Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Marks of the Committed Christian, Part 1
Scripture: John 13:31-38
Code: 1542

This morning, if you have your Bibles, turn to the 13th chapter and we are continuing in our study of the gospel of John ... coming to what has to be a real key passage. This is just loaded with truth and before you get out of here this morning, you're going to be loaded up with some theology and a little bit of practice and we hope you'll be able to assimilate it because this passage just leads to profound depths of basic theology as well as some practical areas of your own Christian experience. It's a passage that is really definitive in terms of discipleship. In fact, we've entitled the message, this morning, "The marks of the committed Christian." The marks of the committed Christian.

Of course, the question alwaysrises, and it must constantly rise in the mind of every Christian, what kind of a Christian am I? I mean, not that we come in a lot of different flavors, in terms of God's cataloging but rather in terms of our own, we find ourselves running a gamut on a spectrum. From the no ... the totally noncommitted who gets into the Kingdom and that's it, and all of his works are burned up, in terms of I Corinthians, clear over to the totally pious committed, saintly, godly, mature, stable believer. And just about everything in the middle of the spectrum is covered by somebody or another in the body of Christ.

Whatkind of a Christian are you? Are you everything you promised Jesus Christ you'd be when it all began? Or are you everything you promisedChrist you'd be three months ago, when you reevaluated your life and recommitted it? Or three weeks ago? Or two weeks ago? Or whatever? Are there visible, distinguishing marks that show that your Christianity is deeply committed?

Well, these are the questions that are going to be answered, I trust, in your own heart this morning as we examine this passage. You should have absolutely no doubt evaluating your spirituality after you've seen what God says here.

In Francis Schaeffer's book THE MARK OF A CHRISTIAN, he says in the introduction that historically men have displayed different marks, or symbols, to show their Christianity. Certain people wore little marks on their coat lapels historically. Some still do. Somebody put this on my coat one day. Other people, historically, wore chains around their neck, identifying them as believers. And still today we ... we have lingerings of that in crosses and little things that people hang around their necks. There was a time in history even when special haircuts designated believers. And we have our symbols today. The sign of the fish ... one way ... bumper stickers...posters ... tee shirts ... Bibles ... jackets with Jesus all over the back of them. Different symbols, people trying to identify themselves as Christians.

And they're okay, I don't really have any argument with these symbols, the only problem is they are totally superficial. They are all visible only to the superficial eye.

Now, you may be a Christian and wear a button that's fine. But you could just as well not be a Christian and wear a button. Wearing the button is totally superficial ... or the bumper sticker, or whatever else. And the way some Christians drive, it would probably be better if they took off their bumper sticker. But in these particular verses, Jesus gives us three internal, distinguishing marks of a Christian that show the commitment of his life. And they are much more, infinitely more, definitive than any superficial button or sticker or anything else.

Now, as we begin to look at our text, we must be reminded that Jesus' ministry is coming to an end. It is the night before His death. And He is spending these last hours with His beloved disciples to prepare them for His leaving. He has just given Judas his exit orders and dismissed him to leave His presence eternally. And Judas has gone.With Judas gone, the hypocrite off to his wretched deed, already indwelt by Satan, Jesus then turns to the eleven remaining disciples and gives to them a valedictory address, a farewell speech. Now that farewell speech runs from 13 verse 31 clear through verse 33 of chapter 16. So, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are really Jesus' farewell address to the eleven beloved disciples, Judas being absent. And in this address there is instruction, promises, warnings, commandments, and all of this private instruction really put together becomes kind of a final commitment of orders to all disciples of all ages. These words are rich, they're exciting, they're powerful, they're informative, they're motivating, they're loving, they're divine, and they're really all the things a disciple needs to know. To be a committed disciple, if you just took care of John 13:31 to 16:33, you'd have practically every ingredient you needed to really know what discipleship was all about, it's all there. And Paul, in his epistles, really simply defines and redefines all of the basics that come right out of this portion of the gospels here in John 13 and following. And I say this to you for your interest in weeks to come. I believe you are a far less than adequate Christian if you do not have a deep and thorough grasp on the principles of these chapters. And I say that because I want you to know that in the weeks to follow, beginning right today in this portion, through the end of chapter 16, these things are critically to be understood by every believer. Now we'll have a little interruption in the middle of it, when...when I'll be gone to Israel, but when we come back we're going to hit it again. These are strategic to our understanding as believers. And unless you have some very good reason, you would do well to really absorb the truths of these chapters, particularly Oven to read them on your own.

And, I thinkthey're doubly significant because they're the last words of a dying Savior. This is the last commission before Jesus goes to the cross. Now He spent time, obviously, with His disciples following the resurrection. But the crisis in their lives was the cross and so this is kind of a crisis oriented speech, and thus it is very important.

Now, in the first brief section that we come to today in these last words of Jesus the night before His death, we find that Jesus gives what should be the marks of the true disciple ... the virtues that should characterize all of His own after He leaves. Now as long as Jesus was in the world there was a certain dynamic, and He Himself had a profound impact and witness. But once He is gone, then the witness becomes dependent upon the availability of His disciples. And so it is strategic that His disciples be marked out as His disciples so that men can know where the truth resides. The problem today is that when Christians do not really be...they are not really definitive disciples, the world doesn't know to whom to go to find the answers. And the average guy when assuming that maybe God is for real, and there are answers, looks at the spectrum of Christianity quote/unquote and church and all the rest that goes with it, and he is baffled. And very often there are Christians around him but he doesn't even know they exist because there are no visible marks. And so, Jesus is saying As long as I'm here, in effect, the world knows where to go to get the message. When I m gone you better be definitive enough so that people know youare the resource. And thus He gives to them three distinguishing marks of a Christian.

You have an outline in your bulletin, and you can follow it, the three are listed there for you, and fill in some notes or passages as we go, if you want. And you can study it later on your own.

Now He shows then that the committed disciple is to be completely absorbed with three things, and here are the three distinguishing marks of a committed Christian: his Lord's glory, his love and his loyalty. That covers it. The committed Christian is totally absorbed with his Lord's glory, his love and his loyalty. I'll say it another way. The genuine, dynamic, visible, detectable disciple has a consuming desire for, number one, an unswerving focus on Christ's glory; number two, an unending love for his brother; and number three, an unfailing loyalty to his Lord. And those things are the key. Those ingredients wrap up the dynamic disciple. And they should mark every Christian, especially the mark of love which is the second one, and we'll see how that keys everything.

But let's look at the importance of each as we hear the solemn words of Jesus to the disciples. First of all, the committed Christian is preoccupied and absorbed with his Lord's glory, verses 31 through 33. Now we've talked about this so much, before we look at the verse, we've said so many times that the most important theme in the universe is the glory of God. And if you came in after the message, buy that tape because that tape ties the gettogether the entire Scripture the glory of God, the greatest theme. And the committed Christian is one who is concerned about the glory of his Lord. He is concerned with living to give glory to God. He realizes that it doesn't matter what people think of him in terms of an end, but only what they think of him in terms of a means to the end that they glorify God, in everything we do the glory of the Lord is to be our motive, our theme, our goal, our reason, ourpurpose. To give Him glory is what it's all about.

Now Paul, as I said, redefines many of the things that are right here in this passage and he does this one as well. In II Thessalonians 1:11: "Wherefore also we pray always for you that our God would

count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power." Now watch the next verse: "That the name of our Lord JesusChrist," watch it, "may be glorified in you." That's why you exist as a believer that God's name, that Christ's name might be glorified in you. And I'm building on past messages and I'm not going to take it much further than that.

Let me just read you a couple of other verses:

Jude 25 says, and wrapping up the Christian's life: "To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever, amen." That's why we exist.

First Peter chapter 4, verse 11, Peter defined it, Paul did, Jude did, Peter did, they all had the same goal, says: "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever." And just prior to that he's told us how to live. And the reason we ought to live that way is that God and Christ might be glorified.

Now, of course, you have the same thing in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 21, and we'll see that tonight in our message because we'll cover those fantastic verses that talk about the Christian's power and how the Christian gives glory to God when we speak of how to be filled with the fullness of God.

The very purpose for which you and I exist is to give glory to God, that's what it's all about. In fact, Jesus is even called in two places in the New Testament, I Corinthians 2 and James chapter 2, He is called the Lord of glory. We are to give Him glory. He deserves it. And it is the mark of a committed Christian; it is the mark of a really genuine disciple that he gives God glory. His life reflects the attributes of God. God is praised by the way he lives.

Now, with that in mind, notice verse 31: "Therefore when he was gone out," that is Judas has been dismissed, "Therefore when he was gone out, Jesus said, now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him."

You know, as I read that, it almost comes across like a sigh of relief, doesn't it? Now that Judas is gone we canget going...dismissing the son of perdition. There escapes from the heart of Jesus kind of a relief and He's now ready to speak freely of His glory to His disciples. And He begins His farewell address, and notice it so carefully, He begins His farewell address by hitting the major issue of all issues in the universe, His glory. That's the key to everything. The highest of all themes is the place where He begins His valedictory address in verse 31. The glory of the Lord is the key to everything...and for a brief few years, 33 to be exact, God incarnate, Jesus Christ, came to earth in humility, He restricted, really, the full manifestation of His glory, didn't He? He subjected Himself to human kind and to human frailty in the sense of the physical world, though He never sinned, and He restricted the manifestation of His full glory for that period of 33 years. But here He says Now it's all

over with ... starting tomorrow the Son of man is going to be glorified again. And all the attributes of God are going to be on display tomorrow. The 33 years of humiliation is done, starting tomorrow it's glory again. And Jesus longed for this glory, you know that, because in John 17 He got down in the garden there and we'll see it as we move through the gospel here, and He prayed and He said, "O Father, Father glorify Me with the glory that I had with You before the world began." He was ready to go to the cross and begin the glorification process again.

And so, with His coming glory in mind, Jesus presents really three distinct statements pertaining to His glory. And I want you to see them. They're unique and important. The first statement that He makes about His glory is this: "Now," verse 31, "Now is the Son of man glorified." That's a tremendous, tremendous statement. And it's a statement of anticipation. For 33 years He has waited to be glorified. Now it comes and His glorification would begin on a cross the next morning.

Now Judas had already begun to set everything in motion. He had already initiated the betrayal, he was out moving about now getting it all set. In just a few hours Jesus and the disciples would go into the garden of Gethsemane where Christ would continue His teaching, and in that particular situation in the garden, Jesus then would begin to pray and following His prayer Judas would march in with the soldiers and the cross would begin to take place. And it was all right around the corner and Jesus says "Now is the Son of man glorified."

Now Jesus tied His glory into the cross. When Judas was dismissed the die was cast, the wheels began to move to make the cross a reality. And Jesus was ready to die...to be glorified.

You say Well, I don't understand how death can be glory. Well, it was for Jesus Christ and I'll show you how in a moment. But let me give you a thought from the sermon of Peter in Acts chapter 3 verse 13, listen to this: "The God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers," listen to it, "hath glorified His Son Jesus whom ye delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let Him go." Peter said He glorified Him in spite of you, He glorified Him on a cross, He glorified Him in a tomb and He glorified Him...I should say, through and out the other side of a tomb ... and He will glorify Him yet, of course, in His ascension...that already had happened when Peter said that. When we talk then about the glory of the Lord, we're talking about His death ... of Christ ... we're talking about His death, resurrection, and ascension, it's all wrapped up in it. But particularly does the cross manifest glory. Even though the cross looked like shame, even though it looked like disgrace, even though it looked like disaster, it was glory and Jesus could say, "But now is the Son of man glorified." The deepest kind of shame, and the deepest kind of humiliation with accusations, insults, infamy, mockery, spit and all that men could throw at Him, a fellowship of thieves, the agony of a sinful death, in all of that Jesus could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified."

You say Well, I don't understand how in the world you can glorify somebody by putting him on a cross. All right, let me give you a little background. The glory of the Lord, the glory of God and the

glory of Christ is a reference to all the manifestation of attributes. In other words, glory ... to give God glory means to...to reveal His attributes, to believe in His attributes, to praise His attributes, His glory is the composite of all that He is. And on the cross when Jesus died, He manifested all of the attributes of God. In His death there were radiating from Him all the attributes of God. This death glorified Christ, first of all, and then we'll see in a moment how it glorified God.

Now, how did it glorify Christ particularly? I'll just give you a couple of thoughts. First of all, it glorified Christ because on Calvary Christ performed the greatest work which had ever occurred in the history of the universe. On the cross He brought to pass the salvation of damned sinners, and that work deserves glory, doesn't it? Not only that, on the cross Jesus Christ destroyed sin ... that deserves glory. Not only that, Christ through His death destroyed him who had the power of death, even the devil...that deserves glory. And then on the cross, Christ paid the price of God's justice and purchased for Himself all the elect of God and that deserves glory. And when Christ came to that cross He rendered His life a sweet smelling savor to God, a sacrifice more pureand blessed than any sacrifice everoffered. And when the offended justice of God and the broken law were fully satisfied, Jesus concluded His cross by saying, "It is finished." And He had accomplished the redemption of the human race ... satisfied the justice of God, repaired the broken law, set men free and that's the greatest work in the history of the universe and thus on the cross the Son of man received glory. So there is in all heaven and earth no act so worthy and praise and honor and full glory as that act of Jesus when He died on a cross, and thus did He say, "In the cross will the Son of man be glorified."

And there's a second aspect of His glory that Jesus mentions, notice it, also, in verse 31, it says this: "Now is the Son of man glorified," we saw that, how Christ Himself was glorified on the cross, but look at the next statement: "And God is glorified in Him." How is it that God is glorified in Christ? Oh, this is a tremendous subject ... tremendous. Now get this, as I said earlier, God's glory is His attributes. His love, mercy, grace, wisdom, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, every attribute of God, all of them are His glory. And at the cross every attribute of God was manifest in a way that had never been manifest before and thus God was glorified in the death of Christ. Do you see? Because Christ put on display in His death, all the attributes of God.

Now you say what are these attributes? Well, let me just give you a few of them. First of all, we know that God is powerful, and the power of God is seen on the cross like it is seen nowhere else. The kings of the earth, the rulers of the earth took counsel together against God and against His Christ. The terrible enmity of the carnal mind and the desperate wickedness of the human heart nailed Jesus to a cross. The fiendish hatred of Satan put forth its best effort. The world and Satan and every demon in the universe, threw all the power that it had at Jesus Christ and Jesus had the power to handle it all and by His power in death He broke every shackle, He broke every power of sin, He broke every power of Satan and He broke them forever and that's power. The cross was a display of God's power like no other display and that, friends, gives God glory.

So, God was glorified, first of all, in Christ because Christ displayed His absolute and total power over every other force in the universe.

Second attribute that came to my mind was the justice of God. And the justice of God is seen in the cross like it is seen nowhere else. God said, "The wages of sin is ... what? ... death." That's God's justice. And someone had to die for sin. And when our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross as the guilty one, the blessed substitute, Isaiah says: "God laid on Him the iniquity of us all." God was so just that He actually put all the sin of all men of all time on Jesus Christ. The penalty of the law had to be enforced, even though it meant the slaying of God's beloved Son, but God would not back off one step from His justice and the cross becomes the greatest display of the justice of God because it demanded out of God the greatest cost, and God paid it. The justice of God, then, is more illustriously glorified by the death of Jesus Christ; watch this, than if every member of the human race were to suffer in hell forever. And that kind of justice gives God glory.

Then I think, also, that God is holy and His holiness is seen at the cross ... like it's seen nowhere else. Now you would think that God would have stayed right there with Jesus because He loved Him so much, but do you realize that on the cross God turned His back and walked away, that's how holy He is. Even though He loved Jesus Christ with an infinite kind of love that's known only to deity, yet He turned His back and walked away from the cross because of His holiness. Habakkuk was right when he said: "God is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity." And when Christ was made a curse on that tree, God turned His back. And Jesus cried out in agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Never did God so manifest His hatred for sin as in the suffering of the death of His own Son. He hated sin so much, He went to that extreme. And all the honor due to the holiness of God by all the holy angels and all the cheerful obedience of the holy men of all the ages are nothing in comparison with the offering of Christ Himself in order that every demand of God's holiness might be fully met. And when Jesus displayed that kind of holiness, God received glory.

And then I think of the faithfulness of God. God is so faithful. God promised the world a Savior and God gave them that Savior. When Christ, the sinless one, was offered on the cross to receive the full and final wages of sin God showed to all heaven and earth that He was faithful. He was so faithful that even though it cost Him His only Son, He went through with it. And when you see that kind of faithfulness, you're seeing His glory.

Then, though there are many other attributes we could talk about, just one more comes in my mind, and that's the attribute of love. God's love is seen at the cross like nowhere else, isn't it? Here in His love, I John, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and gave Himself to be the atonement, the covering, for our sins and not for ours only but the sins of the whole world. That's love. Love is seen in the cross.

Friends, those are all attributes of God. And they have never been so clear in the history of the world as they were on Calvary's cross. And so not only is the Son of man glorified in what He does, but at what He does He glorifies God. And so it is that the Father and the Son are busily engaged in glorifying each other. And we could talk about the grace and the mercy of God and all the other attributes and they're all there at the cross, every one of them is there.

Then there's a third statement in...on His glory that He makes and that's in verse 32. "If God be glorified in Him," and that's reviewing the past statement, "God shall also glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him." In other words, you've got three things, number one, the...in the cross Christ is glorified; number two, in the cross God is glorified; number three, and God will yet in the future glorify Christ again. That's the third one. God shall glorify Him. Now there's the other side of the picture. There was certain glory in the cross but there was an awful lot of glory to follow the cross, wasn't there? The Father would not stop at the cross, there would be the resurrection, there would be the ex ... ascension, there would be the exaltation of Christ sitting on the right hand of the Father and yet to come there would be the return of Christ in total glory. See. So Jesus adds the third dimension of glory, the fact that God's not through, God is yet to glorify the Son and oh, there is yet to be a future glory for Jesus Christ.

In Philippians 2, verse 9, listen to what it says: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him," that is Christ, "and given Him name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." There's coming a day when the knees in the world and under the world are going to bow to Jesus Christ. God's going to glorify the Son.

In Hebrews 1:3, the Bible says this: "Christ is the brightness of His glory." And it talks about how that after He had purged our sins, God took Him to heaven and sat Him down on His right hand.

In I Peter chapter 3, and verse 22, Peter brings the same fact to our minds, it says: "Christ is gone into heaven on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Jesus Christ not only was glorified in His death, but His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation in heaven right now andHis second coming in glory in the future. There is much more glory for the Son past the cross. That's what verse 32 is saying.

Now all this glory that was coming to Christ meant that Christ had to leave. He had to leave to be glorified. And so as He is revealing His glory He also says in verse 33, and watch these words: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you, ye shall seek Me, and as I said unto the Jews, where I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you." In other words, while He's thinking of His glory and all the grandeur of it, and all the things that will be His in glory, He is also thinking about the teknia, that's

Greek for little children, the only time it's ever used in the Gospel of John. TekniaHe's thinking about the little children, the eleven beloved disciples. And He says You know, men, all this glory means I'm going to leave you. And where I go you can't come. Like I told the Jews that they couldn't come, so I tell you. It's kind of an affectionate term that He calls them... teknia, I doubt that He would have used it if Judas had been there. But He uses it of these eleven beloved children.

Now you say what did He tell the Jews? Well, back in chapter 7, He told the Jews they couldn't go where He was going. In 7:34 He said to them, "You shall seek Me and shall not find Me, and where I am there you cannot come." There you cannot come. Now watch what He said to them in chapter 8, verse 21, "I go My way and ye shall seek Me and shall die in your sins, where I go you cannot come." Verse 24, "I said therefore unto you, you shall die in your sins." Now that little statement, "You shall die in your sins," He said to the unbelieving Jews, He doesn't say that to His beloved disciples. He merely says you can't come now, where I'm going to go. And by His death Jesus was going to go to the Father and they would miss Him. They would miss His physical nearness. I can imagine, and so can you, how many days went by in the lives of those disciples when you heard this statement Oh, I wish Jesus was still here. How many times would they have said that? In trials and problems. And you remember on the mount of ascension in Acts chapter 1, as Jesus took off and ascended into heaven, they were all standing there, and they were just gazing up into heaven and the Christ was going up and two angels came by and all the disciples were just looking at Jesus, and you can imagine there were tears in their eyes and broken hearts and He was leaving, He was gone and ... and the two angels spoke and they said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you shall so come in like manner as you've seen Him go into heaven." They were looking longingly and the angel said No, no, don't look despairingly, He'll be back. They didn't want Him to go. And Jesus knew that and Jesus said little children, My glory involves My leaving, you have to understand that.

I believe this became such a burning thing in their hearts that they never got rid of it. In chapter 14, verse 1, notice what Jesus says to them: "Let not your heart be ... what? ... troubled." Now why do you think their hearts were troubled? Oh, it's obvious, because He was leaving, because He says this: "Ye believe also in Me, in My Father's house there are many dwelling places, if it weren't so I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will ... what? ... come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also." Why were their hearts troubled? Because the one they loved more than life itself was leaving. And so, Jesus presents to them the fact that He must leave but they must stay to carry on the work. He's to be glorified, they will too, someday, but not yet.

And Jesus presents to them the separation for the sake of His glory. And the committed Christian is preoccupied with his Lord's glory. It's our theme. His cross, His exaltation, His coming again, that's the display of His glory and that, friends, is the heart of our message. That's the gospel, isn't it? ... the death, the resurrection, the exaltation and the coming again of Jesus Christ. And we should have a

passionate consuming love for His glory above all else.

Henry Martyn sailed for India on July 16, 1805, he said this: "Let me burn out for God." As he watched in a Hindu temple when he arrived in India, he saw people prostrating themselves before images. And he wrote in his diary, "This excited more horror in me than I can express." He grew totally intolerant of false worship and he said this: "I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified, it would be hell to me." And somebody said to him Why so? Why are you so preoccupied with His glory? And he answered this, "If anyone plucks out your eyes there's no saying why you feel pain, it is feeling ... it is you ... it is because I am one with Christ that I am so deeply wounded."

Friends, if only we were so grieved to see His glory and only if we felt so wounded by His public humiliation among men, but we so often remain silent. So, the committed disciple is preoccupied with his Lord's glory, he sees the death, burial, resurrection, exaltation and ascension of Christ and His return of ... all of this being the glory of Christ and that is his message, that is his heart cry.

So, not only is the committed disciple preoccupied with his Lord's glory but quickly, secondly, with his love. And this is ... we've covered it so many times from other angles we'll just look at it briefly. Here is a crucial word, just because we treat it in a brevity of time does not mean it is insignificant, it perhaps is the most significant in terms of practical living. But here is a crucial word to these beloved eleven. A mark that really will distinguish them in the world. And even though they're no longer able to rejoice in the visible presence of Jesus and.... they will still be able to enjoy a full rich experience of love because He's going to leave them a depository of love in their own lives. And He says here that love shall be their mark ... notice it in verse 34. "A new commandment I give you, give unto you, that you love one another ... in what way? ... as I have loved you, that ye also love one another; by this shall men know that ye are My disciples if ... conditional ... ye have love one to another." The first distinguishing mark to the world of a believer is that he is totally absorbed in giving glory to his Lord, and in that absorption giving glory to the Lord, he reiterates continually the gospel; death, burial, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, coming again. That's his preoccupation incessantly. But the second distinguishing mark of a committed Christian is his love ... his love.

In I John 3:11, John repeated it and this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that ye love one another. And you say Well, I have a hard time loving ... do we have a capacity to love? Oh yes we do. We have a new Godgiven capacity to love. The love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, Romans 5:5. And in Romans 13:8 to 10, the Bible tells us that now in that new capacity to love, that love replaces law. We don't need rules and regulations. As I said when we studied the book of Romans. We don't have to have signs in our house that say don't bullwhip your wife. Don't smash your children, you know, with a hammer. And don't do this and ... if we have love that takes care of the lo ... of the law, we don't need the rules.

And so, in the Christian experience Christ has given to us a totally new fresh capacity to love which eliminates the necessity of a legal system because love is a superintending commodity.

And what kind of love? He says "Love as I have loved you." Now that sets the standard up there, doesn't it? That's a selfless, sacrificial, indiscriminate, understanding, forgiving love just like Christ's love. If you want to know what kind of love, it's the same kind that He had and until you've reached that point you have not fulfilled the new commandment.

You say Well, I'm not so bad; there's a few people I love. Well, measure your love by who you don't love ... if you found one, you get an "F".

Now notice what He says, and here's a key, "That you love one another." That you love one another. If ever...and this is just so basic ... if ever the body of Christ existed in that kind of love, we would absolutely devastate the world. But as I've mentioned in our Sunday night series on the body of Christ, it just isn't that way. There are factions and little groups and splits and cliques and ... and this little guy over here, sitting up there on his...ivory tower with his theological shotgun ready to blow out everybody's brains that doesn't agree with him, and you've got everybody fighting for their own little foursquare feet ... and somebody doesn't like this person, and this person doesn't like somebody, and it's just a sick, sick thing. And people gossip and backbite and talk and criticize and the world looks and they say I don't see too much love...I don't know whether they're for real or not. "By this shall all men know that you're My disciples." Francis Schaeffer said, "God gave the world the right to judge us on our love." The world looks at us and says Oh, they love, they must be from God.... oh, they don't love, they're not from God.

How can you manifest visible love? Well, there's two basic ways, Schaeffer says. Number one, by saying I'm sorry. That's a hard thing, isn't it? To say I'm sorry to the brother you don't love? That's what he says. If you're willing to do that, then you're really on the road. But let me say this pointedly, if you're not willing today, right now, to go to somebody you don't love and say I'm sorry then you don't want to be a committed Christian. And you don't want the mark of a committed Christian. And the whole body of Christ is incapacitated... if you're not willing to do that.

You know what really causes the bitterness within the body of Christ isn't doctrinal difference. No ... it's invariably a lack of love. And the first way to show a visible love is say I'm sorry.

There's a second way to show a visible love, that's to say I forgive you ... whether you're asked or not. Can you imagine going up to somebody who doesn't love you and has never apologized and just saying I forgive you for not loving me? Shock them to death. They won't even know you knew they didn't love you. Oh, a forgiving spirit, a forgiving spirit registers an attitude of love, doesn't it? It just registers love.

You say But well, you know, I just can't going around saying I'm sorry, and I forgive you I mean, that...I may have been really wronged. I mean, it wasn't any little thing, boy, I was really wronged. Man, I took a lot of abuse...personally I really took it. Join the club. We've all been there.

You say Well, you know, God doesn't mean that if I really get wiped out, I'm supposed to go say you're forgiven. Yeah, that's exactly what God means.

I'll give you a real practical Scripture; you can fight with this for the next couple of hours. First Corinthians 6:1, "Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints?" Yeah, you got something, you want to sue somebody, what are you doing going to court? You say

Well, I was wronged, I want my money back.

Verse 2: "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" Why don't you come to the body of Christ, let us work it out. "And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" You believers, you're going to wind up judging the whole world, can't you take care of your internal problems? Why do you have to go to the world's courts to settle? "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" You see what he's saying? You guys are going to judge the angels and the world; you think you can handle yourselves? You say Well, it's a serious problem...I might not get justice in the church.

Watch this, verse 7, this is good: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather allow yourselves to be defrauded?" Who cares? Take all you want. I'd rather have my testimony and say I forgive you and be destitute. That's practical stuff ... pretty practical.

You want to really maintain some kind of love in this world? Then whatever comes your way take it, praise the Lord and say that's okay, I forgive you and I love you. Boy, that kind of love would devastate this world. That's a costly love...and you may have to sacrifice, but while you sacrifice materially you're stacking it up spiritually. And the quality of our love is "I have loved you." The extent of our love, "To everybody." To everybody, you know, it's not just Christians ... well that's just the beginning, that's just the start. First Thessalonians 3:12, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another and toward all men." All men. Do you love them all?

Well, there we are, friends, there's the second mark love, love, love, love. And love like Jesus loved ... love personified in Jesus is to be personifiedin us. You say Well, how can you really love like this? Only one way ... and we mentioned this and I'll mention it again ... the key to love is humility. Proud people don't love, they have no capacity. And if you're not willing to be broken, God may take strides

to break you... and break that pride. In Philippians 2, Paul says I want you to have the same love, I want you to love, and in verses 3 and 4 he says how you can do it: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory." Nobody's in it just for glory. Oh, that just kills love. "But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Is that tough? To think everybody's better than you ... honestly. "And look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others." And then he goes on to say and that's just what Jesus did. The only people who have a capacity to love are humble people. If you don't love it's because you're proud and God hates a proud heart. Love is the key.

Do you know? There have been ... there's has been times when ... in a church... love existed. That blessed little congregation, I think if I could have been the pastor in the early church I would have to ... accepted the call to Thessalonica. Man, that was a tremendous church. In I Thessalonians 4, Paul says this to them, verse 9 ... how would you like this kind of church? Wouldn't this be great? It's possible. It can happen here. First Thessalonians 4:9, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another and indeed ye do it." Oh, is that good? That little group was just loving each other and their testimony went everywhere. Two weeks after Paul left that place their testimony was all over the known world. "By this shall all men ... what? ... know that you're My disciples." You get it on with love and, man; the word is going to get out fast because people will gravitate to love like filings to a magnet.

So, he says...at the end of verse 10, he says: "But we beseech you, brethren, increase more and more." Never say die...you haven't arrived. And yet over there in II Thessalonians 1:3, again he writes them a le ... another letter later on and look what he says: "We're bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting because your faith groweth exceedingly and the love of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth." They didn't have one single loveless guy in the whole church...and what a testimony. And when it says love one another there, it's a linear verb keep on loving one another. That's our mark and it's a far surpassing love to any human love.

I read a story this week about many years ago, on Lake Ponchartrain, down by New Orleans there was a large ship that began to sink. And on it was a father and a mother and six children. And the father was strong and healthy and a fine swimmer and he promised to get them all off and take them to shore. They had no lifeboats to handle it. He told his beloved children that held take them one by one, and held be back and for them not to worry. And he jumped overboard and the wife jumped, since she didn't swim he carried her to shore. Dove back into the waves and fought his way back to the boat, took the second child, and the next, and the next, and the next. And finally, he reached the shore, there was but one left on the boat. And the father was devoted and loving and yet his strength was gone. He had no energy to swim. His friend said don't try it, you'll never make it. The father replied, "Jimmy's waiting for me and I'm going to go and get him." And he slowly had to float back the best way he could, too weary to movehis arms. When he finally reached the edge of the ship, he was beginning to sink and he called for Jimmy to jump into the water. He had strength when the boy hit

the water, only to grab him, clutch him, press him to himse ... to his heart, whisper his love in his ear and they sank never to rise again. Now, that's the love of a father and indeed a devoted love it is.

Our Christian love doesn't even match that. But do you want to know something? That's not one ten thousandths of what our love ought to be because God's love is so more infinite than that. The love of Jesus Christ is our standard.

How can you measure that love? Well, John Flavel... oh, was he something ... what a saint...said this, this is so good. He said: "Put the beauty of ten thousand paradises like Eden into one." Now watch this, "Put all trees, all flowers, all fragrances, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness into one and it would be less than the love of Christ as one drop of rain is less than all the lakes, rivers, streams, seas and fountains of all the earth." His love is immeasurable.

Well, we gave you two marks, this morning, give you number three next time. Mark number one ... what is it? ... the Lord's glory. Are you preoccupied with it? Mark number two, love, love, love ... "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples."

Our Father, we thank You, this morning, that You've given to us a visible, actual witness to the world by our love, and by our total absorption and preoccupation with Your glory. Oh, may we just live for the glory of Jesus Christ. May it be, Father, that every time we open our mouths we are uttering things glorifying to Christ. May we speak of His death and speak of His resurrection and His ascension and His exaltation and His coming again in blazing glory, may we but exalt Him every time our lips move. May the passion of our lives be to give Him glory and may it be a literal hell to us every time Jesus is not glorified. Oh we know that it is a mark of a committed Christian to give Him glory in whatever he does and says. May it be so in our lives. And then, 0 Father, what a tremendous debt we owe this world, to show the world who we are by our love. 0 God, I just pray that You might teach us to love even more than a father who gave his life for the love of a son. In the human realm, may we love brother Christians, to clutch them in their moment of disaster and need. May we throw our arms around them and love them. May we suffer whatever indignous ... indignities we may have to suffer, and may we stand firm on our own feet and say I forgive you...and I love you. 0 Father, teach us to love, teach us to go to those we don't love and say I'm sorry ... I'm sorry and I want to love you. God, begin to break down barriers in order that this testimony coming from this little local congregation might be so devastating that the world can't keep its equilibrium when they see it and hear it. Father, teach us to do nothing less and because we know You've said it, teach us to do it. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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