

Love One Another

February, the shortest month, has in it several notable days. Groundhog Day (Candlemas) is February 2. My mother, who died in February 2008 (15 years ago already), often said (probably from her parents or grandparents),

*“If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter will have another flight.
If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain,
winter will not come again.”*

Likely Punxsutawny Phil will see his shadow and there will be six more weeks of winter.

Then there is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, and then George Washington’s birthday. It is rather fitting that the “Father of Our Country,” and the “Great Emancipator” be honored at their birthdays.

Likely most people think of February as being the Valentine month. Valentine’s Day is in honor of the ancient saint of the Church who promoted **love** up to his martyrdom for Christ.

Let’s look at the Scripture in 1 John 3:11-18, and the seemingly simple command that we “love one another.”

The Apostle John, the “disciple whom Jesus loved” wrote this exposition. He points out:

1. Love is a key element of the Gospel (v. 11). He says that we have heard this from the beginning. Heard what? That God loved us (John 3:16), and that Jesus died for His people as a result of that love. Therefore, we are to love others, particularly in the body of Christ. It matters little that we know someone, or that we have had hard feelings with people, we are to love them as God loves the world, and as Christ loves the Church. God loved us so much that His Son died for us—and this love has existed before the foundation of the world.

2. Love is evidence that we have trusted Christ (v. 14). How do we know we are truly belonging to Jesus? By our obedience to this command that we love one another. “We *know*,” John says. This is a *mark of assurance*—that we love brothers and sisters in Christ. Does this mean that others never annoy us or that we never have conflicts? No. It means that despite those challenges, we still love each other—because we are relating to people for whom Christ died.

3. Love is revealed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (v. 16). Ponder the love of Christ wherein He laid down His life for us. This

is the ultimate example of Godly love. God gave of Himself in order to bring us into a saving relationship with Him. God took the initiative. God prepared the plan. God put that plan into practice. God took on Himself our sin. God has given us the Holy Spirit to transform us. God will bring us home to Heaven. God has done it.

4. Love is demanded because of the work of Jesus (v. 16b), and in practically assisting those in need. We do this physically through helping with food and shelter and clothing and encouragement. Our church helps people through our Deacon Fund, and through other special events (like our food drives to help the food bank in Wolf Lake). But beyond that, we assist those who have great spiritual needs as well, through presenting the Gospel and in encouraging believers to live out the implications of the Gospel daily in their lives.

5. Love goes beyond mere talk to concrete action (v. 18). We can talk much about evangelism, yet how willing are we to speak with our neighbor about our faith in Jesus Christ? We can be interested in having visitors in worship, yet are we willing to invite people ourselves? We can be thinking about a growing church, yet how willing are we to pray and encourage and work toward that growth? We can speak of love, yet are we willing to actually share the Gospel so that a friend or neighbor doesn’t go to hell?

So, we see that the command to “love one another” is a demanding command. It’s much more difficult than in simply having warm feelings toward others. It is actually following through on what has already been done for us, and in taking that good message of the Gospel to others.

Let’s love one another, and ever so much the more as we see the Day of the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!