

How to Love the Unloving

by Richard Siple

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and practicing love in our lives, based on the biblical definition of love as a choice to love and serve others.

Duration: 1:07:39

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the definition of God's love. He starts by quoting the famous verse from John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world that He gave.' He then encourages the audience to understand that the next part of the verse will either define or describe God's kind of love. The preacher then moves on to a passage in 2 Timothy 3:1-4, highlighting the contrast between being lovers of self and lacking natural affection. He shares a heartbreaking story of missionaries in New Guinea, emphasizing the need for divine love and selflessness.

Transcript

I think that in any kind of a seminar or school such as we're in here at this time, that one of the great problems is hearing a great deal of truth and then finding it difficult sometimes to apply it. Not because the truth is not applicable or because it's not clear, but just simply because being what we are, we have a tendency to say to people, you ought to get from A to B, but we don't always tell them how to get from A to B. And I think in the area that we want to talk about today, there is a great need for practical application and for people to know exactly how to do what we're talking about. I think one of the most, one of the most needed areas in the work of God is love.

And there isn't anything talked about more. We've gone through a whole era when we had the chant, make love not war, and all this kind of thing. And in the church, there's a great deal of talk about love, and there's a great deal, many songs and courses written about love, but everybody talking about love ain't got it, or they're not practicing it or something.

And so we need to have some very practical instruction on this subject. So that's what we're going to talk about now this afternoon, is how to love the unloving. And just trust that God will give us some very practical direction and instruction on this matter.

So you pray that God will speak to our hearts. Let's bow for prayer. Father, we are thankful for your precious word.

And we're thankful for the Holy Spirit who is here. And we want to confess in your presence that without you, Lord, we can do nothing. In ourselves, we are not wise.

Lord, we pray in this hour when people have gone through a couple of days now, and they're beginning to get tired, and it's difficult to concentrate maybe, and to be able to take a hold of things, we pray that the Holy Spirit will come and meet with us and triumph in our midst and make the truth clear. And help us, Lord, to be able to take a hold of it in such a way that our lives may be changed and that God may be glorified, Jesus may be exalted in our midst. Lord, undoubtedly there are people here on these grounds that need their lives changed by what we're going to talk about.

And if they need to be here, we pray you'll bring them here. And if not, that's fine. But we pray for each one of us who are here that this will be a very special time in which you will teach us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to begin in 2 Timothy chapter 3, and verses 1 to 4, if you'd like to turn there in your Bibles.

2 Timothy 3, verses 1 to 4. And what I'd like you to do is to open your Bible to that passage. And at first I'm not going to read it out loud, but I want you just to look at those four verses and read them. Now, of course, the first verse talks about the last days and the perilous times will come.

And then the next three verses are the verses that I'm particularly interested in. And so I want you to take a look at those three verses, verse 2, 3, and 4, read them over and look at them very carefully for the next few seconds, maybe the next 30 seconds. All right, you've had time to read them and look at them now.

I want you to know something very interesting about these verses. In verse 2, it says in the last days, men shall be what? Lovers. It says in the last days, men shall be lovers.

Now it says more than that, but that's very interesting to me because we're living in a day when men are always talking about being lovers. And of course, all of the communication media is just saturated with this idea that people are lovers. In fact, we've come to the point where that precedes everything and it is priority and it takes over everything in everybody's life.

And if you fall in love, that means that you can just break any covenant or break any promise or destroy anybody's life or any home or anything else. It doesn't make any difference because being lovers is the most important thing on earth. And so, of course, we're living in that day when men are loudly proclaimed to be lovers.

And then when you look at verse 4, it says again that men will be lovers. Very interesting. Verse 2, they're lovers.

And in verse 4, it says that they're lovers. Now it's in the last days in which we're living. So men are said to be lovers in verse 2 and they're said to be lovers in verse 4, but in verse 3, it says they're without natural affection.

Isn't that strange? That's just very interesting. Never forget the first time that really struck me how strange that is. In verse 2, they're lovers.

In verse 4, they're lovers. But right in the middle between the two verses, they're without natural affection. Now, of course, it's because of the kind of lovers they are, right? In verse 2, they're lovers of their own selves.

And there's a whole lot being said today from the pulpit and by those who are purportedly preaching the word of God about loving ourselves. But be very careful what you swallow in this area because right here, it's spoken of in a very bad sense. And men shall be lovers of their own selves.

And down in verse 4, they're lovers of pleasure. Now notice, when men are lovers of their own selves and lovers of pleasure, they will be without natural affection. And that's the day we live in.

When they're lovers of their own selves, when men are self-centered, when living for self and pleasing self and doing what self wants, when that is primary in the life, and men are lovers of their own selves and they live for self. And when men are lovers of pleasure and they live for pleasure. And that's so today too.

In fact, the main reason that people work is so that they can have the weekend off to have fun. I mean, that's it. And the reason why I make so much money is so that they'll have money to spend to have fun when they're not working.

And the work is just a means to an end. The work is not fulfilling at all in any sense. It's just a means to an end.

They get money so they can have pleasure. So men are lovers of their own selves and they're lovers of pleasure. But at the same time, they're without natural affection.

And just recently, I went to a seminar that we had in our city for pastors on child abuse. And I want to tell you, we are living in a day when people are without natural affection. We also studied wife abuse.

And if you get inside of this horror of this absolute horror in North America, in fact, I don't know if any of you have seen photographs, but if you, if you get involved where you can see this as it really is, it will just make you so sick that you'll hardly be able to stand. I remember we had lunch in the middle of the day and I didn't know if I could eat lunch or not. I was so sick over the fact that people have totally lost their natural affection.

And it's because they are lovers of self and they're lovers of pleasure. And that generation of people will be without natural affection. And that's the day in which we live.

And that's the day when, which in which we need to talk about how to love. Because people do not know how to love. They talk about love and they sing about love and they make movies about love and they write novels about love, but they don't know how to love.

They can't love their husbands or wives. He can't love their children. They can't love their parents.

They can't love their sisters and brothers. They can't love their neighbors. They can't love their people in the church.

Pastors don't love their people and people don't love their pastors. Oh, that's awful. I don't know how they exist.

Oh, it's terrible. I want to tell you one of the things that I am so thankful for in this life is that there are people that love me. I don't know why.

They do. It's marvelous to have people that love you. It's wonderful to walk into your church on Sunday morning and have people coming up to you, putting their arms around you and shaking your hand and smiling, putting their arm around your shoulder and giving you a hug, and you just feel the warmth.

And you know they mean it, that they love you. It's fantastic. Amen? See, that's the way God meant it to be.

So we need some very practical instruction on how to love. So I want to start off now by asking you, is there anyone that you love? Come on now, it's impolite to sit and stare. Is there anyone you love? Who do you love? Somebody.

You love your wife and kids. I'm glad to hear you say that. And he had his hand up.

I hope he was going to say it because his wife is sitting right there. Do you love your wife? Amen. Okay.

Alright, somebody said they love their wife and their husband and their kids. Anybody love God? Usually, right away somebody says, I love God. I'm a little nervous now because nobody said that.

I'm not quite sure what kind of a meeting I'm in. You do love God, don't you? Alright, that's where we start. You love his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God.

You love the Holy Spirit. Do you love the Holy Spirit? The love of the Spirit? Pardon me? You love the sheep. A shepherd ought to love the sheep.

If he doesn't, he's not a shepherd, right? That's right. If he doesn't, he has to have a shepherd heart. And so he loves the sheep.

Somebody says, well, I love my Aunt Susie. Let's see, I love my three daughters and Uncle Zeke. And, oh yes, I love my pastor.

You do love your pastor, don't you? If you're not one. Anybody here that's not a pastor? Do you love your pastor? Quick, quick. Oh, some of you do.

And then someone hastens to add, you know, I can just hear a lady saying, I just love my new KitchenAid dishwasher. And then some man says, you know, I really love my new Ford pickup. And somebody else says, I really love roast corn and barbecue chicken.

I do. When we were in Akron, we used to have a men's corn roast every year, which we brought unsaved men. And, oh man, they dug a huge pit and they roasted all this corn and they had barbecue chicken.

It was fantastic. And, of course, it was an effort to get people saved. Then the wives made homemade pies.

I don't know, somehow the Lord blessed the gluttony and got people saved. I don't know how He did it. Some way His mercy just bypassed it or something.

And we were able to reach some men. But you know what I love? I love Swiss chocolate almond ice cream. Do you like that? They sell it in Howard Johnson's.

And up in Canada, you can't get it. So whenever I'm down in the States, if I get anywhere near Howard Johnson's, I like to stop and get some Swiss chocolate almond ice cream. I stopped in one of those places one time and ordered one dish of Swiss chocolate almond ice cream and I got one dozen almonds in one dish.

Oh, yum! I told that story one time and the pastor got two half gallons of it before I left. I guess he's still eating it. Someone else says, I really love to play tennis, or I love swimming, or I love, what is it you love? You say, my goodness, isn't that a strange way to use the word love? We say I love God and I love His people and I love my husband and my wife and my kids and I love my dishwasher and my pickup truck and I love corn and I love ice cream.

And don't we use the word love that way? That's very interesting. Right away somebody says, well, that's the wrong way to use the word love. Well, no, wait a minute.

Don't, I didn't ask you because I didn't want to trap you. It's, you know, usually the way you use a word and the way it's commonly used, that's the use that comes to be attached to it. And so it's not always wrong.

And when we say that we love in these kind of terms, what are we saying about love? And this is very important to examine before we get into what I really want to say. What am I saying about love when I say I love these people and these things and these activities? I am saying, listen carefully, I am saying that love is a good feeling. See, if I say I love these things, what I really mean is I like them a lot or I mean they give me pleasure.

If I say I love my wife, I mean I like her a lot and she gives me pleasure. If I say I like ice cream, I mean, I like it a lot. I love it.

I like it. It gives me pleasure. Are you following me? It has some reaction to me.

It brings to me something. I am really saying that love is a good feeling. And someone says, is that true? And I say, yes, it's true because natural human affection, and that's what we were talking about in verse three, natural human affection is a feeling.

Now stay with me. Natural human affection is a feeling. Now let me ask you why.

How many wives are there here? Raise your hand if you're a wife. All right. If your husband said, I love you, honey, but I don't have any feeling for you whatsoever.

How would you react to that? How would you react? Did you see that? Pow! Boy, she can double that fist. You don't have any black eyes, do you? Pardon me? You'd be crushed, wouldn't you? Isn't that interesting? You'd be crushed. Of course you would.

See, that's interesting. Now, is that wrong in her to feel like that? No. Is there any other wife here that wouldn't be crushed? If your husband said, if you ever heard him saying to one of his best friends, you know, I love my wife, but I really don't have the slightest feeling for her.

Wouldn't that crush you? Wouldn't it? Suppose as a child you overheard your father saying to your mother. I mean, even now when you're growing up, I really love my son, but you know, after all these years, I don't have the slightest feeling in the world for him. You see, I thought you were the man that talked last night about faith or feeling and getting delivered from your feelings.

Yes, I am. And I'm not through yet. I'm talking about natural human affection because natural human affection is a feeling and I want to give you a definition of it.

Then we're going to the scriptures to prove my definition. Human affection, you ought to write this down, I think. Human affection is a feeling.

Human affection is a feeling based on something in the one I love. Human affection is a feeling based on something in the one I love. Human affection is very interesting.

What I'm saying is that there's something about that other person that attracts me. There's something about that other person that interests me. There's something in that other person that draws me and makes me like them and want to be with them and want to be near them and want to do things for them.

And that is human affection that I am experiencing. I love babies. Do you love babies? I love, I tell you, I'm glad, you know, that I'm a pastor because I have more fun with the babies.

One thing I regret is that I can't ever work in the nursery because we have two morning services and a divided Sunday school and I'm always up there in the pulpit and I can't ever get down to work in the nursery and just play with the babies. So their parents bring them by the door and I get acquainted with them. I get, I'm getting acquainted with some of your babies while I'm here.

Aren't they wonderful things? I can't explain what babies do to me. I cannot explain what they do to me, but babies attract me. I love their round, soft cheeks and their big eyes.

I want to kiss all their, I do too. I go all over the place kissing their cheeks at church and out in the hall, you know, I find a new baby. Sometimes we have five, six babies dedicated in one service.

Oh, I just have a ball and really look to God in prayer and trust him to give me a prophetic word for those babies. We don't just go through a ritual. Oh, that's great.

I'm attracted to them. I don't know why, but there's something about babies that just attracts me so little and helpless and soft and cute and all that stuff. And then I can also give them back to their mothers when they cry or mess up their pants.

So I just have all the pleasure and none of the pains because mine are grown up, so I don't have to worry about that. But there's something that attracts me. Why do you have friends? Why do you say, I love my friend? Because there's something about your friend that just attracts you and you like them and you like to be with them and you like to talk with them.

Like my wife is very concerned right now because her best friend is in the hospital, very seriously ill. And it's a friend she went shopping with and had lunch with. And she's much older than my wife.

I think she's about 25 years older than my wife. And yet they're just bosom buddies. And my wife is hurting very bad.

In fact, it's one reason she didn't come with me because this lady is very ill and she wanted to be at home so she could just visit her every day and love her because they're just friends. And you can't explain it. Why those two ladies that far apart in age are so attracted.

And what's interesting is that lady is the wife or he's in heaven, but she's the wife of the pastor that built the church where I am. And he's in heaven and she stayed down and her wife and mine are bosom pals. Isn't that beautiful? Hey, that's the way it ought to be.

That's Christian love. Well, but they like each other. Are you following what I'm saying? I'm talking about natural human affection.

Let me show you this in the word of God. I want to show it to you there. Turn with me to the Song of Solomon, please.

You know where that is in your Bible? Open your Bible right about in the middle and you come to Job's Psalms or Proverbs and keep going to the right and you'll come to Ecclesiastes Song of Psalms. You get to Isaiah, you went too far, come back to the left. Okay.

And go to Song of Solomon, chapter 4 and verse 1. And what we have here in the Song of Solomon is a picture of the love between Solomon and his bride. And it's a very beautiful picture. Now, I know that it's also an allegory, the love between Christ and his church, but it's also a very practical love poem of a real love, a human love.

I mean, not real, that's the wrong word, but a human love, human affection. So here's a picture of human affection. And the groom is talking about his bride and I want you to notice the kind of terms he uses.

He says, Behold, thou art fair, my love. Behold, thou art fair. Thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks.

He is attracted by her eyes. Thy hairs is a flock of goats. Well, a few years ago, people had hair that was like goats, but the hippie thing is gone.

So you don't see much of that. No, no, no, no. He's talking about these goats that had been washed and their hair was shiny and black and beautiful.

And so he was attracted by her hair. He said, Thy teeth is like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, that come up from the washings, have beautiful, even white teeth. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet.

Thy speech is calmly. He liked the way she looked. He liked the way she talked.

He describes her body, which was attractive to him. Finally, verse 70 says, Thou art all fair, my love. There is no spot in thee.

They say love is blind and I guess it is. Now notice that everything he said about that love. Now notice what happened.

He is talking about human affection for his bride. But everything he said about his love had to do with her, not with him, but with her. He said, I'll tell you why I love you.

It's because of your hair and your eyes and your teeth and your conversation and your and your personality and everything about you attracts me. And so I love you because you are so attractive to me. See, human affection is based on things in the beloved one that attract us, that draws, that make us love them.

Well, look at what she says in chapter five. You look at chapter five and go over to verse eight. She says, I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am lovesick.

And they say, what is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved? See, we don't see anything so special in him. Why is it that we fall in love with different people? Well, it's a good thing, isn't it? If we all fell in love with the same girl, I'd have ended up without being married because somebody would have cut me out for sure. But you know, thank God that's just not the way we're made, is it? So we get attracted to different people.

I'll never forget the first time I saw my wife. I will never forget it. I know some of you men have forgotten it, but don't you dare to tell your wife you've forgotten it.

But I remember the first time I saw the lady that became my wife. I was a freshman in Bible college, and I walked into the room of another freshman. We were had become friends, and I walked into his room to talk to him about something.

And he had this great big picture on his dresser of this beautiful girl. Oh, she was a Kentucky belle with long golden hair, big brown eyes, and soft skin. And I tell you, I walked in there, and I said, Wow, who is that? And he said, Down boy, that's my girlfriend.

But she's my wife. Now, it isn't as bad as you think. She wasn't coming to school at that time, and she finally went to St. Paul Bible College.

And then my senior year, praise the Lord, she transferred to NIAC, where I was. And I just caught her my last chance before I graduate. But I can remember how that affected me.

And then I never saw her again until I was a senior in college. And suddenly I came back from my senior year, and I walked into the dining room. My goodness, that's her.

There she is. And she was a lovely sight to behold. And I just fell.

Isn't that an interesting word? I fell in love. See, that's it. That's an accident.

It happens to you like measles. You know, I liked everything about her. I was a Yankee from the north, and she was from Louisville, Kentucky.

I still can't say it exactly right. You're supposed to slur it right in the middle. Louisville.

You say it better than I do. Louisville. Yeah, I got it a little better.

Yankee tongue won't quite go around. And I liked the way she talked. I sure did like the way she talked.

I tell y'all, it was just as... I sure enough did love it. And I liked the way she walked, and I liked the way she tossed her hair, and I liked the way her skirt switched. I mean, everything about her.

See? Now, if somebody said to me, I said, she is perfect. Now, don't tell her I said this. She wasn't perfect.

But I thought so right then. Why am I saying all this? Because I am talking about natural human affection. Natural human affection is a feeling that I have for someone, and it is based on things in that person.

It is their person totality or their personality. It is what they are attracts me, and I love them with human love, with human affection. I still love my wife that way.

You say, well, what's wrong with that? Well, there's nothing wrong with it. There isn't anything wrong with it. God has created us that way.

In fact, it's even here in the Bible, and we read it right out of the Song of Solomon, and it's inspired by the Holy Spirit, those words that are put in there. It's perfectly all right. It is a natural thing that God has created, and it puts spice and delight and pleasure in life.

But the only problem is that as beautiful and wonderful as natural human affection is, it has its limitations. It is wonderful as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Because you see, if my love is based on something in the person that I love, and something happens to change that person, then that can change my love.

Do you follow me? I was driving in my wife's car one day, and it had an AM radio in it instead of an FM. Now she has a different car, but I thought I wanted to listen to some news, so I switched on the radio, and it had one of those things on that they call music. I don't call it that, but this guy was singing, and I reached over to turn it off, and then I heard the words, and I was so impressed with the words that I drew my hand back.

And then after I listened, did this suddenly go off? Oh, is it still on? You can still hear me. All right. Boy, I'm super sensitive to mics.

All right. And so I listened to what was being sung on the radio, and this is what was being sung. It was one of the top hits, I guess.

I do not love you anymore. To waste our lives would be a sin. Please release me, dear, so I can love again.

I do not love you anymore. That is, I did love you. At one time I loved you, but I don't love you now.

Something's happened to change that. I did love you, but now I don't love you. I do not love you anymore.

To waste our lives would be a sin. That is, if I've stopped loving you, then there's no point in us going on living together, because that's just a waste. We don't love one another.

And even though I did love you, I don't love you now, so why waste our lives? That would be a sin. You can see how twisted people can get in their thinking in the world. Please release me, dear, so I can love again.

That is, let me go from this marriage so that I can go out and love someone else the way I loved you. And I added to it again and again and again. You see, you never marry the person you think you marry.

Is that right? Never. Because you don't know them that well. And you find out after you're married that you're married to somebody a little different than you thought.

And you begin to learn about the real person. But if that person changes enough, your affection for them can change. And I'll tell you, I've been counseling people for over 40 years, and I'll tell you, I don't care whether you're a Christian or not, if enough things change in another human being that you have loved

with human affection, your human affection for that person can change.

You say, nothing could ever change my love for my child. Oh, yes, it could. And the only reason you think that is because your child hasn't changed enough or hasn't hurt you bad enough to affect your human affection.

But I know by experience that a child can hurt you bad enough to destroy your human affection. And my brother and sister, you better have something else or you won't make it. And that's why marriages are falling apart everywhere.

That's why marriages are falling apart within the church. Because something happens over a period of time and maybe a long time or a short time so that that natural affection is broken. Something changes in the person.

Well, I'll tell you right now, we're all going to change, aren't we? Some of us men get the four B's, you know, bald, bifocals, bridge, and bulge. It isn't just the ladies that get old. And men don't look the same either.

Oh, I know you two are young and you're both very attractive, but you won't be always. Well, you better get a hold of something better than just human attraction. Isn't it a change? And you see, one of the problems with us in the church of Jesus Christ, you say, is this a study on marriage? No, it could be, but it isn't.

We're here talking about revival and we're here talking about the deeper Christian life and we're here talking about how God can work within a church to make it what it ought to be. And you see, one of the problems within the church is that we don't love each other within the church because we think that the love of God in our hearts is the same kind of thing as natural human affection. And so in the church, when we don't love somebody, what do we do? We get down on our knees and we pray, Oh God, put your love in my heart for that person.

And what we want God to do is to put the same kind of feeling in our heart for that person that we have for somebody else that we love with natural human affection. See, like I, there are lots of friends that I have in the church, men that are friends of mine that are dear friends. I've been away from the church in Akron, Ohio for 10 years, but I'll tell you what, you go to Akron, Ohio and go to Waterloo Road and find a Waterloo restaurant, one of the finest restaurants in Akron.

You find the Waterloo restaurant and you walk in that restaurant and you say, is the owner Johnny Behoff here? And somebody will say, why? And you say, because I want, I'm here to say something for Reverend Siple to him. And they'll say, just a minute. And they'll go, if he's on the premises, they'll go get him and he'll come out and he'll say, do you know Reverend Siple? And you say, yes, he is a dear friend of mine.

And he told me to say hello to you. And I'll tell you, get your dinner free. He's a great big Greek and he'll throw both of his arms around you and bust two or three ribs because he's a friend of mine.

I could call that man on the phone today and say, Johnny, I'm in a pinch and I need \$5,000. Can you wire it to me right away? And he'd say, where shall I wire it? He's a friend. I mean, we're friends.

We like each other. We just like each other. See? But do you know there were some in there in that church that I didn't feel that way toward them? Now, you wouldn't have anybody in your church like that, would

you? See, there is the problem because we think that God's love is the same as natural love.

So we get down on our knees and we say, oh God, I don't understand why I can't love Mr. Jones. I know that he's a little problematical. But Lord, I wish that you would put in my heart the love for him that you have put in my heart for this person.

You're talking about somebody you're naturally attracted to that's a friend of yours. They just like each other. And you have that friendship love.

And you want that feeling for Mr. Jones. And you don't have it. And I'll tell you what, if that's the way you try to get it, you won't get it either.

You may get a little emotion or a little thing or a little feeling like you can get in a revival meeting and get really high emotionally and for a few weeks at least you feel like you love everybody in sight. You get your heart and life straightened out with God and deal with self and get cleansed from sin and filled with the Spirit. You just feel like you love everybody.

But after a while when you get back to the nitty gritty of life and he's just as nasty and mean in the church as he ever was, you'll find your feelings will start to go right back to normal. You can't depend on them because that's natural human affection. And God wants to give us something better than that.

All right. Are you ready for it? Oh, boy. I must have got started later today than I'm supposed to, didn't I? Good.

OK, that's fine. And you won't mind if I run over just a little bit. Let's talk a little bit now about another kind of love, divine love.

Now, in the New Testament, it's the word agape and it's the word always used of God's love. It's God's kind of love that we want to talk about. I have people coming in to see me, couples coming for counseling.

People send them at various times. They'll come in and sit down and maybe they're on their way to the divorce court. Their marriage is about to break up.

And I'll say, well, what's the problem? And one of them will look at me and say, I do not love him anymore. The love is all gone. And I say, well, did you ever love him? And they say, yes.

Oh, yes. I say, well, what do you mean the love is gone? And I've heard this a thousand times. They'll say the feeling is all gone.

The feeling is all gone. And then they think I'm going to pull out my Pope stamp and put my stamp on their divorce. And they're in for a shock.

Because I say to them, then we're going to have to teach you how to love all over again, because there is another kind of love. And I'm going to tell you something right now, in case I don't say it strong enough later. The kind of love that God has can restore natural human affection, or it can bring it where it never was.

Absolutely. And I don't mean just a cheap substitute. I mean, the real exciting thing.

God can do it. Now, what's this divine love like? Well, it's entirely different. You see, the human affection is based on something in the person that I love.

But divine love is based on something in the person who does the loving. That's different. That's different.

There's a man in this movement that will stand up before a crowd and say, there isn't anything you can do to keep me from loving you. That's right. I mean, you can't stop me from loving you.

You say I can be nasty to you. So what? My love isn't based on you. My son, when he was rebelling, said to me one time, what do you see in me that makes you think? I said to him, you're going to get straightened out with the Lord.

And he said, what do you see in me that makes you think I'm going to get straightened out with the Lord? And I said, nothing, not a thing. And he said, what do you mean? I said, it's what I see in the Lord. You see, divine love is something in the lover, not in the beloved one, but in the lover.

That's different. You say, what is it? Well, it's not a feeling. It is not a feeling.

You say, is that right? That's right. And I want to prove it to you from the scriptures. How many of you can quote John 3:16? Let me see your hand because I need your help.

Can you quote it? All right. I'm going to quote it from the King James because I'm so old. That's the way I learned it.

And if you learned it somewhere else, maybe you can still remember the King James. And what I want you to do is quote it out loud with me. And I'm going to hold my hand up now.

So you've got to watch me. And when I bring my hand down, I want you to stop. All right.

We're going to find out. We're going to get a definition of God's love. God's kind of love.

All right. Are you ready to quote it with me? For God so loved the world that he. All right.

For God so loved the world that he. Now, the next thing that comes. So you can just tell where that verse is going.

The next thing that comes is going to be either a definition or an illustration of God's kind of love. Can you see that God so loved the world that he. So you see, the next thing is going to either define or describe God's kind of love.

Do you see that? Do you see that? OK, good. Let's try it again. Here we go.

Stay with me now. We're going to start from the beginning. For God so loved the world that he gave.

Isn't that interesting? Do we think that verse is just for the presentation of the gospel? Now, that verse is far deeper than that. It's a definition of God's kind of love. It doesn't say God so loved that he felt.

Well, you said, doesn't God feel toward me? Yes, God feels toward us. And there are hundreds of scriptures that teach us that God feels toward us, that he has compassion for us and that his heart is broken over us and that he yearns over us. And he has all kinds of feelings over us.

But whenever the scriptures talk about God's love, agape, it never talks about feeling. It always talks about one thing, and that's action. God so loved that he gave.

Now let me ask you a question. What did God give? He gave his only begotten son. Who is that? Ah.

See, who did he give? Himself. God so loved that he gave himself. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is very God of very God? Absolutely.

In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Hallelujah. There isn't any thing that God is that Jesus Christ isn't.

And everything that Jesus Christ is, God is. In Christ is all the fullness that God is. So, when it says God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, it's saying God so loved the world that he gave himself.

And he gave himself, watch now, he gave himself to our legitimate need. Not our wants or desires, but to our legitimate need. And I want to give you a definition now for divine love.

This is a biblical definition. Divine love is to give myself to another person's legitimate need. It's a very simple biblical definition.

Divine love is to give myself to another person's legitimate need. Now, the reason I love this, and I'm so glad God taught it to me, it changed my life, really. Because the pastor, I struggled with this problem.

I struggled with it. I'll tell you there's a lot of people in the church that I really liked. Do you know why? Because for some reason they liked me.

And they happened to like my preaching or my personality or something. But there were some people that didn't happen to like me. And I don't understand that.

Do you? Do you know anybody that's truly born again and is a Christian that you don't like? Oh, you say, if I don't like them, they must not be saved. Oh, come on now. Isn't it interesting? Because you're thinking about human affection and natural human feeling, human love.

But God's love is to give myself to another person's legitimate need. Turn with me to 1 John. Very quickly, 1 John.

Oh, 1 John chapter 4, we're going to get another definition of God's love. Verses 9, 10, and 11. Epistle of John, 1 John 4, 9, 10, 11.

And this was manifested, the love of God. So here we're going to get an illustration or definition of God's love. And this was manifested, the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.

See, that's just like John 3, 16. Here in his love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the satisfaction for our sins. See, what I like about God's love is that it means to give myself to another person's legitimate need.

And I can do that whether they love me or not. Doesn't make a bit of difference. See, who loved who first? You or God? See, it says not that we loved God, not that we loved God.

Listen, if God had waited for us to love him, every last one of us would be lost for eternity. Right? Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the satisfaction for our sins. God gave himself for my legitimate needs to save me when I did not love him.

And God has given himself for the legitimate needs and salvation of men who will never love him and who will go to hell. But he gave himself just the same because it says that he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Now, I don't know your theology, but I believe that's Bible.

And I believe that God gave himself for the legitimate needs of all men. And that includes the men who will never, never love him in response. And he did it just the same.

And that's the kind of love that God wants to teach us. Now we're talking about practical application. You see, you can do that when the other person doesn't love you.

See, I talk to people and they say, well, I'll tell you what, I'll love that person if they'll love me. I can't even guarantee. They say, if I love them, will they? Can you promise me they'll love me? And I say, no, I can't promise you that.

God loves people and they don't love him. No, I don't know. But I know that you can give yourself to the legitimate need of another person, whether they love you or not.

You can do it if they hate you. Jesus gave himself for the men that mocked him and spit in his face and laughed at him and said, if you're the son of God, why don't you come down from the cross and then we'll believe in you. And they mocked him while he was dying in agony and shame.

And he said, Father, forgive them. And he gave himself for their legitimate needs when they didn't love him and they never did love him. And you see, that's the kind of practical, divine love that's available to you and me.

You say, well, I can't do that in my own strength. No, of course you can't. And I'll tell you, brother, I thought I was listening to A.V. Simpson this morning talking about the Christ life.

You see, do you have Jesus Christ living within you? Does he have that kind of love? Then we can love by faith. We can love by depending upon him. The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who has given unto us, says the Scriptures, Romans 5, 5. You get over to Ephesians 3 and you find Paul saying, I bow my knees unto the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his grace.

How? To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, in your inner spirit, in your will, where you make your decisions at the center of your being. The Holy Ghost can strengthen you and can give you that power of Christ to do what? That you might know with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge of something you can't understand and can't explain, but you can know the love of Christ by his indwelling presence. If you put your faith in him and depend on him and obey him, he will strengthen your will, and I'll tell you what, he will make you able to give yourself in the name of Jesus to the legitimate needs of people that you don't like and people that don't like you.

Absolutely. Absolutely. God taught me this when I was a very young pastor, and I'm so glad that I got to reading the writings of Charles Finney when I was quite a young pastor.

I was searching for revival. I was so hungry. I was so hungry, Brother Al.

I was stupid. I did all kinds of dumb things, but I was hungry. I made so many mistakes, but I found out about this love in reading some of his writings.

I began to understand what real love was about. And I had a man in the church that I was pastoring that did not like me, and he was a hot-tempered man, and frankly, I didn't like him either. And you know, God started to speak to me, and I said to myself, I've got to get straightened out with that man.

So I went to him, and I said, Brother, I've come to ask your forgiveness because I haven't really liked you, and I've talked against you. Well, it just about knocked him for a loop, and he didn't know what to think, and so he said, Well, I forgive you. He was one of the board members.

So I went back out. I didn't know how to get victory over it, and I found I had all the same bad feelings against him I had before. I mean, he was just as mean, and I was just as carnal, I guess.

It didn't make any difference. I found out that my human feelings weren't one bit better than they were before, and so after I had struggled around and struggled around with it for a while and made a few more nasty remarks I shouldn't have made, I went to him a second time. I didn't know any better.

And I said, Brother, I'm still struggling with this, and I still haven't liked you, and I've still had bad feelings in my heart against you, and I've made some remarks about you, and will you please forgive me? And boy, he didn't like it, and he didn't look at me very kindly that time. And he said, Well, I don't know. I think this is your problem, but I'll forgive you.

And I said, Oh, thank you, Brother. I appreciate it so much. And I went back, and I had the same problem.

I didn't like him one bit better. And I felt just as bad toward him, and I got guilty and under conviction because I felt so bad towards him. And I went back to him a third time.

He got really mad this time. He said, this was down in the deep south. He said, Preacher, he said, I think this is your problem.

He said, Don't you bother to come and ask me again. And see, I didn't know what to do because I was all mixed up about what God's love is all about. And I thought it had to do with my feelings and see what I wanted God to do was to put in my heart this nice, warm, benevolent feeling toward this man so that I wouldn't dislike him anymore.

But he didn't change, and I didn't either, and there I was. And I had the same feelings, and so I had the same guilt, and so I was just creating a worse and worse problem. And then God began to reveal to me what divine love was all about.

And this man had been in the war, and he had contracted an infection in his leg that he didn't know anything about. It's a very rare infection that some men contracted in the Pacific theater of war. And he began to have problems, and he went to the hospital, and they sent him to the Veterans Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia.

And they said they'd only had five cases of this problem, and every one of them had died. And they amputated his leg above the knee, very near to the hip. And during that time, God said to me, Now, I want you to love this man with divine love, and that means I want you to give yourself to the legitimate needs of this man and his family with all your heart, whether you feel like it or not, and whether he ever loves you or not.

And I took his wife and family, and once a week I took them to Atlanta, Georgia to that hospital, and I did everything in my power to wait on them and to wait on him. And you know what happened? I'll tell you, God went to work. And God went to work in me, and God went to work in him.

And they amputated his leg, and he was coming out of the anesthetic, and his wife was sitting by his bedside, and he didn't know it, but I was sitting there because I had brought her there. And she was holding his hand, and he wasn't fully awake, and he said to her, Honey, I am going through this because of what I have done against our pastor. I don't know that that's true, but that's what he thought.

And he wept. And you know what God did? God absolutely changed my feelings toward that man. You say, How? I don't know.

I don't even care. All I know is that in the process of pouring out love upon him and giving myself to his legitimate needs and those of his family, God changed my feelings toward him, and I started to like him. And you know what? He started to like me.

And so he wouldn't mind me giving this illustration because he's been my friend for many, many, many years. And it's just been a little while ago. We were down in Akron, Ohio, and it was July 4th, and my son said, Boy, Mother, I'd sure like you to make some of that homemade ice cream we used to make when we lived in Alabama.

And she said, Well, I've forgotten the recipe. And I said, I know what you should do. You should call Joe Kim.

And we got on the phone. Son said, Sure. And we got on the phone long distance, and somebody at the other end of the line picked up the phone, and this voice said, Hello.

And I said, Hello, this is the voice out of your past. And she said, Who is this? And I said, Joe Kimball. And I said, This is your old pastor, Dick Simply.

And she went, Woo! Says, Max, come quick, it's Simply. So where are you? I said, Well, I'm a thousand miles away. And we had a great time.

I said, What did Joe call for? And he said, The ice cream. Oh, we had so much fun on the phone. I tell you, it's great.

God completely healed that. See, I'm talking about the practical application of divine love. You have the Christ living in you by the power of the Holy Ghost, and He has all the love you'll ever need.

But He needs to strengthen your spirit with His might in the inner man, and you need to practice faith, practice love by faith. Not by feeling, but by faith. You need to give yourself to the legitimate needs of those around you, and you need to do it whether you feel like it or not and whether they respond or not.

And God can perform miracles. I mean, absolute miracles. I have seen God perform such miracles.

I've seen Him heal marriages that were headed for the divorce court. I've seen Him straighten out problems between parents and children. Well, God straightened out the problem between me and my son.

I just talked to him on the phone before I came here, and we were near Edmonton. I was speaking at a conference, and he saw on the news about the tornado, and he knew I was speaking right there by Edmonton, and he called my secretary and couldn't get me because I was still out of town. Boy, as soon as I got home, that phone rang, and he was on the phone and said, You all right, Dad? I said, Sure, I'm just fine.

And he said, Oh, boy, I saw that thing. He said, Where's Mother? Is she there? I just want to tell you both how much I love both of you. See, God can straighten that all out and heal it.

I had a wife call me on the phone, and she said, I've got a sister that's in deep trouble, and she needs to talk to you this afternoon, and if you don't see her, she's going right straight to the mental hospital and have herself checked in. And I said, Well, I don't have much time to tell her to come by. It was late Friday afternoon.

She came by, and this is a story she told. She sat down and burst into tears, and after she got stopped crying, she said, You're my last stop. Now, I wish they'd come to us first instead of last, but thank God at least she came.

She said, You're my last stop, and I said, Okay, tell me the problem, and she said, This is the problem. She said, I was happily married and I loved my husband, and we had two beautiful little girls, and she said, Then my husband got into an affair with a woman at the office, and he left me, and he divorced me, and he married the other woman and left me with the two little girls, and then she said, After a long time, she said, I met a man, and he had gone through the same thing, that he had been happily married, and he had two little boys, and his wife got into an affair, and she left him and married the other man and left him with the two little boys, and we met, and after a while, we fell in love, and we got married, and I brought the two little girls into the marriage, and he brought the two little boys into the marriage, and I loved my two little girls, and I thought I could love any child, and she said, After we'd been married for a little bit, somebody invited us to a home Bible study, and for the first time in our lives, we heard the gospel, and we received Christ as our Savior, and we've been growing in the Lord, and we want to have a Christian home and bring up our children as Christians, the four children, the two little girls and the two little boys, but she said, I've got a serious problem, and it's threatening our marriage and threatening my Christian life. In fact, it's threatening my sanity, and I said, What's your problem? She said, I cannot love those two little boys like I love my two little girls.

She said, I thought I could love any child, but I cannot love those two little boys. She said, The oldest little boy remembers his mother, and he screams and yells and cries and kicks me and bites me and says, You're not my mother, and I hate you, and I don't have to do what you say. That's sad.

That's a result of sin. And she said, Now the younger boy is starting to copy him, and she said, I've tried, and I've tried, but she said, I just, I find myself getting full of anger and full of bitterness and hatred, and I'm afraid I'm going to hurt these children. And she said, My husband and I are starting to fight about it.

And she said, It's beginning to defeat us in our Christian life, and we just don't know what to do. And I said, Well, I said, My dear, the first thing I want to tell you is this very quickly, that God does not require of you to love those two little boys like you love your two little girls. I said, No, he doesn't require it.

I said, I'll tell you why. Because you love those two little girls with your natural human affection, and that's just natural. And God does not ask you to love those two little boys with that kind of affection.

I mean, that's not natural. And she said, Well, what does he want? So I told her what I've told you today about the difference between human love and divine love. And she said, Well, what should I do? And I said, Well, you've got to love those two little boys with divine love.

Well, what does that mean? It means you've got to give yourself to their legitimate needs in the name of Jesus. Well, she said, I'm doing that. I'm washing their clothes and getting their food and doing everything for them a mother needs to do.

And I said, No, you're not. She said, Yes, I am. I said, No, you're not.

Well, she said, What do you mean? And I said, Well, there's something they need. You're not giving them. She said, Well, that's love.

And I said, No, no. No, it's not exactly like that. I said, Let's get very practical.

What do they need? She said, What do you mean? I said, Those little boys need physical human affection. She said, What do you mean? I said, They need you to hug them and kiss them and tell them that you love them. And she said, I can't be a hypocrite.

I said, I'm not talking about hypocrisy, and I'm not talking about you telling them you have human affection. I'm talking about you saying that you love them in Jesus and show them you do with your touch and with your lips and with your warm arms. And you let them feel the action of your love, because I want you to know it was Jesus' warm arms and warm blood that was torn on the cross and poured out for us.

And so she said, Oh, I said, Now, here's I give people written prescriptions. And I said, Here's one thing. A number of things I gave her to do.

But here's one thing I want you to do once a day now for the next week. Once a day, I want you to take each one of the children, not just the boys, the girls to take each child separately, go into a room, shut the door, get down on your knees by that child, put your arms around the child. And I want you to cuddle that child and pet them and love them and hug them and kiss them many times and say, call them by name and say, I love you.

I love you. I love you. Oh, she said, I don't know if I can do that.

I said, Of course you can do that. Do you have Jesus in your heart? Yes. Do you think Jesus could do it? Sure.

Then you can do it by faith. You can trust him and the power of his Holy Spirit to strengthen you in the inner man so you can do that so you can give yourself to the legitimate need of those children. OK, so she went out and, you know, this is one of the good things about being in the ministry.

I gave her an appointment for the next Friday. She came in with her face just shining. She sat down and said, Guess what? Well, I could guess.

There's no problem. She was transformed. You could guess it easy.

I said, What happened? She said, Well, I'll tell you what happened. She said, I did what you said. And she said, Thursday night.

Now, this was Friday. She said, Thursday night, I was giving the youngest boy his bath. And she said, You know how little little guys are when they're all wet and I'm giving him a bath.

And she said, I was I took him out of the bathtub and wrapped him in the towel and I started driving his little shoulders and head and face were all wet. And she said that I started kissing his little wet shoulders and hugging him and kissing the back of his neck and saying, I love you, honey. Mama loves you.

And all at once, he just whirled around and put his little wet arms around my neck and gave me such a hug. He almost choked me. I said, Tell me, how did you feel? She said, I had all the feeling in the world.

I said, What else has happened? And she said, Well, today the oldest boy came home from school and he came home for lunch in the middle of the day. And she said, I was out in the kitchen getting the lunch and I heard the front door slam and I heard him running through the house and all the way through the house in the front door of the kitchen. He was hollering, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, Mommy.

And he ran right on the kitchen and he put his arms around my legs and put his face up against my legs and said, Mommy, I love you. I said, How do you feel? She said, I feel full of love for those little boys. I've got all the feeling I'll ever need.

See, that's the difference between God's love and human love, because God's love can restore human love. It can make it where it never was. Divine love to give myself to legitimate need of someone else.

I've got to close. We've run over. But can I tell you one more story that broke my heart? I can still hardly tell without crying.

Our missionaries went into the Baleen Valley in New Guinea. And I saw a film of it and they landed on that river, the Baleen River. And no missionaries ever been there.

No white men. And they, the plane landed and they got out of the plane, a little rubber raft, and they went up on the shore. And then the plane took off.

And it was getting late in the afternoon and the sun was starting to set. And the camera, one of them had a camera. And he swung the camera around.

Standing along the top of the hills was a long line of naked savages with 15-foot spears outlined against the sky. I tell you, I looked at that. I said, oh my God, look at those men.

And they stayed. And the next morning those savages came into the camp. And they got acquainted.

And they made a little camp there. And they stayed and they started to work for Jesus Christ. And a few months later, after they'd made friends with these huge, naked, grease-covered men whose pastime was war and cannibalism and eating human flesh.

And after they'd made friends with these men and began to get some rapport with them, it was time for the wives to come in. And this is what got me. The plane landed and two or three young women came in on the raft.

And one of them had a little girl that I presume was about two years old. Little, beautiful, blonde hair, blue-eyed, little baby, two-year-old doll. Gorgeous.

And a little summer-filled dress in her arms. And they got off the raft. And one of the men who had become friends with these new missionaries, great, huge, black savage with a tusk through his nose and nothing on but a gourd and his body shining with pig grease, a man who had shed human blood and eaten human flesh.

And he came walking forward with his face just beaming from ear to ear and reached out his arms for this baby. I just sat there, you know, just paralyzed. I said to myself, surely she's not going to do it.

And she just stood there. And then slowly she reached that little doll out and let that big, black, wicked, filthy man take her little baby in his arms. And I said to myself, that's divine love.

Don't you tell me she wanted to do that. Don't tell me she felt like doing that or that she had any feeling toward that frightening-looking monster. But she did it by the grace of God.

I'm talking about God's kind of love. How do you apply it in the Church of Jesus Christ? You give yourself to the legitimate need of the people around you, whether you feel like it or not and whether they do it or not. That's the answer.

Let us bow in prayer. Oh, my Father, this lesson cannot be learned without going to the cross. Our human nature and flesh rebels against this message.

We want to love those who love us, those to whom we're naturally attracted. And you have called us to love with God's love. Lord, help us to take self to the cross, to let the flesh be crucified, to let God fill us in the inner man with His Spirit and to love by faith and let God do the rest.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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