

Genuine Love

by Tim Conway

Tim Conway emphasizes the importance of genuine love, rooted in faith and the realities of life, as taught by Paul in Romans 12.

Duration: 56:13

Scripture: Isaiah 43:2, Matthew 10:28, Romans 8:1-12, 2 Corinthians 11:25-27, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 3:17-19, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "Faith And Trust"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine love without hypocrisy, rooted in faith in Christ. It challenges believers to love sacrificially despite real-life challenges, false accusations, disappointments, and personal struggles, highlighting that true faith always produces love. The sermon encourages believers to trust in God's promises that all things work together for good, nothing can separate them from Christ's love, and God is always for them, enabling them to love fearlessly and generously.

Transcript

Romans 12 verse 9, first four words, at least in the ESV, other translations may very well have five words there, but let love be genuine. As I emphasized last week, the word genuine in the original is the word that means without hypocrisy. Let love be without hypocrisy.

Folks, let me ask you something. Any of you have a perfect week? Any of you come in here today and you had no problem, no difficulty, no nothing all week? Everything is perfect? Everything is nice? What was that? Exactly, what's that? When Paul says, look, I took a lot of time last week to emphasize, genuine here means without hypocrisy. And I dealt with the fact, many of the facts, about what hypocrisy looks like.

What I want to do is just shift gears a little bit. I hope this will be practical, I hope this will be helpful, but I want you guys to think about this. Look, these words right here.

Brethren, Paul is talking to us. Let love be without hypocrisy. When Paul says this, he's giving instruction to real people that live in a real place, at a real time, in a real church.

It's all real life situations, folks. You guys know what this term is? An ivory tower theologian. You know what that idea is? It's a guy who sits up in his tower and he mulls over and he studies over all the doctrine.

And a lot of times, you know, we might look at a college or a seminary professor like that. Ivory tower theologians. They're not in the real life.

They're not in the real church. They're not among real people. Yeah, they have their classroom come in and they teach their stuff.

But they're not out there where real life happens. They're secluded away in their little monastery or their little seminary. Paul wasn't that.

Right? You guys all agree with that. He lived real life. He rubbed shoulders with sinners.

He rubbed shoulders with the churches. He was out there in the stuff. So when he says that to us, he's not off away, well, Paul, you don't really know real life.

Don't tell us to be genuine lovers when you don't know about real life. That's not where he was. He knew real life.

We heard something about it from what? 2 Corinthians chapter 11, folks? He was in the middle of real life. He wasn't out of touch with this thing. He knew about it first hand.

You know what? You just look at the life of Paul. Well, you got those various lists, but think about this with me. Was Paul falsely accused? Have any of you been falsely accused? People say things about you that aren't true.

How does that make you feel? Does that make you feel like genuinely loving the person that falsely accuses you? Typically not. You know what we often feel like we need to do? Defend ourselves, right? Oh, what are they saying? That's not true. And usually there is a little bit of it that's true.

Maybe not the whole deal is true. But we don't like that. Here's Paul.

Think about him going through life. He's setting out on a missionary endeavor. God set him and Barnabas aside.

They're just barely getting out into this thing. And Mark says, It's too tough. I think I want to go home.

Mark! Come on! We need you! We're heading out into this thing. It's too hard. I want to turn back.

That happened. And then the next time they want to go out, here he is, butting heads with Barnabas. The frustrations of that.

And then Mark and Barnabas are gone. And then one day he comes around and, Where's Demas? He's gone back to the world. I mean, you know what? In real life... Oh, you guys read about these in the Bible.

You know you read, ah, Demas. You guys ever been in those situations where people that were close to you bail on you? It's like somebody just, boom! Right in the gut. It's like you take it personally.

These things hurt. This is where Paul lived. It's in this life that Paul is telling us, love genuinely.

You know what? Did he have a thorn in the flesh? Where'd that come from? Messenger of Satan. You think he knew about the attacks of Satan? You think he knew about these things? Right in that kind of real life. He was acquainted with life's problems, with life's disappointments, with life's struggles.

You know what? I mean, he goes through all this one list and he says, and above all these things, I mean, in addition to all this, I got the care of the churches. Look, I can tell you, the agonies, the disappointments, the depressions that settle upon me from one church. Paul's got all of them.

I mean, he's got this care of the churches. You can imagine, when problems are in the churches, Paul's taking this personally. These things are hard.

Can you ever imagine, Paul got out of bed one day and said, man, I got stoned yesterday. I think I'm going to go on a little R&R for a couple years. Instead, he marches back in there and preaches the Gospel again.

I mean, I've been stoned. I've been shipwrecked. I've been beaten with rods.

The false apostles making these things, even the good churches, they've got all sorts of things they're saying about me. I'm being falsely accused. The more I love them, the less it seems like I'm loved.

I've got fears within, fightings without. Folks, this is real life. And he knows that's right where you live.

And when he comes along and he says, love one another genuinely, it's right in that context. Now, just imagine for a second everything was perfect. Imagine every Christian was just like Christ.

Imagine that everybody you loved returned the love to you just as fully. Or more. And imagine that you really wanted to love all the time.

Imagine that every time you walked into the church, your heart was just overflowing and just gushing with affection. And you walk around and you know, all the people that profess to be Christians really are Christians, and everybody's like Christ, and we're all happy, and everything's perfect. But you guys know that's not real life.

You know what you feel like? You come in sometimes and you're downcast. You're discouraged. You're depressed.

You're disappointed. You may have been fighting with some sin this week and it got the better of you. You may have been fighting with your spouse this week.

You come in here and you had difficulties at work. You had difficulties over here. We don't maybe like something that's going on in the church.

We don't like something. We're just plain upset. The world isn't the way we want it to be.

Typically, it's not. You come in here cold and dry. Sometimes the Lord seems like He's a thousand miles away.

We don't feel much heat in our heart, much fire there, let alone great passions of love. We walk in here. You know what happens? You walk in here like that.

You walk in this door or that door or that door and basically, life, real life, has hit you with things. They're not right. Everything isn't right.

You're discouraged. Somebody's angered you. You know what? You can walk in here and you can do one of two things.

You can basically admit it straight up. You know what, folks? I'm feeling kind of selfish and unloving just now. Or you can walk in here and put the mask on and smile and even though that other is true about you, you can appear to be something else.

I'll tell you what, brethren, there are a lot of times we want to be hypocrites. Because you know what? If you start telling people, well, truth is, I feel rather selfish, rather hard, rather unloving right at the moment, well, then it stirs up questions and people begin to probe and questions are asked we don't really want to answer. So, a lot of times it's very convenient just to smile and, you know, how you doing? Eh, it's alright.

Fact is, inside, it's not alright. Fact is, you didn't come in here feeling like loving anybody. You don't want to be exposed.

You put the mask on. Brethren, there are times that's exactly how we feel. We've been knocked down, kicked around, our love is at a low ebb.

Listen, brethren, that's real life. Let me remind you, this is exactly, this is exactly, exactly the context in which Paul tells us to love one another genuinely. That's it.

Real life. This is no call to genuinely love. Only when, you know, skies blue, birds singing, gas in the tank, bank account full, family's fine, perfect harmony in the church.

Paul's calling us to love one another at the deepest level, in the deepest things, exactly when we've been wronged, exactly when we've been persecuted, exactly when we're disappointed, exactly when others have failed us, exactly when the bank account isn't full. It's empty. And the gas tank's empty.

And the sky isn't blue. It's dark. And the clouds are hanging.

And we don't know how we're going to make it tomorrow. It's exactly right there where he's saying, brethren, love one another genuinely. Love one another without hypocrisy.

Right at that point, right in that place. But the question we need to ask is how do we do that? How in the world do we do that? When I'm wore out, when I'm weary, when I'm exasperated with others, I'm feeling provoked. Here comes Paul.

Love one another without hypocrisy. I mean, how do I do that instead of striking out, instead of throwing in the towel, instead of running out that door all cold and hard? Service is over. I don't want to go to talk to anybody.

I don't want to go love anybody. I don't want to pursue strangers and seek to love them and communicate truth to them in hopes they might come to me. I'm hitting the car.

When this thing's over, I just want to escape. I want to go hide. How do we work through love when that's what we feel like doing? Let's turn to Galatians 5 for a second.

I want you to notice a verse that I think reveals to us something very helpful about where love comes from. Galatians 5. Now, most of you are probably very familiar with verse 22. If I were to ask you where love comes from and I asked you to look at verse 22 of Galatians 5, well, you would say, love comes from the Spirit.

Right? The Spirit of God. Yes, it is a work of God Almighty through that mighty Spirit in our lives that works love. In people who by nature are selfish, unloving, they love themselves.

They are their own objects of love. Selfish, unloving, rebellious people it takes a mighty working of God, a recreative work by the Spirit of God to produce love there. It is a fruit of the Spirit.

It is the first one in the list. But that isn't where I primarily want you to look. Notice verse 6. For in Christ Jesus... Now just stop right there a second.

Listen to me. If you're not in Christ Jesus, you don't have the Spirit. You don't have the Spirit.

You don't have the fruit of love. So if you're in this place today and you're not in Christ, if you're not in Christ, you're in Adam. You're in Adam, you're in trouble.

You're not in Christ, you're outside of Christ. You're either in the kingdom of darkness, you're in the kingdom of light. You're in Christ's kingdom or you're on the outside.

There's no partial... Excuse me. Folks, this is a black and white situation. You're in Christ or you're out of Christ.

If you're in Christ, you're in there by faith in Christ and what He accomplished for sinners. That's the only way to be in Christ. Notice these last four words of this verse though.

In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love. Now notice those last four words. Faith working through love.

Okay, start with the first word, faith. What is faith? Faith is that which connects me with Jesus Christ, right? So that the salvation He accomplished by a perfect life, obedience carried all the way to the cross, in a perfect death, atoning for the sins of His people, shedding His own blood to wash away sin. What He accomplished there.

Faith attaches me to Christ so that that salvation He earned is mine. That's what the faith aspect of this is. We trust Christ and in trusting Him, all the forgiveness, all the pardon that was gained there, all the promises of God become mine because they are yes and amen in Christ.

It's faith that attaches me, that connects me with Christ. That is it. Now listen, notice this carefully.

Love does not save anyone. Faith saves. By faith you have been saved.

Or by grace you have been saved through faith. Not through love. The faith comes first.

Faith. Now listen, over in Romans, you don't need to turn there, but just listen to this. In Romans 3.31, it says, faith.

By this faith, we uphold the law. Okay, right here in Galatians 5, all the law is summed up in one word. What is it? Love.

Faith upholds law. The whole law is love. Faith upholds love.

Faith works through love. True faith always produces love. Do you see that? Everybody needs to key in on this.

By faith, we're connected with Christ. But where the faith is real, where it's true, where it truly embraces Christ, it always affects the heart. It always moves us to kindness.

It moves us to compassion. It changes a man. Listen to me.

True faith exhibits its energy by love. Always. The only faith worth having, the only faith that can save you, is the faith that evidences its existence by love.

That's what James says in James 2, is it not? If you don't have a faith that works, and loves, then it's a dead faith. And he says it can't save you. Look, people come around all the time.

They say, well, I believe in God. I believe in Jesus Christ. It'll last.

Nice you do. The devils do that, James says. The real issue here, do you have a faith that produces such affection and compassion and kindness and love? Faith works through love.

True faith produces that. To be genuine lovers of men, you've got to have true faith in Jesus Christ. Now, here's the thing.

Everybody run back to Romans 12. You know what Paul's doing here? He's running into Romans chapter 12. He wants us to be living sacrifices.

And again, the chief thing in that is love. He wants us to be living, loving sacrifices to God. Let your love be genuine.

But how does he start the chapter? He doesn't just dive in by saying let your love be genuine. He dives in by saying, brethren, I appeal to you by the mercies of God. What's that? Here's the point.

Love is an outpouring of faith. Faith pours out. It works out.

Love. Okay, here's what Paul realizes. If I want a people that are really loving genuinely, if I want that love to be passionate and hot and intense, then I realize that their faith needs to be hot and intense.

And when he appeals to the mercies of God, you know what he's doing? What does that mean? I appeal to you by the mercies of God. In other words, what he's saying is I want you thinking about, I want your faith eating on these mercies of God that you have in Christ. I want your faith there.

I want it eating. I want it growing. I want it hot.

Because where the faith is like that, the love is like that. Listen, brethren. You know what he's doing? He's saying consider these doctrines.

Consider these truths. I'll tell you this. We had a little conversation about this yesterday down in Corpus.

But I'll tell you this, what Paul knows is this. You forsake doctrine, you forsake truth, and you will not produce the kind of love that he wants to produce in these churches. Do not think that a church that emphasizes and focuses on doctrine and truth is somehow unloving.

Because true love is going to spring out of this truth. True love is going to be fed by a faith that feasts on these truths. And so, Paul realizes that.

And he says, brethren, I want you to love one another. And my appeal here is these mercies of God. I want to throw four of them at you.

Because I really believe that this is at the very foundations of you folks loving. We have to ask ourselves, how does this work practically? I mean, what are we thinking in our heads? What's happening in our faith as this really works out? Well, let me give you four things. When Paul appeals to the mercies of God, he says, therefore.

You know what he's doing? He's referring to the things he's already said in the book of Romans. So let me just tag four things he's already said in the book of Romans that I believe will help you love. If that's where Paul's appeal is, then let me appeal there.

All four are found in Romans 8. So, turn to Romans 8. I want to tag, just bounce off the top of four of these mountaintops of the mercies of God. And I want to show you how this will help you let your love be genuine. Oh, brethren.

We sang some songs today. Let me ask you something. I can tell when the folks here get excited about what they're singing about.

I can tell when they're singing something that's producing joy. Guess what song I might be thinking of and what part I might be thinking of. It is well.

There was a distinct joy and energy when we sang that song. Especially like the second and third stanzas. My sin not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

Praise the Lord. I'll tell you what one of the chief... Brethren, we sing, and can it be, we get to one of the seven stanzas there. No condemnation.

Now I dread. Brethren, one of the great mercies of God is found right in Romans 8, verse 1. And again in verse 34. You guys see it? You see it there in verse 1? There is therefore now no condemnation.

Listen to me. If you're in here today, you may have condemnation on your head because you see this again in Christ. It always comes back to that.

If you're in Christ, there's no condemnation. If you're outside of Christ, there is condemnation. And in fact, the Bible says it abides upon you even now.

Now, go to verse 34. Again, who is to condemn? You guys see that there? Who is to condemn? Okay, now, you might ask, okay, alright, I see these. How does that help me love? Well, think about it.

There you are. You're sitting there. You know, this thought occurs to me oftentimes.

Whether you're lost or whether you're saved in this place, many of you have committed sins that are greater than some who are in hell right now. They just lived at an earlier age, at an earlier time. Their life came to an end before now.

They weren't as wicked as you have been or are right now. They're in hell already. Christian, the best Christian in this room, cannot offer to God a spotless record of righteousness.

The best Christian here has failed and feels prone to wander. Lord, I feel it. We know that reality.

Brethren, the fact is this truth. Think about the word condemn. There is therefore no condemnation.

That word, some of the older Bible translations, damnation. There is therefore now no damnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. You know what? Listen to me very carefully.

Paul does not say there's no condemnation because you've been pretty good this week. He doesn't say there's no condemnation because you treat people pretty nice. He doesn't say that there's no condemnation because you've been baptized, because you've come into church, because you've been reading your Bible.

He doesn't say there's no condemnation because your heart's pretty good. You know what he says? He says there's no condemnation if you're in Christ. And in verse 34, he says this.

Who is going to condemn? Why? Because you've got a good heart? No, he says because Jesus Christ has died, Jesus Christ has risen, Jesus Christ has ascended to the right hand of His Father, and He intercedes for us. That's why there is no condemnation. Folks, we've done lots of bad things.

We are sinners! Some of us have done things you know it. Most of us have done things we would be very ashamed if others in this room knew we had done. Wicked things! Vile things! We have fought things! Brethren, Romans 8, verse 1 says there is no condemnation if you are in Christ.

None. The Apostle does not try to quiet fears of condemnation by attempting to give us confidence in anything we have felt, in anything we have done. Not a single reference to how well I've prayed, whether or not I've been baptized.

None of it! If you're visiting today, never come back again. I hope you'll remember this one thing. Our hope is Christ alone.

We challenge all of heaven. We challenge all of earth. I challenge any one of you to bring a charge to condemn one of God's people.

Why? Why? It's God who justifies. Jesus Christ hung on that cross and paid my sin in full. And God says He casts it behind His back.

He says as far as the east is from the west. It's gone, folks. And you cannot bring accusation against Me that's going to ever stick or stand.

It's not possible. Listen, you know why we don't love oftentimes the problem? Brethren, you say, I'm hearing what you're saying about condemnation. I hear that.

How does that help me to love? Brethren, let me tell you this. Not even God Himself can bring a charge against us. That's how full this salvation is.

Don't talk to us about going before a priest and confessing our sin and getting a little bit forgiven now. And then we've got to go back again and again and again. Don't talk to us about Islam.

Don't talk to us about that stuff. We found Christ in Christ. We have full forgiveness for now and forever.

Not in part. The whole nailed to that cross. I don't bear it.

And you know what? When I come in here and I try to love, and one of the reasons that we don't love is because of fears that we have. Fear that it's going to impede on my riches. Fear that it's going to impede on my time.

Maybe fear of failure. Oh, brethren, I can't tell you, there have been times in my life with good intention, I've wanted to do things for people, and it has just turned so upside down and backwards. I went away with my head hanging thinking... I remember one time I felt like I had spoken wrongly against this guy and I went to him to confess it to him and it just made him all the more mad and disgusted and offended.

And I thought, you know, you try to do the best thing, the loving thing, and as a pastor, I see this. I mean, a lot of times, I'm called to lead you guys in ways of truth, to lead you guys in ways of righteousness. I see sin somewhere and you go touch it.

You touch them right there. And I'm doing it out of love. I want to help you get to the end.

Young people, come into this church. God knows my heart. I'm praying for you guys.

I'm thinking how to teach you, how to guide you, so that your lives can be most fruitful. And then I get a call from your parents. They're all bent out of shape.

And I'm thinking, sometimes I'm serious. It's not just those things. Sometimes I think I just want to run.

I want to go. But you know what? The fact is, when there's no condemnation, listen, I can love. And if I fall flat on my face, if it's not received, if you condemn me, if you bring charges against me, they don't even stick.

They don't even stand. Because God's saying all the time, just, just, just. He's got His eyes on Christ.

Christ is at His right hand. He sees those wounds. That blood was shed.

All of my failings. All of my inadequacies. I don't do it just right.

But it's never standing against me. And so all those failures, all those everythings, just clean, spotless, all the time before the Lord. None of it stands.

Brethren, we've got to feel the magnitude of God's salvation for us. Brethren, you know very well, there are times you're going to fail and the accusations brought against you are valid. But still, even if Satan rushes in and says, see, you ought to just throw in the towel.

You can't love anybody. You're just a hard-hearted, mean guy. Nobody likes you.

Hit the road. Leave this church. They don't like you there.

They don't want you there. Nobody understands you. You can say, devil, you're right.

I'm probably all those things. But Jesus Christ died for me. And guess what? None of it stands.

None of it sticks. The Spirit of God's working in me to produce this fruit. And you know what? I'm more than victorious in Jesus Christ.

I'm making it to the end. You can bring all your accusations, but none of them stand. Because Jesus Christ, my surety, my guarantor, He's at the right hand.

Brethren, if you let this life's discouragements, disappointments take you, freeze you, crush you, numb you, scare you, guess what? You'll never end up being loving people the way you ought to be. You'll rather withdraw. You'll become cold, sulking, self-protective, defensive, hurting, basically useless.

Here before us in no condemnation, a massive grace. Brethren, can you really get a hold of this? I mean, do you walk around with this constant reality before you? God is pleased with you for Christ's sake. I mean, sometimes we just need to sit back and just kind of take a deep breath.

I mean, can you even believe this? None of it! He's just looking up there down on you if you're in Christ, and He is just overwhelmingly pleased with you. You say, I just messed up and other people aren't pleased with me. No, but He is! And see, if we'll live in light of that truth in the presence of God Almighty, if you've repented of your sins, you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, brethren, I appeal to you by this mercy of God, let your love be genuine.

You don't have to hide behind masks. You don't have to go hide in a hole. God is well pleased.

Okay, let me give you another one. This comes from verse 31. If God is for us, who can be against us? Now you guys know what he's talking about there.

When he says who can be against us, he's clearly not saying that no one ever does come against us. We heard about the Hamiltons in the first hour. Folks, there are things, there are beings that are coming against them.

There are people that are coming against them. There are no doubt fallen angels that are coming against them. Paul's not saying that.

What he's saying is that when they do come against us, they can never truly hurt us or harm us. It's impossible. Legions of demons, multitudes of men, they are against us.

Jesus said the world would hate us. He said that we're going to be regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. Paul's point in saying who can be against us is not to say that no one in the world does come against us.

He's rather stressing that when they do try, when the devil comes, worldly systems, wicked men, at times even other Christians, when they do come against us, it's impossible for them to truly harm us. Now again, let me emphasize this. I really believe that at the root of not loving, there's a fear of something.

What are we afraid of? You know what? A lot of times, you're afraid that there may be danger attached to loving. Think about it. It can be kind of scary to think of going to try to love a bunch of Muslims on the other side of the world.

They might come against you. That's a reality. RF Khan, his wife Kathy, their bodies are in the ground.

Just in 2004, we all sat together in a conference in Owensboro, Kentucky. There they were, headed back to Pakistan. They don't come to conferences anymore.

Why not? Somebody put bullets in them. They're dead. They're gone.

The Muslims killed them. But don't you see the truth? God is for us. God's for them.

They weren't losers in that. They didn't lose anything. But I'll tell you this.

You start to think, well, if I go to China, I might get demonic dreams. If I go over to Papua, some machete-wielding cannibal might come after me. That's right.

But don't you see the truth? God is for you. You see, this is faith. No, you can't see it.

When the guy's coming with the machete, but this is faith. You see, it's faith that produces this love. We're called to live by faith, not walk by sight.

These are things that we're called to believe. Listen, you ever read this? It comes out of Isaiah. Fear not, for I am with you.

If God is with you, if God is for you, who can be against you? Now, look. He also says this back there in Isaiah 43. When you pass through the waters, guess what? Because you pass through the waters, doesn't mean God is against you.

He says, when you pass through the waters, I'll be with you. Through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. So, some have to go through the waters, some have to go through the rivers, but God's saying, look, that is not an indication that I'm not with you.

I am with you. When you walk through the fire, that's probably a little harder than the water. He says, you shall not be burned.

The flame shall not consume you. I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Brethren, I tell you this, when it comes to loving, our God is no plaything.

If He says, I'm with you, you can go out there into the most hostile parts of this world and love. And you don't have to be afraid. He's with you.

And not one hair of your head is going to fall except what your loving Father, in all kindness towards you, is going to allow. You are invincible except what God allows there. I'll tell you what, you find this in Job, you find this with Peter.

The devil cannot do a thing to you unless he gets permission. And it's only what God allows him to do that can come against you. I'll tell you what, C.T. Studd held on this, did he not? His ability to go and love was anchored in faith in these very realities.

He'd say things like this, you've heard it, some of you, some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to rent a rescue shop within a yard of hell. You know what Paul's saying? He's saying, feel this! Christian, feel this! Really, feel this! In Christ, you are secure.

In Christ, you are safe. God is for you. God loves you.

God delights in you. God is with you. He has nothing but good in His mind toward you.

Listen, you aren't going to find some greater security. You run off to Mormonism? Go try being a Jehovah's Witness? Look, this is the end all as far as security. We found Him that is the mighty fortress.

We rest there. You're protected, brethren. You're protected.

Our God is no plaything. You've got the full deal from God even within a yard of hell. You can go camp right there on the edge of it.

And if your God says He's with you, what do you have to fear? That's what He's saying. Don't fear. I'm with you.

Well, you know what? That causes fear when there's no faith. But when faith says God's with me, I'm going in that fire. And you go in.

Whoa! Fire didn't burn me. Well, no! He said it wouldn't. He said, I'll be with you.

The fire didn't burn the cons. All the bullets entered them, and into glory they went. What was that? Was that loss? Did that prove God wasn't with them? Take them home to a better place? If they were given the choice to come back, they wouldn't come back.

They don't want to come back. The reason people have a fear of that is because they fear that death brings loss. Death doesn't bring loss for the Christian.

It brings enormous riches. C.T. Studd's faith. Again, you can see the strength of it.

He said this. I love this. Difficulties, dangers, disease, death, or divisions don't deter any but chocolate soldiers.

That was his term for Christians that probably weren't Christians. That doesn't deter any but chocolate soldiers from executing God's will. When someone says there's a lion in the way, the real Christian promptly replies, that's hardly enough inducement for me.

I want a bear or two besides to make it worth my while to go. But listen, brethren, that might sound funny and everything, but we're not overly prone to live our lives camped up on these mountaintops of truth. We're not.

Christian, are you really living with this in your head? Is your head in those kind of clouds? Do you walk around saying with confidence all the time, my God is with me. I can go out on the streets on the east side. Some of you, I remember, it's been said, you grew up and you had parents told you never go to Cherry Street, never go to Hackberry, but by faith, we can go to places like that.

We can venture out. I'm not saying to be foolish, but I'm saying, you know what, we can have a certain amount of reckless abandon as Christians. And there's a line in the way where they throw in a couple of bears.

You can go half a yard from hell, and I'll tell you what, the flame's not going to consume you. Because the devil is God's servant still. No matter how close to hell you get, no matter how dark the country may be, the countries of this world are becoming the very kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

Folks, we're on the winning team. He that is with us is greater than he that's in the world. What do you have to fear? You see, so often we hold back love because we're afraid.

We're just afraid. But these truths are meant to take your faith and say, let loose, brother. Let loose.

Let me give you another one. Third one. You guys know this one very well.

Some of you, this may be one of the first ones you ever memorized from Romans. From all the Bible probably. Romans 8.28. You know it well.

Some of it's running through your minds already. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. To those that are called according to His purpose.

Brethren, think about this. Again, what is it that makes you afraid to love? You know what it's like. Well, if I go help them... I'll give you an example.

I field the phone calls for the church. I get a phone call. You know, you always get the story.

There's some horrendous physical dilemma. Okay, this guy's at a hotel up on 35. And you know, you go there, and okay, we paid for the hotel.

Well, now he's hungry too. Okay, now he needs a ride down... And see, you start saying, man, I'm afraid that if I start helping somebody, you know, I invite somebody to live in my house, man, they're going to mess it up. If I go over there, you know, if I stop and help these people, they're probably going to want money too.

And you know, we get to the place where a fear creeps in. We get this fear that we're going to be losers if we love. We're afraid that it's going to cost us to love.

Why? Because at the root, we're greedy. That's really the thing. We're stuck on our possessions.

We're afraid. You know what? We go out and we spend money on luxuries and stuff and toys. Money that ought to go to spreading the Gospel, loving purposes.

We don't undertake anything risky because we've got our precious possessions. We don't want them hurt. We don't want to lose them.

We've got our financial future might be jeopardized. We focus on things instead of people. Sometimes it's those kind of fears that keep us from really letting loose.

If we have someone come live with us, you know, that could bring all sorts of unexpected things that just aren't nice. If we stop and help, we're afraid we're going to get taken advantage of. I mean, that happens.

You know, we get these people come in here for money and I've had people say, you know, should we really be giving them that money? We might be getting taken advantage of. Hey, the world's full of shysters. If you're going to love, you're going to get taken advantage of.

If that's a fear, you won't be able to love. Afraid to come to a bad part of town to love people? Go some dark, foreboding country to love sinners? You might get hurt. I mean, there's this fear we're going to lose something.

Might have to pay a price that we're uncomfortable to have to pay. But brethren, this promise just screams at us. All things work together for your good.

Again, if you love God, if you're in Christ, if you've been called according to His purpose, if you're a true Christian, all things are working together for your good. You just think about that. I can go to a dangerous

place, do the hard thing, I can lay it all on the line in my attempt to love people, and that promise is there just to fuel me to go on, to fuel a fanatical type of Christianity.

It really is. Think about that. Think about that.

We wake up every morning as true Christians and there's that banner. All of it. All things are working together for your good.

God is orchestrating it all. Man, I can walk through those fires. I can go through those waters.

I don't have to hesitate. I don't have to go hide. You see, that's the thing.

We have so much of this attitude. We like to live in our gated communities. You know, moving to the east side, I just knew.

I chalked it up. We moved to the east side. We're close to the church out there in those neighborhoods, but we're going to get broken into.

I just chalked it up. Well, yep, certain enough. We got broken into.

I mean, that's part of the price. You know what? We can live our lives and we can go hide away in our protected little communities, in our protected little cars, in our protected little churches, and not really step out, don't want to love anybody. Why? Because we're afraid.

But when that banner is there, I mean, all things work together for my good. Wow! Where can't I go that the result won't be good? Where? There's no place, right? I can go anywhere. You guys can break out and go over to New Guinea.

You say, yeah, but I might get eaten. Probably not. I mean, I was just recounting like just recently.

One of the guys' names was Clark. Here they are, all the preparation, everything. They put together everything.

They sail all the way around the world. They get to the New Hebrides Islands. They land on that coast.

Bang! The cannibals come running out of the jungle, club them, tear their bodies apart, eat them. That fast. All the preparation.

You can imagine. They were in Bible school. They got all their seminary degrees.

They did all this planning, all this departure, all the saying goodbye, all the moving stuff, sailing around the world for who knows? Six, eight months to get to the other side. They land on the coast. They step out.

Whack! It's all over. All things work together for good. I'll tell you what.

Their blood went on that soil and in came them behind John G. Payton. What was it? The island of Tanna? Nearly the whole island was converted. You don't think all things work together for good? You don't think Clark and Payton together are up there in glory just praising God for saving those people? One of them spilled his blood within minutes.

The other one labored there a lifetime. Brethren, there's no loss! It's all working out for good. We can go.

So what if you die? Your blood waters the church. Brethren, what a promise. Brother or sister, we can launch out this very day.

You can let your love be genuine. It's all for good. It's all for your good.

I'll give you one more in ending. This is a massive one too. Romans 8.35 Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

Brethren, again, faith. You know what Paul knows? Paul knows none of you have ever seen Christ with these physical eyes. Not one of you.

None of you have seen Christ interceding at the right hand of God. You haven't seen Him there? We might get some crack addicts come in and tell us they've seen that, but none of you have. Nobody in their right mind here I don't think is going to tell us that.

You know what? Paul knows that. Paul knows that you weren't standing there at the cross that day, but he says to you, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? He says that to us meaning for our faith to lay into that. Because I'll tell you this, you don't see that love coming down.

There are days you don't feel that love coming down. We have to admit it. We don't appreciate Christ's love for us as we ought.

And sometimes we become pretty blind to it. But He wants our faith there. He wants us realizing that.

He wants us appreciating that. Brethren, we can't see that. But I'll tell you what we can see.

When I walk in here and I'm dealing with brethren, I'm dealing with visitors, you can come across people and they're in all sorts of places. They can be the most cantankerous person. They can just be disgusted by the message that was just preached.

They can be co-workers you don't like. Situations that try our flesh. The Apostle would have us convinced by faith of things that are unseen.

We see these things. We see the disappointments. We feel the discouragements.

We see the people that there's conflict with. We see the people there's not conflict with. We see these things.

We feel the family tensions, the situations in our workplaces, in our families. Those are the seen things. And Paul's saying, look, there are unseen realities.

There is an unseen Christ who pours out oftentimes unappreciated and unfelt demonstrations. God, listen, God working in and through Christ and because of Christ is working purposes on your account. He's got purposes of your good that are being put into place you don't even know anything about.

His love for you is streaming forth. I'll tell you this, Christ is looking down from the right hand of His Father right now and the true children of God in this place. He is full of delight and affection.

He is an intense lover. A jealous lover. His love is great.

It is vast. Who can measure the height and the depth and the breadth? Folks, this is a love like you cannot comprehend. It is incomprehensible love.

And it is just flowing from the heart of Christ to His people right now. But see, we don't always feel it. We don't always see it.

And so what Paul is saying is let your faith weigh hold on what is unseen so that when it comes to the things that are seen... Look, I can come in here... Listen. Think about this. There's Jimmy back there.

He's drinking a soda. Imagine this. Out of love, I give him a soda.

Well, and out of love, he gives me a soda back. We're all happy, right? I come in. I give him a soda.

He doesn't give me a soda. Man, he doesn't appreciate my love. It's like Christ is standing there with an ocean.

Listen, brethren, one of the reasons that we can sometimes feel offended or unloving is because we love and it's not appreciated. We love and it's not returned. If we but look over our shoulders in faith, the true Christian can see that there is an ocean.

We sang about it. The deep, deep love of Jesus. It's kind of like that.

Here's this ocean of love Christ has for us because some person doesn't return back to us just what we want to get back. I'm offended. I'm not going to love anymore.

Christ is saying, my child, I have such love for you. You are not love-deprived. When people don't show it back, when a Trevor Johnson goes out there and pop one, those people just steal all his stuff, have no respect for him, no love for him, don't return anything upon him that he tries to show on them.

All they do is rub his flesh raw. But you know what? They can turn around and just bask in an ocean of Christ's love for him. That makes it possible to love, folks.

That fires the faith to go love. Brethren, I can say this, but do you guys really believe these things? Do you believe everything works for your good? Do you believe that you are not separable from Christ's love? Do you believe that there is no condemnation? Do you believe God is for you? I mean, is that in your faith? Do you walk around with that? Because I'll tell you, if you do, it will unleash the fires of love. It will.

There won't be any hindrances. I'll tell you this, fear kills love. Faith kills fear.

Faith produces love. And Paul wouldn't appeal to all these things unless he knew this is what it takes to really unloose the generosity, the sacrificial generosity and love of his people. Brethren, think on these things.

What are you going to do? Think about it. What are you going to do? There's no condemnation. There never will be.

God is for you. Nobody can come against you. All things work together for your good.

Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. So what are you going to do? Are you going to take all that and avoid the stranger and just head out and jump in your car and drive out of here and not want to engage anybody? What are you going to do? Fight off the call of God to go to Papua New Guinea

because it's too dangerous? Are you rather going to go out and waste money on excess insurance? Are you rather going to go off to the mall tonight and spend money on stuff you don't need? Brethren, on your worst day, what are you? Secure in Christ? Loved with everlasting love? Every sin forgiven? All things working together for your good? Brethren, you've got to get this. God is for you.

God is for you. I can't tap into your hearts to make that truth sink there. I need it sunk into my own as well.

Let love be genuine for Christ's sake.

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