

you're a Christian who shoots the wounded? Whatever our circumstances are today, we all need healing, we all need help in this regard of loving others. Why not submit ourselves to the love of God in Christ just now, and say: 'Lord Jesus, whatever has happened, whatever I have done or has been done to me, teach me to love others'.

Lord, the disciples could say 'Teach me to pray', but Lord surely You taught them above all other things to love their brothers, and by this all the world would know that they were Christ's followers. Lord, teach us to love, so that those around us would be able to say: 'Look how they love one another'; and may that manifest the love of Christ to them in salvation, Amen.



Other Booklets in this series:

"The Morning Watch"

"The Fullness Of The Spirit"

"Temptation"

"Obedience"

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"Love For The Lord"

"Love For The Lost"

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"Love For Others"



*Is the love of Christ
seen in you?*

by Pastor David Legge

“Love For Others”

Let's turn together in our Bibles to Matthew's gospel 22, chapter 22 and begin to read at verse 34. In this series of booklets we have been looking at the basics of the Christian life, a subject especially useful for anyone who is new in the Christian faith, but I also believe, and I hope you have come to know, that it's good for all of us no matter how long we are in the Christian life and pilgrimage, to remind ourselves of these first principles - the ABCs, if you like, of the Christian life. We've been looking at various subjects, and now we have come to look at the subject of love. I thought initially we could look at it in one study, and then I found out that we needed two studies, and now I'm going to tell you that we need three studies! In our last booklet we looked at our 'Love for the Lord', and this time we're going to look at our 'Love For Others'. Now I did say previously that we would look at it under two titles: our love for the Lord's people, and our love for the lost - but we're going to have to divide that up, and just look at love for others this time, and then in our next booklet we'll look at love for the lost in our evangelism.

So this morning we're looking at what the Bible has to say that our responsibility is as Christians to love others. Matthew 22 verse 34:

“But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting”, or testing, “him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

It was Richard Sibbes, that great Christian of several centuries ago, who said these words: 'We are as we love, not as we know'. We are as we love, not as we know. John Calvin, the great reformer, said: 'Whatever is devoid of love is of no account in the sight of God'. Now several months ago in our studies in 1 Corinthians, I spent a lot of time going through 1 Corinthians 13, and we're not going to take time in doing that in this study - save to say that I touched on it last time, what a great definition Paul gives us of love there. He basically tells us that if we as Christians are devoid of love, we are nothing, and whatever we express or do is nothing as well. Whatever we know of devotion to God, if it is not motivated and

sometimes I hardly recognise myself when I measure it up to the command within scripture.

Look at Romans 12 for instance, verse 14: '*Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not*'. Verse 17: '*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him*', what about that, eh? Let's not run past that: '*If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*'. Could I ask you a very pertinent question: why is it that believers are among some of the most begrudging and vengeful people on the face of God's earth? Why is that? Thomas Fuller said: 'If God should have no more mercy on us than we have charity one to another, what would become of us?'. If God judged us with the measure that we judge each other, where would we be now?

Will You Express The Love Of Christ To Others?

The only aggression that the Christian should be known for is aggressive love, aggressive love! Augustine was asked the question: 'What does love look like?', he replied: 'It is hands to help others, it is feet to hasten to the poor and needy, it is eyes to see misery, and ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men - that is what love looks like'. The punch line of the Good Samaritan is the punch line of this message to you: Love your neighbour, love your brother, love your family, love your enemy - **go thou and do likewise!** No excuses, just go and do it! Many of us love at our tongue's end, but not at our arm's end. Love rolls its sleeves up, love is only love when it's practical or it is not love at all.

Once a professor wrote a very learned thesis on love in a book...the only defect was that the professor had never been in love. When he took the manuscript to the typist to prepare for publishing, the typist turned out to be a very lovely young lady. When his eyes met with hers, something happened to the professor which was not in his book. He was happier in five minutes with love within his heart, than he was in 30 years with love in his head. Something like that needs to happen to our Christianity.

Are you a Christian that has not had love expressed to you in the past? For that reason you're deeply hurt and wounded, and I sympathise with you. Someone has said: 'Why is it that Christians are those who shoot their wounded?'. Maybe

and therefore we should spend all our time learning to love - but here is a love that really grates on many of our consciences and emotional seats, because it is hard to love your enemy. Yet Jesus, in Matthew 5 and Luke 6, commands - He doesn't advise, He commands us - to love our enemy! He says that that love will be demonstrated in your life as you bless those who curse you, as you pray for those who mistreat and spitefully use you, as you give generously to those who would rob you. Jesus shows that love is more than friendship based on mutual admiration, but it is an act of charity towards one who perhaps is hostile towards you, perhaps one who hasn't shown any lovable traits whatsoever - Jesus says: 'You love them with the love that I have loved you!'

Jesus reminded His disciples that it's natural to love those who love them, but to love your enemies - well, that's a real act of charity. Can I say: it is to be a mark of His disciples, more than anything, that they love their enemies. Jesus, in fact, said that what will mark you different than a sinner and a Gentile is that you love your enemies and they do not - it is the most distinctive Christian love which expresses grace. The Lord Jesus is saying: God in grace has come to you and me, and has forgiven you, and has washed all your sins away; and God in grace sends the sun to shine on the unrighteous as it does on the righteous, and the rain falls on the righteous as it does on the unrighteous, for He loves all men. When we remember John 3:16, we see that God in His very essence is love, hence love ought to be expressed in the life of the believer towards the undeserving.

Did you deserve to be saved? Francis Schaeffer said: 'Love and the unity it attests to is the mark Christ gave to Christians to wear before the world, only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians, and that Jesus was sent by the Father'. That is the distinctive mark of the Christian, that they love those that hate them. Corrie Ten Boom, who was locked up in that concentration camp, a believer in Christ, wrote these words: 'You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies'. Doing good to those who have no intention of returning it to you, that is the love of God in essence! A love that doesn't know the word 'because', 'I love you because' - an unconditional love! Christ loved His enemies, and the Bible is telling us that the Christian must love his enemies too. The New Testament epistles reiterate that rather than seeking revenge as believers, believers are to love those that hate them, to love those that persecute them. Now I ask you: if this is the distinguishing mark of the child of God in the New Testament, would anybody recognise you as a Christian? I tell you, I wouldn't recognise some of you,

fired and fuelled by love, the love of God, agape love, it is nothing. Whatever we know of service to Christ, or for others, it means absolutely nothing if the common denominator in it all is not the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. We saw that in Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is lineated for us there, the undergirding principle is that of love, because the root of all fruit of the Christian life is God, God's Spirit, it is the fruit of the Spirit; and God is declared in 1 John 4 as love - God is love.

So the origin of the Christian life, we've already seen, is love; because the origin of our life is God - 'For God so loved the world'. We also saw that the source of our Christian life, not just the moment of conversion, but every day of our Christian experience, the source and motivation of that life - however it is expressed - must be the energy of love. The source of that love, in 1 Corinthians 13, we saw is the very life of Christ - isn't that what it is? That kindness, that patience, that long-suffering, not keeping a record of wrongs, and so on that we read in that great passage of love - it's simply the Holy Spirit reproducing the life of Christ in us seen before others.

Let me remind you of what we studied last time. We saw that there are two loves that take us away from God; that was a downward love, the love of sin; and an inward love, the love of self. We saw how the love for the Saviour cannot abide in a heart that loves sin or that loves self. Then our main concentration was on one love that takes us nearer to God, toward God; and that was an upward love, a love for the Lord. So we've looked at a downward love, the love of sin; an inward love, the love of self; an upward love, a love for the Lord - and now we're going to look, this time and next, at an outward love: a love for others.

Now at the time that Moses gave the ten commandments, and I hope most of you're familiar with the ten commandments, it was basic, it was very clear. Although there were a few other rules and regulations that the people of Israel were given at that time, basically God's law was cut and dry. But by the time Jesus comes on the scene, we find that legal traditions, rabbis, Pharisees, or as it is in the Authorised Version here 'lawyers', had added thousands more laws to God's law. To such an extent that it weighed the Jewish people down that they couldn't keep any of the laws, let alone all of them, perfectly. There was a dilemma here before the rabbis and the leaders, they asked the question: 'What laws are the most important laws? We've got to make an accommodation to the people, we admit that they can't keep all these thousands of rules and regulations perfectly, so we're going to have to decide which are the most important ones that out of

them all we must keep first'. So they divided the law into 'heavy laws' and 'light laws'. The heavy laws were the ones that were binding, the laws that you must keep under any circumstances; but the light laws were the ones you could give or take a little on.

The Second Greatest Commandment

That gives us a bit of the background into some of the discussions that the Pharisees have with the Lord Jesus Christ. But there were some rabbis that went a little further than that, they said that if a man just selected one great precept out of all the thousands of laws, and kept that one precept and observed it alone, he could basically disregard all the other laws. As you can imagine, that became very attractive. It was against this backdrop that this lawyer came to the Lord Jesus with a question: 'Rabbi, Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?'. Right away we find that in the Lord's answer He establishes that love, and love alone, is the highest of all spiritual virtues in the kingdom of God: 'Love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength; and the second commandment is like unto it: Love your neighbour as yourself. On these two rest all the law and the prophets'.

The Lord Jesus was indicating in the second greatest commandment that man is to love his fellow man as well as love God. Now it may be a revelation to you that there are many more verses in Old and New Testament that speak of our love for fellow man, than speak of our love that ought to be toward God. Now of course the first and greatest commandment is to love God, so the frequency of verses on that subject doesn't demean the responsibility or the primary part that it plays in the spiritual life. But what it does tell us is the important place that loving others has in the mind of God, that the Scriptures has so much to say. What the Lord Jesus is saying here is that we are to have a love toward our fellow men and women like the love that God has toward them. God loves men, and we ought to love men and women as well.

Four Loves

Now here's the question, I asked you last time: how's your love life? I'm asking you more specifically now, not in relation to your love to the Lord, but how is your love life towards others? Now we'll look next time at our love towards the lost, but the Bible teaches in both Old and New Testaments that our love towards others should be shown in four ways. I want you to take note of these, at least note them in your mind if you don't have a pen and paper. Here they are straight

Proverb says: 'Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covers all sin'.

We must move on: Love your neighbour, love your brother, and then *thirdly, love your family*. Few commands are given in the Bible in relation to this, but there are many more ample illustrations of how love ought to be found in the family. Colossians and Ephesians tell us to 'husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church'. Now interestingly there is only once that a wife is commanded to love her husband, in Titus! The only example I find of it is in the Song of Solomon where it's mentioned; the reason being that the wife's submission to her husband is evidence of her love for him - now mark that, and remember that please, because also there's only once found a command for parents to love the children, especially for young wives to love their children in Titus 2. But there are several illustrations of that love within the Scriptures: Abraham loved Isaac, Isaac loved Esau, Rebecca loved Jacob, Jacob loved Joseph - but it's interesting that there's no command or example of a child loving its parents, no example in scripture. The reason being, again, because there's the oft repeated command for children to honour and obey their parents, which would be the evidence of their love for their parents.

Now I'm not preaching on that particular subject here, but what I am wanting to highlight is this: what the Bible chiefly tells us is, love is service rather than sentiment! The Bible tells us that love is not an airy fairy feeling or emotion that we need to work up, but love primarily is an act of the will where we choose the betterment of another, where we choose to live for another rather than to live selfishly for ourselves. Isn't that what the Lord said? 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. Isn't that what we find in the book of John, where we read those verses? Jesus told them that the disciples would be recognised for their love, but the Lord gave an example of that: Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, He rose from supper, He laid aside His garments, He took a towel and girded Himself; and after He poured water into a basin, He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. God's word says even in the family such love is to be evidenced. Timothy says that you are considered a denier of the faith, and worse than an unbeliever, if you do not provide for your home.

Love your neighbour, love your brother, love your family, and *fourthly love your enemy*. I think this must be the hardest of all. William Penn has said, 'Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity, but for that reason it should be the one that we take the most care of to learn'. Is that not true? Love is the most important thing,

theme in the early church of Jesus - is that not clear? It was evidence to the world that they truly were disciples of Christ, it was the badge of their Christianity. Describing the first century Christians to the Roman Emperor Adrian, Aristides wrote these words: 'They love one another, they never fail to help widows, they save orphans from those who will hurt them. If they have something, they give away freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger they take him home and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers and sisters in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit in God'.

Vance Havner, a 20th-century Christian writer, says: 'Tertullian', an ancient Christian, 'writes that it was said of early Christians, 'How those Christians love one another!'; today the world might sometimes be more inclined to say, 'How those Christians hate one another!'. He concludes, bringing our last study and this together: 'We have left our love for Christ, and when love for Christ dies love for each other dies, when love for the Bible dies love for souls dies - everything dies!'. One of the greatest tests of if we love or brother or not is how we behave when they don't measure up to our standards. You've got your standards, I've got mine, but how do you behave toward someone else who has fallen from your grace, failed in your eyes? Someone has said: 'Perfect love', almost a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13, 'is slow to suspect, quick to trust; slow to condemn, quick to justify; slow to offend, quick to defend; slow to expose, quick to shield; slow to reprimand, quick to forbear; slow to demand, quick to give; slow to provoke, quick to conciliate; slow to hinder, quick to help; slow to resent, quick to forgive'. Amy Carmichael, that missionary, wrote a little poem - it was called 'If - some of the lines of it go like this:

'If I belittle those whom I am called to serve, talk of their weak points in contrast perhaps with what I think of as my strong points; if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting "Who made thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou hast not received?" then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I take offense easily, if I am content to continue in a cool unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

If I feel bitter toward those who condemn me, as it seems to me, unjustly, forgetting that if they knew me as I know myself they would condemn me much more, then I know nothing of Calvary love'.

Do we seek to minimise the faults of others, or do we expose them gratuitously?

from scripture: one, love your neighbour; two, love your brother; three, love your family; and four, love your enemy. Now let's take time as we go through all of these, and this is the whole counsel of God in relation to how we as Christians ought to display the love of God towards others.

First: love your neighbour. Now this is a command that is found often in the holy Scriptures, and it's first found in the book of Leviticus chapter 19 - you don't need to turn to it, it reads: *'Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD'*. Then that command given in the Old Testament law is repeated approximately eight times in the New Testament Scriptures, and Paul states in the book of Romans chapter 13 and verse 10 that all of the law hangs on this, just as Jesus said. Love for your neighbour is a fulfilment of everything that the Old Testament law was meant to do. Romans 13:10 says: *'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law'*.

Now you will remember that on another occasion another lawyer came to the Lord Jesus in Luke's gospel chapter 10. He asked the question, after the Lord Jesus again said that you were to love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself, 'Who is my neighbour?'. Maybe that's the question you're asking: is it the person in the semi-detached beside you, is that your neighbour? The person whose driveway adjoins you? Is it a neighbour geographically to your town or to your state? Well, the Lord Jesus told a parable, and you remember it was the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now I'm not going to have time to expound this parable for you, but I'm sure that you know it very well. A man travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho, he fell among thieves, he was beaten up, stripped of his raiment, wounded, and they departed and left him. Then the priest, the Jewish leader of religion, walked by and ignored him. Then the Levite walked by and ignored him, another religious man. But it was the Samaritan that stopped by, helped the man, put him on his ass, took him to the inn, paid for his keeping, helped him. Jesus asked the question: 'Which of these men was a neighbour to the man who fell among thieves?'. The answer came back from the lawyer's mouth, although he didn't like it: 'It was the Samaritan'. Jesus said: 'Go and do thou likewise'.

So what the Lord Jesus was teaching this particular lawyer in the parable of the Good Samaritan was that showing love to your neighbour is more than showing love to your mutual acquaintances, it's more than showing love to people who are like you, look like you, sound like you, live like you; it's more than showing love

to people who are of the same nationality, ethnic race as you, or even religious persuasion or denominational creed as you. Loving your neighbour is loving past all boundaries, and there was no greater boundary than between the Jew and the Samaritan - the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. This is not something new to the New Testament, this is something we find in the Old Testament for Moses enjoined the Israelites to love the stranger and the alien in the land. In Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 19 we read these words: *'Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt'*. 'Just people', Moses says, 'as you were strangers in the Egyptian land of bondage, whenever a stranger comes into your Canaan land of promise, you be good to them'. The same injunction is upon us, whatever your political persuasions are about immigrants, the fact of the matter is this: we are to be kind to those who have come among us who are different, as the people of God.

Frederick Samson has said: 'Love goes beyond safety'. Love to our neighbour goes beyond the safety of boundaries, and I touch a sore point here for people in Ulster: you are to love the Catholic, you're to love the Nationalist, you're to love the Republican - and I don't care if that causes you a problem, because that's what the Lord Jesus Christ teaches. Love your neighbour as yourself, and man is to be concerned with other men as God is concerned with men. The command, in fact, is to love your neighbour to the degree that you love yourself. Now what is the point behind that? Well, if you're honest with yourself and God today, I'm sure that you'll admit that man, including you, is basically selfish and concerned about himself. The Lord is coming in and homing in on our selfish element, and He's saying that in the same way as you love yourself, that is the degree to which you should be concerned for others!

I like to call this: how to sanctify your selfishness. We've all got the problem, don't we? The way to sanctify it is to use it, actually, as a measure for how you ought to love others! When Paul is talking in Ephesians of how a husband should love his wife, he says that he should love his wife as himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh. You men, including you women, look after yourselves, don't you? In the same way as you protect yourself and groom yourself, you're to pour that love, that selfish love, selflessly into the life of neighbours - people that you maybe don't even like! That's hard to take, but that's God's word: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Oswald Chambers said: 'If my heart is right with God, every human being is my neighbour'. Hard stuff, isn't it?

Love your neighbour, then coming more close to the Christian believer is the injunction: *'Love your brother or sister'*. In Galatians 6 and verse 10 Paul exhorts the believers to 'do good to all', that's the neighbour, 'and especially to those who are of the household of faith', that's the believer. So love your neighbour must be there, but as a Christian, if you're a Christian this morning, you must have a real and a deep concern literally - as Mary Slessor put it, 'To love is to live for' - you as a Christian are to live for other Christians, other believers. Now Jesus brought a new command, He said that believers were to love one another as He had loved them. He said in John 13: *'By this shall all men know that ye were my disciples'*. Now to love one another was not a new commandment, we saw that in the Old Testament; but to love one another as Christ loved us is a new commandment entirely!

Do you see the pattern here? First of all the injunction given from scripture is: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself, and now we come near to the believers, the church of Jesus Christ, the injunction is: 'Love your brother as Christ loves him'. The neighbour is to be loved as yourself, the brother and sister is to be loved as Christ loves you. Then, as we go into the epistles, 1 John, that great book on love outlines that one that loves his brother, chapter 2 and verse 10, abides in the light. You're in darkness if you don't love your brother or sister. Then in chapter 4 verse 12 he goes further to say: 'God abides in the heart of the man who loves his brother'. Chapter 4 and verse 20 says: 'The one who doesn't love his brother cannot love God'. You can't run around talking and claiming to have the love of God in your heart if you're at odds and bickering with a brother or sister in Christ. In chapter 3 and in chapter 4, his whole premise is: because God's love has been so great to you, you should love your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now when we go out of John's writings, the gospel of John, 1, 2 and 3 John, we find that the command to love the brother in the faith is the same. Romans and 1 Peter says that love is to be done fervently; Ephesians says we are to love other Christians with forbearance - that means patience, that means not always getting our own way, but giving way and putting the other Christian before ourselves, not offending them, weak brothers included. Galatians 5 says this love includes serving one another. We see it in the example of the apostles, Paul in 1 and 2 Corinthians, he describes in great detail how he loved the believers. Then later on in Ephesians he says how happy he was that he saw the love that the saints at Ephesus had one toward the other. Now, at a very casual glance, I hope that you can see right away that love for the brother and sister in Christ was a dominant