
- B. **John 15:13-14** . . . "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are My friends **if** you do what I command you."
1. Though there is more we could examine here, I want to touch on just three things.
 2. **First**, Jesus says there is no greater expression of love than to sacrifice your life so someone near and dear to you can live.
 - a. Now I believe it is important for us to understand that this does not mean that dying so another can live is the **greatest expression** of love possible. Rather, it is an expression of love that is not exceeded by any other expression of love.
 - b. For example, we read in **1 John 3:16-17**, "**We know love by this**, that [Jesus] laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (*Now notice the example John gives of laying down your life for a fellow believer*) [17] But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God (*that is, the love we have come to know*) abide in him?"
 - c. My point here is that to sacrifice anything of great value in order to promote or protect the well-being of another is a **great expression** of love.
 3. The **second** thing I want to point out from **vs 13-14** is that Jesus speaks of laying down His life for His friends.
 - a. Now it is true, Jesus died for all mankind And yet, only those who show themselves to be His friends, that is, those who repent, who trust in Jesus for salvation from sin and sin's enslaving power, and who proceed to live accordingly, – only those enjoy the benefit of His death.
 - b. Jesus confirms this narrow application of His death by stating that His friends are those who do what He commands.

4. Therefore, the **third** thing that is important to see in **vs 13-14**, is that Jesus' friends are those who keep His commandments. And to help clarify this truth, I want to remind you of three other scriptures.
 - a. James, in writing to believers, gives us the negative side of who is and who isn't, or when we are and when we aren't a friend of God. We read this in **James 4:4**, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world **is hostility** toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself **an enemy** of God."
 - b. Paul said something similar in **Romans 8:6-8**, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [7] because the mind set on the flesh **is hostile** toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, [8] and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."
 - c. And without mentioning the words, "friends" or "enemies," John the Baptist put it this way, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (**John 3:36**).
 5. The point here is that friendship with God and experiencing the full effect of His love is the result of trusting in God, obeying God, and loving God – rather than loving and obeying the world, the devil, and your flesh, or old nature.
- C. **John 15:15** . . . No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.
1. In **vs 14**, Jesus makes it clear who is and who isn't a friend of His. Here in **vs 15**, Jesus clarifies the difference between a slave and a friend, and that difference is based on what each is told.
 2. The slave is only told what to do – without an explanation of **why** it must be done or **how** it fits into the plans of the master.
 3. On the other hand, friends, though told what to do are also given an explanation of why it must be done and how it fits into the plans of what the Master is doing.
 4. For me, this is a wonderful reality. I understand having to live by certain rules and having to do certain things – even with explanation.
 5. But I also find it helpful to my development as a thinking person to be told why a rule exists, or why I must do certain things, and how doing these things fits into a larger plan for living a godly life. And this is especially true in relation to understanding the mind and ways

of God and applying that information in the most practical ways possible to everyday living.

6. My point is that blind obedience, though far better than disobedience, leaves the one obeying mentally stunted when it comes to learning how to think logically and critically in relation to healthy living.
 - a. And it also leaves the one who is only told what to do immature in his understanding of the master, the master's plans and purposes, the wisdom of the master's ways, and the value of obedience to a well-lived life.
 - b. Therefore, being told and taught why God commands what He commands and why we must do what He says, teaches us to think more broadly and reasonably, to value what is truly valuable, to apply what we know more fully, and to love more completely.

- D. **John 15:16** . . . You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.
1. God said a similar thing about Abraham in **Genesis 18:19**, "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."
 2. And in establishing David as the king of Israel, God said to His prophet Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons" (**1 Samuel 16:1**).
 3. Here in **John 15:16**, Jesus speaks of choosing His disciples. Therefore, with these three scriptures in mind, I want to point out three truths about being chosen.
 - a. **First**, in choosing people like Abraham, David, and the disciples, God is not making random selections, but rather He is choosing an individual – most often from a group of people – who have already chosen to follow Him.
 - b. **Second**, in choosing people like Abraham, David, and the disciples, God is choosing them for a specific task or purpose – which includes teaching God's truths and ways to those who the chosen ones can teach and influence.
 - c. **Third**, being chosen is no guarantee the chosen one will perfectly or even completely fulfill all that God has chosen them to do.

Samson is a classic example of this, and a quick review of the life of Abraham, David, and the disciples shows how true this is.

4. However, being chosen does show God's confidence in you to at least get some of the job done you have been chosen to do.

E. **John 15:17** . . . This I command you, that you love one another."

1. If we believe that God told Jesus what to say, *and we should believe that*, and if we believe that God knows what He is doing and knows the best way to do it, *and we should believe that*, then we should give extra attention to the fact that Jesus begins this portion (**vs 12**) with the commandment to love one another just as He loves us and ends this portion (**vs 17**) with the command to love one another.
2. The obvious conclusion from this is that love is vital to the whole of the Christian life. And to confirm the importance of love, I want to remind you of several scriptures found outside the Gospel of John.
 - a. Loving others as God loves us affirms we are born again. We read this in **1 John 3:14-15**, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."
 - b. Loving others confirms we are serious followers of Jesus Christ. We read this in **John 13:35**, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - c. Loving one another is the most direct path to a godly life. Paul speaks of this in **Romans 13:10**, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."
 - d. And loving each other is so important to Christian living that Paul tells Timothy that the goal of teaching, preaching, and discipling is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (**1 Timothy 1:5**).

III. Conclusion

- A. Loving one another is not natural to our old nature, but it is natural and therefore can become natural to our new nature. Therefore, may we pursue a life controlled by love so that we come to that spiritual condition whereby we love according to love's standard and according to the way God loves us.