

Romans 5

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as a foundational element of Christian life and community, rooted in God's sacrificial love for humanity.

Duration: 43:32

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Christian Love", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love in the Christian life. He encourages the congregation to demonstrate love towards one another and to prioritize it above all else. The preacher references the apostle Paul's teachings on maturity and the need to put away childish things. He also highlights the temporary nature of our current understanding and the future hope of seeing God face to face. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the love of God to be evident in the lives of the listeners and for their fellowship to be genuine.

Transcript

Yes, I did say something about love this morning, and this evening I'd like to say some more. Again, thank you for coming out this evening, and it's always nice to know that there are those that still put some value upon assembling together with God's people. We edify each other.

The word edify and carrying the thought of building up and strengthening each other, and that's all important in this spiritual body, the body of Christ made up of living members. You and I are one of those members. We're in the body of Christ, and that's wonderful.

And to have a function in that body, and certainly when we think about the gospel, we think about love. I think I've mentioned before, and it's worthy of mention again, to love someone is an experience in which it will cost you something. And just think for a moment how much it cost God to love you and me.

It cost him something, didn't it? He so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son to be our Savior. That's a wonderful thought. And I'd like to enlarge a little more upon what was said this morning about love.

A couple that was here this morning, we had lunch with them today, and so often we hear this, and I like to hear it. I like to hear it. They said they felt loved by those that were here at Northgate Chapel, and I thank

God for that, that we feel loved.

I got to thinking about it. Have you told anybody today that you love them? Have you told anybody today, your wife, your husband, your children, have you told anybody today that you love them? If you have, feel good about it. Some would say it's better to show it than it is to just tell someone.

I've heard many, many wives say that. Don't tell me you love me, show me you love me. Give me my credit card back.

But we're talking about something that is so essential to being a member of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and there are certain things in Scripture that emphasize the importance of this. In 1 Thessalonians 4, 9, you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. And in Romans, chapter 5, the Spirit of God has spread abroad in our hearts the love of God.

And it is to be something that we exhibit in our dealings with others, love. And the Apostle Paul certainly has some instruction. You know where it's found? It's found in 1 Corinthians 13, and that's what I'd like for us to look at.

1 Corinthians 13. I think this is Paul's description of love. Holy love.

Let's put it that way. Holy love. Divine love.

The brother we had lunch with, he and his wife were talking about the love of God and how different that love was from what they had experienced in life before they knew the Lord. People tell you they love you. There is an earthly standard.

God has a divine standard. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. Now, that's a different kind of love.

That love of God is something that is so special. It has accomplished so much that we have benefited from God's love. It is all-important.

And Paul describes for us, I believe, very vividly that it's absolutely essential to Christian character if you're going to have much in the way of a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ that others see that this fruit of the Spirit is evidenced in your life. And the fruit of the Spirit is love, characterized by other things, but I believe essential and basic to all of that is the love of God. And the Spirit of God has spread it abroad in our hearts.

I just looked at a book that I had about peanuts, and I had no idea that I was going to be reading this, but it was about Lucy and Linus. And you know Lucy. She and Linus are having a conversation, and she says, You a doctor? She's laughing when she says that.

That's a laugh. But you could never be a doctor. You want to know why you couldn't be a doctor? Because you don't love mankind.

That's why. Linus responded and said, I love mankind. It's people I don't like.

I can't stand them. Now, you know, we sometimes speak humorously of these things, but I've said this, and I really believe it and mean it. I don't even have to like you, but I must love you.

You say, How can you love someone and not like them? There are a lot of reasons why you might not like somebody. But you still love them. God loves us, and He disapproves of so much that's a part of our lives, but He loves us.

We're not talking about some frivolous thing. We're not talking about some fanciful emotion in which one person says, I love you. It doesn't mean a thing, but to really love someone sacrificially.

And the words of our Lord Jesus Christ just tear down deep in your heart and soul. I want you to love each other the same way I loved you. Now, you may not like me.

You may not like that person. You may really have no real bonding with them. Their way of life, everything about them is something that you just don't particularly like.

But love them. If He called you at the midnight hour and said that He had a need, would you respond? He's a brother. He's a sister.

Of course you would. I think that bears out at least some of the distinction between just saying you like someone and loving someone. Love, it goes a whole lot deeper than just liking somebody.

And I think that's all important. And Paul is going to mark out for us what I think very accurately describes for us this holy love, this agape love that I have in my heart and soul. And it's the fruit of the Spirit, and we want to bear that fruit in our lives.

I'm counting on every one of you in this room to love me, and I want you to count on me to love you. You owe it to me. I owe it to you.

I'm fulfilling a divine command. And I'd like to think that the reason this couple at our dinner table today said, I detected I was being loved in your midst, is because there is evidence here, not just what we say, but the way we behave, our demeanor. We love each other.

That's the will of God, that we love each other, because we have a wonderful God, and He is love. And that's all important. 1 John 4.21, He who loves God must love his brother also.

You say you love God, do you love your brother and sister in Christ? The Word of God puts a lot of emphasis upon being consistent. When you read something, don't say, well, but. No, we're reading something and we're taking it at its face value, and if I say I love God, I must love my fellow believer.

If I don't, what I say about loving God becomes meaningless. So that's all important. Let's read this 13th chapter.

It's a chapter that I believe with 13 verses, and each one of them has something I think that we can learn something from. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love. You may have charity in your translation, but love is appropriate for use in this part of the Word of God.

And have not love, I am become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind. Love envies not, love boneth not itself, love is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemingly, seeketh not her own, is not easily satisfied, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.

But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.

But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now a body, faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love. And shall we just look to the Lord again in a word of prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we bow in thy presence in the name of the person that has loved us and died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ. We love him because he first loved us.

And what a difference the love of God has made in our own lives. No one else on the face of the earth ever loved us. We have no doubt in our minds about your love for us.

You loved us and gave us your only begotten Son to be the Savior of our souls. We thank thee that you have placed great value upon this love being evidenced in our lives, the Spirit of God has so kindly spread abroad in our hearts the love of God. Our Lord would have us to evidence our love for each other.

And by so doing, we evidence to all men that we are his followers. And Lord, we would desire to be a good witness for thee in the world. So help us tonight to place the full value upon loving one another that it deserves.

And help us to reach out to a world that has never discovered the value of the divine love that we rejoice in tonight and cause them to be brought into this living, loving relationship with the eternal, sovereign God of the universe through faith in the person of our Lord Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

That speaks Spanish would like to be able to speak Spanish. And the brother said that he'd been praying. He's taking some lessons in learning to speak Spanish.

And he said, I've been praying, Lord, speed up the process. He says, I'm a slow learner. I'm dull-witted, but I want to learn to speak Spanish so I can tell some of these Spanish-speaking people how to be saved.

So that was a good reason. But Paul says, if you had a command of every language that's known on the face of this earth, and you didn't have love, love was not the thing that was driving you on and encouraging you to what you sought to accomplish by having these languages. Someone might say, if I learned all of these languages and had a command of them, I could have a good job perhaps just teaching other people these languages.

In this case, we're talking about living out something. And Paul says, if you had a command of all of these languages and you didn't have any love in it for those that you were speaking to, then it wouldn't amount to much. It would become something that sounded like sounding brass.

You know, I remember as kids, if you want to make a big noise, they had an old wash tub or something in the backyard, and you could get a stick and hit that thing. You can make a lot of noise and wake everybody up. And so often that happened.

And to just think for a moment about what Paul is saying, and that's what he's describing, this matter of having a command of all these languages and yet there's no love in it. All of your reasons for wanting to have a command of those languages are earthly. Perhaps you just want to go around boasting about, I speak 10 languages, 12.

I speak all languages. Paul says, just like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, a tinkling cymbal. It doesn't amount to much.

You know, someone speaks fluently a language. They speak it with eloquence. And you look and you might indeed be a little envious of them because I can't speak that language.

But it's more important to love. Just to be able to make some sounds and someone else is able to interpret those sounds, it's important in getting the message out, but it must be in love. The speaker's heart, if he's speaking those languages, if he's speaking Spanish and he's seeking to win some of these poor souls for Christ, it's all important that he love them.

That's the motive behind it. He loves them because God loves them. It would be better to have a loving heart than to speak a lot of languages.

Then we think of other things like prophecy. We had a real command of the Word of God, and we could take prophecy line on line if we talk about prophecy. That is, foretelling what God has already described in His Word that would take place.

We had a command of it. We knew how to present it. I mean, people would speak of you so highly and say, Look, that man really knows the prophetic message, and he knows how to deliver it, and he gives it so clearly, and it's line on line, precept on precept.

And understand all mysteries. There's still a lot of things in the book that we say, I haven't quite got hold of that yet. It's still a little mysterious.

I don't really understand that. But if we understood everything that is mysterious about the Word of God and all knowledge, had a command of knowledge like you just wouldn't believe. I am well informed on any question, any subject you want to approach me on.

I will astound you. I will amaze you with what I know about that subject. And yet, no love.

I have all faith. Man, I am a man of faith. I'm a woman of faith.

I trust God for everything that may be the way it's expressed. I could remove mountains. That's how strong my faith is.

We just heard a young lady sing this afternoon. She sang two numbers for us, and one of them was, removing that mountain. And she, in singing that, conveyed a message that I trust my God when I'm faced with some kind of opposition that's in my way.

It represents a mountain. It's something that's hindering me. I pray, and he can remove that mountain.

We're talking about faith on that level. But if there's no love, I'm nothing. God's not impressed by any of this.

You know, brother and sister, are we more interested in impressing people than we are God? Start out the day with, Lord, I want to please you today. I may not please the people around me, but I want to please you. I want to do everything that is well-pleasing in your sight.

That's the desire of my heart. No matter how low I may have to stoop to accomplish that, no matter what place I may find myself in life, that's what I want to achieve. You know, having all these gifts is something that we're desirous of.

These are things sometimes of the highest order. People spend a lifetime sometimes trying to prepare themselves in these areas that we're talking about right now. But we need some grace in our hearts.

We need for the Spirit of God to fill us and to empower us to do what we can for the glory of God. Prophecy is great. Being able to unravel all of the mysteries, explain all of the unknowable in the Word of God, things that have never been revealed before in a clear, concise way, that's wonderful.

But there's no love. There's no good in it for God. Man's impressed by it.

We feel like that we are really something that we're not because God's not. You know, that's wonderful. Sending out peals of applause from heaven and sending down angelic beings to praise us for how much progress we've made in all these areas.

There must be love to God and to mankind, and especially to the members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's got to be there or it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. One hill of beans is pretty insignificant.

It just doesn't amount to anything. You're not impressing God if you go after this. This is your ambition.

These things that we're talking about. Speaking with all these tongues and having a grasp of all of these things that men are impressed with. God's not impressed with that apart from that element of love that must be woven into what we're doing.

We move beyond that to something that becomes very personal and people take an account of, and that is when you do things for needy people. I bestow all my goods to feed the poor. I make great sacrifices in my life.

I'm burning myself out in serving others. I'm a charter member of everything that's going that tries to alleviate human suffering. And love is not an essential part of what is we're trying to do.

Someone has said it's like a dead carcass. It doesn't amount to anything in the sight of God. People benefit from it.

You have eliminated some human suffering, but if we are out to carry out the will of God, we haven't accomplished anything that has impressed Him unless it's love. Unless love is a part of what we're doing. Because love suffereth long, is the way the Apostle Paul is kind.

It doesn't envy. These are positive things that you can detect about those that are motivated by love in whatever they do in life. And it's so easy to become motivated by an inflated ego of how great you are as a person that is perhaps serving God's people.

A preacher. A preacher could get carried away. It could be devastating to him as far as having any effectiveness for God and impressing God because he really thinks he's somebody.

Man, I can preach the word. Oh, you can? Yep. No doubt about that.

But unless there's love in what we're doing, it won't amount to much. And you know, if we suffer long with one another, I think it's a sure sign of spiritual maturity. When we are reminded that tribulation worketh patience.

Now, some of you have said, I've had the tribulation, but I don't know if I've fully learned the lesson yet or not because sometimes I'm still pretty impatient. I want things to get going. I want things to change.

I want to see some of the results from my efforts to be long-suffering. This is all important. Not puffed up.

It hates flattery. You know, one time I remember looking at a thing on television and there were some people on there that I just happened to know a few things about them. And man, you talk about puffing.

You talk about really overrating what they were, really. It made me sick to think about it. Yet they accepted that flattery just as if they deserved it.

Has anybody made a compliment to you about something you were doing recently and you knew it wasn't true? I'm not deserving of that compliment. Well, I'm not telling you you should have said I'm sorry, but you're wrong. That's not true of me.

I don't think I would have the courage to say that. Try to be humble. Try to be humble.

And be careful about being humble now. Wasn't it Brother Gibbs that said one time he prayed to the Lord, make me humble? You know what his answer was later? He said, I'll never pray that prayer again. Never pray that prayer again.

Make me humble. Does not behave itself unseemingly. We're talking about love.

Christian love conducts itself in a proper fashion. God has an order. Doing things decently in an order.

Sometimes taking off on some wild goose chase trying to do something. And love is not the motivating factor. We want to behave ourselves in a way that honors the Lord.

Sick is not our own. Is not easily provoked. Thinketh no evil.

Man, thinketh no evil. Had any evil thoughts lately? More than likely if we're breathing we have. I often say this, and I think it's just the tip of the iceberg.

If you drive a car and you go through traffic and you've been cut off and he got in your way and you had to ride away and all of these things, first thing you know some evil thought can come into your mind. Now, I think it was Bill McDonald one time said, did you ask God to forgive you for that profanity? I'm not talking about what you said. I'm talking about what you thought.

I know a lot of profanity. I thank God I don't use it anymore. I used to.

It was just as natural to be profane, use profanity. I remember my brother Julian Stevenson said one time when he got saved, the Lord took away at least half of his vocabulary because profanity was something

that he used. He had no guilt feeling about it.

People that use it don't have any guilt feelings about it, but we've learned to use our tongues for better things. Rejoice is not in iniquity, but rejoice is in the truth. Beareth all things.

You know, to be able to say I would just like to see that thing covered up and never mentioned again. I don't get any joy out of seeing a child of God go in a direction that is not according to the will of God. Every one of us should be grieved when you read in the paper some of the things that you read about people that profess to be Christians and people that have been in positions where they fell because of something they did and you felt ashamed for them.

You find no joy in that. And if you remember some of the things that are said when it comes to the matter of people that have some responsibility in assembly fellowship and you go on a mission and your mission is to relate to something to someone in which it amounts to a rebuke. I'll tell you what, if you find any joy in doing that, you are not the one to go.

It would be better for you to get your own heart and soul in tune with God's will. You'll find no joy in anything that's unbecoming to a child of God. You're grieved by it.

You rejoice in the truth. Beareth all things, praying to God that indeed it'll go away. Believeth all things.

Hopeth all things. Endureth all things. Here's the part that to me just thrills your soul.

I guess it comes into my mind many, many times. And it is this, that love never fails. Now, brother, you can't think of anything else in this life that it will fail at some point in time.

A lot of things have failed recently. You know about the stock market. Well, love never fails.

So when I purpose in my heart that I'm going to allow the Spirit of God to produce that fruit in my life, the fruit of divine love, you can detect it in my character, in my life, then I'm assured that will never fail. Someone said it is an unwithering flower, something beautiful to behold, because we're exhibiting that true divine love. Prophecies, they fail.

Tongues, they cease. Knowledge, it shall vanish away. Think of all the things that have been done in this life.

So many of those things that I pointed out that perhaps have produced such a sense of pride within one's heart, of what they had learned, what they knew, knowledge that had been stored up, was of some value here. But if it was used in the wrong way, it would be of no value. We can take these things and use them for the glory of God.

Our greatest knowledge is to know that we know nothing. Someone said that. Our greatest knowledge is to know that we know nothing.

He said, you know, there's so much that has escaped to me that is a part of what can be known as a human being here on the face of the earth. Why in the world could one individual ever think I know it all? So something has been accomplished when we're able to say, I don't know much. In fact, I don't claim to know much of anything.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. I tell you, we're in God's school. This is the testing time.

We only go this way one time. This is the golden opportunity for you and me to prove that God has really done a work in our hearts and lives, that we really have everything in the order in which God would value and place importance upon it. Love is such an important part of it.

And he brings a child into the picture. When I was a child, spake as a child, understood as a child, thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

You know, to act as a Christian, as someone that is mature. The Apostle Paul had so much that he took note of among God's people. He said, I wouldn't have you to be ignorant, brethren, to be knowledgeable and to be able to take in these things that truly have value.

Because now we see through a glass darkly. But one day we're going to see face to face. You're not going to try to imagine, you're not going to have to close your eyes and try to visualize what it's going to be like.

You're going to be there. You're going to be in his presence. You're going to see everything clearly one day.

Look forward to that day, how wonderful that will be. Then shall I know even as also I'm known. It might be some catch up time for a lot of us.

Things that we could have learned here, perhaps we'll have to learn them when we get home to glory. There'll be some learning experiences. Perhaps the Lord will not pour into our being as new creatures in Christ Jesus, everything that is to be known about being in that place.

So the best sometime that we can accomplish here may not impress the Lord. Heavenly things, these things are temporary. We're looking for things that are eternal, things that have value.

And now he says about it, faith, hope, love, these three, the greatest of these is love. Well, we know that faith and hope will not cease any more than love does. But when you put all of these together, we've learned to trust the Lord.

The more we meet with him face to face, the more we draw nigh unto him and he draws nigh unto us. We are praying that our love will grow stronger as the Spirit of God finds that we're pliable and we are teachable. That's what we look for today in people.

Are you teachable? Can you still learn something? Oh, love is great. Divine love is just wonderful. We've got it in our hearts.

And you know what a change is made in your life. You know what a change it makes. Man, you're not what you used to be.

Just see, you're not what you used to be. Man, you really know how to love now. My wife is a great lover.

She loves me. She's a lot better than she was before she got saved, I'll tell you that. And she'll tell you, I'm a lot better too.

Do you want your love life to improve? Trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust him and let him become the one that controls your life by his Spirit. And let others know that this wonderful love of God is in your soul.

We want to impress people and let them know that there's something real about this Christianity that we claim to have. Exhibit divine love. It never fails, never fails.

This love to God and love to men, if it's absent, all my hopes are vain. Nor tongues, nor gifts, nor fiery zeal, the work of love can e'er fulfill. That one thing that I detect more and more in our lives as believers is that we need to love and demonstrate that love in our lives.

To know love, open your heart to the Lord Jesus. To show love, open your heart to others. And we will have accomplished something for God's glory.

Our Father in heaven, we thank thee again for this privilege of being here today and a wonderful experience being with your people. We love each other, Lord. I know we love each other and we would give of ourselves for each other.

But let us seek day by day to do it better than we've ever done it before. We like to hear people say that the fellowship here at Northgate is a loving fellowship. Oh, Lord, we don't want them to be disappointed.

But most of all, we don't want to for a moment deceive ourselves and think that it's something that's real when it's only just a show. Oh, our God, impress upon our hearts tonight the love of God, the love of God that is at work in our own hearts and souls. And may it be demonstrated in a way that will be for the glory and honor of the greatest of all lovers that ever was.

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