

Love

by Bill McLeod

Love is the defining characteristic of a Christian, and it is demonstrated by serving and helping others.

Duration: 42:16

Scripture: Romans 13:8, Romans 13:10, Ephesians 1:15, Colossians 1:4, 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man named Justin who led a member of a notorious gang to Christ without knowing his identity. Later, the gang members confront Justin and physically assault him as a punishment. Despite this, Justin continues to show love and kindness to his neighbors, even when they reject him. The speaker emphasizes that love is the answer to dealing with evil and that God's nature is love. The sermon references Bible verses from Romans and 1 John to support the message.

Transcript

I would like to take a couple of verses from Romans 13, verses 8 and 10. Verse 8 says, O no man anything but to love one another, for he that loves another has fulfilled the law. And verse 10 says, Love works no ill to its neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

There are four great God is statements in the Bible. God is love, God is light, God is a spirit, and our God is a consuming fire. Only one of those four is given twice, and that's the statement God is love.

1 John 4, 8 and 16. God is love. God doesn't try to love.

God is love. And we have become partakers, Peter said in 2 Peter, partakers of the divine nature. Well God's nature, His being, His essence is love, and we Christians have become partakers of His divine nature.

And I particularly want to talk about this tonight. You know it's very hard to define love, very hard. I can tell you what it isn't.

It's not the absence of hatred. Some people say I don't hate anybody, and they conclude that they love everybody because they don't hate anybody. No, it's not the absence of hatred.

It's not a cozy feeling in the heart, even towards other people. Like some people say, I just have a warm feeling towards everybody in the world. Well sure, it's easy to love everybody in Africa when you don't live there.

It's easy to love everybody in India when you don't live there. How about the fellow who lives next door? Well it's harder to love him, because he's got a dog that runs through the garden in the flower patch, you know. And maybe it's hard to love people living in the house I'm living in, for the same reason that we're too close together.

No, love is not a nice, warm feeling in the heart. It's not a right reaction to a bad situation. The closest I can come to a biblical definition is 1 Corinthians 13, 5, that says simply that whatever love is, love seeks not her own.

In Philippians 2.21, Paul said, all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Well people would say, well surely he was talking about unconverted people. No, he wasn't.

He was talking about Christians. Because here's what he said in the context, I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. So he was talking about Christians.

Now the Bible says on the other hand, let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare. It also says, look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. So whatever love is, it's not selfish, it's not self-seeking.

It's looking for ways to help, to bless, to be an inspiration to other people. Now supposing you had a neighbor and there was a car accident and two of their children had been killed and you know they felt terrible, you felt badly, the neighbors were not Christians and after the funeral was over and relatives had left, you thought, well I should go over there, I'm a Christian and I should go over there and try and help them. So you did.

And finally you said, I know you've had a bad experience, but I just want you to understand that the Bible says that God is love, but they're liable to say to you, since they're not Christians, they're liable to say to you, well that could be, but... You sure can't prove it by my experience. What would you say then? Here's what you could say. From Romans 5, God commends, or God offers His proof, God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Or you might say, from 1 John 3, verse 16, hereby we perceive, or we see, hereby we perceive the love of God because He laid down His life for us. Or you might say, again from 1 John 4, in this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Now you can say to your neighbor, God is love, and here's how we know, but we have become partakers of God's divine nature.

If the cross is the proof of God's love, then what is the proof of yours and mine? Is it necessary to think about this? Apparently it is because Paul spoke about this. What proof do you have that you've really become a partaker of God's divine nature? And dear people, there's no way you can get around this. If you are a Christian, you are supposed to be a loving person.

Paul prayed for the church of Thessalonica that their love would increase and abound, he said, more and more to one another, he said, and to all men. Why? To the end, he said, that is for the purpose, to the end

that He might establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Ready for the coming? Not, if you're not a loving person, you're not ready for the coming.

That's what he's really saying there in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. What is the proof of your love if the cross is the proof of His? Well, let's look at 1 John 3.16 again. This is not John 3.16, but 1 John 3.16, they're quite similar, you know. Hereby we perceive the love of God because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, for the work of God.

Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, Jesus said, not last, but first. Put God's work first. Lay down your life for the brethren.

Paul spoke in glowing terms of some Christians who, he said, laid down their necks for Him. He said, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. We don't know what they did, we have no idea what Paul was referring to, but we do know that in some way they laid down their necks for Him, and that's love.

Love can never be silent, it can never be quiet, it can never be inactive, it has to work, and it always works out from a person. There are some people who go around wanting to be loved all the time. Love is something you have to give away.

In Minneapolis some years ago I had a men's weekend conference for men at a camp. There were 70 or 80 men who showed up, including half a dozen teenagers, and we just had a great time. And you'll laugh when I tell you the name of the song leader.

His name was Justin Thyme. That was not his original name. He had it legally changed to Justin Thyme because he said, I got saved, Justin Thyme.

Because one night he almost died from an overdose of drugs, and the next day a Christian girl happened to meet him somewhere and led him to Christ, Justin Thyme. And he told me a beautiful story which I want to share with you. He was in California on the Sunset Strip, and after he got saved he and some other Christians got together, including the girl that led him to Christ, whom he eventually married, by the way.

They got together and began soul winning on the drug strip. And they were successful. They were a lot of people to the Lord.

One day Justin led a man to Christ, not knowing that he was a member of a very notorious gang that operated in the area. Everybody had heard about this gang. A day or so later four members of the gang, including the boss, came down to have a little visit with Justin Thyme.

They had a kind of a little rescue mission thing there. And the boss said to Justin, We don't like what you did to our man, and we're going to teach you a lesson you won't forget as long as you live. And there was a great big burly husky guy with them, and this guy smashed him in the face and knocked him flat on the floor.

And Justin said, I felt such a love for those guys I jumped to my feet and said, Jesus loves you and I love you. And pow! He got it again. He got up a little slower the second time, but he said it again, Jesus loves you and I love you.

And pow! He got it the third time. The third time he got up slower still, his face was kind of a bloody mess, and he said, Listen you guys, I want you to hear it again. Jesus loves you and I love you.

And the boss said, Let's get out of here. That was getting to him, you see. So they left.

And Justin wiped the blood off his face, chased them down the street, caught up to them, and tapped the boss in the shoulder, and he turned around ready for action, didn't know what it was, and Justin said, I just want you to hear it once more. Jesus loves you and I love you. And he said, The guy said, Oh no! You know, and they got in their car and they drove away in a blaze of hurry.

In the excitement of what happened, Justin had not noticed that one of the gang had stayed behind. And when he got back to the mission, the guy was sitting there, and he got up and he said, Listen carefully. He said, Mister, you've got it, and I want it.

What is it? And then he said this. He said, We had laid our plans before we came down here today. We had razor blades in our pockets, and we'd agreed if you put up any kind of resistance, we would get you on the floor, and we would slice your face with razor blades, and then we would take turns tap dancing on your head.

You know, there are some people around that aren't very nice. But the answer to any person, no matter how evil and bad they are, is love. Love never fails.

Don't forget Justin's time. Let me ask you a question. How do you... Let me ask you a different question.

Why did God save you? Well, you can give me all kinds of right answers, I'm sure. In Ephesians 1, Paul said, 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. You were chosen to be a loving person.

Don't ever forget that. The other question is this. How do you know you're saved? Oh, I could get all kinds of answers from a crowd like this.

I was in a Billy Graham meeting, and I gave my heart to Christ, or when I was a child, my mother led me to Christ, or my Sunday school teacher talked to me, and I became a Christian, or I read a gospel tract, or I was listening to a radio program. You know, all these questions. And they'd all be right.

What does the Bible say? It says we know we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. Do you love God's people? Peter said, Seeing you have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the Spirit unto, and that word in the Greek, it really means motion towards. Unto what? Unto unfeigned.

That means a genuine, non-hypocritical love of the brethren. See that you love one another with a pure heart, fervently. And by the way, it doesn't say just the Baptist brethren, or the Pentecostal brethren, or the Charismatic brethren, or the Lutheran brethren.

It just simply says the brethren, because all these distinctions will be gone when you get to heaven. Keep this in mind, dear people. In my opinion, there's nothing particularly wrong with denominations, no.

But denominations are the scaffold, the buildings in behind. And when the building, the church of God, is complete, the scaffolding will be destroyed. It'll be no longer necessary.

And in heaven, you won't even remember what you were on earth. The former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind. You won't remember whether you were a Baptist or a Pentecostal when you get to heaven.

So don't make too much of it now. Love your church, be faithful to your church, and all of that, but brethren, you're to love the brethren with a pure heart, fervently. And then Peter went on to say in 1 Peter chapter 4, have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins.

Then how does the world know you're a Christian? Answer that question in your heart. How does your neighbor know you're a Christian? Do you know what Christians say? Well, I don't hide my Bible. When I climb in the car Sunday morning, I have my Bible in my hand.

My neighbor sees that. He sees me going Sunday evening even, or maybe I even go to prayer meeting. He knows I'm a Christian.

No, he doesn't. If you could hear your neighbor talking down in the beer parlor, it goes like this to his friends. I've got this nutty religious neighbor.

Would you believe it? He goes every Sunday morning to church, and they say, what? Every Sunday morning? He must be a fanatic. The guy says, wait, I haven't told you it all yet. He goes every Sunday night.

They say, what? Twice on Sunday? He must be crazy in the head. The guy says, I haven't told you everything yet. He goes to some kind of a meeting in the middle of the week for the Bible, and they all just groan.

They don't know why you do this. They don't know anything about that. They just know that you're some kind of a religious fanatic.

What did Christ say? He said, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. That's how they know. Let me tell you about a man in Argentina who had a wrought iron business, and I happened to meet him.

My wife and I had dinner with him, and he gave us his testimony. He spoke perfect English, and we had a great time. He had been raised Roman Catholic, and for many years was a devout Catholic.

Then he met some Jehovah's Witnesses, and he thought, well, these people really read the Bible, and they seem to have more light, and so he became a Jehovah's Witness, and he was a Jehovah's Witness for 18 years, and he persuaded hundreds of Catholics to become a Jehovah's Witness. Then you know what happened? The Lord moved a red-hot Christian in next door, and he told me what happened. He said, I take my axe and go to split some wood, and my neighbor comes over with a big smile on his axe and just helps me split the wood.

I'm painting my barn, and my neighbor comes over with a paintbrush and says, can I help? And he helps me paint the barn. He said, I just knew if I was doing any work in my yard, my neighbor would be over helping me. And he'd give me this big smile all the time, and every now and then he'd give me a little hug.

And I didn't know what was going on, so I put him to the test. I treated him very meanly. I even blasphemed him, and the worse I got, the bigger the smile got.

I just couldn't figure him out, and it bothered me day and night. And I was sitting in the house one day saying to myself, what has this man got? What's behind all this? And you know, he finally decided to go and ask him, so I went and asked him. And the fellow led him to Christ.

He himself became a great soul winner after that. Let me ask you a question. Supposing he'd been your neighbor, would he be saved yet? Oh, wait.

Christians? That Jehovah Witness moves in next door? He's cutting his wood? Okay, Lord, I hope he cuts himself. He's a Jehovah Witness. I mean, that's the way we operate, you know.

Or maybe we're not like that. We're not vindictive, maybe, but maybe we're like the fellow, you know. It's a wintertime.

There's a blizzard blowing, and here's a car out in the street. It's stuck in a snowbank, you know. So he and his wife go and look out through the... It's their neighbor, and his wife is driving it, and he's out there with all the kids.

They're pushing. They're shoveling, and this guy looks at his watch and saying, I wonder how long it'll take them to get out of the snowbank. It takes them 19 minutes.

So he and his wife discuss that and go and have a cup of coffee, you know. But then spring comes, and they're having special meetings in his church, and he wants his neighbor to come, so he dresses up and practices smiling in front of the mirror, and he goes over there to invite his neighbor to these special meetings, and the guy just growls at him, and he goes home saying, what in the world's wrong with that character? You know what's wrong with him? When he was stuck in the snowbank, he saw this guy looking out the window, and he doesn't believe in his Christianity. That's the problem.

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. People understand, unconverted people usually understand that God is love. There's something loving about God, and that Jesus actually died for people's sins on the cross.

Most people have a hazy notion, whatever, about that, and so they expect something from Christians, which they usually don't see. A fellow told me one time he was driving the bad road and slid in the ditch. Cars went by, he'd run out, nobody paid any attention.

Oh, he saw a car coming, you know, and this car had a great big gospel text on the front of the radiator, you know. Ah, Christian, fantastic. This guy zoomed right by, you know.

Then comes a guy driving a great big truck. He's got a cigar in his mouth, you know, and he stops, and he backs up, you know, he backs down in the ditch. He gets out, he gets mud all over his hands, putting the chains on and everything, you know, and he says, oh, man, this is terrible.

Like he says to his truck driver, oh, no problem. Maybe someday I'll be in the ditch. And he pulls them out, so he offers them ten bucks, and the guy says, oh, forget about it.

Someday I'll be in the ditch and you can pull me out. Away he goes, you know. Cigar and all.

But the Christians don't stop. I mean, they're busy praying, you know, or something else. Can I ask another question? Why do you read the Bible? Let's ask another question.

Why should we read the Bible? In the King James Version, 1 Timothy 1.5 says, what does it say, 1 Timothy 1.5? The end of the commandment is love, charity. Charity is a Latin word that means love. Love out of a pure heart.

A modern translation says, the goal of our instruction is love rising out of a pure heart. That's why you should be reading the Bible. Reading the Bible should give you a pure heart and give you love.

You know, I used to think it would be just great if I could just somehow go back in time and just drop in when Jesus was having a private session with the twelve apostles to find out what he taught them. Because they were in the best Bible school on earth, with just twelve students, and Jesus Christ was the teacher. Half of it was practical, and half of it was, I guess you might call, theoretical.

It was great, see? We find out from John 17 what he taught them. It's summed up neatly there. In the last verse of John 17, in his high priestly prayer, Jesus said, he was talking to his father, he said, I've declared unto them, that is the twelve apostles, your name.

The name of God stands for the person and the faithfulness of God. I've declared unto them your name and will declare it. Why? That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.

That was his goal. Do you read the Bible for that reason? That you might be filled with the love of God? But, dear people, that's why he wrote it. Let me tell you about a lady in Canada.

They called her Mrs. Bible because she knew the Bible so well. But actually, she was just a downspout for Bible verses. She knew hundreds of them.

People used to write her letters from a long distance, come and see her, or after church, talk to her, ask her questions, and she had an answer. Bang, bang. She always had a good answer from the Bible, you know.

And she, you know, when she found out they called her Mrs. Bible, she had this cozy feeling in her heart. And she didn't realize it was pride. She just thought, well, it's time they recognized, you know, that I really know the Bible well, see? But one thing she couldn't understand, she knew the Bible so well, but her husband wasn't a Christian, and none of her four or five children were Christians either.

And she couldn't understand that. She had unloaded truckloads of Bible verses on them, but somehow it didn't take. She couldn't understand it.

She was in some meetings. We had a crusade with 10 or 12 churches cooperating, and the crowds were good, and we used to have sharing times. And she came to the sharing time.

Now, the rules of the sharing were simple. Don't preach. Don't be long.

If you can't find a landing field, we'll help you come down. She got to preaching. My assistant went over and tapped her on the elbow and politely suggested that maybe she should sort of wind it up because it was getting too long.

And she smiled ever so sweetly. Oh, I'm terribly sorry, she said, for being so long. But inside, she told us later on, she was seething.

And she went home and told her husband what happened. This was Tuesday night, and she said, I will never go back to those crusade meetings again, and I will never give my testimony in public again. I was never so mortified in all my life.

I had so much to share with those people, and they wouldn't even let me. But Thursday night, she was back. And Thursday night, she was actually on the platform during the sharing time, a totally transformed woman because in the intervening period, God had shown her how full of pride she was.

It was just oozing out the pores of her skin. And God dealt with that. She dealt with the sin problem and the self problem.

Someone has called it slimy self. And Thursday, she gave her testimony. She began by asking the people's forgiveness for the kind of person she'd been.

It was a lovely testimony. And then you know what happened. Listen carefully.

All her family got saved in one week. Do you know why? Because now, they saw the Christ she had been talking about all these years. They saw him in her.

And that Christ they wanted. They didn't want the verbal Christ they'd been hearing from her. But they wanted the Christ they saw in her.

And Paul talked about God revealing his Son, he said, in me. And if you're a Christian, God wants to reveal his Son in you. If you're willing to let him.

But for that to happen, that old self has to be crucified. You've got to drag it screaming and kicking and all to the cross and nail it there. And let Christ have his way in your heart, in your life.

You know, the church in China is extremely powerful. God is using it in a marvelous way. And nobody really knows.

They say there could be as many as 50 million Christians in China today. It's prospered in spite of communism. And I found out.

I read a book called The Church in China. We don't have it on the table here. It's an excellent book, though.

Just called The Church in China. And there were many stories in there about the love of those Chinese Christians. The Bible says, Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Let me give you an example of that in China. Do you remember when the Cultural Revolution was on in China? Some of you older people read about that. The Cultural Revolution when Mao was the chairman of the party and everything.

And the Red Guards, they called them, young people, they went all over China rooting out intellectuals and wealthy people and Christians and killing them by the hundreds of thousands. But eventually, the Cultural Revolution fell into disrepute and it was stopped. Everything changed.

During the Cultural Revolution, this particular family in a large Chinese city, a bunch of Red Guards broke into their house one night and bludgeoned the whole family to death. Except the mother. She lived.

She was bludgeoned, but she lived. She had seen all her family just bludgeoned to death with big clubs. Well, that all ended.

She survived. Some years later, she found out that the leader of that band of men who had bludgeoned her family was living just a few blocks away from where she lived. And she began praying for his salvation.

And then she heard that he had a son who was very, very ill. And the man didn't have any money to hire anybody to help. You know what she did? She went down to the house.

He did not recognize her. She didn't say anything to him about what had happened. She just offered to look after his son as long as he was sick.

He said, I can't pay you anything. She said, No, that doesn't matter. I just want to help.

And she nursed his son back to health again. And eventually, he found out who she was. And it just blew him away.

He couldn't believe it after what he'd done to her family. And he became a believer in Jesus Christ. That's why the church in China is so powerful.

They not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Now, there are 500 commandments in the Bible. Somebody says, I've never counted them.

But they're neatly reduced to 10, the Ten Commandments. We all know about the Ten Commandments. And the Ten Commandments, Jesus reduced to two.

And here's what he said. He said, And these two commandments hang all along the prophets. That is, all the teaching of the Old Testament, Jesus said, can be summed up neatly under two headings.

What were they? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind and thy neighbor as thyself. And these two commandments hang all along the prophets. That's what Christ said.

And then the Apostle Paul, he reduced the two to one. He said, He that loves another has fulfilled the law. Have you ever read about the royal law in the book of James? He said, If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, thou shalt do well.

So that's the royal law. Of all the teaching in Scripture, nothing else is called the royal law but that. Then in 1 Peter 2, verse 9, we read about the royal priesthood.

And the royal priesthood is the Christians. We are a royal priesthood. And dear people, we just have one law to keep.

It's called the royal law. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as you love yourself. If you find something mentioned in Scripture more than once, dear people, it's because it's important.

There are some things mentioned four times, like in the four Gospels, for example. I know something that's found ten times in the Bible, three times in the Old Testament, seven times in the New. It's the royal law.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Ten times. Dear people, it must be extremely important.

And it is. It is. There's a verse in the Bible that says that faith works by love.

You ever think of that verse? We all know the verse, most of us at least, Romans 10, 17, that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Not many people seem to know this other verse in Galatians chapter 5 that simply says faith works by love. Do you want a good study? Take a Bible sometime and look up in the New... Concordance, perhaps.

Look up in the New Testament all the places where faith and love occur in the same verse. And you'll be amazed. I found 33 such places.

Here's a couple of them. In writing to church at Ephesus, Paul said, I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of the love which you have to all the saints. Faith in Christ produces love to the saints.

In writing to church at Colossae, almost identical words, he said, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have to all the saints. He wrote to the church at Thessalonica and he said, Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father. Writing to the same church, he said, Your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all towards each other abounds.

Faith and love. Somehow, we Christians know about the faith thing, but not very much about the love thing. Do you know what it says in 1 John 3.23? It says, And this is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.

And if you're not saved tonight, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Faith! But what's the other half of the verse? The other half of the verse says, And love one another as he gave his commandment. There's faith and love in one verse put together again.

Do you know in the book of 1 John there are twelve places, dear people, where love is made the acid test of reality in the Christian life. For example, he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. For example, 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, for God is love. If you had to get to heaven on that basis, would you make it? Most Christians, if they're really honest, would have to say, Well, on that basis, I don't think I would make it. Then you need a personal revival, if that's so.

Beloved, it means divinely loved ones. Let us love one another. God has loved us.

Now we have to love other people. Why is it so hard to love your own family? Why do husbands and wives natter each other all the time and holler at the kids and all the rest of it? Why does this go on? Dear people, it's because we just don't know how to love. That's why it goes on.

Revival is love. I think I may have mentioned this before, and you'll forgive me if I mention it the second time, but in the Solomon Islands there's been a number of historic revivals, but the people don't call them revivals. They call it the falling of love, because that's what happens when revival comes.

That little chorus, Love is flowing like a river, flowing out to you and me, flowing out into the desert, setting all the captives free. And the chorus says, Let it flow through me. Let it flow through me.

Let the mighty love of God flow out through me. And I sense somebody sitting here saying, I've tried it and I got hurt every time, so I'm just not going to do it again. Can I remind you of something? Jesus tried it and they nailed him to a cross.

Does that make it wrong? That doesn't make it wrong. Love doesn't operate in a vacuum any more than faith does. Every day you live, your faith will be tried and your love will be challenged and your love will be challenged maybe by people that are closest to you.

I mean, love doesn't operate in a vacuum. If you're filled with the love of God, it's going to be tried. Of course it has to be tried.

Like faith has to be tried. It'll be challenged. Every day you live, probably.

So be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good as we noted before. Love is very powerful. It says in the Bible that love is as strong as death.

How strong is death? When I was just a boy, maybe five or six, one of my aunties died, my mother's sister, and Aunt Ina, and we liked her, but she was gone. My mother explained to me that Aunt Ina was dead and she was in a coffin in this house. I could draw a picture of the room, the sun coming in the west window, the whole thing, the coffin there, and my auntie lying in the coffin.

So my mother took me over there very gently and explained that Aunt Ina was gone. She was just gone. And I looked at her.

I'd never seen a dead person before. She wasn't breathing. She wasn't moving.

And it kind of scared me. Have you ever seen anybody get out of a coffin and walk down the aisle? I haven't either. And you probably never will unless you're living when Christ comes back.

Love is as strong as death. Think of it. The problems you face, you can overcome them with love.

Opposition? Overcome it by love. Pour it on. A lady asked me for counseling, and she was 28 years old.

She said she had a husband, and he was a drunkard, and he was beating her up and beating their children up. How do I handle it? And I said, You love them to death. Ah, but she said, Wait a minute.

I've been to many counselors now, and they all tell me to leave them or kick them out, because he's beating us up now, and it's getting dangerous. And I said, Do you think your husband is bigger than God somehow? The Bible says, If God be for us, who can be against us? You don't have to worry about your husband killing you. She said, How do I handle it? I said, Love him to death.

When he gets abusive physically or verbally, make him a cup of coffee and come in and pat him on the head and tell him you love him, see? Oh boy, she said, That'd be hard. I said, I'll pray for you. I never saw her for a couple of years.

I was back in that area, and she came running up after the service and said, Remember me? I didn't just stand right away, you know, but then I said, Tell me what happened. She said, He never lasted two years. He's a Christian.

She said, He's not only a Christian, he's the hottest Christian in the church. She said, It was really hard at the start, but I could see him melting as I kept pouring on the love. He just kept melting and got nicer and nicer and nicer, and all of a sudden, he got saved, see? Love never fails.

I came from a broken home. My parents fought all the time. They did not love each other.

They were not Christians. There were four boys in the family. Mother was gone, and we had nobody to cook the food, and we had a bad time.

Almost wrecked the house sometimes when Dad wasn't around. Sometimes he was gone for a couple of days at a time, and then Mother came back, and we didn't know she'd become a Christian. And when Mother came back, we saw this change in her.

She was so sweet and nice, you know. And we saw this. And she committed this all to God for salvation.

And you know what happened? Nothing happened for 10 or 12 years. I mentioned that in one of the other meetings, I think. And really, when I think back to my mother, the main thing I can think about is her gentleness and her love.

She was firm about things, but she was loving, and that got ahold of our hearts. And through that, long later or not, we all became Christians. One thing I forgot to tell you when I talked about this before is the fact that my dad got saved when he was 72 years old.

He moved to California to get away from the rest of us. He thought we were always jarring at him about Jesus, and we weren't. But every time he looked at us, his conscience troubled him, you know.

And so he moved away. And he got down in California, and you know what happened there? A couple of guys his own age said, Hey, Bob, are you born again? Oh, no. He thought he got away from that, you know.

And they dragged him off to church and said, You can't go to heaven unless you're born again, Bob. And so he got saved. And he came back to visit us one time, and after he'd been there about a week, he says, How come you never asked me to ask the blessing at the table? That was his way of announcing he was now a Christian.

So I just ask the question in closing. Do you have it? Are you filled with the love of God? The Holy Spirit who lives in you is called the Spirit of Love. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind, a healthy, disciplined mind.

That's the spirit that lives in every Christian. But you see what happens until we understand the crucifixion of self. Love is in the background and can never come to the forefront until self is crucified.

And when self is really crucified by faith, then the love of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has given unto us. I said before, it's not my love made stronger, it's God's love poured out in my heart by the Spirit of the Lord. And it's equal to anything that may come up in life, doesn't matter how bad it is, you can overcome through the love of God in your heart.

And more than that, dear people, there's nothing so sweet as to have a heart that's filled with love. I remember one man, disciplined by a church under a serious morals charge and always a problem wherever he went. Just seemed to rub everybody the wrong way.

Critical. Critical of everything and everybody. He experienced revival back in 1971.

I met him about 10 years after that. You know what he said? He said, it is so wonderful just to be able to love everybody you meet. I couldn't do that before.

Of course he couldn't because self was not crucified. And there's a rest and a peace that comes to our hearts when self is crucified and God's love is in control that you cannot describe and you can't get it out of a bottle or a pill. You can't learn it.

It's something that happens when we meet God's conditions in the Bible. It's been happening to people here.

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