

## Love Unites Believers

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In the seventeenth chapter of John, a prayer of Jesus is recorded. This prayer was offered a few short hours before Jesus would die for the sins of the world. We will not find a more heartfelt expression of the love of Jesus than this prayer.

As Jesus prayed, He reflected on His life's work. He petitioned His Father to protect His apostles. Then, at the end, Jesus prayed for the future. He prayed that love might exist among future disciples. Jesus prayer, *"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them"* (John 17:25-26).

Jesus knew what the future held for the disciples. He knew of all the trials and hardships they would experience. He knew of all the persecution they would suffer. He knew of all the internal doctrinal disputes they would face. He knew the pain churches would experience when believers would depart the faith. How could they possibly thrive under such circumstances? In a word, love. Jesus petitioned God to give the disciples His love. The love of God dwelling in the disciples would equip them for everything they would experience in the world.

The love of God is an unparalleled asset, an indispensable blessing, and an inexhaustible area of inquiry for believers. Love is a revolutionary way of being. Jesus had attempted to convey this to the apostles earlier in the evening. He told them, *"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 that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:34-35).

The apostles could not doubt Jesus' love for them. Over the course of three years, Jesus had taken an interest in them. He had invested in them. He had patiently taught them. When they doubted and questioned Him, Jesus did not discard them. He worked with them through their growing pains. In just a few short hours, Jesus would die for them. The love Jesus demonstrated towards the apostles was undeniable evidence that Jesus was the Son of God.

The apostles acknowledged the paramount importance of love existing among believers. They understood how love promotes unity. As a means to reconcile the contentious brethren at Corinth, Paul called them to the greatest of all blessings: love. He wrote, *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love"* (1 Cor. 3:13). Faith and hope are rendered ineffective without love. Paul once described love as the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14). Love is what brings believers together and holds them together.

## The Power of Love

**1). Love is the foundation of discipleship.** Jesus affirmed love was the greatest command (Matt. 22:37-40). Love will give us empathy for the lost. Love gives us energy to teach the lost. Compassion energized Jesus' ministry (Matt. 9:36-38). Remember, love is what prompted God to seek our salvation. Paul wrote, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8).

Also, love will guide us in seeking the restoration of erring believers. Love will guide the approach we take towards our brothers and sisters being overtaken by sin. Paul wrote, *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1).

**2). Love will temper our reactions.** Believers have the propensity to become quite contentious when disagreements arise between them. We may become defensive of our opinions and dismissive of the perspectives of others. Indifferent attitudes certainly have been seen in elderships and preachers; however, such attitudes have not been exclusively reserved to leadership. Some believers struggle to interact in kind ways with one another. Love is the solution to our bad attitudes.

Paul wrote, *"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"* (1 Cor. 13:4-7). This is the kind of love which must govern our relationships.

**3). The love of God will enable us to overcome adversity.** God's love will always give us the strength necessary to endure and progress. Paul famously wrote, *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8:31-39 ESV).

## Conclusion

God's love will keep believers united. Whatever challenges we encounter to unity can be met if believers love God and one another. God's love will help communicate the Gospel of Christ to the world. As the world continues to digress spiritually and morally, God's love emanating

from believers will be noticed. Whatever we face in this life, God's love will warm our hearts and light our path.