



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 13:31-3

“Ethics in Johannine Thought: The New Commandment and the New Life”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the word of God and particularly for the Apostle John and the things that he has written for us. We thank Thee for the thankfulness that he manifested in the acceptance of the truths from the Lord Jesus Christ and for the faithfulness manifested in his life thereafter. We thank Thee for the skills which thou didst give him to write the gospel of John and the epistles of John and the Book of Revelation. We are grateful, Lord, for all that thou hast done for us through him, and we are thankful for his testimony. It is an encouragement to us. And tonight, as we consider the account that he has given of part of our Lord's ministry in the Upper Room, our hearts may be opened to receive the truth and respond to the things that are there. We pray Thy blessing upon each one present, and we ask that the particular needs that we have, each one of us, may be met through Thy word.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We have finished our study of the Holy Spirit in Johannine theology. And of course, when I say we finished it, I do not mean that we have exhausted it because we have not, but we have finished the study of the work of the Holy Spirit that

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we are going to do. I hope it's an encouragement to you to study further in John's theology the work of the Holy Spirit, for there is more that could be discovered as we read what John has to say about the Spirit's ministry to us. Tonight we want to turn to the subject of ethics in Johannine thought, and specifically I want to talk for a while on the commandment and the new life. And so if you have your gospels of John, turn with me to chapter 13, and we want to read verse 31 through verse 35 of John chapter 13.

Remember this chapter is set in the context of the beginning of our Lord's Upper Room Discourse. The twelve of the apostles were gathered together inclusive of Judas. And in the opening part of the thirteenth chapter, we have the incident in which our Lord washes the feet of the disciples, and then as a result of some of the things that transpired at the table, Judas leaves the group of the twelve and the eleven are left with the Lord. Verse 30 reads,

“He then having received the sop went immediately out straightway: and it was night.” [Now, by the way, I'm reading again from the Greek text, and so if my translation is slightly different from yours, that's the reason. But at verse 31 then we read,] “Where then, he was gone out, Jesus sayeth, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. And if God be glorified in him, God himself -- or God also will glorify him in himself, and straightway he will glorify him. My little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me: and as I told the Jews, Where I go, you are not able to come; I also tell you at this moment. A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you too love one another. In this, all shall know that my disciples you are, if you have love one for one another.”

The problem of the *summum bonum*, or the greatest good, in the Christian life is not really a difficult problem. It is a point on which the apostles, as one might expect,

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exhibit a great deal of harmony. In the Christian life, the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, is love. Peter affirms it. He writes, and above all things have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins, 1 Peter 4:8.

Now, notice he begins that statement by saying “and above all things.” So for Peter the *summum bonum* is love.

Paul affirms it also. He writes, and above all these things, put on love which is the bond of perfectness. That passage is found in Colossians 3:14. Paul was not recommending his strong point as we tend to do because he was a man stained with blood. If you look at Paul’s past life, you will see that to have the attitude of Christian love was not something that was natural to him. We tend at times to think that the things that we are most suitable for and we can most identify with are the greatest things in the Christian life. If, for example, we like biblical doctrines, we say biblical doctrines is the greatest thing in Christian life. If we don’t like biblical doctrine but we like to gather round with one another and have social times with one another, we say the important thing in Christian life is to have fellowship with one another, and so on. When a man recommends something that’s not natural to him, something that’s difficult for him, then of course we are inclined to pay a little bit more attention to what he says. And Paul was not recommending his strong point when he said, and above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfectness.

In fact, one might say looking at Paul’s life and following him through in his dealings with the Christian churches that he was not a very loving man, for he didn’t hesitate at all to be very critical of things that took place in the local churches. But there is a place for criticism from God as we learned when we studied the New Testament, and there are certain things that we must say and say in love even when they are sharp and even when they may hurt. In that sense, Paul became a very loving man. John, too,

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among the apostles affirms that the *summum bonum* is love. He writes three paragraphs about it in his first epistle. They begin,

“Beloved, let us love one another for love is God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God,” 1 John 4:7.

And these paragraphs conclude with a reference to our Lord’s new commandment as the ground of his exaltations. And this commandment have we from him,

“That he who loveth God love his brother also.” 1 John 4:21.

And one of the brothers of our Lord also got into the act for Jude, in his closing exhortations in his one chapter book has these words,

“Keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

That’s Jude verse 21. So here we have Paul and Peter and John and Jude all affirming this tremendous significance of Christian love. The source of the teaching of these apostles and the brother of our Lord, Jude, is that of our Lord in the Upper Room Discourse where he gave the apostles the new commandment, the passage that we just read for Scripture reading. It is the express statement of the lesson of the foot washing that has just taken place. When the Lord Jesus took off his garments got down before by the side of the legs and feet of the apostles and washed their feet and then got up and begin to talk about the new covenant he had just given an illustration of what he was giving doctrinally in these words a new commandment I give unto you. So the express

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lessen of the foot washing was the content of the covenant the lesson of humble love for the Christians one for another.

Now, his atoning activity, what he did on the cross, is the motivation for the nonatoning activity on our part, washing one another's feet as we read in verse 34 here, “A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” He's not suggesting that I loved you enough to die as an atoning sacrifice to you therefore you must love the brethren enough to die as an atoning sacrifice for them. That's something we cannot do. But he's simply saying that the example of myself abnegation in the atoning sacrifice is to be the motivation for you in your nonatoning activity towards the other brethren who make up the church of Jesus Christ.

Well, with that as word of introduction, we look now at this passage in the fourth gospel John 13:31 through 35. And first of all, our Lord, in verse 31 and verse 32, speaks of his glorification and specifically in verse 31 of the savior's glorification. “When then he went out, Jesus sayeth, Now is the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

Now, if you look at the context of this passage carefully it will help you to understand exactly what is meant by when then he went out, Jesus sayeth -- because the going -- the reference to the going out is a reference to Judas. He was one of the twelve. Think of it. An apostle of Jesus Christ, Judas.

The Lord Jesus referred to him and said the son of man goes as it is written with reference to him, but whoa to that man through whom the son of man is betrayed. He referred to Judas. So one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ was Judas. If you had asked a general crowd and the twelve were there who are the apostles of Jesus Christ, Judas would have raised his hand, apostle of Jesus Christ, and yet Scripture also speaks of him as the son of perdition. So the apostle of Jesus Christ, on one hand; the son of perdition on the other. What a strange character is Judas. An individual evidently of

unusual culture, the only Judean among the apostles so far as we know, a man who had their admiration because instead of making Matthew the treasurer of the group, Matthew who was used to handling money, they made Judas the treasurer of the group. But in the incident in the preceding context, Judas is now leaving the company of the twelve. John says that one immediately went out in verse 30, and it was night suggestive of the fact that when a person leaves the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is to go out into night and darkness, but one sense almost with verse 31 the relief that the Lord Jesus must have felt now that Judas was gone from the circle, his separation from the twelve. There are now only eleven marked a change of atmosphere. The barrier between the Lord and the apostles was immaturity, but the barrier between Judas the apostle and our Lord was the barrier of unbelief. So when Judas goes out, the unbeliever goes out, and there is left those apostles who were the immature followers of the Lord Jesus.

This opening clause then is more than a note of time. When then he went out Jesus said, “Now the son of man is glorified.” Notice the active voice when then he went out. That emphasizes the fact that Judas’ departure from the presence of the Lord was his own free act.

Now, on the other hand, the Bible also says the son of man goes as it has been determined with reference to him, but here he went out. In verse 18, we read, “Not concerning all do I speak: I know whom I have chosen: but this has come to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled, the one eating my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” So Judas is one whose future was determined by the prophetic word and yet at the same time he, of his own free agency, departed from the presence of the Lord. Again, we have this beautiful harmony of the divine sovereignty and human responsibility. So when he went out, now we have a situation in which our Lord is able to address the apostles as totally believers. It’s possible to understand now the son of man is glorified as a reference to the past life of our Lord up to the time of the supper, but in almost all the other

occurrences of this word in the gospel of John, it refers to the cross. And so here it likely is a reference to the completion of the cross work. So now the son of man is glorified and God is glorified in him. So he refers to the fact that soon the cross is going to take place and that will be the glorification of the Son of God, and it will also be the glorification of God through him.

Now, one might ask the question: how is Jesus Christ glorified in the cross? Now, the son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. How is Jesus Christ glorified in the cross? How would you answer that question? If someone were to say to you, how is Jesus Christ glorified in the cross, what would you say? Well, let's analyze it in this way. Let's just say he was glorified in his person. What is there about the cross that would bring into strong relief the character of our Lord? Well, you might say he's glorified in his person in the sense that one sees the magnificent grace of God in his dedication to the will of God. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor that we, through his poverty, might be enriched. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the introduction of that statement. So the grace of God is seen in the fact that our Lord left the glory of heaven, came down here, took to himself an additional nature, a human nature, and incidentally was wed to it forever, remember? It's no death us do part, for there is not death for him. That's a marriage that is eternal. He's one of us for eternity. What a condescension to the second person of the trinity. So he came, and he not only emptied himself of the sovereign prerogatives of the use of his divine attributes, but he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. What magnificent -- what a magnificent exhibition of the grace of God for unworthy sinners. So God was or Jesus Christ was glorified in the cross.

Now, the son of man is glorified. Well, he's glorified in his person in the sense that we see his grace. He's glorified in his person in the sense that we see his love, too. Is it not the Apostle Paul who says, I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live,

but Christ liveth in me and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So the cross is the exhibition of the love of Jesus Christ. In a moment, he will say, As I have loved, you love one another. So the Lord Jesus is glorified in his grace that he took upon himself this redeeming work. He's glorified in his love in the sense that by giving himself for us we see his love for the people of God.

He was glorified also in his holiness because, as is evident in what he did on the cross, he acknowledged the fact that men are sinners and that the sin of man must be judged, and so he took upon himself to be the sin offering so that judgment may be meted out upon sin in the person of the substitute. He became sin for us, he who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. So he's glorified in his person in the sense that we see his grace, we see his love, we see his holiness. Even the thieves on the cross recognized some of that, or at least one of the thieves did. He said we ought to be here but this man had done nothing amiss. One of the characteristic things that people recognized about the Lord Jesus was he was a holy man. Even the demons said, he's the holy one of Israel. The thief acknowledged his holiness. Pilate said three times I find no fault at all in him. So he was glorified in his cross work by the fact that it was the revelation of his holiness.

Now, if we look at his work, now is the son of man glorified, well, we can see that in the cross of Christ he annulled at the work of Satan. In John chapter 12, verse 23 and verse 31, reference is made to that. Furthermore, he was the means by which the sin nature was judged Romans 8:3. The apostle said, What the law could not do and that it was weak through the flesh God sending his own son in the likeness of sin for flesh and for sin condemns sin in the flesh. So he was, in his work, the means of judgment against the sin nature and also against the world.

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In chapter 12 in verse 31 of this same gospel, we read these words, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” So the Lord Jesus, in his work, is the means for the judgment of the world. Paul, when he speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Corinthians 4 in verse 6, talks about the ways in which God is glorified in Christ, and he rather sums it all up this way: Because God is the one who said out of darkness the light shall shine, and he is the one who has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So when one looks at Jesus Christ, one sees the glory of God in his person, one sees the glory of God in his work. So when our Lord says, now is the son of man glorified, we ought to be able to answer that question. How is he glorified? Well, he’s glorified in that we see these magnificent things about his person. We see these magnificent things about the work that he has done. We call him the savior. We call him the one who has annulled the work of Satan. We call him the one who is the judge of the world. We call him the one who has infinite grace and love and who is the holy one. All these things are expressions of the greatness of the Son of God.

Now, he also says, And God is glorified in him. And if God is glorified in him, God also will glorify him in himself and straightway he will glorify him. The Father’s glorification is referred to in verse 32. You’ll notice that there are, in most of the modern translations, there are three things that are said here in this text. First of all, and if God is glorified in him, that’s not intended to suggest doubt, but in the light of the preceding statement, it’s an assumption. If God is glorified in him -- yes, God is glorified in what Christ has done -- God also will glorify him in himself.

Now, just exactly what does it mean for God to glorify Christ in himself? Well, that’s not an easy thing to say. There are some things that you know in the Bible you can read over and over and over again, and they don’t seem to mean too much to you until finally after you’ve pondered after a long time suddenly things come clear. I don’t know

whether you've ever had that experience in reading the Bible or not, but I think most people who study the Bible have had that experience. That often is the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, sometimes of course it's not necessarily the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, you've just obtained a weird idea. And then the thing to do is to keep reading the Bible, and then when you see that it was a weird idea, to cast it aside. Well, most of us when we study the Bible we find there are many passage in the Bible that are confusing to us because we are not yet able to understand them. What does it mean when he says, and God will glorify him in himself? God will glorify Christ in God. Well, I confess, I've puzzled a great deal over that, and what I'm going to do is to suggest to you what this may mean. In order for you to see what I'm driving at, I want you to turn over to the seventeenth chapter in the fifth verse where we have a similar expression in that we have the idea of glorification here expressed as well.

Now, the Lord Jesus is praying in his high priestly prayer, and he has said in verse 1,

“Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” but in verse 5 he says, “And now glorify thou me, Father, with thyself by thy side of thyself, with thy glory -- with the glory which I had thee before the world was with you.”

Now glorify thou me, Father, by thy side, by thyself, with the glory I used to have before the world was with Thee.

Now, what was it that the Lord Jesus Christ relinquished when he became a man? Many expositors say he relinquished his glory; that is, the voluntary use of his divine attributes. He did not abandon his divine attributes. He was just as much God when he became the son of man as when he was the Son of God in the beginning. So the becoming the son of man did not mean the casting away of any of his divine attributes.

He was just as much God in the manger in Bethlehem as he was in the heaven before he took to himself that additional nature, but what he did as the mediator was to surrender the voluntary use of his divine attributes. That is, he became subject to the Father as he carried out his mediatorial work. Paul says that later on he's going to turn over the kingdom to God as the mediator in order that God may be all in all, and he will resume his position after the mediatorial work is over as the second person of the trinity with all of the voluntary exercise of his prerogatives as the Son of God. But for a time, when he was here upon the earth, he did what the Father wanted him to do. He spoke the words that the Father wanted him to speak. He says over and over in this gospel, as we will see when we study on Sundays, that he was subject to the Father. And so here I suggest to you that when he says and God will glorify him in himself, he's referring to the fact that the time is coming when he will be united with the father in heaven, will receive again the glory that he had by the side of the Father before the world was, and he shall then resume his place in the fullness of the glory of the Triune God. And the third thing he says, And straightway he will glorify him. In other words, it's going to come quickly now because the cross is not far away.

Well, he speaks of his going away in verse 33 he says, “My little children” -- Now, isn't that an interesting word? You see he can use *teknion* which means my little children since Judas is gone. Judas was not one of the little children. You won't find this use in the preceding context because Judas was there. This is a little word that suggests the close relationship of a parent and a little child. It's only here used by the Lord. It was used by a rabbi when he addressed his pupils. He said my little children, *teknion*. And so our Lord speaks to the apostles as his disciples, his pupils, my little children. It left its impression upon John. He must have never forgotten it because in his first epistle he uses the term seven times to speak of Christians, my little children.

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Well, I'm so old I can call you my little children. I hope some of you are spiritual disciples as well. So my little children notice this word my little children here. That's a good biblical word. He says, “Little children, yet a little while am I with you. You shall seek me: but as I told the Jews, where I go, you cannot come; so I tell you at this moment.” I'm going to leave you. I am going to be gone. You will not be able to come. You will be left here. Your ministry will be to carry out the ministry of the preaching of the gospel. And the teaching that follows is an attempt on the part of our Lord to prepare them for the time when he would not be there. And finally in verse 34 and verse 35 he speaks of his gift of the new commandment and first in verse 34 of the precept and then verse 35, the promise. Look at verse 34, “A new commandment I give you, That you love one another; as I loved you, that you too love another.”

Now, this is the dying savior's last gift. One wonders why he chose this gift. It seems more like a yolk than a gift. Who can fulfill the commandment to love one another as Christ has loved us? Think of what that means. My little children, love one another. Love one another as I have loved you. Who can do that? Who could possibly live up to a commandment like that, but this commandment comes with a glorious promise and it's accompanied by the greatest power, the power of the Holy Spirit. And when one considers the potentialities of this particular commandment, it then becomes a gift of grace beyond measure.

Now, what does he mean when he says a new commandment? Doesn't the Bible say almost from its beginning that we are to exercise love toward others? Do we not read in the Old Testament that we are to love our neighbors? As a matter of fact we do. In Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18 in the Mosaic Law, we are told to love our neighbors as ourselves. So what's new about the new commandment? Well, I suggest to you, first of all, that the word new here is an adjective that means new in the sense of fresh. There is another word for new used in the New Testament and also in connection with the new

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commandment of Jeremiah which means new in the sense of recent, but this is a fresh commandment in comparison with the legal commandment. But it's quite different in character from that legal commandment that we should love our neighbor as ourselves because, first of all, it's a love for member for one's own family. It's love one another. It's not love the neighbors. It's love one another. In other words, great stress rests upon the fact that the people of God in this age make up a family. So it's love one another. It's family love. Furthermore, it is measureless love. It's not love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, some people I know that's almost measureless, but still it cannot really compare with as I have loved you. It is a measureless love. That is new. That's something not found in the Old Testament. As I have loved you, that you love one another. And then of course, it's not a fleshly love. It may be suggested by the love of neighbor. It's a spiritual love. The main thing that makes it different is its motivation. It is love for Christ's sake. Please remember that. Our relationship one to another in which we are to love one another in the family of God in Believer's Chapel is for Christ's sake. You don't love them because you find them attractive, and you don't afford them because you find them attractive. Many saints are very attractive. Many saints are very unattractive. You love them for Christ's sake. As I have loved you that you love one another.

Now, one notices also the tenses of these words here. He says a new commandment I'm giving to you that you go on loving one another as I loved you that you also go on loving one another. You see the contrast between the fact that we are to go on loving one another -- he says it twice, and it's like my magnificent exhibition of love.

Now, there are some who like to say this must be a reference to the cross. Well, of course, it includes the cross, but I suggest to you that it's more than that because in

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chapter 15 in verse 9 we read, As the Father loved me, I loved you. And the love of the Father is not related to one incident in our Lord's life, but it gathers up all of the expressions of the love of the Father for the Son. And it is spoken of as if all of them were gathered together spoken of them spoken of as an event. So I would suggest to you that while the cross is paramount, no doubt, as an expression of the love of Christ for us, it also includes the other manifestations of the love of God in Christ because he loved us in becoming incarnate. He loved us in suffering the temptation. He loved us in the experience of the transfiguration. He loved us in the experience in the Gethsemane agon. All of these things were stepping stones along the way to the climax of the cross. And he did love us to the uttermost there in dying for us, but it includes all of the special manifestations of the love of Jesus Christ for the saints.

Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, the Good Sheppard said. So it was his whole life gathered together climaxing on the cross. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I have loved you. So I would render this as, I have loved you that you also love one another. You certainly can see a tremendous emphasis here on Christian ethics. Christian ethics gathers round the love of God in Christ for us and our love for the family of God as the expression of our response. What a difference the righteous love of Jesus Christ is from the love suggested by a situation ethics in which we do whatever the situation seems to demand rather than what the Scriptures specifically teach. You know in the New Testament, there are three words for love. I'm sorry. In Greek literature there are three words for love. Two of them are found in the New Testament. One of them is the Greek word *erabo*.

Now, *erabo* is the word from which we get the English word “erotic” usually associated today with the sexual love. It was the love in which one takes everything. Then there is the word found in the New Testament *phileo* which is the love that people have who have similar likes and dislikes. For example, I might say I love so and so. He

likes golf. I like golf. Or he likes football. I like football. It is the love because we have interests that are alike. So it's a give-and-take kind of love and then of course, the great love is expressed by *agapao*, the third word, in which love is the love of the will directed toward the object and frequently involving sacrifice in order for it to be properly expressed. That's the love in which everything is give. So in one, we have everything take. In one, we have give and take. In the other, we have everything given. Well, that's the word that is used here. That you love in the sense of giving yourself giving yourself sacrificially, if necessary.

There is an old story about Archbishop Usher and Samuel Rutherford that I like. The archbishop was passing through Galloway in Scotland, and he turned aside on a Saturday afternoon to enjoy the congenial society of Samuel Rutherford. This is traditional. I don't know how true it is, but he came in something of a disguise and thought he would act that way with Mr. Rutherford whom he did not know at the time. So he introduced himself. He was invited to come in and to be a part of the home. That night with the rest of the family they sat around the table, and they were catechized as was usual in those days from the Scottish catechism, a Westminster Confession. The question that was asked to the stranger was how many commandments are there? Well, the archbishop said eleven, and Rutherford corrected him. He said no ten, but he persisted, no eleven. He said eleven because Jesus said a new commandment I give you, and so one plus ten equals eleven.

Well, he went on to bed and he still didn't know they didn't he hadn't introduced himself to Mr. Rutherford. And the next morning Mr. Rutherford arose and as his custom was, he went out for a walk in order to meditate over the message that he would deliver in the Scottish Presbyterian Church. And as he was walking along, a walk that bordered on a thicket he was startled to hear the voice of a man praying, praying from the heart, from the heart and on behalf of the ministry that day and for the people who might be

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assembled to hear it. And of course, it was the holy Archbishop Usher. And soon he came to an explanation that Rutherford had already begun to suspect that he had entertained angels unawares but with mutual love they conversed together at the request of Rutherford the archbishop of the Anglican church, went up to the pulpit and conducted the usually service of the Presbyterian preacher and preached on the new commandment.

There is a church in England incidentally in North Wilkes where there are to see be seen eleven commandments inscribed on a slab affixed to the chancel arch, and this is the eleventh commandment that is there.

Well, the promise is given in verse 35 where he says by this all shall know that my disciples you are if you have love one for another. This is the promise. By this. By what? By the love, one for another. Men shall recognize that you are my disciples. That word “know” is the word that really means to recognize. This is the way that you will recognize.

Now, he’s not suggesting that you become a disciple by loving. We don’t become the disciples of the Lord Jesus by observing the new commandment. We become the disciples in the Lord Jesus by believing in him, but we are recognized as his disciples by the observation of the new covenant. So by this, all men shall recognize, and there’s a stress on the word “my” here. And that’s why I’ve been reading it, *My* disciples you are. Love then is the distinguishing mark of the true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think we can put it this way, we can say love, not knowledge, is the distinguishing mark of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but wait a minute you must be careful. We don’t mean by that love and ignorance, but we mean love is the distinguishing mark of a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, but true love can only be love in knowledge. That’s what Paul prays when he prays. He prays that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge because it’s not true love if its not guided and directed by the doctrines of the word of God. So it’s not love or knowledge, but love in knowledge that is the biblical

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truth. Some people think this is the way we can avoid studying the Bible. We will love. No, that's one of the reasons there is so much nonsense in the Christian church today. It's sentimentality. It's not love. It's not biblical love. Biblical love is guarded and guided by the doctrines of the word of God, but love is the distinguishing feature. We do know people who know biblical doctrine who are very hard. Well, that's false, but it's not bad to have doctrine. We should, of course, have love in knowledge.

Now, I think this must have meant something to them because you see Moses' disciples were known by their circumcision. The Pharisees were known by their phylacteries. The disciples of John were known by their baptism. All seem to have their particular chivalry but the mark of the Lord's disciples is Christian love, love in the knowledge of the word of God. How much of it do we have? Would others know us to be his disciples or do they know us as just another sectarian group? Is it possible that we, of all people, need to understand 1 Corinthians 13:1 through 13 in the light of this? They love before they know each other said Minutius Felix of the early Christians and the railing Lucian declared their master makes them believe they're all brothers. There is an anecdote of John in his extreme old age preserved by Jerome in his epistle to the Galatians and his comments on it. It's related that the disciples of the apostle wearied by his constant repetition of the words little children, love one another, which was all he seemed to say when he was often carried into their meetings. They ask him finally, why did he always say this? And he is said to have said, because it's the Lord's commandment and if it only be fulfilled it's enough. But if we can say that we love one another within the knowledge of Holy Scripture and guided and directed by the word of God, it would be a beautiful expression of what the Bible speaks about when it speaks about Christian love.

“Ethics in Johannine Thought: The New Commandment and the New Life” by S. Lewis
Johnson
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Tortonian said, “The heathen are want to exclaim with wonder, ‘See how these Christians love one another, for they hate one another, and how they’re ready to die for one another because, they’re more ready to kill one another.’”

Later in the fourth century Chrysostom, the famous Antioch preacher, said that one of the reasons that there were divisions among Christian in his day was because they had forgotten to love one another as Christ had loved them. He said even know there is nothing else that causes the heathen to stumble except that there is no love. Their own doctrines, they’ve long condemned and, in like manner, they admire ours, but they’re hindered by our mode of life. G. Campbell Morgan said, It’s the final test of discipleship according to the Lord Jesus. By this shall all men know that my disciples you are if you have love one for another. That’s the Christian ethic: Love, according to knowledge.

May God help us to have that kind of love motivated by the greatest exhibition, the love Christ for us. And may God help us to be so disturbed by our failures that we get down upon our knees and pray that men might recognize us as Jesus’ disciples not simply by the fact that we hold to the five points the doctrine of election, the doctrine of the premillennial advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, and other important things, but also by the fact that we have a genuine Christian love, sacrificial love, one for another.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this wonderful exhortation from the Lord. How often we fail. O Father, enable us by the presence of the Holy Spirit who is our power for living to love one another as he has loved us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.