

# The Love of God

by Robert F. Adcock

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*The sermon explores the profound nature of God's love and the imperative for Christians to love one another as a reflection of that love.*

**Duration:** 44:19

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:39, Romans 5:8, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:1, 1 John 4:7-11

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Christian Witness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the seriousness of being a Christian and how it is often taken lightly in today's world. He points out that one reason people don't listen to the gospel is because Christians often lack a life that supports their words. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having a testimony and witness for God that is meaningful, rooted in a genuine experience of God's love. He also highlights the need for Christians to love one another, as God has loved us, and to be a witness to the world through their actions and behavior. The sermon references Ephesians 4:1 and 1 John 4:7-11 to support these teachings.

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## Transcript

For our Scripture reading this morning, let's read in Ephesians chapter 4, commencing at verse 1. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I'd like to read just a few verses in 1 John chapter 4. Let's read from verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

And this was manifested, the love of God toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him here in his love. Not that we loved 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 has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this 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, whosoever shall confess 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.

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 punishment.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us. If a man says, I love God, and hateth 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, that he who loveth God love his brother also." I'd like for us to think in these moments together about the love of God and what it has done in your life as a Christian. Because if it hasn't done what it's supposed to do in your life as a Christian, then you are a flop as a Christian. You are a failure.

Sometimes we can become so involved in things that we think are very important in the Christian life that we find that we've overlooked some things that are so important. In fact, they're so basic that if there is a departure from this course, then we're completely out of touch with God's will for our lives. I think of what we read when we read about the seven churches in the book of Revelation, and we read about the church at Ephesus, that they left their first love.

And note, I didn't say they lost their first love, they left it. And that's what can happen so often in Christian circles. They leave it.

You take up something else. Something else becomes more important. But I know that you cannot, for a moment, alienate love for the person of the Lord Jesus Christ from individual responsibility to love each other as members of the body of Christ.

The two are one. We are one in Him, and I think you read that note, that letter to the church at Ephesus, and they left their first love. I think it was just a gradual process.

It wasn't something that they did deliberately and said, We're just going to leave off all of this preeminence that we're giving to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not going to be the center of all that we do and say. And in so doing, they gradually began to neglect their love for each other.

I don't think it happened like that at all. It was a very subtle thing, very gradual. But when we read in the word of God, they left their first love.

That's exactly what they did. And there's so much that has been written about priorities for the church in the world today that reminds us that Christ must be first. He is the head of the church.

He deserves that preeminent place, and that's exactly what the word of God gives to Him. I think as we read in the scriptures, we are aware that the church, indeed, has a call to love. And, of course, that love for our Lord Jesus and the love for God's people are synonymous.

They are one. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another even as I have loved you. Other men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

I heard a story about a couple that were married. Most of us that have had that experience of being married to someone you love, you are shocked one day when you realize that maybe you're not saying it like you used to say it. You remember when you were courting your wife, and you couldn't say, I love you

too often.

In fact, you were always cozying up to her and, honey, I love you. But after the newness wore off, and you kind of got adjusted to being married to each other, if it's like it happened to me, now she has to tell me. Why don't you tell me you love me? Well, you know I love you.

I told you one time I loved you. I still love you. We like to hear it.

And in this story, that's exactly what happened. The young bride noted after a while that things weren't like they'd been in the past, and her husband told her in a very emphatic way, the honeymoon is over. The honeymoon is over.

We've got to get down to living, and that doesn't include all of this I love you every day. Well, that's a sad commentary on any marriage. It's certainly a sad commentary on the church in the world today that if we forget to love each other, there should be in my life and in your life a provable evidence that we really love each other.

I'd like to read J. B. Phillips' translation of those three verses that we read in Ephesians 4. He says, As God's prisoner, I beg you to live lives that are worthy of your high calling. Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other because you love each other. Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another.

What he has to say about making allowances for each other, it makes a concession in that it acknowledges that we're not perfect. And you know, you thought she was perfect when you married her. Maybe she thought you were too.

It didn't take long to find out that we have our misgivings, we have our shortcomings, and love is the only thing that will keep that union glued together. Love is that thing that when you discover that that person is not perfect, you know, love is going to help you to overlook those things. And that should be true among believers in Jesus Christ.

I'm not perfect, and you are not perfect, and we know it. And I'd like to remind you of this. When the Lord Jesus Christ loved you and died for you, you weren't perfect then.

In fact, I would have to say most of us would say I was very unlovable. In fact, I was a rebel sinner. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were in that state of rebellion, resisting those divine overtures of love and grace, but divine love and grace are greater than all of this. He loved us while we were yet sinners, and we indeed are to show our love for each other. Love each other the same way that he has loved us.

This is what you discover sometimes in church fellowship. People come to Christ individually. It's an individual encounter with God in the matter of salvation.

And once we enter in through the door, the narrow way, and we discover indeed, oh, this is wonderful to know that my sins are forgiven, the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus. It is the price of redemption has been paid. We begin to revel and rejoice in all that is ours as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

That's an individual matter, very personal matter. But you know, once we get inside the door by faith, there's a discovery that we make. We are surrounded by others that have done the same thing.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, a divine union has been established. We read about, when you read one of the rare occasions that you find in Scripture, the use of that word propitiation. It very simply means, and I'm not trying to oversimplify that wonderful, wonderful doctrine in the word of God of propitiation, but it simply means this.

Before there was anything about us that was desirable to God, something was done that caused Him to favor us. Without what Christ did for us, God could never favor us. He could never look upon us in grace and love and mercy.

Something had to be done, and Christ did it. He is that propitiation. He is that which satisfies God so perfectly that now He can look upon me in love and grace.

Without the sacrifice that Christ made, that would never be possible. That's wonderful. You think about it, every individual that is a part of the body of Jesus Christ, that wonderful divine union has been established through faith in the Son of God as one Savior.

We are linked together as one, brothers and sisters in Christ. Freelancing, rugged individualism, as far as the Church is concerned, is something that is foreign to the Scriptures. We are one in Him.

We don't lose our individual personalities and that sort of thing if we're under the control of the Spirit of God. He uses us, and what we have in the way of natural talent and spiritual gift, God uses it for His glory and honor. We are distinctly different, but we are one in Christ.

That sounds a little mysterious, and it's hard to explain, but that's just the way it is. We're one in Christ. He is the head.

We are the members of His body, and the thing that is so important in this divine relationship is that work of the Spirit of God in producing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is happening every day. The fruit of the Spirit is what? Love, joy, peace, but love so prominent. If you don't think things like this happen, you just have to sometimes talk to someone that has had an experience like this, but it does happen.

A lady that told me that she moved to a city, and there she identified herself with a local church. She was a member there for some five years, and not one person in that church ever visited her in her home. She said, I really never got on a basis with anybody there that I would say they were a close friend to me.

Now, that may be the exception. I hope it is, but it just shows you you can come through the door. You can get into this meeting room here.

You can identify yourself with these Christians that gather here, but can you get into their hearts? Can you sense that they really love you? Because you're a member of the body of Jesus Christ. You're one with them. Do they demonstrate that love toward you? You see, sometimes the world that we live in, they say those Christians are a bunch of hypocrites.

Well, they say they love each other, but I haven't seen any of it. They talk about each other. They murmur, and sometimes they even talk about the preacher, and they talk about the Sunday school teacher, and they talk about the leaders.

They devour each other. Well, that's carnality. That's just the flesh.

You're doing the work of Satan when you begin to murmur and backbite against your brothers and sisters in Christ. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Don't become an accomplice with Satan as far as doing his work.

He's very capable of doing it. Don't you accommodate him by being a part of it. The wonderful, divine, sovereign work of the Spirit of God is to produce spiritual fruit in the lives of God's people, and love is so important.

It keeps everything glued together, and it keeps us functioning in the way that our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to function as members of his body. When you read in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 10, I think this spells out this very special priority that we are looking at this morning. It says, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, or all men, but especially to those who belong to the family of God, believers.

Now, you may have thought that the first priority for the church today is to go out and to proclaim the gospel to every creature that lives upon the face of the earth. No, that's not the first priority of the church today in this world in which we live. The first priority, of course, is to put Christ first, the preeminent place, and the second priority is to love your fellow believers.

The Lord Jesus said in the New Commandment, I give unto you that you love one another the same way I've loved you, and here we're brought face to face with that opportunity of doing good to all people. Christian testimony demands it. But he says, especially in a very special way, do you look upon your fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you look upon those that you identify in this fellowship as being very special? They are.

If you would look at them the same way the Lord Jesus looks at them, man, they do become very special. They're very special people. While you're looking at something that the Lord Jesus redeemed with His own precious shed blood, this is what Christ purchased when He died upon Calvary's cross.

This is a member of His body. That person is very special. There's not one that doesn't matter to Him, and the same thing should apply to us.

We are very special in the sight of God. I think most of us would agree that the things we're talking about, most of us could stand them in proof. If you never take inventory, and if you're never interested in updating your Christian experience, more than likely you're going to drift into a condition of such complacency and coldness that your testimony and your witness for Jesus Christ, it won't make much impact upon the world in which we're living.

Because I don't personally believe you can have much of a testimony for God and for the person of the Lord Jesus unless you are obeying what the Lord Jesus tells us to do. The Lord Jesus says, if you love me, you obey my commandments. It matters not how you want to get around that, but if you don't love me, if you're not keeping my commandments, you really don't love me the way that you should.

The commandments are clear. We need to read and reread the life of our Lord Jesus, the words that he spoke, the things that he instructed us to do. You may call that a secret, a secret of that divine unity.

God wants us to really love each other. Love is the chief mark of that love that we have. It says it's authentic, it's real, and that's exactly what we want it to be.

And we don't want to keep it a private matter, either. We don't hide it. We let it be known that we really love each other.

You do that by the way you react to other people, their needs, and there are many, many needs in the world today. Think of all of the church congregations today assembled, and perhaps there are many, many lonely people, unloved people that are sitting in those congregations, and they truly believe. Nobody loves me, nobody cares anything about me, and just waiting for someone to respond and show them a little love.

And you know the Lord Jesus is dependent upon you and me to show his love toward others that are in this world, and most especially the family of God. If the love of Christ is to reach me, more than likely the true evidence of it will be through your life touching my life. And then I give credit and glory to God in that I say the love of Jesus Christ has reached me through another member of the body.

That makes the body something that is living, something that is viable, something that is real, and not just something we talk about. I'd like to read a statement. It supports, I think Schaeffer, Francis Schaeffer, must have read John 13:35 when he wrote this statement, but this is what he had to say.

He said, In the midst of the world our Lord is giving a right to the world. Now, you listen to this. Upon his authority he gives the world the right to judge whether we are real believers on the basis of our observable love toward other believers.

He is giving a right to this world. He's giving the authority to the world in which we're living to make a judgment about whether we are real or not. If he does not see in your life and in my life observable love for each other, then he has every right to say that person is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

Other men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Brother, I'm not talking about lip service. I'm not talking about saying, brother, I love you.

They're just words. I'm talking about observable evidence. Is there that kindred spirit in your love and your care for your fellow believer? Would you give your life for another member of the body of Jesus Christ? Would you? He says, A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another the same way I love you.

He died for us. Would you die for your fellow believer? Well, he didn't ask us to do that, really. But day by day, every time that I give a part of my life, some of my time, to another believer, I'm giving of my life.

I'm giving of myself for that person. It may be someone that is having great difficulty in this life. It may be of a financial nature.

It may be health reasons. It may be all sorts of things that happen in the lives of believers. And I respond to that need, and I demonstrate that the love of Jesus Christ is real.

Is it observable? So, the Lord is saying to the world on the basis of His authority, I'm giving you the right, world, to make a judgment whether or not an individual is a Christian on the basis of the love He shows to all other Christians. That's a strong statement, but I believe it's absolutely true. We can work on this business of loving each other, I'm telling you.

So often, there's a coldness. There's an aloofness. So often, Christians isolate themselves from other Christians.

They act as if they don't even really enjoy being with each other. Brothers and sisters in Christ, that shouldn't be. That's a poor witness to the world in which we live.

After all, we're going to spend eternity together, whether you like me or not. And we're going to be in God's presence. We're going to be around the throne of God, and I'm going to be there, and you're going to be there.

That song that we hear sung, I don't know, I've heard it sung, I haven't heard it sung from the platform, but about the wonderful experience of being one of the people of God, being one of God's children. It's wonderful. It should be wonderful, and it shouldn't be something we just talk about.

It should be an experience in this life that speaks loudly to the world in which we live. Of course, if we get a little angry when someone reminds us of this, it doesn't bother me if you get angry at me. You can do that.

It's all right. You'll be reminded of this. You can be angry with me, but don't let the sun go down on your anger.

It's perfectly scriptural to be angry, but don't let the sun go down on it. So you forget it by tonight, and you take to heart what I'm saying. You get down on your knees, and you ask God to make you a little more lovable to your fellow believer, and you pray that the fruit of the Spirit of God's love will be more observable in your life.

That's the way to get over your anger. If you find out that you're being derelict in your responsibilities as a Christian, the way to get over it is get down on your knees and tell it to the Lord. Tell the Lord all about how you feel about this, and ask him to enlighten you from the Word of God as to where you've gone astray, and where you have been just a little bit careless in your relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Lord Jesus, in John 17, makes an appeal in this prayer that he makes, that all of them may be one Father, just as you are in me, and I in you. May they also be in us, perfect bond of love, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. So that the world may believe that you have sent me.

I know that the world, indeed, has a lot of critical things to say about the church, and, you know, that doesn't really bother me because I know that the God of this world that blinds the minds of those that do not believe, I know that the natural man, he has to say something, more than likely, that is a discredit to what we believe as Christians. And when they say it, and it's not justifiable, that doesn't bother me. But when the world makes charges against us, and those charges are true, that hurts.

That hurts. And to tell me, and it's been often told to me, that person that goes where you fellowship, I don't think they're a Christian. I don't see any evidence in their lives of them being Christian.

You talk about love, you talk about mercy, you talk about kindness, you talk about long-suffering, I've never seen any of that in their lives, and you have to bow your head and you say, neither have I. That's sad, that's very sad. Listen, the word of God tells us if any man be in Christ Jesus, he becomes a new creation. Old things pass away, behold, all things become new.

And we need to get down to this business of letting others see that we are really new creatures in Christ Jesus, and we're different. We're different from those people in this world that the love of God has never touched their lives nor their hearts. If we're going to have a testimony and a witness for God that is

meaningful, brothers and sisters in Christ, it must be so.

God's not impressed with all of the shows of grandeur buildings, those that do so many things that, indeed, you have to have superlatives to describe the things that they're doing. That was marvelous, that's wonderful. It may relate to service, it may relate to so many things that are being done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is not impressed with those things when so often there is a life, there's a heart that's barren as far as the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ is concerned. No observable evidence that we're really loving each other the way that he loved us. You know, God is expecting something out of us.

You think about it, sometimes the Lord saved us and he could have taken us to heaven the very moment that he saved us and said, well, that's it, it's good enough. I don't have anything for you to do, but he does have something for us to do. You know the Lord Jesus, he is at God's right hand this very moment.

He intercedes on our behalf. Gloriously, wonderfully, mysteriously, where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst. But you know, in this world in which we're living today, you and I are to be witnesses, empowered witnesses by the Spirit of God.

These are the last words that he spoke upon this earth before he ascended up into heaven. You will receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses unto me in this world.

He's depending upon us to be a witness to this world. And you know the impressions that they gain concerning the person of Christ, they gain those impressions by looking at you and me. I'm a Christian.

Oh, you're a Christian. You're one that belongs to Jesus Christ. Yes.

You're a new creature in Christ Jesus. Yes. So that's what he looks like, huh? That's the way he behaves.

And then they say, if that's true, I don't want any part of it. Listen, that responsibility that we have as Christians, as representatives, I am an ambassador for the Lord Jesus. I represent him in this world.

That's awesome responsibility. And one day, each one of us that professes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we will stand in his presence and give an account of what we've done with our lives and how we have represented him. And we will receive reward, or we will suffer loss when we stand at the beam, the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus.

Listen, brothers and sisters in Christ, this business of being a Christian is serious business. It's being taken too lightly in this world in which we live today. And one reason men and women aren't listening to us when we proclaim the gospel to them is that we don't have a life to back it up.

The reality of our Christian experience doesn't support what we say with our lips. That's not to the shame of God or our Lord Jesus Christ. That's to our shame.

I'm telling you that with God's help, I can really love the same way God loves. I can't do it. I can no more love you like God wants me to in my own strength than I could save myself.

You see, if I am going to truly love you the way the Lord Jesus wants me to love you, then it has to be a divine, sovereign work of the Spirit of God in producing that spiritual fruit in my life. You see, not one thing that we do for God can we do in the energy of the flesh, motivated by a carnal motivation, and do it for the

glory of God. God sovereignly does it through us.

As we yield, as we become submissive, then He does what He wants to do in our lives. I can love people that are quite unlovable. That's a challenge in itself.

Don't pick out someone that you say, oh, I like that person. They really appeal to me. We have so much in common.

Pick out somebody that you really don't like them, and you get out on your knees and you say, oh God, help me. I won't accept a challenge. I want to do something that I can see that divine work that you're able to do in my heart and life.

Help me to love that person. Help me to win that person. I want to win them to myself and to you by proving that you're really working in my life.

So fulfilled, as James puts it, the royal law of Christ. When Jude writes in that little book of Jude, he says, keep yourselves in the love of God. I believe that is so important if we are ever to demonstrate our love one for another the way God wants us to.

When Jude says, keep yourselves in the love of God, it's like being in a room that is completely dark, and there's just one light, just one shaft of light that comes down, and if you want to really see or examine anything, and to experience the benefits of that light, you have to be in that one place, in that room. The rest of the room is dark. Well, this world that we live in is just engulfed in spiritual darkness, but God's love, like a shaft of light from heaven, when my soul is receptive, when my soul is just longing to be bathed in the warmth of that wonderful love, you can believe it will reach my heart, it will reach my soul.

But I, first and foremost, must be receptive to the love of God. Keep yourselves in the love of God. Keep yourself in a position in this life so that God can shower upon you His love.

Don't go off and hide in a corner. Don't isolate yourself from the Lord and say you're going to freelance it and do it on your own. Don't think that you can ever live without it for the glory of God.

There's no special breed of Christian that can possibly survive in this world in which we live unless God is sovereignly showering His love and His grace upon us. Keep yourselves in the love of God, a full awareness of how great that love really is. And when His love, you've just bathed your soul, you're just filled with His love, it'll be evidenced by the way you treat your fellow believer.

You read in the scriptures that people took note of the fact that others had been with the Lord Jesus. Others will be able to observe that man, that woman, they have a real contact with God. I sense when I'm in their presence the love of God has flooded their soul.

They're so gracious. I feel the presence of the Lord Jesus when I am in the presence of that person. Listen, nothing higher could be said of a Christian that when I see that brother, that sister, and the way they live their lives, I sense the presence of Jesus Christ in that life.

Paul says, Christ lives in me. And brothers and sisters, I believe you could tell that Jesus Christ really lived in the life of Paul. Love is one of those things that's mentioned in the word of God that has an endurable quality.

Love never fails. All other things may pass away. Faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

You want a spiritual gift? It's one that God wants every one of His children to have, and that is of love. Our mission as believers in Jesus Christ in the world today is to first show our love for each other. And we give the world, just as our Lord gave authority to the world to make a judgment about our Christian testimony.

Is that love observable in your life today as a Christian? If it isn't, there's something wrong. That doesn't mean that you're going to throw up your hands and say, it's no use. I failed.

No. You purpose before God that there'll be some changes, and with His help, you will claim as a promise from the Lord Jesus, a promise that He has made to us that we can indeed love each other the same way He loved us. That requires sacrifice.

That requires purpose. That requires that we be persuaded in our own hearts and lives that's the only way to go in this world in which we're living today. May it be so for the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we bow in Thy presence this morning. We thank Thee for the privilege of assembly.

We thank Thee for all that we enjoy in this world in which we're living today. Lord, You've delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the wonderful kingdom of light. O God, we thank Thee today for everything that You've ever enlightened our hearts and souls to concerning Thyself and the beauty and wonderful of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray, O God, that this day that what we've read and what we've considered in these moments together will have a divine impact upon our lives.

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