

Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon emphasizes the profound connection between loving God and loving our neighbors, urging believers to overcome self-loathing and fear through the transformative power of God's love.

Duration: 57:00

Scripture: Isaiah 54:10, Matthew 22:36

Topics: "Loving Others"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of pouring kindness and hope into the hearts of others. They explain that by sharing the truths of God with those around us, we not only walk closer to God but also experience an increase in our love for Him. The speaker uses the story of Peter's vision in Acts 10 to illustrate how God's love extends to all people, regardless of their background or status. They also highlight the need to love our neighbors as ourselves, emphasizing the simplicity and power of sharing Christ with others.

Transcript

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I'm gonna talk today about loving your neighbor as yourself. Not as easy as it sounds. Loving your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew chapter 22, beginning at verse 36. Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. God, you have something so deep, yet so simple, so profound, yet so hard to lay hold of.

I pray, God, that as you're opening my heart to this truth, that you would open it to your church today. Deliver us, God, from every voice of the enemy, from all the condemnation of the evil one. And make us a people that you promised you would have in the last days, who are glorifying God in the midst of the fires.

Whether they be fires of uncontrolled passion, lawlessness, or rebellion. Those that are living all around and trying to push the knowledge of God out of so many parts of every society. I pray, Father, this day, that you make us a people who shine brightly in this hour.

Give us the knowledge of who we are in Christ. I ask this in Jesus' name. Matthew chapter 22, verse 36.

Now, this is a lawyer, an interpreter of the law, who would take the Old Testament law and he would open it up. And as an expositor of sorts of that time, make known to the people, as it was supposed to be what he was doing, what the law was leading to. What was the sense of the law? And he came to Jesus and asked him a question.

Now, it was testing him. Probably a very arrogant man. And the King James Bible says he asked him a question tempting him and really testing him.

I see it this way. This interpreter of the law coming to Jesus and saying, well, let's see if you're as smart as you say you are or people seem to think you are. And he asked him a question saying, Master, which is the greatest or the great commandment in the law? In other words, of all the things written in the law and all the things written in the prophets, if you were to sum it up.

If there was one truth that stands out above and beyond all the other things that are contained in these books, what is the great commandment? And Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Now, Jesus was saying everything that you're supposed to be teaching the people is all summed up in these two commandments.

If what you're teaching does not lead the people to these two things, then go back to the drawing board and start picking the word apart again because you're missing the mark completely. There's a similar account in Luke chapter 10, verse 27. Don't turn there.

Let me just share it with you where an interpreter of the Old Testament law asked Jesus the question, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And when Jesus answers him, he answers and includes another word. He said, not only with your heart, your soul and your mind, but you're to love God with your strength. Now, in other words, if I can put it down in its simplicity, my deepest inner passion must be to love God.

Folks, that's where it all begins. There must be something inside of me. That means loving him with your heart.

The heart is the very essence of my inner passion, my pursuit, why I exist, where I'm moving to, what I'm doing. It's the very essence of who I am as a person. And the most important commandment of God is that I'm to love him with this inner passion.

My pursuit is to be of God. As the psalmist says, as the deer panted for the water, so longs my soul for thee, O God. You see it in the psalmist David, rather, in all of his psalms, where he talks about early in the morning when I seek you.

You see, David is acknowledging that you are the chiefest pursuit of my heart and of my life, Jesus. It's to know you, it's to walk with you, it's to understand you, it's to have your life intertwined with mine. And then to this end, the direction of my will, which is my soul, the development of my intellect, which is my mind, and the outflow of all of my inner abilities must be directed to him and to his work, which is my strength.

In other words, the totality of my life is directed to loving him, to knowing him, to understanding him and to allow him to work within me and to allow that strength that he implants within my life to begin to flow out through me to humanity all around me. And that's where, when you put all of this together, it moves into the second. He said, the second is like to the first.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. In other words, the ultimate expression of how deeply I really do love God is reflected in how I interact with other people. That's why in 1 John, John said, if any man says he loves God and hates his brother, he's a liar and the truth is not in him.

If a man truly loves God, now the word hate also has in it the connotation of indifference. In other words, if a man says, I love God, but is indifferent to his fellow man, indifferent to pain, indifferent to peril, indifferent to the difficulty that people without God find themselves in. If he says, God is in me and I'm in God, and yet he's not working in the work of God.

He has no passion in his heart, which ultimately is the passion of God. There's no outflow of that passion to fall in humanity around him. Then the truth isn't in him.

He knows the truth, but the truth is not in him. He may have a head knowledge of God, but that head knowledge of God has not brought him into the life or the expression of this life that Christ died to give to all those that are his. Now, the ultimate expression of how deeply I really do love God, as I said earlier, is based on how I interact with other people.

In other words, the scripture says, in fact, I am to love my neighbor as myself. Now, here's where it gets a little bit tricky. You asked me the question, well, what if I don't like myself? You see, love is not even an issue here.

And correct me if I'm wrong in this, but isn't self this rotten interior thing that's to be taken and crucified? Didn't Paul say that I'm convinced that within me dwells no good thing? And now I'm told that the measure of how I love my neighbor is measured proportionately with how I love myself. Now, some people might be very happy with this, say, well, I hate myself, so therefore I'm justified in hating my neighbor. But the truth of the matter is, what if I don't like myself? I mean, there's a lot of people here today.

If you were honest, you don't you don't really like yourself. Loving is not even an issue here. Liking would be a major victory.

You look in the mirror and you don't like what you see. You don't like the way God made you. As a matter of fact, there are people here have controversy with God over the way you appear.

Not because there's a flaw in you. It's because you have a wrong definition of what beauty really is. You've been watching too much media.

You've been reading too many magazines and you're looking in the mirror and you have a totally wrong standard of what beauty really is. And but you still don't like what you see. What if all I see is failure? What if what if I look within my life and all these magnificent promises of God are here for me, but I don't seem to

be achieving any of them.

There's a few little victories here and there, but the overall picture is a picture of failure. I don't see myself becoming what God intended me to be. What if I'm not very happy with who I am? And there's so many people today.

Oh, folks, just buy into the lie that you are not complete in Christ and just unhappy as if God made some kind of a tragic mistake in the way that you were created. Or somehow you've taken this life that God gave you and you've made such a mess of it that it's it's not recoverable as it is. What if people laughed at my efforts or criticized me and said mean things to me? And inwardly, I think that's the way they still feel.

How do I love people, especially if I don't love myself? How do I do this? How do I fulfill the law? Jesus said on these two, you can take all the law and all the prophets. And if you could picture putting two hooks on a wall, you can hang all of these teachings on these two things that I am to love God. And I can understand that with all my heart, soul, mind and strength.

But then I'm to love my neighbor as I love myself. You've got to help me to understand this because there's a deep truth in this. Paul, the apostle, even in describing the marriage relationship, said that if a man loves his wife, he loves himself.

There's there's something about this that I need to understand. I'm afraid to reach out to people. Many say, and I don't know how to change.

I'm afraid of people. I love God. I can seemingly open the Bible and read it.

I can come into the prayer closet. But when it comes to people, I have a hard time. I've been I've been so wounded by people and I have a difficulty loving them.

The problem is that you may not understand something that we're going to be looking at here. First John 4:18 says there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear is torment. And he that fears is not made perfect in love.

In a sense, God is saying you are afraid of people because you are not perfected in love. And you would say today, well, I know that that's fairly obvious. If if God's love is in me, then I should not be afraid of people.

I should not be afraid of reaching out of my comfort zone into the places where they live and to see God touch their need through me. Now, we ask ourselves the question, what is the root of this fear in me that keeps me from loving who I am and loving others is hardly an option at the moment? That's what many of you would say. But there's a fear in me that keeps me from loving who I am.

What is this fear? Why don't I love who I am? Have you ever pondered this question? There are so many people here today that I know that the Lord has given me a word that is right where you're living. And if you're able to hear this today, and I'm talking to the I'm talking to the spiritually sincere. I'm talking today to those who have an honest walk with God.

You may not have it all together, but deep down inside, you know that you have trusted Christ for your salvation and you know you want to walk with God. You understand in the Bible there is a great commission to reach the lost masses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You acknowledge all of this.

But there is a fear in you that keeps you firstly from loving who you are. And if you can't love who you are, then according to what I read in this commandment that Jesus said is the most important, you can't possibly love your neighbor. How can I love other people when I hate myself? I don't think it's a reality.

I don't think it can happen. You see, here's the fear that many men carry. Women carry it.

All kinds of people. It's the fear that deep and it's deep within every person. And it's the fear that God sees us the way we see ourselves.

It's the fear that the way I see myself in the mirror, the way I feel about myself. The way that I'm aware of all my frailties and failings is exactly how God sees me. It keeps people out of the prayer closet.

Many, many people can't pray in the body of Christ because they go into the prayer closet. They lift up their hands and here's this whole scenario of failure before them. All they see is how far they've fallen short of the glory of God, how much they fail God, how little they do in the name of God, how seemingly insignificant their victories have been when they're told in the Scriptures they should be mighty and God should be doing exploits through them.

They can't even reach out. They can't even speak to the grocery clerk in the local store. They can't even tell them that God loves them.

They see a person weeping on a park bench. They can't stop. They're so afraid of speaking to people.

And the root of it is this inward loathing of self. An unholy loathing. May I call it that today? A loathing that God does not want you to have.

He does not want me to have. We're not to live there. We're not to focus on these things.

Now John says in 1 John 4, 19, We love Him because He first loved us. You have to know this. Before you knew God was, He loved you.

Before you were born in your mother's womb, all of your members, the Scriptures say, were written down. God knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. You were not an accident.

You were not some fluke of nature or some illegitimate relationship. You were allowed by God to be born. He allowed the seed that was in your mother to be conceived, knowing that that person that was going to come forth from the womb was going to be you.

And He did it because He loved you. He had a purpose for your life. He had a plan for your life.

Something He was going to do in you and through you. In Ezekiel 16, speaking of His own people Israel, verses 5 and 6. Now listen how He describes Israel. And it's a type of you and I. No I, none I pitied thee.

In other words, you were in a terrible condition and everybody basically passed you by. No one had compassion on you. You were out in the open field, cast out there to the loathing of your person in the day you were born.

God says, I saw you. But I was the only one that really saw you. I was the only one who saw the potential in your life.

I was the only one who saw what you were going to be, not what you are. To the casual passerby who didn't know my heart, there was no pity, there was no compassion. You were seemingly dropped off as it is in an open field.

You had no hope, you had no helper in the day you were born. That's the condition that you and I were born into in this world. Without Christ, there's nobody here that would have any hope for the future.

Our songs would be empty songs, our hope of eternity would be in vain. It was only because God had His eye upon us from the very moment of creation. In verse 6, He says, And when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, another translation says that when I saw you trodden underfoot, when I saw that you had no hope, if I didn't reach down to you, I said unto you when you were in your blood, live.

And the word live in the original text means enjoy life, live again, recover and be quickened. I passed you by, God said, and I saw you in your condition. I saw you in your helplessness, I saw you as hopeless as you were.

But I'm not like other people are. I stopped and I began to speak to you. And I said live, I said enjoy your life, I said live again.

Not live in your being trodden underfoot, not live in your failure, but live again, recover from your condition and be quickened. And in verse 7, He says, I've caused you to multiply. God says, not only did I speak the word live to you, but I gave you the strength to be someone other than who you once were.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold, all things are passed away, all things are become new. When Jesus saw you, when you trusted in Him for your salvation, He spoke into your heart and gave you the power to be another person than the person that you once were.

God loved you when no one else did. God saw you when no one else could. And God cleansed you when no one else would.

John says in Revelation 1.5, Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. He came down, gave His life on a cross and washed away all of the filth and iniquity that you and I were born in because we were born in sin and with a sin nature. And God took the penalty of that sin upon Himself and washed us clean in His own blood.

In 1 John 4 verses 9 and 10, John says, In this was manifested the love of God towards us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love. Not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation, or that means the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

This is love. Not that we love God, but God loved us. In Luke chapter 15, we see the story of a prodigal son.

Now this prodigal son took this inheritance of his life that his father had given him and wasted it in a far away place from his father as many of us did before we came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then one day this son got up and started heading home. And as he started to head home, his father met him along the journey.

And the very first thing his father did was cover him. And we see in this story that Jesus Christ and His shed blood on the cross has become the covering for all of our sin. We are covered, folks.

It's as simple as that. We are covered. The father brought out the best robe in the house and put it on the shoulders of his son and this robe covered him.

As far as anybody in the house was concerned, this son was now royalty. Not received as a slave, not received as a second-hand son, having come back with all of his failings. No, coming into the house of the Father fully covered, fully recovered, fully restored, fully cleansed.

Absolutely accepted and undefiled. And that's exactly the way you and I stand if we're in Christ today. Folks, we are clean if we're in Christ.

We are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Psalm 103, verse 12 says, As far as the east is from the west, so far as He removed our transgressions from us. There is absolutely no record in heaven of your sin.

There is no record in heaven of your failing. If you are a genuine Christian, you are received as the righteousness of Christ in heaven. That's how God the Father sees you, not just for time, but for all of eternity.

When you go into the prayer closet, God the Father looks at you through His Son. And because the Son has your name at His right hand on His lips and stands there as your intercessor, you are completely received with the Father as fully righteous and fully cleansed, fully empowered by the Holy Ghost. God the Father does not see your failings.

He sees only Jesus Christ. You're the only one who sees it. And the devil knows that.

And he will come and he will play against that and he will speak that, your repeated failings, your repeated struggles into your ears to try to get you convinced that this is exactly the way that God sees you. The ultimate goal of Satan is to get you to loathe yourself, to hate yourself, knowing full well that if you hate yourself, you'll not be able to love your neighbor. Knowing full well that what God intended to have flowed through you and I as the church to a fallen society will not happen.

You'll not be able to speak. You'll be gripped with fear. You'll not have that perfect love as it is that casts out fear.

You'll not be able to speak the gospel of Jesus Christ to those that are around you. Go with me please to Acts chapter 10. I want to show you this principle in reality.

This is a story of Peter in his journey at a man's house called Simon the Tanner. And just before lunchtime, he goes up on the rooftop to pray. And as he's praying, a vision unfolds before him.

Acts chapter 10 and verse 9. On the morrow as they went on their journey and drew nigh to the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry and would have eaten. But while they made ready, he fell into a trance.

And he saw heaven open in a certain vessel descending to him as it had been a great sheet knitted at the four corners and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat.

But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice or three times. And the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Now, this is a type of many believers who come to Christ. You're on a journey with Christ. You know that God loves you.

You know that God has a commission. You've received that. But you're going out as it is in this commission deep in your heart, but so powerless to go where God is calling you to go.

You go into the prayer closet. And the moment you're in the prayer closet, this sheet as it is comes down that you think from heaven. And on this sheet are all kinds of unclean things.

And I see it as a type for the believer of memories of the past, the awarenesses of your shortcomings, the understanding of what the Scripture calls you to be and how far short you fall of the glory of God. And you look at this and you can't even get beyond this. Interceding as it is for the Gentiles is not even an issue.

You can't even get beyond this, what appears to be a revelation. And the devil would love it to appear as a revelation from God to you. And the Lord tells Peter, there's something in this that I want you to see.

But Peter is so entrenched in his own worldview or Scripture view, as it is of himself and other people, that he can't see it at this moment. So God has to repeat it to him three times. He's still, after the third time, not even sure that he understands what it is that God is trying to tell him.

He sees all of this uncleanness. And the Lord tells him, Peter, it's now yours for the taking, as it is. And Peter says, no, I can't do this.

These are unclean things. I can't accept this. You're presenting something to me that I'm not willing to accept.

You're trying to tell me something that goes against everything that is in me. You're trying to tell me that these things that are now cleansed, that I consider unclean. To the Christian who's in prayer, for example, it's like, God, you're trying to tell me that there's no record of my failure? You're trying to tell me that there's no record of past wrongs? You're trying to tell me that heaven hasn't recorded my present struggles? You're trying to tell me, Lord, that things have changed? They're not the way they used to be.

And the Lord is trying to tell this to Peter, but he can't hear it. And so many of God's people have difficulty with this. Understanding that there is no record for the true believer.

There's no record of your failure in heaven. You might be struggling today, but if you're a true believer, there is no record of your struggle in heaven. You are received with God.

Folks, if nothing else makes you shout your whole life, this should make you shout in the presence of God. It should bring something of joy. God Almighty, you're trying to tell me that in Christ the work was complete? That all my struggles and all my failures and all my trials and all my horrible self-image and all the way I feel about myself, these things that are always before me, that look so unclean, you're trying to tell me, would you have cleansed, then I'm not to call it common or unclean any longer.

This is what the Lord is saying to His church in this hour. He's what He's saying to you this morning. I've cleansed you.

You must not call yourself common or unclean anymore. Don't look to your failings. Look to the one who has cleansed you.

Don't look to your nakedness. Look to the one who has covered you. Don't look to where you've fallen short of the glory.

Look to the glory that now sits at the right hand of God and is resident within you in the power of the Holy Ghost. Look to the promises of God. Look to the faithfulness of God.

Look to the fact that God is well able to make you into everything He has promised that He's going to make you. You see, the man who continues to call himself unclean has in effect deposed God from the throne in this area of his life. He's walked up to the right hand of God and said, excuse me, Jesus, for this momentary interlude, would you mind getting off of the throne at the right hand of the Father? Because I need to sit there for a moment and judge myself.

I need to condemn myself. I need to call myself a failure. I need to call myself ugly.

I need to call myself unlovely. I need to stand there and I need to become the judge of this area of my life or this season in my life. I know you've cleansed me, but for this moment, I just would like to declare myself unclean.

And tragically, there's a certain amount of kind of a perverse religious satisfaction in that. There are religions all over the world that beat themselves and the more unclean and unworthy they feel, ironically, the more holy they think they're becoming. When in reality, the knowledge that's supposed to be theirs of who they are in Christ is being completely taken away from them.

The end result is this deeply embedded fear that makes them strange and religious and they have no ability to relate anymore to the common man around them because they don't know that they have been cleansed from all uncleanness. They don't know how they're seen in the sight of God. They lose the passion for the lost.

They lose this deep inward working of God and ultimately lose all compassion for fellow man. Isaiah chapter 54, if you'll go there with me, please. Isaiah 54.

Are you beginning to get this? Isaiah 54, verse 10. Here's what the Lord says to his people. He says, For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

Oh, verse 11, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. And that describes a lot of people in the body of Jesus Christ. Afflicted, thrown about with different storms and inward struggles and not comforted.

He says, now let me show you how I see you and let me show you where I'm taking you. I'll lay your stones with fair colors. In other words, I'm going to take incredible truths and build a foundation underneath of you.

And I'll lay your foundations with sapphires. I'll make your windows of agates and the gates of carbuncles and the borders of pleasant stones. In other words, I'm going to recreate you in the image of God.

It's not going to be an overnight work. The work of God in the Christian heart never stops, really, all the days of your life. If you are a true Christian, you're going to be changing and changing and changing daily, all the rest of your life, more and more into the image of God.

It's something you want to do because you realize how God already sees you. You realize that you're already in Christ at the right hand of God. You're already fully received with God, fully cleansed.

Already the wrath of God is fully satisfied. You are fully received. That is your standing.

I'm in Christ. I'm already at the right hand of God in Christ. Read it in the book of Ephesians.

That's where I am. If I die right now with all of my frailties and all of my struggles, I'm in heaven. I'm already there.

My spirit is going to join the head, which is Christ. You cannot separate the head from the body. I'm in Him.

He is in me. I'm going to be where He is for all of eternity. I will rule and reign with Him.

And everything else that heaven has for me will be mine. It's in Christ. I'm not working to earn it.

I don't deserve it. I never did. I never will.

It's all by grace and by the goodness of God. Thanks be to God for this incredible salvation. Now, God is building into me because my state is not always in line with my standing.

I am in Christ, fully accepted, fully received. But I live down here on planet Earth. And I live in a body that has an old nature.

And this old nature is always warring against the new nature of Christ that is within me. The new life that God has given me. This old nature always wants to rise up and take over this new life.

But Jesus promises that that old nature will never triumph. Because I'm no longer living under the dominion of sin. I've been set free from the law of sin and death that once worked in me.

And I'm brought into a new law. Romans 8, 2. Of life in Christ Jesus. Now, I'm not everything I'm supposed to be.

But I am fully received with God. I am changing by the grace and glory of God every day. Morning by morning, I wake up and there are new mercies come into my life.

I see God's grace. I see where He's leading. I see what He's doing.

And it puts a shout of glory in your soul. It's not a license to abuse this grace of God. But once you know this grace, there's a cry comes into your heart.

Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus. Live in me, oh God.

Live through me. Be glorified in my life. Kick the sides out of hell through me all the days of my life.

I'll make your windows of agates and your doors. Your gates of carbuncles and your borders of pleasant stones. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord.

And great shall be the peace of thy children. God says, no, I'm not just going to rebuild you. I'm going to rebuild your family.

And there's going to be a peace at the center core of your house from this day forward. I'm going to give you a new lineage. I'm going to give you a promise that the whole world will have to stand up and take notice that I'm with you.

You will be established in righteousness and be far from oppression. Thou shalt not fear and from terror for it shall not come near thee. Behold, he says in verse 15, they shall surely gather together, but not by me.

He said, your enemies are going to come against you. They're going to hear about this new work that I'm doing in you. And they're going to come and they're going to surround you.

Just like they surrounded the Old Testament cities. And they're going to shout insults towards you over the wall. Voices from hell are going to come against you like you've never known your entire life.

Trying to take away your righteousness in Christ. Reminding you of your failings. Reminding you of your shortcomings.

Trying to get you to look in the mirror to see if there's some good thing in you apart from Christ. They'll gather, he says, but whoever shall gather together against you shall fall, God says, for your sake. Behold, he says, I've created the smith that blows the coals in the fire and brings forth an instrument for his work.

And I have created the waster to destroy. Now God is saying they're going to gather. But keep this in mind, I've created them all.

Even Satan himself is a created being from the hand of God. I've created them all. None of them exists without my authority to allow them to be created.

But he says, listen, you have to understand, I'm in total control. Their voices may come against you. But my word is higher than their voice.

Verse 17, he says, no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

I've cleansed you. I've accepted you. No weapon formed against you.

No weapon, no sheet with all of your failings from the past. No lies about your present struggle. No weapon formed against you will prosper.

God says, I have intertwined my life with you. I have come into you and I have purposed in my heart and I've bound my honor to carry you through. All the way through this life and right to the end.

You have the right to condemn every tongue that rises against you. Every voice that comes to take away your standing from you. You have the right to condemn it.

You have the right to stand up against it. I like the story of my daughter, Katie, when she was about three or four years old. A minister and his wife were visiting our house.

They were an older couple. And in the evening, this minister's wife said to my wife and I, could I have permission to tuck your daughter in bed? And we said, sure, by all means. So she went and sat beside her bed.

She said, Katie, does the devil ever come to you at night and try to lie to you and speak lies into your life? And Katie says, oh, yes, he sure does. And she says, and this is a little girl with curly hair. And she says, what do you do when he comes and tries to lie to you? She said, I tell him to go back to hell where he belongs.

Some of you would do well to take that advice. You have the authority to condemn every voice that comes to you to take away from you your standing in Christ. Now, here we get back to our original point.

But I thought that self was to be crucified. I thought self was to be denied, etc., etc., etc. Yes, it is.

But it's the old self. You have an old nature. That nature is to be crucified.

That old nature is to be denied. That old nature is the one Paul was talking about when he said, in me, in my old nature dwells no good thing. But you see, you have another nature.

You have a new nature, recreated in Christ to the glory and to the image of Almighty God. You have a brand new nature. The moment you came to Christ, you were born again.

And you received the Spirit of Almighty God. And God began to recreate you in the image of His Son. And it's this new nature that you are to love.

I love the new nature of Christ within me. I love what God is doing. I'm not happy about some of the struggles, but I do love the man that God is making me into.

And I'm not outside the Scripture and saying that because Jesus said that I'm to love my neighbor as I love myself. It's not that I'm in love with myself, but I love what it is that God is doing in me. I have to.

If I love God, I have to love His creation within me. Isn't that a clear way of saying it? I have to love what God is doing in me. I love the fact that He's taken a man who didn't even care about people.

And He's given me a heart of compassion for all people as far as I know. I love the fact that He has taught me how to be a husband. And He's teaching me how to be a father and now a grandfather.

I love the fact that things that weren't in me are now there by the grace and the glory of Almighty God for no other reason. And I love this. And I should love it.

You should love it. Oh, you might not be Superman when it comes to any of these things, but you are changing. You've been given a new nature.

And the Holy Spirit is within you, recreating you into the image of the one who is your Savior. And you should love the person that Jesus Christ is making you into. Love the work of God within you.

It's nice to love the church. It's nice to come in and love this sanctuary. It's nice to come in and love the praises of God.

But all of that is just leading to something else. It's the work that God Himself is doing within you. You can't hate your own self in a sense.

You can't hate that part of yourself that God is working within you. He's recreating you and making you into a new person that is in line as it is with your standing today, where you are at the right hand of God in Christ Jesus. The prodigal son, as he came back to his father, was given a ring on his hand.

And it's a type to us of the fact that we are to stand in the power of our God and tell other people that what God has done for us, He will do for them. God took me in my powerlessness. God took me with all of my struggles.

God took me and takes me with all of my frailties. He has saved me from the power of my sin. Saved me from eternal damnation.

And by His goodness, He's changing me from image to image and glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. I'm changing every day. God's goodness is in me.

I'm so happy with what God is doing inside of my life. And what He has done for me, He will do for you. The prodigal son was given a pair of shoes.

And it's a type that as we walk throughout our day, that when we see a person who's trodden underfoot, when we see a person who feels about life and about themselves the way that we once did, that you and I are to stop and to pour in the oil and the wine which God Almighty has poured into us. It's as simple as that. Oh, God, thank You for what You've done for me.

That's why new Christians win more people to Christ than older ones. Before they get a chance to study and get all condemned, they know in the beginning that it's all grace. They know in the beginning it's just the goodness of God.

They know they are sinners. They know they fall short of the glory of God. But they know they're covered.

They know they're cleansed. They know they're loved by God. They simply walk through their day looking at other people who look just like themselves, and they start pouring oil and wine into them.

As God has poured into them, they begin to pour out unto others. Hallelujah. Ironically, as we do this, we find ourselves walking closer to God than any amount of Bible study, as good as that is, can ever bring into your life, or songs you sing or tapes you listen to.

We just start pouring a kind word, hope, just a seed into somebody's heart. We find then we're actually walking with God. We find that the love for God begins to increase in us.

As we begin to pour into others, we become aware that God is pouring into us. The truths we share with other people around in society who are struggling, we become more and more aware that these truths are irretrievably ours and cannot be taken away from us. In doing this, we end up loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We begin our day by saying, God, I love you so much that in spite of what I see in the mirror, that's not what you see when you look at me. In spite of how I feel about myself, that's not what you're feeling in your heart. You said to Jeremiah, the thoughts that I think towards you are more than the sand that is on the seashore.

And I am thinking these thoughts to bring you to a desired end, somewhere that you want to go and somewhere that I want to bring you. And I'm bringing you there right now. And we look in the mirror and we begin to realize, God, you don't see this person anymore.

There's a brand new creation going on inside of me. And that is the person that you're looking at. It's your son, Jesus Christ, who's now living his life within me and changing me every day from image to image and glory to glory.

Oh, God, let my mind be focused on these things. Let these things be the passion of my heart. Let me give my strength as it is to this work that you're doing within me.

When I see a downtrodden person on the side of the road, I don't have to know the whole Bible. I have to just know that God loves them the way he loves me. Folks, I won 50 something people to Christ in the very first season when I became a Christian, just one on one sharing Christ with everything and everybody that moved.

I would speak Jesus Christ to them. Many people begin to weep and give their lives to Christ. Then I got into the ministry, started studying and stopped winning people to Christ.

I had to stop at one point. I said, God, what am I doing? Where have I gotten off track here? I have all this knowledge now and I'm not winning anybody to the Lord. And folks, I had to get back again to the simplicity.

The simplicity. That's why Brother Dave stays so alive. He doesn't talk about it in this church, but quite often on Saturday afternoon or evening or some of the week evenings, he'll go out on the streets here.

He sometimes walks all the way down to in the 30s. And he'll just share Christ with people, just pour into people's lives. Tell the drug addict, you don't have to live like this.

There's a God that loves you and the homeless person and the struggling mother and so many others. That's why he stays relevant. And he stays alive in Christ because he's never lost the simplicity of what this relationship with God is all about.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And here's how I interpret this. As you have opened your heart for me to love you.

That's really the key. Love your neighbor this way. You can't love your neighbor until you know how much I love you, God says.

Until you see them the way I see you. And until you accept your neighbor as I've accepted you. Until you're able to encourage your neighbor as you have been encouraged.

Love your neighbor as you love yourself. These are strange words for some of you this morning. To be able to come to this center and say, God, I love myself.

You know, there's a lot of teaching out in the world today about self-acceptance. But a lot of that is about accepting the old nature. This is not about that.

This is about accepting the new nature. I love the work you're doing. If you love me, God, why should I hate myself? If you've cleansed me, why should I call myself unclean? If you are saying that you're doing

the miraculous in me, why should I call it less than it is? Why should I live in spiritual poverty when the treasure of heaven in Christ is open to me? Why should I hate myself when you say you love me? I'm loved of God.

And so are you. It's time to accept that. I'm loved of God.

Loved. Let it soak down so deeply into your heart this morning. God loves you.

I shared with it in a service recently that there was a great, great evangelist in days gone by. And a young man traveled quite a distance to get to his home and to get some incredible revelation. And he finally got to his home and said to him, In all of your years of serving God, in all the things that you've done, all the revelation of the scriptures and all the mighty things you've seen God do through your hands, what is the greatest truth that's ever been revealed to you? And he looked at the young man and said, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

It wasn't being trite. It was true. For some of you today, it's going to be a great deliverance to stop hating yourself.

When you finally accept that you're clean, and you finally accept that God loves you the way you are, and you finally accept that you're not mediocre in the sight of God, you finally accept that there are gifts and talents of the Holy Spirit have been planted within you, you're going to be able to walk out of the door of this church and love your neighbor because you love yourself. This is as great as the greatest commandment. If I may close with these words, Jesus said to his disciples, I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

He's saying it wouldn't be possible if the disciples didn't know the depth of his love. He said, I'm going to open your heart to how much I love you, and this is the way, and in the strength of this love, I want you to love one another. I want to give an altar call today, which is very unusual, but it's for people who you've hated yourself, and it's been wrong.

You've not seen yourself the way God sees you, and today is a time to put this self-loathing away. It's time to take it to an altar and say, God, forgive me for embracing this image of myself when you have cleansed me, and accepted me, and changed me, and you are making me into a new person every day. Forgive me for how I have refused to see this.

We're going to stand, and as we do, I want to ask those that God's speaking to, you can make your way to this altar in the balcony. You can go to either exit. The main sanctuary, just slip out of where you are.

Make your way here. We're going to pray together. You've had a hard time accepting yourself, but today you're going to lay it down.

This is going to be a time of great deliverance for you. You're going to go out of this sanctuary today, and you're going to become a loving person. I speak that prophetically over your life.

You're going to become a loving person, because you know you are loved of God, and you're no longer going to despise the work that God is doing within you. Hallelujah. You see, the Holy Spirit wanted to send Peter to the Gentiles, but he couldn't be sent until this issue of uncleanness is dealt with in his own mind, in his own heart.

God wants to send you to make a difference in your world, your city, your family, but the issue of uncleanness in your own mind has to be dealt with first. You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. If you are a genuine Christian, it doesn't mean you're without struggle, but you're the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

That means you're as clean as God is. That would sound almost blasphemous if it wasn't true. If it wasn't in the Bible, you're as clean as God is.

Now, this has no application to the religious game player. I'm talking to the sincere Christian. It's an amazing thing to realize when it finally hits home, God, you've accepted me.

I'm fully accepted in the Beloved. You look down upon me, you just love me. And you see something you're doing that I'm not aware of, and there are giftings in me that I can't see because I'm so focused on my own failing.

The Lord says today, I want you to look away from that. Pray with me. Jesus, thank you for receiving me, for loving me, for cleansing me, and day by day, making me into a new person.

The person that you're making me into because of your life being lived inside of me. I love this new identity. I love myself because you are working and making me into your image.

I love you, Jesus. And I love your work inside of my life. Open my heart to the joy that you want to give me, to the hope that you want to pour into me, to the strength that you say is mine.

I take authority today over every lying voice, the voices of my own heart, the voices of evil that come against me trying to call me unclean. I condemn you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because I declare by His Word I am clean. I am the righteousness of God.

He is doing a marvelous work inside of my life and He will use me for His honor and for His glory. Now, Lord, that I've accepted myself and I'm learning to love your work in me, help me now to accept my neighbors with all of their failings, all of their flaws, all of their faults, and help me to pour into them your love, your encouragement, your life, your salvation in the same measure that you have poured into me. These are the greatest commandments.

O God, help me not to forget this today. This is a divine moment. This is an encounter with truth.

Lord God, love people through me. Do it today. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Now thank Him. Thank Him. Hallelujah.

For the people at this altar, just a word of encouragement to you. You're not too tall. You're not too short.

You're not too heavy. You're not too light. You're just right.

God made you the way you are. God loves you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12060.mp3>

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