

# Law of Love 2

by Vernon Higham

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and the consequences of not doing so, while also highlighting Jesus Christ's fulfillment of the law for us.*

**Duration:** 39:40

**Topics:** "Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love in the life of a believer. The motivation for love is found in the example of Jesus Christ, who was sent by God because of His love for the sinful world. The preacher urges believers not to lose their first love and to put Jesus on the throne of their lives. The sermon also highlights the need for worshipping God and following His commandments as a rule of life for believers.

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## Transcript

My text is in the book of Exodus, book of Exodus, and this morning I'd like to look at the second commandment. That's Exodus 4, 5, 6. Exodus 20, 4, 5, 6. We'll read it together, shall we? God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Well, I'm sure that you'd agree that that is a very searching commandment.

Yet the commandments of God may be entitled the commandments of love. And if you remember, our Lord Jesus Christ summed them up in two verses, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and that we love our neighbour as ourselves. And then that is spelled out in what that exactly means.

It's all very well to say, I love God, and then there is no substance or any content to what I mean by that. If you ask, well, what do you mean by loving God? Well, I sing a hymn, or so what? I love God, what do you mean? Well, I go to church. Very well, you can go to church and your heart can be far away.

I love God, well, what do you mean? Well, I don't say anything against Him, I try to do my best. Well, is that loving God? It may be your idea, my idea of loving God, but it's a very superficial view of the love of God. So the Ten Commandments tell us exactly what it means to love God.

We must honour His person, we must honour His name, we must honour His day. We must honour Him altogether, and so it's spelled out. What it means to love our neighbour? You might say, well, to love my neighbour means to be nice to those who are nice to me, or to try and put up with those who are not nice to me.

Then it's said quite plainly, you don't commit adultery, you don't covet. It's spelled out quite plainly, in very practical terms, that it means to love your neighbour. And so God is quite precise in what He means by loving God and loving our neighbour.

This law then becomes a terrible thing to us, although it's a law of love. It's an impossible law. It becomes almost a judgment.

When people talk about preaching the judgment of God, actually, the preaching of judgment of God is preaching the love of God. You may be surprised at that. If you preach the commandments of love, they judge us, because they measure us and they show our size.

And we have a defect that runs through our whole being, and that is self-love. We call it sin. Because we love ourselves very deeply, we are incapable of loving God with all our heart, soul and mind.

Sometimes a little expression of excitement may be, but that's about all. Because we love ourselves very much, we do all things to gratify ourselves, and we only love people who do nice things to us. And we are very seldom interested or concerned with those who are not in any way connected with us.

So self-love dominates us because of our sinful nature. We are then rendered incapable of loving God or keeping His law. And if we do not keep the law of God, the condemnation is a second death, eternal damnation.

Now, let's look at the law like this. I mentioned one Sabbath evening in this way. The four corners of the law, or you can put it any way.

Its depth is our deepest degradation, and there we must be clean. Its height is a pinnacle of the worship of God, and there it must be pure. Its breadth is willing to forgive my worst and my meanest enemy.

Its length is from my date of birth to the date of my death, and without any flaw in any detail. Yet it is a law of love, but that law of love condemns me. Now then, what happens then? The Lord Jesus Christ's attitude to the law, He said, and I quoted last week if you remember, Think not that I am come to destroy the law, it's God's law.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law. And then what He does is this.

He fulfills the law of God. And the gospel has, if I may put it in an easy way, a dual purpose. I'm doing this, it's important I say this most times or something like it every time I come to the law.

He fulfills the law for you and for me. So that He loves God for me. He loves my neighbor for me.

It's a wonderful thing. Now that's positional sanctification. Now what about the law I broke before I came to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, He takes all the pieces that I broke, and the condemnation is death.

He gathers them all together, and we know what happens there. There on Calvary, lest I forget Gethsemane. There on Calvary, the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Now then, if anybody here this morning thinks that he doesn't need that, he's a fool. Think of his length, and the breadth, and the height, and the depth of the law. And we all stand condemned.

Don't let's play with it. We all stand condemned with the law of God's love. Yes, God in His love.

You see, love is the most important word in the gospel. God in His love, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not die, but have everlasting life. Should not die, should not be eternally damned, should not enter into hell.

Why? Just because, an act of grace, just because he has received the grace of God and the merits of the Savior, just because of that. Yet not just, it is a wonderful thing that has happened. So, what has happened to me and happened to you? When we are able to say, not I went to Sunday school, I became a member, all these things, not that.

But, O happy day that fixed my choice on thee, my Savior, and my God. Why? Because Jesus Christ fulfilled the law for me. Jesus Christ took a punishment of the broken law for me.

So, I sing then with enthusiasm, the terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do. Why? My Savior's obedience in His life and blood on Calvary, the punishment, hide all my transgressions from you. Now then, some people in the early church and in the modern church think that now here is license.

Now that I have come to Jesus Christ, I can behave as I like. Paul said it quite clearly. He said, God forbid, he said, God forbid.

That is not so, he uses very strong language in the epistles. That law now, the law in its first place must be preached to show our signs and to drive us to Christ for mercy. But now then, has the law any room in the Christian's life? Yes, it has a new role.

It is now our rule of life. But there's a difference. The law is to be fulfilled in our lives, not for our salvation now, but because this is the way that God wants His people to live.

And in the fulfilling of this law, they have a new ability, a new grace. So that as before, they couldn't love God with all their hearts or their mind or their neighbor like that, and it condemned them and Christ fulfilled the law for them and took the punishment for them. Now He writes that law in their hearts.

And the evidence that they are the Lord's is that they will love His law and keep His law. They are not condemned by the law anymore, yet this law will assess what they are, whether Christ is theirs or no, whether they are destined for heaven or no, this law. So now they are expected to love God and to love their neighbor, but with a new grace and a new ability.

So firstly we come to the authority of God in the second commandment. A jealous God. So the authority of God, a jealous God.

Now that word in our modern language today has come to mean something that is ugly and horrible. It means if I am a jealous person, that I am eaten up with jealousy and it is a very bad thing. But when we talk about the authority of God, we are talking of a jealousy that is pure.

It is a different thing. Verse 5. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, to other gods, nor serve them, for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God. That is, I will not allow anything or anyone else to rule in the throne of your hearts.

I have graced it with pardon. I have washed you in the blood of my Son. You are destined for heaven.

The least you can give me is the throne of your hearts. So expect that. Do you remember this quotation I read to you last Sabbath? God will lose none of our love.

Love is the soul of religion and that which constitutes a real Christian. Love is the queen of graces. It shines and sparkles in God's eye.

Such love demands my soul, my life, my all, my heart. How can I, as a believer, love God? You might say, with the right possessiveness which he has. He owns me.

I belong to him. How can I respond when he gives me grace to do so? If I find it difficult, if I find self-love intruding, if I find the flesh with all its desires and trying to battle against the new creature in Christ that I am, then what then? Remember Calvary, it's the first thing. Romans 8.32 says, He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Remember Calvary.

If ever your love for God fades, remember how he fulfilled the law of God in his life. Remember how he took the penalty of your failure on Calvary. Remember the love of God and that quality of love has given to the utmost that God, God who is beyond the confines of our mind, that God should give his son in this way, then this is right that we should love him.

Why? I am forgiven. I am washed. I am a child of his.

He cares for me. He cares for every anxiety I may have. He cares for any worry I may have about my situation today.

He cares for me so much that he gave his son and I belong to him. What kind of a love is it? Love divine. All loves excelling.

Joy of heaven to earth come down. Fix in us thy humble dwelling. All thy faithful mercies crown.

Many mercies, but all thy faithful mercies crown. So survey the wondrous cross. Now the grace of love, the love of Christ.

Why should I love God? Why should love be the primary thing, the prime thing in my life? Well, because it is the example of Jesus Christ. Look at the motivation of the gospel. Why did he send his son? We are told, God so loved the world, yes, an evil, sinful world, that he gave his only begotten son.

God so loved the world that he spared not his own son. It's in scripture. And then we find this phrase, that in the epistles that the apostle Paul might be asked the question, well, why do you bother? There you look at your back.

You've been whipped many times. Look at the insults that you have suffered and see how they've belittled you. You haven't had any honors from any part of the world.

No king or university has acknowledged your intelligence. Nobody has given you any honors at all. Indeed, you have the opposite.

You've been despised. And he said, the love of Christ constraineth me. That's why.

And why did the love of Christ constrain him? Because he knew a great deal about the Lord Jesus Christ. He'd met him. And Jesus Christ once himself, when he looked upon the people, he didn't say, I'll show them.

And his heart was moved with compassion. Love is the most convicting of all the doctrines. Did you know that? It is the most condemning of all the doctrines.

It is the most uplifting of all the doctrines. Now, the authority of God is this. I want you to love me like this.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to other gods, now, thyself to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God. Let me give you an illustration. A wedding ceremony.

Wilt thou have this man? Wilt thou have this woman to be thy lawful wedded wife? And keep thee only to her. Keep thee only thyself to him, as long as he both shall live. These are the words that we use.

Now, take that and lift it now. And lift it to the arrangement or the covenant that we have with God. God keeps himself for us and expects us to keep ourselves for him.

Thou shalt not worship anything else. The dearest idol I have known. You know the hymn, don't you? The dearest idol I have known.

What e'er that idol be. Now, notice the terminology of the writer there. He says, Help.

Now, help what? Help me to take it. No. Help me to persuade it.

Help me to win it. Help me to tear it. It's going to hurt.

You see it? Help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee. I am a jealous God. Thou hast worshipped me.

I love thee altogether and I have given thee grace to love me altogether. If we forget, then remember Gethsemane. If we forget, then remember Calvary.

If we forget, then remember the new grace that we have been given by God mediated by the Holy Spirit when we came to Jesus Christ and we were reborn and became new. We have a new ability, the ability to love God and the ability to love our neighbor. And so, when we hear that he's a jealous God, it is a right and a proper thing that no one else should share the throne, nor husband, nor wife, nor brother, nor sister, nor son, nor daughter, nor grandparent, nor grandson, nor friend, nor any should sit on his throne.

That's one thing. The attitude of God in the context of God's grace unto the believer now because we are looking at the commandment as the role for the believer, as the rule of life for the believer, not as a condemnation for the unbeliever now, but for the believer. If you don't, he says, this is what it would mean to the believer.

You will not be lost as a believer. Then what then? Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me and showing mercy unto thousands of them that

love me and keep my commandments. Well, what is he saying? If you have been to Calvary, you are saved.

If you have been to the Lord Jesus Christ and have the grace of God and the faith which is a gift of grace, then you are the Lord and there is no power on hell or in earth that is able to separate you from the love of God. Yet, if you in any way break these commandments, then it is an iniquitous thing not to love me. It is an iniquitous thing to have any other God, any other idol, any other person, any other thing upon the throne of your heart.

Well, what would it mean in practical terms? Well, I will tell you. First of all, I'll read you the story of a church. You can look with me if you like.

The book of Revelation chapter 2 and verse 2. Revelation 2 verse 2. This is a church that was doctrinally correct. This is a church that labored for the gospel. This is a church that had persecutions and had known many matters.

This is a church that God was very displeased with. I know thy works. It's Ephesus.

I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience. Listen to it. Thy labor.

I know thy works, thy labor and thy patience. And how thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored and hast not fainted. What a church.

What a tremendous church. Listen to them. If anybody came with error, they sorted out the error.

They persevered in times of adversity, in times of persecution. They had their role of martyrs and they did this not for their own glory. They did it for his name's sake.

But I have one thing against them. They were doctrinally sound. They'd make any financial or time sacrifice.

They were willing to have their bodies burned. You can't do more than that, you might say. Oh yes, you can.

You can hold back that one thing that God requires which makes you nothing if you haven't got it. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast lost thy first love. Lord, I know all about thy person.

Do you love me? Lord, I know the confession from beginning to end. Do you love me? Lord, I can smell evil on high aloft. Do you love me? Lord, I labor and I will do many things for thee.

Do you love me? Lord, I am in the ranks of the martyrs and the next to be shot. Do you love me? That's the question. It's a very searching one.

Without it, we're in peril of being nothing. What happens to a church that loses its love? So, in verse 5 in that chapter, remember them remember them from whence thou art fallen. We never fell.

Yes, you are, he says. Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent. Well, we haven't broken any of the doctrines.

We've labored and we've had martyrs. Repent! Why should I repent? I know all the doctrines. I know all the experiences.

Repent. A broken and a contrite heart I will not despise. Repent and do the first work, love.

And do the first work or else I will come to thee quickly and I will remove thy candlesticks out of its place except thou repent. Now, you do know what that means? That for a church, we're not talking about heresy. We're not talking about that now.

We're talking about orthodoxy. For a church that knows the truth, preaches it and believes it. For a church that labors and for a church that even has a list of martyrs and has lost the love of God.

Do you know what God does to that church? In here he says, I'll take your candlestick away. Do you know what he's saying? I withdraw for one generation and for two generations and for three generations and four generations. I withdraw for a day and a thousand years are indifferent to me.

This doesn't mean to say that he will not have mercy upon individuals. But it is such a sin. It is such a sin.

Why is it seventy-seven, seventy-four, five years since there's been a revival in Wales, he has withdrawn? Why is a spiritual declension in Wales a day? He has withdrawn. Not the gospel. People are saved nevertheless.

But look at our churches. Cold and indifferent to either those who are unorthodox or orthodox. He has withdrawn.

How do you bring him back? Repent. I have not loved thee, Lord. As a church, we have not loved thee as we should.

We have neglected thee. We have not put thee upon the throne of our church. He withdraws.

That's what he does. He has the right to do it because he's God for a long, long time. He can do it individually.

Samson in Judges 16, 20. He was greatly blessed of God. He sinned.

Somebody else came on the throne. A woman. And he wished not that the Lord was departed from him.

Everybody else could see it. He was still the Lord's. He still will be saved.

But the radiance had gone. The glory and the loveliness of God had departed from him. Everybody else could see it.

But the poor fool couldn't see it himself. There he was strutting about. I know the truth.

I know God. I'm an Israelite. I belong to God.

I march into Zion, the beautiful city of God. Correct! But he wished not that the Lord and the shine of the Lord had departed from him. And he'd forgotten what it had meant to love and to make God his first love.

Has that? Is that happening to you? Do you know what can happen? Oh yes, you'll still be in heaven. But for decades of your life he can withdraw. Song of Solomon.

Do you remember? She was lying on the couch. She could hear the latch going. I love her.

Oh, he can wait. Doing good to wait. And then after a little while she very, very carelessly goes to the door.

He's always there. Take him for granted. He wasn't there.

And then she realized. And she rushes about the city and said, has anybody seen my lover? What is he like? He is fair. He is handsome.

He is the rose of Sharon. He is the lily of the valley. He is the fairness of 10,000 to my soul.

He is my bright and warning star. And he has withdrawn. And I said, tell us if there's such a lover as handsome as that tell us that we might know as well.

She can't be bothered to listen to their iniquitous and their carnal way of thinking. But it's terrible to her. And she cries out and repents.

And there her lover comes leaping over the hills towards her. But you have to see you cannot play about with the lover of my soul. Don't play.

Don't lose your first love. He must be on the throne. Where is the blessedness Mrs. Von Fuhrman? Where is the blessedness in you when first I saw the Lord? Where is that soul refreshing view of Jesus and his word? How can we bring him back? Depends.

Undo the first work and restore your love. You're his. Put him on the throne and so that the radiance of God might shine upon your life.

This is for the believer now. Now lastly, briefly to close. The adoration of God.

To worship God the instruction is clear. There are certain principles. They may be very hurtful for us here this morning but nevertheless they are there.

The Lord Jesus Christ speaking to a lady, a woman of Samaria in John 4 verses 23, a vital verse in understanding what it means to worship God. He says he doesn't want to worship anybody else. Whom does he want to worship? Worship God.

But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit and they that worship must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Now let me explain this to you. The Lord Jesus Christ took on the form of a servant of a man. Remember man without sin but God has no physical form.

God is a spirit. Don't forget that now. Let me say it again.

God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Now I'm saying that because today it is vital to say it. I will now spell it out in what it means.

Look at these verses with me. Colossians 3.10 and Ephesians 4.24 What happens to me when I am redeemed? I am ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. My sins are forgiven.

The old man is dead but I am still in the flesh and the new man now rose in my heart. Without loss of identity the new man is there. The new creature.

Now the new creature. It is altogether different now. Yet I am still in the flesh and the flesh will want to drag the new creature back.

So the battle isn't between the old and the new man. The old man is dead and crucified so I have no excuse to say it's a 50-50 battle. I am now the new creature in Christ and this creature his affections and his love and his mind is all towards God.

Yet the flesh will drag him to behave in a carnal way and will make us worship in a carnal way because man always wants to make Christianity carnal. Colossians 3.10 And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. How was man created? In the image of God.

But we are not talking about arms and legs. The image that we are talking of is this. In knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Look at Ephesians 4.24 And that he put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. So the image of God that we are talking about when man is created in his image although he has a physical form as a man. God is a spirit and the image that we have from God is the one of righteousness and holiness.

And when we become Christians it is that which is restored. And that is the new man. Now then there will be a day when this corruptible shall put on incorruptible and this mortal shall put on immortality.

That is true. But the image of God we are talking about is after righteousness and holiness and the renewing of our new mind. They that worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth.

Now what follows? Now this is where we can sin terribly and we are responsible in the day of Christ. Our Lord exalted the body and one day we shall have a new body. But in our worship we must keep bodily expression under control.

Always. We must never worship like the prophets of Baal. Never.

Yet there must be a human expression of worship. There must be. Now this is why the true church, now really you see I am talking about revival.

That is really what I am talking about. And Satan will do everything to take us along a little carnal path. Now let me explain.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any grave image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. No image, no likeness. Now in the early church there was a big row in one of the centuries, the early centuries.

And the church divided in two. The east and the west. The east represented by and large what we now know as the Greek Orthodox Church.

And by and large the one in the west was what we now know to be the Roman Catholic Church. Now there was a, I am not going to the big debates which divided them. It was a battle of power and all sorts of things

and of leadership and so on.

Many things. But there was one point which is of interest here. The eastern church said, you've got graven images in your churches in the west.

And what the Roman church was doing, that if she went into, I am now making, simplifying it, if they went to a town and they had an idol that was a goddess, they would superimpose Christianity on it and say, well, her name is really Mary. And they would include her in that way. And if it was a god, a male, they would say, well, that's really Christ.

And so they had a way of enveloping whether it was a god or a goddess, into Christianity, making it easier to get some kind of converts. This is the kind of luxury that came over the church all over at one time. Now then, they had in their churches then images, idols of the son of God.

Yes, he took on the form of a servant. But look at how, without sin, and remember his deity. And so the eastern church said that they were very bad and said, you shouldn't have idols, you should have icons.

Pictures. Silly, isn't it? Icons. And so they had little embossed or something, little rays, little pictures.

It's neither here nor there. But what should we understand? You see, man always wants something to look at, so that he can kneel before it. Man always wants something that he can hold on to with his hand.

Now the principle is this. It is an insult to God to compare him with anything on earth. Because God is a spirit.

Now here is the principle. Scouter, hold your chisel back when it comes to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Painter, hold your brush back when it comes to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Actor, hold your body back when it comes to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Or else you blaspheme. See it? Thou shalt not.

And that's it. Apply it now. I'll not apply it for you.

But apply it. Thou shalt not make any graven image or any likeness, anything. One, because it is an insult to God and it's incomparable.

And the other is, the flesh will always want to own God and want to imitate him in some way. The only imitation we can have is a spiritual one. Yet expression must be made.

And we have a body. And we can only express ourselves through our body. Now then, what must it be? We may use our voices in as far as it is dignified and disciplined and honouring to God.

A preacher must watch that thin line between preaching the truth with his voice and making an exhibition of himself. In singing, we must watch that thin line between the worship of God and entertainment. It's a line that you and I are personally responsible for in the day of Christ.

And we're unashamed. We must watch that thin line. Yet I must preach because we must worship him in spirit and in truth.

And we must express our adoration as well. But it must be with seeing, is this carnal? Is this of the flesh? Is this the spirit of the world? And so that we examine it and go along lines that are spiritual. Why?

Because God is a spirit.

Now what happens then? For the Father seeketh such to worship him. He's seeking for believers who will understand. You know people use this phrase, but we've got to get through.

Shall I tell you what is needed? It is needed that God that might get through to us. Then people will come to God. His law of love must get through to us.

But how carnal we are. When will my little heart be taken up with thee? When will I know how to adore thee with spirit and in truth? However can I learn? And we must willing to put ourselves under the discipline of God and his word in this. To love God means to honour him.

To honour him as the only God and to worship him in spirit and in truth. And that means watching the flesh and its desires. Without thy presence, king of saints, our purpose fails, our spirit faints.

Thou must our wavering faith renew, ere we can yield thee service true. Let us pray. O Lord, we come to thee and ask thy blessing.

Ask thee to draw near to us now. For thy name's sake we ask it. Amen.

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