

Light, Life, and Love - Part 4

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love in our relationship with God and with others, and how it is the test of our being born of God and our relationship with God.

Duration: 49:38

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story of a family who experienced the tragic loss of their only son. The speaker emphasizes the significance of God giving His only begotten Son, Jesus, as a demonstration of His love for humanity. The speaker then highlights the fourfold picture of man's condition before God - helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies - and how God's love overcame these obstacles. The sermon concludes with the message that love and caring for others is a test of our relationship with God and should be the foundation of our interactions with fellow believers.

Transcript

Will you turn to the first epistle of John again? We shall read again part of chapter three and then go on to part of chapter four. Picking up the thread from our theme of yesterday, verse 10 of chapter three. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, and wherefore slew he him, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

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

I'm quite sure the revised and the other translations are right. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, whensoever our heart condemn us. For God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

And then he goes on to speak of the blessedness of the uncondemning heart. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

And how simple are these commandments, just two. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ. Not once we go on believing, and believing on the name, receiving life through the name, and love one another, as he gave his commandment.

He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit, by the disposition, I presume that is, by the fruit of the spirit which he hath given us. Once again, this matter of evidential assurance, one form of it.

And then we go over to chapter four, verse eleven, to verse seven, rather, to verse seven. 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.

God's not like that. He that loveth not. We betray ourselves by our loveless attitudes, and our carelessness of the other man.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. In 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. Herein is love.

I received a Christmas card years ago, and on the outside was, Herein is love. So you open it, and there it was, the rest of the text. Herein is love.

Look inside. Not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

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

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And in this way we have known and believed. The love that God hath to us, and that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

God is love then. And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is not our love.

The revised version rightly, I think, drops that out. Herein is love. It's the love of God perfected.

The love of God in us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. It has the thought of possible punishment.

He that then feareth is not yet made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. Yes, and there too I'm quite sure the revised and other versions are right, when they drop out the word in.

That's not in view. What is in view is our love for the other man, which is provoked by his love for us. We love, because we first, he first loved us.

Love, wonderful love, that first loved me. Well, and the result, we love. We begin to love, we begin to be different to others, because we've had a new sense of the love of God for us, when we didn't love him at all.

That's the meaning. That's the emphasis. If a man say, 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, whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is forgotten of him. Well, there's our passage, and the very reading of it is almost enough.

You know, John didn't write knowing that you have to have an awful lot of preachers to expound it. He said, well, I'm trying to expound it myself. And you know, sometimes, as the old lady said, she found the commentaries on Paul much more difficult than Paul.

But still, we are meant to meditate on what they've written. Now, there's some folk outside. Surely, we can find seats for them.

Would you like to come in, John and Constance? Constance, there's a loud speaker in that room. You can hear him there. You can hear it.

Good. All right. Just as you will.

Well, now, yesterday, we were seeing John make this tremendously sharp distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil. And there's no one in between. You're either a child of God through faith in Christ, or you're still a child of wrath, as Paul says, even as others, a child of the devil.

And he says, the test, the evidence is that he that doeth righteousness, and we've thought a little bit about this, and he says, whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. And that brings him into a very full unfolding of this great matter of love. And he says, we're not to be like Cain.

Cain is the example of the man who did not love his brother. And we saw that the reason for that was jealousy. And it's still the same today.

So often, when I'm not loving my brother in Christ, it's because there's a root of jealousy towards him. I'm critical, resentful, because basically, I'm jealous. And Cain was jealous of Abel.

His countenance fell when he saw that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and not his. And the reason why he was jealous was that reason and the fact that he'd been going the wrong way. Here was a brother who was probably wrong, and yet, so easily, he'd come into peace and freedom, whereas Cain, with all his labor in the field, had not got that peace, and he was jealous.

And you notice this can be the same with us, I repeat again. We can be elder brothers. The elder brother was jealous of the younger brother.

Younger brother said, I have sinned, and was brought by grace right into the feast. The elder brother said, I have served, and he didn't get into the feast. Well, he said, that's not a nice state of things.

Here he is saying he's a sinner, and he's brought in. Here am I serving all these years, and I've never been brought in. Well, you see, he didn't understand.

He thought it was by working, by serving, that he'd have the feast. And when he saw his brother coming in by grace on another principle altogether, he was jealous. And you know, you and I can be jealous when we see another's joy, another's freedom, another being used.

And they aren't half as hardworking as we are. They haven't known the Lord as long as we have. They haven't done what we have, and it just doesn't seem fair.

And you can be jealous of your brother, and then you begin not to love him, and to criticize him. All the elder brothers so easily fall into this. And sometimes I'm a younger brother praising at the cross, and then another occasion I can be an elder brother, be put out, because somebody else seems to get more blessing and is more used than I am.

And deep down I've gone back to the old way of works, rather than coming by the way of the blood of Jesus, the way of grace. But I remind you of that distinction between those two brothers. The younger brother said, I have sinned, and grace brought him in.

The elder brother said, I have served, and he stayed out. They don't want me in there, they don't. If he'd only come down on the same basis as the brother, he was as welcome as him.

And so that could be a great cause, subtle, of not loving our brother. And may I just say one further word about that? It says that his own works were evil, his brothers righteous. I don't know that in themselves there were any difference, but in their sinnership, between Abel's sinnership and Cain.

What was righteous that Abel did that Cain didn't? Simply that he repented and brought the blood sacrifice. And that's the only righteous thing you and I can do. And the evil thing we do is we don't come that way.

And God said, if thou doest well to Cain, shalt thou not be accepted? What did God mean, doing well? If you're prepared to do what Abel did, you'll be as accepted as he is. But he wasn't. And so that leads us into this great theme of love.

Now I believe this word love has become too familiar to us and has lost its meaning. We have rather reacted against the Elizabethan English charity in 1 Corinthians 13, charity suffereth long and is kind, and yet it can convey the meaning to you sometimes better than the word love. Because as I said the other day, we talk about something not a very charitable action.

Well, you know what it means. And that's what is meant here. And I would suggest that perhaps in our thinking to get the full value of this great word love, we could give it another word which will freshen its meaning and point its meaning.

And I believe we could use the word caring instead of love. He that isn't caring for his brother knoweth not God. Caring.

That's this love. It's a love that cares. It isn't an emotion, men.

It's something that sets you on a path of action. Caring. And how little caring there is in the world.

And alas, all too little among brothers in Christ. We're not caring. But this is the whole thing that John is speaking about, caring.

Baron Von Heugel, who was a great Christian leader, on his deathbed is reputed to have said, everything is in the caring. Nothing matters but caring. Well, now that is the sort of love you've got here.

Caring. Oh, it is so wonderful to be in a caring fellowship and in a caring church. Not only to be the recipient of that caring, but it's far greater blessing to be the giver of that caring.

Do we care for our brother? Or are we largely indifferent to him and his needs and his spiritual progress or otherwise? Caring. God so cared for the world that he gave his only begotten son. And if God so cared for us, John says we have to care for the brethren.

Well, that is the theme of this great central portion. And I would like to sum up, if I can, what John says under several headings. First, I would say this, that love or caring, which as we've seen is the sum of righteousness, is the test of our being born of God.

And it's a test of our relationship subsequent at any given time. Love, caring, God insists on as being the great test, either of our new birth or of our subsequent relation to him, is to be judged by the extent of love in our lives, caring. You see that in chapter 4, verses 7 and 8. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth, that has this caring, if you like this Calvary love, knoweth God, is born of God, and knoweth not God.

On the other one hand, he that loveth not, just doesn't love. He may have a lot of other things, but he just doesn't love. It's shown by his attitude to this one and that one, knoweth not God.

And that, for the one basic reason that God is love. Now, when we read that verse, usually we think that God is love for me. Well, he is.

Of course he is. But the emphasis that John gives it here in this chapter is that God is love for the other fellow. And if I don't love the other fellow, if I'm indifferent and cold towards him, or critical of him, or jealous of him, there is one point at least on which God and me don't agree.

That fellow. Oh, wonderful Christian, but there's one thing we don't agree on. That fellow, I love him.

I so cared for him that I gave my son for him. But you don't. You're cold towards him.

Critical. You're leaving him out. You're not concerned.

Your attitude's hurting. Little wonder then when I fail to love my brother. It automatically puts me out of fellowship with God.

And there's no restoration to fellowship with God until that one point on which God and me disagree is put right. And we've seen what love is, it's the opposite. What hate is, it's the opposite of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

And when those are the case of necessity, I'm out of fellowship with God. The three-point circuit is broken. You have the same thing there in chapter 3 verse 14.

This is the test, the test, the evidence. We know that we have passed from death into life. Do you have any doubts? You can assure your heart if you can find within your heart love for the brethren.

That isn't love for everybody, for the others who likewise been born of God. Hence the test. I must confess there was a time when I didn't love the brethren.

I was fearful of the brethren. Before I was saved, I thought they were a queer lot. They wore squeaky boots and looked queer.

And I wasn't at home in their company. But now they're my people. And that's one of the evidences.

But at a deeper level, it's the evidence of where you are thereafter. Whether you love the brethren or you resent the brethren, you're scared of the brethren. And he goes on to say that he that loveth not, that hath not got this loveth, abideth, remaineth in the death of sin in which he was first born.

Will you notice that of course, what John is talking about is love for the brethren. There's a love for everybody. It's very interesting to note that in the second, you can turn to it if you will, keeping your finger in Peter, the second epistle of Peter, you have another sort of love, even beyond love of the brethren.

But that is not the thing that John is especially speaking about here. In the second epistle of Peter, chapter one, you have all the things we've got to add to our initial saving faith in Christ. Verse five, beside all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness.

Now the Greek word is exactly the love of the brethren. That's the meaning of the name Philadelphia. And it has been more than once noted that in Philadelphia, they don't always live up to their name.

There have been many bitter controversies in Philadelphia, which is the word that means love of the brethren. So he says add to all the other things, love of the brethren. But there's something even beyond that.

And to the love of the brethren, charity. And that means a love that goes out to everybody. When you meet a man, I was so challenged when I read Sankster's biography.

By the way, I don't know if you got it in the bookstore. It's the grandest biography that's been written in recent years. As a bit of writing, it's beautiful.

And I thought, well, I wish I'd known that man. And one thing challenged me when I read the life of Sankster, his son who wrote the biography. And I just think no one quite so searching about a father as a son.

He wrote the biography. And he said, there was something about my father, whenever he met a new man, his natural, or rather the attitude, not a natural attitude, but generated by grace was, how can I help this man? Charity. Not only to the brethren, but to anybody.

Well now John, at the moment, is talking about love for the brethren. He said, for the moment, you leave love for everybody. What about love for your brothers in Christ? If you can't learn to love them, you won't love those outside of Christ.

And this is the test. Now it's come to me afresh, even as we sang that hymn, that I don't always regard this as the test of spiritual growth. In my thinking, power is so important.

Effectiveness so important. Knowledge important. Gift important.

Not with God. God is love. And the only mark of new birth, and thereafter of any spiritual progress, is in growing in love.

I tell you, I miss that so easily. So easily, it's other things that I think are the important thing. But I've seen in my brethren growth.

You can't always see it in yourself. I don't know who can tell. You can't always tell yourself that I can look at others and I can see the difference.

When I say that about a brother, I have to admit the only real difference is a growing in love. There's calvary in love, which wasn't there before. Now that is the supreme evidence.

Do I regard it as such? Or is it effectiveness? Is it spiritual gift so that I can minister powerfully? Is it power for service? That is not necessarily the evidence at all. Love. Love is of God and everyone that loveth God, that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

But he for all his gifts that loveth not, knoweth not God for the great sufficient reason that God is love. Now the second thing I go on to say is this. That love, that loving, caring for the other brother is the way by which God dwells in us and we in God.

We had that great chapter in John 15 about abiding in Christ. How do you abide? Well, I used to say it's by faith, coming with your emptiness and trusting. It doesn't say that here.

In chapter 4, verse 12, it says, if we love one another, God abideth in us and his love is perfected in us. Verse 16, God is love and he that dwelleth or abideth in love abideth in God and God in him. There's a reincarnation of God, if you like, in the man that is expressing calvary love, the love that's met and melted him and is now transmitted to his brother without concern as to whether he deserves it or not.

He that dwelleth in love, that means he that dwelleth in love for his brother. It isn't all, I'm going to keep on thinking about the love of God. No, he that's dwelling and continuing in love for his brother is dwelling and continuing in God and God in him for the simple reason that God is love.

That phrase, God is love, comes twice in this epistle, once negatively, once positively. The first we've heard, he that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love, and positively, he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him for God is love. And this question of God abiding in me as I love is to me well illustrated by the picture of a tank in our homes.

Whenever you turn the tap on, somewhere in the house you can hear fresh water going into the tank. We had a meeting in the old gymnasium last week, and there's a great tank there which feeds certain bathrooms, and it nearly drowned us because some folks were having bars, and you could hear the fresh water going in. No fresh water goes in unless that which is there is poured out.

And if I want new in-pourings of divine love and life, I've got to be willing to turn on the tap and pour out to others that which has already been given to me. Now this is abiding in God and God in me. Now this isn't always quite what we thought, but this is what the word says.

And in experience you know it is. When you've been broken over a point, your selfishness has been overcome, and you've done what the spirit told you with regard to another, you know he's abiding in you. The glow and sweetness of his presence is in your heart, and the other feels it too.

Isn't that true? But oh, when our bowels of our compassion are shut up, God can't pour in anymore. Well, that's the second thing. And so here's this love, the test of new birth, and our progressing relationship with God.

It's the way by which God dwells again in man and expresses himself through man. Then I want to go on to say that this love, this caring, flows from a sense of God's love for us. This is the great thing he has to say.

A sense of God's love for us in giving his son. Will you look at 1 John 3, 16? Hereby perceive we love. This is the love that I'm to transmit to others, but I've got to first receive it myself.

Because he laid down his life for us. What deep words those are, though so familiar. And we, as a result, ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

You have the same in verse 11. Beloved, if God so loved us, and he's referring to that great act of the cross, we ought to love one another. Please turn the cassette over now.

Do not fast wind it in either direction. And then you have verse 19. We love because he first loved us.

It's very interesting to always bring together John 3, 16 and 1 John 3, 16. We all know John 3, 16. God so loved the world that he did this tremendous thing.

He gave his only begotten son. But 1 John 3, 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God.

Because he did that, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. And the interesting thing is this. That in this epistle at least, the love of God is not, isn't said to provoke our love for God.

Of course that's true. But that's not what John is after. I don't think in one place, I may be wrong, but I don't think in one place in this epistle is it our love for God which is spoken of.

It's our love for the brother, for our brethren. The hymns of course always familiarize us with the thought, because he loves us, we love him. That's not John's word.

Because God has so loved us, we ought to love the other fellow. Otherwise it becomes a closed circuit, God and me. It becomes that two-point circuit.

But it isn't, it's a three-point circuit. The love of God shed on me, seen in the giving of his son, is to be transmitted to the other fellow. And then his praise goes back to God.

Now that is the conception here. And it's challenging because so often it's that side of the triangle that's missing. And God, and he says you may well doubt whether you've known and believed the love that God hath towards you, if it still left you loveless.

But it all begins with a new sense of how I need it, of the love of God for men. And the writers of the New Testament cannot get over this great demonstration in God giving his son. Oh, it was love, it was wondrous love.

The love of God to me, it brought my Saviour from above to die on Calvary. Every one of the writers has this great theme. That is not how the unhappy experiences of life point in any other direction.

The sight of Calvary and the love of God there is enough to give the lie to every other experience. What shall separate us from the love of God? What shall cause me to doubt it if I have this painful experience or that painful experience? I can never doubt it, says Paul in Romans 8. If God spared not his son, delivered him up for us all, how shall he not freely give us all things? The love of God in giving his son. It's hard to give a son.

Even we mortals find that. Very often missionaries have to part with children because of their call to the foreign field. And they can take them for so long after that they have to be educated in England.

And very often we feel sorry for the child who is thus separated from much that his parents would be able to give it. But the one who bears the biggest cost to the parents are the tears that have been shed by parents who because of their love for a needy country and a needy tribe are prepared to say goodbye for several years at a stretch to beloved children. My very dear friend Len Harris of the Unevangelized Fields Mission told me how during the war there was no possibility of furlough and he and his wife didn't see their daughter, seven or eight or nine years was it, and he said he used to wake up at night time and find his wife sobbing by his side in bed, sobbing for her children.

And when they did get back she at first didn't recognize them or even feel drawn towards them. That's a faint picture. But God, because of his love for a world that didn't love him, gave his son and said goodbye and saw him go to dark Calvary.

But it wasn't only a son that God gave. John 3.16 says it was an only son. I've only got one son.

Others are my friends of large families. If calamity came I suppose, well, it would be hard for them. But how much harder when an only son goes and is lost.

Parents are rarely bereft. And friends of mine who sometimes come to this conference, that's what happened to them. Their only dear boy, a promising young Christian, climbing the rocks at Llandudno, fell and lost his life one year, not during our conference.

He needed all the grace of God to help them to get over that severe blow. That's what God did. It was an only son.

Friends, I know these are only words. How can we express these things? But God says, I want to tell you what it meant to me. You know what it is to give an only son.

That's what it meant to me and more. And more than that, it was an only begotten son. It wasn't an adopted son.

Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, part of himself. And this is what John talks about. This it is that is the inspiration of any bit of love that this man has learnt to show to others.

Beloved, if God so loved us and didn't mark our iniquities and so forth, they haven't turned to me yet. But while we were still away from God, loved us and made this immense sacrifice, we ought to love that other brother with a caring something akin to God's. Well, there it is.

Verse 11 and also verse 19. And again you have it. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Verse 14 and verse 16. And in that way we have known and believed the love of God toward us. Do you know scripture doesn't really give us any other final evidence of the love of God but Calvary.

Our choruses are not too sugary. They're for infinitely short of expressing this love. Oh, to have a new sense of that love.

But the love of God, the love of Calvary, says John is special in this, that he loved us when we didn't love him. This is my next head. And this lovely verse, herein is love, not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Now that was the thought of love. It was a love not dependent on being loved. So often in human relationships, when you are loved, you love.

Not so between God and us. It's so important to see the nature of this love because this love has got to be reproduced and expressed in us. Understand then that the love of God for us was never dependent on him being loved.

Herein is love, not that we love God. We didn't to begin with at all. But he loved us and while we were still in our sins, sent his Son to be the dreadful propitiation for our sins.

Paul has the same lovely conception in Romans chapter 5. We have a fourfold condition of man, a fourfold picture of man's condition, of the love of God for him in that state. In verse 6, chapter 5, verse 6, we are helpless when we were still helpless without strength. We got ourselves into the net but we couldn't get ourselves out.

Then we were ungodly. In that same verse, verse 8, we were sinners. And verse 10, we were enemies.

Without strength was our condition. Ungodly was our character. Sinners were our characteristics and enemy.

That was our attitude. We were resisting. And yet while we were still, says Paul, in that condition, we were loved.

And God didn't hold our sins against us but willingly gave his Son. Who can tell what it cost him for people like that? Verses 7 and 8 is a lovely contrast. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die.

Yet, pray and venture for a very, very good man. Some might even screw up their courage to die for him. But God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, nothing at all.

He loved us. And Christ died to reconcile us to God. You know, it's this factor which gives colour to the theme of the love of God.

It isn't just the love of God. It's the love of God for sinners. The love of God by itself to me is rather colourless.

But what puts colour, what makes it flush red, is the love of God for men in their sins and with their thanks to him. Which love ultimately wins their hearts. His love won my heart.

His love won my heart. He came into stay. He took sin away.

His love won my heart. And that whole chorus ends up with, I want to be faithful and loyal and true to the love that won my heart. Now this is what we call Calvary love.

Calvary love is love for sinners. Calvary love is not dependent on us being loved. Now we come to the next head.

This is the love that I've got to express. I've got to express the love of God. We have that phrase, how dwelleth the love of God in him.

It isn't love dwelling in me, it's the love of God. The love that I've got to express is with that sort of love. I can't do it in myself but as I know what it is to be melted at the cross and as a sinner and an enemy as I repent to receive the love and the benefits of that love, it comes in.

And that is what I've got to express to other people. Now I'm going to suggest to you that if this is the love we've got to express, in the nature of the case, it cannot be expressed to God. This love isn't dependent on being loved.

I suggest to you the love you give back to God is merely as a result of being loved. Therefore it cannot be the true love of God. The love of God is not dependent on being loved and therefore I cannot really reflect the true love of God back to God because it is dependent on being loved.

It's provoked by his love for me. In the nature of the case I can only show the love of God to a mother who perhaps doesn't love me, who's scared of me, doesn't want me to be concerned for him, doesn't want me to help him to Christ, is resenting me, resisting me. That's the only situation seems to be where I can really show the love of God.

So it can be said that that one ultimately he loved me when I didn't love him. I didn't want him to bother with me. Whatever led him to do it because someone from heaven first bothered about him when he didn't want to be bothered about.

And you now are bothering about that other one. And you know it happens. You don't have to work it out.

It happens when you allow yourself to be melted to the cross, when you repent and confess how you haven't loved and been cold. You put it right. It's love that sends you to put it right and then somehow it's there.

And will you please notice that this love we're to express is not to be in word only, says John, but in deed and in truth. That 3.18, my little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And then he gives us an illustration about seeing another brother have need and material need.

And you know the love of God isn't only concern for a man's soul and for spiritual progress and will lead us to go after him and that's lovingly challenge him. And others will do the same for us. But it cares.

It's caring. And it does extend to material needs. It's one of the things one has seen happen.

The love of the brethren. There's nothing that's outside its scope. It's wonderful when the love of the brethren touches our pockets and the Lord's money begins to circulate.

And that's the only thing that does make it circulate. It's love. It's caring.

I find so often I don't. Then sometimes I get so challenged. My wife says so and so.

I find a little struggle with selfishness and then I repent. It's the love of God for another brother who is need. And to receive.

I mean some brethren we've told there'd be some motives. I never thought the brethren really cared about that. If it wasn't so, how dwelt the love of God in the brethren.

During the Grace Abounding Convention on the team, a very sweet thing was said. One of our brethren who's not able to be with us this month, dear brother, told us that he had felt guided to make a gift. He himself was a missionary on furlough.

God knows he had little enough. But God guided him to make a gift to another brother. And he felt God wanted him to make that gift.

And so he gave this gift to this brother. And the brother said, well, thank you so much. It's sweet of you.

But I'm not really in need. Well he said, all I know is that God seemed to guide me to give it to you. He said, I'll tell you what you do.

Keep it in circulation. Keep it in circulation. Maybe one day you're the giver.

Another day there's a need on your part. And you find grace ministering to your need. I wonder are we doing that.

Keep it in circulation. I thought it was wonderful because sometimes you feel a bit flattened when it comes some little sacrifice. And God's guided you to make a gift to the brother.

Thank you, I don't really need it. Keep it in circulation. Somebody else does.

That's love. And all the effect on people. You know that is what is by means of that word that Jesus talked about.

Making friends by means of the mammon and righteousness. Money which has been the curse of the world can be the instrument of the love of God and provoke love and praise all around. Oh, I believe that's the real thing.

It isn't merely a legalistic dealing with a tithe. It may be more than a tithe. Keep it in circulation.

And I know it sometimes happened to us. Someone sent us a gift and we went at that moment in need. So we passed it on.

That's the way. If it should happen that brother, he passes it on. I believe God's money needs to be set free.

It's got into circulation. There shouldn't be any lack. Not only for the Lord's work but for preacher needs as well in the fellowship of the redeemed.

And it's the love of God that touches even that aspect. And so what we've got here in John's epistle is the love of God shed to us, expressed to others. Now that is the meaning of this word that comes in John's epistle on a number of occasions about the love of God being made perfect in us.

Now I've often puzzled as to what that has meant. And John Wesley developed his doctrine of entire sanctification on those verses. To be made perfect in love, he thought, was a second blessing whereby all wrong tendencies were expelled from the soul and the soul was made perfect in love.

And if you read some of Charles Wesley's hymns with that in mind you'll see that's what he's really getting at. Well many of us have thought deeply into the possibility of a once for all blessing that sets you up for life. This isn't true in experience and it isn't really based on the word of God.

But for myself I love anything that's said along that line in one way, even the hymns, because I want to have a high faith in the Lord. I want to know as big a holiness as grace can do for me. But so often if you go too much along that line you think you've got the once for all blessing and then something goes wrong and you're plunged into despair and the devil thrashes you.

But the old Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification was based on these verses of being made perfect in love. Well now I can only share with you what I've come to see when it is to be made perfect. God's love, it says in one place, made perfect in us.

The amplified version has in one place this word about the love of God running its full course in us. It's once again the picture of the three-point circuit. God, me, my brother, is to run its full course and its full course is not only to come down to me but to get through me to the other and to go back to God in greater praise.

And this is what is meant by the love of God, I suggest, being perfected in us. We shall see tomorrow that this love of God perfected in us has wonderful effects in us. But that's it.

I believe the trouble is this, the love of God can get in but it can't always get out. It comes down but it's that bit, that leg of the triangle. The love of God runs its full course in us.

Just look at one verse then as we close about that. It's in the second chapter, is it? Chapter 2, verse 5, who so keepeth his word and obeying in the matter of love in him verily is the love of God perfected. It runs its full course.

Are there matters in which you've not been letting the love of God run its full course? It may be the first thing would be to put something right with a dear brother whom you've resented, whom you've been critical of. Whom you've been jealous, whom you've been cold towards. You haven't been treated like that by God.

The love of God's got in but it hasn't got out. It needs to run its full course. It gets stultified.

It goes stagnant in us and it isn't a matter of just decide to be more loving, there's a matter you perhaps and I have got to deal with immediately. And as we express this great calvary love, it runs its full course. Who knows what great beneficent effects will be accomplished as a result of that when his love is perfected, it comes to maturity, runs its full course in us.

Well, God help us not only to receive these things with our minds but if he's shown you a deep failure in love, you haven't shown the love of God to that brother. We had to see how we hadn't shown the love of God to our son who was not responding to Jesus. And what a change there was in our relationship when it wasn't him that we said must repent, we repented.

But it was the love of God that led us to do it and it produced a melting. The end of the story is not yet as far as he's concerned but what a difference in our attitude and happiness and relationship sense and it's opened the door for him really to hear the voice of Jesus. So we could illustrate it again and again.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we do confess that though thou hast loved us, we've manifested a very different attitude to the other person. We've been that unforgiving servant, having been forgiven so vast a debt.

We're holding some small thing about against another and refusing to let him off when you have dealt so differently with us. Lord, show us what's been stopping that love of thine running its full course to that other. Pin us down to the thing about which you want us to begin with.

We pray thee. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

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