

# Love to All the Saints

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of love in the assembly, highlighting that love is the hallmark of the true church and that dwelling in God's love is the way of prosperity.*

**Scripture:** 1 John 3:16

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the profound love of God manifested in Christ on the cross, leading believers to love Him and one another. This divine love, known in the heart, fulfills the commandments to believe in Jesus and love one another, reflecting God's love within them. Despite challenges in the church, the Spirit emphasizes the importance of loving all saints, as failing to do so indicates a lack of love for God. The sermon highlights the sacrificial love of Christ, urging believers to dwell in God's love and show mercy and truth to one another, as love is the hallmark of true discipleship.

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## Transcript

The love of God told out in Christ upon the cross of Calvary has been shed abroad in the hearts of those who have believed the gospel, and it has produced what the law demanded but could not secure--love to Him who first loved them. God and His love are now known. "Everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God." Such love Him and all those who are begotten of Him. They have not seen God, but they see their brethren in Christ, who, like themselves, partake of the divine nature. His word is not therefore grievous to them when it says, This is His commandment, that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another as He gave us commandment (1 John 3:23), for their love goes out to "all the saints" of necessity, because of God's love which is in their hearts. That love is without partiality. It embraces all. And when God commands love to one another, and when Christ commands it, and when the Spirit inspires the apostle to write these commandments, the hearts of those in whom the love of God dwells are divinely gladdened and assured: they are strengthened in their confidence before Him; for that which they are instructed to do is just that which they long to do; and they find true joy in putting the same into practice: the opposite would cause them grief.

We are not overlooking the difficulties that exist on account of the corrupt state of the assemblies of Christendom. The truth which is before us was given in view of that. In spite of the failure of the assemblies, the Spirit has given through John that which is vital and abiding that our "joy may be full." The outgoing of love to all who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ is to be cherished and furthered in every way

possible. To check it is certainly not the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, to love one another is an obligation which the love of God has given to us. If He has loved us as He has done, it is said, "We ought also to love one another."

We must not ignore this, for the Spirit says, "He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" and, "If anyone hates his brother, he is in a hopeless state--in darkness (1 John 2:9)! He may "say" he is "in the light!" but that only makes his condition all the more serious. Professing to be a Christian--a brother, claiming to be in the light, yet in reality he is a benighted stranger to both divine light and love. Still more awful, if possible, is the case of anyone who says he loves God and yet hates his brother. We are told that he partakes of that which is directly satanic--"He is a liar" (4:20). He may claim to be faithful, to be true to God, to stand for Him at all costs, to love Him, but the father of lies has sway over him and not the God of truth and love. All this is made known for the benefit of those who are truly the children of God, so that they may not allow any high-sounding talk to hinder their love going out to "all the saints"--to all their brethren in Christ.

#### Divine Love Manifested

We have said that it is the love of God known in the heart that leads to this love towards "all the saints"; and that it is the commandment of God and the commandment of Christ which show us the channel wherein the Spirit gives grace and power for this love to flow. Therefore the more we dwell upon the great love which is told out to us in Christ, the stronger and fuller will be the tide of divine love which we shall show to one another in the truth and in the energy of the Holy Spirit. This love did not originate with us. The blessed fountain from which it flows is the heart of God Himself. Nor did its activities for our blessing begin at the time we were justified and cleansed by the blood of His Son. When we were lost and sinful, even then that great love went after us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." How wonderful! and yet it was His way--the way of our adorable God and Father. He loved us; He still loves us; His love to us in all its infinite perfection in His Son was manifested when our need was beyond description. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

"Sure love so amazing, unmeasured, untold,

Since Christ it has given, no good will withhold!"

We are not told to search into our own hearts to discover this love. "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There it shines for our faith to feast upon. "Hereby perceive we the love because He laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16).

"What led Thy Son, O God!

To leave His throne on high,

To shed His precious blood,

To suffer and to die?

'Twas love, unbounded love to us,

Led him to die and suffer thus."

Nought could turn Him from the path in which His love was so severely tested. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Onward the Son of God goes to the cross. Forward He presses to the finish. He faces the pitiless storm that beats so fiercely against Him! He treads the thorny way which He knows leads to death. He sets His face as a flint to accomplish His stupendous task! Without human support or sympathy He bows in prayer, and sweat as it were great drops of blood bursts from His holy brow as He looks into the cup that He must drink. The armed band with lanterns and torches, led by Judas, bind and take Him. He stands before the high priest, and before Pilate--before Jew and Gentile, and receives neither mercy nor justice. Away with Him! Crucify Him! the rabble cries. And He! "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" Alone, despised, forsaken, acquainted with grief, smitten, afflicted, He goes to Golgotha bearing His cross. There they crucify Him. But He laid down His life of Himself. He loved us and gave Himself for us. Blessed, adorable Lord and Saviour, there is none in heaven nor upon earth like Thee!

### The Circle of Divine Love

Risen now, and ascended to the Father's throne, He has redeemed us, and brought us into the light, His blood having cleansed away every sin. And like those who fed upon the peace offering of old, we can now feast in communion together upon the love of Christ, and have fellowship one with another. We can put the truth into practice now, and rejoice with joy unspeakable before the Father and the Son. The Father sent the Son: the Son has brought us to the Father. The Father loves us: the Son loves us: we are to love one another. It is said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." The joys and communion and relationship of this blessed circle cannot be taken cognizance of by the world. Therefore it is added, "The world knows us not." Our portion is outside its circle of interests. The world loves its own, and those who are in life and in the light love one another. This gives the consciousness of the entirely new state and position into which we have been brought, even as we read, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:13-14).

This last statement shows clearly that it is impossible to walk in the light or carry out the truth if love is absent. It is easy for a cold ecclesiastic or a mere religionist to say, we must maintain divine principles at all costs! But such language often betrays a hardened state of heart. Moreover, the principles are not divine which deny, in theory, or practice, or both, the nature and character of God. Again, one sometimes hears, It is no question of love but of truth. This also shows a wrong condition of mind and heart, as we have just shown. Truly, where divine love and life are there is also obedience to every word of God; but, mark well, my beloved brethren, the outstanding commandments of God and of Christ are connected with love to the brethren--to "all the saints." Don't let us shirk this! Let us sincerely confess to Him how short we all come in the practice of it; but let us not give it up, or seek to check it in others; but rather let us take the divine way to have increased grace to carry it out. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments."

It may be said, This is all the family side of things. Reply might be made, If the family relationship and love were maintained in divine grace and power, there would be no failure either in assembly order or gospel testimony; but if the mainspring is wrong, then all is out of gear. It was first love which was first left. But, surely the apostle, who was used to unfold the truth concerning the assembly and the mystery, also showed that this vital truth of divine love was absolutely essential. Did he not write, "Follow after love"; also, "If any man love God, the same is known of him"? and, "Love edifies"? Did he not speak of it as the

"more excellent way?" and, in the letter which shows the glorious administration of the mystery according to eternal purpose, he exhorts the saints to be "imitators of God as dear children and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us" (Eph. 5:1-2). Assembly, and kingdom interests also, should surely be best understood in the royal family, where the Father and the Son are known. It was Paul who used the words at the head of this paper. He told the brethren at Ephesus and at Colosse that he gave thanks and prayed for their prosperity on account of their faith in Christ and "love to all the saints." Peter likewise says, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." There is something divinely encouraging and pleasant in the expression used so freely by all the apostles--"Brethren." The blessed Lord Himself thus spake of His own. We are told, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." This embraces all who are Christ's--all the saints. They are all in the circle of divine love. To insist, even successfully, upon principles at the cost of this; mark, we say, At the cost of love! is to have a shell without the kernel, a cold statue without life, a false bird in fine feathers, an assembly without God and without Christ, ready to be spued out of His mouth. To be without divine love is to be without God, for "everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for GOD IS LOVE. He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in Him."

#### Difficulties in the Practice

Some of the most zealous ecclesiastics have been loveless men. They have ostracized many of the choicest saints of God--always pleading the maintenance of principles and order. Some they have slandered, and even slain or burned. It is not without profound significance that the only mention of the assembly in the Gospel and Epistles of John fixes our attention on that place-loving ecclesiastic Diotrophes. Was he marked by "love to all the saints"? Truly he was prominent in his zeal for casting brethren out of the assembly! but, in all his zealousness, Did he love the brethren? Nay; his zeal was evil and not good. To overstep the mark in ecclesiastical procedure is a serious matter; and the zeal of many has carried them far beyond the instructions of the Scriptures. They have meted out to devoted saints that which is for "wicked persons." Behold the result on every side! Nevertheless, the real need not be surprised, for all was foretold, and "love to all the saints" is still the hallmark. It is most significant that the very last words of the Spirit in the Bible are, "THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH ALL THE SAINTS" (N.Tr.)! After all the failure has been shown, this is the Spirit-expressed desire of the heart. Christ loved all the saints, and gave Himself for all. He loved the assembly--not just a part of it--and gave Himself for it. Viewed as the body, we are all alike members; and it is said, "The members should have the same care one for another." A few of the members have no authority to form an independent company of their own. As the bride of Christ, the whole assembly will be presented to Himself in glory. As the house of God, all are now built together for a habitation in the Spirit. As the flock, the whole assembly was purchased by the blood of Christ. Those who follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, and call on the Lord together out of a pure heart, according to 2 Timothy 2, must of necessity maintain these unalterable facts practically.

Where mercy is not blended with truth, there can be no prosperity. Mercy and truth are met together in Christ; and it is said, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, for thus thou shalt find favour and good understanding (or success) in the sight of God and man." Through our Lord Jesus Christ "grace and truth subsist" now, and when we receive of His fullness, it is not truth upon truth, but "grace upon grace." Therein lies the secret for our spiritual success today. Ecclesiastical law-givers are often more stringent and burdensome than Moses; but it is indeed a double-dyed ministry of condemnation and death. Neither

we nor our fathers were able to bear it. Those who were zealous for the law and for the temple when Christ was here, condemned His hungry disciples for plucking and eating corn on the Sabbath. The Lord pointed out what David did when he was hungry; also that the priests of necessity profaned the temple on the Sabbath days and were blameless, adding, "If ye had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have CONDEMNED THE GUILTLESS" (Matt. 12:7). Is mercy rightly understood? Is grace rightly valued and shown? And love which "never fails," from which grace and mercy flow--How much is it appreciated? John spoke of "love in the truth," and of mercy, grace and peace "in truth and love." It is this beautiful and blessed conciliation of divine qualities which is so necessary, and yet seems to be so lacking among those whom the apostle constantly speaks of as "Brethren," and to whom he so often says, "love one another."

The fact is, beloved brethren, where this vitality in the truth according to the divine nature is evident, the unreal go out of themselves. They are conscious that they are not of us. The light, the life, the liberty, and the love, enjoyed by those who "continue in the Father and in the Son," is not to their liking. They lack the nature to appreciate these things. "He that loves not, knows not God." Therefore John does not exhort us to put out, but to dwell in love. He says, They went out from among us, but they were not of us (2:19). The "us," like "the brethren" in John, embraces, as we have said, all who are born of God, remember that--"All the saints," as Paul puts it. It is Diotrephes who puts out, and puts out wrongly. If this sort of thing went on when apostles were here, we need not be taken by surprise by what happens today--in the close of this remarkable period; but, contrariwise, being forewarned of God, seek grace nevertheless to carry out His commandment and the commandment of Christ--to show that which is approved of the Spirit in Paul, "Love to all the saints." The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. The family cry, "Abba, Father," is found with each one, as he says, "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus our own kith and kin are known.

### The Way of Prosperity

Finally, we must remind our hearts that our lesson is to be learned where divine love was manifested--in Christ: not in the success or failures of the saints. The spirit would ever turn the eye to Him.

Is there to be prosperity in the wealthy things of God? Then let our "hearts be encouraged, being united together in love, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Is progress to be made in the apprehension of the wide range of glory of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the centre? Then He is to "dwell, through faith, in our hearts, being rooted and founded in love, in order that we may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height." Is there to be victory in our conflicts with the foes of the faith? then let there be prayer in the Spirit "for all the saints," and for the preacher of the gospel (Eph. 6:18-19). In the face of all sorts of difficulties it is said in Jude 20, "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, "keep yourselves in the love of God," awaiting the coming of Christ. Here we see the divine way of prosperity;--the good positively before us, ourselves dwelling in God's love to us.

This love produces love, as we have shown. It is the like which begets like. Moreover, let our hearts be reminded again, "This commandment have we from Him, THAT HE WHO LOVES GOD LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO."

"Love never fails." With what exquisite tenderness its desires are expressed at the close of Ephesians by the pen of the apostle Paul, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption." Do not our hearts say, AMEN?

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