

Preaching Love is Preaching Grace, But It Is Not Preaching “Cheap Grace”

(Scripture passages are taken from the NIV)

I recently read a post on Facebook where the author was pitting love against the commandments. The author was arguing that preaching love was preaching the tolerance and acceptance of sin. He was saying we need to focus more on God’s commandments/the Law. I would argue: Love is NOT against “the commandments.” **LOVE IS THE SUMMATION AND FULFILLMENT OF THE COMMANDMENTS.**

Matthew 22:37-40 ³⁷ Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and *greatest commandment*. ³⁹ And the *second is like it*: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*”

John 13:34-35 ³⁴ “A *new command* I give you: *Love one another. As I have loved you*, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1 Corinthians 16:14 ¹⁴ Do everything in love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13 ¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails....¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Mark 12:28-31 ²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Luke 10:25-28 ²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied.

John 15:12,17 ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.... ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

- **Romans 5:7-8** ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 13:8-10 ⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Galatians 5:6,13-14 ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.... ¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be

free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Galatians 6:2,9-10 ²Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people....

Ephesians 4:32-5:2 ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ^{5:1}Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Colossians 3:12-14 ¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

1 Thessalonian 4:9-10 ⁹Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

James 2:8 ⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

James 4:17 ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

- **James 1:22,26-27** ²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.... ²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

1 John 3:16-18 ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 4:7-11,19-21 ⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.... ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Commandments/Scriptures that tend to be overlooked or ignored by the self-righteous.

Matthew 5:38-44 ³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 9:23-25 ²³ Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

Ephesians 4:29-31 ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

James 1:26 ²⁶ If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

James 4:17 ¹⁷ Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

See also

Exodus 22:21 ²¹ “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

Leviticus 19:10,33-34 ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.... ³³ “ ‘When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. ³⁴ The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 24:22 ²² You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.’ ”

Isaiah 1:10-17 ¹⁰ Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ “The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the Lord. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ¹⁶ wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷ learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Micah 6:8 ⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Matthew 9:10-13 ¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” ¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Matthew 12:36-37 ³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Ephesians 5:3-4 ³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

1 John 1:7-10 ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

We do not ignore sin. We address it, calling sin "sin." We call/invite people to repent (turn to God's glorious kingdom of love and in doing so turn from their sinful values, behaviors, and attitudes).

Matthew 3:1-2,8 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near..."⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Matthew 4:17 ¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 10:7-8 ⁷As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Galatians 6:1-2 ¹Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ²Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephesians 5:11 ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Hebrews 12:5-11 ⁵And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ⁸If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

God's Love and Kingdom of Love becomes a magnet drawing people to itself, and to Jesus, the King of the Kingdom, the King of Love.

Isaiah 49:6 ⁶he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Matthew 5:16 ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

John 13:34-35 ³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 15:8 ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- **Galatians 5:22-23** ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ¹³ ...God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While judging sin and sinful behaviors, we do not judge people. We value people. Jesus did not come to judge, but to save. As His disciples/followers, we are to do the same.

Matthew 7:1-5 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

John 3:16-17 ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 12:47 ⁴⁷ “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

We need to learn to love wisely, discerning when to use Law and when to use Gospel (both of which are LOVE).

Philippians 1:9 ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Colossians 4:5-6 ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

James 1:19 ¹⁹ My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

If I am not acting in love, I am not obeying the Law. I may be enacting the letter of the Law, but I am missing the spirit (intent) of the Law, thus I am merely a noisy gong and a clanging symbol. It means nothing and accomplishes nothing good.

Note: Jesus’ harshest criticisms were not for pagan sinners who did not know God, but for those who claimed to know God, those who focus on the letter of the law at the expense of the spirit of the law (love)—on those who judged others, yet they themselves failed to obey God and follow His will.

Other Passages

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Leviticus 19:18 ¹⁸ “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Hosea 6:6 ⁶ For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Matthew 23:23 ²³ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.... ²⁵ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Romans 12:3,9-10,14-18,21 ³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.... ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.... ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.... ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 2:23-24 ²³ You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Philippians 2:3-8 ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

2 Timothy 2:16,22-26 ¹⁶ Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.... ²² Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Preaching love (agape love) is not “cheap grace.” Agape love asks of us far more than the “letter” of the law. The letter of the law tells us when we can stop. Agape love is loving as Jesus loves, giving as Jesus gives, sacrificing as Jesus sacrificed. In/with agape love there is no stopping as long as there is still a need. 1 John 3:16 ¹⁶ *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers [sisters/neighbors/enemies – Luke 10:29-37; Roman 5:7-8; 1 John 4:10-11]. [words added by author]*

Take Note...

2 Timothy 3:15-17

¹⁵ *and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Humbly, be assured...

1 John 2:1-2

¹ *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*