A Key to Recovery – Love One Another Even as I Have Loved You

Let us have another word of prayer.

Lord, what a joy it is to even be on the fringes of Your great work. When we hear of Your faithfulness to Seth and, Lord, the mighty way You work, You care, You love each one of us, it brings worship to our hearts. We bless You and are thankful for the privilege we have to stand with them during this time. We want to stand and see the mighty salvation of our God and to hear of the glorious work that You are going to do—all for Your honor and Your praise.

And Lord, we are thankful we can continue in Your presence. We are thankful You have not left us alone. You care about each one of us. You desire that we would break this bread of life, Your word, and truly feed upon it to be nourished and strengthened for the days we are living in. We are thankful, Lord, for the anointing and enabling of Your Holy Spirit to take what is written on a piece of paper and translate it in a way that brings life to our very being and transforms us. Lord, we worship You. How blessed we are, such great recipients of the grace and love of God. We want to continue now in Your presence, opening the ears and eyes of our hearts to behold You in a fresh way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction: Keys to Recovery

As we started last week, what the Lord has put upon my heart is this matter of one of the keys to recovery. We said there are many keys out there, but one that has been on my heart is this matter of loving one another. We touched on that last week, and I would like to continue this week with another little phrase in that verse where it says, “as I have loved you.” “As I have loved you” is really going to be the focus.

The verses that we have been considering are out of John. And there are three verses here. John is writing this as the Lord is speaking to His disciples. This is when the Lord is ending His earthly ministry. It is a very intimate, precious time together with His disciples. He starts here. We will pick up in John 13:33. “Little children,” what a precious thing. My dear "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'” But to encourage them, He continues. He says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.” I love that—how He adds “that you love one another” and does not just stop there. He makes His provision: “as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” And out of that loving one another, there is a glorious testimony that goes forth: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The God of Recovery

Last week as we started this—I guess you can call it a series, or considering this together—we talked about the days of crisis that we are in. And even as Jack alluded to

the new book that is coming out, these are days of crisis. We are thankful that the Lord has made provision for this day. He has not left us helpless; He has not left us as orphans, but He has made provision for us to go through—not just somehow, but triumphantly in Him, through His all-victorious life. We are thankful that even though these are days of crisis, ever since the fall of Adam, our Lord has been doing a great work of recovery. He is the God of recovery. And today He is recovering that testimony of Jesus—the testimony of Jesus, which is the reality of His headship, the reality of His life lived out and expressed through His people, individually and corporately together. It is a testimony that is of Him, not of us. And we are thankful this is the work He is doing today.

A Key to Recovery: Loving One Another as I Have Loved You

And as we mentioned last week, the key to this recovery starts within the hearts of each brother and sister. It comes about in reality by our hearts being devoted, awakened, knowing Him—His heart, His desire, and His purpose. The Holy Spirit does an awakening within us. Lord, we want You to recover all that You are after in these days. And this is why we are considering one of the keys: this matter of loving one another. And we pray that, as the Lord says in the opening of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we will have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. That call is going out to everyone, and we want to be those who are responding.

We mentioned that when it comes to this matter of recovery, there are two essential aspects. There is a very personal, intimate relationship that we have with Him. We just spoke about how our hearts are awakened. This is the vertical relationship each one of us individually has with Him. And then there is also the recovery of this love for one another—the horizontal relationship. As we have this love for one another, this is how the great building work of the house of God goes on: the strengthening of the body of Christ. This is the testimony that the world sees, and this is what prepares the bride for His soon return. It is a great work that He has called us into. It is a great work that He is doing in our midst, and we want to be those who are cooperating with Him.

We mentioned last week too, when we talk about this matter of love, it is really that God is love. We are speaking of Him, His life. It is His very character and nature. And we see that everything that He does, everything that God has done from eternity past all the way to eternity future, originates from His heart of love—His heart of love for His Son, His heart of love for mankind. Everything He is doing is found in that. And we see displayed in this love a divine, self-sacrificing love with His end always in view. And we see that love displayed by a Father being willing to sacrifice His Son, by a Son being willing to lay down His life for others. No greater love is this than that a man lay down his life for another. Those were not just words meant to encourage others. Those were words that were a testimony of a life lived out and laid down, seen in the very person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Setting of John 13–17

As we continue on today, we wanted to look at the setting of John 13 through 17, because this is where it all starts. The Lord here in chapters 13 through 17 is starting to leave the ones He has been with, leaving His disciples and preparing their hearts. Chapters 13 to 17 are really words of encouragement and preparation for His disciples to go through life and the crisis that was going to be ahead of them. I also think it can be very encouraging for us these days too, for what lies ahead of us.

The Uttermost Love of Jesus

It starts, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come"—that hour, Calvary. He knew it was there. It was not something that caught Him off guard. He knew it was a reality. "That He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world." He had loved those disciples and loved so many upon the earth that He touched. "He loved them to the"—New American Standard says, "to the end." But I do not like that. I like "to the uttermost." "The end" means it is like at some point His love came to an end. And we know it does not. That is why I like the other translations where it says He loves them to the uttermost. There is no beginning, there is no end to His love. It is always there. It is always all-sufficient. Praise God for that.

And as we are considering these verses out of John 13, it is always good to keep in mind how this is the last time the Lord is with the disciples before the cross, and He is getting ready to demonstrate that love to them at Calvary. Now, they are not fully going to understand everything that is going on, so He is preparing them. And in the days, we live in, there are a lot of things we do not understand, but He is preparing our hearts to go through these things.

He tells of His keeping love all throughout John chapters 13–17. If you just read John 13–17, it speaks over and over again of how much the Father loves us, how much the Lord loves us, and how we love one another. And through all of this love, it is great building work. It is so interwoven there. And all He shares is to prepare us for what is ahead.

He also shares, if you look at John 13–17, the blessing that we have been brought into—the great blessing of being part of this grand fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He uses different ways of describing it. Sometimes we are in the vine with Him; other times it is all about the Father's love being in Him, and He is in the Father, and the Father is in us, and we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. And you can get all—if you read it too fast, you get lost; you say, "What is all this?" But if you just take your time and go through it, you see, "Wow. We have been brought into all this great reality," and it is a marvelous thing.

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

As John 13 opens up, we see our Lord, the King of the universe, the Creator, humbly washing the disciples' feet. They do not understand. He says this is an example—a lot of things we will see the disciples not understanding. But the Lord continues to show forth, knowing that eventually they will see, they will come into it. And is that not the truth in most of our Christian lives? We see something, we hear of a truth, we learn something. We know good and well we do not fully understand it, but we know it, we believe it, and we walk on as we are abiding with Him, we are walking with Him, and we start to see, "Oh, this is that. Oh, this is making a little more sense. I am starting to gain some understanding." Praise God, there is a progression to this life. And He does not expect us, when He shows us something, to instantly be an Einstein spiritually and understand everything.

The geniuses of the world—what is always recorded is their great success. But if you look at any of the geniuses of this world, the inventors, their batting average is not too good. They failed more times than they ever succeeded. Through the failures that they had, they finally succeeded. And sometimes in our Christian life, we feel like that. It is like we fail. "Oh, I came up short again." But He still loves us, encourages us to keep going on. And we learn from that, and we keep going. And we see that it is not I, but Christ. And we press on to all that.

Jesus' Intimate Time with the Disciples

As we said, He starts by washing their feet. Then He becomes troubled in His spirit. It says the Lord is troubled in His spirit. That is always amazing. He is troubled in His spirit because He is sharing with these ones that He will be betrayed. They did not understand that either. What is He talking about? And at this point, Judas leaves the room. It is significant. It is recorded there because our Lord had washed the feet of Judas. We will talk about that at another time. But it just shows His love for all and His desire for each and every one. Knowing full well that Judas would betray Him, He humbled Himself and washed his feet. And now He is alone with these eleven remaining disciples. And He shares with them the theme verses. He shared with them the theme verses that we read. But He is going away. They cannot come with Him. And they do not understand that either. And then in John 13, after the verses that we read, it closes with Him telling Peter that he is going to deny Him. Peter, you are going to deny Me three times. And of course, Peter denies that. He says, "No, I would never deny You." Well, we know the rest of the story about how Peter ended up denying Him.

As you stop and reflect upon the message there in John 13, we see that this is, I mean, it has been open to all of us. But the spirit of that time, it was a very private, intimate time with the disciples. And it is so precious for us, this is the spirit in which the Lord shares this with each one of us. This is a very private, personal time for us to consider all that He is sharing with us, to prepare us for the days ahead and how much more of His life He wants to be seen through us.

And as we said, the first thing He speaks to them—the first thing He speaks to them as we have often said that the first thing is the most essential, and it is the main thing. As we mentioned last week that main thing, as John reminds us, is to keep the main thing the main thing. But He gives them this—it is a precious spiritual treasure, and it is the reason He is giving it. He says, “I am giving you this to keep you from stumbling.” Remember at the beginning of John—it is 16:1—He says, “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.” He knows that they will be tempted. He knows what is ahead. He knows these ones—they do not know themselves, as we will see in a minute—but He knows them, and He is trying to encourage them and prepare them. And He knows us. Much of what He shares with us at times and through these verses is to keep us from stumbling and doubting as we go through some of the challenges ahead.

The New Commandment: Love One Another

As we come to this, it says, "Little children,” we just read this: “I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'” And then that special treasure about loving one another. We are going to reflect on these verses. I was not sure how many times to put these verses up there, but I said, well, you cannot err on the side of excess with Him in His verse. If you do not, I am sorry for the repetition, but that is fine. But this again, this new commandment. We will talk about the new commandment: “That you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."” So precious, the treasure of these words.

Unity

As we see the opening here of John 13, we said John chapters 13 through 17 go together. It is one whole section within the Gospel of John. As we look at the end of John 17, we see the same spirit that we see from the very beginning, and it is summed up at the end. He closes this time with that specific prayer. It is called the Lord's Prayer or the High Priestly Prayer. This is truly His prayer—what He is praying for the disciples. Just as we know that the first things that are shared are so essential, the last things are also very vital and equally essential for us.

As we look at this prayer at the end of John 17, He is praying to the Father: “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.” These ones for which He is praying, He is saying they know the reality, they know You sent Me. He says, “And I have made Your name known to them,” He has revealed it to them. “And will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” This Father's love within them—just as the Lord and the Father are one, He is really showing us, in this panoramic view of John 13 to 17, how much this whole matter of love and unity goes together. Love, as we mentioned last week, is that perfect bond of unity.

You cannot have unity unless there is one with another. You can have a congregation; people can congregate together. You can have a team. What is the success of a team? Team sports are won by unity. Team sports are won when maybe one guy denies himself a little bit so that others can come in. It is often the case.

I think I have mentioned this before, but Stella and I go to Brazil pretty frequently. And one of the things I have learned in Brazil is football, as they call it—football, or soccer, as we call it. I never knew anything about it. But Brazil creates some of the greatest football players in the history of the sport. And it still does, but Brazil does not— it has won its share of World Cups, but the biggest problem it has in winning World Cups is that they have too many stars on the team. Everybody on the team plays for clubs in Europe or other places, and they are all making $50 to $100 million a year. You ask somebody like that to deny themselves for the other guys on the team, and you have a team of individuals running around. Whereas often what you will see, maybe somebody like from France or the team from there will come in and they play together, they win the game.

And this is what the Lord is trying to get through our thick heads—the necessity of how we need one another, and that "one another" is all-inclusive. It is not just to say you need some of them. We need all of each other, and we need to be together in this. And this is the example the Lord shows us: the unity that they have in the Godhead. He wants that to become reality within our hearts and lives. As we touch more and more of His heart and His life, we see the precious treasure we have been brought into. And what we start to see, which we do not see with our natural eyes, is the precious treasure in one another. The precious treasure in Isaiah—just because he has a great name does not make him special. But no, there is treasure in that name, treasure in him. What a treasure each one has. Some of us have known each other for a good while. What a treasure there is within each one. And do we really value that? It is only then that that testimony can fully, really be recovered and expressed in this day and time. And this is His heart's desire. What He desires is to see His desire for our hearts to be woven together in unity with His heart for the achieving of His return and purpose.

Fellowship

What this is called is fellowship. It is the unity of fellowship we have been brought into with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an amazing thing, what we have been brought into. Without any caveats. He brings us into this place of fellowship, and He discloses that throughout John chapters 13 to 17.

It is not like we are second-class citizens. He says, look, all the Father has, I am giving to you. The Spirit of truth reveals everything to you. The Father is in you, I am in you, you are in Me—all of this. It is not like you have this elite group—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now obviously they are, but they are in this fellowship. He says, no, we are sharing back and forth, one with another. There is a place that you have been brought into.

Now, we do not have the Deity and all that—do not carry that too far. But we see how in fellowship there a union is, there is oneness, there is preciousness, there is unhindered access that we have to Him, and we want Him to have that unhindered access to us. The hindrance in this fellowship does not come from His side. It often comes from our side when we are not really opening our hearts and allowing Him to work the way He is desiring to do. And He wants us. God is so jealous that we know Him. And this is a recurring message throughout John 13 to 17.

I am actually up here doing an advertisement for John 13 to 17 if you have not noticed that. We are doing the panoramic view. And I appreciate how some Bible teachers say, when you are sharing, just give the panoramic view. But what you want to do is stimulate brothers and sisters to go back from looking at this panoramic—wow, I want to see that detail—and just be able to dig into this.

Because we see throughout these chapters, He wants us to know this beautiful fellowship that we have been brought into. He wants us to know this absolute necessity of loving one another—really not an option. In order for us to really press on, this is an absolute necessity. And He wants us, each and every one of us—each one of us. And as soon as we say, "each one of us," automatically in some of our minds, we say, well, that is not me, though. But, but, but—no. He wants each one of us to know how much the Father loves us, how much Jesus loves us, how much the Holy Spirit loves us, how much all three of them are for us in this, to bring about the glory and honor.

As we said, He wants us to know the person of the Holy Spirit. He has not left us alone as orphans. He comes and He has left us with this Holy Spirit. And even just in these few chapters, He talks about the Holy Spirit as the Helper, the Comforter, the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, on and on—to reveal Christ. This is what the Holy Spirit is after.

Oh, would we come into seeing this recurring message! And what it does, it reinforces within us the overall message of how God is a God of purpose. He is doing this with an end in view. He is doing this work of recovery through all of this and through reminding us that He has made again every provision for us in Christ Jesus. What a life we have.

And whatever is in front of us, there is a place of complete security. He holds us in His hand. He never lets us go. He is ever interceding for us. He is pleading, Father, do not take them out of the world, but keep them through the world. Hold them through the midst of the world. And He knows the evil of the world. He knows all of the challenges we will face. Hold them there, Lord, as they are abiding in You and resting in You. Praise God. He will return and complete all that He has begun. We are thankful for that.

The Disciples' Weaknesses and Jesus' Response

Jesus Knows the Challenges Ahead

As I was considering these theme verses, I will call these three verses that we are looking at the theme verses just for reference—I was thinking, why is this the first thing shared with them? Why is He sharing this with them? To me, three things came up.

First, He knows the challenges they will face when He leaves. He knows how their faith will be challenged: doubts, sufferings, fears, rejections, persecutions, denials, the feeling of abandonment—everything that they will go through, He sees. And we see how the disciples experience all of these. He is preparing them. He does not say, "Do not have these." He says, "When you have doubts." "I love Thomas, and I will bring, I will carry Thomas through when he is doubting Me. As you have fears, as you reject Me, as you abandon Me"—one denies Him in Gethsemane, they all flee and abandon Him—"still, I love you. I have still got you." There is a provision here for them.

And He is trying to help them see in a fuller and greater way how much they need to stand together in unity and oneness that they have in Him to overcome all of the challenges that they face ahead.

Brothers and sisters, this is the exact same reason He shares it with us. He is sharing it with us because He knows what we will be facing ahead. We do not know what is ahead, but we know who is ahead. And He is the one who carries us through. This is the spirit of John 13 to 17. I am not looking for a theological understanding of these chapters. It is not a study of that. It is a study of life—seeing His life that He is wanting to impart to us, to carry us through triumphantly.

Jesus Knows We Do Not Always Get Along

He also—the second thing I noticed—He knows they do not always get along. And can you imagine saints not getting along? I do not know, I mean, look at us, we get along all the time, no problems. But He knows them, that they do not always get along together. Remember the time when the mother of James and John went and asked for the preference? "Lord, in Your kingdom, let one sit on Your right hand and one on Your left hand." And what did the others think? It says they became indignant. They were just really ticked off because they did not ask first. They were jealous. How come? And you get your mother working for you? That always—that is a sucker punch when you try to get the mother involved. Boy, you are in trouble then. But we see how they do not know each other, and they do not get along well at times.

Even when the Lord tells them He is going to Jerusalem, "When I go to Jerusalem, I am going to be arrested. I am going to be found guilty. I am going to be crucified, but I am going to be resurrected." And what do they do? Do they start praying for anything? No, they are arguing, talking among themselves: "Who is the greatest? If He is going away, who is great? I am going to be number one." "No, no, no, John. I should be number one." "No, I was the first one selected. We saw Him, remember?" No, they are

always—each one, each one has their own little argument on why they should be number one.

It is interesting, after the Lord's Supper, after He washed their feet, they had had the Lord's Supper, He told them that one was going to betray Him, and they were arguing again over who is the greatest. Brothers and sisters, He knows we do not get along all the time, but He is showing us a way through as we argue over who is the greatest, who is number one, who is this or who is better than so-and-so. “I am better than that. My apple pie is better than her apple pie. Why do people appreciate that? My butter chicken is better than her butter chicken?” I have to work in some Indian things now. We get jealous if everybody is not bragging about what I make, this or that.

We see it is the same for us. We can become offended with each other; we can be upset. But He is saying He does not throw them out. The beautiful thing about this is you see how much He knows these disciples, and He does not disqualify any of them. He is talking with the eleven now. Judas is gone. He knew one would betray Him, and that was to fulfill the scripture. Judas was gone. These are the ones close to Him. He knows, He sees them. He knows them far better than they know themselves. And He does not say, “You are all going to be disqualified. I will find another group.” No. He says, “You are it.” Brothers and sisters, we are it. We have to press on through. We do not have those options.

Jesus Knows We Do Not Know Ourselves

Finally, as we say, He knows they do not know themselves. He has talked with Peter; He tells Peter that Peter is going to deny Him. And Peter says, no, no, no. Often when we read this story, we stop with Peter saying no. But if you look at a couple of the Gospels, what did all the others say? They agree with Peter: “We would never deny You.” It is really all eleven who have said it. Peter gets exposed publicly worse than the others. All the others are committed: “We are committed. We will never do this.” And then you remember James and John, what were their names? They were the sons of thunder. They were going to call down lightning upon those who did not agree with our Lord, who did not receive Him. It is amazing—that is a whole different topic—how John ends up being transformed into the apostle of love. He just has this desire that they be kept from stumbling because He knows that possibility. Remember at Gethsemane, when they came to arrest Him, how many stood with our Lord Jesus there? None of them. They all fled. Everybody fled when He was arrested. It was not just Peter who denied Him; they all fled. And in this, He says, love one another.

As we look at these verses, it is healthy to see the Lord's heart and purpose for them and also the condition of these disciples. If we have a better perspective on them, I think it can help us relate to them. Sometimes we can almost unconsciously elevate them. Look at these eleven. They were so special. They were this or that, but they are flesh and blood. They put on their pants just like we do. They walk and they have issues and problems and all, but the Lord used them. They were His chosen ones, and brothers and sisters, each one of us is a chosen one—a chosen one with a special treasure. And

that treasure within us is desiring to burst forth. And He is showing us the way for that treasure to come forth and to carry us somehow, not just through by the gritting of our teeth, but carrying us through triumphantly, overwhelmingly conquering through Him who first loved us. Praise God for that.

The Tenderness and The Intimacy of Jesus' Address

Let us look at these verses now, John 13:33. And the key phrase in that, that is really upon my heart, is this little word at the very beginning: "Little children, little children." Now, this phrase, "little children," really means "My dear little children." There is an intimate, personal relationship there with these dear ones. And it is the only time this word, this phrase, is used by our Lord Jesus. It is the only time it is used. It is used by another person, His mother, one time when He was a child and they found Him in the temple. They had all gone to Jerusalem when He was a child, and they headed back to where they were from. Then they found out Jesus had not been with them, so they had to go back to Jerusalem. They found Him in the temple. And when His mother speaks to Him, she uses this little word, but it is a very specific, special word. It is not a normal, common word. It is the only time—it is really the only time—it is used by anyone throughout the Gospels, and really in the New Testament, it is very rare. John, because of being one of His disciples and that apostle of love, uses it seven times in his first epistle, I John 1. He uses that.

But this phrase, "little children," is—and this is who He is speaking to. Just imagine now that He is speaking this to you, to each one of us. He is speaking this to us. This was not just limited to them; He is writing this to us, and this is the relationship. This is His perspective of who we are. He is not up there as God Almighty; He has come down, He has washed your feet, He has died for you. And now He is saying, "My dear little children, I know what you are going to have to go through." And He is trying to get our attention through tenderness, this precious, tender word. He is crying out to them, to comfort them, to console them, because He knows all that they are going to have to go through. They are going to need His protection, His guidance, His support, His care because of who they are, and because of their weaknesses. And we need that just as much because of our weaknesses. Lord, we need Him. We need Him every hour, we need Him every minute, every second, all the time. But really, He is trying to let them know that He will never forget them, He will never leave them, never forsake them. That is why He talks in John 14: "You will not be left as orphans. I am leaving you for a while, but I am coming back. I am not leaving you as orphans because I am sending a helper to you. We are of the same spirit." Oh, what love He has. We see this tender affection, compassionate love. It is a great word of comfort. Tremendous.

In marriages or in families generally, most husbands or wives or fathers or mothers have a tender word of affection that they address somebody—one of the kids or their spouse—by. And it can be unique. To somebody else, it does not mean anything. It can be "honey" this or "honey" that. It does not mean anything to most people, but to you, between the two of you, that is a special connection. Wow. When my father calls me this, my mother says this to me, when my wife or my husband says this phrase to me,

there is a connection, there is a heart-to-heart talking with each other. And this is what He is doing. “You are My special, dear little children.” And He says that to each one of us. What a place of comfort, what a place of assurance and awe, of experiencing His great love that He pours out to us as He calls to us in that way. Praise God for that.

The New Commandment: Love One Another

And then as He has their attention, as He shares this tremendous word of encouragement—this new commandment given to you: “Love one another. Even as I have loved you, you also love one another.” What a new commandment this is. And you read this new commandment, and we are thinking, wait a minute, in the New Testament, we do not have commandments, but we see that we do. This is a new, fresh way of expressing Himself. Because this new commandment that He has given comes from a new source. It is a new nature originating from a new center of life. There is a newness of motive, newness of scope, and testimony. And it applies to something that is fresh, full of life. It is not stale, old, or dried up, but there is freshness—there is freshness of life. And it is backed by a higher and purer example, and it is His life. What is this new commandment? What is the source of this new commandment? It is His life. Christ in us, His life expressed in us. It is that source of life. He says, “Love one another as I have loved you.” He is not expecting us to do this in ourself. He says, “look at Me—as I have loved you. And now that life is living within you, let that life in you be lived out as you love one another.”

The Old and the New Commandments

Sometimes when we think about this new commandment, we might say, wait a minute, it does not sound entirely new. I have heard some of this before. People asked the Lord, what was the greatest commandment? They asked Him that, and He replied, quoting from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. He says there in Matthew, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend on the whole Law and the Prophets.”

As you compare this to what He is saying, what is the source of the Old Testament commandments themselves? In the Old Testament, He says, “You shall.” In the New Testament, it is “He will.” In the Old Testament, it was, “You shall do this, you shall do that, you shall do this.” But in this one, He says, “You love one another as I have loved you.” He will do it. When He gives us these encouragements and all, He will do it. It is His new source of life in everything.

The people in Israel were never called to lay down their lives for one another. You do not see that being expressed. What is making this a new commandment is that it is so much richer and has a new source. And this new source is simply His life, that life of love, that agape life. Not just brotherly love—praise God for brotherly love—but it is that agape, that self-sacrifice, a life of one who loved us far more than He loved Himself. It is

not our natural love for our neighbors, but the way He displayed that love at Calvary for us.

Kenny mentioned a couple of weeks ago in Romans 13:10 how love sums up the whole law. And this is what it is summing up; it is completing it. There is a way of living it out now. There is a new way of living it out. And this new commandment—it always touches me how, when we think of our Lord Jesus, He speaks of His love. He loved us so much. And we hear it so much, it loses the punch. One brother was going to sleep; I just had to wake him up. But we see how it loses the punch that He died for us. He loved us so much, He was willing to die for us. Wow. We hear it again every day, every time at the table. That is the standard that we have. And this is the one: He died for us. Why did He die for us? So that He could live in us, and so that that life could continue to live and bear fruit—and bear much fruit—and bear fruit that remains for His glory and for His honor. His dying for us was a beginning; that we could enter into the joy of everything that He has for us.

The New Motives and Obligations of Love

Now I quote. I came across this quote from an older brother from Scotland. He said, “His love is now to be seen through new vessels”—that is us—"reinforced by new motives. As He works in us, we have new motives of caring for one another and new obligations.”

Now, obligations might sound like, “That is legalistic.” But when Paul spoke of the love of Christ, he said, “I am controlled, I am constrained.” Sometimes, when you know you have to do something, it might sound legalistic—like you have to do it. But what is the source of that? It is because of some great love that you have to do this. There is not option. The option is you can always say, “No, Lord, I am not going to do it.” But within you, you say, “I have just got to do this. I am obliged. I have to do it.”

We see this illustrated in life throughout history and in lives today. And it is obeyed in a new manner. There is obedience that is not from us, but from Him. His love is working in us to transform us and conform us into His image. Praise God.

We see this elaborated on, expounded on more and more throughout John chapters 13-17. We see how this new commandment impacted Peter. Peter, at the end of the Gospel of John, the Lord asked him—He said, and we are familiar with this, “Do you love Me?” using that word, agape. And Peter said, “No, Lord, I just phileo You. I cannot. I am attached to You. I have a brotherly love. I am very fond of You.” But later on in Peter's life, we see how he got it. Even in his death, he said, “I am not worthy to be crucified like our Lord.” And history tells us that Peter was crucified upside down. He was captured by this love.

The Testimony and Transformation of Peter and John

Fervently Love (Agape) One Another from the Heart

We see this wonderful testimony in some of Peter's writings in I Peter 1:22. I love how Peter expresses this—from going from one who said, “Lord, I cannot say that I love You,” to now, as he has entered into the reality of it being not Peter, but Christ in Peter: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love (agape) one another from the heart.” That is the heart of Christ. That is Christ in them. And Peter is encouraging them, in the days and the troubles and trials that they are going through, to really fervently love one another. We see it also impacts the life of John.

As we said, John is called the apostle of recovery. It is wonderful how the Lord used different ones of these apostles in different ways. For example, Peter was the fisherman, and he went out and brought people in. Paul was the builder; he was building things together. Then, at the end of the first century, we see John being used to recover, to bring people back to Christ—the great apostle of love. Love ends up being the apostle of recovery as well.

We see that he used the word agape thirty-seven times in his gospel—far more than anyone else. Even in his three little epistles, which you can read in less than half an hour (I have never timed it, but they are pretty quick if you want to read all three), he speaks of agape over thirty times. In his old age—John lived to be over ninety, which seemed younger and younger all the time, really—we see how all of that shaped him.

When someone would say, “Brother, would you share something with us?” all he would say was, “Little children, love one another.” That “little children”—he had heard that over 60 years earlier. The Lord had told him that in the upper room, 60 years before, and it was still as fresh to him at the age of ninety as it was roughly 60 years earlier.

That word—when the Lord speaks something to our hearts, which is the freshness of love. That is the freshness of His life. It was life to him, and he was conveying that to others: “You are My little children, just as the Lord spoke that to me. Now, you are His little children also.” Praise God. Love one another. We see Him doing such a marvelous thing.

The Message of I John

I was going to pick a couple of verses out of I John to show how much he tried to reinforce this to them. But it is really hard to pick just a few, it is all in there. I probably could have just put the whole I John up here; it would have been easier to read. But I picked the ones related to loving one another. And this is not all-inclusive either. John writes to them in I John 3:11: “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning,” still fresh within his heart. I love when a dear older brother or sister has the word of God still fresh in their heart. They are not just testifying, “This happened to me many years ago, praise God,” but it is still fresh in my heart today: “That we should love

one another." In I John 4:21, "And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." Praise God, which is from Him. In 4:11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." And the familiar verse that we have in 4:19, "We love, because God first loved us." Praise God for that first love that He has touched us with.

I mentioned it a little bit earlier, but we want to be clear. Jesus does not say "Love one another" naively. He knows we cannot keep His commandments, that is, loving one another on our own. It is from His life within us. It is not a commandment impelling us from without, but it is the very fruit of Christ's life in us. It is the fruit of His life. That is why in Galatians 5 we speak of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit—the very first one is love, because that is the way it is. And we see He knows full well that man cannot do it. Man has never been able to do what the Lord commands us to do. We might get one or two right at a time, but then we will mess up. We are just not able to do it. But praise God, He never gives up on us. That is the beauty we see in these ones—how He recovered Peter, His love for Peter. Peter was recovered and used as a vessel to say, "Love one another fervently from the heart." Praise God for that. This is one who had denied the Lord, publicly denied Him, and yet was used in a mighty way. How He wants to use us.

Looking Ahead: The Practical Outworking of Love

We are going to go ahead and stop here for now. I am going to build off of this and be sharing next week also, Lord willing. I would like to look at some of the practical outworking. As Christ is in us, and as we see His love displayed in His life, how that gets worked out in us as we talk about the fruit of the Spirit. But we see the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

There are two ways that Galatians 5:22-23 gets interpreted. Some think that the fruit of the Spirit is all of those—that is the fruit of the Spirit. There is another interpretation: since "fruit" is used, it is hard to know if it is singular or plural. Another way of interpreting it is that the fruit of the Spirit is love—one thing, which is it. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and then that love displays itself in different ways. Joy is love's strength. Peace is love's security. Patience is love's long-suffering. Kindness is love's conduct. Goodness is love's character. Faithfulness is love's confidence. Gentleness is love's humility. Self-control is love's victory.

We want to be looking at some of these—loving one another in more practical ways within our lives. We will start on that next time together. May the Lord encourage us.

You can go back and read chapters John 13 and 17 again if you want to. I have to tell you; I have fallen in love with those chapters. I have been reading them over and over, and it is amazing how every time I read them, it is like, wow, I just read that an hour ago and I did not see that before. Where is this? Where is that? The Holy Spirit is wonderful. There is a richness there. Thank the Lord. I did want to mention that some people have asked about these slides, and Jack has graciously offered to make them available. They

are on the CTM website if anybody wants them. They are not on the YouTube channel, but on the CTM website.

Conclusion: God's Work of Recovery and Our Response

As we conclude this, as we try to pull this back together, what we are always keeping in mind is that God is a God of recovery. He is recovering the testimony of Jesus. The reason we are considering this is because of the big picture. In this great day and time, He desires for the testimony of Jesus to be strengthened, to be recovered, to hasten His return. It always starts with those captured hearts, those hearts that have been awakened, captured, and devoted to Him. The key that we are looking at is there. We said earlier last time that there are many different keys to recovery, but we are looking at this particular one of loving one another and knowing, out of today, the reality of this glorious provision that He has made for us. The wonderful provision we have in being brought into this fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: the unity we have in Him, the unity we have with one another, the love that we have from Him, and the love we can have for one another. That we can really experience more and more of the fullness of everything that He has done for us; the life we have within us. As we would be those who are testifying in living ways that Jesus is Head; He is Lord over all things—not only individually, but for us as an assembly. His life being expressed through us. Praise God for His love.

Let us close here for today.

Lord, we are ever grateful for Your wonderful love and mercy that You show to us. Lord, You are the God who has reached out and touched each one of our hearts, each one of our lives. You have brought us to Yourself. And, Lord, we continue to desire to see more and more of Your love, Your heart, Your purpose. That we would be those who are captured. That, Lord, our hearts would be devoted to You. That we could see the blessedness of the fellowship we have in You; the blessedness of the treasure we have being with one another Lord, in Your glorious life, Your life expressed through us. Lord, it all starts with You working in our individual hearts. And we want to open our hearts to You, for You to have great freedom and liberty to do what You are desiring. In Your name we pray. Amen.

A Key to Recovery – Love One Another Even as I Have Loved You ____ *1*

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