

Choosing Love in a Bitter and Divided World

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and love among believers, highlighting the transformative power of God's love to break down barriers and bring people together as one body in Christ. It calls for a deep commitment to love one another as commanded by Jesus, showcasing the supernatural love that only God can produce. The speaker shares personal testimonies and challenges the audience to choose unity and love, even towards those they may have considered enemies, as a testimony of God's power and presence.

Duration: 52:22

Scripture: Ezekiel 47:1, John 13:34, John 17:20, Psalm 133:1, Matthew 24:6

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Transformative Love"

Description

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Transcript

It is wonderful for us to be here, from Pastor Gary, myself, Pastor Teresa, members of Times Square Church, and board members from World Challenge, Incorporated. We've come here believing that God is going to do something in our midst. I am personally not interested in wasting God's time.

When He is somewhere, there should be a change happening inside of our hearts. When God is in a place, we should be growing together as the body of Jesus Christ. The love that we have for one another should be deepening.

And by God's grace, we will live to see that. By God's grace, the walls that separate us are going to come down. By God's grace, in these last days, we are going to become one people, one body, one spirit.

And so, believe God with me, that He's going to do something that's going to take His power for it to be accomplished. We have all built walls against other peoples in other places. I pastor a church in New York City of over 100 nations.

And some of the people in that congregation, their countries are at war with each other. But because of Jesus Christ, they are at peace with each other. And not only at peace, they love each other.

Jesus said, by this, all men will know that you are my disciples, that you have a love for one another. It's a supernatural love. It's not a love that the world can produce.

Only the Holy Spirit of God can produce this love. When I was a new Christian, I was a police officer. A friend of mine wanted me to go and visit another new believer.

And he said, this new believer is from a gang, a violent gang, a criminal gang. And I said to him, there is no way that man could be saved. It is not possible.

These people commit murder. They beat and torture people. How can you tell me this man is now one of my brothers in the Lord? And he said to me, come and see.

And so I went to see. This man who was my enemy, in the street we would be fighting against each other. When I walked through the door, he put his arms around me and called me his brother.

I was in a uniform, carrying a gun. And to meet this man in the street, we would normally be very suspicious of each other. But suddenly there was a love in my heart for him.

How do I explain that? How did that happen? Only God could do that. Only God could break down those barriers. And when this man and some of his friends prayed for me, the power of God came on my life.

And I was changed from that day forward. I was never the same again. God used a man who was my enemy to pray for me.

To change me into more of a man of God. This man who used to commit murder, now makes roses on cakes. That's what he does for a living.

Only God could do that. Only God could change a man like that. Only God could bring us together.

Only God could help us to love each other. Only God could break down the walls that society and our own hearts had built up against each other. Just a few years ago, I met that man again.

He is now a deacon in his church. He said, do you remember me? I said, how could I forget you? You were a man who was once my enemy. And God used you to bless me.

And make me a stronger believer than I ever have been before. I want to read to you today from the book of Ezekiel chapter 47. I want to read to you today from the book of Ezekiel chapter 47.

From Ezekiel 47, from the number 4 to the number 10. From the number 1 to the number 10. And those who speak English, if you could just read along in your Bible.

And those who speak English, if you could just read along in your Bible. And he said to me, did you see, O son of Adam? Then he took me and took us back to the shore of the river. And when I came back, there were many trees on the shore of the river, here and there.

And he said to me, this water is out to the eastern circle, and it descends to the desert and goes to the sea. Out to the sea, and the water is healed. And it is that every living soul, wherever the two rivers flow, lives.

And there is a lot of fish. Because this water comes there and is healed. And all that comes to the river lives.

And the fishermen are standing on it from eye to eye. God gave the prophet Ezekiel a beautiful vision. God gave the prophet Ezekiel a beautiful vision.

Most who study this believe that this was a vision of the church of Jesus Christ. Most who study this believe that this was a vision of the church of Jesus Christ. A beautiful river of people flowing from the throne of God.

A beautiful river of people flowing from the throne of God. Mixed together, flowing as one body. Mixed together, flowing as one body.

With one baptism and one Holy Spirit. With one baptism and one Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul says that this body is not a nation, or a Jew, or a man, or a woman, or a girl, or anything.

He describes it as a people that are born from the cross of Jesus Christ. A new people that are not as the people of this world are. The people of this world are bitter and divided, and even more so in our day.

But these people are not like that. They are one people from all nations. Every language, every tongue, every culture.

And from the cross they are flowing together. Into this world. A people like none other in the world.

While this world is bitterly dividing on cultural lines. These are a people that are coming together in the bond of Christ's love. And everywhere these people go, healing comes with them.

Everywhere they go, death is turned on them. Death is turned into life. Everywhere they go, people look and see something.

There is a desire that comes into their heart. How is it possible that these people could love like this? Shouldn't they be as divided as we are? Shouldn't they be bitter like us? How is it possible that coming out of that upper room, we hear all of our languages, but yet we are seeing something. These are a people who are united in God.

And even though they speak different languages, they are speaking one thing. They are speaking about the greatness of God. The power of God.

The ability of God. That's taking them into a place that natural men can't go. Three thousand people were coming from the temple.

Their religion had left them still bitter and divided. Powerless. Always looking for God, but never able to find Him.

And they stopped in their tracks. And they looked at these people. And they said, how are they doing this? How do we become like them? Then the Apostle Peter stood up.

And in the power of God's Holy Spirit, he spoke a message that brought three thousand religious people to their knees. I don't think that in our generation, we should settle for less. Because we are called to be a testimony of who God is.

Not just a testimony about God. But a testimony of who God is. That when people look at us, when they listen to us, they see who God is.

We have people that come into our church in New York City. And they come from all over the world. They walk into the auditorium.

And they see hundreds of people from over one hundred nations worshipping together. And usually in about ten minutes, they start wiping their tears from their faces. They say, God, how could this be? Everything in this world is so divided.

Everybody is pulling back to what makes them comfortable. Everybody is throwing stones over the fence at somebody else. How is it possible that these people love each other? When the end of the service comes, many of them come forward.

Just like on the day of Pentecost. They say, we want the same God that you have. And they come from all over the world.

God touches their lives. Not because of our preaching. Not because of our worship.

But because of the presence of God in that place because of a unified people. The scripture tells us where this river of God's people goes. Many people, fish from everywhere, will come to the saving knowledge of God.

I believe with all my heart in the end days before Jesus Christ returns he's going to break down our walls. And he's going to bring us back together again as the body of Jesus Christ. And I thank God for that with all my heart.

I feel a love in my heart for you today. An overwhelming love. A powerful love.

How is that possible? Apart from the presence of God inside my life. Jesus said in John chapter 13 I give you a new commandment. It is the 11th commandment.

It is as powerful as the first 10. From the mouth of God. I give you a new commandment.

He didn't say I give you a new suggestion. He didn't say I give you a new idea that you might want to consider. I give you a new commandment.

That you love one another. That you love one another. As I have loved you.

I give you a new commandment. That you love one another. As I have loved you.

By this he said. All people will know that you are my disciples. Because of this love that you have for one another.

This love that the world cannot produce. Human effort cannot produce. In John chapter 17 just before Jesus went to the cross.

He was praying to his father. He said I'm not praying just for my disciples in this room. But I'm praying for everyone who will believe in me because of their words.

So Jesus was praying for you. Because you have believed in him through his words. Here was his prayer.

That they all might be one. As you father are in me. And I am in you.

That they might be one. That the world might believe that you sent me. I pray for them.

He prayed for us. He prayed for us today. That we might be one as he and his father are one.

That the world might believe. And he said and the glory which you gave me. The word glory in the Greek means the inner power that you gave me to be everything I'm called to be.

I have given it to them. I have given them the same power. That you gave to me.

To be united with you. And I've given it to them that they might become one. Important is unity.

It's everything. Doctrine without unity is not a testimony. Doctrine without unity is not a testimony.

It is information about God. But it isn't a testimony. And what an opportunity we have in such a bitterly divided moment in history.

Not just here in Israel all over the world. People are divided. Just the way Jesus said it would be.

Matthew chapter 24. He said in the last days ethnic culture is going to rise against ethnic culture. There will be bitter division all over the world.

That will lead to wars and rumors of wars. Look at the opportunity God has given us to come together as the body of Jesus Christ. This river that flows through the midst showing men and women who God is sweeping everybody who's confused into this incredible love of God.

Now here's what Ezekiel saw. He saw people walking into the water up to their ankles. Now that's the type of a person that says you know I agree with you.

I agree that the word of God says this. But it's too costly for me. It's like a man who says there's a restaurant here in Jerusalem.

And the food is the best you've ever tasted in your life. It is an experience like none in the world to go there. But I'm not going there because it's too expensive for me.

And many many people can agree with every word that's been spoken here. But in their heart they say well I will agree. Isn't that good enough just to agree? Do I really have to love these people? Well I was a brand new Christian.

And I walked into church. This man walked up to me. And he said to me I love you my brother.

And I just looked at him. My wife said to me why don't you tell him you love him too? I said I don't even like him. Why would I tell him I love him? I've never told a single man in the world that I loved him my whole life.

I was so uncomfortable with that. I was a police officer. You don't hug people.

You put them in a headlock but you don't hug them. And you don't tell them you love them. But over time I started to learn about the ways of God.

I started to let God do a work in my heart. And those walls that wanted to separate me from people the walls that I had built are allowed to be built to protect myself. The walls that made me afraid of going into something that I wasn't sure of I had never experienced it.

I saw it in the word of God. And I was in up to my ankles. Isn't it good enough? God, do you really want me to go farther? Then Ezekiel saw people going up to their knees.

And I've been there and some of you are there tonight. That's a person that says well I'm in farther than other people isn't that good enough? I'm willing to come to a gathering like this even though it makes me uncomfortable. Other people wouldn't come here because somebody they didn't like was going to be here.

But I came so I'm in up to my knees isn't that good enough? And so they just stand there and they just watch this river of God go by. Then he saw another type of people they're in up to their waist and if you go swimming and the water is cold that's the hardest part because you're considering diving in but you're already cold you realize that this is total commitment. And some people here tonight you're up to your waist right now.

You say well what this man is saying is right. I believe it's true. My own viewpoint has fallen to the ground and I'm in to my waist but oh God what am I going to do if this man gives an altar call? What am I going to do if he asks me to dive in? What am I going to do if he asks me to love people I've been taught to hate? What am I going to do if he asks me to let the barriers break? And even by faith just hug somebody that I've not even liked before and that's the place of decision.

It's a place that several times we've come to in our lives. Will I go with God? Will I go with the ways of God? Will I go with the people of God? Will I become part of this wonderful river that God has sent into the world to testify of his love or will I stand there up to my waist and just watch it go by? What will I do? And then there's a fourth type of person that person who makes the decision that I'm going to love my brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm going to agree with the word of God and I don't care what it costs me.

I don't care what people say. There's a higher law. There's a higher commandment.

I am commanded of God to love my brother. I am commanded of God to love people of different cultures I am commanded of God to love people of different places and I don't care what people say and I don't care about the fear of my own heart and I don't care what it costs me personally. I'm going into this river this river of God and I'm going to swim with God's people and with God's people I'm going to be part of this healing of God.

We need a healing of God in this last day. Everywhere this river of God's people goes the prophet Ezekiel said death turns to life. Everywhere this river goes there's a multitude of fish brought into the nets of God's love.

Like the fish of the great sea it says exceedingly many. The psalmist said in Psalm 133 when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity there's a blessing of God that is found there that you can't find anywhere else. This blessing of God is like the holy anointing oil that holy oil that separated the people unto God for His purposes that holy oil that made them a unique and distinct people.

That anointing makes them like dew on dry mountains. Everywhere they go everything they touch everyone they speak they bring life. And there's a blessing that God says I will command a blessing on you.

If you choose to walk in unity God says I will command a blessing on you. Two nights ago the Lord woke me up at three o'clock in the morning and gave me this word for you. If you will walk in unity I will command a blessing on you and that blessing is life.

Everywhere you go you will bring life. Isn't it wonderful that where the church first began and it began in unity with God and with each other that the church can also finish this way that one more time the gospel can go forward with power from the place where it first began oh Jerusalem Jerusalem if you only knew what could be yours but you will not see it you will not know this life until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord until your heart opens to the truth of God through Jesus Christ of who you are and now we make the choice I know the choice that I have made I am diving in to the church of Jesus Christ and I am choosing even to love people who have been my enemy it is not a feeling it starts as a choice unity is a choice oh hear me the choice you make in this room could have an effect far beyond anything you could ever understand all throughout history God comes to the weakest places and he takes the least likely people to do the most power oh Jerusalem if you only knew if you only knew what could happen this can't be just another conference we've had enough information about God this has to be something that God does something in the heart and so I want to give you an opportunity to join with me and we're just going to say this we are going to take a journey to unity it might take a little time we might have to go from our ankles to our knees to our waist and I am not suggesting this is going to be easy but I am saying that it is right listen to me there is no power without unity only information so you can leave here with power in two and a half days or you can leave here with information unity brings power this is the deep need of this world this is the source of this last day revival and I am not suggesting it's easy there have been wounds there have been inbred cultural biases but God has to have the people in this last day but don't just talk about who he is but they show this world who he is can we show this generation who he is are we willing to love are we willing to be one that the world might know that Jesus Christ has come I say we make that decision I say we break down the old walls I say we choose to walk in unity we choose to love each other the feeling might come eventually but today we make it true you see I am a man who loves nobody I was as hard as a stone completely self focused I could go to an accident as a police officer I could draw chalk lines around the bodies and go and eat my lunch I didn't care about anybody it didn't even bother me but when I came to Christ he started to do a work in my heart and I am here today because of it I chose to love chose to walk in unity and I have seen God do the miraculous and I believe that because I made that choice I now pastor a church of over 100 nations there is incredible power everything of hell will come against that every unbiblical reason will come why you can't but all things are possible through him who believes it is possible to walk in this truth that's where the power of God is so we are going to stand in just a moment please if you would stand and if you want to join with me and we can pray together if you want to be among those who say pastor I want this in my life it's going to be hard but I want this I don't want to be divided anymore I don't want to live outside of what I am supposed to be and people are going to say things but I know this is right if that's you would you just come right now just come to me wherever you are just step out join these men that are coming young people old people just come just come take the step of faith I am going to walk together with my brothers and sisters in Christ move in close move in close young pastors come young leaders come you will make a difference in your generation as hard as it will be just come just come take that step let God have control of your life hallelujah we are going to wait for you we are going to wait this could be so powerful in this part of the world right now oh God thank you Jesus thank you Jesus if you brought a friend turn to your friend and ask them if they want to come with you bring your friend and ask him to come with you to the front bring your friend with you come to the front thank you Jesus let us be in a state of prayer let us pray yes yes thank you Jesus yes thank you Lord thank you Lord thank you God thank you God oh Father God I thank you Lord for these men and women God who have

come forward today and those who came forward in their heart wanting to be one body I ask you for an anointing of the Holy Spirit touch each of their lives in a brand new way let this be the upper room again the place of your Holy Spirit the place of life where you bring life to this dying society oh God oh God teach us to love now help us oh God to be one in Christ help my brother help my sister help all of us Lord to love you in the same way that you have loved us this is a commandment this is a commandment help us to bend our knees put away our bitterness put away our evil speech and embrace one another as only one body only one God Father I thank you with all of my heart oh Jesus thank you so much thank you so much God let there be a miracle here a miracle a miracle a miracle you sent truth through the whole world through just a few people they were gathered in your name but they wanted to honor you you touched the whole world they can be the same again because you are the same thank you Lord let's all lift our voices and pray together call out to God now call out for power the ability to do what only God can do call out for the grace that you will need the ability that God will give you and I thank you we thank you Lord we thank the people in prayer hallelujah we pray we pray those who are behind those who are watching pray, close your eyes pray together this is the time that God is talking to us in God wants to change to change the situation in these countries to change the situation between the Arabs the love the hateful love goes away the barriers go away the things that keep us apart go away we love each other as God commanded as God commanded the people that we don't like their looks we don't like their thoughts we don't like but they are our brothers in Juz they worship in a different way than we do today our neighbors our brothers our loved ones who are in the church with us our servants who serve the servants who serve those in Juz we don't give them today God is talking to us let us put the barriers let us love let us love let God tell you I love your brother I love your sister I love each of you may God remove the barriers some of us are hurt by the people hurt by the people who spoke against us who spoke against us who did this to us who put us in trouble today God is telling us to repent and return to Him today God is telling us to choose to love them to choose to love them to choose to love them say Amen O people of the Lord pray with me shout loudly for the sake of these countries there is no solution to these countries it is our love that appears that appears the Lord in our midst let us hold our hands and pray for each other I want you all to stand in your places those of you who are here pray for each other hold your hands together pray pray Pray for unity in one body. Unity in one body.

Pray, pray, pray. All three together. What do you think, all three together? Pray, all three together.

All the brothers and sisters, and the family together. Pray together. Pray for those who are there.

I wish you would pray together. Those who are there, pray, pray together. Pray, pray, pray, pray.

We're praying for unity in the body. We're praying for unity in Christ. Unity in Christ.

Let's pray. Break down the walls Lord. Break down the walls.

Everything that divides us Lord. Break it down God. Break it down Lord.

Only you can Lord. Nobody but you can do this Lord. Only you can break these walls down.

Break them down Lord. Break down the walls Lord. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Break down the walls Lord. Break down the walls.

Yes, pray, pray, pray. Pray O people of the Lord. Let the Lord penetrate in our midst.

Let him penetrate in our midst. Love will come. Love will come.

Let us choose to love. Let us choose to be alone. Let us choose it.

Let us choose it especially if there are people that the Lord is reminding you of today. Choose to love them especially if you disagree with them. Choose to love them especially if they have hurt you today.

O people of the Lord. O people of the Lord. Yes, yes, yes, O people of the Lord.

O people of the Lord. Hallelujah. Yes, yes, yes, O people of the Lord.

Come Lord and visit us. Come Lord and visit us. Thank you Lord.

Thank you Lord. Thank you Lord. Only you can do this Lord.

Only you can do this Lord. Only you can do this O God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Only you Lord. Only you God. Only you can do this Lord.

My God, my God, my God. I would like you to give God a shout of glory in this house. Give him a shout.

Give him a shout. A shout. Hallelujah.

Thank you Lord. When Joshua took the people around the walls of Jericho, on the seventh day he told them shout. For God is going to give you the victory.

So I would like you to shout. One. Two.

Three. Shout. Hallelujah.

Shout. Shout. Shout.

Shout.

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