

AREAS OF CHRISTIAN DUTY

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: John 15:9-17. From Roy H. Enoch (06-27-1993).
- B. The NT describes man's duties in three areas:
 - 1. His duty to himself to grow in grace and knowledge of the truth that we might be fruitful in the Lord's vineyard.
 - 2. Man's duty to his fellow man is emphasized that we love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - 3. Man's duty to God is our greatest responsibility.
- C. We emphasize the first and last more frequently in our preaching.
- D. This lesson will focus on the areas of duty that we have for one another. It will not be possible in the 25-30 minutes that I have to discuss in detail every duty and responsibility, but we will focus on the most basic and comprehensive principle of all: THAT WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

I. THE NT SAYS A GREAT DEAL ABOUT OUR OBLIGATION TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

- A. A concordance will impress us w/two things about our responsibility to love one another.
 - 1. We will learn about how many times we are told to love, and
 - 2. We will be impressed by our obligation that is expressed so frequently.
- B. In the text Jesus said, THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT.
 - 1. We are fully aware of the emphasis on keeping commandments (Mt. 7:21; 1Jn. 2:4; Rev. 22:14).
 - 2. What is this COMMANDMENT that Jesus is giving His apostles at the last supper?
 - a. Is it baptism for the remission of sins? No.
 - b. Is it the command to meet on the first day of the week?
 - c. Is it the command to give on the first day of the week?
 - d. These things are taught in the NT, but the commandment that Jesus emphasized at the last supper is different.
 - 3. John 15:12
 - a. If keeping His commandments is necessary to go to heaven, then this duty stands between us and heaven as much as faith.
 - 4. Jesus gave a similar commandment earlier the same evening (Jn. 13:35).
 - a. We may be surprised that He did not say, "By this God shall know,"
 - b. Or that "By this I shall know that you are My disciples."
 - c. But this shows MEN that we are following X.
 - d. This shows the genuineness of our discipleship.
 - 5. But Jesus had also said earlier that we are to "love our enemies."
 - a. We have difficulty w/ this if we do not recognize that there are two Greek words translated "love."
 - 1) "phileo" means warmth of affection, emotional love.
 - a) "philosophy"--the love of wisdom.
 - b) "philology"--the love of words or logic.
 - c) "philadelphia"--the love of brethren.
 - d) This word is never commanded.
 - 2) "agape" indicates a decision to do what is right or to treat people right, and is the love that is commanded.
 - b. Jesus tells us what he means by "love your enemies" (Mt. 5:44-45).
 - 1) Loving our enemies is to treat them right.
 - 2) The Lord never commands us to like them or have affection for them.
- C. There is another passage that gives us difficulty about loving (1Jn. 3:14-15).
 - 1. John clearly states that we love or we hate.
 - a. There is no neutral ground in matters involving basic principles.

- b. The fact that you are not in the light means that you are in the dark: If you are not saved, you are lost.
- 2. These facts make it very clear that there is absolutely no proper place for compromise in matters of principle for the Lord's faithful people.
 - a. Although not popular, to disregard it will be responsible for leading people astray.
 - b. Examples of those who compromised God's teaching to their destruction.
 - 1) King Saul (1Sam. 15:1-23).
 - 2) King Solomon (1Kgs. 11:1-11).
 - 3) Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-2).
 - c. In matters of expediency where there is no basic principle involved, and the various ways are right, it is proper to yield for the sake of peace.
 - d. No one respects one who will compromise principle, especially for selfish ends.
 - 1) Bro. Guy N. Woods tells of a civil war soldier who was drafted, but did not want to fight on either side. He decided to compromise so that he would be safe: he put on a Union coat and Confederate pants. They found him dead--with bullets in his coat from the direction of the Confederate line and bullets in his pants from the direction of the Union forces.
 - 2) We must stay w/the truth of God's word and teach what is right regardless of the circumstances.
 - 3) The love for God and respect for His word will allow no other course.

II. **LOVE IS THE BASE ON WHICH RESTS EVERY DUTY WE OWE BOTH TO GOD AND MAN.**

- A. A lawyer came to Jesus (an expert in the Law of Moses) about a matter that had been a subject of controversy for centuries: Which of the commandments is the greatest?
 - 1. It is of interest to note how Jewish traditional law had arose.
 - a. The Bible is a book of principles that can be applied in different cultures for all ages.
 - b. But man wants detailed legislation which is cumbersome.
 - c. Bro. Guy N. Woods said that when he studied law in Texas and was admitted to the bar, the civil statutes were two volumes, each about 4" thick, and the criminal code was a stack of books about 8" high. This was for 1 state of about 100 years.
 - d. How many volumes of specific, detailed legislation would result for all peoples for all time?
 - 2. The Jewish tradition developed because a Rabbi decided to write proper application for the Law that Moses received from God at Sinai.
 - a. Then later, another Rabbi decided that the earlier explanation needed explaining, so he proceeded to do so.
 - b. Fifteen hundred years later when the Lord came to earth, the Jewish traditional material was more respected than the Law itself, and they were even more ingenious in evading it.
 - c. Some brief examples may illustrate this:
 - 1) A woman was forbidden to look into a mirror on the Sabbath, because she might see a gray hair and be tempted to pluck it and that would be reaping.
 - 2) They thought it was wrong to eat a chicken on the Sabbath, but they could eat an egg, so if they wanted chicken on the Sabbath, they called it "only an egg turned out to be"--simply an extension of an egg.
 - 3) They taught that a journey of more than 7/8 if a mile was wrong on a Sabbath, so when they wanted to go father on a Sabbath, the day before they would deposit bits of food every 7/8 of a mile, reasoning that where you eat is home, and therefore as long as you were w/in 7/8 if a mile of your food, you were never more than that from home.

- d. This kind of hairsplitting prompted the Lord to rebuke the Jewish leaders of His day (Mt. 15:7-9).
- 3. So a Jewish lawyer asked Jesus what is the great commandment of the law (Mt. 22:36-40). Notice the last statement: "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."
 - a. Like a peg on a wall w/a string over them, the two ends are the commandments with all the teachings of Moses and the Prophets hanging from them.
 - b. All of God's law is based upon love: for God and for our fellow man.
- B. Among the duties we often owe to those about us is the obligation to forgive.
 - 1. Jesus recognized that the Jewish teachers had a very limited sense of obligation in this matter.
 - a. They thought that if one forgave another three times that it would exhaust all reasonable expectation.
 - b. Peter seems to have sensed that this was too limited and asked the Savior (Mt. 18:21-22).
 - c. Jesus was not limiting our responsibility to 490 times, but that we should forgive as often as we want God to forgive us (Mt. 6:12-15).
 - d. We are often assured that we will be treated by God as we treat our fellow man.
 - 2. Therefore we should look at the occasion of forgiving as an opportunity to receive a blessing from God rather than as our giving a blessing to someone else.
 - a. We must realize that our not forgiving will keep us out of heaven, not the person we would not forgive.
 - b. Therefore Paul admonished Christians: Col. 3:12-13
 - c. We should be willing to pray, "Lord, if I will not forgive others, then don't forgive me."
 - 3. In the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord prayed for Himself, and on the cross, he prayed for His enemies (Lk. 23:34). The verb is an imperfect, signifying, "He kept on saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"
 - 4. As Paul enjoined in the passage from Col. 3:12,13, two things:
 - a. "bearing w/ one another.
 - 1) To "bear with one another" means to endure, suffer, tolerate; to put up with.
 - 2) It is often easier to share a burden than to endure weaknesses, peculiarities, and eccentricities (Gal. 6:2).
 - 3) If we will not endure the weaknesses of others, we will often not have the love to forgive, and be forgiven.
 - b. forgiving.
 - 1) We cannot be happy in this life if we have not learned forbearance and tolerance of the weaknesses of others.
 - 2) Hence, to refuse to tolerate others, and forgive them will compound our own unhappiness in this life and close the door of heaven against us in the next life.
 - 5. It is interesting to note that the Greek phrase, translated "forgiving one another," in Col. 3:13, is, literally, "showing favor to yourselves."
 - a. The brother we forgive is in the same body to which we belong, so restoring him, contributes to the well being of the whole body.
 - b. Therefore, the forbearing, forgiving spirit will bring happiness to oneself and to the body, the church, as well as eternal life.

CONCLUSION.

- A. When we think of Xian duty, there is no greater challenge than to love our brethren as the Lord loved us.
- B. That loving includes forbearing in the weaknesses and mistakes of others and forgiving.
- C. When we master these responsibilities, we will be mature in the Lord's Family.