

# Galatians 5:1, 13-25

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning, if you will open up with me to your copy of God's Word. We're going to be in Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5.

Our main text today will be from verse 1, and then we'll also be reading verses 13 through 25. I'll remind you, this is the Word of God, and it reads, For freedom Christ has set us free.

Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. And then skipping down to verse 13. For you are called the freedom brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.

[ 1 : 05 ] For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Amen. Amen. So if you had one guess, or maybe even five guesses, as to what passage you would hear as we study the Advent topic of love, I doubt that you would have guessed this text.

Maybe you would have chosen the classic marriage passage on love, that love is patient, or love is kind, it does not envy or boast. Or maybe the story of six-pound, eight-ounce, baby Jesus lying in a manger, combined with some Old Testament prophecy, Emmanuel, God with us, the wise men giving him gifts that represent both his kingship and his destiny to die as a sacrificial lamb of God.

[ 2 : 31 ] Christ is indeed the culmination of God's love for his people. And certainly the Christmas story leading to the Easter story is what we celebrate. But this morning I'd like to draw our attention to the effects of God's love in Christ, rather than primarily the display of God's love in Christ.

It's far too easy in a culture of cheap grace and easy believism to get so caught up in the love of God for me, that we miss the call of his love to take up our cross, our lethal injection, our electric chair, or our firing squad daily in order to follow him.

Hopefully as we walk through our text today, we'll see God's love as a central force behind every aspect of the Christian life. And we'll see the Christmas story not only as a display of God's love, but a call to action.

Our text today establishes and supports a pattern found throughout the scripture, which is essential to understanding and practicing holy living. Our obedience, that pattern being our obedience, summed up as loving God and loving others, is a result of the activity of the Holy Spirit, as he stirs our hearts with affection for God, by pointing to the person and work of Christ on our behalf, causing us to love the things he loves and participate in the work that he is doing.

So, summed up, the Holy Spirit helps us to love God by exalting Christ, which is God's greatest display of love to us, causing us then to love what he loves and do what he does.

[ 3 : 59 ] So today, our text, through our text, we'll see together how God's love, and this will be our four main points, so I'll go through them as we're going, how God's love causes freedom in Christ, causes obedience to God's commands, gives us the model for love, and gives us the means of our

love.

So first of all, if you will look with me at our first main heading, freedom in Christ. So God's love gives us freedom in Christ. So verse 1 says that Christ has set us free, and Paul gives us an encouragement not to submit again to a yoke of slavery.

And this one verse is disconnected in proximity to the other verses that we're reading, but I do want to start here because Paul refers back to it then in verse 13.

So I want to start here by way of introduction to our primary topic of love, because I believe Paul is here establishing a link between understanding the peace that we have with God, which Caleb talked about last week, and what he goes on to teach, that the whole law is fulfilled in loving our neighbor as ourself.

And that's going to be like our primary thing that we're going to be looking at. How is it that the law, the whole law is fulfilled in us loving our neighbor as ourself? So if you look with me, Galatians 5, verses 2 through 12, I'm not going to read it, but Paul explains the point of his whole letter to the Galatians, and this will be some context that we're moving out of today.

[ 5 : 25 ] So peace with God or our salvation comes by grace alone. In any attempted addition to Christ's finished work, his perfect life, death, and resurrection is a subtraction from the efficacy of Christ's work on our behalf.

So in other words, when we try to add works to Christ's already finished work, we're actually subtracting from the value of Christ's work. So Paul here was pushing against a heresy which had arisen from a group of people called the Judaizers, who taught that someone had to believe Christ as Lord and be circumcised in order to be a true believer.

In other words, they said that Christ's work wasn't enough for salvation, but works must be added to it in order to be righteous before God. And while most of us wouldn't say that Christ's work wasn't enough, we often live as though it wasn't.

And this can be demonstrated in a bunch of different ways. I find it personally, and what I see in others, it can be demonstrated through shame, prolonged unnecessary guilt, pride, self-pity, and working our way to a perceived higher status before God.

Often when we sin, we act as though we are no longer deserving of God's love, which carries with it the assumption that at some point we were good enough to deserve God's love, and now I feel bad about myself because I've now done something wrong.

[ 6 : 44 ] But this is not what grace in Christ looks like, and this is what Paul is teaching against here, and it's also what Caleb taught on last week. So I think there's a really clear connection. All of our Advent topics mesh together, but there's a clear connection in understanding the peace that we have with God and the great love of God in Christ.

So peace with God means that we no longer have to prove ourselves to God, we don't have to prove ourselves to others, and we don't have to prove ourselves to ourselves, but we can live in the freedom of the cross, no longer under a covenant of works, which says we must be good enough to be God's child, under which we all fall short.

But now we live under a covenant of grace, which tells us you're not good enough, and that's kind of the point. But Christ is. He fulfilled the covenant of works. He took our punishment on the cross.

So as we surrender our meager attempts at righteousness and accept His grace to us, we through faith alone receive the righteousness of God. And this is the old covenant, new covenant.

This is what God promised Israel in the Old Testament, and then what the prophet says we'll look at in a minute, promised the new covenant would be in the New Testament, that we're no longer under a covenant of works, but under a covenant of grace.

[ 7 : 59 ] So there's a story I'd like to reference that Nathan has talked about before, about pastor and Puritan John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress. And this story kind of provides an applicable commentary on this topic.

Eric Geiger records this particular account. It says, Bunyan continually preached grace, constantly reminding people that Jesus' perfect obedience was theirs, that His righteousness was freely given in exchange for their sins.

Some religious leaders were concerned that the emphasis on grace would cause people to live however they want and do whatever they want. They feared an emphasis on Jesus' performance instead of our performance would cause people to sin, to live unguarded lives, and to lose a sense of responsibility for personal holiness.

Thus, some religious leaders told John Bunyan, if you keep preaching free salvation in Jesus, based off of His performance and not theirs, Christians are going to do whatever they want. And Bunyan's response was beautiful.

He insisted, if I keep preaching free salvation in Jesus, based off of His performance and not theirs, Christians are going to do whatever He wants. Grace, not law, empowers us to obey Him.

[ 9 : 10 ] Grace can do what the law cannot do, create a new heart, a heart that obeys out of love and not out of fear or an attempt to earn a favor. So Paul here in verse 1 pleads, Caleb pled last week, and I plead with you now, do not submit again to a yoke of slavery, of having to prove yourself to God, but walk in the freedom of Christ's perfect obedience imputed to you.

Paul continues on in verse 13 on what this true freedom looks like, which brings us to our second point. The love of God causes obedience to God's commands. So at this point, some of you may question my use of the word cause in this context.

Before you jump to this conclusion that I'm wrong and therefore deserve to be tuned out, allow me the opportunity to demonstrate this pattern from our text, from the Old Testament prophecy, and from Christ's teaching.

So we're going to return, we'll flip around to a couple places today, hopefully not too many, but Galatians 5, where we are, verses 13 through 16, let me read those. It says, For you were called to freedom, brothers, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. And then in verse 16, that I say, Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

[ 10 : 36 ] So verse 13 says that freedom from the law was given to us so that we would love and serve one another, not so that we could use our freedom that we've been given for our own pleasure. So there's a purpose behind the freedom that we have in Christ.

We're going to tackle verse 14 in a bit. Like I said, it's kind of the main driving point that takes a little bit of unpacking. But skipping down to verse 16, if we do something called walking by the Spirit, Paul tells us that we won't gratify the desires of the flesh.

In other words, walking by the Spirit is the means or the way in which we obey God's commands. Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The Old Testament prophets told of a time when God's people would live under this new covenant of grace and have the effect that it would have on them.

Listen to the words of Jeremiah in chapter 31, verse 33. Speaking of this new covenant of grace, he says, For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord.

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Ezekiel expounds a bit more on this point, even more compellingly, in chapter 36, verses 25 through 27.

[ 11 : 47 ] He says, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And he says, And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules. Again, he says, I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules. God promises here that under the new covenant, the people of God would be an obedient people, because of his spirit living inside of them.

Christ teaches similarly in John chapter 14. So if you guys will, flip with me there. Again, that's John chapter 14. You can keep your finger in Galatians.

We'll be flipping back and forth between these two chapters a couple times today. I'm going to be skipping around a little bit.

[ 12 : 51 ] I'll try to call your attention to the specific verses. So John 14, 12 says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

Verse 15, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And then in verse 16, we see that he promises the spirit would come as a helper. It says, And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.

So again, this tied together, obeying God's commandments and the spirit of God given. In verse 21, he goes back. Again, Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. In verse 25, again, the promise of the spirit who would help us people remember all that he had taught. It says, These things I have spoken to you while I'm still with you, but the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all the things, all things, and bring you, bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Okay, so, so far, we can see that under the new covenant, we will be free in Christ because of our peace with God and obedient to his commands because of his spirit working in us.

[14:05] But this might be a little bit confusing to us. How does this make sense in light of the choices that we have to make every day? Because it kind of seems like this is robotic, and it kind of seems like God is just putting his spirit, zapping us, and then automatically we obey his commands.

And when we see things like this that appear to be contrary to what our experience is, we don't need to just ignore them, but we need to take a little bit deeper of a look to see how these things are actually going together.

And so, this morning, I don't pretend, and I don't think anyone here would pretend, that we totally understand how God's sovereignty and man's will or man's choices work out together.

But there are attributes of those two things, God's sovereignty and man's will, that are revealed in Scripture, that are important for us to understand what obedient Christian life looks like.

So, this is a hard, but very important question to answer, how these two things work together. And I believe if we understand verse 14 of our text, we'll come to a greater understanding of the law, and how it works together through us to prompt obedience.

[15:14] This is why I have a backup, in case my computer goes bad. Give me a second. Okay.

So, like I said, it's a hard, but important question to answer, and I believe if we can really understand verse 14, how the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, we'll come to a greater understanding of how these two things work together.

So, how could this be possible is the question that we're trying to answer. How is it that by loving someone else, which is not necessarily one of the Ten Commandments explicitly, how is it that by doing this, we fulfill the Ten Commandments, which are a summation of the moral law that God expects from his people.

So, to understand this saying, we must first understand two things. First, how do you love your neighbor as yourself? And secondly, how do you love your neighbor as yourself?

And so, what I mean, first we have to understand, in what way, or how do you love your neighbor as yourself? How are we expected to love our neighbor as ourselves? And then, by what means? How do we actually do it?

[16:25] What gives us the power to love our neighbor as ourselves? And if we understand the answers to these two questions, I believe it'll be clear what Paul means by this challenging statement, that we fulfill the law by loving our neighbor.

So, we're going to move on to our third main point today, that God's love is a model for our love. So, we'll be looking at answering the question, how do you love your neighbor as yourself?

In what way are we expected to love our neighbor? Now, the short answer to this is simply how Christ loves us. This is our standard. It's given to us in a couple of places that we'll look at.

But our standard is not simply loving other people better than other people love us, or meeting some standard that we make in our own mind, or when it's convenient for us, but how Christ loves us.

So, John 13, verses 34 through 35 says, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

[17:31] He then repeats this command in John chapter 15, verse 12, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

And of course, we know, they didn't know this time, but that's what Christ did. He laid down his life for his friends, and so our standard is to lay down our lives for one another.

So, we could spend a whole lot of time talking about what it means to love other people, like Christ loved us, but I want to hit a couple of points today. So, firstly, we need to love each other sacrificially, in a way that hurts, to where we actually have to give something up, to love someone

else, putting away our own wants, desires, dreams, finances, all for the needs of others.

Secondly, we need to love each other unconditionally. And so, we can get into a whole tizzy, trying to understand the word, or unpack the word, unconditional love. We know that God's love for us, is conditional on us having faith in him.

So, it's not unconditional in that way, but it is not contingent on works, as we see in scripture. So, what I mean by unconditionally, is not expecting that someone will be able to return the favor.

[ 18 : 50 ] That we don't love other people, just so that they love us back, but instead, we love each other, knowing that they may not be able to return that favor.

I'll figure out my ups in a minute. So, it's easy to love those who are easy to love, but Christ calls us to love our enemies, to sacrifice for those who cannot pay back. So, I want to read really briefly, the text that Caleb preached from last week, I think is a really good reminder, a really good model, of the way that Christ loved us.

So, this is going to be Romans 5, verses 6 through 11. And it says, For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, that perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore, we have been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[ 20 : 11 ] So, God's standard of love is dying for enemies, dying for those who couldn't pay him back, but simply loving for the sake of loving.

And then, Ephesians 2, a very classic verse that explains this concept. Ephesians 2, I'll be reading verses 1 through 11. I know it's a big chunk, but stay with me. It says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

So, this is our status before grace. And in the glorious words, But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All of this, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not as a result of work, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

[ 21 : 36 ] So, Christ loved us when we were dead, when we were opposed to him, when we were his enemies. How much is it to ask for us to love others in the same way?

So, simply but profoundly, then, the more that we know, both cognitively and experientially, the love of Christ, the more we'll be able to reflect and display that type of love for others.

So, a very simple application at this point is to know, get to know, experience the love of Christ, so that we have a model for how we are to love other people. And then lastly, and this is where we'll spend most of our time today, experiencing God's love is the means of loving others, or the way in which we love others.

So, several other passages speak to this point using similar language, which can help us understand exactly what Paul is teaching in verse 14 of our text, by saying that loving your neighbor as yourself fulfills the law.

So, we're going to look at a couple of these passages together, and hopefully it'll give us a better understanding. So, Paul, in Romans 13, 8, and following explains, Oh, no one anything except to love each other.

[ 22 : 47 ] For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment are summed up in this word.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore, love is fulfilling the law. So, this makes sense, right? If you love someone else, you're not going to be stealing their stuff.

You're not going to be coveting what they have. You're not going to be unfaithful in marriage. But, this only knocks out six of the ten commandments. Loving other people, the other four are directed at how we are to interact with God.

So, let's look at some more passages. Maybe Jesus' teaching can clear it up for us. Okay? So, we're going to look at Matthew 22, verses 34 through 40.

And it reads, But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?

[ 23 : 46 ] And he said to them, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. So, somehow, Paul says that loving your neighbor fulfills the law, but here, Jesus says that loving God and loving your neighbor fulfills the law.

So, how can both of these things be true at the same time? Hopefully, you know where I'm going at this point. Experiencing God's love, and then loving God, is the means of loving your neighbor as yourself.

So, you can't do one without the other. I hope that you see it so far from our text. I think something that will really clear it up for us, is found in 1 John chapter 5. So, if y'all will turn there with me. Should be the last place we turn, other than our main text. In case you were tempted not to turn there with me.

[ 24 : 49 ] This is 1 John 5. We'll be reading verses 1 through 3. It says, So, it's really important that we understand what's going on in this text, and we see the different parts about what it means to love other people, what it means to love God, what it means to obey God's commandments.

John here explicitly equates loving God, loving God's people, and obeying God's commandments. In other words, you cannot have one without all three.

So, if you don't believe me, look back. In verse 1, we see, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ isn't born of God. Everyone who loves the Father, loves those who have been born of Him. So, if we love God, we will love believers. We will love the church. And then it says, an indicator, by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and obey His commandments. And then it says, for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. And so, just in case, that we wanted to try to work really hard, to love other people with all our might, but still hold resentment on the inside, John gives this really helpful, but also kind of convicting tag onto the end.

[ 26 : 31 ] He says, for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. So, many in the church today, live as though God's commands, especially loving others, with the standard that we've just set for ourselves, that we are supposed to somehow love each other, in the same way that Christ loved us.

Now, this may seem like a burden, that's been tied up nicely, so that you can bear it for the rest of your life. But this is not the point of God's commands. He has commanded what is best for us. Many in the church live today, as though God's commands are burdensome, which probably contributes to the world's image of the church, as miserable rule followers, instead of joyfully obeying God's commands, which are designed to promote human flourishing.

He has commanded what is best for us. And when we don't believe this, we fall into sin. Was this not the original sin? Adam and Eve in the garden, doubting God's intent, behind the command that he had given.

We do the same thing, every single day, when we believe that his commands, are a burden upon our shoulders, rather than a privilege, to walk in the way, that he desires us to do so.

[ 27 : 41 ] So, recall Christ's teaching in John 14. I lied. We are going to turn back to John. So, if y'all will turn with me to John 14, we're going to recall, and then keep moving with this teaching.

So, recall with me, in Christ's teaching, in John 14, he already said, if we love him, we will obey his commandments. And then we saw, that he will give his spirit, to help us to do so.

In chapter 15, Jesus goes on to explain, the means by which, we obey the commands of God. And really simply, this means, abiding in God's love.

So, we're in chapter 15 now. Very common passage, but important, in link to, or in tandem with, obedience. So, it says, abide in me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit, by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. And then, verses 9 through 10.

[ 28 : 54 ] As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

As we read earlier, he then repeats the commandment already given, in chapter 13, 34, also found here. This is my commandment, that if you love one another, as I, that you love one another, as I loved you.

And then finally, in verse 17, he says, these things I command to you, so that you will love one another. So, if we look at chapters 14 and 15 together, a summation of Christ's argument, is as follows.

Whoever believes in me, loves me. Whoever loves me, will keep my commandments, chiefly loving one another, all of which are done, through abiding in his love, by the Spirit, who will help us to do so.

So, you can't do any of these things, without the other. Paul further establishes this point, to the Corinthian believers, in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 through 21.

[ 29 : 58 ] You can just jot that down. Listen, for the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live, may no longer live for themselves, but for him, who for their sake, died and was raised.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we once regarded Christ, according to the flesh, we regard him thus, no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, and behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ, reconciled us to himself, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting the trespasses against them, and entrusting to us, the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So, Paul here teaches that Christ died so that we would live for his sake as new creations. Ministers of this message of reconciliation. Not for us to sit on the sidelines, but for all of us to engage a lost and dying world.

[ 31 : 26 ] So, if our standard of love is the way that Christ loved us, how can we then claim that we love others when we know the fate of their souls, which is the same as what you and I deserve?

An eternal inheritance bought with our sin of the wrath of God. How could we say that we love them and stay silent about that message? How unloving would it be for us to know someone dying of a treatable illness and to withhold treatment?

Now, if you told them that there was a cure and they just didn't believe you, well, their blood is on their own hands, right? No. If you just tell someone and they don't believe you, you don't stop there. You continue to press. You continue to convince until they understand they're dying. We would do everything we could to convince them that they were wrong. And yet, when it comes to eternal damnation and suffering beyond comprehension, we are content to stay silent and acquiesce to the world's demands to keep our faith private.

How silly is this? The minute percentage of claimed believers who actively share their faith in America provides a scathing commentary on our selfishness with our own time, energy, and effort.

[ 32 : 37 ] And I hope that this hurts a little bit, especially if it's true. But I know for many, including myself, that the problem isn't merely not caring. Though sometimes it is.

A lot of the times we are simply forgetful people. We get stuck in a fishbowl of only interacting with what we can see and feel around us. But I hope the Word of God, Christ coming to earth, is a wake-up call for us.

We've been given marching orders, and this is why we need daily mind renewal to set our minds and hearts back on the things of above where they belong. So, as we remember the peace of God, the peace that we have with God, not because of our works, but because of His great love to provide a sacrifice through the atoning blood of Christ, we have a hope and a life that is to come which enables us to give up our lives now for the abiding reward in heaven.

We have the joy of salvation and contentment with whatever comes into our path, and we have love for one another as God's love overflows through us.

Our experience of God's love is not merely a cognitive ascent or something that happens in our minds, but it always works itself out in the way that we treat others.

[ 33 : 53 ] In other words, it produces fruit. So, our text continues if we look back at Galatians 5, starting in verse 16. It says, But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things that you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you as I warned you before, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

[ 35 : 01 ] So we must ask ourselves a question at this point. Which of these lists characterizes the pattern of my life? According to this definition, if this is what it looks like to walk by the Spirit and to live in obedience, which are you pursuing?

Do you walk in the flesh gratifying its desires or do you walk by the Spirit of God pursuing His desires? Belief produces action always. So, what do your actions say about your beliefs?

The great American mind, Jonathan Edwards, once wrote, in a quote, that's on the front of your bulletin, if you want to turn there with me. He once wrote, all the fruits of the Spirit, which we are to lay weight upon as the evidence of grace, are summed up in charity or Christian love, because this is the sum of all grace.

And the only way, therefore, in which any can know their good estate is by discerning the exercises of this divine charity in their hearts. For without charity, let men have gifts you please.

They are nothing. In other words, if you don't love others, to some increasing degree, in the way that Christ has loved you, then you simply don't love God in the way that He has told us to love Him.

[ 36 : 22 ] So, we have to have love for one another. So, this morning, maybe you find yourself never having experienced the transforming love of God in a way that causes you to give up your own life daily for the sake of others.

after seeing from God's word that the real experience of God's love produces obedience, the fruit of the Spirit, chiefly a deep, abiding love for others and a desire for them to know this love of God, you may now see that God's love had only been information that you had been taught rather than a life-altering relationship.

So, the call to you this morning is simple. Repent and believe. Turn away from your self-focus, life, and slave to sin and turn to Christ's love.

Throw yourself on Him is the only chance at righteousness before a holy God and walk in the freedom of His love. For many of us, the love of God has grown cold in our hearts.

We know that we ought to love God deeply and love others genuinely, but the commands that God has given may seem like a burden to bear rather than a privilege to live as God has designed us to live.

[ 37 : 26 ] And the call to us is the same. Don't turn back to the slavery of working to be in right status before God. seeking to prove yourself through your love for others. Some of you may find yourselves tempted to desire and pursue the things of this world.

Money, love, being liked by others, sin, apathy, and your faith. Remember this morning that the commands of God, avoiding sin, pursuing righteousness, loving others in the same way that Christ

has loved us, have been given as a gift and are not meant to be burdensome.

Fight this temptation, rely on the Spirit of God and equip for this daily battle against your flesh. If you find yourself not loving others well, living or loving selfishly, having trouble dying to yourself, the answer is not shame and it's not guiltily yourself into action by trying harder.

Rather, it's experiencing and being fully satisfied in God's love, allowing it to overflow in you to others. If our love for others is a measure of our concept and experience of Christ's love, then if you are struggling to love others, you need to pursue a deeper understanding of the reality of the depth of this great love.

Remember the message of the Gospel. So simply, this is done through participating in the means of grace given to us, pursuing Him and His Word, spending time with Him in prayer, encouraging and being encouraged through the fellowship with other believers, and allowing the preaching of God's Word to soften hard hearts, singing true songs with one another, and letting your affections be turned again to Christ.

[ 38 : 58 ] So together, let's rest in the finished work of Christ this Christmas season and live freely. Go to Him daily in His Word and in prayer as a source of your love for others, and behold the great love of God, allowing it to push you on to greater love and good works as we set our eyes to Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Let's pray together.