

# Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now we meditate for a little time. In the chapter we read together, the Gospel of Christ by Luke, and the tenth chapter, and reading again from verse 25, And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right, This do, and thou shalt live. Particularly these words, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The theme of love has been occupying your attention for some weeks now. You would perhaps allow me to remind you of the different aspects of the subject with which we have already tried to deal.

We began by letting stress on the greatness of this grace, basing our comments on these words in 1 Corinthians 13, 13, Faith, hope, love, these three.

[ 1 : 36 ] But the greatest of these is love. It is the grace that gives meaning and purpose and motivation to every other grace. Within glance that the marvel and the glory and the wonder of God's love as revealed to and bestowed on his people, and took those words in 1 John 3, verse 1, as the basis of our comments.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God. Who can ever comprehend or grasp the magnitude of this love?

Herein is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sin. After that we looked at the response of his people, the response that ought to come from his people, the reciprocating what he had made known to them of his wonderful love.

We love him because he first loved us. There is this proper, that is this spiritual response to the activities of divine grace in the Christian soul.

An opening of the heart to God in answer to the touch of his own hand and the exercises of his own spirit. And then two weeks ago we made some reference to the manifesting of this love by the Christian in the direction of the Christian believer.

[ 3 : 23 ] Basing our remarks on these words in 1 John 4, verse 21, and this is his commandment, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Now it's a professional Christian commitment if he doesn't find a practical outlet in this sphere, then what we are proposing to deal with this evening, love to all men, will just not be there.

Love to all the spiritual family must be a reality and not just an idle profession.

if we would manifest any meaningful, practical, Christian love to the hordes of men and women with whom we rub shoulders from day to day in the course of life.

Now then as we look at these words before us in this chapter, we might first of all look at the meaning and the significance of this term, thy neighbor as thyself.

[ 4 : 39 ] Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. How does a man love himself? Is it proper? Is it wrong?

Is it right? To love oneself? Well, remember of course what the apostle says in Ephesians chapter 5 at verse 28 in his connection, so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.

So there is a self-love that is scriptural, that is proper, that is right. There is a love to oneself that ought to be exercised by every reasonable, rational man and woman.

But how will this evidence itself, how will true self-love express itself in the life of any man, in the life of any individual? Well of course it will express itself for one thing, in the preserving of physical life, in a man's preservation of the life that he has, the life that has been given to him by God, the life

that he values as God's gift to him.

The moral law requires that men should exercise all reasonable care over the life that God has given to them. And this is a proper expression of self-love.

[ 6 : 08 ] The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others. And it forbids the taking away of our own life and the life of our neighbor unjustly or whatever tender thereunto.

So you see, self-love, true self-love lies at the very root of self-preservation. And it's a proper scriptural thing to have this form of self-love.

It will express itself in this direction. But of course it will express itself also in the pursuit of spiritual values.

It is good that a man should exercise care and preservation over the physical life that God has given to him. But that must never be an end in itself.

The end which he must always have in view in preserving life is the glory of God. And if he is going to neglect the pursuit of spiritual values then he is failing to measure up to this requirement of glorifying God.

[ 7 : 27 ] And true self-love will of course express itself in seeking the best not only for the physical but for the spiritual.

He recognizes the man who is expressing this scriptural self-love or right. He recognizes that man lives not by bread alone by emphasizing the physical but by every word that comes from the mouth of God by pursuing true scriptural values and by coming into coming to grasp and to understand and to appreciate these values in his own soul.

then too I suggest that true self-love will express itself in a man's concern for his good reputation you see a proper and legitimate concern for every right-thinking man and right-acting citizen.

self-love will express itself in this direction a man who is properly concerned for the way in which he acts and lives he will have this true concern for his own reputation because it is something of great value something that he ought to place great value on.

and I think too that true scriptural self-love will show itself will evidence itself in a man's anxiety not to be ostracized you see a very reasonable rational person he wants to be accepted by other people he doesn't want to feel that he is odd that he is not wanted that he is being rejected by society and by others he wants to be part of that society and a useful member of it and make his own contribution to his life and to his witness he wants this because of this inherent principle of self-love that is within him and these are one or two of the things which I believe are to be understood by loving oneself by this scriptural idea of self-love then we pass on to notice the

[ 10 : 04 ] Christian's unquestioned obligation to love his neighbor as himself and this is clear from several directions that the Christian is obligated to love his neighbor as he loves himself and perhaps if we kept this in view oftener than we do then we would be able to express this scriptural Christian love towards men and women more than we do now this obligation stems to love one's neighbor as oneself it stems of course from the fact that Christian ethics demand it it is an integral part of the ethics of the Christian religion to love one's neighbor as oneself you see the law of the Jews might have taught concerning the

Ammonite and the Moabite and other heathen nations around them the law of the Jews might have taught concerning them and thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days forever but the law of the gospel is totally different and we have the law of the gospel expounded and interpreted for us by the Lord and the master of the gospel the Lord and the master of the Christian we have it expounded for instance in the Sermon on the Mount the fifth sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew's gospel you have heard that it has been said thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy but I say unto you love your enemies bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you you see Jesus gave an altogether new upward momentum to the law and he gave the proper interpretation to that law so the believer the Christian is obligated to love his neighbor as himself because the Christian ethic demands this he is obligated also from the fact that adherence to scripture requires it for it is clearly the general teaching of the word of God despite certain apparent contrary statements appearing throughout the Old Testament we must remember that we have to read these in the fuller revelation which we have given to us in the New Testament and particularly in the light of our Lord's interpretation of the Old Testament the Old Testament revelation was essentially let us remember a shadowy one God's people were feeling their ways so to speak they were groping around in the dark they hadn't a full

understanding of things as we have under this new dispensation so the general teaching of God's word requires that the Christian believer should love his neighbor as himself but I suggest also that this obligation stems from the fact that the principle of faith insists on it because faith is a divine principle and what is divine will at all times respond to the divine pattern and this of course is the divine pattern manifesting itself or manifesting himself in love it is divine love that lies at the basis of all the divine activity both in a physical and a spiritual world because God is love he couldn't act in any other way but in this way and the principle of faith because it is of God it must respond in the same direction it belongs to God God has implanted it within the believer's heart and therefore it will respond in the way in which God requires it to respond and for this reason the Christian is obligated to love his neighbor as himself the principle of faith within him he insists on it and what is more he is obligated to also from the fact that devotion to Christ impels it because of what he has experienced of the love of Christ in his own heart because of what he sees of the love of Christ in his believing people because of what he knows of the love of Christ through the gospel and because of what he sees in scripture of the love of

[ 15 : 27 ] Christ towards men in general love so amazing demands everything it impels to the performance of the most difficult and demanding duty it constrains to give all you see the Christian's unquestioned obligation to love his neighbor as himself passing on the third place notice the awesomely demanding nature of this obligation and we have that eloquently said before us in the context particularly in the parable of the good Samaritan this particular lawyer who asked this question he got much more than he bargained for when he asked who is my neighbor in verse 29 the subject upon whom the good

Samaritan the good neighbor was to lavish his love he was in dire and miserable stretch he had been brutally attacked and he had been left to die the representatives of the church were the first on the scene but they quickly washed their hands of him they didn't want to become involved I wonder I wonder if we stand condemned when we read that I frequently have to walk through the gas market in the course of coming to and going from the church here and when I look at the wrecks of humanity lying around at different corners and in different postures I ask myself what would the good heavenly Samaritan do if he were here and what would he have me to do in such distressing in such circumstances as these one feels utterly dismayed and distressed at the lack of almost any positive response of love within one's own heart to human beings in such condition of utter wretchedness and misery but what happened here and perhaps we can see something that will be of benefit and instruction to ourselves how did the love of this good

Samaritan express itself towards this unfortunate victim of the brutality of man to man well we see first of all that he came to where he was oh you say the others did that but they went on quickly they simply glanced at him and then they passed quickly on their way to their various tasks but you say they were probably busy men they probably had many important duties to attend to many important committees perhaps ecclesiastical committees to sit on or or or perhaps they weren't accustomed to dealing with problem cases of this nature and they excused themselves on this score how well finding an excuse is no problem at all that is the easiest thing that can come within our reckoning there is nothing easier than to find an excuse and a good neighbor could have done precisely the same but he didn't he came where he was he bent down beside him and we understand by that that he showed a willingness and a readiness to act he came where he was and as he came to where he was there was immediately there was a willingness and a readiness to act for this wretched man it may well be that a want of willingness often lies at the root of all the nothingness that we do in this connection in expressing love in a practical way this is the first step and if there is not a willingness and a readiness to act there can be nothing else and we might as well cease professing this love this is the first thing he do he came to where he was he showed a willingness and a readiness to act for him and then we noticed that he had compassion on him and I think by this we are of course to understand his emotions were stirred within him compassion compassion is the emotion which is generated by love we find this frequently ascribed to our lord himself in connection with certain individuals in some distress or another for instance in luke chapter seven we read of the widow of name whose only son had died and when he saw the bear being carried out to be buried we read that when he saw her he had compassion on her and said weep not in luke chapter fifteen we read the parable of the prodigal son we read of him returning to his father and we read of the father steering him a great way off and having compassion on him again in matthew chapter fifteen and chapter twenty we read of jesus having compassion on the multitude and providing for a material

well-being and of course all this stemmed from his wonderful love to men in varied vicissitudes in life through christian love in exercise will always lead the believer to feel a surge of compassion within his soul on a practical level he may not perhaps be able to do a great deal but he can and ought to feel a great deal for those who perhaps feel not for themselves and know nothing of their own mystery and their own wretchedness and one feels if there is at least the emotion of compassion in exercise then there is a good step forward in expressing this love for men in their misery and in their need material and spiritual the next step we see happening here is that he bound up his wounds although perhaps he found them so revolting and so repugnant in other words his love found actual expression in setting about to do something whatever revulsion he felt as he saw this man it was submerged by the compelling power of the love of Christ a love that would brook no disobedience and listen to no excuse from any direction last century I'm sure you've heard this beautiful incident before last century when leprosy was still a dreaded scourge throughout the world and there was no known cure for it certain Moravian missionaries asked permission to enter a leprosy compound in a certain part of Africa in order to minister to those poor wretches and preach to them the gospel of the grace and the love of God they were informed by the authorities that permission would be granted but only on one condition that they would never again be allowed to leave that compound for whoever was imprisoned in that compound when those lepers were brought from different parts of the country and placed in that compound they were there until they died and were buried and anyone who would go in to minister to them had to face the same conditions but those

[ 24 : 12 ] Moravian devoted Moravian missionaries didn't hesitate for a moment they accepted the condition they went in and they found out their wounds physical and spiritual at length they died but there were others waiting to take their place as they as they went off the scene of time to carry on the work of binding up to give expression to that love which they themselves had experienced had found and which they wanted to share he bound up his wounds you can take it either physically or spiritually and then we read that the good Samaritan took care of him it is written of our blessed savior that he that having loved his own which were in the world he loved them to the end or literally he loved them to the uttermost extent of love his love is a love that doesn't fall short of total accomplishment at any point his love went all the way and this is the kind of love which he demands of his people this is the kind of love which we have demonstrated in the parable of the good

Samaritan having gone the first mile in extending help to this poor wreck binding up his wounds taking extending help to him bringing him and placing him in a refuge and doing everything that was necessary for him he might have been excused if he had done no more if he hadn't in fact gone the second mile had he not done enough but that is not the nature of true Christian love that is not how it acts that is not how it operates at all in the world of mankind and in the case of the good Samaritan he recognized that his obligations weren't complete until this man was back where he was and as he was whatever in other words whatever the cost to himself in terms of sacrifice time talents or material resources he would willingly render because of this obligation which he has within his heart to him this

I believe is a great and important lesson that we have here in relation to the expressing of Christian love towards men in general and towards God believing people in particular that true Christian love is a costly thing and this year perhaps that all of us fail so often and so miserably we are prepared to project our love to men up to a point so long as it doesn't cost us too much in terms of sacrifice we are ready to go a certain part of the way in order to alleviate our own consciences but the saviour's uttermost is too demanding altogether is it not I'm not preaching to you my friend particularly I'm preaching to myself just as much because I feel it in my own heart and in my own soul and yet surely he demands nothing less than this promise he himself says I have left you an example that you should do as I have done to you

I love to the utmost extent those who were yet mine enemies I poured out my soul unto death for them it was the most costly price that was ever paid the most costly expression of love ever seen in this world and I demand nothing less from those who know that love and who experience that love in their own souls how do you measure up how do I measure up well if we are true men and true women I am quite certain that we shall be confronted with our utter dwarfishness where we confront ourselves with such a demand as this but there's nothing less than this that is demanded of us it is a demanding thing it is a costly thing the love that

Christ demands of his people the love which they ought to express not just towards those in whom they see evidences of beauty of character and excellence of life but towards those miserable righteous with whom we rub shoulders from day to day how can I love them in a scriptural biblical manner and yet I am obligated to do it God demands it of me thou shalt love thy neighbour as myself I take that to refer to all men without exception the saviour himself did it he demands nothing less of you and of me this is what he says to you this is what he says to me this evening thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself not just your brother not just your sister it is so easy to love one's family is it is it not but when you go outside the family and when you see a nutterly unlovely person passing by then the difficulty arises how can

[ 30 : 26 ] I love him how can I show my love Christ's love in a proper practical scriptural way well the obligation is there the demand is there he requires it thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself you love yourself I trust in a proper biblical manner you show evidences of that in a way in which you live the manner in which you conduct your life do you do the same with regard to your neighbour would you do to him as you do to yourself would I thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself God grant my friends that we may examine ourselves anew in the light of this awesome demand and by the grace of God seek to practice something of it from hence forth in our life in our hearts in our living Amen let us unite in prayer O

Lord our God have mercy upon us we are filled with shame and confusion for thy word clearly condemns us in our actions in what we fail to do our sins of omission are greater perhaps than our sins of commission Lord we entreat of thee to enable us in the light of the demands the right and proper demands of thy holy word to examine ourselves closely again and to see wherein we are falling short of the glory of God and of the demands of God's holy word we pray to be with us as we sing our parting song continue with us as we continue before thee and let thy blessing rest upon us O God each one according to need and go with us into this week upon which we have entered and give us grace to live in all things to the praise and to the honor of our glorious head we ask it all in the name and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ Amen