

# Love in Action

2017 Mark Beard

## Text: Romans 12:9-21 NIV

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## Introduction

The great American civil rights leader Martin Luther King preached one of his most moving sermons on the title "Loving your enemies". He was in jail at the time, imprisoned for daring to suggest that American Negroes should have the same civil rights as other Americans.

During his life-time he had received death threat after death threat, he'd been maliciously accused of being a communist, his house had been bombed, and he was jailed over 20 times. Yet in this sermon he said "hate multiplies hate...in a descending spiral of violence" and is "just as injurious to the person who hates" as to his victim. But "love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend" for it has "creative" and "redemptive" power.

Source: reported in David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross. Martin Luther King Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*

There are at least two main **challenges** we face in showing real love.

### I. Loving Those Who Love You

A. Strive to remain sincere (v.9-10)

B. Strive to remain passionate (v.11).

C. Strive to live out your love in actions (v.12-13).

“What Does Love Mean?” It seems that a group of professionals posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year olds. The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. Listen to some of these.

“When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toe nails anymore. So, my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That’s love.” Rebecca – age 8.

“Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.” Karl – age 5.

“Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.” Terri – age 4.

“Love is what’s in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen. Bobby” – age 7.

“If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.” Nikka – age 6.

“My Mommy loves me more than anybody. You don’t see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night.” Clare – age 6.

“Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford and Brad Pitt.” Chris – age 7. I’ve never heard that one! Have any of you other guys ever heard that? I sure haven’t!

“I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.” Lauren – age 4.

“You really shouldn’t say ‘I love you’ unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.” Jessica – age 8.

## II. Loving Those Who Hate You

### A. Strive to remain loving with difficult people and difficult situations (v.14-16).

In his book Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis wrote, "Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less." *Our Daily Bread*, February 14.

### B. Strive to maintain your integrity in difficult situations (v.17-19).

### C. Strive to let your good outshine their evil (v.20-21).

“In Bible times a person needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time in order to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, in a fashion we often see in some cultures, back to his home. The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of getting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury.” – source unknown

### Conclusion

In his recent book *How Small a Whisper*, Roger Carswell relates an amazing story of a Christian family's response to tragedy:

In May 1987, 39 American seamen were killed in the Persian Gulf when an Iraqi pilot hit their ship, the *USS Stark*, with a missile. Newspapers carried a picture of the son of one of these seamen, a shy five-year-old boy, John Kiser. He was standing with his hand on his heart as his father's coffin was loaded onto a plane to take him back to the U.S.A.

His mother said, "I don't have to mourn or wear black, because I know my husband is in heaven. I am happy, because I know he is better off." Later on, she and young John sent a letter and an Arabic New Testament to the pilot of the Iraqi plane, addressed to: "The man who attacked the *Stark*, Dad's ship, in the hope that it will show that even the son and the wife do not hold any grudge and are at the same time praying for the one who took the life of our father."

*Roger Carswell, How Small a Whisper (Kregel, 2000), p. 67; submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois*