

Love Is the Big Thing

by Charles Leiter

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the foundation of the law and the key to fulfilling every moral commandment of God.

Duration: 25:25

Scripture: Matthew 22:34

Topics: "Loving God", "Christian Unity"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of understanding and embodying the core commandments of loving God and loving others as the foundation of all other commandments in the Bible. It emphasizes that every sin is ultimately a lack of love and that true love, as exemplified by Jesus, is sacrificial and transformative. The sermon highlights how love automatically fulfills all moral commandments of God and how maintaining unity and love among believers is crucial in the Christian walk.

Transcript

Well, Tim suggested that I might want to use this time as an opportunity for anyone who might have questions about the teaching on the law of Christ. And I know some of you have read the book and have been exposed to these things. In some ways, I'm hesitant to do this unless you actually have questions, because many times these subjects, we can lose the glory of what we're looking at just by trying to bring up all the negatives and all the attacks against things.

But on the other hand, if there's things that you have questions about and things that are bothering you, then it can be profitable. But I think what I'm going to do is just make a few statements to start out, and then we'll see if anyone has some questions. First of all, the text that I want to read to you is in Matthew 22.

And I'll begin reading at verse 34. It says, When the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, Teacher, which is the great commandment of the Law? And He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment.

And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

Let's pray once more before we look into this. Our Father, open our eyes this morning that we may behold wonderful things from Your Word. Help us here, Lord.

Give clarity of thinking and understanding. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. The thing to notice here is that this man came and asked the Lord Jesus, What is the great commandment? And he could have easily said, The great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And just stop there. But if he had done that, we would have the idea maybe, Alright, here's the great commandment. Number one, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And then we'll have number two, and number three, and number four, and so on, on down the line. He didn't ask Jesus what was the second great commandment. He just asked what was the greatest.

And he could have answered that. But instead, what he did, he volunteered something. He volunteered what the second great commandment was.

He says the first commandment is, Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the second is, like it. How is it like it? Anybody? Has to do with love.

The second is, like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So the first commandment, vertical. Second commandment, horizontal.

Now, why does the Lord Jesus volunteer what the second commandment was? Well, because He wants to lay the foundation for a very basic, far-reaching teaching. And that is, He says, on these two commandments depend, or literally the word is hang. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.

Every other commandment hangs on the love commandments. So the reason He volunteers these two is He wants to give us the heart and essence of everything. And He wants to explain that every other commandment hangs on those two.

So if you want to talk, I think Brother Tim talked about the moral law and this terminology, the moral law. If you want to talk about the moral law, here it is. These two.

Because everything else hangs on those two. And so what this means is, love is the big thing with God. And if we could just get this.

And whenever somebody asks me to sign my book, I put this verse, God is love. And it's amazing, many times I've felt like that is a weak verse. Well, it's not a weak verse.

It's a glorious, beyond imagination, glorious verse. But we have had such watered down ideas of what love is, that it has become almost meaningless in our society. But when you understand what love is, and when you begin to comprehend the Lord Jesus Christ and what He's done, and His demonstration of what real love is, then it is overwhelming and amazing that God is love.

That is incredible. God is love. So, the Lord says that all the other commandments, and He says this in another place, whatever you want those to do to you, you do to them.

For this is the law and the prophets. He's saying the whole thing. Take the whole thing, sum it up in that.

Paul says something similar in Romans 13. He says if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this statement, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. This, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not... Love does no wrong to a neighbor.

So, love is the fulfillment of the law. He says that in Galatians 2. The entire law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbors yourself.

And so, what does it mean that all the commandments hang on these two? Well, let me just say it this way. You've got to listen to this carefully. In one sense, stealing is not a big thing to God.

Murder is not a big thing to God. Adultery is not a big thing to God, except that it breaks the love commandment. Now, let me say it a different way around.

Murder is a very big thing to God because it is a great transgression of love. Stealing is a great transgression of love. Adultery, that's a big thing to God because it is going directly against the love commandment.

You see this? Idolatry. Why is idolatry such a big thing to God? Because it is a slap in the face of God and it goes directly against loving God. The greatest commandment there is.

Well, what's the big deal if I go out here in the woods, nobody sees me, and I make a little mud idol and I bow down to it? What's the big deal about that? What's that hurting anybody? It is a direct violation of the greatest commandment that there possibly is. Loving God. And so, what we see is love is the big thing with God.

And the reason that it is, is because God is love. The Bible says that God is just, but it never says God is justice. It says that He is merciful, but it never says that God is mercy.

But it does say that God is love. Incredible statement. So, second thing, I'm just skimming over the surface here, but the second thing to realize is this, every sin is a lack of love.

It's a violation of love. Now, this is just the other way of looking at what I just said. But every sin is a violation of love.

You just think of your sins throughout the day. Maybe you don't have any desire to spend time in the Word, or you read the Bible and it's dull, your heart's dull and cold. What is that? It's a lack of love to God.

You get out in traffic and somebody blocks you off and you have impatience rise up. What's that? A lack of love. You see somebody that's dressed immodestly and you feel lust toward them, it's a lack of love.

If your heart is filled with love, you have a totally different attitude. Now, what it amounts to throughout the day, you just look, my failings as a pastor, my failings as a father, they all relate to lack of love. Our impatience with one another.

Our willingness to believe some slander against a brother or sister that relates to a lack of love. And you go through your whole life, you can look at every marriage problem. Every one of them relates to a lack of love somehow, in some way.

And when you start seeing this, love is not some mushy feeling. It has to do with laying down your life for someone. And you know, when you start having children, you start finding out how much selfishness there

still is and how much more you need to love.

It's the most costly thing imaginable to love the way the Bible talks about what love is. And so, we're not talking about some vague, empty feeling. We're talking about the very life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ which involves dying for others and laying down your life for them.

So, every sin is a lack of love. And whenever the Holy Spirit fills your life, the first thing that comes out is love. This is the third point.

If you love, if you truly love, you will automatically fulfill every moral commandment of God just by loving. Now, that ought to cause red flags to pop up if you've heard very much of anything. But let me prove it to you.

You remember the Lord Jesus had a man come to Him, and he said, what must I do to have eternal life? And he said, what does it say in the law? How does it read to you? He said, well, and this guy must have been a pretty amazing Bible scholar. He said, well, this is what you need to do. You need to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and you need to love your neighbor as yourself.

He mentioned the two great commandments. What must I do? If you want to do something, if you want to fulfill the law perfectly in order to have eternal life by doing, what must you do? Love God. He said, you've got to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

You've got to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus could have said, oh no, there's a whole lot more than that. You've got to keep this.

You've got to do that. You've got to do such and such. He didn't say that, did He? He said, you have answered correctly.

You do those two things and you will live. Do this and you will live. If you do those two things, there will not be any other commandment of God that you won't be fulfilling by doing those two things.

Now the problem is, none of us have ever done it for five minutes, but the Lord Jesus did it, didn't He? He loved God perfectly all the time and He loved His fellow men perfectly all the time. But if you love, you will fulfill every moral commandment of God just by loving. So the question comes up, what is love? And we said earlier, there's all kinds of mushy ideas.

You know, two college students living together. Oh, we love one another. Here's a guy doing abortions.

He says, well, that's the only loving thing to do. Well, how do we know what love is? Love is defined for us in Scripture. We know love by this.

And we look at the Lord Jesus Christ and that's how we know what true love is. But the fact is, love just by itself. Now, a lot of you are familiar with Reformed theology.

And a lot of Reformed men are so afraid of this, they say, love may want to do what's right, but it doesn't have any idea what to do unless it has these concrete, specific commandments. And so the emphasis ends up turning around. They say, love motivates me to keep the commandments properly.

But love itself is just kind of a feeling. Well, that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says, love is patient.

It doesn't need a commandment to tell it to be patient. Love is patient. You're full of love for somebody, you don't rejoice in iniquity.

You don't want evil things. You want good for them. Love is kind.

It doesn't have to have a commandment to tell it to be kind. It just is. And if I love, you think of those specific laws, all those lists of laws in the Old Testament.

Love tells me not to put a stumbling block in front of a blind man. Here's a blind man walking along. You say, let's have some fun with this guy.

We'll stick a rock out there in front of him. So love tells you not to do that. Love tells you not to curse a blind man.

Love for God tells you not to worship an idol or take God's name in vain. It just happens automatically. You think of it, if you want to take this to its logical conclusion, think about heaven.

When you're in heaven, do you think you need to have a commandment written up there? You shall love the Lord your God. You already do love. You're full of love for Him.

That's just there. Because of what God has put within you. So love itself tells us the right path.

Now, we could go on and on in that. Things in the Old Testament where they gave specific laws, God said if you have a high deck or something, you need to have a railing around that. He said if you've got an open pit, you need to cover that so nobody will fall in.

If you have a dangerous animal, you need to confine them so nobody will get gored. All of that is part of love. You know that automatically.

And so love itself, and that's what Paul says, isn't it? He says love is the fulfilling of the law. And it's incredible because he's writing the Galatians, for example, who are Gentiles who don't know all that Old Testament stuff. They had never been taught any of that.

And he writes to them and he says, love one another. The whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbors yourself.

And beloved, you get down to what's really the big problem. The big problem in your life and the big problem in any church and the big problem in any marriage is lack of love. It's either lack of love for God or it's lack of love for one another in some way or another.

And so it's not this idea of, oh yeah, well, love, that's there. You know, we need to get on to the deep stuff. No, this is the deep stuff.

There's nothing any harder than this. There's nothing any deeper than this, to love one another. Why do we need commandments at all? Well, we need commandments because we still have the world, the flesh, and the devil to contend with.

And let me give you an example. Here's a newly converted Christian. And Paul writes and he says, let him who steals, steal no more, but rather let him work with his hands that he might be able to give to other people.

Why does he need that commandment? Love tells you not to steal, but you know, because of the state we're in, because of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it takes some time to sort all these things out. And I think a guy that's been a thief all his life, I think eventually it would dawn on him, you know what? I shouldn't steal that brother's whatever it is that I'm stealing. Eventually, it would dawn on him.

And if he had stolen something from somebody else, eventually the Holy Spirit teaches you and says, you need to go back and get that made right. But the commandments are there to clarify things, to help us to see, to have our senses exercise, to discern good and evil. And how we thank God for every specific commandment of the New Testament, it's not in any way, shape, or form, and the whole Bible really.

It's not in any way, shape, or form saying, oh, I don't need those commandments. That's not it. But we have got to get centered in our hearts and minds the thing that the Bible puts in the center, and that is love, not commandment keeping.

And some of the Reformed men, godly, good men, John Murray is one, he's a wonderful theologian. But he said this, he said, even before the fall, Adam needed to have a commandment. Be fruitful and multiply.

Now, beloved, that's a different mindset. You go back there and read that. What was that? God putting His blessing on mankind.

He's not saying, don't you think Adam says, you mean I've got to embrace this woman and have children? And it's like, that wasn't it. It's like God blesses them. He says, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

That's a blessing. In other words, I can picture Adam thinking, praise God, life is good. You know, this is a totally different mindset.

And as we begin to realize that as Christians, God's not centering us on keep this, let's do this, do this, do this. Could you imagine, I come home from a trip overseas or somewhere and my wife greets me at the door and she has a list in her hand. You know, greet husband, kiss husband, hug husband.

That doesn't honor you, it insults you. And I found when I was writing that book on the law of Christ, I had to be reminded of it every day because here I am writing this. And if I looked at, well, how did I do today? Did I read my Bible? Did I pray? Oh, I'm not doing too bad.

Then I'd think, have I loved as Christ loved? You know how the plane goes down in flames? That's the way it was. When you judge yourself by that standard, loving as He loved, it's a totally different thing. But yet, somehow it's so liberating, so wonderful, so life-giving.

Because we're not dealing with impersonal rules, we're dealing with a Person and a love relationship with a Person. And it's a totally different world. And we don't have to create love for one another.

You remember God said, I'll write My laws on their hearts. That was a promise of the New Covenant. I'll write My law on their heart.

Well, let me ask you, when you first became a Christian, you'd get up in the morning, you just automatically don't want to touch a lizard carcass, because you might be defiled. Or you automatically don't want to start a fire in your dwelling from 6 o'clock Friday night to 6 o'clock Saturday night. That's not what's written on your heart.

But as soon as you become a Christian, you have love to God. That's how Paul describes believers. He says, all things work together for good to those who love God.

That's the definition of a Christian. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. So all Christians love God, and all Christians love their fellow man.

He says, we know that we've passed from death to life because we love the brethren. And he says, concerning love for the brethren, you have no need that anyone teach you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. You know, the idea, I've heard preachers get up in the pulpit and say, we Christians ought not to hate each other the way we do.

Well, if you hate other Christians, you're lost. A church full of people that isn't loving to one another is a church full of lost people. And so it's just there, isn't it? I mean, we experience it there at the men's retreat or camp or whatever.

You just meet a new brother in Christ, immediately you have love. We're not talking about something you have to create. It's already put in your heart when you become a Christian.

But what's he say? Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You've got to maintain it. Don't let things come up that would become barriers in areas that are already there, stuff that God has already put on your heart.

Make sure, because the devil is going to constantly be slandering you to one another, trying to divide you, trying to put thoughts in your mind about this brother or that brother. And you've got to be wise to these slanders. But love is already there.

I had a sister one time in our church was taking pictures of families after the meeting. And our kids got sick and we had to leave early. And a little bit later, I got a call from her.

She said, did you leave just to keep me from taking your pictures? And I said, no. The reason we left, our kids were sick. But you see what happened? She had enough wisdom to know that she needed to talk to me about that, lest a barrier come up.

Because the slanderer is constantly wanting to divide us from one another and to put thoughts in our minds about one another that are not true. And if she hadn't called me and gotten that cleared up, and the next Sunday, I come in and I see her and I look over at somebody else and greet them and I forget to greet her or whatever happened, then, oh, yeah, that is why he did that. And after about a month or two, you've got this wall built up and all kinds of lies.

And the devil is trying to cut you out and destroy you, separate you, divide. That's what he does. All these things have to do with love.

You want to ask some questions now? I can keep on going, but I think maybe that'll prime the pump. Anybody have questions about this whole thing? Something that's bothering you about this or anything? All right.

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