

“Love Does No Wrong to a Neighbor”
(Romans 13:10)

Introduction: If there is one thing that is lacking in our society today as a whole, and in great measure in the church, it is love. Love is the premier mark of the church. Jesus said, **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:35). Love is that which builds up. It is that which edifies. Everyone knows the effects of love, and everyone likes to be the recipient of it, although relatively few are, because there are so few who love. But love is important, so important, as a matter of fact, that God commands all men everywhere to have their hearts exercised in it. His commandments, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength,”** and **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** -- upon which the whole Law and the Prophets depend (Matt. 22:37, 39) -- are not only for Christians, but for all men. There are not two standards. All are duty bound before God to perform them. And yet, it is also true that no one can love in the way which God commands apart from His grace. Since the Fall, this love can only come as the fruit of His Spirit. And it is this fruit of love which the Spirit produces primarily in our hearts. From this, all of the other gracious fruits flow. Paul writes, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law”** (Gal. 5:22-23). God never issued a law against these things because these things are the fulfillment of the Law. **“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law.”** Love is actually what God is commanding in the Law. That is why the Law is good. And it is able, like a mirror, to show us whether we have this love or not. It is able to penetrate into the heart of the unregenerate person to show him that he has no love. And if he has no love, then he certainly does not have God. **“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love”** (1 John 4:8). The Law shows him this, and through this, it shows him his need of Christ. But the Law also penetrates into the heart of the regenerate to show him how to love, and how far short he falls of God’s standard of love. That love is already present when the Spirit of God takes up residence in the heart. But so often professing Christians can become confused as to which desires in their hearts are from the Spirit, and which from the flesh. The Law teaches us how to recognize the love of the Spirit, how to cultivate it, and how to avoid those things which will quench this love, and thereby quench the Spirit of love.

But since love is the fulfillment of the whole Law, then it also follows that it fulfills each of the individual laws. And if it fulfills each of the individual laws, then it must also fulfill the sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13). What I would like for you to see this evening is how love fulfills this commandment, by showing you the different ways in which we are to love. And what I want you to see is that,

Love is the fountain from which the sixth commandment will be fulfilled in your life.

- I. What Are Those Acts of Love Then that the Lord Is Aiming at Through this Commandment?
 - A. First, He Wants You to Have Kind Thoughts About Others.
 1. It is in your mind or heart that you begin either to keep or to break the sixth commandment, or any of the other commandments for that matter.

- a. Jesus said, **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man”** (Mark 7:21-23).
 - b. They begin here, but they actually break the commandment here. John wrote, **“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”** (1 John 3:15).
2. And so in putting off the old man and putting on the new, you are to put on charitable thoughts about others. You are to think kindly of them.
 - a. Saul was harboring evil thoughts in his mind about David, but Jonathan, his son, thought well of him. This is why he defended David before his father. He said, **“Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, by putting David to death without a cause?”** (1 Sam. 19:4-5).
 - b. Ahimelech the priest did the same thing when he defended David before Saul. When Saul asked him, **“Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?”** Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, **“And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house”** (1 Sam. 22:13-14).
 - c. God calls you to have charitable thoughts in your mind about others. In order to do this, you need also to root out the uncharitable thoughts that you have of others. Especially when they are sinful to begin with and are there without a cause.
 - d. In the case of David, he had done nothing to earn the hatred of Saul, except that Saul perceived that the Lord was going to give him the kingdom in his place. There were not even just grounds for this hatred. In David’s case, the Scripture applied to Christ, applied to him as well, **“THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE”** (John 15:25).
 - e. This does not mean that it is wrong to harbor thoughts about the evil or wrong-doing of others. If they commit evil, you have no choice.
 - f. But it does mean that you should never allow those thoughts to breed malice, or bitterness, or the desire for revenge. No matter what someone may do to you, you are always to repay good for evil.
- B. Second, God Wants You to Put on the Godly Fruit of Compassion.
 1. When the lawyer asked Jesus about the second greatest commandment, which is to love your neighbor as yourself, He gave him an example of the kind of love that He required in the Good Samaritan.
 - a. In His story, after the priest and the Levite had passed by the Jew who had been beaten and robbed, He said, **“But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him,**

and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (Luke 10:33-34).

- b. The Samaritan’s compassion moved him to care for this man who was unable to care himself, even though he was his enemy.
- c. After the story, Jesus told the lawyer, if you are to please God, **“Go and do the same”** (v. 37).

2. The Lord commands you as well to have such a heart.

- a. Jesus said, **“I desire compassion and not sacrifice”** (Matt. 9:33).
- b. Compassion is mercy. When Jesus asked the lawyer which of these three men who saw the injured Jew was a neighbor to him, the lawyer replied, **“The one who showed mercy toward him”** (v. 37).
- c. To have compassion, or to show mercy, is to be moved with kindness toward those who are afflicted, even if you hate them, so much so that you desire to help them.
- d. Not only will you desire to help them, but you will help them. If you think that you are really concerned about someone, but you don’t lift a finger to help them, then you really aren’t as concerned as you think.
- e. James wrote, **“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”** (2:15-16).
- f. Having compassion is more than feeling it, it is being moved to the point of action, of meeting needs, of relieving suffering.
- g. On the day of Christ’s judgment, it is not those who thought good thoughts toward the afflicted that are owned by the Lord as His children, but those who actually helped them that are (Matt. 25:31-46).

C. Thirdly, God Wants You to Have a Heart of Meekness, Gentleness and Kindness.

1. Paul writes, **“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you”** (Col. 3:12).
2. These are also expressions of love.
 - a. Meekness and gentleness is a strength, not a weakness. It is a strength that condescends to another’s weakness. It is the ability to show loving consideration even in the face of another’s assaults.
 - b. It is the quality that a mother shows her child even when that child has worn her down through its constant crying. Paul says, **“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children”** (1 Thessalonians 2:7).
 - c. Kindness is another act of love. It is to do something good for someone.
 - d. Kindness is what the jailer showed Joseph in prison when he gave him a position of favor (Gen. 39:21).
 - e. Kindness is what Jacob asked of Joseph when he asked him not to bury him in Egypt, but in the land which the Lord would give them (47:29).
 - f. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit’s work as the outgrowth of love (Gal. 5:22).

- g. The Lord wants you to be gentle and kind. Even and especially to those to whom it is most difficult. Jesus said, **“And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them”** (Luke 6:32).
- h. You must go beyond them. You must show the supernatural character of a supernatural love. Again, our Lord says, **“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men”** (Luke 6:35).
- i. If the love within you is no greater than that of the world, then it is the world’s love and not God’s.

D. Fourthly, God Wants You to Speak in a Mild and Courteous Way.

- 1. The control of the tongue is a very difficult thing. It is beyond the ability of nature to do. James wrote, **“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison”** (James 3:8). It cannot be conquered except by divine grace.
- 2. But with the coming of grace, the control of this small member of the body is something that we are commanded to do. Remember what Augustine had said that I quoted this morning? “Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt” (*Confessions* 10:40, p. 280 [Sage]). God gives us the grace to do it, and He requires that we do it.
- 3. Peter writes, **“To sum up, let all 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 were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, ‘LET HIM WHO MEANS TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS REFRAIN HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING GUILE. AND LET HIM TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; LET HIM SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT’”** (1 Peter 3:8-11).
- 4. And this is the wise thing to do. Solomon writes, **“A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger”** (Prov. 15:1). How many times have you found this to be true. To speak back to someone with the same degree of anger that they display only causes the argument to escalate. But to answer with mild words bring peace.
- 5. When Gideon went out to fight against Midian, he neglected to call the men of Ephraim to the battle. When he returned, **“Then the men of Ephraim said to him, ‘What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?’ And they contended with him vigorously. But he said to them, ‘What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?’ Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that”** (Judges 8:1-3).
- 6. Even so you are to exercise love by speaking in a kind and gentle way.

E. Fifth, God Calls You to Be Patient When You Are Wronged, and to Work Toward Reconciliation Where Possible.

- 1. It is inevitable that in this world of sin and sinners that you will offend and be

offended. When this happens, you must exercise a greater degree of love than the world, and you must own the responsibility of being the first to seek reconciliation.

2. If you are the offended, then you must, as Paul wrote, **“with all humility and gentleness, with patience”** show **“forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”** (Eph. 4:2-3). You must, **“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”** (vv. 31-32).
 3. If you are the offender, then you must, before you go to worship, as our Lord said, **“Go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering”** (Matt. 5:24).
 4. Sometimes reconciliation is not possible because of the unwillingness of one party to either to repent or to forgive. When that happens, you do what the Lord holds you responsible for, and leave the rest in His hands.
 5. And heed the admonition of the Apostle Paul, **“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord. ‘BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”** (Romans 12:17-21).
- F. Lastly, God Calls You to Bring Comfort and Strength to Those Who Are in Distress.
1. You and I are called by the Lord to help those who are too weak to help themselves.
 2. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, **“And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”**
 3. Job was a righteous man in the sight of God. He did what the Lord required of him by His grace and mercy. It is interesting that Job called down a curse upon himself in front of his friends if it was true that he did not help the needy. He said, **“If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering, if his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate, let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow”** (Job 31:19-22). It is a sign of being accursed if we do not help those who clearly need help and it is clearly in our power to do.
 4. As I said earlier, at the final judgment, Christ will judge us, not by our feelings, but by our deeds, whether we have done so or not. He will say, **“For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me”** (Matt. 25:35-36).
 5. And so we must, as King Lemuel said, who wrote the 31st chapter of Proverbs, **“Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy”** (Prov. 31:8-9). Then we will be able to stand in the judgment.
 6. People of God, this kind of love is above our nature and requires the grace of God.

Let us come to Him therefore and pray that He would put this kind of love in our hearts that we may glorify Him in this life and in the life to come. We must never excuse our sins or our failures to keep His Word. Rather, we must confess our sins to find mercy in Christ. And we must renew our efforts through His grace to accomplish what it is that He commands of us. May the Lord grant us the strength to shine forth with His love, that all men seeing our good works, may in the day of judgment give glory to God for them. Amen.