

Christian Love

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod's sermon on Christian love highlights its essential role in the believer's life and the necessity of embodying God's love in our actions towards others.

Duration: 27:04

Scripture: Ezekiel 33:31, John 17:26, Romans 5:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 John 3:18, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares two powerful illustrations about the transformative power of love. The first story is about a pastor in Chile who, after struggling with a stagnant church, simply told his congregation to love one another. This simple message sparked a change in the church and things began to happen. The second story is about D.L. Moody, who experienced a profound encounter with the love of God that transformed his ministry. The speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life of love, not just in words, but in actions. They also encourage listeners to examine their own hearts and ask God to fill them with His love. The sermon references passages from Ezekiel, 1 John, 1 Corinthians, and Philipians to support the message of love and serving others.

Transcript

Good day, this is Bill McLeod, speaking from Winnipeg, Canada. I want to speak on the subject of Christian love, and remember that Paul, in the last verse of 1 Corinthians 13, that great love chapter, he said, and now abide. That is, he's been talking about all the gifts, and now he's talking about the three gifts that remain, that abide, that are there when the others are all gone, perhaps.

And now abides faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these, he says, is love. God is love, twice given in 1 John chapter 4, God is love. God doesn't have to try to love.

God is love. There's times when we have to try to love unlovely people. God never has that problem.

He sends rain and sunshine in the field of the unjust as well as in the field of the just. He's told us that plainly. And so, God is love.

And we have become partakers of God's nature, so we read in 2 Peter 1, 4, which means that we, as a Christian believer, must likewise be walking in love. We were chosen to be loving, you know, Ephesians 1, 4, according as he has chosen us in him, that is in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we

should be holy and without blame before him in love. It says you and I were chosen to be loving people, loving people.

I heard Dr. Price from the People's Church in Toronto give an illustration that was quite interesting. I'm not sure I have all the facts right, but here's sort of like it went. He was talking about a pastor, I believe in Chile, had a large church, but nothing was ever happening.

So one Sunday morning, the pastor simply told the people, my text for today is love one another. And then he just sat down, didn't preach, just sat down. And nothing happened.

People were sitting there wondering what was going on. The text is love one another. And somehow they got the text, and then things began to happen in the congregation.

People began moving around, talking with each other, and praying in little groups here and there. We heard later on that six unemployed men got a job that morning through the church. And it was wonderful.

So then, the next Sunday, he said, now my text today is love your neighbor as yourself. And he sat down, in five minutes there wasn't a person left in the church. They'd all gone to find their neighbor and love him.

Well, that's unusual. But anyway, there are ten such references in the New Testament. We discover that love was the goal of Christ's teaching in the Twelve, John 17, 26.

He said to his Heavenly Father in that high priestly prayer of his, I have declared unto them your name, that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. So he's not really talking about just human love jacked up a little bit. He's talking about the love of God, the love that God had for Christ, that that love might be in the Twelve Apostles.

That was his goal. It was also the goal of apostolic teaching, because in 1 Timothy 5, Paul said, to quote from a different translation, perhaps the end of a commandment is, or the goal of our instruction is, is what? Is love rising out of a pure heart, not of a good conscience, not of a genuine faith. So love, that's the goal.

That was the goal of apostolic teaching. 1 Peter 1, 22, if you recall, seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto, and that Greek word means motion toward. Motion towards what? Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently. And then 1 Peter 4, 8, which again called unto love one another. And of course 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, and even people who are not believers in God, reading that chapter, say it was a tremendous, tremendous thought.

That Paul certainly inspired in some sense. But we know it was not in some sense, it was the Spirit of God. But to the worldly people, that's how they look at it.

Alright, love covers the multitude of sins, we read in 1 Peter 4, 8. Love covers the multitude of sins. Have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins. 1 Corinthians 13, 7 says, and this I think is the nearest to a definition of love we can possibly get.

What does it say? Love seeks not her own. Love does not seek her own. Then we find that love believes all things, 1 Corinthians 13, 7. Faith works by love, Galatians 5, 8, faith works by love.

Spurgeon said that love comes when self dies. And he had a little poem, praising God with all my might, in the sea of God's delight. Self is drowned and I am free.

Christ and love remain in me. Alright, faith works by love. 2 Corinthians 5, 14 declares that the love of Christ constrains us.

It's a constraining power. You can't think of the love of Christ without being constrained to love others. Because you are joined to Christ and have become one spirit with Him.

Alright, hereby we proceed. Now proving the sincerity of my love or of God's love. 1 John 3, 16, hereby we proceed the love of God.

Because He laid down His life for us and we are to lay down our lives for the brethren. That is for the work of God. In 2 Corinthians 8, 8, Paul uses the phrase, the proof of your love.

In 8, 24, to prove the sincerity of your love. And if you look carefully at these two verses and the context. He's talking about giving to God.

You can measure the love you have for God by the way you give to God and to His work. We're told, and I'm sad to say this, but we're told that probably not more than 15% of people in the average evangelical church. At the time of their income, only 15%.

And people say, well that's an Old Testament deal. No it's not. In Matthew 23, 23, Christ speaking of the tithes said, these you ought to have done.

So it's something we ought to do. And it's promised in Malachi 3, as you know, verse 10 and on. To really bless those people who give Him the tithe.

Otherwise we're robbing God. Romans 12, 9 says, let love be without hypocrisy. Is it possible to have a hypocritical love? Yes it is.

Like it speaks in one place, Ezekiel, with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. So we may have a hypocritical love.

We shouldn't have, but we may have. Now sometimes people say, you know, I could have helped that guy out, but it didn't have that love feeling. What are you talking about, a love feeling? Love is a power.

Love is as strong as death, we read in the Song of Solomon. It's a powerful, powerful thing. And it's harder to resist it than to move with it.

And we need to be looking for people that we can help, we can love, we can help out. And comfort and exhort and so on. So Ezekiel 33, 31, with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness.

And then 1 John 3, 18, we're not to love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. I had meetings in Minnesota at a camp, a conference. We had a wonderful time there.

And we met a man whose name was Justin Thyme. This was not his real name, but he had his name changed from whatever it was to Justin Thyme, because he said, I've got saved, Justin Thyme. He was in

the drunk culture in California, and one night a Christian girl saw him lying there drunk, and she ministered to him.

And, you know, he got saved, he accepted Christ, and then they got married. It was a real romance. The police force in the Twin Cities, they had him on call.

And if they have a man threatening suicide, going to jump from some building, they get Justin Thyme in there, then in 95% of the cases he was able to talk them out of it. He was such a loving character, you know, just had a sweet, loving way about him. And people would listen to him.

But that shouldn't be a peculiar thing. That should be the way we all are. People say, I don't have that kind of personality.

It's got nothing to do with personality. You know, people mistake your poisonality for personality. No, no matter who you are, it doesn't say you're not providing you have a loving personality.

It doesn't ever say that. Now, the Holy Spirit, and we all want to be filled with the Spirit, is a spirit of love. Romans 15, 30 speaks about the love of the Spirit.

So he is a loving spirit. And then Colossians 1, 8, your love in the Spirit. And then Romans 5, 5, the love of God is shed abroad, poured out, says one translation, into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us.

So the Spirit living within us is constantly trying to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts so we'll be what we should be, a partaker of God's divine nature. May I just say this? If you're not filled with love, you're not filled with the Spirit. I remember one time at a meeting, I'd been counseling some people, and then a lady came down the aisle dragging her husband.

He was a very unwilling follower. And she got him to the front and then she said to me, speak to my husband, he's a backslider. Well, I started talking to him.

She says, look, preacher, I'm not ready for this. She said, you know, I wouldn't come here, but if I hadn't have come, she'd have made my life a hell on earth at home. So I ignored him and I said to her, are you a Christian? Absolutely, she said.

Are you filled with the Spirit? Absolutely, she said. I speak in tongues 30 minutes every day. I said, I didn't ask if you spoke in tongues.

I asked you if you were filled with the Spirit. You know, you can speak in tongues and not be filled with the Spirit. Well, how can that be, she said.

I don't know how it can be, but I know it can be. So I said, are you really filled with the love of God? You speak in tongues 30 minutes a day. Are you really filled with the love of God? And she said, well, I have a few little problems.

I said, tell me about your little problems. And she said, well, I'm insanely jealous of my husband. And he shook his head up and down.

And then she said, I sometimes have a horrible temper. And she said, I sometimes blaspheme when I get angry. And I have sometimes blasphemed God.

And I said, sister, listen, you're not filled with the Spirit of God. You're full of self. You're filled with self.

You need to die to yourself. And she fell on her knees and began to weep, and she wept her way to God. And so I say again, if you're not filled with love, you're not really filled with the Spirit.

The first fruit of the Spirit is love, right? The fruit of the Spirit is love. That's the first thing. If it's not there, you don't have it.

You know, Finney had a remarkable experience. He didn't even know there was such a thing as a baptism of the Spirit of God. And he accepted Christ out there in the woods.

And he'd been struggling with this whole thing about being a Christian. And he came in and sat down by his fireplace. And suddenly he was filled with the Spirit of God in the most remarkable way.

He said he was being fanned by gigantic wings of love. And it went on and on and on and on. He went to bed that night, woke up in the middle of the night, and these baptisms of love came back again.

I believe it was the next day when every person he spoke to found Christ as their Savior. And before he died, it's computed that likely half a million people found Christ as their Savior. I know many Christians, they don't believe in Finney because some of his doctrine they say isn't right.

And I know that he was not quite straight in some doctrines, but he was certainly straight on the place of Christ and the need of being born again by the Holy Spirit of God. Moody had a fantastic experience, much like Finney's, only he was walking down the street in Chicago. And the Spirit of God came on him and so filled him with the love of God.

He rushed to a friend's house and asked if he could have a room where he could be alone. And he spent hours there while these baptisms of love just coursed through his body. You know, up until then he saw two saved here, three there, maybe a family there.

He said, I never preached any different sermons. I preached the same sermons as before after this experience. But he said then hundreds were being saved, hundreds were being saved.

You know, love is called the royal law in James 2.8. And listen, if you don't have it, you've missed the royal law, the one great law, the law you must have to be filled. But to be filled, dear people, we must first of all be empty. God can't superimpose, baptize you with the Holy Spirit and the love of God.

His self is in control. So self must die. Reckon you also yourselves, it says in Romans 6, to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All right, we said before, love comes and self dies. Then we discover that love is from the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 3.12. The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another and toward all men, even as we do toward you to the end. For what reason? To the end.

To the end. That God may find us filled at the coming of Christ. To the end.

That He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the saints. 1 Thessalonians 3.12. Romans 5.5 simply says, We noted that before. It comes from the Spirit of God.

1 Thessalonians 4.9 says we're taught of God to love one another. But how does God teach us? In three ways, by precept, command and example. Precept.

In 1 John chapter 4 there's a verse that says, And the word beloved means divinely loved ones. Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. And everyone that loves is born of God and knows God.

He that loves not knows not God. Do you know that in 1 John, that five chapters, there are twelve places where love has made the acid test of reality in the Christian life. No love, you're not born again.

You're not born again. Alright. Taught of God by precept and by command.

This is His commandment. That we should believe on the name of the Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave His commandment. I say to myself, Why did He say this is His commandment when He gave us two commandments? Why didn't He say these are His commandments? People, it's because you can't really separate the one from the other.

Alright. So. This is His commandment.

That we should believe on the name of the Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave His commandment. So loving Christ, love your neighbor. Then an example, precept, command and example.

Well, here it would be 1 John 3, 16. Hereby we perceive the love of God because He laid down His life for us and we are to lay down our lives for the brethren. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

That's the message of God. Then 1 Timothy 1, 5. Love rise out of a pure heart. We mentioned that briefly before.

Love rise out of a pure heart, of a good conscience and a genuine, unfeigned faith. And so you can't be filled with love of God if you don't have a pure heart. You can't be filled with love of God if you don't have a good conscience.

After some meetings in Chile one day, they brought me a man and the fellow said he doesn't know any English so we can talk very clearly. He said he's got a very bad conscience and he wants you to pray for him. I said, well tell him it says in Hebrews chapter 13, pray for us for we trust we have a good conscience and all things willing to honestly.

So tell him I can't pray for him because I'm only supposed to pray for people who have a good conscience and he's got a bad conscience. So I told him through the interpreter, now you need to go home and ask God to search your heart and get right with God. And the tears running down his face and I walked away.

A day or two later he came to see me. He was talking so fast. The interpreter had to slow him down.

He couldn't get it all. He just wanted to say thank you, thank you, thank you. He told us how he went home that night after I told him to get his conscience cleared up.

And he spent hours before God and God searched his heart and he dealt with every kind of sin God had showed him and then he prayed to be filled with the love of God. People, it's essential, a good conscience, a good conscience, and a genuine faith and a pure heart. Okay.

Both love and faith come from God in Ephesians 6.23. We're told that it comes from God the Father. Love and faith come from God. And sometimes, you know, we catch it from others.

I knew a couple in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. He was a doctor and his wife was, they were both godly people. And they went away to China on holidays and left her parents to look after their children.

I'm not sure, I think they had three or four. And while they were in China, the grandparents took the children out for a walk and a drunk teenager ran into them. The grandma died immediately.

I think the grandpa died the following day that was Blanche's parents. The children were not her. They had trouble finding the Johnsons in China but they finally found them and got them back and there was a funeral and all of that.

And then Blanche asked, where is the young man that killed my mom and dad? And they said, he's in jail. So she went to jail and asked permission to see him and talk to him and they let her in. And she said something like this, you know, you killed my mom and dad and I respect them much, I miss them very much but I just want you to know that I forgive you because I'm a Christian.

And you know, he found his face and began to cry and she led him to Christ. Can't we learn something from that? Some little thing happens and all of a sudden we have, we feel tiffed, you know, somebody said something or didn't look at us right. I remember my mother, this was before she really, she was a Christian then but not really totally in touch with God as she was later on.

She came in one day and she said, I passed Mr. Loving, Mrs. Loving on the street and she never even said hello. I think she's mad. I said, well mother, did you say hello to her? Indeed, she said, and why should I? It was kind of funny, you know.

Why was she expecting this Mrs. Loving to greet her when she didn't greet her? Anyway, the Lord make you to increase. From others, blanch, yes. Hebrews 10, 24 says, we are to provoke one another to love and to good works.

Well, we know how to provoke others and we do it constantly. We're not to provoke others to feel bad but we're to provoke them to love and to good works. You can't do that unless you're involved yourself in good works and you can't do that if you're not a loving person.

But you can if you are. Hebrews 10, 24. So Philippians 1, 9, Paul prayed, this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more, more and more.

We're to increase in love. We read in 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1. We're to increase in faith and love. All right, characteristics of true love.

2 Corinthians 13, 5. Love seeks not her own. Philippians 2, 21 says, all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ. Well, surely he was talking about non-Christian.

No, he was talking about Christians as the context says because he said, I have no man like mine who will naturally care for your estate. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ. He was talking about Christians, self-centered Christians, living their little life selfishly, not thinking of others, not walking in love.

You see, it says in Ephesians 5, we're to walk in love as Christ also loved us. That's not something you put on for an emergency, people. It's a way of life.

It's a way of life. You walk in love constantly. So let no man seek his own.

1 Corinthians 10, 24 says, but every man another's wealth. And then Philippians 2, 4, look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. And then we're told by love, serve one another.

By love, serve one another. Philippians 2, 3 says, but each esteem other better than themselves. Where do you stand? Where do you stand in this? Are you filled with the love of God? Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.

You can't do that unless you're filled with the love of God. I would like to suggest this. Maybe you're driving a car down the road.

Can you pull over to the side and have a few moments when you meet with God and ask him to forgive you for your lack of love? Ask God to empty you that you might be filled? Would you do that? Or if you're at home, you can get alone in a room somewhere, just get on your face before God and ask him to forgive you for being a person who is not really a loving person. We're told to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. And the word adorn, the Greek word there, is a word from which we get the English word cosmetic.

And so what he's really saying, Paul is, the Spirit is saying through Paul, we are to adorn the doctrine. We're to make the gospel as loving, beautiful as we possibly can. We're not to dress it up and change the wording.

We're just to live a godly life because nothing backs up the gospel so much as people who walk in love to the glory of God. Love your neighbor as yourself, given ten times in the Bible. Is it three times in the Old Testament? Seven times in the New? We're to love one another with a pure heart.

Fervently, it says, being born again. Simply because you're born again, if you are, you are to love others with a pure heart, fervently. Oh, may God bless you.

God is waiting. Remember, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. The love of the Spirit, Romans 15, 30, and then your love in the Spirit, Colossians 1, 8. Let's get with it, people.

I want to close in just a moment. Moody, the famous evangelist, not long before he died, he addressed a group of several hundred pastors, and here's one of the things he said with great emphasis. He said, Brethren, hold the churches to love.

This is where we've gone wrong. Oh, yes, thousands are being converted. They compute that through his ministry half of a million people have found Christ as their Savior in the States and in Great Britain and so on.

But he could see that thousands of these people, he was hearing from churches and pastors, his people are not really walking with God, you know. They were Christians but not walking with God. So he said, hold the churches to love.

This is where we've gone wrong. And maybe that's where you, as an individual believer, have gone wrong, too. God bless you.

God bless you. It's my prayer. Amen.

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