

Commanded to Love - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince emphasizes that love is a commandment from Jesus that should define the Christian community and serve as a testimony to the world.

Duration: 28:20

Scripture: John 13:34

Topics: "Christian Love", "Godly Freedom"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of love as a powerful tool to impact the world with the testimony of Jesus. It highlights the simplicity and depth of love as a commandment, not an option, and the significance of loving one another as Jesus loved us. The message stresses that love is a decision, a gut feeling, and a corporate commitment that reflects being born of God. It also explores how love is the perfect law of liberty, enabling believers to fulfill all commandments and experience true freedom.

Transcript

I'm excited about what we're going to experience today, I believe, from God. I believe God has planned a kind of sandwich for us. Last night we'd talk about warfare.

Tonight we're going to talk about warfare. But this morning we're going to talk about love. And you see there's two wholemeal slices of bread, very healthy but hard to chew, but in the middle of them there's something very sweet and very tasty.

The love of God. I was reading the Bible, as I do from day to day, and I saw something that surprised me, and I want to share it with you. But first let me ask you this question.

Would you really be excited if you knew that we collectively could impact our neighborhood? If we could impact San Antonio? If we could impact Texas? That's a big job, isn't it? Suppose we could impact the whole of the United States. Would you be excited? Well I believe God has shown me very simply out of the Scripture a way it can be done. Now I'm not talking about all of them getting saved, but I'm talking about all the people that we have in mind being confronted by the testimony of Jesus in a very real and powerful way.

I believe that Jesus himself explained to us how we can do it. I'm going to read from John 13 verses 34 and 35. These are part of the final words of Jesus to his disciples.

John 13, 34 and 35, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. That's very simple, isn't it? All will know that you are my disciples.

You can confront everybody with the testimony of Jesus. I'm not saying they'll all be converted, but everybody can be confronted with the testimony of Jesus. Jesus said by this all will know, wherever you are, in San Antonio, wherever you go, to the ends of the earth.

By this all will know that you are my disciples. They'll be confronted with the reality of Jesus and with the reality of a life committed to serve him. But what is the this? By what will everybody know? The answer is so simple we could pass it by.

You know, I came from a background of philosophy to the Lord Jesus and then to the Scriptures. One of the things that has always impressed me most, it impressed me so vividly when I first began to study the Bible, its simplicity. I was used to long, complicated phrases.

The philosopher Kant once wrote a sentence that extended over two pages without a period. Can you imagine reading a sentence like that? And then I came to the Bible, and I came to Jesus. It's so simple, so down to earth, so practical.

It revolutionized my whole way of thinking. There was a brief time when Lydia and I had personal fellowship with Corrie ten Boom, whom all of you have heard about. And you know her simple little statement, KISS, K-I-S-S, keep it simple, stupid.

That's my aim. I'm not saying you're stupid, but my aim is to keep it simple. When I get complicated, I get frightened.

I think, what am I doing wrong? So this is so simple, but not altogether easy. Jesus said, by this all will know, everybody in the whole area will be confronted by the reality of the fact that you are believers in the Lord Jesus. They won't all be converted, but they'll all be confronted.

I believe we have an obligation to confront the whole world with the testimony of Jesus. Let's go into all the world, Jesus said, and proclaim the gospel. But I want to point out to you something else very simple.

Love is not a choice, it's a commandment. Jesus said, I'm not giving you a recommendation, I'm not making a suggestion, I'm giving you a commandment. Love one another.

How are we to love one another? The same way that Jesus loved us. That is an unselfish, self-giving, seeking first the good of others. Jesus said if you will have that kind of love, the whole world will sit up and take notice, because they don't see it.

They don't see it anywhere. What they see is selfishness, self-seeking, grabbing. You can revolutionize a whole situation by demonstrating the love of God.

But bear in mind, it's not an option, it's not a recommendation, it's not a suggestion. It is a commandment. And so if we don't do it, what are we? In one simple word, we're disobedient.

So we have two options. We can either love one another the way Jesus loved us and be obedient, or we can fail to love one another and be disobedient. But remember this is not a suggestion.

It's not a recommendation. Jesus said very clearly and precisely, it is a commandment. And he said it's a new commandment.

The Jewish people were used to the Ten Commandments of Moses. In a certain sense you could call this maybe the Eleventh Commandment, and I believe it comprehends all the Ten Commandments. If we do this, we're keeping all the commandments.

By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. I command and I give you that you love one another as I also have loved you. And there's no options as to the kind of love.

It's not a self-seeking, self-gratifying love. It's a self-giving love. A love that lays down its life for those whom we love.

That's very simple, very basic, and very seldom practiced. If you were to ask most people in America today what their impression of the Christian church is, they would not speak in terms of love. That isn't the way the world sees us.

There are wonderful and glorious exceptions, but basically they see us as religious people. People with a set of rules. People who meet inside strange buildings that they never really feel they want to go into.

Because they have never been confronted with the real testimony. I think history proves this. I'm not a historian by any means, but I do know that in the Roman Empire, which was one of the most powerful and long-enduring empires and widely spread empires that history has ever recorded, the unbelievers said about the Christians, see how these Christians love one another.

That was their impression. Do we give the people of San Antonio or Texas or America, is that the impression they get about us? See how these people love one another. And it won.

Within three centuries, the most powerful empire on earth at that time had capitulated to the claims of Jesus. A Jewish carpenter who perished on a Roman gibbet. What changed them? The way Jesus said they would be changed.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another. I just want you to meditate on that for a moment or two. It's not something out of our reach.

It's not something impossible. It's something we can do. If we don't do it with the help of God, it's not because we can't, it's because we're failing.

This has become so vivid to me. I've been a preacher of the gospel for almost 60 years. I've traveled in more than 50 nations.

My books are in more than 50 languages. But am I really doing the job? Are you and I together really doing the job? Are we confronting the world with this testimony? Would the world say, will America say today about us what it said about the Christians of the first centuries? See how these Christians love one another. They couldn't explain it.

They couldn't understand it. People from diverse backgrounds, different races, very different social levels. Some were slaves and some were members of the emperor's family.

But they loved one another. It impacted the whole Roman world. It can be done.

Jesus never used idle words. He said by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another. I want to speak a little bit about love.

The kind of love that I'm speaking about is really not an emotion. People are very prone to get excited about emotions. I think particularly in our contemporary culture, a whole lot depends on people's emotions.

But the love that the Bible talks about in God's people is not an emotion. It's a decision. I want to turn you to the first verse of Psalm 18.

These are the words of David. I will love you, O Lord, my strength. That's not an emotion.

It's a decision. Psalm 18, verse 1, I will love you, O Lord, my strength. David made a decision.

Furthermore, the word for love there is not the usual Hebrew word. It's a word that's directly connected with the womb or with the entrails. In other words, as Americans would say, it's a gut feeling.

Now we tend to think that kind of feeling is not under my control. But David said, Lord, I'll give you that kind of love, gut love, total commitment. My whole person involved in it.

It's a decision. Have you ever made that decision? Have you ever really decided, I will love the Lord with all that's in me. Everything I have is his.

I'll hold nothing back. Whatever he asks me to do, I will do it. So far as I know my own heart, and the heart is deceitful, and we can't trust our own hearts, but so far as I know my own heart, I have decided to love the Lord.

I've made that decision. It's not an emotion. You could say I'm not an emotional person, although you'd be wrong.

You might have the outward impression I'm not emotional. I am very emotional, and getting more and more emotional as I get older. But this is not an emotion.

It's a decision. I've made the decision. I'm not boasting, but I'm simply speaking the truth.

I've decided I will love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. He's worthy. He's done everything for me.

The least I can do is love him. And it's not painful. It may be costly at times, but it's definitely not painful.

So remember, love is a decision, this kind of love, and it's a gut feeling. It goes much deeper than superficial emotions and sweet words. It's a decision.

Now David made it a personal decision, an individual decision. I will love you. But in 1 John chapter 4, we're confronted by a corporate decision, which takes us even further.

1 John chapter 4, verses 7 and 8. I counted once in 1 John chapter 4, between verse 7 and verse 21, the word love, either as a noun or a verb, occurs 29 times in 22 verses. Surely God has put some emphasis on love, hasn't he? It's almost impossible to imagine an author using the same word 29 times in 22 verses. God must surely be saying something to us.

And then I want to point out to you that the kind of love that John is speaking about is also a decision. But it's a corporate decision. I want to read these words.

Beloved, verse 7, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

See that's a corporate decision. Let us love one another. How would it be if all the people in this wonderful congregation were to make a corporate decision? Let us love one another, for love is of God.

And then one of the most amazing statements in the Scripture, so simple that we pass it by. It says everyone who loves is born of God. It's very simple, but think of the implications.

It means that there is a kind of love that can only come through being born again. If you ever encounter that kind of love in anybody, you know that person is born again. It also means that if you don't have that kind of love, it's questionable whether you're born again.

See we can make this a doctrinal issue, explain salvation, the steps, and I've done it more times than I can count. But that isn't the final test. The final test is not assent to a doctrine, it's love.

Everyone who loves is born of God. You cannot have that kind of love unless you're born of God. But if you are born of God, the evidence should be that kind of love.

Let's say that together shall we. I'll say it first and you say it after me. Everyone who loves is born of God.

Everyone who loves is born of God. Say it again. Everyone who loves is born of God.

Now turn to your neighbor and say it to your neighbor. That's wonderful. So this is the collective decision.

Just let me compare another scripture just to confirm what I've been saying. 1 Peter 2, verse 22 and 23. 1 Peter 1, verse 22 and 23.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, how do you purify your soul? In knowing the truth? No. In obeying the truth. You want to be pure? No.

Obey the truth, consistently, continually obey the truth. Since you have purified your souls, how many of you would agree that our souls need to be purified? Well this is the way to do it, you see. By obeying the truth, not by knowing the truth.

You need to know it, but that's not enough, you have to obey it. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, and that's not in some verses, in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. Do you love your fellow believers fervently, passionately? You know, I have another message which I'm not going to preach, but it is, how much passion is there in your faith? I've come to see that faith is something passionate.

Love one another with a pure heart, fervently, passionately. And then it says how you can do that. Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.

How is it possible to have that kind of love? Only one way. If you've been born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. A friend of mine whose name is fairly well known, he's a preacher, said that

being born again has become a kind of cult in America.

I read somewhere, in some statistic, that 47% of Americans are born again. I say nonsense. Where's the evidence? 47% of Americans may know doctrinally about being born again, but they haven't been born again.

If 47% of Americans had been born again, this would be a very different nation from what it is. I doubt if 5% are really born again. I mean, I'm no statistician, I may be wrong.

Now, I want to tell you two things about love, from the epistle of James. It's rather interesting. I'm reading from James, Peter, and John, which I don't very often do.

James chapter 1, verse 25. And then chapter 2, verse 8. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. And then chapter 2, verse 8. If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well.

So that law, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, is called two things. It's called the perfect law and the royal law. It's the perfect law because it includes all other law.

When you do that, you are obeying all law. It's the perfect law, it's the royal law. It's the kingly law.

And it's the perfect law of freedom. This is very simple but very profound. Nobody can stop you loving.

If you've made your mind up to love, nobody can stop you. They can say all sorts of hard things about you. They can treat you in a very mean, miserable way.

But they cannot stop you loving. Is that right? So it's the perfect law of liberty. Furthermore, it's the perfect law because it contains all other laws.

When you really love your neighbor fervently, with a pure heart, you'll keep all the other commandments. You see, and it's the perfect law of liberty. In other words, who is totally free? The person who loves.

Nobody can stop you. The perfect example of that is Jesus. They did everything to him.

They beat him, they pierced his hands and his feet, they put a crown of thorns on his head, they gave him vinegar to drink, they abused him, they reviled him. But one thing they could not do was what? They could not stop him loving. He loved them to the end.

You see, if you love with that kind of love, nobody can stop you. It's the perfect law of liberty. You are the only really free person on earth because nobody can stop you doing what you want to do.

Isn't that wonderful? I mean, I'm impressed when I think about it. Nobody can stop you. That's why it's called the perfect law of liberty.

Now I want to make this personal. Don't cringe. It will work out all right.

I make it personal to myself first. I just want to read an incident from the end of Mark's first chapter. Mark chapter 1, verse 40, and 41 and 42.

Then a leper came to him, that's Jesus, imploring him, kneeling down to him, and saying to him, if you are willing, you can make me clean. And Jesus moved with compassion, put out his hand, and touched him, and said to him, I am willing, be cleansed. As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

It says there Jesus was moved with compassion. It's very interesting, because it exactly corresponds to the word that David used in Psalm 18. How shall I express this? It's a gut feeling.

It refers to the bowels. I think the old King James used to speak about the bowels of compassion. And that's where our deepest feelings are.

They're not in the heart, this physical heart, they're here. This is where it all begins. This is the source of everything.

And the word that's used, it says Jesus, his bowels were moved. I remember when my first wife was writing her book, she was talking to the sheriffs who were auditing it, editing it, and she said something about, my bowels were moved. And they had to explain to her that wasn't the right way to say it in English.

But, it's exactly right. That's what it's talking about. You know in every language that I know, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, the real deep innermost part of you is not this physical heart, it's this.

And I think all of us will know, that's where it really begins. Whether it's love, whether it's fear, whether it's hate, that's the place it starts. And so it says, Jesus' bowels, if I may say that reverently, were moved for this man.

The word compassion actually isn't there in the Greek. And when I read that, I asked myself a personal question. Why, what am I moved? What moves me? What prompts my actions? Am I really moved with compassion? Or am I moved with personal ambition, self-seeking, a desire to get my own way? Let me just read something from Philippians chapter 2. I may seem to be over-emphasizing this, but I have really come to the conclusion that the greatest single problem in the church today is personal ambition on the part of ministry.

And I'm not saying I'm exempt. In Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 1, Paul says, Therefore, if there's any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, those are all very powerful words. They're not superficial feelings.

They go right deep down.

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