

Confessions of a Pharisee

by Alan Martin

Alan Martin's sermon emphasizes the importance of mercy and love over legalism, encouraging listeners to reflect on their own hearts and actions towards others.

Scripture: Hosea 4:9, Matthew 22:39, Luke 10:25, Romans 3:23, Romans 11:32, 2 Corinthians 3:7, James 2:8

Topics: "Pharisaism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the role of the tutor in delivering people from condemnation. He refers to Romans 11:32, which states that God has committed all men to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them. The preacher highlights the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge, which are beyond human understanding. He also discusses the ministry of the law, describing it as the ministry of condemnation and death. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the importance of loving one's neighbor and the judgment that awaits those who show no mercy.

Transcript

Let's pray together and ask for God's help in this. And I'm going to ask something that I don't always ask. I believe this is so important.

I'm going to ask everyone's cooperation to help reduce distractions. And that means I love children. But I'm going to ask you mothers to be sensitive if it gets wild.

I'm going to ask you to be sensitive just to help. We can handle small noises. We can handle that.

But everyone here, let's ask God to help us concentrate and help us hear and help us receive. Father, we need an experience with You, just like when Your Son came alongside the two disciples. And when You spoke to them through Your Son, their hearts burned within them.

And we need a time with You, Father, where Your Word causes our hearts to literally burn within us as You open to us the Scripture through the ministry of teaching, through the ministry of sharing. Your Word says that any person speaking is supposed to speak as one speaking the oracles of God. But we know many claim to do so.

Only by Your mercy and grace can this really come about, can this really happen. So we ask for that grace and mercy this morning if You'd open Your Word to us. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

Okay. Where did this begin in my heart? Well, it began from just the groaning of meeting so many people in need of hope. To know the Word that sustains the weary.

And more and more, that's been my concern. Not those who are strong, but those who are weary. The strong don't need a doctor.

Jesus said, I've not come to call the strong or the righteous. I've come to call sinners to repentance. And in the same way, my heart has just been burdened on really helping people find hope.

And just what are people longing for? And the NIV, a Scripture according to the NIV in Proverbs 19, verse 22, and I want you to turn there and we're going to look at that Scripture. But the NIV says it this way, what a man desires is unfailing love. But you're going to find when you open your version, if you have the New American Standard or the New King James or the King James Version, it doesn't say it like that.

So I didn't really get the right understanding from the NIV, so I wonder, am I at a roadblock already, Lord? But I began to check with the other versions. Would someone read out of, for example, the New American Standard what it says in Proverbs 15, 22? Just the first part of the verse, please. 19, excuse me, 19, 22.

Just the first part of the verse. Now, how about the New King James Version? That's interesting. That's the idea that my heart was after.

When I read that, I knew that's what I was after. That's what the Spirit of the Lord in me was sensing because I want you to turn with me to Lamentations 3. Lamentations. You know what it means to lament, don't you? To lament is to be full of sorrow.

So this is the book of Lamentations, the sorrow of Jeremiah. And in Lamentations 3, here the same word occurs. The same word for kindness.

That's what is desired in a man is his kindness. Here in Lamentations 3, from verses 18 on and on. So I say my splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord.

I remember my affliction, my wondering, the bitterness and the gall. And I remember them well. And my soul is downcast within me.

And that's what the Spirit of God in me was sensing. What touches you when your spirit is downcast within you? When you are down. When you are low.

When you are weak. Well, it's interesting what speaks hope to a man in the very next verse. Verse 21, Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.

What brings hope to a man who is downcast? It is of the Lord's mercy we're not concerned. And that's what it says in the King James. It's the same Hebrew word for kindness here.

His loving kindness. It actually comes from the description of a mother with a young child like Angela holding Nathaniel here. It's that affection drawn out of someone to bring comfort and assurance.

That's what brings hope to a person. And I just find this very interesting. And so I began to search in the New Testament because honestly, I'm going to be very honest here.

It seems as though I've been a Christian. I know I've been a Christian since 1979. It seems like I'm just beginning to understand that.

And to me, it's so simple. It's so foundational, but it's just like, it's just now dawning on me. Something that maybe you've grasped and maybe you've not.

Well, let's see. What a man desires is this kindness. Let's go back and look at something.

I'd like you to turn to James, the book of James chapter 1. James chapter 1. Actually, chapter 2. Turn to chapter 2. I'd like to look at verse 8. And I'd like us to put ourselves in this position. If you really fulfill the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You do well.

But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law yet stumble in one point is guilty of all. He who said, don't commit adultery, do not murder, said also.

And if you don't commit adultery, but you do commit murder, you become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who's shown no mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. Now back at the beginning of that passage there in verse 8. If you really fulfill the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You do well.

Do we really fulfill that law? Are we partial? Are there people we act differently around? Because they are harder for us to love. Do we regard some people differently than others? Are we kind and friendly and open to some? And cautious and reserved and distant from others? Is that partiality? Ask yourself, do we really fulfill the royal law of Scripture? Love your neighbor as yourself. And to help us examine ourselves, you know, when we want to see what we look like, what do we go to in the natural? A mirror.

Well, let's go to one of the little mirrors in God's Word. All right, let's go to Luke, if you would, chapter 10. And let's see when this incident came up with this same Scripture was quoted.

Luke 10. Luke 10 and verse 25. You're very familiar with this, but let's read it again.

That's what's amazing. That you can be so familiar with a passage and suddenly find so much truth there that's like you've never read it before. So whether you're familiar with it or not, I hope that you are able to receive what I believe the Lord is on His heart for us all to hear today.

From verse 25, And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And look at the wisdom of our Lord. Our Lord said to him, what's written in the law? Now, who is asking this question? A lawyer. Now, what's a lawyer all about? The law.

You're an expert to know. So how do you think this guy asked him when he says, oh, what do you think? What does the law say? This is... I should know this. I mean, he's speaking to what this guy knows.

And right away, this man gives a very good answer. Look what he answers. What's your reading of it? So he answered him, he said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

And he said to him, you've answered rightly. Do this and you will live. But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Now, it's interesting.

Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Why would this man suddenly ask, who's my neighbor? Was there something uncomfortable in him when he quoted the second part of that verse? Being a lawyer, very conscientious of doing everything right in the eyes of God. I don't think he didn't even blink when he said loving the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul, all my might, all my strength.

I know I do that. Now, and love your neighbor as yourself. Right there, he must have felt a check.

He must have wondered. I don't know about that. Because that's what he mentioned.

He didn't ask Jesus, well, what does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart? He asked, well, who's my neighbor? He was unsettled in that. I have found this very true in my own experience. I'm going to say sadly, I have found this to be true.

That when I am all wrapped up in the law and the legality of what's right and wrong, what I'm usually having difficulty in is in relating to people. What does the law do, by the way? The letter kills. And what was the ministry of the law actually described in one word? It is the ministry of death or condemnation.

It's the ministry of condemnation. And it's amazing how many people I have made personally feel condemned when I've been an expert in the law. Anyway, Jesus, to answer his question, you know the story.

He says, well, there was a certain man. And you know the story. I don't need to go into the details of the story.

What I want to do is go to the end of the story. And when Jesus asked the lawyer the question, verse 36, So which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? Look at his answer. And he said to him, he who showed mercy.

He who had mercy on them. Then Jesus said to him, go and do likewise. Now, what was his first question? What was the lawyer's first question? How will I have eternal life? What's Jesus' answer to him? Go and show mercy.

Go and show mercy. If you want to live, go and show mercy. I'd like us to look at another passage.

Back up a couple of chapters to chapter 7. Verse 36. Just to help you know, I'm not after... I can be honest here. I'm not after anything and anyone.

Let me tell you what's happening here. The Lord is after something in me. And I'm just being open about it.

He's after in me the lawyer. He's after in me the Pharisee. I want it out of me.

I want to be cured. And I'm going to take my therapy in public so that if you recognize it in you, you can join with me in my own healing. See, the lawyers and Pharisees have something in common.

They're both very set apart from others. You know the word Pharisee means separated one. So this is another glimpse of someone of a very similar spirit to a lawyer.

A lawyer being expert in the law. Pharisees were also quite expert in the law and considered themselves very separate and called themselves so. So here in verse 36, read with me of Luke 7. Then one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him.

And he went to the Pharisee's house and he sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. Now, I was reading this in the Greek this morning and I couldn't help but recognize the little word *ein*, which means it's an imperfect tense.

Imperfect tense means this. She was being a sinner. Not had been.

It's describing a present condition and a past event. She was being a sinner. She stood there with him.

And it says, she stood at his feet behind him weeping. And she began to wash his feet with her tears and wiped them down, wiped them with the hair of her head. And she kissed his feet and anointed them with fragrant oil.

And now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he spoke to himself saying, this man, if he were really a prophet, would know who and what man or woman this is. You know, I hear this. I'm going to be very honest here.

I have heard this question a lot. And this is personal. I've heard this towards me.

If I were really serving God, I'd know what kind of place I'm in. I'd know this was the harlot. I would know this is just a false religious system.

I would know this is just the empty traditions of man. If I were really a man of God, I'd be able to know what it was really like, where I really was. Who I was really with.

You know, that's the danger of being a separated one is you really think you know. You really think you know. And this Pharisee, you know what the Scripture does say about knowledge.

What does knowledge do? It puffs up. Well, this Pharisee was puffed up. Can you imagine him thinking of the Creator of the universe if he really knew? I mean, if this man were really of God, he would know who this is.

So it says in verse 40, and it's interesting, this confirms it in the Greek in verse 39, for she is a sinner. That's present tense. The Pharisee was right.

I mean, she currently was a sinner. Verse 40, And Jesus answered and said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And so he said, Teacher, say it.

There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred in their eye and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to work with which to repay, he freely forgave them both.

Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And he said to him, You judge rightly. Then he turned to the woman and he said to Simon, Do you see this woman? Remember what Simon was thinking in his own heart? If this man knew who this was, now Jesus is turning it back and asking him, Do you really know? Do you see this woman? You know, I'll tell you what, the Pharisee in none of us.

Is that correct English? The Pharisee in each of us is not going to die till our pride is humbled and we admit correctly we don't know what we think we know. Well, anyway, he turns and he points out to Simon that I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet.

But she's washed my feet with her tears and wiped them off with the hair of her head. You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil.

Therefore, I say to you, her sins which are many..." Now, was Jesus seeing her correctly? He Himself said she has many sins. He knew who she was. "...her many sins are forgiven, for she loved much.

But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. Then He said to her, your sins are forgiven." I have another question to ask you. That's me.

Why wasn't the woman at Simon's feet? Why is she standing up to Jesus weeping? He told us in Simon. He was more than Simon. He's more separated than Simon.

Why is she standing up? He saw her as a sinner. He had mercy. Ask yourself.

You know, I praise the Lord that there are going to be those of you out there who can't relate to this, that you've been having seen relationships driven off and ruined by being a lawyer and by being a Pharisee. May you never know such a thing. But for those of you who can relate to what I'm saying, may God have mercy on us.

You know, there was another time. Turn with me to Matthew 9, I believe. Verse 9 of Matthew 9. And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office.

And He said to him, Follow Me. So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened as Jesus sat at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? And when Jesus heard that, He said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. What did Jesus mean by that statement? Remember, the Pharisees. He's talking to the Pharisees.

And if the Pharisee is alive in us, we need to learn what Jesus meant by go and learn this. I desire mercy. What does He mean by that? Where is this quoted from? Most of you have a Bible.

What's this a reference to? Let's turn there. Hosea is one of the minor prophets. It's not very far from the book of Daniel.

Daniel, I believe it's. Joel? Hosea, right? It's right after Daniel, okay. Daniel, Hosea.

Before we even start reading in 6.6, those of us, let's remind ourselves, who's Hosea? Yeah. He is the prophet that the Lord says, I want you to go and take a harlot as your wife. Why? Why would the Lord tell a prophet to take a prostitute as his wife? Because what was Hosea supposed to be? A living example of God's heart towards His people.

And I think it's why Jesus is pointing the Pharisees back to a time. Now I want you to notice something here. In my Bible, from chapter 4 all the way to chapter 6, verse 6 is all on the same page.

Very convenient for me. But if yours is not, go back to chapter 4 and find verse 10. I'll go ahead and start from verse 9. It's just hard to jump in the middle of a verse.

Hosea 4, verse 9. And it will be, like people, like priests, I will punish both of them for their ways. I will repay them for their deeds. They will eat but not have enough.

They will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they've deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old and new wine, which take away the understanding of my people. And they consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray.

They are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills under oak, poplar, terepith, where the shade is pleasant. So were these people who didn't sacrifice? Actually, they sacrificed everywhere.

They were full of sacrifices. They were full of religion. But look what the real problem was in chapter 4, verses 1. Hear the word of the Lord, ye Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land.

And what's number one on the list? There's no faithfulness and no what? Love. There's no faithfulness and no love. No acknowledgment of God in the land.

Now, I want you to follow this. There's only cursing, lying, murder, stealing, adultery. They break all bonds and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Because of this, the land mourns. Now, verse 2, tell me, who do you do all of those things to? All of those things involve what? Problems with other people. There's no faithfulness to one another.

There's no love for one another. There is cursing. Who do you curse? Do you think they're cursing God? They're cursing one another.

Lying, who do you lie to? Who do you murder? Who do you steal from? Who do you commit adultery against? They break all bonds. Now, it's interesting, it says there's no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. What's acknowledgment of God? Well, now, look in Hosea 6. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

And it's not an accident that this follows. What was first on the list, right at the top of the list in chapter 4, is right here. What I desire is mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

What does it really mean to acknowledge God? Let's quote this together because I think you'll understand what it means. Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone who loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

Do you know God? It had better be manifest in that you love one another. He that loveth not knoweth not God. God is love.

If you want to acknowledge God, you had better acknowledge Him for the one thing He wants to be acknowledged for. I desire mercy. God will judge, but He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone.

He does not delight to punish the wicked, but He delights to show mercy. He desires to show mercy. As a matter of fact, He said that of Himself.

Look in Exodus 34. When He reveals Himself to Moses. I've said this before, and maybe we'll say it many times again.

Lord willing, should He continue to give me breath. Moses wanted to see the glory of God. Moses said, Lord, You said that I know You and I've found favor with You.

Well, if I have found favor with You, He says, let me know You that I might continue to find favor with You. And he says, now show me Your glory. And how does the Lord answer him? He says, show me Your glory.

And the Lord says, I will cause all of my goodness to pass before You. The glory of the Lord is His goodness. Although He is a great and mighty and terrible God, He wants to be known for His goodness.

And in chapter 34, when Moses enters a cleft in the rock, probably a cave, an indentation in the rock, the Lord covers him with His hand. And in verse 5 there of chapter 34 of Exodus, and the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed His name, the Lord. And as He passed in front of Moses, proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate, gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in the thing that's desirable in a man.

The thing that is the most desirable in a man, the Lord abounds in. He abounds in loving kindness. And after He's stated how He wants to be known, He says, yet, He doesn't leave the guilty unpunished.

He'll judge. He'll judge and His judgment will be sure. But He'll take no pleasure in it.

He won't delight in it. And it's not what He desires. The same word here for what's desirable in a man.

And I haven't really explained a whole lot about loving kindness. It has the idea of mercy. It really does have the idea of someone moved to help alleviate the consequences of sin.

Moved to really help alleviate the consequences of sin, you see in others. Now, let's go back to James and see something. Back to James 2 where we were earlier.

Let's switch Bibles here. Back to verse 8. If you really fulfill the royal law of Scripture according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You do well.

But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as a transgressor. And then he really kind of jumps an interlude. He's just pointing out that loving your neighbor as yourself is just as important as not murdering, not committing adultery.

Therefore, failure to love your neighbor as yourself makes you a lawbreaker. So he says in verse 12, So speak and so do. In the Greek, it's saying, Thus in this way speak, thus in this way do, as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

For judgment without mercy is to the one who has shown no mercy. Now what does he mean when he's saying speak? So speak and do as those who are going to be judged by the law of liberty. What does he mean? I'll give you a hint.

Turn to Luke 4. In Luke 4, if you find verses 16 on, Jesus has returned from the wilderness full of the power of the Holy Spirit. And He comes to Nazareth. And He speaks.

And verse 17 says, And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And He closed the book and gave it back to the attendants and sat down and the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And then He said to them, Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. What did Jesus come to proclaim? Liberty.

Freedom. Freedom to the captives. Whose captives? In Jesus' mind, whose captives? Is He talking about someone in a physical servitude as a slave? In Jesus' mind, who was a slave? Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

But He whom the Son sets free is free indeed. How are we supposed to so speak and so act as those who do what? Judge others by what? By the desire to see them set free. What are you to proclaim? Freedom.

If they're in bondage, freedom. If they're in debt, freedom. Bring liberty.

That's the ministry we've been given. Someone mentioned this earlier. Turn to 2 Corinthians 3. 2 Corinthians 3. Find verse 7. 2 Corinthians 3.7, But if the ministry of death written and engraved on stones was glorious so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of His countenance which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

For if even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness.

What hope do we have? What did Jeremiah, in the midst of his lamentation, what did he call to mind and therefore have hope? That the mercies of the Lord endure forever. You cannot exhaust God's mercy. And look what Paul says of himself in chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, since we have received this ministry as we have received mercy, we don't lose heart.

That's why despite being shown what a Pharisee, what a lawyer I have been, I so feel God's mercy. Because I know He's not shown it to me to condemn me. He's shown it to me to set me free.

And oddly enough, turn with me to 1 Timothy. And there's another reason He's shown it to me. And to you.

And to many of us. He showed this to the Pharisee of Pharisees. Who was the Pharisee of Pharisees? Paul.

Paul was the Pharisee of Pharisees in legalistic righteousness blameless. In zeal for passing all of his days. Persecuting the church.

And look in 1 Timothy 1. And if you find verse 12. And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord Who has enabled me because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Although I was formerly a blasphemer.

Who did Paul blaspheme? Did Paul ever blaspheme God? No. Who was Paul blaspheming? Men. Speaking evil of other men.

Because he saw them as wrong in his ignorance. I was formerly a blasphemer, he says. And a persecutor.

And an insolent man. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

I just don't want to lose this. Why was Paul saying? He considered himself the chief of sinners because he knew in his heart everything Jesus Christ had come to do to bring about this ministry of grace, this life-giving ministry, Paul was opposing to preserve that which was old and worn out and condemned men. And then he says, yet for this very reason, I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show what? What could choosing Paul, Jesus Christ, make very clear? What does the Scripture say? His all-long suffering and patience.

If Jesus Christ could suffer long with a person who opposed everything He came to do, He could by choosing Him and using Him say, look at what my heart... If I can forgive my enemy number one, I can forgive anyone, all. And so, I know how I feel about myself. I feel God's mercy to me helps others.

Demonstrate that even to the lawyers, to those who have wrongly judged others, who've been divisive, who've condemned others unfairly, who've considered themselves separate and more holy than others, look down on others, even among those God can even use their ignorance and the ignorance that I've walked in to demonstrate how long-suffering and patient He is. The law is true. Men are sinners.

But we are to speak and act as those who have been according to the law of liberty. We're to judge one another by the law of liberty. We know what that law of liberty is.

That law of liberty is, praise be to God for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has done what? It set me free from the law of sin and death. And the law of the Spirit of life and liberty at work in us really should be about setting others free from the law of sin and death. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not His Son into the world to... Do you understand that? God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world. I have spent a lot of time in my life trying to make sure the world felt condemned. Guilty by the law.

Well, that's okay if you're just a tutor. But what's the tutor's job? I mean, that's part of what a tutor's supposed to do, right? Because the Bible says that God really wants all men under the law. God wants all men to be condemned and to be guilty.

I'll show you right there in Romans 11. Look in there and see. That part of my life, that's just what I'm really coming to see.

I just wasn't finished. That's not necessarily wrong. It's just not complete.

It's not done. The tutor is not just to take the student and just teach him the basic principles. He's supposed to be delivering him somewhere.

So, we haven't done our job if we don't end up delivering people just from the realization that they are condemned according to the law. So, look here in chapter 11 of Romans. Verse 32.

God has committed all men over to what? He's committed all men over to disobedience. For what purpose? That He might have mercy on them all. And can you see why Paul breaks out in his declaration in verse 33, O the depths of the riches of both the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. For who has known the mind of the Lord, who has become His counselor, or who is first given to Him, and it shall be repaid to Him. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever, Amen.

It is as if for me, I cannot claim any, anything. How in the world was I blind to so much of this? I don't know. But God in His infinite wisdom and mercy is making it known to me, and I believe to us, to us, corporately.

I just want us to try to soak this in. Be still before the Lord and just search your hearts. Do you really do well? Do we show partiality to some? Or do we love one another as the way God through His Son Jesus Christ loved us? Are there those in your life that you draw away from, shy away from, keep at an arm's distance? Because quite honestly, they're kind of difficult to be around.

Well, if that's the case, can't we honestly look at what the Lord Jesus said? If you do good to those who do good to you... I mean, don't even the tax collectors do that? Is that any sign of Christianity if the only people we really have in our life are the people that just are easy to be around? What have we gained? Where have we come? It's the same, but I'll be open if one of you brothers has something stirring in your heart to share or add to give you that opportunity.

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