

Session 5 The Relationship of the First Commandment to the Second

INTRODUCTION

Tonight we are going to be talking about the relationship of the first commandment to the second commandment. In Matthew 22:36-40 one of the religious leaders came to Jesus (Mt. 22:36) and asked Him a question.

He said, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” and Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Mt. 22:38, NKJV). “This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:39-40, NKJV). He says, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

THE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE

Now the foundational premise of this course on the first commandment: We are spending twelve Friday nights, twelve sessions focusing on the first commandment because the Holy Spirit is restoring the first commandment to first place in the generation the Lord returns. I believe we are in that generation; I believe we are in the early days of that. I believe that the Holy Spirit wants the body of Christ contending for the anointing to operate in the first commandment.

Therefore, we have to understand it. We have to reach for it. We have to believe God for it, pray for it. That is why we’re teaching this course on it, but the foundational premise of this course is that people who love Jesus with all of their heart will always love people far more.

THE PRIMACY AND SUPREMACY OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

The reason I say that is that over the years as we have focused on the first commandment, I have heard people say, “What about the second commandment?” It’s a very theoretical question, or in some cases even a debate. Some people say, “We’re into the first commandment;” others say, “We’re into the second commandment.”

It is a completely false concept because it is impossible to touch God in love without overflowing in love towards other people. It is impossible to love other people in a deep way without it coming in the overflow from loving God.

So the two commandments are dynamically joined; it’s not just that they’re supposed to be – they are in reality. You cannot do one without the other. The first commandment always leads to the second. The pursuit of the first commandment by itself will always be empty and flat without being energized and generated by the anointing of reaching to Jesus with all of our heart and all of our strength.

I have here that to put the second commandment first, which is very common, to put our ministry to people before our ministry to the Lord, is to make our ministries an idol. It is to get in the way of the purpose of God. I’m going to say that again. To put the second commandment first, which is common, will not only lead us to burn-out and disillusionment and discouragement, but it actually makes our ministry to people an idol to get in the way of our relationship with the Lord.

Now, to put the second commandment in tenth is another problem, but if the first commandment is first, the second commandment will always be big on your internal radar system. It will be on your screen. The Holy Spirit will make sure that it is.

AN OVERVIEW

Now, what is happening in this passage in Matthew 22 is that one of the religious leaders comes to Jesus. Of course they're trying to trick Jesus, because it's obvious. Everybody knows from the "Shama Israel" (Deut. 6:5) the famous verse: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." Everybody knew that was the first commandment. It was the main one. So what is happening is that they come to ask Jesus the question, and He of course quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, the famous verse called the Shama Israel.

Of course they thought He would quote it, but He adds three new points that Moses did not have. The first point: He says, "I want you to know this is the first and the great commandment." He adds that description to it. They said "the great commandment," but Jesus says it is not only that, it is the first priority to God. It is the first one on God's priority list and the agenda of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, He says in Matthew 22:39, "There is another commandment and it is like the first one" (paraphrase). This idea of loving people is like that; it was a new concept that loving people is like loving God.

The third point He makes in Matthew 22:40. He says, "As a matter of fact, all the purposes of God hang on these two commandments" (paraphrase).

This means that all the purpose of God like the bucket at the end of a rope hanging, and the rope is the love of God.

What Jesus is saying is that all the purposes in the Word of God originate in God's heart from His design that people would love God and love one another. There is no purpose for Israel that does not come from this passion and reality in God's heart of loving God with all of our heart and loving people. This is what was in God's mind when He called Israel to be a kingdom or a nation, a kingdom of priests. This is what is in God's mind when He created the New Jerusalem for us to live in forever and forever and forever, but all the purposes of God hang or draw their strength and their source from these two commandments.

REVIEW: THE FOUR STAGES OF LOVE

Now, we did this a couple of sessions ago. The four stages of love: Love develops in our experience of these four stages. Of course we pursue all four stages all the time. We don't focus on one and then say, "After a few years, we'll move onto the second one." In our spirit we reach for all four of them simultaneously, but there is a sequence in which they are developed in our experience.

The first stage is that we receive revelation of God's love for us. John tells us in 1 John 4:19 that we love God and love people because they are in the overflow of understanding and feeling God's heart for us. When people say, "I want to love God more," I say, "I will tell you exactly where to go. If you want to love people more, focus on feeling and experiencing how God feels towards you."

GROWING IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD

The second stage: When we understand how God loves us, it awakens an overflow in our heart and we receive God's love for God. We love Jesus in the overflow of the Father, or the impartation of the Father's love for Jesus.

In John 17, Jesus is praying. He says, "Father, I have declared Your name to them, so that the love with which You love Me would be put into them" (John 17:26, paraphrase).

LOVING OURSELVES IN THE GRACE OF GOD

The second stage is that we grow in love for God. Now the third stage, which some folks don't focus on properly, is loving our self in the grace of God. Jesus said that we are to love our neighbor as our self. Loving our self actually proceeds loving our neighbor. Now, this isn't a carnal thing, or a fleshly thing; there is a way in which people love themselves in the flesh.

Jesus is talking about a spiritual dynamic, about loving ourselves or valuing who God has made us to be in the grace of God. A story that I have used over the years is of the lady who prayed and said, "God, I want to love my neighbor as myself." She was praying the prayer and the Lord spoke to her and said, "That's the problem. You do love your neighbor as yourself. You hate yourself; that's why you hate your neighbor."

This is a real thing here. It's a very important reality that we love ourselves by knowing who we are in Christ, and by rejoicing in who God has made us, in many ways. We all have limitations and it's our natural bent to look at our limitations. I'm not talking about our character. We always want to be more godly, more humble, wiser. I mean physical limitations, gifting, personality, calling, and it is very common for people to despise those limitations and in essence they are really charging God with bad leadership in their life.

It really minimizes and hinders love in their life, but when we can agree with God and the way that He values us, and we agree with what He has done in our lives and rejoice in it, it's what Psalm 139 talks about. We talked about this for a whole session a few weeks back; what it does is, it puts us in the position where it energizes our spirit and our emotions in order to flow in love. When we get our self off of others in envy and when we get our self off of our failure and condemnation, we love others significantly better.

So this is the idea, the third stage, of loving one another as we love our self, you could even say in the overflow of how we love our self in the grace of God, or rejoicing in who we are in God's eyes, and agreeing with God's value over our life.

LOVING OTHERS AS A MEANS OF LOVING JESUS

Then the fourth stage, obviously, is loving others. Now loving others is the outward proof and the outward demonstration of these three other realities. It is hard to see stage one, two and three when you look at a person because those are the invisible passions of the heart.

This fourth dimension of love is easy to see because it's demonstrated in actions, but the truth is, all four stages come together in this fourth stage of loving other people. In this our love for God is made visible.

Jesus is the One who said this in John 13. He said His command is that you would love one another, and this is the way that your love for God or your devotion as a disciple is openly displayed. Now, when you love another

person, your devotion to Jesus in God's eyes (for not all people say, "Boy, they must really love Jesus"), not everyone connects your relationship with Jesus with your loving actions towards others, but the Lord says more and more people will be able to do that.

LOVING THE ONES WE WOULD BE MOST TEMPTED TO DESPISE

Even more importantly, God does. When I love another person the Lord takes it personally. He takes it as a statement of commitment in my life, or your life, to be a devoted disciple to Him.

Now, one of the things that we have to get clear here is the definition of love, because when people think of loving one another, some automatically go to the outreach ministry where they give food or clothing to the stranger on the street. It's really cool to do that. I value that, and the Bible is behind that, but most of the love that you show in your life will not be those outreaches you go to for an hour or two or longer, or where you give a stranger food or clothing.

The love that you will demonstrate most is to the people that you are closest to and most familiar with, that you might be most tempted to despise. That is where love is magnified most. That is where our love for Jesus is demonstrated, in the most familiar relationships.

It's not like, "Well, next month is the outreach, so then we're going to show love for people." No. We show our love for Jesus by the humility and the servant spirit we have with the people in our home or the people we live with; the people whom we interact with day in and day out, or the people whom we interact with in the society at large. The guy you go to the store to buy something from, and you buy it and it doesn't work. You aren't happy with the guy and you might speak sharp words to him. The Lord says, "No. Even in those arenas, that is where love for Me is demonstrated."

LOVE AMID FAMILIARITY

It isn't just the random outreach ministry. Of course, for others it isn't so random. So go really regularly, but many people do one here, one there and they're saving up their love focus for giving food to someone they don't know. The vast majority of your love for Jesus will not be shown in that way for most people. Now for some folks, that's what they do all day. That's a different story, but for the majority, our love for Jesus is demonstrated as people seeking to walk in the first commandment, bringing it into first place.

This love is demonstrated in everyday relationships – literally, with the people we're most familiar with. Jesus made a very important principle: He says we are to love our neighbor like loving God. He said the second commandment is like the first commandment.

LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR LIKE WE LOVE OUR GOD

Now, in what ways is loving a person like loving God? Well, the obvious way is in its importance. Jesus is saying it is as important to love people as it is to love God because loving people is a reflection. It is a statement of your devotion about loving Jesus. It actually is a mirror. It is a reflection of the reality of your secret devotion to the Lord. Again, don't limit loving people to outreach ministry. Think of the person in your home that maybe tests your patience the most. Loving that person is a reflection, is a mirror of your devotion to Jesus.

It doesn't even mean you have to enjoy them. I'm being serious. Loving people in a biblical definition isn't related to enjoying them. You can love your enemies and not appreciate talking to them or going on a trip with

them. Some guy says, “Well, this particular person in my family, I just can’t stand them.” I say, that’s fair, but you still need to love them in sincerity, in humility, and in secret.

What I mean by “in secret”: without drawing attention to the fact that you are doing it. Seeking their good without them knowing it, because in Matthew 6 – Jesus said this over and over in the Sermon on the Mount – He said, do it in secret, and God’s eyes will see you, and the Lord will take it as a statement of your commitment to Him.

So this is about loving God. Jesus connected the two together. He said the two are deeply connected. They are like each other. They are joined in a deep way. You cannot separate them in the way that people commonly do.

THE OVERFLOW OF LOVE FOR GOD

Now another: Loving people, loving others is like loving God in that it flows from regular encounters of God’s love.

You want to love a person who causes you pressure, who locks you into growing in how God loves you because the stirring of our emotions and the impressions of the Holy Spirit and the subtle activity of the Holy Spirit on our heart, when we study the Scripture-focus on God’s emotions and God’s passions for us, when we lock into this it strengthens our emotions. They’re just subtle stirrings of the Spirit, but this is the overflow out of which we love other people.

THE FULLNESS OF WHOLEHEARTED LOVE

This is where we get the energizing of our spirit. Loving people is like loving God in that it requires all of our heart and all of our strength. There’s an emotional dynamic that happens in us when we commit to be wholehearted in love.

I’ve talked about this over the years, and people seek to obey the Lord in 98 percent of the areas of their lives, but there’s that one area they’re saying no to the Holy Spirit in. It’s in that final area that our emotional dynamics are released at a wholly different level. It’s the same with loving people. When we are committed in our heart before God, we are saying we are going to walk in love, the whole definition of love, in 1 Corinthians 13.

We will get there in a moment. I really want to do this. I want to go all the way in loving people. “Now we love people...” The minute you say, “I want to love people all the way,” you’re going to have a dozen folks describing to you how you should love them better in the way they want. So when I talk about loving people with all of your heart, I’m not saying that you’re going to give that definition to everybody who knocks on your door who wants you to do something for them or with them.

When I talk about this dimension, when in the secret place of our heart we say, “I want to do it with all of my heart, I want to love people in the way that I love God,” when those two alls come together, then there’s an energizing of our spirit that we don’t have.

I don’t mean that love is easy and perfect, but love has a wholly different flow to it when we burn the bridge, and we are going for the full definition towards God and towards people.

THE SUPERNATURAL DIMENSIONS OF LOVE

Loving others is like loving God in the sense that there is a supernatural dimension. It takes the activity of the Holy Spirit. We cannot live spiritually, superficially, with the Holy Spirit, and be strong in love. That is why, in society, there are the secular, humanist attempts at love, and I appreciate them, actually. I appreciate an unbeliever who's trying to be nice to people. I think that's cool. It's not enough, but it is way better than them being mean to people, but the definition in the culture of what it means to love, often in the lives of unbelievers, does not have a supernatural dimension that requires an interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, you cannot love people in the same way you cannot love God without a supernatural help of the Holy Spirit. You can decide to, but you cannot actually follow through in terms of definitions of what love really looks like without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

It is a profoundly spiritual thing, this thing called loving people. It is something unbelievers cannot do, from a biblical point of view. They can seek to do it, but it takes the power of God in the inner man to do it in the way that the Bible describes. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the idea of going deep in Jesus is critical to the foundation of genuinely loving people. The thing that you can do best in terms of loving people is to go deep in Jesus.

MOTHERS: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF US

I know that I've said this over the years to moms. I mean, there is no group of people in the earth who seek to love more than moms. It is all through history in all cultures. Moms really want to love.

Over the years of pasturing I have had to encourage moms where some of them are so devoted to their children that their relationship to the Lord goes really low. I mean, their heart is really good. They just want to be nearly omnipresent with their children, thinking that more of Mom to the nth degree means an enhanced child.

I know that some of you, you could go several places with that, but actually I'm not being humorous on this. What I have told these moms: You will give a lot more to your family if you have a spark of light in your spirit than devotion and intensity of commitment without a vibrant spirit towards the Lord. I said, "You will actually do more for your children drawing back a little bit, connecting with Jesus. Your spirit will be far different when you talk to them, when you are devoted to them."

If it is true of moms, it is true of every other group in the human race, because there is nobody more devoted than moms, but moms, I just want to say this as the chief group in the earth that seeks to love: Without the interaction of the Holy Spirit, you will not love well if your spirit is dull; even though you might mean well, you will not love well.

You may be there and devoted but your spirit will be angry, depressed and frustrated, and that is not the highest and best that God has for you if you are invested in your family. Now, again, if that is true of moms, who are the chief lovers of the human race as far as I'm concerned, it is true of everybody else in every other category. We will love far better with a lovely spirit.

So I have talked to folks over the years. Sometimes they get nervous about people spending time with the Lord, as though if they run into Jesus, the fountain of love Himself, somehow they are going to be callous towards people.

A SUMMONS TO LOVE IN ACTION

You cannot run into that burning flame, that Man, without having the flame touch you for other people. I say, “No. Actually, push them into Jesus. They will love deeper in a far more sustained way if they get that fire operating in their spirit.” Because when we feel the gratitude for how He feels towards us, and when we have the joy of being loved by God that energizes and sustains our compassion for other people – because compassion is more than feeling sorry for somebody in pain, though there is a dimension of that; there’s a natural human compassion which is good but there is something more God has for us: It’s the overflow of the Spirit’s work in our life, and we have gratitude and joy because of the way the Lord relates to us. When this happens, our spirit is far more free and far more energized to sustain a flow of love and compassion to other people.

Now this commandment, loving people as you love yourself, is searching. It is a searching commandment. I challenge you to take that before the Lord as a serious part of your life mandate and your life calling. I am going to love people in the way I love myself, and as a statement and reflection of my devotion to Jesus. I am going to go all the way by the biblical definition of love.

TWO PROBLEMS: SELF-PRESERVATION AND SELF-REJECTION

It will require a comprehensive reordering and restructuring of our thought life and our priorities because by nature we despise our self and we are consumed with our own comfort and honor.

So we have two natural things that happen. Without the Holy Spirit’s help, it is a very common thing for many people to have self-rejection and self-loathing. It’s a problem with the whole human race. You know the guy who says, “I just hate when I do this. I can’t stand so much about myself.”

I say, “Well, that’s an extremely normal, common human reaction and feeling.”

Not only is there a natural operation in our human spirit to despise much about ourselves – self-rejection is very common throughout the human race – there is also a natural desire to be self-consumed, meaning just living for our pleasure, our own natural pleasure and honor.

So to overcome those two natural tendencies, self-rejection and the quest for self-comfort, it takes the work of the Holy Spirit. But when we say before the Lord, “Lord, we are going to do this; we are really going for this because we love You. We really want to be wholehearted lovers of God. We want to go after this thing with all our heart,” this is a statement of loving Jesus.”

THE RADICAL NATURE OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

This isn’t just trying to be a better person, though I think it’s cool to be a better person, but this is a direct reflection of your pursuit to love and encounter God in a deeper way. “I am going to go after this; I am going to love people in the overflow of how I love You as a reflection of it, and I am going to do it by the help of the Holy Spirit in the same intensity that I love myself.”

Of course, the minute you go on that journey in truth, the thing that happens in our hearts, and many of you know this because you are on that journey; others of you, you think, “Well, I kind of love; I never think about it specifically, but I must love; I mean, I’m a Christian. Surely I am. I like people, is that what you mean?”

Loving others as you love yourself is more than a general liking of cool people. It really is about humility and servant-hood. We are going to look again in a minute at the definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. It lays out what we're talking about here, and to love people in that kind of standard.

HUMILITY, THE RESULT OF DEPENDENCY AND NEED

As I search to do that, as I seek and reach to do that in my spirit, the thing that becomes obvious is that I fall short. When Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, blessed are those who are poor in spirit," we have poverty of spirit and we see our spirit in a very dynamic way. This commandment, this radical commandment to love others as we love ourselves, as the overflow and reflection of our love for God, the theater of how we love God is how we love people according to the definitions and attitudes in 1 Corinthians 13.

This radical commandment touches the core of our being and exposes our weakness and failure. Now, when I draw back from really reaching for this, I don't see my need and depravity so much. But when I make it my true heart standard to love Jesus by loving people in this way, my depravity comes to light. It exposes my significant need, which creates humility.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REACHING WITH ALL OF OUR HEARTS

The Lord says, "You keep reaching for it, but here is another thing." That's actually a positive thing, that we see our need in that way, but also the reaching with all of our heart to walk in love in this way changes our emotional dynamics.

Again, I mentioned this point earlier: When we go for 100 percent, saying, "We are really going to do this," there is an enriched dynamic in our heart that really changes the way we think and feel.

Many believers, and of course unbelievers as well, are so diminished and so stuck on the inside because they are so self-consumed. We are born self-consumed and we typically get more self-consumed the older we get instead of less.

But the way out of that prison is to act in the opposite spirit by loving others as we love our self. The very reaching for it, when we do it in relationship with the Holy Spirit, does this.

LOVE THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD

Love is the source and the goal of the law and the prophets. The law and the prophets hang on these commandments. The law and the prophets means the whole purpose of God. The whole purpose in God's heart, from creating Adam and Eve in the Garden right through to the New Jerusalem in eternity; think of the bucket in the well hanging on the rope in the ancient world. The rope is sustaining that bucket and it is the source of strength. It is the system support of it. What Jesus is saying is that the whole support system, everything that God's purpose hangs on, is this dream in God's heart that people would love God and love one another forever.

Everything is built on that premise. Everything is built from that paradigm, from God's point of view. Not only is it the source of all God's plan and the support system of God's plan, it is the fulfillment of everything in the Word of God as well.

In Romans 13, Paul is talking, and he says, “He that loves another has fulfilled the law.” All of the commandments of the Bible are fulfilled by seeking to love people, because even the law “You shall love the Lord your God” with all your heart is ultimately fulfilled in love people.

You cannot love people in truth except in reaching to love God and asking for the Holy Spirit’s help. So in Romans 13 Paul emphasizes, and tells us two times, that everything God is about is fulfilled in this passion and this reach of the heart. Even loving God, the ultimate law, the great law, is fulfilled as we walk this out towards other people. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:5 that the goal of the commandment, the purpose of the whole Word of God, is that it would ignite, motivate, and energize love in people.

This is what was in God’s mind all along, not just that we would walk in love for one another, but this is what energizes the whole purpose of God. So he says the purpose of the commandment is love.

LOVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRAYER MOVEMENT

He gives three different dimensions of how we love with excellence from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. It’s an entire passage in the Sermon on the Mount. It is Matthew 7:12 that we are looking at. Jesus is calling them in the Sermon on the Mount to love people. He says, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do it to them, and in this way the law and the prophets are fulfilled” (Mt. 7:12, paraphrase).

He is talking about loving people, but here is the point I want you to see: The word “therefore” in Matthew 7:12 is linking the commandment to love people with the passage right before. So Matthew 7:12 is a logical connection to the principles of Matthew 7:7-11, and it is very significant that the call to love people, the “golden rule” as it has been referred to, is in context of the prayer moment.

Jesus is telling them in Matthew 7, “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find. Everyone who asks” – He is talking about the prayer life – “receives” (Mt. 7:7-8, NKJV). He goes on and asks the question: “What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?” (Mt. 7:9, NKJV). Then He goes on in Matthew 7:11, “How much more will the Father give you if you ask?” (paraphrase). “Therefore, love one another,” He says in Matthew 7:12 (paraphrase).

THE SPIRITUAL DYNAMIC OF LOVE

Here is the point: There is a very dynamic spiritual reality. Even the call to prayer is linked to loving one another. The reason I say that is because in our culture there are all kinds of secular, humanist movements. Again, I am certainly not against them. I appreciate them, but they get confused because they think their love is the kind of love the Bible is talking about, and there are even believers in the Church who get caught into these movements, and they think that love is just about doing some good deeds for some people occasionally: Give them a little bit of money; maybe go on an outreach occasionally. But love is a far bigger subject than that. It has a far greater demand on the human heart than some good deeds here and there.

The point I’m making is that it takes a spiritual vitality to walk in it. The reason I’m saying that is because as I seek to be a man who walks in love, I’m very aware I have to have a prayer life. I have to have a spiritual vitality and dynamic, or this whole thing is just rhetoric.

I see movements in society that are trumpeting their love, and again I appreciate all the efforts for people to be kind to people, but in my spirit I say, “There is more.” It takes a spiritual dynamic. It takes a context of wanting to be wholehearted towards Jesus for this thing to work.

Now in our context of loving people, it’s more than just doing good deeds for them, though I want to emphasize the value of doing goods for people. It’s fantastic; it’s essential. It is biblical, but people are more than physical. They are spiritual and they are eternal. Though I value, and the Bible values, giving somebody food who is hungry, that in itself is good, but it is not enough.

THE FALSE LURE OF SELF-SATISFACTION

Again, the reason I am focusing on this and connecting it to the first commandment is because I have seen believers get content if they are doing a little outreach, and they lose the reach in their spirit for a deeper dynamic in interaction with the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

The more I reach for love, the more I see how much I need the Holy Spirit, but in the secular, humanist paradigm of love, people reach for love and they actually become content with their love, proud and self-satisfied spiritually.

It has the exact opposite dynamic in them that reaching for love is meant to have. The more I seek for love in a deeper way, the more desperate I become for a deeper interaction with the Holy Spirit, the more aware I am of my poverty; the more grateful I am to God.

But the very quest for love in a different paradigm makes people satisfied with their love and proud and it causes them to boast in their heart before God: “I’ve done all these good things in my life.”

Both groups would talk about love and helping people. One of the great movements in the end of the age that will be led by the Antichrist will be a compassion movement. It will be a secular humanist compassion movement that will cause people to be bolstered in their confidence that all is well because they are doing some good deeds to people in need.

LOVING OTHER PEOPLE ON GOD’S TERMS

So as I see in the Church a movement to be more active, I like it. It’s good. But I was talking to some guys the other day and they said, “Well, we’re just going to help those guys. That’s good enough in itself.”

I said, “No. We want to give a witness about Jesus.”

There’s a thing going around – you’ve heard it – where people say, “We want to love them because it’s enough to love them. We’re not just being nice to them so we can preach to them.”

I say, “What’s wrong with being nice to them so you can preach to them? They are eternal beings. They will end up in the lake of fire even if you feed them every day if they don’t get the truth about who Jesus is.”

I’ve heard a lot of believers over the years, in my thirty years of pasturing, say, “No. We’re not just doing it to open a door.” I say, “That’s good that we do it as a good thing in itself, but by all means reach for every opportunity when you meet a physical need to touch the spiritual need of this eternal human being.”

Whatever need we meet, that person's profound need is to connect with God on God's terms. So even in our quest to love people, we want to love by God's definition on God's terms in the truth that Jesus describes.

In other words, it is love with allegiance to Jesus. You're going to find (we are seeing it already) more and more compassion movements in society that will spill over to the Church that will grow weaker and weaker in allegiance to Jesus but more bolstered in their confidence that they are doing right.

I want to love on God's terms, by God's definition in allegiance to Jesus, in allegiance to His word and as an active expression of my love for Him with all of my heart.

Calling on the Holy Spirit, humbling myself when I come up short, which is all the time, in love, being energized by gratitude and joy by that which I do receive from the hand of God by the work of the Spirit: This is the context and the relationship of loving one another and loving Jesus with all of our heart.

LOVE, THE CURRENCY OF HEAVEN

The supreme value of love is that it is the only thing that lasts forever. The currency in the eternal city is love. The only thing you're going to bring with you through the resurrection is the testimony before God in your heart that God recognizes of your love for God: your love for God directly to God, and your love for God that is expressed by loving people, both of them are love for God, but all that we bring with us through the resurrection.

We don't bring our clothes. We don't bring our bank accounts. We don't bring our databases. We don't bring trophies. All we bring is what God sees as the truth about love that was in our hearts towards Him.

The direct "I love You" towards Him, the heart of devotion, but also the love towards Him that is expressed in denying the flesh and obeying Him, and its expression in loving people because you love Him; loving people because you love Him and loving people as we love our self which is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that will take asking, seeking, knocking, and crying out for the supernatural provision of God.

First Corinthians 13 describes a secular humanist approach to love. It says in 1 Corinthians 13:3, "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, if I give my body to be burned but don't love by God's definition of love, it profits me nothing when I stand before God" (paraphrase).

So you can move in the power gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-2) or you can move in compassionate deeds towards others, but if you aren't doing it in love for God, because you love God, and if you aren't loving as you love yourself – that is the reach of our spirit; I don't know that we ever fully attain it, but that is the reach of our spirit – if we do it that way, it profits us because God remembers it forever. That is how it profits us.

The people may not even receive it while you are doing it. You may show love to people; they may reject it or misunderstand it, but God remembers it. That is why it profits you.

THE ONLY THING THAT PROFITS

The only thing that profits you ultimately is what God remembers. It is what God esteems and remembers. First Corinthians 13:4-7 is love by the biblical definition, and you cannot fulfill your obligation in the Spirit to love by going on a few outreaches.

I'm for the outreaches, but you cannot do a few events and there you've got love settled. "Check the list: I did the love thing last month. I wrote the check to the needy person giving the appeal on the TV show."

"No. Although it's good that you do those things, that's not enough." Paul describes the character of love here in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. He gives two basic definitions of love. One is passive and one is aggressive. Then he gives descriptions, but really he talks about love in two basic ways.

LOVE SUFFERS LONG, AND IS KIND

He says, "Love suffers long." That's the passive definition. "Love is kind." That is the active definition. Then he gives all the other attitudes and activities that manifest those two realities.

"Love suffers long." What does longsuffering mean? It means you suffer long. That's what it means. It means when the person deserves a judgment, a harsh judgment, you don't give it. To suffer long is passive. There's nothing you do. It's what you're not doing. You're not venting. You're not paying them back, and you're not giving them what they deserve in the negative sense. It suffers long. Now go right to your family members or to the place you work. That is where this is worked out most dynamically because of loving Jesus.

Then there is an active definition of love. "Love is kind." It's giving people what they don't deserve. So when you are longsuffering, you are holding back what they do deserve. They deserve ill treatment, but you are holding it back and in kindness you are giving them what they don't deserve. They don't deserve it. This is how God treats us.

Then it gives all the different positives and negatives behind it, but that is the essence of God's definition of love. This takes the work of the Holy Spirit. It takes a commitment to love Jesus in the secret place of our heart to do this in secret; without announcing it; without making a big secret of it. First Corinthians 13:8 says, "Love never fails." This doesn't mean that love is always effective in the eyes of man. What it means is that because God remembers love, it does not fail. It has a reward that goes past the grave and remembrance.

THE GREATEST AND HIGHEST CALLING

Much love that you show to a person, they won't appreciate. They don't even recognize it as love, but still it does not fail.

This doesn't mean it always changes the person. It means it's remembered and honored by God forever. In that sense it never fails.

Again, this doesn't mean it doesn't fail in the sense that it always impacts the person. God loves the many and they do not receive it. They end up in hell. God's love does not fail. People fail to receive it but the love is real. The testimony of it lasts forever, that He really loved them and reached to them with all of His heart.

It goes on to tell us in 1 Corinthians 13:13 that love is the greatest. It is the greatest before God. It is the great commandment, to love God, to love people, which is really two sides of one coin.

It is the greatest and highest calling. You could preach in stadiums; you could have the biggest worldwide TV ministry ever, the largest number of people being touched, but the greatest calling you can operate in is the calling and the anointing of love: love to God and love to people, which in reality is the same reality.

Amen. Let's stand. I'm going ask the Lord to come and touch our hearts as we give our selves to Him.