Exactly What Is It That Jesus Requires From Us?

By David Hopkins

Are you annoyed by the ritualistic feel of most churches today?

Are you tired of people who insinuate that if you're not perfect, then you aren't a good Christian?

Doesn't it annoy you when people equate drinking and smoking with sin?

Yes, you know that the Bible does not command people to not drink. You know that Jesus changed the water into wine. You know that Christians are not perfect, they're just forgiven. Nowhere does Jesus tell people they should try to stay healthy and take care of their

body. In fact, He says the opposite, that you should not worry about such things. When people try to say that cigarette smoking defiles the temple of the Holy Ghost, you know that Jesus said it is not what goes in by the mouth that defiles a person.

Odd, isn't it, how some people try to make their prejudices into commandments from God? Especially when Jesus complained about the Pharisees "teaching as commandment the doctrines of men." But this seems to be the habit of those who wish to control others.

A "divining rod," or "rule of thumb," if you wish, for determining whether something is good or bad is the Love commandments. When asked which was the most important commandment, Jesus replied, "Love God with all your hearts... and the second most important is similar to it, love your neighbor as yourself." Later on, Jesus gave as a "new" commandment: "Love one another." When taken together with His assertion to "Love your enemies," it can be seen that, by "one another," He meant everyone, not just fellow Christians. Thus, as Paul said in Romans, "The law and the prophets are summed up in the one commandment, to love one another." Unconditional altruistic love is how Jesus wants us to treat each other. Can love be faulted? It cannot. Anything done out of love is good. Understand that, by "love," we are not talking about infatuation or sexual attraction. Those are different things altogether.

What is meant by "altruistic love" is caring about the feelings and well-being of the one loved. Jesus gave us an example when He said, "Greater love has no man than... to lay down his life for someone else." Then He put his life on the block as a sacrifice for our sins. He paid it all, folks, paid for everyone, everywhere, once, for all time.

Why was His sacrifice able to wipe out the sin of all people? He was the only perfect person ever to live upon the earth. As a perfect person, His sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice. He had no sin that needed paying for, thus giving up His life was an act of purest love, utmost unselfishness. It was the perfect sacrifice, the only thing which could cleanse all sin forever.

It is not by our "being good" that we are saved from punishment. It is simply not possible for us to be that good, that we would not suffer punishment. Every human being save the Savior has been selfish at some time in their life. When you play a sport and attempt

to win, you are being selfish. I'm sorry, but it's true. When you have food and eat it, knowing there are people in the world who have no food, you are being selfish. It is sad, I know. How, then, can anyone be saved? Jesus said, "Believe on me, and ye shall be saved." What does this mean? Simply that if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who gave His life to save us from punishment, that is faith, and that is all that is required.

Knowing that someone gave up their life to save yours, doesn't this make you care about the one who gave up their life? Jesus said, "If you love me, then obey me." What does He want us to obey? He gave us a "new" commandment, (meaning it replaces all the old ones) to "Love one another." He cares about each and every one of us, and He wants us to care about each other in the same way. No parent wants their children hurting each other.

Love does not envy; love does not desire to control; love gives all it has, even gives up its life for the sake of the one loved; love is patient; love is kind; love is not proud; love does not punish, love praises; love is happy when it sees happiness, sad when it sees sadness; love nourishes; love encourages; love builds the other up; love desires to be always with the one loved; love heals; love does not destroy; love is not selfish; love does not ignore the one loved, but waits on them "hand and foot."

That can be a tall order, folks. But love also gives strength to the one who loves.

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