

The Most Powerful Thing a Christian Can Do

Consider the power of love

John 13.34, 35

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • February 24, In the year of our Lord, 2013

Scripture Reader and Reading: Michael Crisp – First Corinthians 13.1-7

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Kevin Michael – Songs on loving one another

Prelude:

I. How many lost people inhabit Earth?

- A. How many of them live in Josephine County?
- B. About 83,000 people live here, and
 - 1. only the Lord knows the number of the saved.
 - 2. How shall we reach those people?
 - a) How many evangelism efforts would it take?
 - b) How much money could we spend?

II. I think of atheists, evolutionists, secularists, Muslims, and others,

- A. thinking of how popular they have become, and
- B. that they have resources that we do not appear to have.
 - 1. I have had numerous discussions with these people, and
 - 2. I use the best arguments of which I am familiar, but
 - a) most of them have already decided to be against Christianity, yet,
 - b) there exists an argument they cannot refute, and
 - (1) that I have found persuades some of them
 - (2) to give up their positions and to become Christians.

III. That argument is love, but

- A. more specifically for us to love one another in the church.
- B. How can anyone argue against such a practice?

7 When a man's ways please the Lord,

He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
(Pro 16.7)

1. Eventually many of them see the emptiness of their position, and
2. the fullness of the life of love that we have in Christ and
 - a) they want it.
 - b) Therefore, assume that outsiders see your treatment of your brethren.

Persuasion:

I. The Most Powerful Evangelism Tool You Possess

- A. Brethren, we can follow the experts on evangelism,
 1. know everything that is right,
 2. say everything that is right, and
 3. do everything that is right, yet,
 - a) if we fail to use this most powerful tool,
 - (1) all we know shall be meaningless,
 - (2) all we say shall make us as nothing, and
 - (3) all we do shall not help us.
 - b) Are we ready to intensify the highest good of our religion?
- B. I just paraphrased a well-known passage on this powerful argument, and
 1. the passage goes on to say that love should permeate all that we do.
 - a) If we possess love,
 - (1) we shall possess something as strong as death,
 - (2) so that many waters and floods cannot quench this fiery attribute.
 - b) Do you understand how your love for your brethren affects the world?
- C. If we are looking for a trick, a psychological insight, or a marketing strategy
 1. that will suddenly convert people

2. without serious commitment from us,
 - a) we show we do not understand the highest good of Christianity.
 - b) Love supersedes what the world and worldly churches offer.

D. Many passages reveal the superior nature of love.

1. Song of Solomon 8.6, 7 Strong as death, cannot drown it
2. Mark 12.28-34 No greater commandment, more than offerings & sacrifices
3. Romans 13.8-10 Fulfills the law, does no harm
4. First Corinthians 12.31 It is the most excellent way
5. First Corinthians 13.1-3, 13 Tops angelic speech, knowledge, benevolence, faith & hope
6. First Corinthians 16.14 Should be present with everything
7. Galatians 5.22, 23 Tops list of fruit of the Spirit
8. Ephesians 3.17 Rooted and grounded in it
9. Colossians 3.12-14 Put on above all
10. First Timothy 1.5 The purpose of the commandment
11. James 2.8 Royal law
12. First Peter 4.8 Above all have a fervent degree of this
13. Second Peter 1.5-7 Ultimate Christian Grace
14. First John 3.10-18 Manifests children of God
15. First John 3.23 Summarizes His commandment
16. First John 4.7, 8 Do not have it, do not know God
17. Second John 5 Repeats new commandment

E. In the last passage, John said that he did not write a new commandment, but

1. one that has existed from the beginning:
 - a) From the time God spoke through Moses,

- b) to the beginning of the new covenant of Jesus Christ.
- 2. I now want to comment on this later time.

II. John 13.34, 35 – The Most Powerful Thing a Christian Can Do

34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you *love one another; as I have loved you*, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13.34, 35).

A. Consider the background to this teaching.

- 1. In 13.1-17, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

12 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? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them* (John 13.12-17).

- 2. Then in 13.18-30, Jesus revealed that one of them would betray Him.
- 3. Afterward, in 13.31, 32, Jesus said the Father and the Son would be glorified.
- 4. He told them, in 13.33, that He would leave them.

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” (John 13.33).

- a) He startled them with that announcement.
- b) No longer would He be with them in the flesh
 - (1) to lead them,
 - (2) to teach them,
 - (3) to guide them,

- (4) to command them,
- (5) to settle disputes.
 - (a) How could they keep their little group together and grow?
 - (b) Then He delivered the summum bonum, the supreme good.
 - i) Love one another just as He loved them.
 - ii) Is it really that simple?
 - (1) Yes, *talking* about it is simple,
 - (2) doing it *can be* just as simple,
 - (a) until we start putting conditions on it,
 - (b) finding excuses not to do it, etc.

B. What was the old commandment?

- 1. The old commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself.
- 2. In what ways do you want to be loved?
- 3. Love your neighbor in those ways.

C. What makes this one new?

- 1. Jesus taught that we should love one another even as He loved us.
- 2. He loves us more than we love ourselves.

D. How did Jesus love us?

- 1. He left the best place to live *with us*.
- 2. He lived His life, especially His ministry, *for us*.
- 3. He died *for us*.

E. How then should we love one another?

- 1. With humble service toward one another, even as Jesus washed their feet.
- 2. We cannot demand of one another what we are not willing to do for others!
- 3. Receive one another, even as Jesus washed the feet of Judas and Peter.

4. Forgive one another, even as Jesus did the next day.
 5. Greet one another, even as Jesus greeted Judas before the betrayal.
 6. Be available for one another, which is what Jesus did that night.
- F. What does this have to do with evangelism?
1. Look at John 13 again.
 - a) By loving one another as Jesus loved us,
 - b) we show all people that we are disciples of Christ.
 - (1) He taught love.
 - (2) We His students, teach love.
 - (a) He practiced love.
 - (b) We His students, practice love.
 2. What will happen, if we love one another as the Lord commanded?
 - a) People will want what we have.
 - b) They will desire to be part of us.
 3. We have to go out of the way to show love for one another.
 - a) What can each of us do to show such love?
 - b) What would Jesus do?
 - c) What *did* Jesus do?
 4. By love we create an attractive atmosphere for people of the world.
 - a) We do not want to repulse them by what they see and hear in us, but
 - b) we want them to see and hear love that they do not experience,
 - (1) which is what attracted me to the church as a late teenager.
 - (2) In John 13.35, Jesus revealed that He knows the hearts of all people,
 - (a) that they want to know Him, and
 - (b) that they want to know who His followers are.

- i) Not that they will always join us, but
 - ii) they will at least know who we are and some will join us.
- 5. The world knows that a man named Jesus once walked the earth and
 - a) that He started the church, but
 - (1) the world sees churches and people who really do not follow Him.
 - (2) Yet, Jesus knew that people in the world would still
 - (a) hunger and thirst for a relationship with Him, because
 - (b) He created that desire.

11 He has put eternity in their hearts... (Ecc 3.11).

19 ...because what may be known of God *is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.* 20 For since the creation of the world *His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,* 21 because, *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ...* 28 And even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,* God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting... (Rom 1.19–21, 28).

- b) Many people still want to find true disciples of Christ.
 - (1) So, the world watches us.
 - (2) They hear us boast that we are the ones.
 - (a) They hear us say we have restored the New Testament Church.
 - (b) However, they want to see it in action.
 - i) When they see it,
 - ii) they know that they will know it.
 - (c) Jesus let us know how the world thinks in John 13.35,

- i) that they know they will know who His disciples are,
- ii) if we love one another, even as He loved us.

G. Therefore, ask yourself *of yourself*,

1. how does Jesus want you to love the other members of this congregation.
2. Then do it.
 - a) That is the most powerful thing you can do as a Christian
 - b) to persuade people to follow Christ.

Exhortation:

I. While I know that what Jesus taught the apostles,

- A. for the most part He intended for us, but
- B. the fact that He did not speak this to the multitudes
 1. should tell us something.
 2. The world needs to learn this truth, but
 - a) we have to learn it first,
 - b) then we can expect the world to follow us.

II. I advise you strongly to make a point of following this passage.

A. Paul told Titus to make sure that we maintain good works,

14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful (Tts 3.14).

- B. Likewise, let us learn to maintain love for one another,
 1. to meet urgent needs
 2. that we may not be unfruitful.

III. Let our Jesus-like love picture us as much as singing a capella does, for

A. Without God's love, we cannot be saved.

1. Without Christ's love, we cannot be saved.
2. Without our love, we cannot be saved.
 - a) If the Father and the Son had not loved us,
 - b) nothing else existed that could save us from an eternity in hell.
 - (1) If the Father and the Son love us, and they do,
 - (2) we still cannot be saved,
 - (a) unless we also love.
 - (b) How can we expect to receive the greatest love, but
 - i) not return it to the One who gave it to us, and
 - ii) not show it to those whom the Father and the Son also love?

IV. Therefore, let us love as we have been loved, for then

- A. we have the hope of salvation, because
- B. we will have incorporated into ourselves the very nature of God.
 1. God is love.
 2. The sons and daughters of God are love.
 - a) When others think of a manifestation of love on the Earth,
 - b) they should think of us.

V. If that is not true,

- A. we live in a dangerous condition, but
- B. if we remember Him who loved us,
 1. we can turn our lives around and
 2. be what God wants us to be, and
 3. be what our brethren need us to be.

VI. May we pray for you to have the fullness of the love of Jesus in you?