

Love of the Brethren

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon explores the essential nature of brotherly love as a reflection of God's love and a testament to true Christian faith.

Duration: 51:13

Scripture: 1 John 3:11

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the subject of gospel charity or love. He begins by reading from the little epistle of John, specifically Chapter 3, and continues to the end of Chapter 4. The preacher emphasizes the importance of love and its connection to the law. He mentions watching a news segment about male prostitutes and discusses the reactions of religious individuals to such topics. The preacher admits that this is the first time he has dedicated a sermon solely to the subject of love and acknowledges that it is a broad and complex topic.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn to the little epistle of John, and, uh, I don't know, I'm not going to preach too much about this subject, I'll just share a whole lot of thoughts with you, and trust that the seed that's from these thoughts has been a very tremendous study for me, something I hadn't, I suppose I hadn't done before. And that is, give concentrated effort and thought and prayer to the subject of gospel charity, gospel love. So I'd like you to turn to the little epistle of John, chapter 3, and I want to begin reading at verse 11, and read all the way to the end of chapter 4. So before we look to the, to God's book, let's bow our heads in our hearts, and again, let's pray that the God of the book will come by his Spirit and assist us to speak and to hear, because if the only voice you hear is the preacher's this week, you've missed it.

You want to listen for that voice that says something down in here, you young people. You listen for that, feel those motions and those movements inside. Listen well.

Let's pray. O gracious God, and our Heavenly Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in his merit, coming at his invitation, we come to thee. We come, O Lord, because we're still sinful.

Though we seek to be saints each day, O Lord, we must come as sinners each day. And as your people we come, but we thank you you've made him sin for us, who knew no sin. We come tonight, our Father, confessing our ignorance still, but we thank you that you've made him our prophet-teacher, and so teach

us by thy Word and Spirit.

We come tonight confessing, O Lord, our evidence we are so impotent, with all we know we're so impotent in implementing and practicing what we know. But we thank you that you've given thy Spirit to empower us, and so we pray this week as we meet that we would be conscious of thy presence, thy self-presence, to meet the needs of our hearts and our lives. Hear our cry, and meet with us for Christ's sake.

We ask it in his name. Amen. For this is the message that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother, and wherefore slew he him, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. What is the test of eternal life? We know we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.

Some of you wouldn't mark very high on that test. He that loveth his brother, loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Hereby perceive we the love of God. This is how we perceive it, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us, greater is God than our hearts. God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.

And this is that Spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard it, should come, and even now already is in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore spake they of the world, and the world heareth them.

We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us.

Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

In this was manifest the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we are also to love one another.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, whoso confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God. God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment.

He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hated his brother, some of you need to hear this, your attitude toward one another.

If you say you love God, if a man say, I love God, and hated his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, a commandment, note, that he who loveth God love his brother also. Sometimes I've thought about why we in our circle, particularly many evangelical circles outside our own, why we preach so little on brotherly love, love, period, in a general way.

And I believe there are some reasons that have some validity to them, why we back off. I've looked over my sermon notes for a long time, and I've never spoken. But to devote yourself, and give yourself to this subject alone, I look at you, and I've been trying to preach for a long time, and this is the first time that I've dealt with it just this way.

Or in fact, this is the most exhaustive study that I've made of the subject myself. And I say, well, why have we kind of stayed away from it? Well, I think there are several reasons. First of all, it's a broad and large subject for a couple of messages.

And I felt when I was looking at this, I felt like that young fellow who went to the bishop, and he hadn't preached, and he says, Bishop, what should I preach about? He says, well, preach about God in about 20 minutes. And maybe because it's so large, we stay away from it. Then I think, and I think this is the biggest reason, because of the terrible abuse that preachers, that we, when we were converted, if you talked about love to me, I'd have been upset.

Because all that's what I heard from those lovey-dovey preachers. Love, love, love, love, love, love. And they loved everything, including the devil.

I'm sure that they would have preached the sermon on the love of God to the money changers. But Jesus didn't do that. He cast them out.

And with eyes of fire and a scourge in his hand, he drove them out of the temple. And I'm talking about those people who preach love of God, love of God every time, everywhere, everything. And because of that terrible abuse, some of us have backed away from that subject quite a bit.

I'm not, Jesus didn't even preach a sermon on that occasion. He just threw them out. He took action.

Of course, some of these lovey-dovey boys would have a, they'd have a dialogue or set up a counseling center with the sodomites. But God didn't do that. He sent fire and brimstone.

I suppose someone would have told the evil and wicked days, wicked men and women and ungodly men in Noah's day. I suppose they would have told them God loves you and put a sign on their car, God loves your smile. But for 120 years, Moses preached and warned and wooed about the judgment of Almighty God.

And I suppose that same lovey-dovey crowd would have nailed to the church at Wittenberg's door, 1 Corinthians 13. But Martin Luther didn't do that. He nailed 95 theses because there were some other things that were vital.

And hadn't done that, we may still be in the superstition and dribble and ritual of Rome. So I think one of the reasons we shy away from it, another reason is because of the awful abuse and the failing to mention other parts of the Bible. And sometimes we've felt constrained and we must press those buttons that aren't pressed.

And then I think another reason why we don't talk more about brotherly love, God's love, the love of Christ. I think it's because of our own experience. We're so far short of what we see.

When I read those passages to you tonight, I see a standard that's higher than I know. But you see, if we were consistent, we wouldn't preach Christ at all. Because when we're preaching Christ, we're preaching a standard higher than we know.

But I do feel that sometimes that we feel we have so little of it. Experientially, we sometimes shy away from those things that we've not experienced as much. And then I think another reason we shy away from it may be because of the word itself.

It's just a little word. It's like the word law. It's a little word, but it's used so many different ways in the Bible.

You know, the law of God, sometimes it refers to the whole Bible, sometimes to the Pentateuch, sometimes to the moral law, sometimes to the ceremonial law. And in one message to divide all that, you have to, sometimes it's difficult. Just the word itself, to come at it.

And the same way with the word love. It's used so many ways. There's so many kinds of love.

There's God's benevolent love to all men. He sends the sunshine on the rain. And then there is his complacent love, that love that gives him joy, that love that delights him in his sheep, that special love, that saving love that no one knows but his people.

And sometimes the confusion of that, we just stay away from the subject. Well, there are many difficulties, but let me tell you something, preachers. There's one thing that's not difficult, to find a text to talk about brotherly love.

It's not very difficult to find a text. You know, I took out my concordance, and I went down, I counted how many times the word was used. Now, I didn't read the New Testament to find out how many, so this is approximate.

But I'll guarantee it's within two or three. I take my concordance and I go down the column and count the columns and I count the columns, and then I multiply and count them up. And I counted this word in the New Testament, love, love, love is charity, which is both translated from the same Greek word, agape, 276 times.

There's only one other major word that exceeds the word that I'm talking about, and that's the word faith, which appears some 343 times. And the only close runner up is the word believe, and that is about 264 times. Now, don't misunderstand me, I don't think these statistics prove anything.

I think if God said it once, it's true. But I do think that when we, I think the significance of something with so much, it's significant in the emphasis, and it's significant not only in the emphasis, but in the priority of things that we ought to preach on and things that we ought to teach. And if that's true, it should have much emphasis, and it should have much priority.

In John's gospel alone, of those 276 times, John, who is known as the Apostle of Love, and probably, John uses the word over 100 times in the gospel and in his epistle, which is more than a third of it as compared to Matthew, who maybe 12 times, as I remember, but John, in his gospel and his epistle, used it over 100 times, around 106 times, as I remember. In a little epistle, this was amazing to me, in the little epistle of 1 John, which is only 5 short chapters, he uses the word 47 times. 47 times.

But I want to tell you the most amazing thing that I've found, and I never knew this before, and I talked to one of my favorite preachers this afternoon and asked him about it, and he said, I never knew that. And I made a discovery after all these years, I'm still learning, believe it or not. I hope.

Let me tell you what I discovered. I discovered there was one book in the New Testament that didn't have the word love in. And the fact is, when I was using my concordance, I couldn't find a word in that book.

And I thought, surely this is wrong. I got down another concordance. You know, I have crude, so that's for the crude, and young for the young, and strong for the strong, you know that.

So I have all of them. Then I got all these concordances out, and the word wasn't there. And I was so excited, and I said, honey, if I were to ask you what book in the New Testament you would turn to for an example of apostolic preaching, for evangelism, for missions, I said, what book would you turn to for an example of missions, evangelism, apostolic preaching? And she said, Acts.

How many of you think she was right? Let me see your hands. Boy, you're scared. Well, I think she was right.

Where else do you get Peter's sermons and Paul's sermons and how many sermons do you have in Acts? But let me tell you something, I almost spent the whole night on this subject because that starts the wheels rolling. In the book of Acts, the word love does not appear. Now you think that through a little bit about evangelism and I'm not going to say any more about it because I have some other things to say.

I'm not going to put that sign on for about four hours and they wanted to know about what I thought of certain methods of evangelism. I said I'm going to get them. Oh, I guess I said I can't embrace them.

And then I told them why. I said, I can't say God loves you. I said, or I can't say smile, God loves you.

And he said, why? I said, because my Bible tells me the wrath of God. And my Bible tells me God is angry with the wicked. And I said to what I tell sinners is, sinners, the saving love that God has for you.

You see, you tell these people they're living in open rebellion. Oh yes, there's a sense in which you could say it. It's not what I'm talking about tonight.

Well, I don't want to get on that. I'll get off my nose and I'll start preaching to you about something else. And that's not part of my plan.

But that happened to me this week. And you see the saving love that God has for men is in Christ. Call upon him, cast yourself on his mercy, fall before him.

Otherwise he says, well, God loves me. I just keep on doing it. I'm having fun.

God loves me. Keep on. Don't you see what I mean? Let me tell you some things it is tonight.

First of all, it is never separate from his law. And I'll come back to that in a minute. And that's one thing.

It'll be keep it from becoming sentimentalism. And it'll be one thing to keep it from that which I spoke against in the beginning. God's love is never separated from his law.

The law is love's eyes. And without the law, love is blind. Now the law cannot produce love, but it directs it.

And the Bible says love is the fulfilling of the law. So one thing about it, and I'm going to just go swiftly to tell you something, you work these out on your own. It's never, Bible laws, God's kind of love is never separate from his law.

And another thing about it, love, brotherly love, this gospel charity, if you will, is the best judge of your Christianity. Jesus is the one who said, by this shall all men know that you're my disciples. And in the apostolic days, it was a common proverb, see how they loved one another.

Today you would think, see how they devour one another. So I say first, it's not separate from his law. It's the best judge of your Christianity.

And we learn from the New Testament that it's the first fruit of the Spirit. It's an inseparable fruit of the Spirit. And we have that in this same little epistle, John chapter 4, that I read to you tonight, verse 20.

If a man say, I love God and hate his brother, he's a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? It's an indispensable fruit of the Spirit. And then love is a sure evidence of a saving work.

We read it in verses like I read in your presence. We know we've passed from death to the life because we love the brother. We love him because he first loved us.

It's an evidence of a saving work in our heart. And then another thing about it, gospel love is the root of all Christianity. As we look at first Corinthians, we see we can preach and be zero if we don't have love.

We can have all understanding and understand the deep things in the mystery without love we're zero. We can have all the gifts and without love we're zero. We can be generous, it teaches us, but without love we're zero.

We can sacrifice, but without love we're zero. And then there's something interesting. You know, I don't know any other case, and I stand corrected, but John Owen said it too, I don't know of any other gospel duty that's above other gospel duties except love.

And in Colossians chapter 3, verse 14, he names many things before the 14th verse in Colossians. He names such things as having forbearance, forgiving one another, don't have quarrels with others, and so on. But when he gets to verse 14, he said, above all things, above all these that he mentioned, such as meekness, humbleness, kindness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, above all these, above these put charity.

And Peter does the same thing in 1 Peter chapter 4a. He says, above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, because the love life and the Christ life are synonymous. Incidentally, on that, on that verse, John Owen has a great sermon.

He was combining two congregations when a great old preacher by the name of Joseph Carlisle died, Carl, Joseph Carl died. He also has a tremendous commentary on Job, probably the best commentary. But they were very wealthy people, very prominent people, some lords and so on in his congregation.

And that congregation was joined with Owen's congregation. And the first sermon he preached because of this vast difference, many rich and many poor, and some others that he preached to you tonight, was on this text, Colossians chapter 3 verse 14. And it's a tremendous sermon on what I'm trying to talk to you about tonight, for you preachers that have that, it's in volume 9. It's a good, it's a very good sermon.

Well, let me tell you something else about it. Not only is, is it above other gospel duties, it is a gospel duty, but it seems as though the apostle puts it above other gospel duties. There's something else about it that you need to know.

It's supernatural. It's not drunken up, and that's, that separates it from sentimentalism. It's supernatural.

If you have an ounce of it, you got it from above. It never grew on Adam's vine. It's supernatural.

The Holy Ghost teaches, that's what Paul said to the Thessalonians. He says, on teaching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you, for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And if you haven't been taught that, you just haven't been taught of God, because that's what it says.

It's the path in which believers are exhorted to walk. The Bible says, walk in love. Walk in love.

Well, there's something else about it. Love is how we're meant to imitate our Heavenly Father. It's how we're meant to imitate Christ.

Love is, heaven is, Al was talking about heaven tonight. It's a, it's a world of love. It's a kingdom of love.

Whatever else heaven is, it's a kingdom of light. It's a kingdom of love, and it's a kingdom of life. That's opposite to the devil.

His is a kingdom of darkness, of death, and of hate. Love is subject, or was the subject of apostolic prayer. Would you turn your Bible to Ephesians chapter 3 verse 17 to 19? I say, and it ought to be a subject of our prayers.

That's another thing I thought about this week, last week. I thought about how little I hear about this in prayers, in our public and private prayers. And here's the great apostle, who we don't usually think of as somebody who's gushy and sentimental.

He was always in some kind of a fight. But listen at him. In Ephesians chapter 3 verse 17 to 19, I won't read it all.

In verse 14 he says, I vow, as he starts to express, that he being rooted and grounded in love, and go ahead and read the rest of it. Verse 19, and to know the love of Christ. So it was a subject of apostolic prayers, and it should be a subject of our prayers.

You know, I was telling somebody, since I've been studying this, and I reflected back when I was first converted. And I must have seen that from the Bible, because it was part of my prayers all the time, to love sinners. It was, it was one of the chief subjects of my prayers.

To have, because I recognized I didn't have an ounce of it. But it seems as though that aspect got thinner and thinner. And then I remember when I first started to preach.

I used to read 1 Corinthians every time before I'd preach. Because I got that idea, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have no charity. I'm nothing, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

And I said, Lord, I don't want to be a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Give me some of that which I don't have. I trust that this study will increase that in my own life.

Well, love has some relatives. And the fact is, they're inseparable relatives. And I want to talk to you a little bit about them.

I'll talk to you a little bit about those relatives that love has. And the first one is the law of God. It's an awful thing to make an antithesis of love and law.

They are so vitally linked together. And sometimes you watch these television shows. I watch the news in the morning, and hardly ever anything else, all day long or all night.

But I do watch the news in the morning. Well, I was watching the news a couple of mornings way back, and they advertise what's going to come next. That's where they catch you.

You just waste a little more time. But this caught me, because, and I just wonder how brave and bold they are to be willing to put that on there. So I thought, I'll just watch what that is.

Well, it's not the show I want to talk to you about, because after this fellow was done, he had an audience. And there was obviously some people in there who were religious, possibly Christians. And they were, he was trying to find out the reaction to all this.

And he had a lot of people objecting, thank God. But when they gave their reason, it was always, it's never a reference. And I thought, surely a couple of them were Christians.

But never a reference to God's law. God's sixth absolute standard. No reference.

And of course the other side was, well, love, love, love, love. But it was love without law. Now I want to give you some verses tonight, to show you that these, these things, love and law, are inseparably joined.

And if you want to salvage it from becoming sentimental, it's a curse to the church. And the church is full of it. If you want to salvage from that, you must never separate it from its law.

When the lawyer asked Jesus in Matthew 22, Master, what is the great commandment in the law? And he said, the first and great commandment is, thou shall love the Lord thy God. And he goes on to say, the second is like unto it, thou shall love thy neighbor. And he joined the commandments, not separate.

Jesus said, and I quote, and please keep these things together. Even in our preaching, in our thinking, and in our approach to the problems of society, we must never separate it. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

And he put love and the commandments together. And this little epistle that we're looking at, and I say he was the apostle of love, 47 times in the first epistle, look at it in 1 John 5, 3, and you see that he has it together, never separate. For this is the love of God, there you have love, that you keep his commandments, there you have the commandments, and they're together.

And just look at the second epistle of John, verse 6. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. And if you forget everything that I say tonight, remember that one of the inseparable relatives of Bible love, of gospel love, gospel charity, is it's never separated from God's law. Furthermore, it's never separated from the truth of God, any of the truth of God.

Look at it in John's third epistle. And I'm reading from the apostle of love on purpose, and he is rightly called this, if the number of times that he uses the word is significant. But look at it in the first four verses of his, of this little epistle, to see how it's not only joined to the law, but it's inseparable from truth, all truth.

The third epistle of John, the elder, unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prosper. For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Now he started out at the beginning, whom I love in the truth. And you see the truth and love are together. You see it in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 14, where we're meant to speak the truth in love.

And there you have truth and love joined together. And the preacher who said, and I don't know who it was, said, rather let error live than let love die. He's making an antithesis that shouldn't exist.

Rather let error live than let love die. No, they're together and they're inseparably joined together. And you see it all through that little epistle.

Well, love, Bible love, gospel love, is not only inseparably joined to God's law, it's not only inseparably joined to, but it's also related to gospel duties. I referred to 1 Corinthians chapter 13 a moment ago. And if you read that chapter, you'll see that though I preach or prophesy and don't have love, it's linked to gospel duty.

Though I give, though I sacrifice, though I have faith and I miss this, I've missed it, said the great apostle. And in Hebrews, he says, he speaks of your work and labor of love. It's related to gospel duties.

In the 10th chapter, verse 24, he says, we are exhorted to provoke one another to love and good works. Love and duty are inseparably joined together. And then of course, and this is very important to us who believe in evangelism, it's vitally related, it's inseparably related to evangelism.

And fact is, I believe that only true preaching and only true witnessing, only true evangelistic work, the purest of it, must stem from that love. That's why Jesus said, we're to, that's why Paul said, rather, we're to speak the truth in love. And the gospel is a message that we communicate.

But he said, speak the truth in love. And we have Jesus saying by this, shall all men know that ye are my disciples. And that's what we want people to know, that we're his disciples.

Well, it's not only related to evangelism, but it's also related to the harmony, I think, in the house and the fruitfulness of the local church. We're one family, one body. We have one father, one redeemer.

I suggest to you preachers to have John Owen to read his, if you have him on Hebrews, to read John Owen's on Hebrews chapter 13, verse 1, where it says, let brotherly love continue, and you'll get much fuel for your fire. Let brotherly love continue. In that same sermon that I referred to a while ago, this is Psalm 49, I took one quote in that sermon, I think, and that's all, and this is it.

John Owen said, a church full of love is a church well built. I had rather see a church filled with love a thousand times than filled with the best and highest and most glorious gifts. And I said, Lord, we don't have it.

I'm sorry. Increase our love. But love is connected with something else.

And I mentioned it in passing as I read, but I want you to turn tonight, those of you, please turn to these passages. Love is connected to our assurance that we belong to God. And that's one thing you ought to want to make sure of this week.

If you're here this week and you're not sure you belong to God, one of the ten, I didn't say the only ten, but one of the ten. And that's why I say love is inseparably related to the assurance of our salvation. Would you turn in this little epistle to several passages.

First one I've already referred to. Let me do it again, because it's vitally, inseparably joined and linked and related to the assurance of our salvation. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.

We don't love the brethren in order to be saved, but this is the way we know we've passed from death unto life. Look at it again in this same epistle, chapter four, verse six to eight. We are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us, and he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.

And everyone that is born, everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. You have it in the eighth verse. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

Look at it again in this same chapter, the twelfth verse. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.

How do I know that God dwells in me? Well, one of the ways, if you love one another, then see it again. In the sixteenth verse of that same chapter. And we have known, and we have known and believed the love of God, that believed love that God hath to us.

God is love. And he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. That's how I know that God dwells in me.

One of the ways you can know that God dwells in you, and you dwell in God, you dwell in God, is by this love. You have it in the twentieth verse, twenty-first verse of the same chapter. And then in chapter five, verse two, by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.

And so you have it there. Well, since gospel love is related to his law, it's related to all the truth of the Bible, it's related to gospel duties, it's related to faith. And I didn't touch that one because I don't have time.

But it's so related to faith. You have an Ephesians, just let me give you the verses quickly in passing, since this is kind of a little Bible study, it's not so much of a sermon. Let me just turn to Ephesians quickly, show how it's related to faith.

Just one second, and you'll see it. Chapter five, verse six of Ephesians. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.

It doesn't look like the right reference I have there. Chapter 13, I mean, verse 13. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever... I don't have the right reference on that.

It must be Galatians. But I had a whole series to show how that love is related to faith, and many times it's put right together. Love, faith, and action all together.

It's any wonder why Paul says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 24, he said, Show proof of your love. Show proof of your love. Well, how do we show proof of our love? He asked to show proof of our love.

Well, obvious, by obedience, keeping his commandments, seeking his honor, spreading his name and his teaching, communing with him, and above all, showing it to people. You see, if a man does not love God, he's not a Christian. If a man does not love Christ, he's not a Christian.

And as a consequence of loving God and loving Christ, a Christian is somebody that loves his brother and loves those who Christ loves. Loves those who God loves. And therefore, we can't say, as John tells us, we can't say we love God and hate our brother all in the same breath.

And so Paul says, prove your love. Prove your love. Well, why do we prove our love? Because love wants to prove itself.

Love wants to prove itself. If you love somebody, you'll want to prove it. You'll want to show it.

Love wants to bless others, true love. And love also, we want to prove it as God proved his love to us. Paul said, I know that he loved me because Christ gave himself for me.

In the little epistle of John, he says, how do we perceive the love of God? And he goes right into the death of Christ. You have it in that little epistle, chapter 3, verse 16 to 18. Well, what causes the decay? Why is it such a sad state of this great Bible truth? This truth that's so inseparably joined to all that we want to do and all we want to say.

What about the decay? What causes the decay? Let me suggest a couple things quickly. The difference of opinion and practice about things in religion, other things. I've seen a decay over songbooks.

I've seen a decay over what color you paint the church door. I've seen a decay over all kind of little things. If you go into a couple of building programs, you'll see a decay when people express their honest opinions.

It's different. And they have a right to those differences. And it shouldn't cause our love to decay.

Because I like a red door. I bought a can of paint one time to paint the church doors red. I didn't think anybody cared what color the doors were.

I had these, and I was in a board meeting, and man, I found out some people didn't like red. And so I just took those little cans of paint back. I think they're green now.

Of opinion. And then, of course, another reason it decays is because of abuse and spiritual gifts. On the one hand, pride.

On the other hand, envy. And it causes what I'm talking about tonight. It causes a decay.

Pride on the one hand over gifts, or envy on the other hand. Another thing it causes is a decay is attempts to dominate. Attempts to dominate in things where you shouldn't be dominant in.

It decays when Christians discriminate against each other. Especially where the rich discriminates against the poor. Or where those who, they discriminate against those who are not so attractive to us.

Sometimes you discriminate against those who are awkward to deal with. Now, that doesn't mean you have to go along with all their awkwardness. I told them at Grace Baptist Church last year about an old lady by the name of Mrs. Brumall.

I tell you about Mrs. Brumall. Well, she is one of these people you had to have a lot of charity with. Everything the preacher did was wrong, including what color his necktie was, everything.

He couldn't do anything right. And he was a good man. A fellow told me this last year for the truth.

I don't know if it is or not. But he told it to me for the truth. So finally the preacher said, I got to go see that sister.

So he went out to her house. As he pulled up, he saw the blind come down. And he thought, uh-oh, thank the Lord, she's home.

And she's going to see me. So he goes up the door and he knocks. Nobody comes.

Knocks again. Nobody comes. Keeps knocking.

Nobody comes. After a while, he got down on his knees. He looked through the keyhole.

And on the other side of the keyhole was an eye looking. And then when Christians won't forgive, are you here tonight? You just won't forgive somebody? I'm serious. Love will disintegrate and decay where you know nothing of forgiveness.

Don't you need forgiveness? I tried to solve a lot of church fights. Several. I've been called in on some of them.

I said to one church once, I said, I want you to all put a verse on your phone. I want you to put this verse on your phone. I told her, paste it on her telephone.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from among you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God as your children and walk in love as Christ has loved us.

And if you have a hard time forgiving somebody here, I'll tell you, I'll tell you something that will help you more than anything else. And I'm speaking from experience. I just think how much he forgives me.

How much he has to forgive me every day. And some of you young people have a hard time forgiving. You know, somebody steals your boyfriend.

Somebody looks at him a little funny. Yes, you do. And the best way to do it, if you're having any trouble, say, Lord, how much did you have to forgive me just today? Well, I only got eight more pages of notes, but I'm going to quit.

There's some things that love won't do. I didn't listen to the bishop. He said, preach about God and preach about 20 minutes.

Bill, you're right. I'll tell you some things love will not do. And you can find this all in 1 Corinthians.

Love will not envy. Love will not be jealous. Love will not vaunt itself.

That is, boast or be proud or self-seeking. That's not love. Love will not be haughty.

That's selfish. Love will not be rude in the lines going into Al's dining room. Love will not be rude at the table.

Love will not be irritable or touchy. That's behaving itself unseemly. So don't be so touchy this week.

There's a lot of people here. Some of them are awkward. Love will not blow its top this week.

There's some things it won't do. It won't demand its own way. It won't hold grudges.

It will hardly notice wrongdoing of others. Never be glad in injustice. Not easily be angered.

That's what it won't do. It won't delight in evil. And some things it does do.

It'll be patient. It'll be kind. And it'll rejoice in the truth as you hear it this week preached.

It'll rejoice in the truth. Be loyal to Christ and his people. It'll believe others.

It'll defend others. It'll never fail. It'll never fail.

And we live in a day when they always advertise it's the greatest. The chapter closes after it says it won't fail. It says, and the greatest of these is love.

Well, that's my first sermon on love, on love. I think I'm gonna have some more. I got enough material for about five more.

I'll tell you that we know so little about what you've said so much about. We ask you to be, make us serious about this. If we've neglected too much to preach on it, help us.

If we've, where we've neglected to practice it, grant to us great measures of it because it doesn't come from us. Help us in this area where we need help so much that the world may know that we love thee and that we love Christ and that we love each other for his namesake. Help us and forgive us where we've failed.

Amen.

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