

The New Covenant Leads Us To Love God Supremely

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the transformation seen in the disciples from the Last Supper to Pentecost, highlighting the impact of being filled with the Holy Spirit. It discusses the importance of loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. The speaker delves into the significance of God's eternal law and the need for a deep foundation in God's love to overcome insecurities and failures, ultimately leading to glorifying God by finishing the course set before us.

Scripture: Matthew 22:36, Romans 8:3, Mark 12:30, John 14:15, 1 Kings 19:10, 1 Kings 19:18, Luke 16:13, Romans 5:5, 2 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Transformation through the Holy Spirit", "Love and Obedience to God's Law"

Description

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Transcript

Matthew 22. We know the main thing that changed the disciples from what they were on the day Jesus was crucified to what they were on the day of Pentecost. So when you look at the day Jesus was the Last Supper, they hadn't really made much progress in their life.

They were still arguing about who's the greatest and the Garden of Gethsemane, they all ran away. So though they had a lot of admiration for Jesus and probably some understanding of the things that he taught, if you look at their lives, didn't bring much of a change. They were still even after seeing the resurrected Jesus, they were scared and sitting in inside a wood-locked room.

What was it that changed on the day of Pentecost? You know they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They didn't become perfect. We know that Peter was, for example, very reluctant to mix with the Gentiles and Paul made mistakes like circumcising Timothy and even many years later we find Paul yelling at the high priest.

So they were not perfect, but yet they were not the same like they were on the time when Jesus died. So I found that this thing which Jesus said in Matthew 22, where someone asked him a question in verse 36, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? We know that, you know the verse which says, what the law could not do, God did. That's Romans 8.3. So the new covenant does in us what the law could not do.

The law really hasn't changed. God's law is eternal. The little details of the ceremonial part of it may have changed, but God's essential law is eternal.

That means when he created man and woman, this is the law. There were so many things that, so many things we are commanded to do which Adam and Eve did not have to do. But this law was there right from the beginning.

That is verse 37. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. And Jesus said, I can't give you one command by itself.

That is linked to the second one. And you know the man is only asked for what is the great commandment, number one. And Jesus said, I can't give you only one.

I have to give you two because both are linked. Like you know there's no cross without the two arms. So these are like the two arms of the cross, the one vertical one which is always longer than the horizontal one.

So the vertical one is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And then your neighbor is yourself. The two are linked.

There's no cross without two arms. So it's easy for us to inwardly compare ourselves with others who don't have certain external things that we have in our church or in our life or we have understood the new covenant. And to not essentially be proud of it or glory in it, but to inwardly congratulate ourselves that we're a little better than others because of maybe we don't go to the movies or we don't watch television so much or you know all the things we don't do and we don't do we don't do.

I've often thought of the time of Elijah when Elijah was so discouraged and he was particularly when the queen wanted to kill him. If you're not familiar with that passage let me just show you in 1 Kings and chapter 19. It says he got so discouraged that he ran away.

He had killed 450 prophets of Baal single-handedly and then one woman threatened him and he got scared and he ran away. And then he tells the Lord in 1 Kings chapter 19 verse 10, Lord Israel has forsaken you. 1 Kings 19 and verse 10.

You know they've killed your prophets. Only I am left. Then the Lord told him okay I'm going to anoint you. Verse 16.

Elisha is a prophet in your place. Verse 16. Okay Elijah your time is up.

You're exhausted and I will leave 7,000 in Israel. Verse 18. Who have not bowed to Baal every mouth that is not chistened.

So many people look at that and say well it wasn't only Elijah. There were 7,000 people there in Israel who also hadn't bowed the knee to Baal. But the interesting thing is those 7,000 never had a testimony.

Nobody knew. Ahab never knew about all those 7,000 because their testimony was negative. I have not bowed to Baal and I have not kissed Baal, the statue.

Whereas Elijah's testimony was not negative. It was positive. In 1 Kings chapter 17 you find Elijah's testimony is this.

Verse 1 is the first time he's introduced. It says here as the Lord God of Israel lives before whom I stand. That was his testimony.

So his testimony was positive. Those people's testimony is negative and that's why none of those 7,000 could bring fire down from heaven. No matter how much they would have prayed at the altar nothing would have happened.

Their prayer may not have been much better than the prophets of Baal. The way that applies to us is you know many Christians their testimony is negative. I don't bow the knee to Baal.

I don't go to the movies. I don't drink. I don't smoke.

I don't beat my wife. I don't get angry. I don't tell lies.

It's a whole lot of negatives just like these 7,000. It's good. It's a wonderful thing in a country where everybody's bowing down to Baal.

There are people who say I don't do it. So certainly Christians who in a church who have to stand and all these things are definitely better than a whole lot of other Christians who compromise in many many areas. But yet it doesn't bring fire down from heaven in our life or in our ministry or in our home or in our church.

It's a positive testimony that Elijah had. I live before God. I stand before God.

He's the only one who matters to me. He is the only one whose opinion has any that ever bothers me. What does my heavenly father think of me? What does Jesus think of me? I stand before him and all the time I'm conscious of living before him.

That is what made Elijah different from all the others. And that's why you know the Lord didn't say okay go and pick one of those 7,000 to be your replacement. No there was another man in Israel, Elisha who God had watched him.

He wasn't a prophet. He was just plowing the field and you know just like the disciples were before the Lord called them. They were just fishing people.

But the Lord saw something in their hearts which made it. There's something in the hearts of those people like Peter, James, John, Andrew which the Lord saw and which made him pick them out to be disciples and something that the Lord saw in Elisha who was also had not bowed the knee to Baal and had not kissed Baal and yet the Lord could not pick one of those 7,000 to be the replacement for Elijah. It had to be Elisha.

So there's a distinction even among those who don't do this and don't do this and don't do this and don't do this. A multitude of Christians who avoid so many sins. I don't commit this sin.

I don't commit this sin. I don't You can go through the list of it. Think for example of the Sermon on the Mount alone.

I don't get angry. I don't lust after women. I don't divorce my wife.

I'm just going through Matthew 5. I don't tell lies. I don't hate my neighbors. I don't curse those who curse me.

I don't reveal to others when I pray or fast or give. I don't do so many things. I don't judge others.

I can go through the whole Sermon on the Mount. I don't get anxious. I don't love money.

You can go through the whole Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6 and 7 and essentially it is that I don't bother meeting Beale. I don't kiss his statue. That's why we've got to come back to Matthew 22 where it says the law is not a whole lot of you shall not do this, you shall not do that.

It was like that. I mean the Ten Commandments are like that and all the other 613 commandments there in the Old Testament were basically things you could not do and there are a lot of things in the New Testament too which you were not supposed to do. I mean a lot of things in the Sermon on the Mount as I just said but we go back to the law of God which is a positive thing.

I must love the Lord with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength. It's not a question of what I don't do and I must love my neighbor as myself. It's not what I don't do to my neighbor.

It's what I do. It's a positive thing and that's what God wanted Adam to be like. He wanted him to love Eve.

She was the only one human being around but to love the Lord first and that's where he failed in the Garden of Eden and this is where you know it's very easy for us as Christians particularly when we have taken a stand against Babylonian Christianity and all the wrong things there are in Christendom to as I said inwardly congratulate ourselves that we're not in that group of people who are Babylonian. But the question is do I love the Lord with all my heart? You know Jesus said that one of the main alternative masters to God was not the devil but money. Luke chapter 16.

I mean if Jesus hadn't said that and we were to ask anyone a question what are the two masters which are vying? Vying means v-y-i-n-g. That means trying to claim our hearts. If Jesus hadn't said that we would have immediately thought it's God and Satan because in the Garden of Eden it was not God and money.

It was God and Satan. Adam didn't love money. There was no money around.

The choice was in the Garden of Eden was God or Satan. But for us today it's God or money which is when it's not just money. So when he said Mohammed he's I think refers to this old material world which has so many things in it to attract that Luke 16 and verse 13.

No servant can serve two masters. He will hate the one and love the other and devoted to one and despise the other. So I don't think most Christians to tell you honestly I don't think most Christians face up to that verse fair and square looking at it and meditating on it and examining their own life in the light of it.

The people are scared to look at that verse and think too much about it because it's very demanding. First of all there must be absolutely no element in me of serving material wealth. Earning material wealth? Yes.

Doing a business and making profit out of that business? Yes. That's okay. Jesus I'm sure Jesus didn't sell us the stools and tables he made at cost price because if he did he'd have no money to take care of his his four brothers and widowed mother and all that.

So I'm sure Jesus added a commission to his material cost to cover the cost of his labor. There's nothing wrong in it. There's nothing wrong in making a profit in business.

In fact Jesus spoke about someone who went out with one talent and earned ten. So there's nothing wrong in making profit but it's a question of what one lives for. You cannot serve God and wealth.

That means two masters claiming my allegiance and it's very real in the world in which we live. God and wealth. Claiming my allegiance and the test for me is something like the test in Eden.

God says one thing, the devil says another thing. Who am I going to listen to? Okay today it is God pulls me in one direction, money pulls me in another direction. Which pull am I going to yield to? Now I'm not talking about the sort of asceticism or being a hermit where I think that spirituality is to get the lowest salary and live in the most difficult place and it's more spiritual to go to Afghanistan than to go and live in the United States.

I don't believe that because I mean I'll tell you why because I don't believe Jesus lived in the most difficult place on earth. The most difficult place on earth was certainly not Israel. So you don't have to go and live in the most difficult place and earn the least amount of money in order to be spiritual.

That's not what I mean. It's a pull. God and material things.

I think of that going back to Adam that his body was made of the same dust that the animals were made of and I think there's something significant in the fact that it's not only man that was made on the sixth day. The animals were made on the sixth day too. In fact all the others were created earlier but the animals, the earth-bound animals, the fish were created on the fifth day but the animals were on the sixth day.

The first part of the sixth day made the animals from the dust and these animals are in terms of their body and all the most similar to human beings. I mean fish are not like human beings but those things that God created on the sixth day you know dogs and monkeys and all they've got a lot of internal organs which are just like us made from the same dust we're made of and then towards the end of the sixth day God makes man from the same dust that he made animals and he breathes into man and that breathing into man didn't just give man breath. It did give him breath but the animals also had breath without God breathing into them but there was something more that Adam got and that was a conscience or what the bible calls the spirit.

Man is body, soul and spirit as the soul is our mind and our feelings. I think dogs have got a mind and feelings too but what they don't and will. Dogs have got a will.

Sure they can obey or disobey but spirit the deepest part of man that no animal has. That is what came with the breath of God and so man is constantly pulled by the spirit pulling him up and the body which is made of dust pulling him to the things of earth. That's what happened in the garden of Eden that there was something in I'm sure there was something in Adam and Eve that pulled him up towards God saying hey you shouldn't be doing this.

God's told you not to eat from that tree and there was another part of that tree which it says he looked at the fruit and it was really made her mouth water. There was some something of the earth part in her body pulling her towards in that case a tree in our case it may be money it can be something else. It's these two pulls that we find the part that pulls us upward and the part that pulls us downward and I see it like that in terms of God and money.

God and material wealth. But the reason I feel that many don't meditate too much on this verse is because it's a very strong word to hate the one and love the other. That means I gotta hate money if I want to love God.

You know we're thinking of the first verse the commandment is you shall love your God Lord your God with all your heart soul strength and mind. So I gotta hate money in the same way in which Jesus said if you want to be my disciple you got to hate your father and mother and you got to hate your wife and you got to hate your children. So we know it doesn't mean that I detest them.

That's not the meaning but that in the light of my love for Jesus my love even for my wife and children is hardly anything. The Bible commands us to love our wives to love our children bring them up and we all do. But I cannot be a disciple if not just that I love the Lord more.

I thought much of that commandment you must hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters even in the church. I gotta hate my brothers in the church if I want to be a disciple. So the best illustration I've used the picture I've used I find a great help when I try to understand some difficult verses with an illustration or a picture because that's how Jesus taught is between the light of the sun and the light of the stars.

The stars have got light and any night you look up they are there. My love for my father, mother, brothers, sister, wife, children must all be there. It must not be non-existent.

It must be there. But when the sun comes up even though the stars are there you can't see any of them. It's almost as though they're not there and so that's how I see it that my love for Jesus must be like the light of the sun in which light my love for my wife, even my wife and children sort of fades into insignificance compared to my love for the Lord.

It's a wonderful thing to love your wife and children but it's not the greatest thing. The greatest thing is to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. So I see that this is the way in which I gotta hate money too.

It's not that I have nothing to do with money. I gotta hate money like I hate my wife and like I hate my children. In other words, the light of the sun, the love for Jesus is so great that the other is almost insignificant.

It doesn't... If the Lord pulls me in a certain direction nothing can pull me away from another direction. Not my wife, not my children, not money, nothing. No brother, no sister, no ministry, nothing.

This is how Jesus lived. He was that perfect man who did exactly, who lived exactly the way the Father wanted man to live. And when we say we're going to walk as Jesus walked, we can look at the externals that he forgave those who killed him or he was very disciplined in the matter of prayer and resisted temptation.

All that is good but inwardly the thing was he loved the Father more than anyone else. Even his going to the cross which we often think of as a mark of Jesus' love for man. Jesus described it in John 14.

His going to the cross was an act of obedience to his Father and love for his Father. Where John 14 31, that the world may know that I love the Father. I do exactly as the Father commanded me.

Let's get up and go from here. Where? To the cross. So what he was saying is I'm going to the cross because I love my Father.

You know when Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, people looked at that and said behold how he loved him and they saw him weep. And when I look at the cross, it's something like that. Look at Jesus hanging on the cross and say behold how he loved the Father.

I don't think many Christians think of that part. They think of the cross as oh behold how he loved me. It's true but that was a small arm of the cross.

The big vertical arm was behold how he loved the Father that he would go to the cross. It was his love for the Father. He says that the world may know that I love the Father.

John 14 31. Let's go to the cross. Let me go to the cross.

So I would choose the cross every day in my life if I love the Father. If I love him more than anything else, more than my wife, children, the pull of anything on earth. That's the reason why when Peter told Jesus in Matthew 16 when Jesus said you know I've got to go to the cross.

That's the first time he explained the cross to his disciples. It says in Matthew 16 21. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he's got to go to the cross and be killed and be raised on the third day.

He included the resurrection. He told them it's not it's not the end of everything. After three days I'm going to come out of the grave.

But Peter rebuked him saying no Lord never. I mean it's okay you're coming out of the grave after three days but you should not suffer like this. And immediately Jesus said get behind me Satan.

As I see it there are only two times in the Bible where Jesus says get behind me Satan. One is when he spoke to the devil directly. When the devil said fall down and worship me.

He said get away Satan. The second time was to Peter. Get away Satan.

So the voice that told him to avoid the cross, Peter's voice, is the same as the voice that tells bow down to Satan. You got to equate the two. Bowing to avoid the cross is bowing down to Satan.

In both cases Jesus used the same expression. Get behind me Satan. So I got a seed like that you know.

Any voice that tells me don't die to yourself here. Assert yourself. I'm really worshiping Satan.

Maybe a milder form of it but it is. And so I got to think of the pool of money like that in a situation where I choose to indulge myself rather than deny myself. Paul said in 1 Corinthians in chapter 6. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 12.

There are a lot of things we can do with money and material things. And a lot of those things are lawful. All things are lawful.

1 Corinthians 6.12. But all things are not profitable. All things are lawful but I will not be mastered by anything. We can apply that to God and money.

I must allow only God to master. Not my bodily desires. Not money.

Not my loved ones. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. It means with spirit, soul, and body how to love God.

And a lot of things are lawful. A lot of things I can do lawfully with my time. With my money.

A lot of things. But they may not all be the best for me. They may not always be what God wants.

And again I have to give a warning against asceticism. Where I think that if I avoid all these things and become like a monk or a hermit, that is spirituality. No.

I'm always encouraged by the fact that when Jesus got into the boat he asked them, hey have you brought a pillow? I want to lie down here. Lord you want a pillow? Don't you want to be a bit tough and sleep on the hard wooden boards? No. I'd like a pillow.

And I love that passage where it says he was sleeping on a pillow. To teach me that he was not an ascetic. He didn't live on wild locusts and honey like John the Baptist.

He enjoyed a good meal. In fact he enjoyed it so much that people called him a gluttonous man. He wasn't gluttonous.

Far from it. He could fast for 40 days. But when people looked at him, they thought boy this guy's asking for a second helping.

Do Christians ask for a second helping? I think Jesus would if he enjoyed something and if there was enough for everybody else at the table. There's so many ideas we can have about true spirituality which are fake. Jesus life is a very natural life.

It says in 1 Timothy in chapter 6, there are two things it says about riches here. Since we're talking about money, 1 Timothy 6, 17. Said those who are rich in the world mean those who got plenty of money.

Don't be conceited and don't fix your hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God. But he says remember God has richly supplied us with a lot of material things to enjoy. Our material things things meant to be just denied or enjoyed.

I have no problem enjoying a lot of things. Good food and many other things a comfortable house to live in provided it doesn't become an idol. God has provided us with things to enjoy.

Non-ascetic will never accept that. Everything on earth is to be denied. I'm just saying saying that as a word of caution.

But the other side of the cliff, that's one side of the cliff. The other side of the cliff is where I say you know one side is I must not enjoy anything. I must just anything that's going to make me a little happy I just deny myself.

I'm not going to take a second helping. I mustn't touch that ice cream. That's not Christianity.

The other side of the cliff is it's lawful for me. There's nothing wrong with it. That's another cliff because all of those among those lawful things there may be only 10% that's profitable in terms of the way I use my time or the way I use my money.

So when we come back to the original law of God you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart soul strength and mind. That is the life of Jesus. It's not that I don't bow the knee to Beal or I don't do this and I don't do that and I don't do the other thing.

It's not asceticism and it's not just denying certain external things. It's a positive thing that I with my heart's taken up with love for for Jesus. I always come back to this passage when it comes to serving the Lord.

I say Lord you called me to serve you full-time 52 years ago. What is the main thing you want from me? Studying the Bible, seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In John 21 when God was Jesus was recommissioning Peter after Peter had failed miserably denying the Lord three times and it's interesting that Peter had given up because when he says in John 21 and verse 3 I'm going fishing I think what he meant was I'm going permanently back to fishing.

I know the Lord called me more than three years ago to be an apostle but I'm a failure as an apostle. I tried it. I was sincere absolutely sincere.

I really wanted never to deny the Lord and I thought I would never let him down but I discovered that I would deny him even before a servant girl not once but thrice. I'm not fit to be an apostle but I can do fishing and that's where the Lord allowed him to fail. You know when God's called you to something and you try something else you'll find repeated failure.

You'll try all night and you won't catch anything because that's not where God called you to be. When he's called you to a particular task like he called Peter if he tried anything else he would be a failure. He goes back to fishing even at an area where once upon a time he was an expert and God makes sure that no fish get into his net and when the Lord loves a person so much that he says he's jealous to make sure that we fulfill the plan he has for us and not some other plan which may be a good plan but not his plan for us which may be a lawful plan but not the profitable one.

He will make sure we fail there. See that's why our life can be so much at rest. You know when we try different avenues of ministry or looking for a job or something like that and something doesn't open up it looks as if we try try try and something doesn't work out or in the case of people trying for a visa or permanent residency etc.

A true Christian is at complete rest total rest in God because he knows that anything outside of God's will I'll just be a failure. I'll toil all night and catch nothing. I'll try my best to get something and I won't get it.

It's just like John 21. That's because God doesn't want me to go into that direction. All those hours in which they try to catch fish and they didn't get anything was the Lord's word telling Peter that's not what I called you for Peter.

That's a good way of earning a living. There's nothing wrong in that. Nothing wrong in earning a living by fishing but that's not what I've called you for.

I know you've been a failure so far as an apostle. It doesn't matter that failure was part of your education. I don't know whether you realize that in God's economy and the way he deals with us failure is part of his education.

It doesn't apply in earthly circumstances. A brilliant student never fails all the way from first grade right up to PhD. He's a success always but it's not like that with God's dealings with us.

In God's dealings with us failure is a part of our education. I found that in my life. I found in my life that God took me through.

When I started my Christian life it was great. It was like an ascending curve and then God allowed me to fail and fail and fail as a believer and as I look at my life even my law my graph hit rock bottom and when I look back now I see it is so easy for God to prevent me from that but I was assessing my life in terms of you know I didn't bow the knee to Beal. I didn't kiss Beal.

I didn't do this. I didn't do that and I didn't do the other thing so I was pretty good but God wasn't happy and I was taken up with and I was doing a lot of things positively mostly in terms of service for God but the Lord wanted me to love him with all my heart and that's why he allowed me to fail and it's when I hit rock bottom about 43 years ago that the Lord that in that place of total failure that the Lord filled me with the Holy Spirit my life turned around. That's what happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

It wasn't a message to challenge them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and they had to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit and what did the Spirit of God do? Many people ask what is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. It's unfortunate that people have got that doctrine in this from Acts of the Apostles.

Acts of the Apostles was never given to us as a book of doctrine. One of the principles I've understood in Bible study over after 58 years of studying the Bible is that you must never get a doctrine from the historical sections of Scripture. You'll get a wrong doctrine.

Example, Jesus healed everybody. You're trying to get a doctrine out of that for today. You'll be a hypocrite deceiving others because it just doesn't happen.

Acts of the Apostles didn't heal everybody. Paul himself was sick. Timothy was sick constantly with stomach problems.

So that's one example of Jesus healed everybody. What doctrine do you get from that? Jesus walked on the water. What doctrine do you get from that? Jesus turned the water into wine.

He fed the 5,000 men with five loaves. What doctrine can you get from that? Same way with the Acts of the Apostles. It's a historical book.

You can't get doctrine from history. You've got to get doctrine from the teaching sections of Scripture. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus is teaching something, that's for me.

What he did, that's not necessarily for me. He walked on the water. He fed the 5,000.

He healed everyone. Not one person was left out. That may not be for me, but what he taught, every single word he taught, that's for me.

Think of a word like Matthew 12, 37, which I often say is one of the verses which hardly any Christian believes. Every idle word that you speak, you will give an account in the day of judgment. I really don't know how many believers really believe that.

Every single idle word that you speak, that means a word which is unchrist-like. You'll give an account in the day of judgment, Matthew 12, 37. Those things are necessary for me.

Jesus healed them all. I say praise the Lord. He did it, and I believe it.

But I find, for example, in Pentecostal Christianity particularly, I've never heard a message on Matthew 12, 37, that every idle word you're to give an account of the judgment. I had lots of messages on Jesus healed everyone. Why can't you do it? You see how the devil's led people astray by making history a doctrine, and it doesn't work.

And even then, people don't open their eyes and say, hey, it doesn't seem to work. Something must be wrong here, and then to miss out on the main thing. So what is the mark of, I was talking about, what is the proof of being filled with the Holy Spirit? Every Pentecostal Charismatic will say Acts 2-4.

They spoke in tongues. I say, if you want to go to Acts, why do you go to Acts 2-4? Why not start with Acts 2-3, which happened before Acts 2-4, and that is, there was a ton of fire over their heads when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, teaching me that my tongue should be on fire in the Holy Spirit, that I don't sin with my tongue. Not that I speak in tongues, that's Acts 2-4.

Acts 2-3, that if I'm really filled with the Holy Spirit, my tongue will be controlled by the fire of heaven, that I will have control over my temper, and I will have control over idle words and useless speech. I've never heard a single person preach on Acts 2-3 as the sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and yet that's the first thing that happened there. But besides that, you go to the teaching sections of Scripture, and then, and that's in Romans chapter 5 and verse 5. I say, this is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit, from the teaching sections of Scripture, not the historical sections in Acts of the Apostles.

Romans 5 verse 5, when the Holy Spirit fills us, the love of God is poured out within our hearts, it fills us so. I see Romans 5, I would paraphrase, it's like this, when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, your heart will be filled with love for God, with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and filled with love for others. It's the fulfillment of the law of God, which we read in Matthew 22, in Judaism, what is the great command? Here it is.

Nobody in the Old Testament could keep it. Nobody. When the Holy Spirit comes, He fills my heart with the love of God.

That means, I think, I get three things from that. One, it fills my heart with the assurance of God's perfect love for me. That's number one.

My whole heart is filled with the fact that God loves me as He loved Jesus. I never want to doubt that. The Holy Spirit makes, you know, He cries out, Abba Father, and assures me that He loves me more than any earthly father.

That's very, very important. It's very important, my dear brothers, because I find a lot of Christians are not assured in that love. The problem with a lot of Christians is their insecurity.

And if you look at your own heart, you may find that if you have a problem with your wife, it's insecurity in your own heart that causes it. It's insecurity in your heart that brings tension between you and your wife, or creates unrest in a certain situation. It's an insecurity.

It's the love of God. You're not allowed the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with that. God loves you as He loved Jesus.

To be filled with that, that's the first thing. And the second is that my heart is filled with love for God more than anything else. I love God more than my wife, husband, my wife, children, brothers, sisters, money, material things, property, everything.

And the third is love for everybody. My heart is filled with love for everybody else. It's only the Holy Spirit who can do that.

I cannot produce it. I cannot. I can say like Peter, even if all men deny you, I will not deny you.

And I may be very sincere, but in the moment of pressure, I'll deny him. And so, I need to go to God all the time and say, Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And the mark of it will be, I'll be perfectly assured of your love for me in any circumstance, no matter what happens around me or what doesn't happen, what God gives me or what God doesn't give me, I'm rooted and grounded in the fact that God loves me as He loves Jesus.

This is very, very important. My dear brothers, you may not be facing a circumstance right now that tests you on that, but you'll find in the long run, if you're not rooted and grounded on this, you will have problems in your Christian life. You have to be rooted and grounded, just like building a skyscraper.

Don't be in a hurry to build a skyscraper. Make sure the foundation is deep enough to hold the skyscraper. That means be rooted and grounded in the fact that God loves you as He loves Jesus Christ.

It took me 16 years after I was born again to come to that understanding. But that's because nobody ever taught it to me. You don't have to take 16 years.

You guys have probably heard it from day one in this church. But I never, even though it's written in John 17, 23, and I probably read it numerous times, there was a day when it hit me. And I said, wow, it's amazing.

It removed all insecurity from my life. I was a very insecure person. And you know, as a preacher, out of those 16 years, I was a preacher out of those 16 years.

In nine years, I was a full-time preacher and I was insecure. And one mark of my insecurity was that when I preached, I wanted to impress people with what I said. I wanted them to remember, oh, Brother Jack said this.

It was all my insecurity. But when you are secure in the love of God, these things don't, I mean, it takes time to pull out of that. But you come to the place where it doesn't bother you whether they think about what you said or don't think about what you said or quote you or don't quote you.

It doesn't make any difference. You're secure in the love of God, secure in the fact that even after any particular ministry that you did, you say, Lord, I love you with all my heart and with the limited ability I have, I did what I could to serve you. That's all.

I'm not competing with anybody else. I'm not here to show that what I share is more impressive than somebody else shared or rubbish. Absolutely no interest in that because I'm secure in God's love.

That's what the Holy Spirit does, first of all, you. I love you as I love my son, God says. Okay.

I want to be rooted. I want to dig a deep foundation because I'm building a skyscraper here. And I wanted this to be really deep so that the building will never shake, even gets to a hundred stories, it won't shake.

So allow the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in your heart, as it says in Romans 5. This is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. To me, it's not speaking in tongues, Acts 2. That's a good gift of God, but that's not the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit because I've met numerous people who speak in tongues who are not filled with the Holy Spirit. And I met numerous people who do not speak in tongues who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

So it is this, to be rooted and grounded in the fact that God loves me as he loved Jesus and find total security in that. And from that foundation, this skyscraper rises of love for God more than anything, loving God more than money, loving God more than relatives, and from there also the horizontal aspect of loving others. Again, the Holy Spirit.

I cannot love people without the Holy Spirit filling their heart with love. That is the difference in the old covenant was the command was there. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

It's not a new covenant commandment. It's an old covenant commandment, but they couldn't keep it. But what the law could not do, God has done by filling us with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God.

So I say if Romans 5.5 is not being increasingly true in your life, you're not really filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't care whether you speak in tongues or whether you're a great gifted person or that one or two people got healed when you prayed. It doesn't mean a thing.

It's this. I want to check myself always with this. So this is the, it's not that I hate money, but this is love Jesus.

One of the best illustrations that came to my mind of how to be detached from love for material things and other is this an illustration. Here is a father who's very concerned that his daughter is in love with some guy who's useless. He doesn't know how to pull her away from loving this man who he knows will mess up my daughter's life.

And no matter what he says, she's just madly in love with him. He warns her against him and says he's like this, he's dangerous, this, that, and the other. But it doesn't seem to make any difference.

She still loves him and secretly texts him and meets with him and all that. And the father doesn't know what to do. He just keeps, seems to be, this is a picture of my love for the world or love for money or love for something like that.

And then one day, his daughter comes up and says, dad, I've given him up. I've given up on him. We've broken up.

What happened? I found somebody else. It's far better. That is, it's by the love for Jesus that I break away from love for the world or love for money.

That's the illustration. It's not by my battling. I'm going to stop loving money.

I'm going to stop. It doesn't work. It's the excelling power of a new affection, a new love has driven out the other one who I loved fervently once upon a time.

That is what the Holy Spirit does. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, which means, first of all, God's love for me. It's like, I mean, my love for God drives out from my heart all that love for material things.

It's not by battling. I want to hate that. I want to hate that.

It's like that girl saying, I want to, my dad says, I'm going to hate this man. I'm going to hate this man. But in spite of that, she goes out and sleeps with him.

But it's the expulsive power of a new affection. That new affection expels from her heart the other one. So, and from there, I will learn to love my fellow believers and others.

And, you know, how John gives us this horizontal love as a test of our love for God. In 1 John, I'm sure you're familiar with this verse, 1 John chapter 3, sorry, chapter 4 and verse 20. If someone says, 1 John 4 20, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar.

Because the one who does not love his brother whom he can see, how can he love a God whom he has not seen? That's his logic. The logic is, if you can't love a brother whom you can see, you cannot love a God whom you cannot see. It's a deception.

You're fooling yourself. So God, you know, it's like what they call in chemistry a litmus test. Is it acid or alkali? And the litmus test is to love for God is, can I love my brother? This horizontal love is the litmus test for my marital love.

Otherwise, I'm just deceiving myself. So, coming back to what I said in Luke 16, you know, it's quite a strong word that Jesus said that one who loves God will hate money. Like I said, hate money just like he hates his mother, I mean, father, mother, wife, children and all.

So, if I keep this always before me, I found it very helpful in some of those questions that people ask. What shall I do here? Sometimes there are certain areas in life which are not clear black or white. Particularly in the world in which we live in, in a secular world, there are certain things which are what we call gray areas, which at least in, maybe we haven't come to the level of maturity where it becomes crystal clear black or white.

And there'll always be certain areas which are a little gray in our thinking. Should I do it or not? Am I permitted to do this or not? Which maybe other Christians feel quite free to do it. I say I'm not so sure.

So, what is the test of it? Love for God, love for one's neighbor. To me, that's the test. If I do this, is it going to hinder my love, my fervent love for God? Is it violating my love to somebody else from the earth? If not, as far as I'm concerned, it's okay.

That is how I have, I found this verse very helpful when I've come to these gray areas where you don't know exactly what is absolutely right. I asked myself, does it violate the law of love for God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind? Does it violate the law of love for my neighbors, myself? If not, it's clear. I may not do it.

That's another thing because I may say it's permitted, but it's not profitable. So, I don't do it. That's another step altogether.

But if I were to ask that, if I were asked that question, I'd say, oh, that's quite lawful. Whether you choose to do it or not is up to you. But if it does not violate my love for God and love for one another, it's lawful.

But as I said, the Christian chooses to live by a higher standard, saying among the lawful things, I pick out only the ones that are profitable. See, Jesus could never have said in John 17 verse 4. John 17 verse 4, Jesus said, Father, I have glorified you on earth. When the Bible says, do all for the glory of God, how do I ensure that I can come to the end of my life and say I've glorified God on earth? According to John 17 verse 4, I finished the work that you gave me to do.

You know, initially when we hear Jesus crying out, it is finished on the cross, we think only of our sins. Praise God, he said it's finished. It's true.

But I think there's a world of meaning in it is finished on the cross when he said that in John 19 verse 30. Of course, all my sins were finished there too, but he had finally finished everything that the Father told him to do from the time he was born. He died on the cross, it is finished.

He had finished also being tempted in every point as human beings are. He had to be tempted there also when you're crucified to forgive those who crucified him. That also was a temptation.

So when all that was accomplished, you could say it's finished. The entire range of temptation that is possible for man, I've colored the whole circle. There's not even one segment left out.

If you think of temptation as different little segments of the circle, Jesus is overcoming, overcoming, overcoming, coloring the whole circle, and finally there's a wee bit left out and on the cross, finished. Every temptation that man can, any human being can ever encounter, you or me or anybody, he had overcome. It's finished.

So there's a lot of meaning in that statement, it is finished on the cross. But he says that, potentially he said it here ahead of time, I've finished the work you gave me to do. So how do I glorify God on earth? I'm sure all of us want to glorify God on earth.

Well, here's the way. When you were born, God had a particular plan for your life. Like the Lord told Jeremiah, before you were formed in your mother's womb, I chose you.

And Paul says that, God who chose me from my mother's womb, see that expression of Paul's in Galatians and chapter 1, Galatians 1.15. See, when you meditate on this verse, there's quite a depth of meaning in it. God who set me apart even from my mother's womb, Galatians 1.15, called me through his grace and was pleased to reveal his son in me. When did God set him apart? Before he was born, from my mother's womb.

That means when Paul was conceived in his mother's womb, nine months before he was born, God had his eye on him, made sure he was not aborted, made sure his mother didn't have a miscarriage. God had his eye on him. I hope you can believe that about yourself too.

I believe that about myself. It brings great security into my life to know that when I was conceived in my mother's womb, God had his eye on me from there. And it says here, God had set me apart.

That means in my mother's womb, God had set Paul apart in his mother's womb. And how in the world did this guy go killing Christians for 30 years? God had set him apart in the mother's womb. He was persecuting Christians and harassing them.

And he would travel all the way from Jerusalem to Damascus. You know what a long journey that is? Just to persecute the Christians. I mean, people travel that distance to make money, but he was trying to persecute Christians.

He was so zealous. And this guy was set apart from his mother's womb to do God's will. See, that's where I learned that failure is part of God's education for us.

I've discovered that in my life and it's been a great comfort. And I once said, Lord, why did you allow me to wander 16 years in Babylon before showing me how to build the church? And the Lord said, you needed that education, that guided tour through all the streets of Babylon. It was necessary for the ministry I had planned for you.

So even that was not a waste. So God allowed Peter to fail. He allowed Paul to fail.

Fail miserably. So miserably that till the end of his life, he felt he's the chief of sinners in the whole world. Why? Because I persecuted Christians, man.

Is there a greater sin than that? I did that. That I'll never get over the fact that I'm the chief of sinners whom God called to serve him. That was necessary.

And we can't bear that revelation all the time that we are the chief of sinners. We'll get so discouraged. We'll never do anything for the Lord.

But once in a while, if it doesn't hit you that you're the chief of sinners, I think you need to have it. I get it once in a while. Not all the time.

It will discourage me. But once in a while, in the presence of God, you suddenly get hit when you're least expecting it. Boy, there can't be a greater sinner than me in the whole world.

And yet, who's saying that? The man, Paul, who said in another context in Acts 23, I have lived with a good conscience all my life. He says that in Acts 23.1. I have lived with a good conscience all my life. This is the man who says I'm the chief of sinners.

That is the true paradox of the true Christian life. I've lived with a good conscience, but I'm the chief of sinners. We can't say we've lived with a good conscience all our life.

At least we can say I'm living with a good conscience today. But I feel I'm the chief of sinners. Because that failure is part of God's education.

So what I'm trying to say is Jesus never failed. And so he could say, I finished all that you wanted me to do. What I want to say for our encouragement is that this guy, Paul, who failed for 30 years, could also say at the end of his life, I finished all that God wanted me to do.

That's the wonderful thing for us. When you look at Jesus, you say, well, he lived a perfect life from day one. So I can't really say that.

But when Paul says in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 7, I fought a good fight. I finished the course. A man who for 30 years was outside the will of God could say at the end of his life, I finished.

Just like Jesus, I finished my course. I glorified God. I meditated on that and said, Lord, because my life was like that.

I didn't live with a good conscience from day one of my life. I wandered away even after I became a believer. I failed in so many ways.

And I see that that was all part of God's plan. He who had chosen me from my mother's womb, Paul says that. And I can imagine God watching Paul's life.

I've chosen this guy from the time he was conceived to be my servant. And I see him going around persecuting my children. And, you know, like he spoke to him from heaven.

Why are you persecuting me? Because Jesus' body was on the earth and Paul was attacking his body. That man could say at the end of his life, I finished my course. And I say that for your encouragement.

And you look back over your life. There may be many, many years in your life where you missed the will of God and you did it wrong, even after you were converted. A whole section of your life.

And yet, I hope a time came in your life where you said, God, I'm going to take you seriously from now on. I want my whole life to love God with all my heart. You were not perfect.

Paul is not perfect because 25 years after he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he still shouts at the high priest once, God has smite you, you whitewashed well. It was certainly an idle word. But he repented immediately as soon as he aware of it.

So I'm not talking about a perfection which even Paul didn't have. But when he discovered it, he repented, apologized and moved on. He didn't sit condemning himself, forgetting the things that are behind he pressed on.

And he could say he finished his course. I want to say that to all of you. I believe that all of us can finish our course, no matter what our past failures.

I mean, that's what encourages me. But make loving God with all your heart and loving others as the central law by which you live and never congratulating yourself and either the things you don't do, I don't kiss Bial, I don't bow the knee to Bial, I don't do this, I don't go to the movies, I don't do this, I don't do that, no, no, no. And not even the external rituals that, you know, the Pharisee who prayed, Lord, I pray three times a day and I fast twice a week and I pay my tithes.

No, those are not the positive things that we are to glory in. Those are the things the Pharisee's glory in, in his prayer. Lord, I thank you.

I'm not like other men. If he had said I'm not like other men because I love God with all my heart, that's one thing, but that's not what he said. He said, I fast and I pray and I tithes and external things.

So this disconnected message was to enable you to have a correct view of what is most important in the Christian life. It's not as disconnected as you think it is. It all centers around one thing.

God wants us to love him with all our heart and love one another. Thank you.

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