

Love Thy Neighbour

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately exhorts believers to obey the second greatest commandment by loving their neighbors selflessly and practically, regardless of differences or difficulties.

Scripture: Matthew 19:19, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:25-37, John 13:34, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, Ephesians 4:32

Topics: "Christian Love", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound command to "love thy neighbour as thyself," urging believers to embrace a selfless, practical love that transcends social, religious, and personal barriers. He challenges Christians to move beyond mere avoidance of harm to active kindness, forgiveness, and service, reflecting the love of Christ. Spurgeon's timeless message calls the church to a higher standard of neighbourly love that is both demanding and transformative.

Transcript

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—Matthew 19:19.

OUR SAVIOUR very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with them—have not what is now currently called "the gospel" in them at all. Our Saviour did not every time he stood up to preach, declare the doctrine of election, or of atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, he just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life, and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit, which are begotten in us by the grace of God. Mark this word that I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first, but upon diligent reading of the four evangelists, you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Saviour's time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another; and many of his sermons are not what our precise critics would in these times call sermons full of unction and savor; for certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical part of religion. Beloved, it is as much the business of God's minister to preach man's duty, as it is to preach Christ's atonement; and unless he doth preach man's duty, he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the law, and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction—certainly, not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion. This morning, I am aware, my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you that are always wanting the same round of doctrines, but of this I have but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked, and if we can get at the ears of the

people, it is our business to reprove them; and I think if ever there was a time when this text need to be enlarged upon, it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

I shall notice, first of all, the command; secondly, I shall try and bring some reasons for your obedience to it; and afterwards, I shall draw some suggestions from the law itself.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great commandment. The first is, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," and there, the proper standard is, thou shalt love thy God more than thyself. The second commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," and the standard there is a little lower, but still preeminently high, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is the command. We can split it into three parts. Whom am I to love? My neighbour. What am I to do? I am to love him. How am I to do it? I am to love him as myself.

First, whom am I to love? I am to love my neighbour. By the word neighbour, we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae or near, (near) and buer, (to dwell) persons residing, or being near us, and if any one in the world is near us, he is our neighbour. The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighbourhood, and that therefore he was his neighbour, and he was bound to love him. "Love thy neighbour." Perhaps he is in riches, and thou art poor, and thou livest in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Thou seest his estates, thou markest his fine linen, and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts, and if he has not given them to thee, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. There will ever be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with thy own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were poor as thyself; and do not aid or abet any who would rid him of his wealth, to make thee hastily rich. Love him, and then thou canst not envy him. Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbours. Do not scorn to own that thou art bound to love even them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are thine equals really, though not so in station. "God hath made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth." Thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men; and if thou be a man arrayed in scarlet, thou art no more than a man. Take heed that thou love thy neighbour, even though he be in rags, and scorn him not, though sunken in the depths of poverty.

Love thy neighbour, too, albeit that he be of a different religion. Thou thinkest thyself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth, and thou hast hope that thou and thy compeers who think so well, shall certainly be saved. Thy neighbour thinketh differently. His religion thou sayest is unsound and untrue; love him, for all that. Let not thy differences separate him from thee. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong; he shall be the rightest in practice, who loves the most. Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards thy God; he breaks the Sabbath; he is confessedly an atheist; love him still. Hard words will not convert him, hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on; his sin is not against thee, but against thy God. Thy God takes vengeance for sins committed against himself, and leave thou him in God's hands. But if thou canst do him a kind turn, if thou canst find aught whereby thou canst serve him, do it, be it day or night. And if thou makest any distinction, make it thus: Because thou art not of my religion, I will serve thee the more, that thou mayest be converted to the right; whereas thou art a heretic Samaritan, and I an orthodox Jew, thou art still my neighbour, and I will love thee with the hope that thou mayest give up thy temple in Gerizim, and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem. Love thy neighbour, despite differences in religion.

Love thy neighbour, although he oppose thee in trade. It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade; but, nevertheless, it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him; you must neither think nor say anything to injure him. Your business is to love him, for though he oppose you in your business, he is your neighbour still. There is another one residing near you, who is indebted to you, and if you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him; but if you let him keep your money for a little, he may weather the storm, and succeed in his endeavors. It is your business to love him as yourself. Let him have your money, let him try again, and perhaps you shall have your own, and he shall be helped too. With whomsoever thou hast dealings in thy business, he is thy neighbour. With whomsoever thou tradest, be he greater or less than thou, he is thy neighbour, and the Christian law commands that thou shalt love thy neighbour. It doth not merely say that thou art not to hate him, but it tells thee to love him; and though he should thwart thy projects, though he should prevent thy obtaining wealth, though he should rob thee of thy custom—ay, though he should obscure thy fame, yet thou art bound to love him as thyself. This law makes no exception. Is he near thee, and hast thou any dealings with him? Thus says the law, “Thou shalt love him.”

Again, thou art bound to love thy neighbour, though he offend thee with him sin. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed, and our hearts are grieved, when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common habit with the harlot or the profligate, is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right, it is not Christian-like. We are bound to love even sinners, and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue; but I am bound to love him still, and even though I am wronged by him, yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling, but as I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him. And if he so sins against the law of the land, that he is to be punished (and rightly so,) I am to love him in the punishment; for I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively, but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment; I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as an atonement for his crime, but to teach him the evil of it, and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with a tear in my eye, because I love him still. And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness, and although there be a necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty, and become wanton, instead of useful. I am bound to love him, though he be sunken in vice, and degraded. The law knows of no exception. It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house; I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others, and reward vice. I am bound to set my face against him, as I am just, but I feel I ought not to set my heart against him, for he is my brother-man, and though the devil has besmeared his face, and spits his venom in his mouth, so that when he speaks he speaks in oaths, and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood, yet he is a man, and as a man he is my brother, and as a brother I am bound to love him, and if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it, for I am bound to love him as I love myself. O, I would to God that this great law were fully carried out. Ah, my hearers, you do not love your neighbours, you know you do not. You do not hardly love all the people who go to the same chapel. Certainly, you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion—would you? That would be too strange a charity. Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters. Some of you to-day are at daggers drawing with them that hung on the same breast. O, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents, and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home. O, if you can not love your brothers and sisters you

are worse than heathen men and publicans. How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, "Love your neighbours?" But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it, and not shift it to a gainsaying generation's taste. First, we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men; and we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness toward us, but simply because the law demands it, and they are our neighbours. "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbour? Love him—it is a hard word—love him. "Well I believe," says one, "I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbours. I do not know that I ever hurt a person's reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbour no damage. When I start in business I do not let my spirit of competition over throw my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody." My dear friend, that is right as far as it goes, but it does not go the whole way. It is not enough for you to say, you do not hate your neighbour, you are to love him. When you see him in the street it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way, and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet. It is not a negative, it is a positive command. It is not the not doing, it is the doing. Thou must not injure him it is true, but thou hast not done all when thou hast not done that. Thou oughtest to love him. "Well," says one, "when my neighbours are sick round about; if they be poor, I take a piece from the joint for dinner, and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed, and if they be exceedingly poor, I lay out my money, and see that they are taken care of." Yes, but thou mayest do this, and not love them. I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog, and there was no love in it. I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one half the politeness with which hay is given to a horse. "There it is, you want it. I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal. Take it, I am sorry you came here. Why don't you go to somebody else's house? I am always having paupers hanging on me." O, this is not loving our neighbour, and this is not making him love us. If we had spoken a kind word to him, and refused him, he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though thou feedest the poor, and visitest the sick, thou hast not obeyed the command, unless thy heart goes with thy hand, and the kindness of thy life bespeaks the kindness of thy soul. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

And now some one here may say, "Sir, I can not love my neighbour, you may love yours perhaps, because they may be better than mine, but mine are such an odd set of neighbours, and I try to love them, and for all I do they do but return insult." So much the more room for heroism. Wouldst thou be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most—shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, and still on, loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please them, but to please thy Master, and remember if they spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as if it had been acceptable to them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

Now, if this love for our neighbour were carried out—love, real love—it would prohibit all rash anger. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are now and then, and I suspect we should not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button. He can not be a good man, for he will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, thou hast no right to be more angry with thy neighbour than thou art with thyself. Thou art sometimes vexed with thyself, and thou mayest sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong. But thine anger toward thyself is very short lived: thou soon forgivest thine own dear self; well, thou art bound just as soon to forgive him, and though thou speakest a rough word, if it be too rough, withdraw it, and if it be but rough

enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if thou art obliged to do it, as kindly as thou canst. Be no more stern than there is need to be. Deal with others as thou wouldst deal with thyself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let the sun set on thine anger—it is impossible to love thy neighbour if thou dost that. Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question.

Thou art bound to love thy neighbour, then do not neglect him. He may be sick, he may live very near thy house, and he does not send for thee to call on him, for he says, “No, I do not like to trouble him.” Remember, it is thy business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where thy neighbours are in need; do not wait to be told of it, but find it out thyself, and give them some help. Do not neglect them; and when thou goest, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes, not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction, but go to thy brother as if thou were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due, and sit by his side, and talk to him; and if he be one that hath a high spirit, give him not thy charity as a charity, give it to him in some other way, lest thou break his head with the very box of ointment with which thou hadst intended to have anointed him. Be thou very chary how thou speakest to him: break not his spirit. Leave thy charity behind thee, and he shall forget that, but he shall remember well thy kindness toward him in thy speech.

Love to our neighbours puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness, and envy, and it makes us at all times ready to serve them, ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ.

“Well,” says one, “I can not see that I am always to forgive; you know a worm will turn if it is trodden upon.” And is a worm to be your exemplar? A worm will turn; but a Christian will not. I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my exemplar, when I have got Christ for my copy. Christ did not turn—when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they crucified him, and nailed him to the tree, he cried, “Father, forgive them.” Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in thy bosom, love which many waters can not quench, love which the floods can not drown. Love thy neighbours.

3. And now we have done with this command, when we have noticed how we are to love our neighbour. It would be a good thing if some ladies loved their neighbours as much as they loved their lap-dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbours as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue, if some of you were to love your neighbours as much as you love some favorite animal in your house. What an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it were something far superior to what some of you have attained to. You do not love your neighbour as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high then is, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” the gospel standard? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little, some of us too much. Thou mayest love thyself as much as thou pleasest, but take care that thou lovest thy neighbour as much. I am certain thou needest no exhortation to love thyself, thine own case will be seen to, thine own comfort will be a very primary theme of thine anxiety. Thou wilt line thine own nest well with downy feathers, if thou canst. There is no need to exhort thee to love thyself. Thou wilt do that well enough. Well, then, as much as thou lovest thyself love thy neighbour. And mark, by this is meant—thine enemy, the man who opposes thee in trade, and the man of another class. Thou oughtest to love him as thou lovest thyself.

Oh, it would turn the world upside down indeed, if this were practiced. A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land. In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindostan. My lord will not speak to any one who is a little beneath himself in dignity, and

he who hath the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him, and he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice, and mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down, when the impulse of the one blood shall be felt, and when as one family each shall love the other, and feel that one class depends upon the other! It were well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to church many a day and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak, who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life. You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a-year than she is shillings. There are you, Sir John, you come to your place, and you expect every one to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed they ought to be, for we are all honorable men, and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men." And so we are bound to honor every one of them. But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped. You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great. Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be his Father for this commandment, and blessed be the world when the commandment shall be obeyed, and we shall love our neighbours as ourselves!

II. And now shall I have to give REASONS WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbours because God commands it. To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He doth not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others, but he simply says, doth my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey, not because I may see how it shall be always good for me, but simply because thou commandest. It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "hearkening to the voice of his Word." But some other reasons may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, that selfishness itself would bid you love your neighbour. Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon; but yet if self could speak, it might, if it were wise, deliver an oration like this, "Self, love thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will love thee. Self, help thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will help thee. Make to thyself, O self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when thou fairest they may receive thee into abiding habitations. Self, thou wantest ease; make thyself easy by treating everybody well. Self, thou wantest pleasure, thou canst get no pleasure if those around thee hate thee. Make them love thee, dear self, and so shalt thou bless thyself." Ay, even if ye are selfish, I would ye were so pre-eminently selfish, and so wisely selfish that ye would love others to make yourselves happy.

The short cut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy. The world is bad enough, but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well. There are some of them that you can't mend at all, but treat them well, and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough, but as a class they know good servants, and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world, nor the things that men call comforts; the best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me, and a sense that where I went I scattered happiness, and made men glad. That is the way to be happy, and selfishness itself might say, "Love thy neighbour," for in so doing thou dost love thyself; for there is such a connection between him and thee, that in loving him the stream of thy love returns into thine own heart again.

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that; it is too poor for a Christian; it should be too base even for a man. Love your neighbour, in the next place, because that will be the way to do good in the world. You are philanthropists, some of you subscribe to missionary societies, you subscribe to the society for orphans, and other charitable objects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they be excellent and good things, are in some respects a loss, for now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself; and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan, and so there is about one-tenth of the charity. I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies, but to give all away himself. Be your own society. If there be a society for the sick, then if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time go and visit the sick yourself, you will know money is well spent then, and you will spare the expense of a secretary. There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own soup. Give it yourself; and if every one who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done. Societies are good; God forbid that I should speak against them; do all you can for them: but still I am afraid that they sometimes thwart individual effort, and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own benefactions—the pleasure of seeing the gleaming eye, and of hearing the grateful word when we have been our own almoners.

Dear friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your church; a pretty church you will make of it before long! Are you a Sunday-school teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face; a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants, and say "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that. Are you a warder of a jail, and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them, and then send the chaplain to them. A fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God! You have poor around you; you wish to see them elevated, you say. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings, and the meanness of their tastes. Go and make a great row at them all—a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown, and buy a little essence of summer somewhere, and put it on your face, and have a smile on your lip, and say, "I love you. I am no cant, but I love you, and as far as I can I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? Methinks I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor to your wife now she is ill?" All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gibbets, and all that, never made the world better yet. You may hang men as long as you like; you will never stop murder. Hang us all, we should not be much the better for it. There is no necessity for hanging any; it will never improve the world. Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly, and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness; and there is not a tiger in woman form but will break down and sue for pardon, if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend. I say again, for the world's good, love your neighbours.

And now, once more, love your neighbour, for there is a deal of misery in the world that you do not know of. We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls; we did not know their misery, but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my friend landlord, you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has got three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks back in her rent; the last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband's watch and her own wedding ring; it was all that she had that was dear to her, and she paid you; and you went to her the next week, and she begged a little patience, and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little

patience. "The woman," you have said, "I dare say is good for nothing, and if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has got three children, or none; rent is rent, and business is business." Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman's heart when she stood penniless and homeless, and knew not where to send the children for the night, you would have said, "Never mind, my good woman, stop there; I can not turn a widow out of house and home." You did not do it yourself, did you? No, but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that. You had no right to do it; you had a right in the eye of man's law but God's law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, "Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard, and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don't know how it is, I seem to get very hard up. I think, sir, if I could weather the next month, I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade yet, if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it." "Young man," you have said, "I have had a great many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security; I can not trust you." The young man bowed, and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house, and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself. For the last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter, and the weakest tea has been their drink, and he has been striving hard; but some one, poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him, and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him; and now what to do he can not tell. His heart is broken, his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his, and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known. You never should have dismissed his case until you had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like. But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Out on your business; be Christian-like. If you be professors, seek to serve God in obeying his commands—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

"Nay," says another, "but I am always very kind to the poor." There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare, and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor; and when she gets in, they set her a chair, and she sits down, and begins to talk to them about economy, and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economise any more than they do; for they eat nothing but bread, and they can not see that they can get anything much cheaper. Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness, and makes about fifty impertinent remarks about the children's clothes. "Now," says she, "my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract, it is about drunkenness: perhaps you will give it to your husband." If she does he will beat her, you may depend upon it. "Come now," she says, "there is a shilling for you." And now, my lady thinks, "I love my neighbour." Did you shake hands with her? "No, sir." Did you speak lovingly to her? "Of course not. She is an inferior." Then you did not obey this command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone, began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, "Do you know, sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had a little relief given me this morning, but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, sir, we used to be in better circumstances. This morning Mrs. So-and-so came and talked to me in such a way, as if I had been a dog, or as if I had been a child, and though she gave me a shilling I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I should have thrown it after her. She did talk in such a way, I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, sir, I know you will speak kindly to me, and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and find fault with me." "Oh," she said, "my heart is broken within me. I can not bear this, for we have seen better days, and we have been used to different treatment to

this." Now, you did not love her. Your shilling, what was the good of that, if you did not put a little love on it. You might have made it as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it. She would have thought far more of it. "Love thy neighbours." Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself, and would that I could impress it into every one of your hearts. Love thy neighbour as thou lovest thyself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion claims your love—Christ loved you before you loved him. He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted him, though you despised him and rebelled against him. He has loved you right on, and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same, and he shed his heart's blood to prove his love for you. He has given you what you want on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you, that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate him, unless you love too? We will leave to the Mahometans, to the Jew, and to the infidel, coldheartedness and unkindness; 'twere more in keeping with their views, but with you unkindness is a strange anomaly. It is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion, and if you love not your neighbour, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus.

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two, and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, the guilt of us all. My friends, if this be God's law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God's law demands I should love my neighbour, I must stand in my pulpit, and confess my guilt. In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbour that I had slighted, and I labored to confess the sin. I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who would not do the same, if he felt this law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul.

Oh! are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark. If no man can be saved by his works, unless he keeps this law perfectly, who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your neighbour all your life with all your heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds, if you have not broken any other command. But if you have not done it, and can not do it, then hear the sentence of the law. You have sinned, and you shall perish for your sin. Hope not to be saved by the mandate of the law. And oh! how this endears the gospel to me! If I have broken this law, and I have—and if I can not enter heaven with this law broken, precious is the Saviour who can wash me from all my sins in his blood! Precious is he that can forgive my want of charity, and pardon my want of kindness—can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness, and can through his all-atoning sacrifice give me a seat in heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. You are sinners this morning—you must feel it: my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall he saved." Though he hath hitherto broken this law God shall forgive him, and put a new heart and a right spirit into his bosom, whereby he shall be enabled to keep the law in future, at least to an eminent degree, and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in glory everlasting.

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to anybody this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I meant to be. I know there are a great many characters in the world that must have a cap made exactly to fit them, or else they will never wear it, and I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you would not say, "How well that applied to my neighbour," but just for once say, "How well it applied to me," I shall hope that there will be some good follow from this exhortation; and though the Antinomian may turn away, and say,

“Ah! it was only a legal sermon,” my love to that precious Antinomian. I do not care about his opinion. My Saviour preached like that, and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do, and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do; that the highest standard of love, of kindness, and of law, should be uplifted in the world, and kept constantly before the people’s eyes.

May God bless you, and be with you, for Jesus’ sake!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/love-thy-neighbour/>

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