

Understanding God Is Love

by Shane Idleman

God's love is not a license to sin, but a call to repentance and a reminder of our need to live a life pleasing to Him.

Duration: 48:29

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 1 John 4:7-11

Topics: "Gods Love", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of sharing the full truth of the Gospel, including difficult topics like sin, judgment, repentance, and the wrath of God, alongside the love and grace of God. It highlights the need for reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ and the urgency of being ambassadors for Christ, sharing the message of salvation. The story of a father sacrificing his son to save others serves as a powerful illustration of God's sacrificial love for humanity.

Transcript

Lord, we give you this service tonight. Lord, we often say that, but Lord, we truly mean it. Lord, I pray that your spirit would descend upon this place.

Lord, begin to break addictions. Lord, in strongholds. Lord, I pray that those who came here in a spirit of failure will be strengthened and rebuilt.

Lord, I pray that you'd begin to call the prodigal son home and the wayward daughter. Lord, I pray for those who are not here as we're praying and we're contending. Lord, that you would bring them to you.

Draw them by your spirit, Lord. Draw them by the power of your love, the power of the gospel, the power of the truth. Lord, I pray tonight for marriages that are on the rocks.

You'd begin to restore and rebuild those marriages. Lord, strengthen the man. Call him to a place of spiritual leadership in the home.

Lord, we thank you for your son. We thank you for the cross. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Boy, I'm often tempted to just keep going into worship. That's a message, you know, and just let God break us. And I would be remiss this evening if I didn't obviously say something about Mother's Day that is

tomorrow.

And I personally want to thank, of course, my mom and my wife, two of the most special women I know, obviously, and my daughters. But they couldn't make it tonight because they're at a wedding. And they were honoring that commitment.

And I came here to honor this commitment to you. And I was thinking of, of course, my mother and Morgan today as well. And it reminded me that as we're talking about God's love, I think moms are one of the greatest gifts we've ever received to show what God's love looks like.

That nurturing, that caring, that long-suffering. There's just things a man can't bring to the equation. And remembering what they, what they bore.

There's no monuments erected. I mean, many of you know wives are the hardest working people out there. Taking, taking care of kids.

So we honor you today for that. Absolutely. It's an honor and a privilege to even be able to speak on this topic because mothers often sadly keep the home together.

If I can be a little bit honest tonight. It was my mom who kept our home together. Praying and contending when it looked like it might not work.

It's the moms that encourage prayer. It's the moms that encourage church attendance. Why is that, man? Why is that? We are called for that purpose.

And a lot of times they've got to pick up the slack and they're showing the love and the compassion that we should be showing as well. And I actually saw that a few hours ago. My son, my five-year-old, he's turning five.

He broke his first window a few hours ago. With a golf ball. So who does he go to? Mommy, mommy, I broke a window.

And I go, what window? I'm out looking. And we, and he was like, you know, holding on to her. And I said, I said, Shane, I'm so proud of you.

You came and told us that you did this. It was an accident and we're proud of you. And he was happy after that.

And I said, you know the difference? If you would have said, I don't know who did that. I don't know. There's a big broken one.

I have no idea who did that. And you lied about it. We'd have to, there'd be some recourse.

But don't worry about it. He was scared, obviously. But just seeing her love.

And he runs to her and she's holding him. And he's, there's security there. There's safety there.

And a lot of times what happens is we forget about God's love. As Christians, we should know God's love thoroughly. And without a shadow of a doubt.

Because it's he who holds us. Though the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. If he falls, he will be upheld by the Lord's hand.

Remember David, we talked about a few weeks ago. You know, if I ascend into heaven, you are there. Behold, if I ascend, descend into hell, even you are there.

If I go to the uttermost parts of the world, you are there. You will uphold me with your right hand. You will sustain me.

He is the God. He provides for us. He shelters us.

He covers us. And we need to remember that today. We remember, we need to remember his love and thankfulness.

We need to be in a spirit of thankfulness. And I was remembering also, some of you were there at the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast last week. They had a guest speaker.

She's, she was blind. I think at 10 or 11 or 12 years old. Jennifer Rothchild.

It just broke my heart because her dad is taking her to the hospital. 10, 11, as her eyesight is fading. Can you believe, could you imagine that? Or mothers, if you're taking a child each year to the doctor, and the eyesight is getting worse and worse and worse.

And now she's obviously blind. But she was talking about how she came to know this couple. Or that they actually called her in to help this couple.

And they had what is, I guess, recorded as the only, the only triplets born to a husband and wife that are blind and deaf. Triplets. And the husband was just about ready to throw in the towel.

He was completely worn out, as you can imagine. I mean, one normal child is difficult. Throw three with being blind and deaf.

And I started to think, and God just pressed it on my heart right there. The only way those children knew their parents was by a touch. Think about that.

They couldn't see them. They couldn't hear them. They just knew the touch of their parents.

And I think God wants to do that sometimes in our lives, is just give us that touch, and that peace, and that joy. But she went on to say, the husband said, I feel like a failure. I'm here to lead, and I'm not the hero.

I can't fix this. And she told him something I hope I never forget, because it strengthened me that week, believe it or not. She said, you're not called to fix this.

You're called to stay in the battle. You see, we have to remember that. We're not even called to win the battle.

We are coming from a position of victory already. The battle's been won. We are called to hold our ground.

Having done all, stand. Stand, therefore, with your loins girt about with truth. He told Moses, stand.

Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He told Joshua, stand still, Joshua, and see the walls come tumbling down. A lot of times, we want to run into and do this.

God says, just stand. Having done all, stand. Stand with perseverance, with fortitude, with patience, with long-suffering, with trust, with faith, with perseverance, because we're in a position of victory.

The battle's been won. So there's nothing we need to win. We need to hold our ground.

That's why Ephesians breaks down the Christian armor, because we are in a fighting position. We are in a battling position. We are waging wars against the unfruitful works of darkness.

That's why the love of God is such a powerful message that the hardest of criminals on death row have been known to weep when you talk about the love of God, the love of Christ. And a lot of times, we can get so caught up, especially in Bible-believing, preaching-the-truth type churches like this one is known for, that we can slip to the side of just proclaiming repentance, repentance, repentance, and miss the other aspect of the love of God, because the love of God compels us to repentance. But as I've said before, if it's all about love, and all about love, and all about love, nobody changes.

There's no conviction. They like to say, for God so loved the world. And they're not going to finish the last half of that one.

It's all about, no, it has to be, we have to, truth and love are married. The truth, God doesn't refrain from telling us the truth, but he tells it because he loves us. We just had a memorial service.

Yvette, Ron, and Pastor Gary, your family did it. It was a great job. It was a reminder to me that the love of God changes lives.

It's the love of God that actually, when we come, why is somebody so joyful? Why are we so joyful as believers in this new life in Christ? Because of the love of God. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. That verse in and of itself is powerful, powerful.

And I want to get into that briefly, but I want to read Lamentations 3, 22 through 23. Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. Listen to me tonight.

Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, okay? Some of you are feeling consumed, worn out. You don't need to be that way. Paul said, though I am hard pressed, though I am afflicted, all these things, it doesn't matter because Christ is on my side.

He says, when you're feeling consumed, do not, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is God's faithfulness.

See, the government's going to let us down, the financial system, everything's going to let us down in the end, but God will not let us down. His word will not return void. We stand on a solid foundation that will not shift, it will not sink, it will not collapse.

It is sure it is there. So what the enemy tries to do, he wants to come in and remove you from the foundation. See, the foundation's there.

It's not going anywhere. But he tries to pull us off of that foundation. Having done all, stand on that foundation, the foundation, the rock of Christ.

Jesus said, I am the rock. Build your house on this foundation, for it will weather the storm, because the storm's come. It's been said, if you're not coming out of one, you'll be going into one shortly.

You're either in one or you're coming out of one, or you're going into one. And it's what foundation are you building upon? And God, this aspect of love, God loves us so much that he has given us hope, he has given us peace, he's given us reassurance through his son. And I wanna get to that, but first I wanna talk about, we're gonna get into the message now, on this issue of love.

The series is Understanding God. We just started the series, Understanding God, trying to systematically go through and understand God, who he is. The last two weeks, we talked about understanding God through holiness.

And talk about a sermon that ruffled some feathers. Go home and listen if you were not here, because that is a very important message, when we talk about this issue of holiness. See, I can talk about holiness, and all the churches say, amen, brother.

But when I talk about practical application, you're labeled legalistic, you're labeled narrow-minded. And this idea of holiness, and you guys, you need to understand, I'm not trying to hinder anything. I'm here to help.

I'm trying to help. But I wrote down something here, holiness cannot come from a polluted mind. That's why I hit on this subject so hard, because what the church has been filling their mind with, and they wonder why they've lost the passion for God, wonder why they don't know anything about holiness, why church is boring, why they can't even get through one chapter in their Bible, why the things of God seem distant, because they're feeding their mind with things that directly oppose Him.

And I have to tell you that, because that is the transformed life, is when you look at what you're feeding your mind, what as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. What you put in comes out. So we talked about understand holiness.

Now I want to talk about understanding this phrase that we've all heard, God is, let's say it, God is love. Do you know that? I believe it's one of the most misapplied verses that has ever, ever touched the shores of our nation for sure. I've seen it used to back everything.

One of the misquoted verses or misapplied verses also is found in Matthew that we've all heard, judge not lest you be judged. And you say something about abortion or homosexual marriage or any of these hot topics. Oh, no, no, sir, judge not.

You cannot judge. Oh, yes, we can. We are called to judge with righteous judgment.

Keep reading a little bit further. Jesus says, remove the plank from your eye, take on a spirit of humility and brokenness and gentleness, then you can speak the truth in love. But they misapply these things and God is love has been thrown out there to apply to everything.

God is love, God is love. You know what the reason is? What they're really saying is tolerance. In America, especially, God is tolerance.

Don't challenge me. Don't upset me. Don't offend me.

Don't rebuke me. Don't come down on me. Don't come against me.

God is love. You can't do that, sir. No, that's not what it means.

We want tolerance. Basically, people are saying, I want to justify my lifestyle. God is love.

I wanna do whatever. I want to whoever I want, whenever I want. And I don't care what you think.

God is love. We see this on the news all the time. People come out and say, God is love.

You can't, how can a mean, angry God send people to hell? God is love. I mean, we hear this all the time, don't we? So let's do this. Let's put that verse briefly in context.

And I wanna make a statement tonight. I hope you never ever forget, because this will help, especially when people come to your door, sometimes dressed nice and presenting their other gospel. The truth of God's Word invites scrutiny.

It says, bring it on. Error will run from this. Truth invites scrutiny.

Truth says, come on, let's dialogue. Let's sit down. Let's discuss.

But error says, no, thank you. I'm out of here. I do not wanna discuss.

I remember I told you last year, some people came to my house and they left. They said, can we leave you some material? And I said, well, I'm going to, when you come back, we're gonna sit down. We're gonna compare it to the truth of God's Word.

No, we'll just, thank you, sir. We'll thank you. We don't wanna do it.

Why? What's wrong? What's wrong? This invites scrutiny. Let's talk about this all day long. It's when you don't wanna scrutinize when there's something there.

And I often tell people if they're local and they email me and it's a critical email, I say, you know what? Let's talk. Let's bring your scriptures. Let's talk after the service or this.

I never hear from them again. Why not? If your position is accurate, let's dialogue. Let's talk about this.

Truth invites scrutiny. The truth of the gospel invites scrutiny. Truth invites scrutiny.

So on this, let's put God is love in context here. Are you ready? You have your Bibles? Or it should be in the bulletin or I can read it, whatever's easier. And actually I didn't put the, I believe it's 1 John.

I just put 4-7. So I believe it's 1 John 4-7. If it's not, let me know.

Okay, here we go. Beloved, let us love one another. So 1 John 4-7.

Okay, beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God. And everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Now let's stop there for a minute. He's saying, let us love one another. For love is of God.

And everyone who loves, truly loves, is born of God and knows God. So right there, he's telling us the genuine fruit of a genuine person who's been transformed by the radical power of the gospel, has genuine love for people. They have genuine love for God's word.

They have genuine love for God. Their heart is set on God, not on Sodom. As I said last week, they're set, they're focused.

They're not perfection, but they love God. They love God's word. They love the people of God.

If you don't, that is a characteristic of somebody who's been genuinely converted. If you don't love the brethren, if you don't love Christians, you don't love God's word, you don't love the truth of God's word, you have to do a heart check and say, is my heart right? Because John is saying right here, everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. And it's not the love of the world, right? We've talked about that before.

Many times when people say I'm so in love, they're not in love, they're in lust. They just make me feel so much better. I just love this person.

And then six months later, they wanna get out of Dodge. What happened if you're in love, true love? The Bible says love is patient. Love is kind.

It doesn't envy. It doesn't boast. It's not rude.

It's not proud. It's not self-seeking. It keeps no record of wrong done against it.

Love rejoices in the truth. It does not delight in evil. It always trusts.

It always hopes. It always perseveres. That's what love is.

So we have to go to the Bible for the correct definition of that. So John is saying everybody who truly has this characteristic of love knows God. Now, here we go.

Verse eight, he who does not love does not know God. There's no difficulty in understanding that. He who does not know God or he who does not love does not know God for God is love.

It's funny how people just wanna throw out that God is love and that covers a multitude of sins and I can do whatever I want. God's love does cover a multitude of sins, but we have to be in right relationship with Him. And he goes on to say, in this, the love of God was manifest toward us.

Basically, that means revealed. In this, the love of God was revealed toward us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this love that we should love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.

In other words, Christ took our spot. Christ took our place. The wrath of God was satisfied on the cross on Christ.

That is propitiation. He sent His Son for that purpose. Verse 11, beloved, if God so loved us, we also should love one another.

Now, we talked about genuine faith. If you have genuine faith, there is love in your life. You love God's Word.

He's also saying, if you've been truly converted and you have the love of God in your heart, you will love other people in the church. See, that right there would eradicate gossip and slander and backbiting and jealousy if we would just focus on those points. Because of the love of God, we love, we truly love other people.

That is a hallmark of the Christian faith. Bar nine. So now that we've put it in context, verse eight, let's read it again.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. Okay, now I'm just gonna talk about a few things on this topic because we could really unpack it and there's not a lot of time. But I wanna make a point here with this issue of love.

We need to remember that anger is not the opposite of love. Because this is when this verse is often used. God is love.

How can an angry God send people to hell? Number one, we have to remember, He does not send people to hell. People choose to reject God and that is the final destination. So anger is not the opposite of love.

What is the opposite of love? Hatred, indifference. Let me read this quote that's powerful. We tend to be taken back by the thought that God could be angry.

How can a deity who is perfect and loving ever be angry? So what is God's problem? Real love stands against the deception and the lie and the sin that destroys. Nearly a century ago, the theologian E.H. Gifford wrote, listen to this, human love here on this earth offers a true analogy. The more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, and the traitor.

Anger isn't the opposite of love. Hate is. And the final form of hate is indifference.

Here's the question. How can a good God forgive bad people without compromising himself? Does he just play hard and fast and loose with the facts? Try telling that to the survivor of the family who saw their family murdered in the Cambodian killing fields. Or what about the family who was killed in front of their child at the Holocaust? Try telling that to those people.

You see, righteous indignation, righteous anger is not the opposite of love. It's because of love. When he sees sin destroying his people, that's where anger, righteous anger rises up.

What about Jesus when he drove out the money changers from the temple? He said, get out of here. This is a place of prayer. And he threw over their money tables.

He rebuked the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He rebuked them because of his anger. That's why God would get upset in the Old Testament.

Because the children of Israel were being drawn away by all these other nations around them. They were sacrificing their children to the God of Molech. They would get this thing red hot inside.

It was hollow. And they would put coals and wood and burn, get him red hot. And they would put their children on the altar of Molech.

God says, you're doing things that haven't even entered my mind. Do not pass your children through the fire of Molech. Do not pass them through.

The children of Israel would do that. They would sacrifice their children. The fatherless homes, the sexual morality that's destroying that nation, destroying ours.

That makes him very angry. And rightly so. You see how love, anger isn't the opposite of love.

Anger is a byproduct of genuine love. God is angry at the condition of fallen man. But anger doesn't minimize love.

It validates it. We see that in our own children. We get so upset and angry if they're getting hurt.

Don't we? So anger, anger is not the opposite of love. So as we're understanding God's Word, that is the first point. The second point, we must know to appreciate something.

I'm going to say, what are you talking about, Shane? I'll tell you in a minute. But I want to get this point across as well. We must know something to truly appreciate something, okay? Here's what I mean by that.

What about if somebody ran in and said, I can't believe it, they just won. They just won in overtime. I can't believe it.

Well, who won? What are you talking about? Oh, don't worry about it. Just they won, that's great. No, no, no.

I have to know something to appreciate it. No, no, no. Don't worry about it.

It doesn't make any sense. What about the students filling out tons of college applications? You're filling them out, filling them out, and your mom runs into your room. I can't believe it.

They accepted you. Who, mom? Who accepted me? It doesn't matter. Just know that they've accepted you.

No, I need to know. I can't appreciate something without understanding what's been accepted. What has happened? What about the man who fills out applications online all the time, trying to look for work, construction work, whatever I'll take, putting out applications, putting out calls.

He comes home. His wife is elated. There's a great job opportunity.

You're going to make good money. We're back on track. I can't believe it.

Where? Where am I going to work on Monday? Where? Show me. Don't worry about it. Just rejoice in that fact.

I can't rejoice that well until I know what is happening. You see that point? We must know something to truly appreciate something. And here's what our nation particularly is forgetting.

We've got to talk about the difficult truths to appreciate the good truths. How can you talk about heaven but not hell? How can you talk about a savior but not sin? How can you talk about relationship with Christ but not repentance? So we've convoluted this whole thing with God is love and pastors across our nation step to the pulpits and they say, I'm not going to offend anybody rather than I do not want to offend God's

word. And they don't finish the rest of John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world. Isn't that great? Let's go home and rejoice. No, His son had to die upon a cross because the wrath of Almighty God is on us without Christ.

See, how can I? Jesus said that lady who's been forgiven much loves much. And I will submit to you that I've seen it throughout my life that those who are the closest to Christ, those who love Him the most, those who are filled with the Spirit of God realize just how close they are. They're so close that they were to the verge of destruction.

And that's my concern is when we just talk about the love of God, but not the other, the ramifications, we are on dangerous ground because God does. He talks about the difficult truths to get us to turn back to Him. Think about that.

The good news can only be appreciated with the bad news as the backdrop. And that's why I think it's a good wake-up call for some of us that God is love, God is love, God is love, and that's great. But why is that so great? As the song says, it's grace that's brought me here thus far.

It'll be grace that takes me home. Thank God for God's grace. But God's grace because of what? Because of sin and eternal separation from God.

So He's saved us from that. That's true grace. Let's read what Jesus said.

He himself said, I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council and whoever says you fool will be liable to hellfire. Jesus is trying to get his point across.

This nice little turn the other cheek Jesus who wouldn't offend anybody, this same Jesus said, do not fear him who can just kill your body. Jesus said, fear him who is able to cast both body and soul in hell. You see my dilemma from the pulpit? You see my dilemma? As much as we don't want to offend people, it's actually the offense of the gospel that convicts the heart where a person repents and they see their need for a savior.

If we just leave here saying God is love, God is love, they continue in the same direction they're going. There's no challenge. There's no stirring.

There's no conviction. We can't talk about the love of God without the anger of God over their sinful condition. Jesus wrote many, many other words.

And I want to read something briefly. I usually don't do this, but I'll do it tonight. I want to recommend this book if you get a chance, The Reason for God by Tim Keller.

And this is absolutely amazing. And this gives a lot of perspective on this imagery that we have. We have God's love, but what is the other side of it? Of hell and eternal separation from God.

And we think of this mean, vengeful God. You know, ah-ha-ha, you're going to be down there, you know, in eternity without me. Ah-ha, isn't that great? And how could this loving God? The loving God says, I don't want you to go there.

I am long-suffering. I am patient. I don't wish that any should be put in that position, but that all come to repentance.

He put something remarkable. I had to highlight it. He said a common image of hell in the Bible is that of fire.

Fire disintegrates. Even in this life, we can see the kind of soul disintegration and self-centeredness that they create. We know how selfishness and self-absorption leads to piercing bitterness, nauseating envy, paralyzing anxiety, and paranoid thoughts.

And the mental denials and distortions that accompany them. Now, ask the question, what if when we die, we don't end, but spiritually our life extends into eternity? Which we know it does. Hell then is the trajectory of a soul living a self-absorbed, self-centered life going on forever and ever and ever.

And then he concludes, all God does in the end with people is he gives them what they want most, including freedom from himself. What could be more fair than that? The love of God puts Christ on the cross, calls us to him, long-suffering, gentle, kind, patient, long-suffering, calling us throughout many of our entire lives, this calling of God. And then we at the end say, those who reject him say, I don't want it.

I want my self-centered life. I don't want there to be a God. I don't want to bow to any God.

And basically says, you want it, you got it. See, it's not as much about an angry, vengeful God as it is a people rejecting the God who bought them with a price. So that's what the love of God is.

It is saving mankind from himself. That's why A.W. Tozer, I've quoted this before, I'll quote it again. He said, I love Jesus Christ because he is my savior.

But I fear him because he is my judge. You see, I can't just talk about one side of the coin and not the other. It's a love of God that compels me to share the truth of the Gospel.

Paul said to Timothy, listen, listen, don't doze off just yet. Listen to this. Paul is telling Timothy, Timothy, listen, when it's all said and done, here's what you're called to do.

I charge you, 2 Timothy 4, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, that's a strong statement, who is to judge the living and the dead. Paul says, I urge you, Timothy, by God and Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom. Timothy, preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. That's why Paul tells Timothy, Timothy, preach the word.

What that means is preach the difficulties and the pleasantries. Preach the cross and the new life. Preach heaven and preach hell.

Timothy, preach salvation and preach damnation. Preach grace and preach sin. Preach love and preach wrath.

Preach mercy and preach judgment. Preach forgiveness and preach obedience. Preach that God is love, but don't forget that God is just.

You see how we have to balance this truth of God's word and the love of God compels us to share the entire truth. Who in their right mind would share partial truth as not to offend someone on their way to hell? I'm not going to offend you, but you're on the broad road that leads to destruction. See, it makes no sense, but I've said many times before and I'll say it again, that's why from the pulpit you've got to be filled with the spirit of God and say like Martin Luther, he must be ready to stake not only his soul on it, but his life on the truth because we've got to stand before God and answer for the words that come out of our mouths.

And most of us don't want to offend people. We don't like people to get upset. It's not what we like to do.

We want everybody to say, oh, wasn't that a great sermon? What's for dinner? Oh, you're so encouraging. Thank you and thank you. We need encouragement.

We need this, but we also need the truth of God's word like never before in our culture. I've said this before and I'll say it again. I would love for Joel Stein to give a message like this because in all seriousness, those people need to hear it.

You've got the largest platform in the nation. We need to get the truth of God's word out there. We can't just say God is love and everybody thinks all is well and we don't need to change.

He loves me and He does. That's why He calls us to repentance and right relationship to Him. It's because of that love.

So you have to understand these words we don't like to use, hell, sin, judgment, repentance, the wrath of God. They're all necessary to convey the truth. See, the power, I've said this before, the power is not in my eloquence.

Lord knows I don't have it. The power is not in my knowledge. The power is not in my speech.

The power is in the truth of the gospel, period. The power is in the truth. Just proclaim the truth in a spirit of love and gentleness and meekness.

It's not what we say often, it's how we say it that tilts the scale. If somebody is truly concerned for the souls of people, why, how can they hold this back? Either they're a coward or they're not themselves convinced of the gospel truth. Those are the only two options.

Because when God radically changes your life, you have to get this message out. The truth, the truth I'll tell you tonight is not palatable, right? Tastes good. The truth is not marketable and it's not acceptable.

The truth will not be marketable, it will not be acceptable. We are called to proclaim the truth in a dying culture and to a church that loves the world more than the things of God. I want to even just read real quick 2 Corinthians.

Let me read this. This will give you a whole new perspective on this issue and what even your calling is. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17.

We've all heard this, but I want to keep reading. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

Now, okay, hold on, he's getting here somewhere. Now, all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ. God said, I'm going to reconcile, I'm going to restore my relationship with

fallen man through Jesus Christ.

And he's given us then the ministry of reconciliation. How do we talk about being reconciled with God but not talk about the difficult truths? It's like telling a cancer patient, I've got this wonderful medicine for you, but I'm never going to tell you about it. You're not going to be able to take it.

Sorry, I just want to tell you. I don't want to tell you about it really. And you hide it and we hide it.

God says He's reconciling the world to Himself through Jesus and therefore has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses upon them. And He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Verse 20, now then we are ambassadors for Christ. Listen here, although we're supposed to feed the poor, we're also to do these things. We should help people when they're in need.

We should do all these things. But ultimately, ultimately our major calling as Christians is to be ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us. Now this verse is going to upset some Calvinists, but let me read it.

As though God were pleading through us, we implore you. Those are some pretty strong words. We implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God.

I can almost, I can see Paul saying, you are ambassadors to Christ. God is pleading through you. Would you not preach the gospel to people, preach the truth to them? That's how they're going to be reconciled.

That's the only way. There's no other way. There's no other way.

Jesus Himself testified that I am the way, the truth, the life. No man can come to the Father except through me or as another translation, but by me. He is the only way.

And Paul's saying now that your new creation's in Christ, you are ambassadors for Christ. God is at where we're pleading through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God.

If Paul would stand before kings, King Agrippa and say, King Agrippa, I would persuade you. If he would stand in the Roman Colosseums in different areas and say, men, I would persuade you. There is a day of judgment coming.

There is the wrath of Almighty God falling upon this people. Turn to God, repent of your sins. Ought we not do the same thing? Yet we want this to be marketable.

We don't want to upset anybody. We don't want to offend them as if they're going to come to God through osmosis. If they just sit in the pew long enough, they might get it.

I just hope they read the Bible and they get it themselves. No, we're supposed to tell them a spirit of love. It doesn't mean we walk into Starbucks and start saying the sky is falling.

I got it. But when he gives us opportunities to share the gospel, people often they'll say, I need some money for food. Okay, I can help you out.

How's your soul? I can feed your stomach. Where's your soul at? That's the love of God. You might say, Shane, I just want to hear about the love of God and the grace of God.

That's what this is. This whole message of the gospel, the whole message of the Bible, Adam and Eve fell into sin. God began reconciling His people back to Him.

The sacrificial system, we talked about that before. The shedding of blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

God created a way to people have right relationship with Him, ultimately in the fulfillment of Christ, ultimately who came born to die. Ultimately why? So that those who believe in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. And then Paul and the disciples carry on the church, preaching repentance, preaching turning to God.

Now we come to our church and we don't want to mention these things. The 21st century, we don't need that, Shane. No, we need it more than ever before.

That is the hope for our nation. That is the hope for the church in America is to begin going back to the truth again, but be broken and humble. Time in the prayer closet, seeking the face of the Father so you know how to address people.

We're not fearful. We're not afraid because the love of God compels us to share the truth. That is the message of the gospel in a nutshell.

God reconciling man to himself. An angry God, the opposite of love is hate or indifference. God says, oh, too bad.

I'll just start over on some other planet. And that's why I get so passionate about this is because it's not a bunch of rules or doing this and that. He's saying, repent and return, acknowledge that you need me.

If you confess with your mouth and believe that Christ raised from the dead, you will be saved. As we started with the same verse, John 3, 16. You know what happens now? I'll be honest with you.

I see it in people's faces when I talk to people. Yeah, blah, blah, blah. I've heard that before.

There is so much power in that verse that if you stop and you thought about that verse, get up early one morning before the sun's even up, put on worship music and just think about that. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish. There's love.

There's damnation. There's attorney separation. There's a way.

There's a truth. There's a life. It's all packaged right in that verse.

That's why it's the most popular verse because it is the only hope for a dying world. And I hadn't heard this story in many years, but I think it's a good way to conclude with this. I heard D. James Kennedy tell, if you guys remember him on the TV a long time ago, 12 years ago, and it stuck with me ever since.

I doubt it's true, obviously, but the principle still applies. And I know I'm going to mess up the story. Some of you have heard it.

It's a good reminder. Some of you haven't. You need to.

But it's a story of this man my age who took his little boy to work with him. Five, six, seven years old, little boy, okay, Daddy, you can come to work with me. And what he did was he would stand above this big

ravine in this big tower, glass tower, couldn't talk or do anything.

And the railroads were too poor back then. They just made one track, another track on this side. And so what he would have to do is turn this big lever and would move the entire track over because the train was coming.

He would kind of guide that whole thing. And down, obviously, down 50 yards was this big gearbox that would just turn and turn this whole mechanism so the trains could pass by. Well, it's a normal day like any other day.

He's there. He's looking out. He gets a call in.

That we've got a problem. There's a train coming quickly and another one. You've got to move the track ASAP.

And he said, okay, no problem. As he went down to move the track over, he looks down. And on that gearbox, playing on that gearbox is his son, his five-year-old son.

He knows as soon as he pulled that, it's going to crush him to death. And he's there. He can't call down.

He can't, the trains are coming. And with tears in his eyes, he said, oh my son. And he pulls back the shifter and the trains pass.

And he can see the people and they're saying, thank you, drinking margarita, champagne. Thank you so much. Good to see you.

As his father is weeping, giving his son so these people could be saved. But the picture there is they don't even know it. They don't know what happened.

They're rejoicing. They're getting drunk, partying for tomorrow we die. That's one of the best stories I heard because that's what happened.

He had to give up his only son. You will not fully understand it. I won't either.

And I thank God I don't. There'll be a lot of questions. Why did God create this? Or why did God this? Why didn't he just make people do that? Because they're not robots.

He created us to love and to cherish him. That is the love of God in a nutshell. Dying and sending his son to die for the sins of the world.

As Gabe comes up and Chelsea and Matt, we're going to conclude on that note. It's a somber message for sure. If you truly don't know God, you've just been going through the emotions and the motions.

I want you to seriously check your heart tonight. I want you to check your heart. I want to say, do I truly have a relationship with Christ? Because if you don't, it's the most important decision you'll ever make.

You don't have to come up here. You don't have to raise your hand. What you have to do is your heart has to break.

And you have to say, Lord, I need you tonight. That is the love of God calling us back to him. And he will never reject you.

That's one prayer he will always hear. He will always hear the prayer if somebody says, Lord, I need you. I turn my life over to you.

So I ask you tonight, if you don't truly know him during worship tonight, cry out, give your heart to him. Say, Lord, I'm giving my heart to you tonight. I need you.

Lord, we give you this service. Lord, even the ending. I pray that this worship, Lord, would pierce the hearts.

Lord, begin to draw people to you. Lord, those who need to be encouraged, show them. Lord, show them that you have their life in the palm of your hands.

You control every breath we take. Lord, give them strength. Lord, give them encouragement.

Lord, I pray tonight that you would fill us mightily with your spirit. Lord, a spirit of love. Lord, give us that baptism of love and of gentleness and kindness.

Lord, flow into us those things we need. Lord, I pray tonight also you would break the hard hearts tonight. Lord, the arrogant heart, the heart of the men in this fellowship, Lord, that need to break and need to be more humble and broken before you.

Lord, I pray that your love will go through and fill their hearts as well so we can then show our families that love that you've given us. Lord, we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/XguwV-bJb-A.mp4>

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