

Love

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[0:00] It launched. Its engines burned thousands and thousands of pounds of fuel every second, and it gracefully and beautifully arced into the blue Florida sky to the ooze and the oz of all the onlookers.

Sixty-two seconds later, an O-ring in one of the fuel tanks malfunctioned, and several seconds later, not even ten seconds later, the space shuttle Challenger disintegrated horrifically into millions and millions of pieces on national TV.

Such power, such beauty, such grace amounted to nothing but a tragedy that day. And the Challenger is a perfect picture of the loveless Christian.

They might be beautiful in many respects. They may have great gifts and have all sorts of accomplishments. But without love, a Christian is nothing but a wreck, a sham, and a tragedy. Love is what we are talking about today. Not so much love for God, although that's very important, but we are going to talk about love for man. The older saints called it charity, and that's what J.C. Ryle called it in his book.

[1:28] We're going to talk about love. We're going to use the word love. Ryle answers four questions today about love in this chapter. And the first of the four questions is this.

What place does the Bible give to love? What place does the Bible give to love? And how we're going to do this, how we're going to look at, see what place the Bible gives, is we're just going to look at what the Bible says.

What does the text say about love? And so I've given some verses out to several people, and we're going to just read these verses. Will you please listen? This is the word of God, and so it demands our attention.

The first verse, first set of verses. 1 Corinthians 13, 1 through 3. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor, and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Colossians 3, verses 12 through 14.

[2:52] 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is the most important virtue. Love binds together compassion and kindness and humility and forgiveness and patience.

Love is the glue that binds all the Christian virtues together. It makes them fit together properly. 1 John 4, 7 through 8.

Dear friends, let us love one another. Love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. So what's the infallible test if someone is a Christian?

[4:09] What's the infallible test of the new birth? Love. Do you love your brother? It's impossible for someone to love their brother if they have not been born of God.

1 Timothy 1, 3 through 5. I was thinking to Timothy, as I urged you when I went to my communion, stay there in Ephesus so that you may demand certain men not to keep false doctrines any longer. You devote yourself to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work, which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

So why do false teachers have to be stopped? Why do they have to be silenced? The answer is because false doctrine does not promote love. It does not promote God's work.

And the goal of the command is love. That's why we defend our body against false teaching. Because false teaching destroys love.

[5:19] Romans 13, 8 through 10. Let no death remain outstanding, except the continuing death to love one another. For he who loves this fellow man has fulfilled the law.

The commandments do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandments there may be are summed up in this one rule.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its name. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. Okay. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Ephesians 5, 1 through 2. Be imitators of God. Therefore, and as dearly love children, and live the life of love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, as a prayer and offering and sacrifice to God.

So how do we imitate God? What is the imitation of God from that verse? Live a life of love. Live a life of love.

[6:23] God lives a life of love. And if we're going to imitate God, we have to do the same. And then 1 Corinthians 13, 13. So the greatest of these three.

Faith, hope, and love. The greatest is love. So what place does the Bible give to love? What do you say?

What does the Bible say? It's the supreme virtue. Love is the Mount Everest of Christian virtue. It stands unrivaled in weight and in grandeur.

And beloved, we never grow out of our need to love. And we never grow out of our need to be reminded to love. And so that's why my prayer for this Sunday School lesson is that a chapter on love, which can be so cliché, which can be so general, we need, it needs to spur us on to love.

We need to be reminded because we don't love the way we should. And so even as old as the command is, it has to come to us as a new command today.

[7:45] 1 John 4, 21. And he has given us this command, whoever loves God must also love his brother. So we must love our brother.

It's an absolute requirement. That's our first question. What place does love, or what place does the Bible give to love? Love is supreme.

Love is the first and the greatest of all virtues. So the second question is this. What is biblical love? What is biblical love? I'm going to say a few things that biblical love is not, and I want you to tell me why it's not those things, and how do you know that it's not those things?

And we're going to start out with the easy one. Biblical love is not giving to the poor. Why isn't biblical love giving to the poor?

There. It can be self-conscious. It can be self-serving. It can be not out of love. Right. What does 1 Corinthians 13, 1-3 say about the person that gives away all their possessions to the poor, but they don't have love?

[9:03] It's possible to be very generous and to give all of your possessions to the poor and not have love. So Bill Gates, giving away billions and billions of dollars of his fortune, should not be confused with love because it's not necessarily love.

So here's a harder one. Biblical love isn't never disapproving of someone's behavior. So it isn't never disapproving of someone's behavior.

Why is that? Chuck. I disapprove my children because I love them. Right. Exactly.

J.C. Ryle says, This idea of charity is a very common one. Was it common in his time? Then I say it's probably all the more common in our time. It's a very common one.

And it's full of mischief. To throw a veil over sin and to refuse to call things by their right names. To talk of hearts being good when lives are flatly wrong.

[10:08] To shut our eyes against wickedness and say smooth things of immorality. This is not scriptural charity. How many of you have been to a funeral and where the person is apparently justified by his death?

Where we talk about hearts being good and lives being flatly wrong. Some people call that love, but that's not scriptural love.

The third thing, biblical love is not, is never disapproving of anyone's religious opinions. So it's not never disapproving of anybody's religious opinions.

Why isn't it? What is so unloving about approving of everyone's religious opinions?

It means you don't believe in anything. That's true. It makes the Bible a farce. If you say, oh, he's right and I'm right and they're right.

[11:25] Dave? Dave? Especially in our society, everyone wants to be set free and God tells us the truth and sets us free. If we're loving then we're going to want to declare the truth.

What does falsehood do to people? Does it set them free? Dare? What does it mean to people? What does it mean to people? What does it mean to people? What does it mean to people? What does it mean to people? If you don't concern them the truth loving them then you're allowing them to hold them to exist.

Right. Is it loving to let someone march their way straight into hell? It's not. And that kind of love, that kind of everyone's right and I'm right lands people in hell and it belittles Christ. love never, biblical love never makes Jesus look small. It makes Jesus look big because Jesus is love incarnate.

So, what does saying, oh, you're okay, what you believe is right, what does that say about Jesus? So, say we have a Muslim here and why is it so bad to say that that Muslim is right?

[12:42] Why is it so unloving? I mean, one, it's not true. Marcus? Not caring what happens to their soul whether they're going to help.

Right. And besides, the Muslim says that Jesus is not God and to say what you think is okay is to say that you think and I think it's okay that you think Christ is not God.

That what you think about Christ doesn't matter if that's the kind of love that you have. So, what is biblical love? It's none of those things but it is it is some things and what it is generally is it's a general demeanor and attitude of benevolence.

It's a general demeanor or attitude of benevolence and what I mean by that is that love at its core is a big heartedness towards the well-being of others.

It's an attitude of goodwill towards all men. So, love is big hearted. It's not small and narrow. It's generous. It's magnanimous.

[13:59] Selfishness. It's affectionate for all mankind. Love is the opposite of selfishness. Love is the opposite of selfishness.

Selfishness is the idea that focuses on me. What do I want? What is best for me? And love is not is the opposite of that. Selfishness can have a face of love and you see that all the time.

Selfishness can have a face of love but meanwhile it's trying to manipulate the people to do what's good for the person. So, selfishness can be like a spider and it can pretend to be good but all the while it's seeking to trap and to poison and to kill.

So, there's a fish that lives in the ocean that will pretend to be food and it lays there and pretends to be food and another little fish will come and nibble on it and nibble on it and nibble on it a little more and then finally the last time it nibbles on that fish and the big fish turns and eats the little fish.

That's what selfishness is like. Selfishness will let others feed on it for a little while as long as in the end it gets its own way. But love does not seek its own good but the good of others.

[15:20] Love has an open eye for all those who are in need and that's why when Jesus is explaining what are the greatest commandments and the second is love your neighbor as yourself and the Pharisee seeking to justify himself says well who's my neighbor?

And Jesus replies with the parable of the good Samaritan and the point of the parable is that your neighbor is anyone that you run into that needs help and it doesn't matter if they're a different nationality than you your neighbor is anyone who needs help.

So love is open to help all kinds of people. So love has this big hearted openness to it. Love is ready to help all those who are in need.

So love is active. We said earlier that love isn't giving to the poor but love is always going to have that is always going to be giving.

So love isn't summarized with giving to the poor but part of what it means to love is to give. John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.

[16:33] So love is active. We've seen from James in the morning messages that faith without works is dead and in the same way love without action without works is meaningless love.

There's this idea of love in the world and we all know it that love is a feeling and I say if love never gets above a feeling then it's not biblical love. So love isn't something that you're going to see on TV.

Love isn't just saying those words I love you just at the right time with the music soaring and that heartfelt affection for one another. Love means sacrificial action and so no one should suppose that they have loved anyone until they feel the pinch of self denial.

If you haven't denied yourself if you have never given of yourself then don't ever think that you've loved anyone because love demands self denial.

So what is love? It's active it's big hearted it's patient and affliction so what was today's memory verse? Don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

[17:51] So are there going to be times when the person that you are seeking to love doesn't love you in return and rather harms you?

You're pouring yourself out for that person and the person ignores you. They don't care for you. They don't return your affection and it hurts so much. So you're in pain.

You've tried to love someone and they've only hurt you. What does love do? Love is not overcome by evil. It seeks to overcome evil with good.

So when it is reviled it doesn't revile in return. When it's mistreated it doesn't seek vengeance. Love is patient and affliction. Love covers over a multitude of sin.

So what is that going to look like? Well, if you're the parent of an ungrateful unbelieving teenager maybe you know. You love that teenager and you pour your heart and your life into her and she's hard.

[19:04] She just does not listen. She does not care for your love. You love her and she doesn't return your affection. And you want her love. But she's turned the cold shoulder.

She does not love you. So what does love do in that situation? Well, it perseveres in well-doing. Love perseveres under affliction.

So what is love? It's patient and affliction. Love is how our Lord lived. Pastor John said love was incarnate in Christ.

If you want to really know what love is, then you're going to have to spend a lot of time in the Gospels. Because in the Gospels we see what love looks like in every situation.

In affliction and in good times and in bad times. So when we look at the Gospels, when we read its pages, we see a man who never let a grouchy, unkind word slip out of his mouth.

[20:12] We never see someone who's angry at other people for anything less than an absolutely holy and perfectly good reason. He went about doing good.

He spent hours and hours helping people. When he was reviled, he blessed in return. So was his love the kind of love that ignores people's wrongs, their sins.

No, he corrected people who taught falsely. He never shrunk from exposing people's wickedness.

So he was always constantly exposing the Pharisees and the Sadducees for their hypocrisy.

When they said, well, should we pay taxes to Caesar? He says, you hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? That doesn't sound very kind, but those words were meant to penetrate their facade, their religiosity, and expose their heart.

And that's what Jesus was always trying to do, was to expose the Pharisees' hearts to themselves. He wasn't their enemy, he was really their friend. And you can see that.

[21:26] Think about John chapter three. Nicodemus, a leader of the Pharisees, comes to Jesus, and Jesus has a heart-to-heart conversation with him. He opens himself up completely to Nicodemus and befriends him.

Jesus was not the enemy of the Pharisees, he was their friend. He exposed the Pharisees' sin because he wanted to save them. So, was Jesus' love tough?

Yeah, it was tough love. But it was really love indeed. So, Jesus, he spoke out of love. He spoke about hell out of love. And he spoke of heaven out of love.

He wearied himself day after day, hour after hour, staying up far into the night, healing people out of love. He saw the crowds.

And they were like sheep without a shepherd. They were wandering and torn, and he had compassion on them. He produced bread out of thin air to feed thousands of people who would eventually just turn their backs on him.

[22:40] So, when a blind man is calling out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me, the disciples were saying, shut up, be quiet.

But what does Jesus say? Do you remember? He said, send him over to me. And he says, what would you have me do for you? So, the disciples are telling the man to be quiet, and Jesus is taking the role of a waiter almost, and saying, what would you have me do for you?

And at the Last Supper, Jesus took off his outer garments and washed his disciples' feet, and John the Baptist said that, I'm not even worthy to untie the strap of the sandal of that man.

And Jesus was on his knees washing the stinking feet of his sinful friends. But love kept on going. Love went into a garden and cried and sweated great drops of sweat that were like blood. And love watched Judas, the one who shared bread with him, betray him, and love suffered his friends and his disciples abandoning him.

[24:00] Love suffered the lies of the Sanhedrin, where there's kangaroo court and they tried to pull witnesses from anywhere and they couldn't agree, but finally they find two people that said, oh, he said he could destroy the temple and raise it in three days.

So love suffered this mockery of justice. And love suffered the slapping and the cursing of a high priest and then love saw just this conniving, sniveling little Roman governor hand him over to be killed.

So love took him to a cross. And in love, he didn't call down legions of angels like he could have. And in love, he saved the man that was right beside him who was a thief.

And why did he do that? One, he loved him. And two, I think he loved us. He was showing us that no sinner is too far gone for me to save.

So in love, he was broken for us. In love, he gave his life to the wrath of God for us. And that's why John said, this is how we know what love is, that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

[25:29] So that brings us to our third question. Where does biblical love come from? Where does that kind of love come from? When I look at Jesus, and then when I look at myself, we have nothing in common.

I look at myself, and there's nothing natural about love to me. I don't have the resources to love that way. And the natural heart doesn't know anything about love.

The natural heart is bent on itself. And that's why children are always saying, mine, mine, me first. I want to go first. And that's why adults are always saying, mine, mine, me first.

It's my money. It's my time. It's my energy. My stuff. Me first. I'll sit and you work because that's the way it should be. So let me ask you, where does biblical love come from?

If it doesn't come from me, where does it come from? Michael. The Holy Spirit.

[26:35] What does Galatians 5.2 say? The fruit of the Spirit is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. When the Spirit of God comes, a transformation takes place in the sinner's heart.

The Spirit is setting on making that man holy, giving that man the fruit of the Spirit. And one of the first and the most important things that the Holy Spirit does is he teaches a man to love.

Because a life of love is a life of holiness. And we can't obey the commandments. We can't be holy in any way until we learn how to love God and to love each other.

So what does that mean? What does it mean if I want love, if I need love? It means I have to pray. I'm bankrupt, but he can help me.

The Holy Spirit can help me. So if you want to love more, you must pray more. And I know that's not very new, is it? It's not new, it's not something that you didn't see coming, but if you're hungry, you go to the refrigerator, don't you?

[27:48] And if you're thirsty, you go and get something to drink. You don't complain because you have to go to the refrigerator every time you're hungry. And we shouldn't complain if we have to tread the old paths in prayer to find love, because our need is still the same.

I need love, and the only place I can find it is in the Holy Spirit. So where else does love come from? Ed?

From the power. From the love, you can see yourself. Right. 1 Peter, or 2 Peter 1.4, says, through God's power, we participate in the divine nature.

We participate in what it means to be God. We become something like God. And that requires a total transformation.

God is love, and we need to be changed into something like His image. So, do you suppose that anything but a totally new birth can give you love?

[29:01] love? We have to be made like God if we're going to love. The image of God has to be restored in us if we're going to love. And so that means if you've never been born again, then you can't love.

You have to be like God the Father. Where else does love come from? We talked about God the Father, God the Holy Spirit. Where else does love come from?

Pardon? Jesus. Love comes from walking close with Jesus Christ. So, if you have a piece of paper, how are you going to set that piece of paper on fire?

You have to bring it up close and in contact with a match. And I'm that piece of paper and Jesus Christ is the match. If I'm going to ever burn with love, then I have to be close to Jesus.

So, the assignment then is not try harder to love. It's not try harder. It's walk closer with Jesus. And if you walk closer with Him, then you're going to start on fire with love.

[30:27] So, you start your day with Him and you commune with Him throughout the day. You ask Him for help constantly. You ask Him for help to love that person that is so unlovable because He loved unlovable people and He knows how to make that happen in us.

And so, we meditate on Scripture. We meditate on Him in our Scriptures. We memorize His words. We worship Him. We know that we become like the things that we worship.

And if we worship Jesus, our hearts are going to be more like Him. So, whatever you do, if you want to love, then you have to get close to Jesus.

Love comes from walking close with Him. So, we have to do it. We have to do it. The fourth question is this. How can I apply this lesson? How can I apply this lesson?

First, husbands, love your wives. If this lesson is going to take root in our life, it has to take root first in our families.

[31:34] And that means it begins with husbands loving their wives. So, men, when was the last time you read Ephesians chapter 5 and saw what it meant for Jesus to love the church and for a husband to love his wife?

In Ephesians 5, we see that Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. So, you should love your wives sacrificially. Sacrificially.

And that kind of sacrifice isn't going to just take place by chance. By, you're not just going to wander into sacrifice. Jesus thought about his sacrifice.

He thought about what it meant to go to the cross. He pondered it and considered it and then he set his face like a flint to do it. So, husbands, we have to be like Jesus if we're going to love our wives sacrificially.

We have to consciously think about what we are going to do to sacrifice for her. And Jesus' love for his bride was a sanctifying love, wasn't it?

[32:40] It was a sacrificial love and it was a sanctifying love. He died to cleanse her by the washing of water. So, husbands, our love for our wives needs to be directed towards their holiness.

And so I ask, is your relationship with her one that makes her holy or one that is a burden and is a temptation? So, is your relationship, men, with your wives a blessing or a burden?

Then Jesus' relationship with his wife or with his bride, the church, was a priority to him. It was a priority. Husbands, are you going to make your relationship with your wife a priority?

Are you going to be finding ways to make that relationship stronger? Men, the quality of our marriages, it initially is our responsibility.

If it's a good marriage, if it's a bad marriage, marriage, it's resting on our shoulders first. So we don't pass the buck. The buck stops here. And I don't say that to discourage you men who are laboring to love your wives, but they're the problem.

[34:00] But I say that to encourage us. If we need to make it, we need to take every effort to take our responsibility seriously.

So Jesus love is a gentle, considerate love. In college, I was part of a street evangelism team where we would go into downtown Dayton and we would talk to people that we met.

And it was nighttime. It wasn't altogether very safe. And so we always paired the ladies and the gentlemen together. And the gentlemen always walked street side, if I remember correctly.

And the reason is because danger, if it was going to come, was going to come from the street side.

And the reason we always said for this is the ladies are the china and the men are the tin cups.

And so you treat the china more delicately. It was one thing if a man, if a guy was attacked, but it was something very different if a lady was attacked. The important thing was that the ladies were protected from whatever happened.

[35:08] So the Bible teaches us that women, the wives, are the weaker vessel. She's more fragile in many respects. So men, do you treat your wives gently like china, or do you carelessly throw her about like she's a tin cup?

Jesus was gentle and is gentle with his church. And so husbands, we have to go and do likewise. The second way that we can apply this lesson is parents love your children.

So after the spouse relationship, it's the parents and the children. And I think we make the gospel the most glorious to our children when it is couched, when it is put in the frame of extravagant love for them.

So does your Christianity make you sweet and affectionate towards your children? Because it should. Christ is sweet and affectionate towards us. God the Father is sweet and affectionate towards us.

We have beautiful houses, beautiful clothes, delicious food that is not only nutritious, but it tastes good. And we have countless spiritual blessings. And all these good gifts come down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

[36 : 27] He's an indulgent Father, but he also disciplines his children. And so in the same way, our love for our children should be a disciplining love. And our discipline for our children should be a loving discipline.

And so, parents, are you raising your children to be holy? Because the only way they're going to be holy, the only way they're going to be happy is if they're holy. So are you pointing your children to Jesus every day?

Are you giving them the gospel every day? The gospel is the richest gift that we have from God the Father. And so we need to be giving it out all the time to our children so you open up your life to them.

You share your weaknesses and your sin and you show them how sufficient the gospel is, how it meets every need that you have.

Then the third way that we can apply this lesson is by exercising your spiritual gifts in the church. exercising your spiritual gifts in the church.

[37 : 34] And specifically for this church, for Grace Fellowship, 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter of love, it is surrounded by a discussion of spiritual gifts.

And so Paul was not saying that love replaces spiritual gifts. He's saying that love guides, directs, motivates our use of our spiritual gifts.

And so God has given a spiritual gift to everyone who is united to Jesus Christ. And so if it's teaching, you teach in love.

And if it's encouraging, then you encourage and you build up the brothers in love. If it's showing mercy, then you show mercy in love. And if you don't know what your spiritual gift is, but you have love, you'll find some way of loving.

So you don't have to know what your spiritual gift is, but if you love, you're going to find out how you can love the best. So, will we love our brothers and sisters?

[38 : 35] And will we love our neighbor? We need to ask God to help us do that. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we come to you as bankrupt. We don't know the first thing about loving the way we should love.

But we do see in Jesus Christ the perfect example of love. And so we pray that you would spread the love of God in our hearts, that you would make the gospel precious to us.

Will you exalt Jesus Christ in our eyes so that we could begin to know what love is? Father, I pray that you would do this for your great namesake.

Grace Fellowship Church needs to be a people of love. love. And we pray that you would do it for your namesake, that you would have a people here that reflect your glory and your love.

And it's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. We're dismissed.