



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 13:31-35

“The Eleventh Commandment”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For our Scripture reading we’re turning to John chapter 13 and reading verse 31 through verse 35. For those of you who are visitors and for those of you who may not have been here over the past couple of Lord’s Days, we are in the Upper Room Discourse of the Gospel of John. And in the preceding verses of this 13th chapter the Lord Jesus has washed the disciples feet, giving them a visible example of humble love and now in the new commandment he will express directly what he intended to illustrate by the washing of the disciples feet. In our last study we saw that Judas was dealt with by our Lord and now Judas has left the company of the apostles and the Lord and there are left the eleven and our Lord in the upper room as they are celebrating the last Passover and the first Lord’s Supper.

In the immediately preceding verse John has written, “He (that is Judas) then having received the sop went immediately out and it was night.” That last clause John no doubt intending to suggest that there is a parallel between the spiritual and the physical and Judas leaving the company of our Lord goes out into the darkness of the physical night outside but that’s suggesting that when a person leaves Jesus Christ and the fellowship of Jesus Christ, he does walk into spiritual darkness.

Beginning with the 31st verse then we read, “Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” Those of you who have Bibles with

marginal references will note that in verse 32 there is some question about the authenticity of the opening clause. If God be glorified in him, since some of the manuscripts of the New Testament do not have that clause. One of the things that we as intelligent Christians should remember is that we do not have the original writings of the New Testament books, what we have are copies.

Now we do not have the original writing of any ancient book, and so that is not unusual. What we do have in the New Testament textual tradition is more copies of the New Testament than of any other ancient writings. In fact one of the problems of textual criticism is the very multiplicity of the copies of the manuscripts, many of which go back very close to the New Testament times. Also contrary to other ancient writings, there is relatively speaking a very short period of time between the time of the writing of the New Testament and the time of our first copies of the New Testament, where as in the case of other ancient writings there are often as many as eight or nine centuries between the original writing and the copies that we possess. The New Testament is the best attested book of ancient history. That of course is probably due humanly speaking to the fact that the people who read the New Testament thought of it with such high regard that they preserved the New Testament. Others reading other books were of course impressed by them but they did not feel the same desire to preserve them that the Christians did the New Testament manuscripts and copies.

Now when we read in our margins that some manuscripts have this clause and some do not, that's simply a fact of human writing. It so happens that when people copy they make mistakes. They didn't have personal computers that were programmed to copy the same thing over and over again and so they had to copy by hand. I've always thought one of the funniest cartoons that I have seen was a cartoon of a group of ancient scribes in some monastery who were all had their little cubicles up against a wall, and each had his scroll out and he was copying a scroll. And one of them turns around, there's a whole string of them, one turns around and says to the other, IBM has missed out, they don't have this, but anyway, "There must be a better way of doing this," this fellow says. [Laughter] Well they didn't have that and of course they made the common mistakes that we make

when we copy. All of us who copy have copied the same thing twice, have we not? And then copying a document, because of the presence of the same phraseology, we have often skipped a section because our eyes play tricks and so we look and we copy and then we look back at the text that we are copying and our eye picks up instead of the same word or phrase that we’ve just been copying, either one before it, in which case we copy twice, or one later in which case we omit. So in the New Testament it’s not unexpected that in a case like this where we have the term glorified used several times, that our manuscripts should differ at this point.

The point of textual criticism is to notice the common human errors, frailties, errors of the eye and errors of the mind and compensate for them. Now it is likely that the text that we have, “If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself,” is genuine, and that is why we’re taking that way, but we recognize that some manuscripts have omitted that clause that begins verse 32. Here endeth the lesson in textual criticism for today. [Laughter] So, verse 33,

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know (Notice that word, know) by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Now I’m not sure that I will be able to lay stress upon this, but I wanted you to notice particularly that the Lord Jesus did not say, “By this shall all men become my disciples.” We do not become disciples by loving one another. We become disciples by personal faith in the Lord Jesus who offered the atoning sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. But it is true as he says, “that men shall know that we are his disciples if we have love one for another.” May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the opportunity that is ours this day to gather and to hear the word of God expounded, to sing these wonderful hymns of praise and thanksgiving which express what is deeply within our hearts by Thy grace, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual truths that we have been taught by the Holy Spirit.

We thank Thee for the great hymn writers of the Christian faith and for the way in which they have sought to lead us in our praise and in our worship, expressing the things that mean so much to us in spiritual language and song. And we thank Thee Lord for the day in which we live and the opportunities of it. Many hundreds of years after the time of our Lord and the apostles, but the things of God are fresh and real and living still. And today we worship Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We desire Lord to see his name magnified in our meeting, in our assembly and in our lives.

And we give Thee thanks for the blessings of life, and we would bring to Thee particularly those who are in our calendar of concern. We pray Lord Thy blessing upon each one of them, and may the particular needs that are mentioned there be met by our wonderful powerful gracious God in Heaven. We particularly bring the [name redacted] family to Thee and we pray Thy blessing upon them. Encourage them and strengthen them and bless them in their time of difficulty and trial and tragedy. Console them. And we ask Thy blessing upon Ron and his ministry and may it be fruitful there in New Jersey.

We thank Thee and Praise Thee for our country and for its leadership and we pray Thy blessing upon the President and those associated with him. And Lord we commit to Thee our elders and deacons in Believers Chapel, strengthen them. Bless the ministry of the word as it goes forth from this place over the radio and through the tapes and through the publications in the Bible classes, in the daily Vacation Bible School and all of the arrangements that are made with reference to that. O God, we commit that to Thee, we know that we are utterly dependant upon Thee for spiritual blessing. O God we pray that Thy hand of blessing may be upon us for the glory of Jesus Christ. Now Lord, be with us through the remainder of this meeting for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in the exposition of the Gospel of John is, “The Eleventh Commandment.” One question that comes before us as we ponder the section that we have before us today is the question of the *summum bonum*. What is the greatest good? How would you describe the greatest good in life? Well for Christians, one of the things that would contend for identification as the *summum bonum* would be Christian love. And the New Testament lays a great deal of stress upon this. It’s very difficult for us to say that one thing is the *summum bonum* when we do not have any statement in Scripture that says, the *summum bonum* is, or the greatest good is Christian love. But when one examines the writings of the apostles concerning love, one gets the distinct impression that one of the things that would certainly contend for being called the *summum bonum* is Christian love.

When one reads 1st John chapter 4 and the stress that the Apostle John lays upon love there, one would think that perhaps he gained those marvelous insights by reflecting upon the fact that the Lord Jesus had given him and the other apostles this new commandment first of all. He repeats the new commandment and furthermore he lays stress upon the fact that God is love. The Apostle Peter who also was in that Upper Room Discourse and heard the Lord Jesus give the new commandment, writes in his first epistle, “And above all things, have fervent love among yourselves for love shall cover the multitude of sins.” The Apostle Paul who was not there, lays stress upon some of the same sentiment, for in Colossians chapter 3 in verse 14, after speaking about all of the things that we are to put on as the elect of God, he says, “And above all these things, put on love which is the bond of perfectness.” So the apostles and our Lord lay great stress upon Christian love.

One of the things that has always impressed me about this is that the Apostle Paul surprisingly says much the same things that the Apostle John says. That’s somewhat unexpected because we do expect the Apostle John to lay great stress on Christian love, because we think of him as the apostle of love. But we don’t usually think of the Apostle Paul in that way, and yet they agree. In fact, when one looks at the past of the Apostle Paul, one is really surprised to find the emphasis that love has in his writings. For example, Luke when he describes Saul before his conversion, describes him in this way, “And Saul was consenting unto his death.” And then in Acts chapter 8

and verse 3 he says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison.” In the 9th chapter of the Book of Acts, writing again about the Apostle Paul, not an apostle yet, but the Paul to be, Luke says, “And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord went unto the high priest.” So when Paul speaks about love and lays stress upon it, he’s not recommending his strong point, he was a man stained with blood.

If you examine human nature, you will notice about human nature that people often recommend the things that are their strong points. For example, people will say, “The most important thing in Christianity is,” and it usually is the thing in which they most excel. Or “the most important thing is this,” and it usually is something in which they feel at least that they excel. A man who doesn’t know anything about Bible doctrine will not say the most important thing is to know your doctrine. He will usually say the most important thing is to be kind and loving. And likewise, if a man excels in Biblical doctrine and Biblical knowledge, he will not be likely to say the most important thing is to manifest Christian love. We tend because we are fallible human beings affected by sin to recommend our strong points and sometimes we do it not realizing our own failures in it. So when the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John and the Apostle Peter all seem to agree that love is significant and important and perhaps the *summum bonum*, we probably ought to pay attention to them.

The prologue of the Upper Room discourse is what we are studying at the present time. The actual instruction will follow, beginning in chapter 14. But it is important for us to gain an understanding of this prologue. When I think of the Upper Room Discourse, I often think of how it differs from the other great discourse that the Lord Jesus gave just before he died. In the synoptic gospels Matthew for example gives a full report of our Lord’s Olivet Discourse. It too was given near the end of our Lord’s days. But it’s an entirely different kind of discourse. It was given outside; it was not given in an upper room. It was given outside in full view of the temple and of course of the Mount of Olives on which he sat.

This one is in an upper room, it is dark, at night, and the physical surroundings illustrate the content as well. For in the Olivet Discourse with the temple in full view, we have a picture of the outward consummation of the Kingdom of God. The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth, for he will come on Mount Olivet as the apostles knew from the Book of Zechariah, and then all of the other details that have to do with the consummation of this age, well they are set out in the Olivet Discourse. But now in the upper room our Lord is speaking not to the crowds, not with the public temple and the city in view, but he’s speaking to a group of eleven men, eleven apostles, Judas now separated from them and he is going to prepare them, or try to prepare them for the time when he will not be there. In other words, these words have special reference to the individual lives of the apostles which they will live following the cross. And by application, by direct application to us, they have particular reference for us who live in the same age in which the apostles live.

This is in a sense, the express statement of what he was trying to illustrate when he got up, laid aside his garments, put the servant’s apron around him, got down upon his knees and washed the disciples’ feet. That was the visible example. That was the Texas sized object lesson. Here is the doctrine that lies behind it, the new commandment.

Now he begins in verse 31 and 32 by speaking of his glorification. He says, when Judas is now gone, and incidentally, that is important, because Judas’ separation means that there is a change of atmosphere in that little room. The barrier between the Lord and Judas is the barrier of unbelief. Judas is a man who did not have faith in Jesus Christ, though he had all of the opportunities in the world. But nevertheless he had never believed in him and therefore he could not comprehend spiritual truth. Remember the great text we cite so often but so fundamental in understanding Christianity, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they’re foolishness to them, he cannot know them, they are spiritually discerned.” Judas was utterly incapable of grasping the true meaning of spiritual truth. Of course he understood the words our Lord was speaking just as anyone may read the Bible and read the words, but to understand the spiritual truth, to have a comprehension of what it is, Judas not only did not, but could not understand. Very much like a

blind man who has people explaining to him what light is. He can have a comprehension of it, he can even speak of it scientifically, but if he has never really seen light, then he does not have the kind of experiential knowledge that is the true knowledge of light. And so Judas is a man who is separated from our Lord in spirit.

Now it may be that you're in this audience this morning and are just as blind to spiritual truth as Judas was. Oh, you know all about churches, you know about Jesus Christ, it's even possible you know about the doctrine of the Trinity. The chances are you know that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross a couple of thousand years ago. You know about the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John. In the United States we know all of these things so far as the objective truth is concerned. As a blind person you've had these things brought to your attention, but so far as the comprehension of Christianity in an experientially way, you don't really have it. There is no sense of personal communion with the Lord, there is no sense of relationship to him which is the New Testament goal, to bring us to the knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and that in that knowledge we should have life. Judas was not born again. And not being born again, he did not have spiritual life.

So Judas departs from the twelve, and now the twelve have become eleven. There is a barrier between the eleven and our Lord, but it is the barrier of immaturity. In a few minutes he will say, “I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. How be it when he the Spirit of truth has come he will guide you in all truth.” But the barrier of immaturity is far different from the barrier of unbelief. And so let me say since these messages in the Upper Room Discourse are largely for believers, let me say right at this point, that if you have not come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus, don't be surprised if you don't really grasp what we are talking about. Your need is more fundamental, you need to be born again by the grace of God.

The eleven of course, they not only are immature, but they are a group that is just about to panic. And at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, that's what will happen, they will all run off and hide while only one of the apostles will drift back to the place of the cross and a few of the women

will be there, but they will go off like wounded animals into their holes. They are men who do not yet fully comprehend even the faith to which they have been brought by the grace of God.

Now the Lord Jesus speaks to them and he says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.” One looks at that and thinks, “Now what does our Lord mean when he says that the Son of Man is now glorified?” Does that mean that at this high point in his ministry the glorification has taken place? It could be taken that way, it could be translated, the Son of Man has now been glorified. In other words, all of his ministry to this point has been a manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course in a sense it would be true, we have seen the Lord Jesus glorified in his ministry. But it is also characteristic of this gospel writer and of our Lord to use the term glorified with reference to the cross. And in fact the usage of the term in previous contexts suggest that what he means is “The Son of Man is now glorified,” he speaks proleptically “in the work that he will do on the cross by dying there.” He will not speak about that on the cross; he speaks about it ahead of time so that they will understand. “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” In a few moments he will say, “I have finished the work that I have come to do.” But he had not yet finished it. He speaks from the standpoint of the cross.

So, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” What is glorification? Well glorification is simply the manifestation of the attributes of an individual. So if the Son of Man is glorified, then we see in manifestation the attributes of the Son of Man. And if God is glorified in him we see in him the manifestation of his attributes. When we think about the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, what are the things that come in our mind? Well I can think of the Lord Jesus as being glorified in his person in that he was manifested by his death on the cross as a person who dispensed grace to men. “Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor that we through his poverty might be enriched.” And Paul prefaces that comment by saying, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich he became poor for our sakes.” The Son of God, the second person of the eternal Trinity, took to himself an additional nature, and think of this my dear Christian friend; he took to himself a human nature forever. In a sense, he wedded himself to

human nature, and he wedded himself to human nature forever and forever he will be the God man. What a condescension, what a manifestation of grace in order that the eternal promises, the purpose of the ages, that God should have a people should be accomplished. So he was manifested in his grace, he was manifested in his love, Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ, I no longer live, the life that I live in my flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, (notice the past tense) who loved me and gave himself for me.” The cross is the manifestation of his love; he is glorified in his love there.

And he is also glorified in his holiness there, let us not forget that. The Old Testament speaks of the beauties of holiness. The modern age wonders how one can think of holiness as being beautiful. Well that is only a measure of how little we appreciate of the nature of God. God finds holiness beautiful, and of course it is desirable for us to come to the place where we too find holiness to be beautiful. Think of the cross of the Lord Jesus and the two thieves who were hanging there, one on either side. Both railing upon him, both reviling him, and then suddenly a transformation takes place and one of them by the grace of God, for no man can come to Jesus except the Father which has sent draw him, and so finally, near the end of their time on the cross, one of the thieves begins to complain to the other thief that he shouldn't revile the Lord Jesus Christ because he says, “This man has done nothing amiss.” Isn't that interesting? On the cross, he comes to understand the perfection of holiness that resided in the Lord Jesus Christ. And even the Roman centurion standing by when the Lord Jesus died said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

So the Lord Jesus is glorified in his person on the cross, but he is also the instrumentality for the glorification of God. “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Just think of some of the things the Lord Jesus did. Sermons could be preached, series of sermons on all of these points. The Lord Jesus when he was hanging upon the cross annulled the power of Satan. We read back in chapter 12 in verse 23, the Lord Jesus said, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” And then in verse 31, “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” It was at the cross that Jesus overcame Satan.

Also on the cross he obtained a release for sinners. “He the Son of God bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we being dead to sin might become righteous in him,” so Peter said. So he obtained a release for sinners. He also accomplished a judgment against the sin nature. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” He too obtained a judgment against the world as we have read there in John chapter 12 also. All of these things were things that the Lord Jesus accomplished in his work. In fact, there were so many things there that one tends to want to turn to a passage like 2 Corinthians 4:6 where the apostle writes, “But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” In fact, all of the manifest virtues of God find their ultimate manifestation in the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving work.

“Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.” Every attribute of deity is superlatively magnified in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what he speaks about.

Now, of course the apostles will not understand all of that at this stage, they will labor as he teaches them in his post resurrection ministry, learn more and as they reflect through the years will finally write those magnificent epistles in which these things are spelled out.

Jesus then says in the Upper Room Discourse to the men, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you, ye shall seek me and as I said unto the Jews wither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you.” He speaks of his going to them. I think it’s rather good that he speaks to them as little children. That word is a word that means a born one. It’s a diminutive; it’s the kind of thing that you would use to speak of a little child. “Little born ones,” there’s no better translation of it than the old Scottish word, bairn which expresses a little boy, a little girl, a little child. That’s the way he speaks to them because he’s speaking as the *pater familias*, as the father around the last Passover meal. Remember at the last Passover meal, it was customary for the father to be the master of ceremonies.

I think that’s so good, we have so many things that are contrary to the spirit of the New Testament, it’s one of the saddest things to me that a father will give up his opportunity to teach his

children the things of the word of God and will, it's almost customary in so many professing Christian homes, for the father who ought to be the teacher to turn and say to his wife, “Now you teach the children the things of the word of God.” In the observance of the Passover supper it was the father who was the master of ceremonies. It was he who gave the exposition of the significance of the Passover, explaining to the children the spiritual meaning of it. Like Mr. Prier says all the time, “You'll never have a better Bible teacher than your own father.” You fathers do not give away your privilege and your opportunity and your responsibility to be the spiritual teacher in your home. You will never do more for your children than you will do if you teach them the things of the word of God. You will do far more for them than if you leave them a large estate if you simply teach them the truths of the word of God. Nothing could be greater than for a child to say, “My father taught me spiritual truth.” Eternity rests upon that. So he speaks to the disciples and says to them, “Little children,” little born ones, instructing them in the light of the fact that he will soon be gone from them in physical presence.

Now in the 34th and 35th verses he turns to speak of the new commandment. He says, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you that ye also love one another.” When one looks at this, the first thing that I think of is, how can he call this a gift? “A new commandment give I unto you,” why it doesn't seem like a gift, it seems like a yoke. Who could possibly keep the new commandment as it is set forth here? “A new commandment I give unto you,” who could fulfill it? And yet it comes with glorious promise and is accompanied with the greatest power, for in a moment he will say, “I'm going to pray the Father and he is going to send you the Holy Spirit that he may abide with you forever.” It is a yoke if we think that we can keep the new commandment apart from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. But it is the Holy Spirit who will be the power by which we are to keep the new commandment. So this great promise has potentialities that make it a gift of grace beyond measure. We should thank the Lord for the new commandment, “A new commandment give I unto you that ye love one another.”

One other question that might arise in our minds is, particularly if we're Bible readers, how does our Lord get away with saying it's a new commandment, because does not the Old Testament say that we are to love? Well, yes it does, in fact in Leviticus 19 and verse 18, Moses in the giving of the law says, “But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, I am the Lord.” So in the Old Testament, we do have the command to love. What is the meaning then “A the new commandment give I unto you?” Well of course it is a new commandment to go with the fact that there is going to be a new creation as a result of the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, in a moment he will ratify the New Covenant in his blood, and the new commandment goes with the New Covenant. Probably he means that it is a new commandment in the sense that the motivation for the fulfillment of it is new. “Love your neighbor as you love yourself,” well I guess we can look around and as we look at ourselves and other Christians, we could say, “Well we would do better if we loved one another as we love ourselves then we are doing at the present time.” Because many of us do love ourselves and if we just loved others as we loved ourselves that would be an improvement. But the potentiality that our Lord is thinking about is something far greater than that, “A new commandment give I unto you that you love one another as I have loved you,” ah what a difference. This is family love, not national love, even though a body of people like Israel, this is not that kind of love, it's something even more intimate and something deeper, family love, family love within the body of Christ. And further, it is to be measured by the love that Jesus Christ has shown to us.

Now we ought to have an intermission and let some of you leave who have to go because appointments, and then we'll spend the next two or three days talking about how Jesus Christ has loved us. One of the things that we should never forget is that the love of Jesus Christ is particular and eternal. It is directed toward his people and it is eternal love because he is the eternal Son of God. And when he sets his love upon someone, it is eternal love. That great attribute of eternity which is the possession of the persons of the Trinity pertains to all of the manifestations of their attributes. So the goodness of God is eternal, the mercy of God is eternal, the holiness of God is eternal, and the love of God is eternal. And it is special for that reason. It is eternal love, it is special

love, it is love for the people of God. One of the great experiences of Heaven is going to be the experience of being there and seeing all of those whom the Lord has loved with eternal love. No fellowship can be deeper and more intimate than the fellowship of being the recipient of the eternal love.

I've been reading over the past couple of days the biography of Augustus Toplady, the great Calvinist hymn writer. You know his hymns, you may not know them specifically, but, “Grace tis a charming sound, Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.” The man who is writing it was writing a series on hymn writers. He says, “The seven greatest hymn writers are these,” and did you know the majority of them are solid Calvinists. He includes Charles Wesley, but the majority are strong Calvinists. That's what you might expect in my opinion, because only Calvinists can best understand the love of God for us and the natural praise that flows from redeemed hearts, they best understand that in my opinion. Mr. Toplady only lived to be thirty-eight years of age. Magnificent preacher, teacher, writer and polemicist for the Christian faith, he made the statement one time and more than once that, “if a man didn't believe in unconditional election, he was basically an atheist.” Wouldn't it have been nice for a person to live in those ages when you could say things that you really thought and people didn't get so upset at you for saying them? Now you have to say it all in sweet language or else they will say you're unloving.

Well I think I was born in the wrong century, but the Lord knows best, and so here I am and I'm rejoicing I want you to know. In the eighteenth century when men like Toplady and Romain and Gill and all of those great men were flourishing and preaching the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God and people were flocking to hear them. Mr. Toplady labored out in little churches out in the west of England for most of his ministry, but in his last few years, he was invited into the city of London. And right down near Trafalgar Square just a few blocks from Trafalgar Square, he preached in Saint Stephen's and it was packed and jammed with people who were anxious to hear the great doctrines of the sovereign grace of God. And one of the themes of Mr. Toplady's preaching was the theme of the love of God for the saints and the fellowship that we have in it. I'm sure that he

enjoyed the “new commandment I give unto you that you love one another with the eternal sovereign love with which I have loved you.” That means so much.

I entitled this message “The Eleventh Commandment” because there is a tradition that Archbishop Usher, a believing man, was traveling in Scotland came to Galloway where Samuel Rutherford, the leading figure behind the Westminster Confession of Faith, was ministering and was introduced to Mr. Rutherford, and Mr. Rutherford invited him since he was a visitor in the community, to spend the day with him. It was Saturday as the custom was in Scotland; they gathered people around the table at night and had a little Scriptural quiz before the Lord’s Day the next day. And Mr. Rutherford was going around the table asking questions, and Usher had not made himself known to Samuel Rutherford yet, evidently had given another name in order that he might not realize he was in the presence of the well-known Archbishop Usher. So when he came around to the Archbishop, he asked him, “How many commandments are there?” And he said, “Well there are eleven.” And Mr. Rutherford said, “No, there are not eleven, there are ten commandments in the Mosaic Law.” But Mr. Usher said, “Well I beg to differ with you sir, there are eleven commandments, there are the ten commandments of Moses, and the one commandment, the new commandment of the New Testament.” And Samuel Rutherford said, “Well I guess your answer is acceptable.”

They went to bed, they still didn’t know each other, the next morning, Rutherford as his custom was got up early, was going out into a little place where he went to pray over the messages of the day and meditate. And as he went over to his familiar place, he heard somebody praying. And he went over to look to find out who it was because the person was praying obviously fervently and with a great deal of knowledge of the word of God and it was Archbishop Usher. Tradition has it that they came to know each other then and Mr. Rutherford invited him to preach and so that morning he preached on the new commandment or the eleventh commandment in Samuel Rutherford’s Presbyterian church.

“A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another.” By the way, this is not sentimental love; this is not what we often think of as love, sentimentality. This is the love of divine intention to bless. That is the kind of love of which he speaks. As you know well, there are several words for love in the New Testament. One of them, the one that is used here is a word that is characteristic of the New Testament apostles and our Lord as the strongest form probably of love although there is a lot of overlapping. This is the love of the will, directed will, directed toward the blessing of its object regardless of the cost. It’s the ἀγαπάω [agapaō] kind of love. It’s not the sentimentality that is so often today set forth as Christian love. This is divine eternal love.

Vernon McGee who has a way of having a happy turn of phrase every now and then reacting to the stress on sentimental love that is so characteristic of our day, in evangelicalism too, says, “I’m tired of sloppy ἀγάπη [agapē].” [Laughter] ἀγαπάω [agapaō] expresses something very deep, very significant, it is the love of divine intention to bless no matter what the cost may be. That’s the kind of love that we find expressed here. “A new commandment I give unto you that you go on loving one another.” It is a durative tense, “that you go on loving one another as I have loved,” a reference to gathering up all in one and climaxing in the cross, the love of Jesus Christ. “You go on loving one another as I have loved you in the gift of myself as the sin offering on the cross.”

And then he finally concludes by saying, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” Not by this shall you become my disciple, “By this all men shall know that you are my disciples.” In other words, it is the badge of Christian discipleship, love for one another. There’s a great deal of stress on that my in the Greek text. “By this, shall you know that my disciples you are.” And one thinks of all other kinds of disciples. Sometimes people say with reference to a young man who has been taught by me, “He’s one of Dr. Johnson’s disciples.” I cringe at that. I don’t want any disciples, I would like to attach all people that I teach and preach to the Lord Jesus so they will be his disciples. I couldn’t think of anything worse than being a disciple of Dr. Johnson. I love men like

Toplady and Calvin and Luther and all of the other great men of the Christian faith, but I wouldn't like to really be one of their disciples.

The Lord Jesus says, “By this shall all men know that my disciples you are,” both knowledge and love, how were Moses followers known? Well they were known by circumcision. How were the Pharisees' disciples known? They were known by the phylacteries that they wore on their garments. How were John the Baptist's disciples known? Well they were known by their baptizing. How are Baptists today known? Well, many times Baptists today are known by the fact that they practice immersion. How are Presbyterians known? Well they are known by the fact that they practice sprinkling, and they used to believe in predestination. [Laughter] And how are Episcopalians known? They are known by their dignity. It's nice to be an Episcopalian isn't it? Dignity. How are Romanists known? Often they are known simply by the fact that they observe the mass. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that my disciples you are, if you love one another.” Now in that list of things there are some good things. Of course it's proper to believe in baptism, it's proper to believe in predestination and so on, but Christian discipleship in its ultimate manifestation is not simply knowledge, must be grounded in knowledge but knowledge that manifests itself in the kind of Love that Jesus Christ manifested toward us.

In the early church there was some of this, not all together. Minutious Felix says, “They love before they know each other.” I don't know Mr. Romain, and I don't know Mr. Toplady, but I love him. Because he is one upon whom the Lord Jesus has set his eternal love. I cannot help but love him. The railing Lucian declared concerning the early Christians, “Their master makes them believe that they're all brothers.” We are. There is an antidote of John's extreme old age when he used to have to be carried into the Lord's Supper as they observed the Lord's Supper each Sunday. And he kept saying, “Love one another, little children love one another.” And finally one of them said to him, “Why do you always keep saying little children love one another?” And he is reported to have replied, “It's the Lord's commandment, and if it only be fulfilled it is enough.” It is the final test of Christian discipleship according to the Lord Jesus. “By this shall all men know that ye are my

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disciples, my disciples, if you have love one for another.” Not sentimentality, divine sovereign particular love. You notice he does not say love everybody as I have loved everybody. His love is for his sheep, “I have loved my sheep and I have given my life for them, you love one another as I have loved you.” May God help us by his grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to realize it in measure in Believers Chapel.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent commandment. Lord enable us through grace ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]