

## **Holy love: the guarantee of true Christianity.**

1 John 2:7-11

### **Introduction**

#### *Poor Widow*

In his *Treasury of Quotations*, F. B. Proctor told the following story: A man was trying to get financial help for a widow who was in dire need, but his efforts were met with very little success. Even so, most of the people he contacted did express their regret over the sad situation of the poverty-stricken woman. The concerned man, refusing to give up, had high hopes as he approached a wealthy acquaintance, but he too refused to offer help. In declining the request, the rich man said, "I do want you to know, however, that I really feel sorry for that poor woman." The one who was asking for the money responded, "I'm sure you do. But I'm afraid you don't feel it in the right place." "Oh, yes, I do," the man replied, "I feel it very deeply in my heart." The other responded, "That's the problem. You feel it in the wrong place. I just wish those feelings were also in your pocket."

The more I listen to the views expressed publicly by people on what being a Christian is really about, the more I am convinced that the vast majority of people do not even know the simplest definition of true Christianity. The popular view of what Christianity really is about would be the one that says that Christianity is about keeping certain rules. Most people also think that whenever these rules and regulations are broken, they will be judged harshly. For them Christianity is all about right and wrong; about do's and don'ts.

To find out a real definition of true Christianity, you must go to the Bible. **And there you will find that true Christianity hangs or falls on holy love, lived out in the power of Christ who is living in us through the Holy Spirit.** The affirmation of Christianity is that when a person receives Christ as Lord and Saviour, that person is empowered to love.

Whatever the proper definition of love is, we all find ourselves longing for it. It remains the ultimate need in people's lives. Christianity is all about meeting that need.

This is what the apostle John is getting at in this passage of Scripture. He has been telling us how to walk in the light. He has been emphasizing the importance of fellowship with God and with one another. Now he will tell us how true Christianity can be guaranteed, namely by the presence of holy love and that holy love implies that we do certain things; that we follow a very specific commandment.

### **To love is an old commandment made new in Christ**

*Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. (1John 2:7-8)*

The apostle John turns to the most basic commandment of Christianity. It is the law of love. He explains to us that love is both an old and a new commandment. But how can something be both old and new?

The command to love is an old one in that it has been around since the beginning. In the Old Testament we find many commandments to love.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-5 we find what was considered as the greatest of all the commandments in the Old Testament: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*" And in Leviticus 19:18 we read, "*Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself.*" The Bible had taught these commandments from the very beginning.

Many people wrongly think that God is revealed in the Old Testament as wrathful and full of vengeance, whereas Jesus came to teach us about his love. But in both Old Testament and New, we meet God as a God of love. Be careful not to mistake the holiness of God for hatred. God is a God of holiness and a God of love. In both Old and New Testament, we find that God expects from us to have holy love. In God's view nobody can be holy, without having love, and no true, Christian love exists, if it is not holy.

But how does the old commandment differ from the new commandment that John speaks about? When John wrote these words, he was thinking of Jesus' own statement recorded in John 13:34: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." It is not the command to love that is new; it is that He gave us a new application of the command to love. The commandment is not new in its scope. It is not new in its reality, but in its reach. It reveals a new degree of love to be manifested. ***It is new because it is based on a new comparison.*** Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." This is the answer. We are not to love only as we love ourselves, but as Jesus loved us. In the old command, we were to love our neighbour as ourselves. In the new command, we are to love one another as Jesus demonstrated God's love to us. This is the new commandment - *to love as Jesus loved!*

How did He love us? Look at His life. Jesus loved us when we didn't deserve His love, when we were not easy to love, because we still needed to be restored by His love. Listen to John 15:13, "*Greater love has no one that this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*" Jesus loved us enough to lay down His life for us. What makes this love even more inconceivable is that He loved us when we were still sinners. Romans 5:8 says, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

Holy love being present in our lives shows us that we are true Christians. What does the love that you have, tell you about your relationship with Christ today?

#### **Holy love is the guarantee of true Christianity**

*Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him. (1 John 2:9-11)*

The apostle John now refers to love and hate. There is no middle ground, because true Christianity is characterized by love. If you claim to be a Christian, or as John calls it, claims to be in the light and you hate your brother, you show no authentic Christianity at all. This is the essence of the message of verses 9 and 11. John says that if you hate your brother you are still in the darkness. There is a difference between walking in the darkness and being in the darkness. A Christian may sometimes walk in the darkness without being a part of the darkness. But John says that an unforgiving, hateful person does not walk in the darkness, but he or she is part of the darkness.

A simple definition of hate is a feeling of extreme hostility or dislike for someone else. It can be an active hatred where we do or say things in order to hurt other people, or it can be a passive hatred where we express ourselves by being indifferent, cold, and uncaring. Whether it is an attitude of active hostility or cold indifference, it is a form of hatred. And John says that this kind of person is not a Christian.

A true Christian cannot be part of darkness. We are called to be holy - to be part of the light of God! Therefore, like God, a Christian can forgive. Forgiveness is the essence of holy love, because the way God forgives shows us what holy love really means.

A true Christian is not only commanded to love, but from the Holy Spirit received the power to love. How do we show this kind of love? There are practical ways in which we can demonstrate our love for one another. We can show our love by how we think about people. The Book of Proverbs teaches that a person is what he thinks in his heart. If we have critical and judgmental thoughts concerning people, we can be sure that the love of God will not be manifested by our lives. Loving actions begin with loving thoughts. In Romans 15:7, we read, "*Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*"

We are to receive one another as Jesus received us. When we came to Jesus we were all freely accepted. We must cultivate this mind-set of acceptance, before we can show our love. Another way in which we can demonstrate our love is by how we speak about and to one another. The Scriptures urge us to speak words tested by grace, because words can encourage or it can discourage, hurt and break the spirit of others. The words we speak ought to be words of encouragement. Everyone needs an encourager. No one needs a sharp-tongued backbiter.

We also show our love by how we act toward other people. We must not love in word only, but also in deed. We must not only think right thoughts about others, but also speak the right words about one another, and also do what is best for the other person.

This is true, because love is not a feeling, but it is an action of the will. To forgive your enemy is holy love defined. Love certainly is something we do. An act of compassion, a good deed, an act of kindness, of respect, of trust, of appreciation, of tolerance. The most important action in love is forgiveness. Forgiveness speaks volumes about the authenticity of our Christian walk.

**Appeal:**

The promise we have, if we love one another, is that there will be nothing that causes us or anyone else to stumble within our lives.

If we love, we are in the light and we will see clearly how to walk with Christ. It is proof to us that we are His disciples. It is the most powerful testimony of the reality of the grace of God in our lives that others can see. Without love we are blind for God's purpose with our lives. Without love we make others blind for the love of Christ. Without love those closest to us become without hope and often even without faith, because not to be loved, is to be rejected, hurt and left unfulfilled. Not to love is to become part of the darkness that blinds others: When people are not loved, they cannot see that they are worth anything, and more importantly, they cannot see the love of Jesus.

In the place of bitterness, dislike and hate, put forgiveness. Give others permission to be who they are. Give them hope to become whatever they can be. Ask God to empower you to empower others, by placing His love in your heart. Commit yourself to love in thought, in word, and in deed. This is the only way to live as an authentic Christian. Accept the love of Jesus for you, and His forgiveness, and what you received freely from Jesus, freely give to those around you.

*This is the Word of God. In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

You are welcome to send your comments on this sermon outline to Andries Combrink at [info@cpk.co.za](mailto:info@cpk.co.za)