

The Unity of Faith Working Through Love

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity in the church, focusing on relating to one another through faith working through love. It highlights the need to see others through the lens of God's love, bearing with one another, having hope, and showing kindness. The ultimate goal is to walk in the Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and produce unity through faith and love.

Scripture: John 17:21, Ephesians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 13:7, 1 John 5:16, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:7, 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 15:7, Galatians 5:6

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Love and Kindness"

Description

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Transcript

Today, no notes, just your attention. You know, the way the gospel was communicated at birth was all verbally. Just either reading a letter or listening to one of the apostles or one of the deacons, one of those early evangelists preach.

They didn't have numbers, they didn't have chapters, they didn't have books. They spoke about truth. And they all sought, they come together to seek understanding.

And if that's how we'll be together this morning, I believe we'll receive an understanding. Last week we talked about some things that we need to remember. Because, you know, you're looking at maybe a new pastor, but do you know the leadership of this church is not going to change? The head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is a change. There may be another man underneath that, another shepherd. There's no change.

It's the church of the Lord Jesus. He is the principal pastor and shepherd. And so we know that and we talked about always our focus, our hope, our confidence is in the Lord.

It's not in a person. Our hope is in the Lord himself. This is something that was on my heart this morning.

We also know what the future direction of this church is. I'm going to make that very clear. And it's going to be, yeah, you're right.

Once you hear about it, it's going to make perfect sense to you. Because, not that I'm a prophet. I don't need to be a prophet.

We can know with certainty what God's will for this church is. As a matter of fact, any person here, any Christian here in any church, we can know with certainty what the will of this church is. I want you to take the word this.

Inside of the word this, this church is his church. Just drop the T. That's how can we know what his will is for this church. Because this church is his church.

And we know what the will of his church is. He prayed for that will in John 17. Who can tell me, basically, what the will of the Heavenly Father is for his church? What did Jesus pray for his church in John chapter 17? Can you summarize that for me? Yes, that they would be what? Completely united together with the Father and the Son.

The Father and the Son are in perfect unity. So the goal for the church of Jesus Christ is to come to the same unity with each other that the Father has with the Son. And when we come to that unity, that is God's goal, that is his will.

When that happens, Jesus says that the world may know you sent me. Now here's the challenge. Coming to complete unity.

What does that look like? Because if you look around in the natural, we are very different. Aren't we? The good news is, you don't have to be like me. I don't have to be like you.

So how do we become completely unified? That is all of us becoming like Jesus. Not about my way, and it's not about your way. It's when all of us come to the place where we are completely united together in his spirit.

We understand that. And there's two elements of this that fascinate me in scripture when it talks about a complete unity. In Ephesians 4, we read that God gave apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors, teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry that the body of Christ may build up until we all reach the unity of the faith.

There it talks about being completely united in faith. Other places, through the same apostle, through the apostle Paul, he talks about another way for unity to be completed and perfected. There he talks about love being the bond of perfection.

So you have faith, the unity of the faith, and being completely united in the love of Christ. So you have this dynamic, and this is what I want to talk about this morning, because the way God works and the way he brings about his unity is the unity of faith working through love. I want us to see if we can get a greater understanding of that this morning.

In the book of Galatians, when Paul was writing to the church of Galatia, he reminded them that circumcision, meaning being a Jew, or non-circumcision, being someone other than a Jew, didn't mean anything. No longer had meaning. Being a Jew does not have meaning.

Not being a Jew doesn't have meaning. He says the only thing that has power, in the Greek it's a school, the only thing that actually has a dynamic force at work is faith working through love. This is what I want us to try to understand.

For a church to come to unity, for a believer to come to maturity, you're going to experience it this way, because this is the way the new covenant works. Faith working through love. Notice what's working? Didn't say love working through faith.

Paul's very specific. Faith working through love. Now what does that mean? Let's see if we can understand.

This is what I've spent time just enjoying reflecting on. We must learn to relate to one another on the basis of faith working through love. What do we know about faith? Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.

So unless you and I are relating to one another on the basis of faith through love, we're not going to come to unity. You know why? Because I see things in you, you see things in me. And sometimes we don't like what we see.

In the natural. And unless we learn to relate to one another by faith through love, we're not going to achieve this unity that is God's will for His church. So what does that look like? By faith through love.

I see you, you have an issue, you have an issue with me. By faith, what do I remember? By faith, Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for sins. That means whatever I'm seeing in your life, whatever issue there is, by faith, Jesus Christ died for that.

I forget that. All I have is my issue with that. My personal dislike of that.

My irritation with that. That's natural, not spiritual. Faith works through love.

When by faith, you remember, Jesus Christ died to redeem this person from this. Then you can begin, by faith, to work through love. Now what does love do then? How does this faith work through love? Well, the first quality of love is love suffers long.

By faith, remembering that Jesus Christ died to pay for the sins that irritate me, I can be long-suffering with this brother or sister. Knowing that God's will is that they be redeemed from these things that I see. Now does that mean it will happen? No.

This is why you have to understand something. That doesn't mean they'll change. Let me assure you that God doesn't force himself on people.

God looks at a person, and if that person is proud, what does God do? What does God do to the proud? He resists them. So you don't have to put on rose-colored glasses. If you see pride in someone, what you know is God is going to oppose that person until that person might respond to truth being shared.

And if that person responds to truth being shared and humbles themselves, by faith you already know those sins have been paid for. By faith you know Jesus has died, and that person can be forgiven. God won't force it on them.

And you might have to be careful. You might have to suffer long with it. Because you see the issue.

You don't like the attitude. It grieves you. But rather than just having your own personal offense, by faith, you remember Jesus Christ died.

Yes. And in that process, we become more like Jesus. We suffer like he suffered for others.

And by faith, what do you remember? Remember the way love works? You say, but how can I love them when they haven't changed? But this is how God demonstrates his love for us. How did God demonstrate his love for us? Can you say it? In that while we were still sinners, Christ died. So God didn't wait until the world changed and then sent his son for those who had changed.

God demonstrates his love in that he provided the sacrifice and atonement while men were still sinners. When you and I relate to each other this way, while we see the sin, we remember by faith Jesus Christ died. So that could be forgiven.

And then through love, we can bear with it. We can suffer with it. There's another thing the Bible says about love.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 13, that love bears all things, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things. So by faith, remembering that the way God demonstrates his love is, Jesus Christ, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish. So whatever we're seeing in someone, if they come to the place where they believe, convicted by the Holy Spirit that they're wrong, if they will humble themselves, what are they going to experience? They are going to experience the grace and mercy of God.

And you know what we're doing in the meantime? We're hoping that's what happens. That's working through love. That's faith working through love.

We're hoping for something we don't yet see. We still see the attitude. We still see the stubbornness.

And we know God's got it, right? They're suffering. They're going to suffer for what they're doing. God's not happy with it.

He's not pleased. He knows what's going on. But even with that, it's possible.

Remember what Paul said in Romans? It's possible that someone might die for a good man, but who's going to give himself for an evil man? But that's exactly what Jesus did. And so we don't have to deny what we're seeing in each other. Do it.

See it. But through faith, working through love, we can bear it. We can have hope for them.

We wait. We wait for that understanding. We wait for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Knowing by faith, God has the power to save this person. God has the power to make this person a new creation. And we don't, in our smug self-confidence, sit back with this only natural thinking, saying, I know that person never going to change.

Yeah, you might be right naturally, but that's not spiritual. And God knew every single one of us. And what did He do with what He saw? He sent His Son.

And when Jesus Christ was in the world, here's what it said, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against them. So you know how we relate to one another through faith? Faith, working through love? We don't allow what we see to cause our hearts to be closed. Instead, we walk in hope.

We walk in hope that the work of the Holy Spirit will bring conviction. And that through the work of conviction, there will be a humbling and a confessing. And we know by faith that if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And isn't that what happened to us? When we confessed our sins, didn't He forgive us? Isn't that what the Scripture says? We are to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. That's how we become one. Faith, working through love.

And this is what happens. When you begin to walk this way, faith working through love is how the Holy Spirit is poured out into the heart. Because this is where the Spirit works.

If you are believing for someone and you're, through love, you're willing to suffer long for them, you're willing to have hope for them. You're willing to not count their sins against them. You're willing to remember that they may experience that conviction.

They may experience that renewal. They may see. They may humble themselves at some point and you know, and you're almost anticipating it.

It's what you hope for. That the moment they humble themselves, they will receive that faith working through love. And we talk about the Spirit moving and people receiving the power of the Spirit.

And let me say this. One of the evidences, one of the evidences for the Spirit being poured out on someone is speaking in other tongues. You know, that's an evidence of the Holy Spirit.

That's what happened at the Day of Pentecost. It happened even in other places in the New Testament, not only the Day of Pentecost. It happened several times.

So I'm going to say that is an evidence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but it's not the evidence. Let me tell you what the more reliable evidence of the Holy Spirit being poured out. When the Holy Spirit is poured out on someone, the love of God is shed or brought into their heart.

And you know how, you know how you know that they are being filled with the love of God from the Holy Spirit in their heart? It's not that they babble in some kind of tongues. Because that's, there are prejudice people in the deep south that can handle snakes and speak in tongues and they're no more filled with the Holy Spirit than anybody. That's not evidence.

The evidence that you are filled with the Spirit of God is you have the ability to speak the truth in love. You have the ability to suffer long with people. You can bear with people.

You can endure people. You're willing to lay down your life for people. You have hope for people.

That's what the Holy Spirit does in the heart. That's what walking in the Holy Spirit is. And that's what produces the beautiful unity of the Spirit.

We have hope for one another. We know we're not finished. But we know by faith the Holy Spirit will convict the areas of sin, right? Isn't that what John said in 1 John? If you see your brother or your sister just meaning either one if you see your Christian friend your brother or sister in Christ if you see them commit a sin not unto death, what are you to do? You're to pray.

And when you pray, what is God going to do? Give them life. That's what God's going to do. You know why you know that's what God's going to do? Because it's always what God wants to do.

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. When I'm being filled with the Holy Spirit I don't want to see anyone slaughtered. I don't want to see anyone fail.

It doesn't please me at all. I don't even get any pleasure in being right. I knew it.

I knew it. That's what would happen. Oh, come on.

That is so carnal. That's not spiritual. If God treated us that way there'd be no hope for us.

This is how faith works through love. Now when God decided to send Jesus from heaven as the Savior of the world do you think he stopped to wonder but will everybody take advantage of it? Do you think he waited and thought you know, why should I do it if only a few people are going to would that make it worth it? No, no, he didn't. I believe the reason God sent his son Jesus is he didn't want a single person to carry it.

I don't believe he takes any pleasure in the destruction of the wicked. That's what the scripture says about it. That we are to consider the long suffering of God to be salvation.

Because God wants people to come to repentance and that's what relating to one another by faith working through love is it it leaves room in your heart. You can it's okay to see them like they are that's what they are that's how God sees them you're not wrong for seeing the problem. That's that's what God sees.

I mean read read to the church the revelation how many times you read Jesus said but I have this against you. Listen that's okay to do not give up hope for them. Jesus came and spoke that giving them an opportunity to change so that he could have mercy upon them and that's us.

We have been given the ministry of reconciliation not condemnation. God didn't make us judges he made us evangelists. We are the ones with the good news and you know what the good news is? That whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That if you humble yourself God will lift you up. That if we sin he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. All we have to do is walk in the light as he is in the light.

That's it. And not everybody sees the light equally. The goal is to be completely understanding but this takes time and if any of us have come to learn anything by faith we're supposed to remember something everything we've learned we've learned because God is merciful and his mercy and his kindness has allowed us to come to see it.

So what if someone else doesn't see it yet? Yeah, they're blind. Yeah, they're wrong. But is God's heart for them the same as God's heart for us? Absolutely.

And you can only know that by faith. That's a by faith thing. And when when that faith is clear in your heart love will be the fruit.

Love begins to work and that's when by faith you suddenly find the ability to bear with them to have hope for them to show kindness to them because God who is love, what does he do? How is God to the wicked and the ungrateful? How is God? He's kind to the wicked and the ungrateful. That's how he is. And he's love and this is what the scripture says.

How can you say I love God? You don't see. If you don't love your brother so you do see. Because if you knew that God is love when you see that sinner what do you remember? God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Whosoever believeth in him might not perish. You know that's his heart. So if you know God isn't that your heart? Isn't that your heart for them? Aren't you hoping that they will be convicted of sin and humble themselves so they can be forgiven? They can be lifted up and they can receive the same mercy that we received.

And what if they're stubborn? And here we've been we've repented maybe early on in our life and we've got these family members or these children or these people we know and they just stubborn. They keep on doing their sinning and they just won't come I mean they just do you remember a little parable that the Lord Jesus gave about the workers of the venue? You know these workers agreed to work for denarius a day's wage. And they started early in the morning.

But there wasn't enough workers so the landowner went out kept hiring workers all throughout the day even to the last hour. He found some guys that were standing there almost at the end of the day and said what are you doing standing here? And they said well no one hired them. They said come work for me I'll pay you whatever's fair.

They only worked an hour I guess there was probably the light went out they couldn't see enough to continue so the landowner tells the foreman call everybody in but put the front of the line let's start with those that I hired last and then put the ones that I hired first at the end. So the ones that hired last came he didn't told them he only told them I'm going to pay you what's fair. But when they came he gave them a denarius.

That's what he agreed to pay the guys that worked all day. And of course when you're so surprised you're talking about it well the guys at the end of the line could hear what was going on. Those guys are getting a denarius.

He's paying them for all day. I wonder what we're going to get. When it was their time they put up their hand and they got their denarius.

And they were bummed. They said hey he gave those guys the same thing he gave them. He made those guys equal with us.

As if he had done something wrong. You know what the point of that story was? It's for people like us. Maybe we've been grateful that God's mercy has reached us early.

And we know the Lord and we love the Lord and we're serving the Lord. And there are people still out there in the world doing their thing. They haven't even begun to work.

Are we going to murmur and complain when God gives them the same mercy that he gave us? I sure hope not. Do we really know the Lord if that's our heart? You see, it takes faith working through love to produce unity. Because the unity is based upon God's heart.

We understand his heart. Where there is sin, he wants to convict it, bring understanding, bring deliverance and repentance so that he can have these new creations. And that's how we relate to each other.

When by faith we are working that we begin to work through love, we suddenly find the power of God, the very nature of God, the love of God being shed and brought in our hearts and suddenly it's an opportunity to bear with someone. To hope that we might be the vessel of mercy that leads them to repentance. Because you know what, especially the hard cases, and we, I think we've had a few hard cases.

A lot of time the hard cases are the ones that people give up on. And I'll tell you why they give up on them, and I'm glad this came to mind, it is because they're not yet mature in love. Faith working through love makes this a difference.

Because let me look, I'm going to look at this congregation right here, those that are sitting here. All of us walk through these doors kind of one of two ways. One of two ways.

You walk through this door wondering will these people love me? Or you walk through the doors wondering who is there that God is sending me to love? I want you to think about that. How do you come? You come wondering, will these people love me? Do they love me? You know, people do come in that, you know who they are? They're the infants. That's how the infants think.

Hold me, pamper me, feed me, play with me. That's the infant. The mature ones look for who needs to subvertate.

Who is there that needs me to be a blessing to them? And when a church, when a group of people walk through the door in a church looking for who they can be a blessing to, you don't have issues. But you know what happens to the infants? They come to a church and if not everyone is mature, they run into another infant. And what do children do when they're putting together and there's the same toil right between them? They start fighting over it, don't they? He pulled my hair, he bit me, you know.

And that's what children do. They fight. And then what happens? You get disappointed and I'm going to run away from home and nobody loves me and you have your pity party.

And all that is an indication is you do not know the love of God. You have not come to see how great God's love is. Because when you see how wide and how long and high and deep is the love of God, it is such a privilege to be a blessing to the people who don't deserve it.

Because that's what God did. When he saw the world in its condition he sent his son. And now in the name of his son that's how we get to be with people.

What a privilege. What an honor. That he would give us a chance to be ministers of reconciliation with people.

So that's his will for this church. This church. That he be perfect in love.

That we come to the place where we're walking through these doors wondering who am I there to bless? Who am I there to serve? And then we'll be there. It won't matter who the pastor is. Because we're his

church.

We're doing his will. We live by his spirit. How it might look will vary.

But what it will produce is true unity. Mutual love. Mutual esteem.

Mutual honor. And it will create an environment where the areas in our lives that still need to be finished, the Lord can continue to work upon them because we are surrounded by brothers and sisters living in hope for us. Bearing with us.

Believing for us. Just waiting for that day when we suddenly see it. And we realize, wow, and then how wonderful it is when a person comes to repentance like that and turns to someone realizing now kind of like, oh, man, I had no idea I was that way.

And can look at you and say, thank you for loving me. Thank you for bearing with me. I'm sorry I didn't see it sooner.

That's the kind of, see, that's his will. That's his will. No question.

We don't know about who the pastor may be. We don't know what it may look like. It doesn't matter.

His undisputable, unchangeable will is that's how we relate to one another. By faith, working through love, we'll produce the initial experience. Okay? Got that? Thank you.

Thank you.

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