

Hebrews 13:1-3

by Don McClure

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living out Christian theology in daily life, particularly through the expression of brotherly love and selfless love for one another.

Duration: 42:07

Scripture: Titus 2:7

Topics: "Christian Living", "Transformed Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the evidence of a genuine change in a person's life when they give their life to Christ. He emphasizes the dramatic transformation that occurred in the early church, where people's values and behaviors were drastically different from the godless and corrupt society they lived in. The speaker highlights the importance of living a life above reproach, where opponents of Christianity cannot find anything bad to say about it. He also emphasizes the central role of love in the early church, where people from different backgrounds and cultures came together as a family through their faith in Christ.

Transcript

Well, as we are coming to the end, the near end of Hebrews, this wonderful book, it is a book essentially where the first 11 chapters of the book, they really don't emphasize so much behavior. They don't emphasize a lot of exhortations on things that we are so much to be doing. But rather than that, they emphasize theology.

They emphasize who the Lord is, what he has done for us, the whole work of the cross. They emphasize the fundamentals essentially of what the Christian faith is foundationally all built upon. And it's just simply laying it out, who Jesus Christ is, what he has done for us, why he is better than anything and anybody that ever has come along.

And this specific book, why he is better than Moses, why he's better than the law, why he is better than the sacrifices, why he is better than the tabernacle, why he is better than all of the priesthood, because he is the fulfillment of all of them, is just kind of laying out for us. A lot of the fundamental attributes and doctrinal aspects of Christianity, what it is, the fundamentals, you might say, of the New Testament. When you move on into chapter 12, it begins to give us some of the applications of that where it tells us that now that we are to be looking unto Jesus, because this is who he is, because after 11 chapters of over and over, this is his love, this is his power, this is intercession, this is his mercy, this is his forgiveness, this is what

he has done for us.

Now it tells us that we are to be looking unto him, that we are to be running the race that is set before us, that we are to be entering into this faith of trusting fully our lives over to him. It's now kind of wanting to lay out for us the way that most of the New Testament books actually work. If you really kind of step back and look at a lot of the New Testament, you'll find that they always start off with some of the fundamental doctrinal aspects, the theology of the Christian life.

After it lays out the theology, then it talks about our responsibility to want to enter into it, to want to experience it, to want to enjoy it, and then most of the books then will go from here's the truth about it, now you enter into it, and then it gives exhortations of the expectations we ought to have in our own life, the changes that it ought to have within our own life, wanting to implement. If I understand this theology, I am now entering into Christ the evidences of doing that, the exhortations, the changes in my behavior, in my thought, in my heart, where the Lord tells us now do these things. And here as he comes down to the end of the book of Hebrews, it's much the same.

He is laid out for literally 11 chapters who Christ is, and in the 12th chapter it's now enter into him, look to him, yield your life over, surrender everything that you are and you have to him, he is worthy of it. And now in chapter 13, if I am doing that, here are some of the evidences that ought to be within my life if in fact I have done that. And this of course is one of the things that happened so dramatically and wonderfully in the New Testament.

When people were giving their life to Christ in the early church, there was something, there was a genuine expectation in a change of life, of value and behavior that was extremely dramatic in the world in which they lived. And the cultures and the societies in which they lived so godless, so wicked, so corrupt, and now is this new body of people, you know, were coming to Jesus Christ, there was something they began, the world began to see in them. They saw in their life, they saw in their love, they saw in their values that were so dramatic that it was tremendous, the effect of it.

Because you see fundamental in the early church, the Christian theology, Christian doctrine, Christian truth, was that there was a dramatic change in living, in a value system that seemed to happen within the church. And there was an expectation and one of the chiefest of them as we'll see this morning was the love. Jesus told the disciples, a new commandment give I unto you that you love one another as I have loved you and by this shall all men know that you are my disciples and that you have love one for another.

That here were these whole generations, whole body of people, never knew each other. They were Greeks, Romans, Jews, there were all sorts of societies, young, old, men, women, all sorts of different cultures and behaviors, but as they came to Christ there was something that happened to them where it was as if they were all family. The way that they loved one another, the way that they cared for one another was so powerful.

Sometimes I think that's one of the lost things in the world today many times. Many Christians, they subscribe to all the right theologies. They know all the right doctrine.

And yet at the same time we have doctrine that isn't seemingly charged with deity. There isn't something so often that there's just as much as I know that I believe certain things that there is an equally a demand within my own heart, do I implement them within my heart? Is it something that I truly long to see these things happen within me? Apostle Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 2, 7 and 8, he says, in all things show thyself

to be an example of good deeds by purity and doctrine dignified in sound and speech which is beyond reproach in order that the opponent may be put to shame not having a bad thing to say about us. Here Paul told Timothy, Timothy by the way you live and you walk and you talk and you behave have it be something that your life is above reproach that the way that you live they can't gain any dirt on you essentially or on Christianity because the way that you live they can find nothing bad to say about it.

And here in Hebrews 13 are just some essential practical changes and expectations that we ought to set before ourselves and that the early church that they ought to have that these are things do I, is this the result, is this a consequence of my faith in Christ? Is this happening within me? Are these things, of course, that's it, that's what I long to have or are they things that we just kind of well arbitrarily, yeah they're nice and I suppose you know they're good things to think about, can't hurt anybody or are they things that we in ourselves would look there and say God, I am not like this, what's wrong, what has happened between my belief system and my personal carrying out of my faith in my life? It was something there, of course, before anybody came to Christ, these things that the Bible tells us to do, the expectations, the implementations of Christianity, utterly impossible but now if a person is truly giving themselves over to Jesus Christ, they're running the race, they're looking unto Jesus, then they ought to see many of his qualities now that he's alive and living within us, that we would see these fundamental attributes of his lordship now taking over our lives and saying yes, look at this, isn't this exciting, this is wonderful. On the other side of the story, of course, when Christians don't do this, when they don't long for the implementation, when there isn't a deep desire within them and a deep seeking that Christ would take over their life, that his love would come through them as is revealed here in these verses we're looking at here, then the world seems to be able to use them as a reason to reject Christ and that's all many people seem to need. When I was in college, I remember reading Bertrand Russell, maybe you've heard of him, he's a famous atheist, reading some of his work and actually character, his name was Bertrand William Arthur III Earl Russell, what a name, but at any rate, he was a very famous atheist philosopher for a time because of his writings against Christianity.

He once wrote an essay entitled, Why I Am Not a Christian and in this, you know, he simply looked at the life of Jesus himself and he says, exemplary life, had no accusation whatsoever about him, no way that he could look at him and by way of accuse him and say he was bad or he was wrong or he didn't do this or he shouldn't and that. In terms of his own personal life, in terms of who Jesus was, he agreed, perhaps the greatest life ever lived, but he couldn't be God because of the fact Jesus failed as a teacher, was his accusation and he said the major test of a teacher is not so much the knowledge that he has but his ability to communicate it effectively to his followers in such a way as it changes their life and so many people, their lives through the history of Christianity are entirely unchanged that Jesus could not have been God because of the fact that he failed to change lives and he was not a good teacher. What an interesting accusation, but he would go through history and he would look back at the Spaniards and on how many of them they came over to the Indians and literally, you know, baptized them and their babies and then killed them and simply to say, well, here they're going to heaven, now kill them and get them out of our way and a lot of things that have happened through Christianity, through the history and said these things were all done in the name of Christ and they are what terrible living, what terrible lifestyle and simply he used not Jesus Christ as a reason to reject Jesus Christ but people that said that they were followers of Christ and it's interesting, I think most of the world is still that way today.

When you would look at most of the people that you know, if they were to write an essay, why I am not a Christian and they were to sit down and do it, most of them would probably say very many of the same

things, they'd look there and say, well, Jesus was wonderful, I don't, I don't have any accusation against him, who could, who would, but the Christians I know, the people who say they are followers of Christ live such terrible lives and no changes at all in their life and in their behavior and their thoughts, therefore I don't believe in Jesus, crazy thinking, eternally foolish thinking, but nonetheless there's a lot of people that that's exactly why they reject Christ. Alexander McLaren, a wonderful Christian once said, you know, the world takes its notion of God most of all through those who say they belong to God's family. They read, they read us a great deal more than they read the Bible.

They see us, they only hear about Jesus Christ. And on how that in the early church they seem to know that there was something within them that if Christ is really alive in me, then there ought to be these things, I now have a tremendous responsibility, the greatest responsibility of my whole existence is to let him live within me, regardless of the struggles in doing it. And that's Christianity.

It not only has the first 11 chapters, you might say, of where do I believe and believe and believe and believe chapter after chapter, doctrine after doctrine, truth after truth, and we need those to be able to stand and to be able to live. I need to realize Christ died for me, that he rose from the dead, he ascended to heaven, and now he comes to live his life in me by the power of the Holy Spirit. But if I believe that, then it equally ought to be something that not just I can be content to say, oh, I believe that, I believe that, you know, but do I really now let him live his life through me? Is he really dominating my relationships? Is he somebody that people see a fundamental change in what I am and why I am and why I exist and what drives me, what motivates me? That's one of the important things.

This is where all the power of the Christian life comes from, of letting Christ live within me. And here, you woke up this morning, Jack, God bless you, but here, here Paul gives to us, or the writer of Hebrews, we don't know for sure who it is, but he gives us here some very simple things. This is not just kind of as he's closing off the book, getting to the end, oh, by the way, and throwing in a few little tidbits.

He is now looking there and he says, now, if you believe the first 12 chapters, if they've made any effect at all, then it ought to be something there that you find yourself looking there. And he looks now at 13 verse 1, he says, let brotherly love continue. Now if I'm looking at Christ, he is in me, I'm running the race.

My faith is set upon him. My eyes are looking to him, the author and the finisher of my faith. Now that it is, there is now a life within me that now I'm just to let his love flow through me, essentially is what he is saying.

Don't stop it. Don't regulate it. Find that way in your heart, in your life, or you're simply going to let first of all brotherly love go on, flow out of you is what he is saying.

That this love that the Bible calls for fellow Christians, the word there used for love when he says let brotherly love continue is a familiar word. It's Philadelphia, and if you've ever, you know, studied or heard much about the word, the word fellow means a tender affection. It means it's a love.

It's an affection. But Adolphus, where the second part of Philadelphia, that actually is a word that literally means from the same womb where we get, you know, a brother or a sister, essentially a brother or sister is somebody that came from the same womb. And in here, Paul looks there at the Christian, at the body of Christ, and he says that when you and I come to Christ, we are essentially all from the same eternal womb.

We have all been born from the same spirit. We have all been brought into the same family, that as we are now to look at one another, just like we may be in our own families, look at somebody and say brother, sister from the same womb, that essentially now a Christian is now to look at the rest of the people within the body of Christ and say it's the same thing that two physical human beings would say about one another. Now that the spiritual eternal womb essentially from which we have come from, figuratively speaking, now we look at one another with this brotherly love that we realize we are from the same womb.

We are from the same family. We are deeply a part of one another. It is such a wonderful thing that when we have this Philadelphia, when we have this love and realize God wants to give it, and that's one of the fundamental things that the world, when they looked at the church and they saw all these people that who were not from the same womb physically, they were from entirely different cultures, languages, all worlds, and yet at the same time when they looked at one another, didn't make any difference what their physical body came from, what color they were, what background they had, whether it was high or low, rich, poor, bond, Scythian, free, Greek, Jew, it made no difference at all.

As soon as they found out you were born of Christ, He's your Savior, God is your Father, there was this wonderful identity that they had that was seemingly much stronger than any human brother or sister could even know. There is they had now this wonderful sense of attachment. In Romans 12, 10, Paul writes, he says, be kindly affection to one another with brotherly love in honor, giving preference to one another.

Paul looks here at the body of Christ and he asks him, he says, make sure that you have this affection to one another, this Philadelphia. First Thessalonians 4, 9 says, but concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write unto you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. I shouldn't even have to mention it to you, Paul says, I shouldn't have to write to you.

There should be this wonderful kindred spirit as soon as you realize you're a Christian. Yes, I'm a Christian. You know, it's just this wonderful thing.

The other day we this this week, we were in and out of town a couple of times. So back and forth to Denver, actually, or to Colorado and for a few days and in Silverton, Colorado. We're going through there and just in and out of stores, walking around, trying to keep up with the wives and the spending.

But anyway, as we did this kind of walk in the store and look around and all these little knickknacks and goodies, I walked into one store and there was, you know, wonderful Christian music going on. Nobody in the store, just the lady who, you know, running in this Christian music. It's wonderful.

I turned to her and I said, you Christian? And she says, yes, I am. And I said, so am I. And there's just this wonderful thing. I didn't know her name, didn't know anything about her, but there was just immediately.

And I had no interest in buying anything. But a few minutes later, I walked out with three hats just because I just looked at her and I said, I've got to buy something here. You know, you're family.

And it was just this wonderful sense there. Sometimes you just, I'm looking around, Jean comes into the store, said, help me find something to buy. Literally.

I mean, I'm thinking, what am I saying? This is like her. I've been around her too much. I feel like she's not really that way.

Well, maybe a little. But anyway, it's one of the things I like about her. But the thing is, is that this affinity, this love that is just there, it just happens.

When you realize there that someone is in Christ, Paul says that we need to have that. First Peter 1.22 says, since you have been purified, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit and sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently and with a pure heart. Here's Peter, right? She says, since you come to Christ, since your heart and your life has been purified by the obeying of the truth, you have come to Christ.

He says, now, love one another fervently. Have this great, tender, wonderful love. We've all heard the story of the, you know, the fellow coming down the street and he sees, you know, one man carrying another man on his back.

And you know, when he looks at him and he sees this enormous guy that he's trying to carry and the weight of it, and you know, the old story, he asked him, he says, isn't he heavy? So he looks at him and he says, he ain't heavy. He's my brother. I mean, it's just like, hello? How could a brother, how could family to do what it is there, you know, be heavy? This is why they're part of me.

This is not an issue of the weight. It's something there that when the love of Christ is in our hearts that we ought to have that love one for another as a family has, as those that are from the same womb. I read a little story of a doctor, I mean of a little boy rather, you know, who was told by his doctor that he could potentially save his sister's life and by giving her some of his blood.

They both, both he and his sister ended up having the same blood type and the disease, you know, had come and there was something that was life-threatening to her and would take her life unless she was able to get a transfusion of the same kind of blood. And here as the doctor approached the little boy and he asked him, you know, that if he would help save his sister's life and that she needed his blood. At first the little six-year-old boy, his face kind of went down and his lip quivered for a moment and then he turned to the doctor and he says, yes, doctor, I will do it.

And so they set up, you know, went into the surgery and as the boy and his little sister were brought in there together, there was first silence as he is just very, very deep in his thoughts and things seemed to be very heavy to him, but he went in and then they set up the IV and things are, you know, getting the transfusion going. And there as they set it up from his, you know, arm and over into hers and getting the blood out of his body and essentially being transfused over into hers. And there her body, you know, so peaked and weak and he's so full of life.

But then as they literally, as the blood began to go in and her countenance began to change, literally while they're on the table and he's looking over and he's smiling quietly without a word at his sister. There and then after a few moments of this going on, the little boy looked at the doctor and he said, doctor, after he realized his sister was fine and seeing the blood go out, he said, how long till I die? And the doctor looked at him and all of a sudden he realized why his lip had quivered and why his face had kind of dropped. But then when he turned to him and he said, yes, I will give the blood, he thought that literally he was going to give his life for his sister.

He was being going in there, we're going to take your blood and you're going to die, but she will live. And yet there as he did and he watched her and he smiled there and yet now his question was how long till I die? And yet that's the, that's brotherly love. That's what something there in the body of Christ that to be

able to look at one another, seeing each other as peaking at times, seeing each other as needy, caring there that we ought to have a love like that.

It's the love that Jesus had for us and it's the love that he had. He said a new commandment, give I unto you that you love one another as I have loved you. And there, of course, he let his love, you know, blood flow out until not only it transfused into us, but he did die.

And he says, this is the love. I want you to have one for another. Let brotherly love continue.

Secondly though, he goes on, he says, do not forget to entertain strangers. For in doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. And that word there when he says don't, do not forget simply means don't let it ever be put out of your mind.

Don't ever let yourself to forget. Don't ever allow yourself to forget or be put out of your mind or to neglect there to be hospitable is what the word when it means to entertain, to be hospitable to strangers. The people there that you don't know, you don't know their name or address or anything about them particularly there, but there, there would just be something there that, that again, this isn't, by the way, it's not a human love we're talking about here.

This is the love of Christ. And when he gets into somebody there, I mean, as far as Jesus Christ is concerned, when he was here in this body, he had no strangers. There was a lot of people that had never met him, but his love, there were, there was no stranger to him.

Every human being Jesus ever met was just a not yet redeemed soul for which he would die. Everyone that he looked at, everybody came though a stranger in one sense to that person though their eyes maybe had never met. There was something about his love that no one was strange.

No one was a stranger essentially about them. He looked there at every single person and there was this hospitable, this desire there to give his heart and his life to them. There was a commitment that there was there.

And here he looks there at us. Not only are we to have that brotherly love one with another within the body, but also there is to be this love in a sense that there is no stranger. There's just people we don't know yet.

There's just people we don't know their name yet. We don't know who they are. We don't know what's going on, but at the same time, there is something there that we are there to give hospitality.

We're to be hospitable and caring. And the reference here that he has there, he says, for, but in doing so, some have entertained angels as back in Genesis chapter 18, where literally Abraham entertained and was hospitable to Jesus and angels. Not knowing that they, that, that he was, you know, he just thought that a couple of travelers had, had come along.

And but in reality there, what was, what's happening, of course, is, is Abraham was seeing Jesus, was talking with him. Or even later on one time when they looked at Jesus and they said, you are not yet 50 years old and you say you saw Abraham? And he said, yes, Abraham did see my dad. And they laughed.

I don't think so. You're not even 50. And how could you have possibly known Abraham and talked with him when Jesus had said that he had done so? Well, he had done so there and entertained him back in

Genesis chapter 18 recorded for us there.

But I'm personally, I wonder how many times we've all entertained angels, never known it. I personally, I mean, I just have this conviction. I think it's probably happened a lot.

I really do. And, and just though they, just like with Abraham, he didn't know nothing supernatural about them. Looking at them, came right in, talked, looked like any other being, you know, close to any other human being, though they were actually messengers from God, angels from heaven that were now sent.

And I wonder how many times the Bible tells us that God puts his angels and gives them charge over us, lest we dash our own foot against a stone. And how many times have there been within our lives where angels have intervened, angels have come and done things, strangers to us. Somebody just happened to be there at the moment.

Something happened here. Somebody came along and there was a word, there was a behavior, there was some saving thing or some encouraging thing that happened in a moment. And yet as it happened, there was something that we'll look back, I think when we get in heaven and just realize, I believe innumerable times, here the Lord just sent an angel.

And we just looked at him and said, idiot, thanks, sucker, you know, or whatever else. And then we'll meet the angel in heaven and say, hi, I'm that sucker that saved you, you know, or, oh, sorry. But on how here, you know, we're told there that our attitude, even with people that are strangers to us, that there's something to realize, are they really? Maybe they're not strangers at all.

Again, they're just people we haven't got to know that one day we will and we'll know them fully and wonderfully. Some years ago, there was a shipwreck in the coast of the Pacific Northwest and then by a fishing village. And there is a crowd of fishermen gathered during this tremendous storm and they're watching there a ship as it's being dashed against, you know, the rocks out there.

They decided that they absolutely had to get on a, you know, boat and try to go out there and save, you know, the fishermen on the boat. And so they go and they venture out through this terrible storm and water is coming in. They get all of the people they possibly can.

But as they're leaving, there was somebody else still there and they said, stay there. Hold on. We will come back for you.

And as they worked their way in and the ship, you know, a little boat made it back in with them. But they said, we have to go back. I need to.

And one of the men said, I need a man that'll go back with me. There's still one out there. And a man immediately jumped in the boat and he says, I'm going with you.

And when he did that, his mother who was standing there said, no, no, you can't go. Your father drowned at sea and your brother, William, he's been lost at sea and you're all that I have left. You can't go.

And he stood there in the boat for a moment, looked back at his mother and he says, mother, I must. And shoved off and off they went out there to fight the storm as the people stood to watch this boat as it went out. And there as they look and they kind of lose it in the storm a little bit and then they see it's beginning to come back and they cry out, you know, as did you get him? Did you get him? And their Jim, who was

the one who went in the boat replies back and he says, yes, we got him.

And tell mother it's William. Here there was something there that she lost. She thought that she, she had lost a son.

And here this guy just going out thinking he's helping a stranger. He's just going out just to help some fishermen and he didn't recognize her seeing the storm. They just saw in the last against the rocks out there, hang on.

But they're, but then as they come back and they realize the very one he had saved was the brother he thought he had lost. And I believe when one day when we get to heaven, we will look and we'll have all these names and realize we were all family. We didn't know it.

That's what he says that, you know, that, that here he says entertain strangers, people that maybe they seem strange to you, but they're not. They're your family. You ought to care.

You ought to have this love. You're going to realize you're going to spend eternity, you know, in heaven with them. I think one of the things to me that so grabbed my heart lately in these trips that we've had going down to El Salvador, particularly in this last trip in winter down in, in there's a church that's virtually doubled since we were just there a couple of months ago, a little outreach church out in a very poor little area called Zacatec and Luca.

And here they had this, this thing, this little outreach, little kids, many of them orphans. They had 250 kids. It took off to show the pictures of it, but there at this little outreach that they had and many orphans coming in there.

I'll never forget. There's one little boy who kept, he just, he looking at me. I just, I don't know, look weird or something to him, wonder who these people were.

But I just kept smiling at him, just a little boy. And I, and I walked over to him and I said, hello, you know, I said, and he says, and I said, me, me, I'm a Don and my name is Don. And he just smiled.

And then I went over and I sat in a little while, but he kept on looking. And then a little while later he came over and he just came up and he, I'm sitting down and he just put my, his hands on my leg and he just sat, just stood there just staring up at me. And a little Chico.

And I realized that there's hundreds of these little Chico's down there, you know, and just looking they're lost at sea. You know, in a world that there is, could dash them against the stones at any time seemingly. And just looking and realizing, I can't, I've got to go back and find Chico and all of his friends, you know, that are shipwrecked out there.

And whatever we can possibly do as a body, by the way, I believe we're going to be doing, there's something to help these churches and help, you know, these wonderful things. There's a great revival going on down there. And I feel honored that we have the opportunity even to, to meet them and to love them.

And Mike, I don't want to get distracted by it, but Mike Rizal, who went down with us, who has, you know, who did Potter's Field, he was here with us. By the way, you may not know it, but they have raised support through the years of Potter's Field. One of the things they've always had as a table for orphanages,

they've got 30,000 children around the world that are being supported by people that have come.

And now they're realizing we want to do orphanage ourselves instead of doing it for other ministries. And we're going to be going down and helping plan an orphanage down there. And all these little chicos, all these little kids that we can, and families that we can touch and realize, we, God just say, they're out there.

If you want to get in a boat and you're willing to go, you can, you can have all you can get in your boat. You can fill it every time you go, you know, you know, with, out to sea, if you're willing to do it. And to me, I mean, Paul just says this, or the writer of Hebrews says, just do this.

One day you may realize you thought you were just doing something for a stranger. You may realize God was smiling and says, no, a little chico was an angel. It was somebody there that just allowed you to actually entertain God himself, for you to see his face and to be touched by him.

It's an honor, not simply an obligation, although it's that as well, but the wonderful honor that God gives to us. And then lastly, he tells us here in verse three, he says, remember the prisoners as though in prison with them and those who are ill treated, since you yourselves are in the body. Here he looks there and he said in the early church, one of the things that was such a great part of the early church was this, this sympathy that they had.

The persecutions for great many Christians had been thrown into prison for their faith, for their stand for Jesus Christ is still going on in many places in the world. And I wouldn't be surprised to see it happening more and more here. And but it's something there that when you, that the amazing thing is that they look there and hear these people that were in prison or else as he says, those that are ill treated, since you yourselves are in a body, he says, you have a body.

You see somebody else, they're hungry. Don't you know what it's like to be hungry? Don't you know what it is? Here's these people ill treated. They're lonely.

They're rejected. Don't you know loneliness and rejected? You're in a body. You have the capacity to feel loneliness and rejection and hunger and struggle and emptiness like anybody else.

Doesn't that bring anything out in you, he says? It should. It ought to bring something there that if you realize I'm healthy. I'm healthy.

I mean, I look there and I see all these other world is so hungry. I spent the last 30 years on a diet. This never worked yet.

You know anything? And I realize how, none of us are, there's more food than we know what to do with around here. And yet there's tremendous needs in other places, people that are ill treated that have a body just like we have a body that's hungry, that's lonely, that's imprisoned, that's rejected. And that when there is something there here, the writer of Hebrews says not only to have a brotherly love and we ought to ask, do I have that? Do I look just the rest of the body and realize you're my family? Same womb, same spiritual home, the same, you know, spiritual womb that we came from and realize you're mine, I'm yours.

And then also there to look at, you know, at others, you know, of strangers that we just, they're just strangers. We don't know them yet, but yet we will forever and ever. And then also now to look at those that are going through difficult times, ill treated.

Sometimes people that their life or their world is not very attractive. It's not very warm. It's the, you would realize if I just give to them and do something, I'll never get anything back for it.

I'll feed them and feed them and feed them and feed them and never, you know, never get a thing for it. I'll give and give and give. Why? Because that's Christian love.

This is what the fundamental thing, when somebody looks there and they realize if I don't have these things within me, not only are others, am I sitting there saying, well, sad, but to look there and realize I have failed myself. The potential of my life. The potential there, the opportunity that Jesus gives me to say, you know, you can love your family like I do.

You can love the brethren as I do. Would you like that? And realize if I go through my life and never learned that, if I never learned to love strangers, I cheated not only the stranger, but I cheated myself out of what God wants for me. The joy, the fullness of realizing I've learned this love.

I've learned there to give is more blessed than to receive and to pour out and pour out and pour out. And then to find myself sometimes even loving those who may seem unattractive, who may not have anything to give. But in so doing, Jesus said that one day you and I, when we go to heaven, we'll stand before the Lord.

Can you imagine? This is to me the one of those astounding things. I wouldn't believe it if Jesus didn't say it himself. He says one day you will go to heaven.

And when we do, Jesus will look at you and say, thank you. Thank you. When I was hungry, you fed me.

When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was in prison, you visited me. And we will say to him, Lord, when did I do that to you? And Jesus will say, when you did it unto the least of my saints, you did it to me.

When you went out and you thought you were just doing something for what was the least in your mind of his saints, somebody there that just why let somebody else do it. I don't care. But we'll realize there that in doing it, we did it unto him.

We had done it to him. I read a story of a man and a woman who fell in love through the mail. It was before internet and email.

They actually wrote the letters and sent them to one another. You've heard of it. It's called the mail system.

And it's still around, a little antiquated, but still there. But anyway, they fell in love through the mail. Never had seen each other.

And, but just through their writing and just through the, the interaction, you know, over a period of time, they felt deeply in love. And there, when it was time they had to meet, you know, one another there, she, you know, they were, they met at an airport and there she told him, well, you'll know me because you'll be able to find me simply because I'll have a green carnation and I'll have a green scarf, you know, around and a green hat. And you look at the, and a green coat, green coat, green hat, green scarf, green carnation.

So she wanted to, so if I'll stick out, you'll be able to find me. And so they, he gets to the airport there and he looks around and there's a woman. Green coat, green hat, green scarf, you know, green carnation.

He realized that's her. But as he looked at her, she was very unattractive. And she of course didn't know who he was because he was just looking for her.

He didn't have anything. And he's paused for a moment. And he was kind of startled that she was so unattractive.

But there as he realized there and he thought for a moment, but the woman that had written these letters, he didn't realize, I don't care what she looks like. I want her. And there he went over to her, you know, and he came up to her and he grabbed her, you know, and said, hi, and you know, and I'm so and so, you know, and, and this woman looked at him and she said, well, I'm not so and so, you know, and she said, well, I'm not who you think.

I'm not that. And he said, you're not at this, this outfit. And he said, no, that woman over there paid me \$5 if I would stand here for a few moments and wear all of this.

And so I'm just standing here and he looked over and here was this gorgeous woman. And he looked over and he walked over to her, find out who she was. And he, and she said, and he said to her, she, she said, why did she, he said, why did you do this? And she said, all my life, everybody has been attracted to me because of my looks and not for the person I was.

And through our writing to one another, there was somebody that just seemed to fall in love with who I was. And I wanted to see if it was what they thought of me or what I looked like. And so I paid her.

And then when I saw you walk up to her, I realized you loved me for who I was. And you know, I think many times we look at Jesus, we write to him, Lord, I want to go to heaven. I love you.

You're wonderful. You are great. Nobody is as gorgeous as you, as beautiful as you, as magnificent as you, but Jesus has this amazing way of clothing himself in things that are unattractive, ill-treated, imprisoned in ways that as we would look at them, think why, who needs this? Not realizing that the day that we would go in love and that we would treat the ill-treated, we would care for those that seem to be unattractive to many, strangers to others, and we would love them.

Then is when Jesus has this way of standing out and all of a sudden we see a beauty. We see something where we realize, Lord, you have given me the best, haven't you? I believe that with all my heart. And I believe that when we find ourselves saying, Lord, give me this love.

Maybe today you don't have it. Maybe you would look within the body of Christ or the brethren. It's easy to write them off.

It's easy to be done with certain people. It's easy almost to say if so-and-so fell off the side of the face of the planet, hallelujah, they belong in heaven. They don't fit here, you know, or some as far as I'm concerned.

Do we love them? Do we find ourself? Well, I'm from the same womb. Right now, we may not get along, but that's no excuse. It's just an opportunity to know how deep and real my love.

David once wrote, he says, when I was afflicted is when I learned thy statutes. When I went through the hard times is when I learned what your love and your nature and your being was all about. And sometimes God tests our love for others.

Sometimes he puts strangers around there, and literally there, they're angelic messengers from God, you know, that they themselves, whoever they are, but God looks and says, I'm not interested in them as much as I'm interested in you. Do you know this love? Do you want it? And also, they're just the ill-treated in the difficult world around. Do we care? Naturally, not at all.

Humanly, who cares? But when I realized I want to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and therefore, Lord, teach me how to do this. Teach me how to do it. Fill me with your love.

Fill me with your spirit. Help me to care and to love. Amen? Let's stand, shall we? Dear Father, we thank you that this is, you look at us and give us your word.

You give us your life. You offer yourself on the cross. Your blood shed forgives our sins.

You go to heaven. You write our name down in the book of life, and then you come in and dwell us. And then as you indwell us, then you challenge us to say, will you give me your whole life? Will you surrender all? Will you look unto me, the author and finisher of your faith, for the joy that was said before me? I endure the cross, despise the shame set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Will you seek after holiness and after peace? And we say, yes, I want that. And now you turn to us and say, now then, I want you to love. I want you to let me so live within you that you set aside all your weaknesses of your humanness.

You find yourself saying, Jesus, fill me with your spirit and fill me with your love. Give me a reason to live like this. Lord, show me the orphans and the fatherless.

Show me the ill-treated. Show me the needy. Show me, Lord, how to love those that are right around me, that are my brethren, and just to love those who are far off, that are ignored by so much of the world and everyone in between.

Lord, that we may be the ones that end up to be the greatest recipients. But when we walk over and other people would look and say, well, that's not a very attractive person you're with, that we could smile and say, oh, I don't think you see what I see and who I see. I can't believe that Jesus Christ has let me love and has taught me to love this way.

For I've received far more than I'll ever give when I'm loving. Lord, teach us this and challenge us, Lord, in our life and in our walks to long to have this love within us. Lord, today we just open our heart and confess we are not this way naturally.

So fill us with your spirit. Help us, strengthen us, encourage us, Father. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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