

John 13 v 34 & 35 B

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[0 : 0 0] John and chapter 13, John and chapter 13 and verses 34 and 35, 34 and 35.

In fact, actually, let's just bring it into context. Let's read from verse 31, let's read from verse 31 through to verse 38. I think that'll be helpful. This is, as you know, Jesus on the night before his death, in the upper room with his disciples, and Judas has just left to go and meet with the religious leaders to arrange the betrayal and the handing over of Jesus.

And so John picks up the story from, and we're going to pick it up from verse 31. John 13, when he was gone, Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer.

You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now where I am going, you cannot come. And you command, I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

[1 : 2 0] By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me? Tell me the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.

Who here was watching the Wimbledon men's final? I'll tell you this afternoon. Put your hands up. Come on. Okay. I don't know what their score is. Have they finished yet? Who won?

Did he? Shh. Some people have taped it. Okay. Shh. It wasn't Murray. Okay. Just tell you that. Who's been watching the World Cup? Football World Cup.

Anybody been watching some of the games? Who watched the British Grand Prix this afternoon? We sort of swapped between channels trying to catch up with that. Hammond won that. So that's good.

[2 : 2 3] Isn't it amazing, though? I don't know if you do watch Wimbledon, or you watch the World Cup, or you watch the Grand Prix, or any of these great sporting events, there's thousands and thousands of people, isn't there? I mean, not actually in Centre Court, but all on the hill and all around, so on.

And people, of course, in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, and they've travelled halfway in the world, most of them, or almost all the way around the world, and they're all decorated up and dressed up, and they're all excited, and they're fanatical, aren't they?

And they go to any lengths to be there, or to see their sport, or to follow their hero, or to, in some way, just engage in this passion, about this love, some of them, this life that they have.

Now, this morning, we considered what it means to love one another as Christ has loved us, this new commandment. The question, really, is this, to what lengths will we go? To what lengths will we go to keep that commandment?

You know, people will do the most crazy things for sport, for just being a fan of a particular team, or a particular person, or whatever it may be. What about us?

[3 : 38] How far will we really go to love one another? Will we go to the ends of the earth for one another? Will we make fools of ourselves for one another?

I want us to think about this command a little bit more, and really ask why we must take it seriously, why we must put no limits upon this commandment of Jesus, why we must really ask for God's grace, that we should obey it completely, fully, entirely.

And, of course, the reason why we should do that, and there are a couple of reasons I want to bring before you this evening. The most obvious reason is, of course, that we should take this command seriously and obey it, because we love Christ.

That's the main reason. That's the first reason, above all else. Jesus made it very clear, over and over again, that if we love him, we will obey him. Here in this same passage, John 14, verse 15.

If you love me, you will obey what I command. If you love me, you will obey what I command. That's the Christian life. We obey Christ, and this is where the great difference between the gospel of grace and the gospel of law is.

[4 : 58] The gospel of grace says, I want to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. I want my life to live, to please him and to follow him, because I love him who first loved me.

The motivation is love. The gospel of law, or the religion of law, or people who are involved in anything other than the gospel of grace, is that I do this to try to gain favor.

I do this out of fear that I'll be rejected. I do this out of a sense of trying to win God's favor or approval. I hope that each one of you knows the difference, and I hope that each one of us who knows Christ is living in this, and that we are motivated and directed and passionate about obeying Christ because we love him, because we know that he first loved us, and love means we obey.

But when Jesus says, if you love me, you will obey what I command, we then are brought to, well, what has Jesus commanded us to do to show that we love him?

Here is the only place where Jesus speaks to say a new command I give you. This is the only place in the gospels Jesus mentions this new command, and in one sense, the only place where he actually speaks about his instructions as being a command or a commandment.

[6 : 24] Now, we know that Jesus, of course, from the very start of his ministry, called people to repentance. Repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is near. And in one sense, there's a command in that, but it was a call.

Jesus doesn't call it a command. We know that Jesus teaches us that we are to love God, and we are to serve him, and we are to worship him. He doesn't command us to do those things.

In the same way, using this word command. He doesn't tell us that we must pray. He tells us when we pray, or that we must give tithes and offerings, though, again, that's implicit in his teaching.

Even when we come to the Great Commission of taking the gospel, where Jesus says, go and preach the gospel, or Matthew 28, the Great Commission, as we call it, he says, all authority has been given to me, therefore go.

He still doesn't say, I'm giving you a new commandment, or another command, though we know that is indeed what his desire is for us, to preach the gospel and make disciples.

[7 : 29] Now, we all agree, I'm sure we all agree, that these other things, repentance, and faith, and giving, and evangelism, all these things are very important, and prayer.

We all agree with that. We all agree that these are things that are essential ingredients to living the Christian life. They are things that you cannot, in one sense, sort of put as secondary issues to living for Christ.

There must be repentance, there must be faith, there must be prayer, and so on. These are the fruit that come out. But if we do all of those things, but fail to keep this command to love one another as Jesus loves us, then we are falling short of loving Christ.

I'm just trying to stress to you, dear friends, and to myself, the seriousness of what's involved here, because we can, and there are aspects of gospel churches where we can be so concerned, if I can put it that way, to be doctrinally correct, and to do the things right, the way we do church, the way we organize, and all these things are very important, and important that we pray, and so on and so forth, and handle the scriptures rightly, that if we can lose sight of this command, love one another, which seems to me to be the primary command of Jesus.

These things are all important, very important, but we can lose sight of this, and we can find ourselves being unloving and forgetful of that commandment.

[9 : 03] To love one another as Christ loved us. Now, this is something I believe that is exemplified in Paul's teaching as well, particularly, we looked this morning, didn't we, at 1 Corinthians 13, that we know the passage.

Well, turn again to it if you would, if you've got your Bibles there, but especially, of course, when you look at this passage, what is Paul talking about? He's talking about loving one another the excellent way, because he's been speaking about relationships within the Corinthian church, and they were pretty terrible because they were either selfish towards one another or judgmental of one another or taking one another to court or getting into cliques, one group around Paul and one group around Paulus and one group around Peter.

And so at the end of all his teaching about the unity that we have in Christ and how we're to use those gifts for one another, he says, this is the best way, this is the ultimate way, this is how you must do church.

And so again, recognize what he's saying. He's saying, if you do all these things, speak in tongues, tongues of men and angels, but don't love one another, if you're a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal, if you've got the faith of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, have faith to move mountains, but do not have love one for another, I'm nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love for one another, I gain nothing. Do you see how very much he's pressing this point?

[10 : 38] And I'm banging you over the head about it as well in love and myself. We can't take this commandment of Jesus too seriously, I believe.

If we claim to love him, if we claim to be those whose desire above all else is to live for Christ, then we must, dear friends, take seriously and take to our hearts and take to our prayer lives the command, love one another as he has loved us.

Now that's not the only reason. That's the first reason. I think it's the primary reason. The primary reason for everything we do is because we love Jesus. That must always be the primary reason for everything we do, whether we come to church, whether we're involved in service, as I said this morning, whether we're cleaning the loos, whether we're making the tea or coffee, everything must flow, first of all, that we love Christ.

Secondly, it is because we love one another. So Jesus commands us, we're to obey him because we love him, but we're to obey him because Jesus' commands are always given to us because he loves us.

Jesus' commands are always given to us because he loves us. He's given us the command to love one another because of his love for us. Every command of Jesus, every word of Jesus, flowed from and flows from a heart of unconditional love and care for his people.

[12 : 08] That's why all the commandments of God are good. Paul, when he's going through and teaching about the law and faith, he doesn't ever say the law is a bad thing.

He always says the law is a good thing because it's given by a good God for our gods. God has never done anything for his people except that he is motivated by love for us.

Think of Hebrews, chapter 12, where Paul goes on about discipline and suffering and about hardship and he says this is the God dealing with us as a father towards his children whom he loves, correcting us, disciplining us, shaping us.

And that's why, dear friends, when we come to this commandment, if we could grasp this truth that it has been given to us for our very good, that will help us as well in seeking to keep it and seeking to live it out.

We are not to think that it's just something that's been laid upon us as a great weight. Oh, Lord, why did you have to tell me to love these people? I don't ever think that.

[13 : 15] Well, most of the time I don't. No. You know, it's not a burden. It's not something that we're just to attempt weekly and think, what can I sort of set aside this week?

What loving act can I do? A bit like the Boy Scouts. Have you ever been a Boy Scout? Janet wasn't a Boy Scout. Have you ever been a Boy Scout? You always had to do your good deed for the day, didn't you?

Your good deed for the, so I'll do my good deed for the week, my loving deed for the church this week. No, it's not like that, is it? It's not to get your badge. It's because it's a joy.

It's because Jesus loves us he's given us that command. He's given us that command because he loves us and cares for us. See, all the commandments of God that are given to us are given to us that we might honour God, we might glorify him, but that we might enjoy him.

This is the wonderful thing. This is what the world just can't get. It just can't seem to grasp the reality that submitting to God and owning him as the Lord of your life is the most satisfying and completing and most fulfilling and satisfying thing that can ever happen to anybody.

[14 : 36] It's where you find what you were made for. It's where you find your *raison d'être*. It's in God. The world just looks by and looks at Christians and says, oh, it's just laws and regulation and it's because you're ignorant and because you're afraid of death and all these other things.

God gives us his commandments because he loves us and because he knows that in obeying those commandments is joy and fullness and satisfaction. And so it is with this one. The giving of this commandment reveals Jesus' love for him.

If you go back to the very start of chapter 13 and verse 1, we're told about Jesus knowing his time was coming.

He was preparing to leave the world and go to the Father and says, having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. Now we know that that's ultimately the cross but actually it's everything that led up to the cross is Christ revealing his love for his disciples and so in giving this command he's revealing his love for his disciples and we can see that because it seems a little bit, well, in one sense it seems a little bit in the wrong place, doesn't it?

Here's Jesus, we read it, didn't we, from verse 31 of chapter 13. Jesus is speaking about being glorified and glorifying God and then he's leaving them and he's not going to be with them any longer and suddenly breaking into a new command I give you, love one another.

[16:07] Why does he do that? Why does he do that? It's because he has a great care and love for his disciples that he has given them this commandment.

He's told them he's going away, he's told them they can't come with him. To them, that's the saddest news possible. That's the thing that they didn't want to hear. He's not going to be there anymore.

For three years he was there, now his physical presence will be gone. He was going to the cross. He was going from the cross to rise and ultimately return to heaven and they would not see him again.

And he gives them this commandment. He gives them this commandment because he wants to comfort them in the midst of their loss. He gives them this commandment because he wants them to be strengthened and encouraged and helped after they've heard such sad news.

What's so sad of course is of course that they fail to recognize it. It's as if you could cut out, couldn't you, verse 34 and 35, just take them out completely as far as Peter's concerned because he just immediately says, Lord, where are you going?

[17:15] It goes over his head. Just like us, over his head. So the reason Jesus gave them this commandment was for their comfort, for their encouragement, for their help, for their strengthening, for them to face life without the physical presence of Jesus.

Now dear friends, we are going out again into the world, aren't we, this week? We're setting off into another week where Jesus isn't seen, where Jesus isn't heard, where Jesus isn't felt.

We're going out into that world where we are surrounded by enemies on all sides. We're going out to walk by faith, not by sight. So what comfort can we have, what encouragement can we have to strengthen us and support us, in the trials and the difficulties of living for Christ in a Christless world?

Here's the answer. One of the wonderful ways that God has given us help and support is through mutual love for one another. That's why the church exists.

The church exists. That's why we press for and encourage folk to seriously consider being a member of a local church. Why? Oh, we want to have numbers. We want to have burns on seats.

[18:34] No, it's nothing. We're going to have more money in the covers. No! It's because Jesus has given his church as that means of blessing and grace to his people. He's put us in families because he knows we need one another.

Now just think about this for a moment and I'm sure that each of you can agree with something of this experience. we appreciate how much difference it makes when somebody shows us love.

Doesn't just a little word of encouragement make us feel like we're walking on air when we leave church? Just a little word of encouragement or care or love.

It lifts us, doesn't it? We might come in a bit downcast but just a word and doesn't an act of kindness lift our souls and push away the dark clouds of sadness?

Doesn't just a bunch of flowers here or there occasionally when we're feeling a bit low or it's the anniversary of a difficult time? Doesn't it just, it does something to us, doesn't it? It's not the flowers themselves, it's not the words themselves, it's the love.

[19 : 39] Now we know that. And so though Jesus has promised to be with us by his spirit and he's not left us as orphans and though we enjoy great fellowship with himself through his word and by the Holy Spirit, the physical and practical way that the Lord Jesus wants us to know that we are loved is through one another's love.

Isn't that wonderful? That's an incredible responsibility, you know, that's laid upon us, that we are to show and display and to share love of Christ with one another.

So Jesus has given this command because he loves us. just go back to chapter 13 again and look at that incredible incident which is the washing of the disciples' feet.

And what does Jesus say after the washing of the feet, after he's done this act, this servile act, this servant-like act? Verse 12, when he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.

Do you understand what I've done for you? He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

[20 : 55] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

But listen, verse 17, now that you know these things, you'll be blessed if you do them. See what Jesus is saying? There's the blessing in loving one another.

I have served you and shown tender care for you in washing your feet in a very humble way. As you do that to one another, there's your blessing. We know that.

Again, it works, all these things we know, it works both ways, doesn't it? When we receive, it's a wonderful blessing to receive love from somebody, but when we love somebody and give them love, we feel great as well, doesn't it?

It's a no-lose situation. Those who love enjoy loving and those who receive love enjoy being loved. So Jesus has given us the commandment, knowing the difficulties, knowing his disciples were facing all sorts of sorrows, love one another.

[21 : 58] That's the answer. That's what's needed. Love one another. Then thirdly and finally then, and we see it here as well, we see that this commandment that Jesus has given us to love one another is because not only we love him, not only that he loves us, but also that he loves the world.

He loves the world, verse 35. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. We thought this morning about, when we read through 1 Corinthians 13, about Jesus as the very revelation of love.

He is the demonstration of God. God is love, and Jesus is the revelation of God's love to the world. So when he was born, he was given that wonderful title, Emmanuel, God with us.

Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3 tells us, of course, that Jesus is the one who reveals the very radiance and outshining of God to us.

Here's what it says. The sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

[23 : 19] But Christ is about to leave the world, isn't he, as he gives his commandment. He has come into the world to be the radiance, the outshining, the demonstration of the love of God, but now he's leaving the world.

So how is the world to know what love is like? How is the world to know what God's love is like, except that it's seen in us? I'm not trying to trivialise this, I'm not trivialising, please don't think I'm trivialising the work of the Holy Spirit, or the work of God's word, or the gospel, but ultimately this is what Jesus is saying, this is how men and women will know, you're my disciples, that you are like me, because you love one another.

This is how the world will know what God's love is like when they see it in us. And isn't it a tragedy, isn't it a catastrophe in one sense, when all the world sees of the church is its bickering and fighting and complaining and moaning about one another?

other. Now, that's a very complex issue, and there's reasons for that, but isn't it one of the most powerful testimonies that we can give to the world the testimony of love, of care?

And as we thought this morning, not only in word, but indeed in action, in practicality. In one sense, we might say that Jesus was saying something like this, I'm going, therefore you must be as I have been in the world.

[24 : 43] Remember Jesus said something like that when he said to his disciples, as the Father has sent me, so I send you. That's an incredible thing, again, that's an awesome and awful in one sense responsibility that when the world needs to see Christ, it must look to you and I in the church.

That's why our love has to be so radically different to the love of the world. That's why it has to stand out. You see, there is a lot of love in the world. There's no doubt about it. The world in which we live, men and women are loving.

We see the incredible love when people have love for their country, patriotism, but it's not Christ-like love. We see people can show love for those in poverty or in need.

That's pity, but it's not Christ-like love. Some show love for those who are suffering and in great distress and go to great ends and sacrifices. That's sympathy and it's empathy, but it's not Christ-like love.

It must be that the love that we show and the love that we declare is a love that can only have one explanation and that's because we are Christians. It can only be explained because the power of God has been at work in our lives and causes us to love as he loved us.

[26 : 08] love that has no desire for praise. It's love that doesn't love for return or acknowledgement.

Love that loves even when the object is unlovely and has nothing to deserve that love. love. Even when that person has no sign of showing they need love.

See, this is where we come back to the love of Jesus, you see, and as we see it demonstrated in the Gospels. It was so radically different to any love that could be seen.

It wasn't just that he loved the poor and the needy. It's because he loved the sinner and the wicked. That's what they hated, wasn't it? But he also loved the tax collector and the rich.

Now, the world will admire, will admire, and in one sense I have to say rightly so, the person like the Mother Teresa who will get down in the slums and will get in amongst the filth and the dirt, the world will admire that love and certainly there's a great need for that love.

[27 : 19] Dear friends, as Christians, we're to love the people who are really unpleasant people who would say, well, they don't deserve love because we didn't deserve love but Christ loved us.

We were enemies of God. We were those who deserved his anger and wrath, yet Christ loved us. That's Christ-like love. It's loving people who really shouldn't be loved.

That means there's something very different about our love. Now, we can't show that all the time, we don't demonstrate it in every way but it's to be there, it's to be growing, it's to be deepening and it's where Jesus tells us that the symbol and the sign, the distinguishing emblem of being a disciple of Christ is love.

I've got nothing against people who want to put a fish on their car or a cross or a dove or some other sign, ichthyus or whatever it may be, that's fine. If we feel that's a good thing to do, that's great, if it gives opportunity to witness, fine.

But what will the world recognise and show that we are Christians except love? That's what Jesus says. This is the sign, this is what the world will, this is what will stand out to the world to say that you are a follower of mine is that you love one another.

[28 : 38] And so therefore, dear friends, in light of all these things, we must pray, mustn't we? Here's Paul's prayer for the Philippians, chapter 1, verses 9 and 10.

This is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness, one of which of course is love, that comes through Jesus Christ, the glory and praise of God.

And so I want to ask you, dear friends, to join me in praying for greater love for us, greater love for one another.

There isn't a church, of course, that we read about in the New Testament where this wasn't the case, where there wasn't this call for greater love. We're never going to cease to need to grow in love.

We're never going to get that place where we reach love in all its fullness and love one another as Christ has loved us. But as I said this morning, we've got to aim at it. We've got to target for it.

[30 : 01] That person who aimed at nothing hit it. We may have to aim very high and we may fall very short, but at least we'll be maybe just a millimeter or two closer.

Please will you pray for love and be willing to do anything for love. I'll just close with this little anecdote in one sense.

It's about the Apostle John. As I said, his first letter was all about love. He wrote those letters, certainly when he was much older, probably maybe 70 or 80 years old.

When he got very, very old, that's because obviously 70 and 80 are not very old, they're very young. And when he got very old, he was unable to walk and he could barely speak.

And he would be carried into the church on a litter, on a like a stretcher. and all that he would do would whisper the words, little children, love one another.

[31 : 05] Well, let's pray, shall we? It was love, Lord Jesus, that brought you from heaven to earth, love that took you from earth to the cross and the grave.

It's love, Lord, that you now shower upon us by your spirit to rescue us, bring us into your family, and it's love that will take us to be with you for eternity.

Lord, you are love and everything about you is love. And you've called us to be like you, to live like you, and to love like you.

And so we ask, oh Lord, that that love which so constrained and consumed you may fill our hearts and lives with all that we say and do and think and are.

may be born of love for you, for one another, and for this world. And so, Lord, we ask again that you would apply these things to us by your spirit, not that we might, again, go away feeling how bad we are or how far we short, fall we short, but Lord, that we might cry to you for the grace and we might pray, Lord, make our love to abound, make our love to grow, make our love to be seen.

[32 : 29] Oh, Lord, we pray that men and women and boys and girls may be drawn to the Jesus who laid down his life in love for sinners. And we ask these things again, Lord Jesus, for your glory and the glory of your Father.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.