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John 13:31-38 Then when he had left, Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. (32) If God is glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall immediately glorify Him. (33) Little children, I am with you yet a little while. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, Where I go, you cannot come, so I now say to you. (34) I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you should also love one another. (35) By this all shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love toward one another. (36) Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where do You go? Jesus answered him, Where I go you cannot now follow Me, but you shall follow Me afterward. (37) Peter said to Him, Lord, why cannot I follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake. (38) Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for My sake? Truly, truly, I say to you, The cock shall not crow until you have denied Me three times.

As Judas leaves, Jesus says that He is glorified. Not “will be glorified” – but “is glorified”. Present tense. And the hours following prove Him right – the Last Supper, Gethsemane the cross and the resurrection are His glory – and Judas set in all in motion! God uses even betrayal for His glory! (But woe to the betrayer!)

Jesus then gives a “new commandment” – “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you should also love one another. (35) By this all shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love toward one another. “ What is so new about this? Love your neighbor was an old, old commandment from the Jewish Law (Leviticus 19:18). The radical bit is: “As I have loved you, you should also love one another”. In other words, self-sacrificing, foot-washing, servant love. Love that sees the other person as infinitely precious and worthy!

This command is surrounded by talk of death and “Where I go, you cannot come” which Peter understands all too clearly when he replies “Lord, why cannot I follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake. “ The whole context of this command is self-sacrifice one for the other.

John explains this very clearly in his first epistle:

1 John 3:16-20 This is how we have come to know love: Christ gave his life for us. We, too, ought to give our lives for our brothers. (17) Whoever has earthly possessions and notices a brother in need and yet withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God remain in him? (18) Little children, we must stop loving in word and in tongue, but instead love in

action and in truth. (19) And this is how we will know that we belong to the truth and how we will be able to establish our hearts in his presence. (20) If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

The loyalty within the Christian community should be so intense that we would give our lives for each other – and act with compassion spending this world's goods for a brother or sister in need. That does not mean that we have to give to all the charities that advertise on TV – but when we see someone at church – with a real need, that we can meet. Then we ought to do our best to help. Practical, compassionate Christian love is a sign that God's love is truly in our hearts and helps to reassure us that we are truly saved and possess a new nature.

Jesus says that this kind of self-sacrificing agape love is our best witness. “By this all shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love toward one another. “ When unbelievers point to someone and say “There goes a real Christian” it is a “Mother Teresa” they point to someone showing agape love. And when they say “there goes a phony” they mean someone who is a love-less hypocrite. Agape love is the big kahuna. It is the one thing we MUST have in our lives.

Paul puts it like this:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of humans and angels but have no love, I have become a reverberating gong or a clashing cymbal. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy and can understand all secrets and every form of knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains but have no love, I am nothing. (3) Even if I give away all that I have and surrender my body so that I may boast but have no love, I get nothing out of it.

The new commandment can only be lived out by the new creation.

It is absolutely impossible for the flesh to be that self-sacrificing.

In fact the whole system of Christian reward revolves around “impossible” self-sacrificing love: See Matthew 5:5,12, 6:1-4, 10:39-42, 16:24-28, 19:29 Luke 6:22-24, 35, 1 Corinthians 9:16-18; Colossians 3:22-24; Hebrews 10:35, 11:6, 11:26; 1 Peter 1:4, 3:9; 2 John 1:8

If you check these verses you will find that we are not rewarded on a tally sheet for how many converts we make. Rather we are rewarded for our conformity to the principles of agape love. A successful evangelist who is selfish, exploitative and mean will receive much less of a reward than the humblest saint that lives in love.

The new commandment is tough and even Peter could not live it until Pentecost. The cock crowed and self-preservation cut in. Only a might anointing with the Holy Ghost can make us holy and loving and able to live the life Jesus wants us to live.

Why not pray for that anointing right now?

“Lord Jesus, I cannot love others as You have commanded me to – unless You make me loving. I will arrive in Heaven with no reward at all unless You change me. Anoint me, fill me, change me and renew me. Do whatever it takes to make me full of agape love and a Christian who is living agape love out on a daily basis. In Your holy name name. Amen”.

Blessings,

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