

Main Idea: In John 13:34-38 Jesus gives His followers two things that will make it clear to this world that we belong to Him.

- I. Jesus gives us an exhortation (34-35).
 - A. He says we are to treat one another as He treated us.
 1. Think about what Jesus did in the upper room.
 2. Think about what Jesus did during their three years together.
 3. Think about what Jesus did on the cross.
 - B. He says if we do so, the world will identify us with Him.
 1. How we treat each other is evangelism.
 2. How we treat each other exposes our need for grace.
 - C. He says that what He commands, He makes possible (chs 14-15).
 1. Jesus will help us (14:12).
 2. The Spirit will help us (14:16-17).
 3. The Father will help us (14:23).
 4. The Triune God will produce this fruit of love in us (15:1-4; 9-17).
 - II. Jesus gives us an example (36-38).
 - A. He revealed some painful truth to Peter.
 - B. He revealed He would never give up on Peter.
 1. This is what He's done with us, too.
 2. This is what we're to do with one another.
- Let's Take Inventory: Ponder three questions...
1. Have I experienced the love of Christ?
 2. Am I experiencing the love of Christ?
 3. Am I showing the love of Christ to my forever family?

We have a wonderful Savior! Our Savior has given us a wonderful, world-wide mission! The One who died for us and conquered death to save us has told us to make this message known to the world.

But there's increasing hostility in this world towards our Savior. Have you noticed? I know you have. That means we need not only courage, but wisdom and discernment if we're going to fulfill our mission.

How will we do it? I'm thankful He gives us models. This past week He raised up a brother in Christ, a Baptist pastor named Oleksandr Turchynov, to become Ukraine's new president. This brother is seeking to be salt and light for Christ in this world, and we should pray for him and learn from him.

Also this past week, on Tuesday, another brother, Albert Mohler, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, delivered an address at Brigham Young University. The talk was entitled, "Strengthen the Things that Remain: Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Human Flourishing in a Dangerous Age." I recommend you read it in its entirety, but I want to share just a few excerpts because Mohler so helpfully models for us how to fulfill our mission in this volatile age. Here's how he began:

The presence of the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary behind the podium at Brigham Young University requires some explanation. I come as an evangelical Christian, committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the trinitarian beliefs of the historic Christian faith. I come as one who does not share your theology and who has long been involved in urgent discussions about the distinctions between the faith of the Latter Day Saints and the faith of the historic Christian church. I come as who I am, and your leaders invited me to come knowing who I am. I have come knowing who you are and what you believe and my presence

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here does not mean that the distance between our beliefs has been reduced. It does mean, however, that we now know something that we did not know before. We need to talk. We can and must take the risk of responsible, respectful, and honest conversation. We owe this to each other, and we owe this to the faiths we represent. And we had better talk with candor and urgency, for the times demand it.

What “times” is Dr. Mohler talking about? Most of his talk had to do with the moral erosion America is experiencing, why it’s happening, and what we should do about it. Again, very helpful, but I’m interested in what our brother did to fulfil our Savior’s mission. Here’s what he said towards the end of his address:

When I was with you last October, I said something that got picked up by media around the world. I said that I believe that we will not go to heaven together, but we might well go to jail together. That was last October. That was four months and a few days ago. Since then, federal courts in your own state have ruled that your legal prohibitions of both same-sex marriage and polygamy are unconstitutional. Since that time, the President of your church has been summoned to appear in a secular court in London. Since that time, just over one hundred days ago, so much has changed.

Civil and criminal penalties have recently been leveled against bakers, photographers, and florists who could not in good conscience participate in a same-sex wedding ceremony. Erotic liberty is in the ascent and religious liberty is in peril.

We may go to jail sooner even than we thought.

This is why our conversation is really important, and why we need to stand together on so many urgent concerns. Most importantly, we are now called to defend religious liberty for each other, so that when they come for you, we are there, and so that when they come for us, you are there. We are learning anew what the affirmation of religious liberty will demand of us in this dangerous age.

But as I come among you, and I am honored by this opportunity to address you, I come as a friend among friends to speak as who I am and of what I believe. As a Christian, my ultimate confidence does not rest in marriage, or the family, or civil society, or human rights, or any human affirmation of human dignity, not matter how robust.

My confidence is in the Lord, the unchanging God of the Bible, who revealed himself in the Bible and who redeems sinners through the atonement accomplished by his Son, Jesus Christ, who was both fully human and fully divine. My confidence is in the Gospel revealed by Christ and preached by the Apostles — the Gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. I believe in the saving acts of Christ in his death, burial, and bodily resurrection from the grave. I believe that the Bible is our sufficient written revelation, inerrant and infallible and unchanging. I believe that God’s promise of salvation will be fulfilled and that all he has promised in Christ will be given. I believe in the truth unchanged and unchanging, because I believe in the God who tells us in the Bible that he never changes.

I can close my eyes at night and I can open them to face each day because I know that my Redeemer lives, and that history is in the hands of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I know that I, along with all who come to him by faith, are safe in Christ. I can trust that he, as the Apostle Paul stated so famously, will be faithful to the end.

So I thank the Lord for these two brothers and how the Lord has given them a platform, and how they are using that platform to make the truth of Jesus Christ known to a needy yet increasingly-hostile world.

That raises the question, how are *we* going to do it? In the face of the world's opposition to what we love and value, how are we going to make Christ known? Yes, we too should use our words and be verbal witnesses for Christ *out there*. But there's another way, and it happens *right here*. In fact, it's one of the most powerful ways to open up opportunities *out there*, and it's something we're to do with *each other*.

In John 13:34-38 Jesus Himself gives His followers two things that, if we take them to heart, will enable us to send a powerful message to the world, about who He is, and who we are, and what it needs.

We looked at this text last week, but there's so much here we're going to return to it for another look. In John 13 Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure. He'll be dying for them on the cross the next day. In that upper room He washed their feet, then predicted one would betray Him, then identified Judas and sent Him out. Then, at that critical moment, He said, "It is glory time!" and gave something critical to His disciples, and to us. Point #1...

I. Jesus gives us an exhortation (34-35).

Verses 34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

As I shared last time, seeing this familiar command in its context makes all the difference. What just happened in that upper room? Jesus and His men gathered to eat the Passover meal together, but when they got to the room, they had dirty feet. A problem. This wasn't their house. Another problem. None of the disciples did anything about it (Luke's account says they were arguing about which of them was the greatest).

So Jesus took the posture of a slave and washed His own follower's feet, and finished by saying, "Do as I have done for you (15)."

Then He announced that one of those men was going to betray Him. Unthinkable, for sure. Any other ruler would lock away or kill any subject suspected of betrayal. But Jesus? He offers the betrayer the best piece of food on the table, and offers him one more opportunity to repent. And when he doesn't, Jesus says, "What you are about to do, do quickly (27)," and lets him go free to finalize the plot to hand Him over to His enemies.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified," says Jesus at that very moment. What? This is glory time? Yes. According to Jesus, God's glory is put on display through washing the feet of selfish men and giving the betrayer the best piece of food on the table.

In God's eyes, that is glorious! You say, "But doesn't the Bible teach that God hates selfishness and betrayal?" Yes. Those are expressions of sin, and He hates sin. But He loves the sinner, and He has come in human flesh to love selfish, betraying sinners. How? By washing their feet, and giving them the best piece of bread.

But ultimately, by giving something else. *His own life*. "Where I am going you cannot come," He says in verse 33. Where's He going that He must go alone? He's going to carry a cross outside of Jerusalem where He will give His life as a ransom payment for sinners.

So there's the context. The Son of God demonstrates the glory of His grace by washing selfish feet, and giving bread and another opportunity to repent to a betrayer, and a commitment to give His very life for sinners on the cross. *That's* when He said these words.

A new command I give you. A new command? It's not new in the sense of brand new, for He gives similar commands in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your

strength.” Leviticus 19:18 says, “Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” And even Jesus Himself had earlier said (in Mark 12:28-33) that the Law was summed up by these two commands, love God, and love neighbor.

So the call to love isn't *new*. What's new is the specific object of this love. He says His followers are to love *one another*. Just one another? No, not just. But initially, and particularly. There's something about this command as it relates to one another that the Lord intends to use to impact the world.

But there's more. Jesus doesn't stop with, “Love one another.” He offers a modifier. “*As I have loved you*, so you must love one another.” So *His* actions set the pattern for His followers.

A. He says we are to treat one another as He treated us. And how is that? If we're going to fulfill this assignment, we need to do some thinking about what Jesus did. *As I have loved you*. Loved you *when*? What does Jesus have in mind? I think He wants us to think about three expressions of His love. First...

1. *Think about what Jesus did in the upper room.* In that upper room Jesus saw the dirty feet of twelve selfish men, and He humbled Himself and *washed* them. Also in that upper room, He looked into the eyes of a man whose life He had blessed for three years, a man who was presently in the process of betraying Him, and He treated that man just like you would treat your best friend by *extending the sop*.

Brothers and sisters, anybody can love people who treat them well. That's not Jesus' command. He says, “*As I have loved you*, so you must love one another.” But since Jesus' love didn't start in that upper room, we must go back further.

2. *Think about what Jesus did during their three years together.* If we're to do what He did, what did He do with these men? That's what love is.

This is love. He didn't condemn them because of their past. He didn't write them off when they doubted, or wavered, or asked stupid questions. Instead, He spent time with them. He ate with them. He let them get close to Him. He healed their loved ones. He taught them. He mentored them. He trained them and unleashed them to do ministries. At times He confronted them when there was sin. At other times He encouraged them when there was fear.

That's what love is, and that's what we're to do with each other. But there's one more place we must go.

3. *Think about what Jesus did on the cross.* “*As I have loved you...*” Here we see the apex of His love, at the cross. On the cross He took our sin upon Himself. On the cross He paid our penalty in full. On the cross He offered to a holy God the merit of His righteousness, for our benefit.

And He who did all this now says to His followers, “*As I have loved you...*”

As I said last time, we mustn't glamorize this. The fact is, we will do to each other as we've done to Him. Disappoint. Hurt. Abandon. Betray. We'll do that to each other because that's what sinners do, even saved sinners.

Then what? Then, we'll feel like giving the cold shoulder, or retaliating, or leaving and looking for another church. But the Lord doesn't want us to do as we feel, for that robs Him of glory and us of maximum joy. Rather, He says we must *love* those fellow followers, just like He loved us.

Let's be honest about this. This is not natural. C. S. Lewis said it well in his book, *The Four Loves*:

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies

and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”¹

Lewis is right, isn't he? The choice to love one another is a choice to make oneself vulnerable, to risk the possibility of having your heart wrung out and broken. So why would we do that? The Bible gives several reasons, but notice the one Jesus gives here.

B. He says if we do so, the world will identify us with Him. Verse 35 again, “By this [by choosing to love one another as He loved us] all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

How will the lost world know that we belong to Jesus? By our church buildings? No. By our music? By our dress? No. No. By our programs? No. By our doctrinal statements? No. By our preaching? No, not initially. By this, *if you love one another*.

Notice brothers and sisters. According to Jesus...

1. How we treat each other is evangelism. It's not the only form of evangelism, but it's the initial one the world should see.

Tertullian was an early Christian leader who lived about a century later than John the apostle. He says that the pagans of his day marvelled at the love of Christians, particularly at how Christians faced persecution by standing together. “See how they love one another!... how are they ready even to die for one another!”²

When we do with each other what Jesus did with us, we're giving our unsaved neighbors a clear picture of Jesus, and that's evangelism. When we have marriage problems, and choose to forgive each other, and return good for evil, just like He did us, what are people going to think? They'll think, one, you're just like us, for we have marriage problems, and two, you're just like someone I've heard about called Jesus, who forgave those who wronged Him and overcame evil with good. I'd like to know more about that person!

By this will all men know that you are My disciples.

Friends, how this church does life together *is* evangelism. It's not a substitute for speaking the good news, but it actually shows the good news in ways even a hostile world can't miss.

Do we ever hurt each other in this church? Do we ever sin against one another? You know we do, just like we did to Jesus. And He says, *by this all men will know*. By what? By precisely how we respond to a brother who is selfish towards us, or even betrays us, by our commitment to do as He did, to do what's right for the glory of God, no matter what's been done to us, for that's what it means *to love one another*.

You say, “But that's so hard to do!” And you're right. In fact...

2. How we treat each other exposes our need for grace. Grace. God's unmerited help and favor. That's what we need if we're going to love one another as our Savior has loved us. And that's what we have.

You say, “I don't see any mention of grace in this text.” I do. Oh, not the word, but just look at the next two chapters. Jesus' teaching in the upper room doesn't end in

¹ Taken from www.cslewis.org.

² *Apology* 39.7; taken from Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

chapter 13. He's just getting started, and if I can summarize the next two chapters with a sentence, it goes like this...

C. He says that what He commands, He makes possible (chs 14-15). We've just seen His command in 13:34-35, a command so important He repeats three times. *Love one another. Love one another. Love one another, as I have loved you.* And that command does what any divine command does to sinners. It brings us to our knees. It exposes our inability. I can't love others like He has loved me. The standard is too high.

So what's the solution? It's grace. For because of God's grace, what He commands, *He makes possible.*

And how does He do it? In John 14-15 Jesus informs His followers that divine help is on the way, and it's specifically intended to help them, to help *us*, fulfill this impossible command to love one another. Where does this help come from?

1. *Jesus will help us (14:12).* Notice John 14:12, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Did you catch that? What's true of the person who has faith in Jesus? Jesus says *he will do what I have been doing.* In fact, *even greater things than these.*

Interesting. What kind of things has Jesus been doing? I've always thought He was talking here about miracles, and He is. But in this context, what's Jesus been doing? Things we consider impossible, *miracles*, like washing the feet of selfish men who are about to deny us, and treating a betrayer like a dear friend.

I could never do that! He did. And He says He will help us do the same.

Friends, who has the power to do these kinds of things? Jesus does, AND whomever He gives that power to, namely His followers. Notice His very next words in verses 13-14, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

What's He talking about? What kind of things does He want us to ask for? Do you see the connection? *Lord, my brother just hurt me deeply. He betrayed my friendship. I feel like making him hurt, but I know You want me to love him as You have loved me. Will You give me the power to do that?*

YES! I will help you do it, and even greater things than I have done.

Greater? Think about it. Jesus loved the betrayer, Judas. Now think about what Jesus' followers have done. Think of Jim Elliot and Nate Saint and the other five missionaries in Ecuador. They befriended the Aucas, who betrayed them and killed them. Then what happened? Their wives kept loving those betrayers. Nate's son, Steve Saint, actually made one of the murderers the adopted grandfather of his own children!

Pastor Paul Schneider preached loved a congregation in Germany in the 1930s and was betrayed by Nazi informants who were church members. His response? He kept loving that church, no matter how much professing believers hurt him.

And the list goes on. Think of Stephen with his dying words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Who enabled those men to respond like that, and will do the same for us? Jesus said *He will help us.* But that's not all. Jesus says...

2. *The Spirit will help us (14:16-17).* Keep reading in John 14 and notice verses 16-17, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

So it's not just the Son who helps us. The Holy Spirit does too. But since they are different persons, they help in different ways. How does the Spirit help us? Here's one

way, verse 26, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The Spirit helps us by *teaching* us. “I don’t know how to love that hard to love sister in Christ!” *Here. I’ll show you how*, says the Spirit, as He uses His Word to teach us.

But there’s more. According to Jesus...

3. *The Father will help us (14:23)*. Notice verse 23, “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.’ Stop there. What’s true of a person who loves Jesus? He will *obey my teaching*. And what’s the essence of that teaching? *Love one another as I have loved you*. And what’s true of that person?

Notice the rest of verse 23, “...My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” You say, “I can’t love that person! It’s too hard!” Is it too hard for God the Father who has sovereignly placed that person in your life? It’s not. And know this. God the Father didn’t just put that person in your life. Jesus says that He and the Father will come to you and make their home with you! So we’re not alone in this assignment.

And lest we miss the point, Jesus gives an illustration in chapter 15. Fruit. The point?

4. *The Triune God will produce this fruit of love in us (15:1-4; 9-17)*. Listen to Jesus in 15:1-4, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

Where does this power for loving one another originate? In ourselves? No. We’re simply branches, and a severed branch simply dies. But connected to the vine? It bears fruit. In fact, one little branch connected to a vine has the potential of producing anything the vine itself can produce.

Think of that vine behind your house. Hanging from that one tiny little branch is the huge cluster of grapes.

And what kind of fruit does Jesus have in mind here? Listen to verses 9-17, “As the Father has *loved* me, so have I *loved* you. Now remain in my *love*. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my *love*, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his *love*. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: *Love each other as I have loved you*. Greater *love* has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: *Love each other*.”

There is it. The fruit our Savior wants to see in us is *love*. He wants us to love specifically *each other*, and while that’s impossible in our strength, that’s okay because the Triune God Himself provides the strength. The Son helps us. The Spirit helps us. The Father helps us. The *Triune God Himself* produces this fruit of love in us!

You say, “Okay, can you be more specific? What does this love look like in action?” Good question. When we hear love, we think emotion or feeling. So we need some clarification on what love actually is. John clarifies for us by showing us love in action in the next passage. After Jesus gives the exhortation...

II. Jesus gives us an example (36-38).

It's what He does with Peter. Two things. First...

A. He revealed some painful truth to Peter. Listen to the exchange between the Lord and Peter in verse 36, "Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'"

It's as if what Jesus said in verses 34-35 went right over Peter's head. Peter doesn't want to talk about loving his brothers. He wants to discuss Jesus' announcement back in verse 33 that He's leaving.

Of course, this is Peter's pattern. He's always asking Jesus questions! And that's not a bad thing either, though it can wear on you.

Here's another question in verse 37, "Peter asked, 'Lord, why can't I follow you now?'" Followed by a bold claim, "I will lay down my life for you." Peter truly loved Christ. He meant what he said. The problem is, he's underestimating the wickedness of his heart. He wants to love Jesus, but he lacks what it takes.

That's why Jesus is going to the cross. Peter is a sinner, just like we are. As such, he is enslaved to his self-first approach to life, though he knows it's wrong. He's saying the right thing, for he should lay down his life for His Master. But he doesn't have what it takes, not within himself.

And to help him see that, Jesus bursts his bubble in verse 38. "Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!'"

"Good intentions in a secure room after good food," says D. A. Carson, "are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob."³ He's right. How many promises have you and I made to the Lord from a church pew on a Sunday morning that didn't stand the test on Monday at work or school?

This is painful truth, and Peter needed to hear it. Carson sums it up, "Tragically, the boast that he would never deny his Lord, even to the point of death, displays not only gross ignorance of human weakness, but a certain haughty independence that is the seed of the denial itself."⁴

So if you love someone like this, like Peter, what do you do? What's the loving thing to do? You do what Jesus did. First, Jesus revealed some painful truth to Peter. But don't stop there. Jesus didn't just reveal painful truth to Peter. That would be brutal. Secondly...

B. He revealed He would never give up on Peter. I'm so encouraged by what Jesus told Peter in verse 36. *You will follow later.*

Peter, you have good intentions now, but you're blind to the condition of your heart. You're going to deny me. But I'm not giving up on you. In fact, what I'm going to do on the cross tomorrow is for you. And on the basis of what I do, I'm going to restore you, and then you will follow Me.

Know this, my brothers and sisters...

1. *This is what He's done with us, too.* If we're His followers, it's because He revealed the painful, ugly truth about us, too, and our sin. But He didn't give up on us. Rather, He died for us, in our place, to deliver us and give us new life, and having

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 486). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 486). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

conquered death, He's now the Living Savior who promises He will never give up on us, no matter what.

If that's true, then so is this...

2. *This is what we're to do with one another.* "As I have loved you, *so you must love one another.*" There's the exhortation, and there's the example. As He did with Peter, so we are to do with the Peters in our lives.

It's not surprising that the person who wrote this gospel had more to say about this same subject. Listen to 1 John 2:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

And 1 John 4:19-21, "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Let's Take Inventory: Ponder three questions...

1. *Have I experienced the love of Christ?* My non-believing friend, have you experienced the love of Christ? God so loved this world, including you, that He gave His Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Have you received this gift and experienced His love?

2. *Am I experiencing the love of Christ?* Remember, He is the vine, and we are the branches. Are you feeling the wonder day by day of His love?

3. *Am I showing the love of Christ to my forever family?* "Just my forever family?" No, not just. But here's where we're to start, according to Jesus, and here's where our primary attention should be. "As I have loved you, *so you are to love one another.*"

This is how a hostile world will come to know about our Jesus, by seeing how we love each other.