

A Godly Man Is a Lover of the Saints

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All right. Good evening, everyone. It's good to see you all tonight. It looks like everyone's here tonight. So packed house. So it's good to be with you all again. And of course, we were here Sunday, but I wasn't doing anything. Just sitting there enjoying the service with the rest of you.

But to be back into the saddle of teaching again is always a joy and a delight. And actually tonight, we're going to not be in Zachariah. We'll be there next week. But I, in getting ready for Frank's coming on Sunday. I was doing some reading cause I usually look for a quote of some sort for the bulletin.

So I do put some thought into that. So I don't want you to think I'm just finding these randomly. And I was looking for, for something that I thought would go along with the sermon the topic and title that he'd given to me. And there's a little book written by a Puritan pastor. He's probably my favorite Puritan author.

Or maybe my second favorite. So it's a real tight one between John Owen and Thomas Watson in terms of readability, Thomas Watson is the easiest to read in terms of content. John Owen is probably the better, but it's like you better get ready for, for the long haul. So there's a little booklet written by Thomas Watson called a godly man's picture, and it's just listing various characteristics that will be true of a godly man.

And one of those characteristics is that a godly man is a lover of the saints. And in reading that chapter it went along well with what Pastor Frank taught on Sunday. And so I thought, well, maybe we'll this week take the content of that chapter and kind of condense it into a Bible study and just do that as an addition.

to what Frank taught. Some of it will overlap with what he taught. Some of it may be new material or information, but along the same lines of loving one another, of loving one another. So that's what we're going to do tonight. We'll start in first John chapter three, verse 14, and we'll read this passage and pray, and then we'll just go from there.

And look at various passages and text and just again, expounding on this virtue of loving one another and the centrality and the importance of that in the Christian life in the Christian life. First John chapter three, verse 14 says, we know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren.

He who does not love abides in death. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you tonight. Lord, knowing that, that we cannot claim to be your children, Lord, we cannot claim to have passed out of death into life. If there is no evidence and no change within us, Lord, we know that we are born dead in our trespasses and sins.

And that in that natural fleshly carnal state in which we enter into this world and in which we live for many years, that Lord, there is no love there. No true love. There is a counterfeit. There is a love that is evident in the world and that we see even among unbelievers. But true spiritual love. Love for the saints.

Love for the brethren. True love for you. Lord, these things are not natural. These are not common to us in our natural state, but are completely foreign and contrary to the flesh. Father, we want to be a body and a people who are known by our love of one another. And so Lord, we pray that you might teach us Lord, that you might establish us in this truth.

Lord, that you might produce within us this virtue, this characteristic of godliness Lord, that must be so prominent and really first among the virtues is to love one another. So father, we pray that you might produce this in us Lord, that you might teach us of its nature and of its characteristics, Lord, that we might cultivate it more and more in our own lives.

Lord, that you would mortify what remains of the flesh of our selfishness and of our hatred of one another. Lord, guard us from envy and jealousy and ambition and pride. Lord, all of those things that are contrary. To love, and we pray that you might build us up and bind us together in this perfect bond of peace.

The Lord, that you might cement us together through our love for one another. So, Lord, teach us tonight, and Lord, may we abound in this virtue. And it is in Christ, then, that we pray. Amen. All right, so that's what we'll be talking about tonight this virtue of loving one another and that a godly man is one who does have love for the saints, which is as we read in 1 John 3, 14, that we know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren.

This is the clearest evidence of new birth of regeneration that one belongs to God that they have passed out of the domain of Darkness out of the kingdom of Satan into the domain of light and into the kingdom of Christ One of the clearest evidences of this is love for the Saints and if there is no love for the brethren Then there is no life.

There is no salvation. There is no spirituality if these things are not true So for a person to be a Christian who does not love is a complete contradiction. It is impossible This would like be like the Sun Not having light Or the sun not having heat. How can the sun exist if it does not produce light and heat?

The very nature, the very characteristic of the sun is to produce light and heat. And so it is with the child of God. The very nature of the child of God is to love God and to love the sun. And so we must have this love. Love will begin with what is called civil love, a civil love. And that is that in a godly man, there is a love or a civility that extends to all men, right?

We are to love our neighbor as our self, not merely for the saints, as if we have no obligation to outsiders. We are to love all men, and all men are our neighbors, so all men, in one way or another, should be the objects of our love. One of the characteristics of Abraham in Genesis 23, 7, it says that Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

Though the sons of Heth were not in the covenant, though they were pagans and idolaters and unbelievers. Abraham was still able to show proper honor, proper respect, proper

friendliness toward those people, though they were not believers. So he was still able to love them in a sense and to behave himself in a friendly, in a kind, in a respectful way.

Even toward those unbelievers. We know from Matthew chapter 5 43 to 48 that one of the characteristics of God's love toward mankind is that he Causes the Sun to shine on the just and the unjust he causes the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked And there he says that our love is to be similar to his love And just as God loves even his enemies, so we, as God's children, are to love even those that we would consider our enemies.

We are to pray for those who persecute us. We are to do good even to those who may do evil to us. First Peter chapter three, first Peter chapter three verses eight to nine,

it says there to sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly. Kindhearted and humble in spirit. Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead for you are called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing there. He wants them to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind, kindhearted, humbled in spirit to not return evil for evil.

Not insult for insult, but instead when people give you evil, when they insult you, bless them instead. And this should be extended to all men. This is the way that we ought to be. There should be within us, even a sympathy, a pity, a compassion. Toward unbelievers when we see them living in their sin. It should move us to compassion and tenderness but because of their condition and because of the state and nature in which they are in now reasons Why it is good for us to love all men Well one is because we are all of the same lump of clay and we all bear the image of god Every man every woman every child that we encounter in this world.

All of them have the same father You And the same father ultimately is God. And then the same human father is Adam. So in that sense, we are all part of mankind. We are all brothers. We are all kinsmen in that we all come from the same lump from this original source that is Adam. In Romans chapter 9 verses 1 to 5, this was the apostle Paul's attitude toward his kinsmen, his brothers according to the flesh.

toward the Jews. is he had great anguish, unceasing sorrow in his heart. He wished that he himself could be accursed, cut off from Christ for the sake of his kinsmen, his brothers, according to the flesh. So his fellow Jews, though they hated him, and though in many ways they were persecuting him, tormenting him, trying to put him to death, Yet, he had love for them, compassion for them, and he wished that he himself could be accursed for their salvation.

And this because they were his kinsmen. They were his brothers according to the flesh. Well, what was true of them more specifically as Jews? It's true of us in terms of all mankind. And there is a sense in which we are related to all men because we all descend from Adam and then also from Noah. Also another motivation for us to love all men is because many times God will use as a means to draw unbelievers to Christ, the sweet, kind, tender behavior of the saints toward them.

When they insult us and curse us. And we do not return that, but instead are kind and tender and we bless them. This is a means that God can use to draw them to the gospel so that they might see the beauty and the glory of these things. Rude, bitter, harsh, sour behavior often alienates and hardens the hearts of sinners against religion.

Whereas love and loving behavior softens their hearts. First Peter chapter three verses one to two there in speaking to wives, the apostle Peter says this in the same way you wives be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be one without a word by the behavior of their wives as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior there.

Now, of course we know that no one can be saved merely by observing behavior. That ultimately there has to be truth. There has to be the content. There has to be the preaching of the gospel. However, one of the means God uses to make the gospel powerful to make it glorious and beautiful to these people is the behavior of the saints.

And in this case, the chaste, the respectful behavior of the wife softens the hard heart of the husband toward the things of God. And in the same way, as we are out in the world and as we are extending love to our fellow men, even though they may be unbelievers, our love toward them may be used by God to soften their hearts toward the things of God.

And so there is a sense in which we ought to have love for all men, but then specifically in first John chapter three, verse 14, here he is talking about spiritual love, spiritual love, and that is this pious and holy love that is directed, especially toward the household of faith. There is a sense in which the.

Peculiar objects of our love and of our affection of our tenderness and our kindness and our sympathy is to be the household of faith it is to be the children of God just as God does good to all men, but he does a special good to his own children. That there are blessings that he gives to his children that he does not give to all men.

And in the same way, we are to love all men. But there is a special, peculiar love that is reserved only for the saints. For those who are our brothers in Christ. Galatians chapter 6 verse 10 says, So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people. And especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We are especially to do good to those who belong to the household of faith. Now, what are the characteristics of this love for the brethren? Well, the first is this. Our love for one another must be sincere. It must be sincere. It cannot be hypocritical. It cannot be an outward showy love, but it must be genuine, sincere love that is proceeding from the heart, from a heart that loves them from the bowels of our very affections.

1 John 3, verse 18, 1 John 3, 18 says, little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth. Love must be pure. It must be without deceit, right? A pretended

love, a fake love is like a picture of the sun, right? It has the picture of it, but it has, it produces no heat. It gives no light.

It gives no heat. And so it is with a fake or a pretended love. Right. It has the, the look of love, but there's no substance to it. There's no true heat in it. So first our love must be sincere. Secondly, love must be spiritual. We are to love the saints because they are saints, because they are the children of God, because they have been redeemed, because they belong to the family of God, because the spirit of Christ dwells within them.

When we see the saints. Who should we see within them? We should see Christ Himself. And the way that we love Christ, and the way that we love God, or one of the ways we do so, is by loving the saints, because in them is the image of Christ. We see Christ in them. So it must be for this spiritual reason. Not because they did something for me and I'm returning the favor not for some other ill motive But simply because they are the children of God Why do you love your own children because they're your children, right?

It is your relationship. It is this Bond that you have as being of the same family that causes you to have love for your children in the same way There will be this spiritual love that exists In the body of Christ, because we all belong to the same family. We are all members of the same body. We belong to Christ.

So we are to love one another because of who we are in Christ Jesus. Third, love must be extensive, including all who are God's children. We cannot pick and choose the members of the body that we like, That we have a more natural affinity to, that we get along with better and say, I'm going to love them.

And then I'm going to ignore the rest of them. And especially this one guy, because he really gets on my nerves. It can't be like that in the body of Christ. We have to love everyone, right? We have to show love for all the brethren. It must be extensive. And it will be true that there are times where we have more in common with one person or another.

We may have a more natural rapport with one or another. But our love cannot be confined only to those that we get along with or those that we have common interest in. We are to love all of God's children. Well, it's true that the young people typically tend to congregate in churches. But does that mean they have no obligations to the old?

Absolutely not. And it's also true that the old people many times congregate in the church as well. But does that mean they have no obligations to the young? No, we have to go beyond these things and extend love to all of God's children, young and old, rich and poor, educated, uneducated, Jew or Gentile.

None of it matters. None of those distinctions matter. Our love must reach to all people. Again, there's nothing wrong with us having natural affinities more natural rapport. There are some people that we will be closer friends with. That's just a part of life. However, that

does not mean that we can exclude or that we can neglect our obligations and our duty to show love to all people.

Also, it must be extensive. To even those who are weak in faith, even those who have many infirmities. There is no Christian in this life who is going to be perfect. So perfection is not a prerequisite to our loving one another. We are to love each other even though we are still covered with many sins, with many infirmities, with many weaknesses, with many spots and many blemishes.

We all have areas of immaturity. We all have areas of sin, and we have to love one another in spite of these things. God loves us. Even though we are covered with many spots and blemishes, does God cease loving us because we commit a sin against him? Does he cease to love us because we have weak faith because we are immature?

No, if we are in his body and if we belong to him, he never quits loving us. And this is the way that we must be in the body of Christ as well. Jesus Christ will never extinguish it. Even the dimly burning flax, the bruised reed, he will not break. And there will be those in the body of Christ who have a weaker faith, who are more immature.

And it is the responsibility of those who are stronger, those who have a greater faith, who are more mature, to bear with the weak, and to bring them along with tenderness, with compassion, with gentleness, And the other thing that we can do is we can't be exaggerated with one another. In those things. Also, our love must be extensive in that we may differ and disagree on certain things.

Another Christian may differ from me on matters of lesser importance, either because he has more light than me or because he has less light than me. Some have stronger faith, others have weaker faith. Love cannot only be extended if there is perfect uniformity in everything. That's not a prerequisite to love is that you have to agree with me on every single topic and if you don't agree with me on this one topic, then I don't have to love you.

It cannot be that way. We may disagree. We may differ from place to place. Now on certain things, of course, there must be uniformity. On the person and work of Jesus Christ, I cannot say that it's okay for you and me to disagree. I believe Jesus is the Son of God, and you don't believe He's the Son of God.

Alright, you can't be in the church, you can't be a member of this church, if you do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Alright, but on other issues, things of lesser importance, we can still have fellowship. For example, the pastor, Frank, who came this week and taught at our church, their church takes the Lord's Supper once a month.

We take it every week. Well, I prefer doing it every week. I think there's many benefits and much value in doing so. But are we going to refuse to have fellowship with that pastor and with that church because we differ and disagree in this one practice? No, of course not. That would be ludicrous. It would be insane to, to practice such things.

And this is the way it has to be in the body of Christ as well. There are other matters that are issues of indifference. Things that don't matter one way or another. Where you may do things one way and I may do things another way. And on those things, we just need to love one another. This is what it's talking about in Romans chapter 14.

In Romans 14 verses 1 to 9, the Apostle Paul is telling them that love we'll show patience, grace, mercy

on these matters of lesser importance or even matters of indifference. Romans 14 verse 1, he says, now except the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person regards one day above another. Another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day observes, observes it for the Lord.

He who eats does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God. He who eats not for the Lord for the Lord, he does not eat and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. So there, he's telling them, quit passing judgment, quit condemning, quit looking at contempt and disdain upon one another over matters of eating and drinking and observance of days. These. He says these things are not worth fighting for over.

Instead, what should we do? We should bear with one another. We should practice patience and kindness and gentleness and tenderness toward one another. So, are we to love only those that agree with us on everything? No, of course not. Also, love should be extensive, even though other's gifts and graces may surpass mine.

This is when it really the rubber meets the road right here. Do we have true love when other people in the body of Christ, whenever they surpass me in terms of gifts, in terms of grace, in terms of faith, in terms of knowledge, right? It's very easy for us, especially if there's an area where we, we think ourselves proficient, we think ourselves excellent in some area.

And if there's someone else comes along who surpasses me in this area in which I think I am very proficient to look upon them with envy, with disdain, to judge them, to have contempt for them. But this is not the way it should be. If someone surpasses us, we should praise God. We should bless the Lord. We should rejoice because if God gives to someone this unusual gift of grace for whose benefit is it?

It's for our benefit. It's for the body's benefit. It's for the glory of God and God can distribute his gifts. However, he sees fit. So if I am holding him in disdain because God has given to him something that he is withheld from me. Then ultimately who do I have a beef with? Right. Who am I passing judgment upon?

I'm passing judgment upon God because who am I? Right? God is the one who dispenses, who dispenses his gifts as he sees fit. And if he chooses to raise someone up and to give someone a gift, maybe it's the same gift that I have, but he gives it to them in a greater measure than who am I to rail against God and who am I to have disdain toward my brother because God has chosen to bless him in this way.

Instead, we ought to praise God. We ought to bless God for gifting and blessing another, even if that gift surpasses mine. Remember in Numbers chapter 11, 27 to 30, there when the elders began to prophesy

that Joshua wanted Moses to rebuke them and to stop them from doing such things. But notice Moses' reply to Joshua. Numbers 11, 27, So a young man ran and told Moses and said, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. Then Joshua, the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses, from his youth, said, Moses, my Lord, restrained him.

But Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all of the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them. Then Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel. And He says, are you jealous for my sake? Moses was happy that there were others who were prophesying in the name of the Lord.

He wished that there were more to do such things to take away the attention from him. Pride, envy, jealousy, rivalry. These are the enemies of love. Yet we are often tempted to hate and to begrudge one another because of God's blessings. Again, in this typically is especially true if it's an area in which I find myself to be proficient.

If, for example, as a pastor, you know who teaches the Bible, there is someone else who comes along who's a better Bible teacher, that natural inclination of the flesh. Is to envy this person to be jealous of this person to begin to criticize them and find ways to knock them down. Well this guy he just does it for his own glory. He doesn't really care. He's not doing it for the right reasons to find ways to justify myself and to make myself look better. This is often a real problem among pastors, among pastors.

And actually, if you go back and read in church history Spurgeon, who was a prominent pastor in England in the early 1900s, it was an extremely gifted man and his giftings were evident at a very young age. So by the age of 19-20, he was one of the most popular pastors in all of London. And what do you think the result of that was from the other pastors in London?

Do you think they were praising God? Because God had gifted this young man with knowledge beyond his years, with faith beyond his years, with skills and talents beyond not

only his years, but beyond what even other men had ever attained. No, no, no, no. If you go back and you can read the things that they would write about him, what they would say about him, how arrogant he was, how proud he was, how he was just doing it for his own fame and his own fortune.

I mean, they eviscerated this man, this young man, because of the giftings that God had given to him. Well, all of that is rising up out of what? A spirit of envy, of rivalry, of jealousy, right? So that they begin to bite and devour one of one of their own. Should we despise one another because God grants some blessing to another that he withholds from me, right?

It is a strange thing indeed that we would hate one man because of his sin and then we would hate another man because of his virtue. And yet many times this is what the children of God do. They hate the one because of his sin. They hate the other because of his virtue. So we need to examine our hearts.

Love is right and genuine when we can rejoice in the faith, the grace, the blessings of others, though they seem to eclipse ours. This is the way that we should be. Fourth, a fourth characteristic of love. Love must be appreciating, appreciating, right? There must be a special place of honor and love for the saints, for those who fear the Lord that we should appreciate and love and honor them even more than other men.

Psalm 15 verse four, Psalm 15, four says of the righteous man. In his eyes, a reprobate is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord. He swears to his own hurt and does not change. So he despises the reprobates, but he honors those who fear the Lord. He has an appreciation, a love for those because they fear the Lord.

Fifth, love must be social, social. We have to be together. We should want to be together. There should be a desire. In the saints, our love for each other should cause us to want to be in each other's company, to want to fellowship and to encourage one another. Psalm 119. 63 says, I am a companion of all of those who fear you and of those who keep your precepts.

Psalm 16. 3, as for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. Psalm 101 verse six, my eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me. He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me, right? How can we love one another?

How can we delight in one another if we're not spending time together, right? We see this in young people when they fall in love, right? When you fell in love with your husband, with your wife, that's all you want to do is spend time with them, right? Every waking moment of your day. You wanted to talk to them, be on the phone with them, be with them, be in their company, be in their presence.

That's And why is it that people are like that? Now, you also want to do that even after you're married for many years, right? You still want to be with your, the one that you love.

But especially when you're young, right? When you're young and you're falling in love, there is this desire to be together because of the love and the affection that you have for one another.

And this is how it should be in the church as well. Our love, our affection toward one another should cause us to desire to be together, to meet together. There should be a sense of rejoicing when we gather together with God's people. And when we are united together, we go our separate ways throughout the week.

And then we come together in the times that are arranged and in other times as well. And that should be a delight for us. A sixth characteristic of love. Love is that love must be demonstrated. Our love for one another must be manifested, must be fulfilled in our acts of love toward one another. 1 John 3, 18, we read earlier, little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Love must be demonstrated. It cannot be merely in words. Now, it is good for us to affirm our love and our affection for one another with our words. And we should say those things. But those words are empty and idle if they are not proven, if they are not backed up by our actions and what we do. Just like a husband can say that he loves his wife But then if he goes out and cheats on her his actions are proving that these words that come of it out of his mouth Mean absolutely nothing But if he is faithful to her and if he loves her in his actions, then his words are meaningful They mean something to her and they actually have substance to them.

This is the way that God loves us God's love for us is not merely professed but is demonstrated through his acts by sending his own son into the world to die on the cross for our sins. In Romans five, verse eight, it says that God demonstrated his love for us in this, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

He demonstrated, he manifested, he made it plain and obvious the love that he has for us. through sending Christ to die on the cross for our sins. So love cannot be concealed, but is active in its operation, right? The good Samaritan, he manifested his love toward his neighbor by caring for him, by binding up his wounds, by taking him to the end, by paying for his care there, right?

His love was not merely something that he professed, Yes, if he told the man that he loved him and then walked by like the others and left him there for dead, what, what good is that love at all? It is completely worthless, but his love was seen, it was proven in his actions. And then a seventh characteristic of love.

Love must be constant, constant. Living in love is like running a marathon. We must endure until the end. Our perseverance in the faith is also a perseverance in love. We must persevere. We must endure. We must continue and be constant in love. There are many who may burn hot with love momentarily, but then their love grows cold.

There's no constancy in their love. First John chapter four, verse 16, It says, God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. The one who abides in love. We must abide in love. God's love for us does not wax and wane, but is constant in its operation. And so we also, again, though it's impossible in our current state for us to love the way that God loves.

Our, there's always going to be some fluctuation because of the weakness of our flesh, but we have to overcome that. And we have to, over the course of our life, prove and manifest that we have true love for the saints. We must persevere in these things. Hebrews 13 one says, let love of the brethren continue.

Let us continue to love the brethren. And that can't only be when it's easy. When they're lovable, right? When we want to, right? Just as it is in our marriages. Though, Amy is always lovable. But me, on the other hand, I'm very unlovable many times. But she perseveres in her love for me, right? What kind of a marriage are we going to have if we only love our spouse when they, when we deem them worthy of love, when they are lovable?

Right? It can't be that way. There's, it's, it's, it's going to fall apart, right? That's the problem that's going on in our own country today and in many churches as well. But we must continue and persevere even through those difficult times. Even when there are those in the body who go through seasons and times where it is very difficult for us to love them.

Then they need to be loved even more right then they ought to be the special Attention and focus of our love this is as Christ does with his sheep those that are sick Those that are weak those that are nursing young Those are the ones that he carries in his bosom those that are struggling and are weak And so it ought to be in the church as well.

There are times when we may be offended by one another There are times when our feelings might get hurt, whether intentional or accidental. But we cannot subject our duty to love to our feelings, right? It must be based upon the truth of God's word and the reality of the gospel. This is what gives us our duty and obligation to love.

It's not our feelings and it's not the objects. It's not the people. It is the gospel. It is the command of God. It is what Christ has done for us. So, these are the seven characteristics of love, should be found, and that we will have for one another. And it is our union with Christ, our spiritual relationship, that causes us to love one another.

We have one head, and therefore we should have one heart. We are all stones in the same building, and it is the bond of love that cements these stones together. Now, a couple points of application. Number one, if one of the distinguishing marks of a godly man is love, then how sad to see this grace of love extinguished in the church.

It is a sad day indeed when the church is cold, when it is lifeless, when there is no love, no affection, no unity, no harmony, no tenderness and kindness and sympathy among the

people. The church at Ephesus. They were rebuked, not because they were compromising the truth. It wasn't because they were not sound in their doctrine.

In fact, they are commended for being sound in their doctrine, in that they hated the works of the Nicolaitans. But they are rebuked for what reason? Because of their love. Their love had grown cold. They had abandoned their first love. It says in Revelation 2. 4, I have this against you. You have left your first love Jesus says in Matthew 24 12 that in the last days when there is an increase in wickedness the love of many will grow cold it will grow cold Now when the church in Ephesus is forsaking or abandoning their first love and when the love of many grows cold Well, certainly he means that towards God, but who else will that be?

practiced against one another as well, right? Because our love for God is chiefly manifested in our love for one another in the way that we love and care for each others. Should Christians of like faith, should Christians who agree on 99 percent of issues, but may differ here and there on lesser matters or matters of indifference, should they be at constant war?

Should there be censoring, condemning, despising, ridiculing, mocking, biting and devouring of one another? Should they be filled with evil suspicion and fault finding of one another? Right? This is contrary to the command to love. And it is a sad state when a church arrives at a place where they are filled with this spirit of evil, of bitterness, of harshness, where there is no love among the brethren.

So we must make sure that that isn't true of us. Use number two. Let us prove our calling and our election by our love for one another. 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 10 says, Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing of you. For as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.

He says, be certain, be diligent to make sure to make certain about his calling and his choosing of you. There are those. 1 Who have a false faith, who have a false sense of security, who believe that they are children of God, and there's no evidence of those things. Well, if we're going to make our calling and election sure, what is the first thing we ought to look for?

It is love. Is there love found in us? Second Corinthians 13 verse 5 says, test yourself to see if you are in the faith, examine yourselves. Or do you not recognize this about yourself? That Jesus Christ is in you. Unless indeed you fail the test, test yourself to see if your faith is genuine and true.

Examine yourself, he says, to see if Christ is in you. How can Christ be inside a person and they not love and there be no love in them completely void of it, of love and it's, it's fruits. It's impossible for that to be the case. We know James two 17 faith without works is. It is a dead, useless faith that will not save.

The chief evidence that we belong to God, that we are in the faith, that we have been chosen and called by God, that we have true, genuine faith. Right? That Christ is in us. The chief evidence is love. This is the chief of all Christian virtues. The first fruit that we should look for, the most prominent fruit that should be found in our life is that we love one another.

And if we do not have love, then we do not belong to Christ. That's what we read earlier from first John chapter three. Amen. Jesus says in John 13 35 by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. In 1 John 4 20, if someone says I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar.

For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. If we say we love God and we love Christ and everyone who claims to be a Christian, he They all love God and they all love Christ, but they hate their brother. What are they? They're liars He says they're liars.

There's no truth in them, right? This is how we know that we are his disciples It will be known it will be evident by our love for one another Application three Consider how evil it is for Saints not to love one another But we are often tempted to think, okay, well, as long as I, which again, these are all manifestations of lack of love.

As long as I'm not murdering, you know, committing adultery, homosexuality idolatry pillaging, raping, doing those kinds of things, then, then, you know, I don't need to do those things. But, you know, not loving someone, it's not really that big of a deal. But this is a very pernicious sin, it is a very evil sin for us to not love the brethren, to not love the saints.

First, it's evil because it is unnatural. Saints are likened unto lambs who of all creatures are known for their meekness, for their mildness, for their gentleness. Now, no one is surprised in the farming world if a wolf or a dog attacks a lamb. This is what you expect, because that is what is a part of their nature, is to do such things.

But for one lamb to bite and devour another lamb. Right? Spiritual cannibalism. It is completely unnatural for a lamb to do that to another lamb. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. For two brothers to be at war, to be fighting against one another, this is not good. It's not right for that to be happening in the home.

This is why when our children bicker and fight, or yours do, we were like, stop doing that. Right? It's not good. You're, you're siblings. You're supposed to love each other because we all know that in the home, in the family, there should be this love, this harmony, this bond that unites us together. It is unnatural for Christians not to love one another, and it's also unnatural for brothers and sisters not to love one another.

So y'all, everyone get along and love each other. Secondly, it is very foolish. Do we as saints not have enough enemies to contend with that we need to wage war against one another?

With so many enemies abroad, how can we fall out and divide into warring factions among ourselves? We've got the devil to contend with.

He has an army of demons that we have to contend with. There's the wicked in the world that we have to contend with. All of them want to destroy us. And yet, then in the church, what do we so often do? We turn and bite and devour one another as well. We're doing the work of the devil for him. And it shouldn't be that way, right?

It should not be that we bite and devour and destroy one another. It is very foolish to do so because there's plenty of enemies for us to be fighting out there, especially in the day in which we live. Secularism, worldliness, all of these things are mitigating against the faith, against the things of God, against Christianity, and there are plenty of people, if you want to fight with someone, there's plenty of people to fight with out there, right, who are fighting, and you can actually contend for the faith, that we need to turn and bite and devour one another, and then a third reason of why it's so evil is it's, it's a very fatal sin, it's a fatal sin, and Christ warned the church at Ephesus that if they did not repent of their lack of love, what would he do to them?

He would remove their lampstand from among them. He would take away their light so that they no longer were a true church and there was no salvation that would be found there. If we forsake our duty to love, the glory of God can leave the temple. Did that not happen in the Old Testament on multiple occasions?

The glory of God left the temple. Well, where is the temple of God found now? It is the church of Jesus Christ. We are the temple of God. And the glory of God is here, but it is not guaranteed. The glory of God can depart from the temple. And in the case of the church of Ephesus, the sin that was leading to that departure, that would lead to the removal of their lampstand, was their lack of love for one another.

Amen. Amen. So, if we forsake our duty to love, then God can remove His glory from us. And also, when we live in an unloving way, doesn't it just make us miserable all the time? Which home would you rather live in? A home where there's love, harmony between the husband and wife, and the parents and the children?

Or, where people are constantly fighting and devouring one another. It's a miserable place to be. Who wants to be in a home like that? Right? Our church, our home, our lives will be filled with turmoil, with malice, with joylessness. There will be no peace, no harmony, no unity. Constant strife and friction and division.

when there is no love. Who wants to live like that, right? Who wants to live in misery, and yet it is a self inflicted misery whenever we are not loving one another. A last point of application. How can we attain and promote the grace of love within our church? First, we should beware of the devil's schemes and his servants.

If this is the chief virtue of the Christian life. If all of the law and the prophets can be summed up in this word, to love your neighbor as yourself, then where do you think Satan is going to tempt us? What is he going to attack? Where is he going to try to turn us in these things? It is going to be in this area of love.

He wants to undermine and attack our love for one another. He doesn't want us to love each other. He wants us to hate each other. He wants us to have envy and jealousy and rivalry and dissension and deceit. And what else within us also desires the same things? Our own flesh within us. So we have the devil who is seeking to promote these things within the church.

Then each of us, because we all still have the flesh, we all bring our own flesh into the equation and the flesh also wants hatred, envy, jealousy, selfishness, rivalry, dissension, conceit. The flesh and the devil in the world. This is what they desire and this is what they want within the church and we have to fight with all that we have against these things.

We have to be on guard. Be watchful. We are not unaware of his schemes. We know what the devil wants to do. We know where he wants to attack us. The devil and his servants, they want to sow discord, division, contention, strife, jealousy, bitterness, envy, brutality, harshness among us. And he is very crafty at what he does.

He will turn these vices into virtues and convince us that it's actually a good thing for us to behave in such ways. Lack of gentleness and kindness is zeal for the Lord. Constant conflict and strife is suffering for the Lord. Being a big fat jerk is being bold for the Lord, right? This is the way that we'll convince ourselves that what we're doing, though it's sinful and fleshly, oh, it's actually very righteous and good before God.

And we have to be aware of these things. Now, Is it good to be zealous for the Lord? Of course. Is it good for us to be bold in the Lord? Absolutely. Are we going to suffer in the Lord? Of course. There's never going to be perfect peace and harmony. However, when we are pursuing those things, and when we are giving ourselves to bitterness, to division, to constant strife and conflict, then this is what is going to be happening all the time in the church.

Romans 16 verse 17 says, I urge you brethren. Keep your eye on those who cause divisions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you have learned and turn away from them. He says keep your eye on those who cause what? Divisions. They cause divisions in the church. They create factions in warring parties, setting one man against another man.

Before the two men were at peace, they were in harmony. There was no problem. But now the factious man comes in and he sets one brother against another so that now they are at odds. They are living as enemies in strife and contention with one another. Read the pastoral epistles, read all the epistles in the New Testament.

It is the false teachers who are introducing strife and conflict into the church. Setting brothers against one another. Dividing the church, ruining their unity and the bond of love that they have with one another. Colossians 3. 14, beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Put on love, he says, because love will promote what in the church? Unity. If the church has no unity, no harmony, no peace, it's because there's no love there. If the church is filled with constant contention, strife, conflict, bickering, fighting, what is lacking in that church? It's love. There's no love there.

Another way to promote unity. the grace of love. Keep up friendly meetings, both regular church meetings and outside meetings. The more we are together, the more we're going to love one another. The more we will be endeared to one another. The bond of love will be strengthened as we are with each other. So we should not neglect the meeting of the saints.

We should do all that we can to be here, to be together at both. The schedule times that we have, but also other times as God gives opportunity, we should meet and be with one another as well. And then finally, we should pray and plead the promises of God. One of the marks of the new covenant is Jeremiah 32, 38 to 39.

This is one of the promises that God promises to give to his people in the new covenant. Jeremiah 32, 38, they shall be my people and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me always for their own good and for the good of their children. After them, God will give them one heart in one way.

We should pray. That God would do such among us. Lord, bind our hearts together in love. Give us the bond of unity, which is our love for one another. We must pray to the Lord of heaven, from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds, to produce in us love for one another, to give to us one heart and one mind.

This is supernatural. This is not something that we can produce through our own strength. Only the Spirit of Christ within us can produce love in us. And therefore, if it's an act of God, then who should we go to? Who should we be pleading with? Who should we be crying out to that Lord give us these things?

We should go to God and we should pray to Him and ask Him to produce by His Spirit these fruits within us. There should be no contest. No competition, no rivalry in the church among us, except this, who is going to love the most. This is what we should strive for. If you want rivalry and competition, then say, I'm going to outdo everyone in loving one another.

Not so I can be proud and arrogant, but so I can serve and show my love for God and for Christ. May God divide Babylon and may he unite Zion. This is what we should pray. Divide the wicked. Set them at war against each other. Let the Democrats and the Muslims devour each other. But leave us alone and let's not devour each other.

Let's be united together in Zion as the people of God in our love for one another.