

Love Is a Fulfilling of the Law, Part Two

by John Piper

Love is a debt that we owe to everyone, including our enemies, because of Christ's love for us, and it is a debt that can never be paid back.

Duration: 48:49

Scripture: Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:37, Matthew 22:39, Romans 8:28, Romans 13:8-9, James 2:8

Topics: "Christian Love", "Radical Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper explores the concept of love as a debt that Christians owe to one another. He emphasizes that love is not something that can be paid up and forgotten, but rather a continuous obligation. He highlights the importance of self-love as the measure of our desire for others' joy. Additionally, he discusses Jesus' commandment to love one another as He has loved us, clarifying that this commandment adds a deeper understanding of the nature of love. Overall, Pastor Piper calls for a miraculous transformation in the church and society through the radical practice of love.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.DesiringGod.org Tonight's scripture reading is found in Romans chapter 13, verses 8 through 14. If you'd like to follow along in your pew Bible, it can be found on page 948.

Romans chapter 13, starting in verse 8. Owe no one anything except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law, the commandments. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder.

You shall not steal. You shall not covet. And any other commandment are summed up in this word.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know the time that the hour has come for you to awake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone.

The day is at hand. So then, let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime.

Not in orgies and drunkenness. Not in sexual immorality and sensuality. Not in quarreling and jealousy.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Let's pray together. Father, here we are gathered now in the evening and in the morning.

One church across eight or nine miles. One church across 15 hours. And we are glad to be together.

Under the word of God, in worship to the living God, in the name of Jesus, under the blood of Christ, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we are glad to be your people. So I pray now that you would draw near and help us in these services. That you would make yourself seen and savored in the word of God.

Pray that you would draw near and help me, Lord Jesus. That you would fill me with your Holy Spirit and help me to preach the word of God with liberty. And I ask, Lord Jesus, that you would cause us to be a loving church.

I want to pray for Katie Stellar who is in the hospital this afternoon with unexplained abdominal pain. Would you touch Katie and Tom and Julie and give them wisdom and discernment and great healing to Katie. Lord, in these services there are untold needs.

And I pray that you would do an amazing, miraculous work like you did when you put your hands on the loaves and the fishes and meet 5,000 needs that I can't even dream about. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

If the Lord wills, next time we're together, I would like to take up the question about the law. And how it is that loving your neighbor as you love yourself is a fulfilling of the law. And why it is that if Paul wants us to fulfill the law, why doesn't he just take us straight there? Why does he do this through love routine? That's where we're going next time.

This time, today, I want to focus not on how love fulfills the law, but on love itself. Four questions. How is love a debt? And how do we get into this debt? Question number two.

How does love for each other relate to love for God? Three. How is love for others related to love for self? And fourth. What would Jesus' new commandment add when he says, love each other as I have loved you? Not as you love yourself, but as I have loved you.

What new thing would that add to the command, love one another as you love yourself? So those are our four questions for this message. My aim, as I have prayed, is that God would use his word of inspired scripture to create love in this church like we've never known it before. This is one of the most radical, impossible, amazing commands in all the Bible, to love each other as we love ourselves.

Question number one. How is love a debt? Verse eight. Owe no one anything except to love each other.

Let me rehearse last time just a moment. I argued that it's not the whole truth to say that the point of this text is unlike taxes, revenue, honor, respect, which can be paid up and forgotten, at least for April 15 to April 15, love isn't like that. It can never be paid up because as soon as you love somebody at 12 o'clock, you owe them just as much love at 1201.

That is true and not the main or only point of this text. That was my argument. Rather, it goes on like this.

Since honor is in verse seven and also can't be paid up and is contrasted with don't owe anybody anything, I take rather the larger point to be, owe no one anything, period, except this way. Pay it in love.

So sure, you've got debts of taxes and you've got debts of a book you borrowed and you've got debts of a mortgage.

And the point is, don't owe any of that except one way, as love. In other words, don't put the debt of love into a category set apart from mortgage payments, taxes, returning books, keeping the speed limit, doing nice things. Don't put love over here in a separate little category.

And sometimes we do this and sometimes we do this. The point of this verse is, owe nobody anything except to owe it this way, as an expression of love. So now, that was last time.

This time my question is, how do we get into this debt of love? How is love a debt? How did you get indebted to the people you're sitting near? You owe them a debt, the debt of love. Even more puzzling, how did you get into debt to your enemies? Because there's no distinction flowing here from chapter 12. It says, bless those who persecute you, and if your enemy's hungry, feed him, and if your enemy's thirsty, give him something to drink.

He didn't forget that suddenly and start talking about something else in verses 8 to 10. This is important to ask for two reasons. One, usually we think about getting into a debt because somebody gave us something.

So a bank gives you \$150,000 to buy a house, and now you're in debt to the bank. Somebody loans you a book, now you're in debt to give the book back. When somebody gives you something, then you're in debt.

But there are all kinds of relationships in which you owe love, where nobody gave you anything. If you go to Luke 10, the parable of the good Samaritan, here comes the priest and the Levite, and then here comes the Samaritan, and the Jewish man is all beat up and in need, and he doesn't even know him. How did this man on the side of the road, beat up, become somebody to whom the Samaritan now is compelled, he owes, you're in debt.

God would say you're in debt to that man, you owe him love. How did he get there? The man never gave him anything. In fact, there's enmity between Jews and Samaritans.

So this is a very odd way to get into debt, to everybody, even your enemies. How did we get there? What constitutes this debt? That's the first reason the question is important, because we don't usually think of debts arising except when somebody gives us something. And that's not the case in this debt.

Here's the second reason it's important to ask this question. Most of us, and rightly so, think of love as something that if you do it as a debt, isn't really love. But if you invite me to lunch, to tick off the fact that I invited you to lunch, nobody's going to call that love.

They're going to call that a deal. I invite you to lunch, you invite me to lunch. We don't usually say, oh, what a loving thing.

It's just kind of, they invited us, I guess we should invite them. That's not love. We don't think of love that way.

Love is free, right? It's free. In fact, we've been doing these fighter verses in chapter 5 of Matthew, and Jesus says, if you love those who love you, what do you do more than the tax collectors? What do you do more than others? Even the tax collectors do the same. So Jesus is not impressed with debt payment, and

yet that's what it's called here.

So those two reasons make this a really compelling question for me. How did we get into this debt? Should we even think of love in terms of indebtedness? Because doesn't it just wreck the whole concept of love if you think of, I owe you. I've got to do this.

You've done something nice for me, I've got to do it back. So, how did we get there? What does it mean to say only owe love? Always owe love. Always be a debtor to pay love.

Now, here's a clue back in chapter 1, verse 14. You can go back there with me if you want. Romans 1, 14, the same language of indebtedness is used, and we're going to get help here, at least I get help here, from Romans 1, 14.

Paul says, I am under obligation. Literally, I am a debtor. Same language as back there in Romans 13.

I am a debtor to both Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to foolish. So this is a concrete illustration of Paul's feeling of indebtedness to people he doesn't even know and people that most people think are untouchable. Nobody wants to do anything for the barbarians.

And Paul says, I owe them. I owe them. Now, how did he get into this debt to barbarians, for goodness sakes? There's a clue.

The next verse, verse 15 of chapter 1, begins, So, since I'm a debtor to them all, so I'm eager to preach the gospel to them and to you who are in Rome. His eagerness to preach the gospel is flowing as an expression of his debt. So the way Paul pays the debt that he owes the barbarians and the Greeks is he preaches the gospel to them.

It's the best thing he can think of to give them in the payment of the debt of love. And now, jumped up to verse 5 to see how he got into this debt of gospel payment. Chapter 1, verse 5, Through whom, that is, through Jesus Christ, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of the name among all the Gentiles.

So Paul had received something not from Greeks and not from barbarians. He had received something from Christ. Namely, grace.

Free grace. And apostleship from God through Jesus. So the debt of love that he has to unbelievers, barbarians and Greeks, isn't because they've given him anything, it's because Christ has given him everything.

That's the way his mind is working here. The debt is because Christ has done everything for us when we deserved it less than they deserve our love. I'll say that again.

This indebtedness to enemies, to barbarians, to Greeks, to neighbors, to hard to love spouses or kids or neighbors or anybody, this debt that we have is flowing not because of what they gave us, but because of what Christ gave us so freely, so fully, when we deserved it less than people deserve our love. That's huge. That is life changing.

Christ gives us freely. He gives us his life. He takes away our sin.

He takes away our guilt. He takes away our condemnation. He guarantees us eternal life and joy forever with him.

He does it while we are still his enemies, according to Romans 5. And we thus become debtors to all men. To which someone might say, no, no, no, no, no, no. You become a debtor to Christ, to God.

I mean, if God, through Christ, gives you everything, you're a debtor to God, not people. Oh, this is important. I hope you're with me.

Understanding what I'm about to say is the key to how love is free between people and free from God. And if it's not free, it's not divine love. You cannot and you dare not even try to pay God back for what he has given you in Jesus Christ.

I'll say it again with all my might. You cannot and you dare not even try to pay God back for all that he has given you freely in Jesus Christ. You cannot.

Why? Because your debt is infinite and you can never pay it. And you cannot because, and this is even more significant, every step you take in some act of obedience or surrender or worship or love of people in order to pay down your grace debt with God doesn't work because every step you take is taking you deeper into debt because God is enabling every step freely. Do you see the implication of this? The implication of this is that every godly attempt that you make to pay down your love debt or your grace debt to God isn't doing it.

It's taking you deeper into debt. Guess what? You are going to spend eternity going deeper in debt to God every millisecond of your eternal life. And that's a good place to be.

You know why it's a good place to be? Because we get the joy of being the beneficiaries and he gets the everlasting glory of being the benefactor and you dare not ever reverse roles in this thing. Oh, the religions that have reversed roles with God here. We will work for you.

We will pay up. I heard Michael Medved being interviewed last night on KKMS and wept at the evil that he was propounding. What a sad thing that you have to joke around on the radio when life hangs in the balance.

This is huge. Oh, I hope you get it. And not only can you not pay back, you dare not even try.

Why? Because any attempt you make is going to turn grace into a business transaction and destroy it. Grace isn't grace if you can pay it back. If you invite me out just because I invited you out, it's over.

There's no grace anymore. You just cancelled my grace. And if you try to pay God back, you cancel the cross.

You cancel grace. You turn it into an amortization payment. So, here's the glorious conclusion.

This reality means two things about love. It means it always remains free coming down. Free, free, free.

You can't earn it. You can't deserve it. You can't pay it back.

You shouldn't try. He remains the glorious fountain. We remain the needy, thirsty ones.

And that's the way it's going to be forever and ever and ever. And guess what? That creates the impulse within to love others rather than depending on the impulse to come from them because they deserve it. And now your love too is free.

And it's the only kind God delights in. If you're looking around, you remember that lawyer in chapter 10 of Luke when Jesus said, you want to get an eternal life? Keep the commandments? He said, I've done that. And then he said, love your neighbor as you love yourself.

And then Luke says, to justify himself, he said, who's my neighbor? There's a group of people who qualify. And we want to make sure we spot those, not the others. Wrong.

There's nobody who qualifies for your love. Nobody. If you're looking around for a group to qualify for your love, you missed the whole point.

You didn't qualify. Love came down, saved you absolutely freely. And now it wells up inside with an ocean of freedom in which you are driven not to look for deserving people.

There aren't any. But to look for vessels of mercy that you're just going to fill up. You're just going to be indiscriminate in your love.

God, do it. All of that to say something that the Apostle John said so much simpler, right? He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. Or 1 John 4.11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to, we are debtors.

The word ought there, same word. We are debtors to love one another. So, here's my answer to question number one.

How do we get into this debt? It's a really weird debt. It's so strange. It's absolutely unique.

There's no debt like it in the world because we are owing people who didn't do anything for us. Because we have received everything from Christ when we deserved it less than they deserve our love. And therefore, when this love comes down, there is a pressure created, an indebtedness to the world created that the world had nothing to do with.

It all comes from Jesus so that it flows freely to them just like it flowed freely to us. You are a debtor to love the people in this room as you leave. You are a debtor to love sex offenders.

You are a debtor to love all people who come within your sphere. The Samaritan wasn't responsible to get down and help anybody 100 miles away. There was a man on the side of the road who needed him and he was there and the debt should have been paid and it was paid.

That's question number one. And I should ask before I turn to number two, do you know yourself loved by God like that? Do you know yourself loved by God like that? And then, just as important, do you find rising, because of that being loved so freely, do you find rising in you the impulse to love others that way? A debt. Not to God.

Not to God. You can never pay that one back. But start paying in the world freely because of the spillover of divine love.

Here's question number two and it was already answered in the first part so it will be short. Question number two is how does our debt of love to others relate to our love to God? Our love to God. I haven't said anything about that yet.

It's just been implicit. I'm talking about His love for us. But I'm asking now, how does our debt to love each other and our enemies relate to our love to God? Now here's the reason that's an important question.

In Matthew 22, when Jesus was talking about the two main commandments, He said, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

And Paul says the law is fulfilled by the second commandment. Does that bother you? Is it strange to you? So, why don't we have the first commandment here in verse 9? All the commandments are summed up in this word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Why doesn't he say all the commandments are summed up in two words. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. That's what Jesus said.

So Paul gives half of it. And says the law is fulfilled by half of it. And so I'm asking the question, How does that half work relate to the first work? In Paul's mind.

Not just Jesus' mind. And the answer is really not that hard or complicated. This is chapter 13.

This is not chapter 1. This is chapter 13. Chapters 1 to 11 and even parts of 12 are Paul laboring to unpack the fullness of the love of God to sinners in Jesus Christ with a view to awakening in them a love to God that he assumes when he gets here. And you can find it very easily, for example, in chapter 8, verse 28.

All things work together for the good of those who, tell me, love God. Paul's not saying, Oh, I never even thought of love to God. That is not the way Paul's thinking.

Paul has thought deeply and he has laid a foundation of love to God in chapters 1 to 8 that is unsurpassed in all the Bible and all the world. And when he gets to chapter 8 and he talks about the benefits of God flowing down on us and He's working everything together for our good, he says this happens to people who love God. So when he gets here to chapter 13, he hasn't forgotten all that.

He's talking to Christians. He's talking to Christians who love God. That's the definition.

We cast ourselves on God. We have had our eyes opened to see His beauty and truth and power and wisdom and justice and our hearts have gone out and said, That's my treasure. That's my treasure.

None of these husks and ashes of money and success anymore. No way. God is my treasure.

All that He is in Jesus Christ I now embrace as my treasure. All that's assumed as he gets to chapter 13. And so he says, Now, we're talking about horizontal love of people in 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

And when this love that's soaring up to God in response to His love starts to spill over, law is fulfilled. It stopped here and there were no spill over, law would not be fulfilled. So when he says, Love your neighbor as you love yourself, that's the fullness of the law? He doesn't mean that's the only thing.

He means it's the fullness. It's the completion. It's the outworking.

It's the spill over of all of 11 chapters of engagement with God. We'll be back there next time to talk about that. Third question.

How is the debt of love we owe to others related to self-love? Verse 9 is a quotation. Romans 13, 9 is a quotation of Leviticus 19, 18. It's quoted by Jesus.

It's quoted by James. It's quoted by Paul. This is the royal law of love.

You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself. And my question is, what does as you love yourself mean? As yourself. I've been here 25 years now.

We just celebrated that on Wednesday night. And I can remember in the six years before I got here being over at Bethel. And I would say among the dominant concerns of my life from 1974 to 1986, 7, 8, 9 was this issue.

What does as yourself mean? And I point out that little historical fact just because either I've got my head in the sand or things have changed a little bit. I don't hear as much now as I did 30 and 20 years ago the psychological scheme that was built on this verse that was so wrong. But I'm going to tell you what it is just in case my head is in the sand and just in case it's got a hook in you in a second or third generation I'm going to try to get the hook out right now.

Okay? For many years people, Christians would write articles and books in which they said that this command meant that the reason people don't love others is because they haven't learned to love themselves enough. And therefore the task of counseling and the task of education and parenting and preaching is to help people love themselves more so that they would have resources to love other people. And in that little scheme self-love always meant self-esteem.

So the universal gospel that fixes all problems of children and marriages and business conflict is lack of self-esteem. And therefore the task of all counselors all preachers, all parents, all educators is get more self-esteem into these little kids' lives and into these employees' lives and then things will go better because as they love themselves they will spill over on love to other people. That was the scheme and it colossally missed the point in several ways.

First this biblical commandment assumes that all of us love each other and don't need to be taught at all to love each other. It is an assumption. Every person in this room without exception has a massive love affair with yourself.

You don't need to be taught at all and it has, secondly, nothing to do with self-esteem. Your love for yourself is very simply your desire to be happy and to do whatever it takes to make your life the way you want it. He's not talking about first you learn to esteem yourself and then out of that rich appreciation for your qualities you now are free to love other people which presumably then would mean to help them appreciate how wonderful they are.

That's just not the way Paul is thinking. The words are not a command to love yourself. They are an assumption.

Love your neighbor as you already love yourself no questions asked about it. Here's an example. Ephesians 5. I'll just read it to you.

What Paul is doing in Ephesians 5 is husbands and wives, right? And in husbands and wives he's taking the command to love your neighbor and applying it to husbands and wives. Isn't it great? So how does a husband love a wife in these terms? And it goes like this. Verse 28 of Ephesians 5. Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. And then he adds this amazingly crucial statement in verse 29. For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church.

Nobody ever hated himself but nourishes and cherishes himself. Everybody, without exception, loves himself whatever his self-esteem is, high or low. Everybody wants food to eat and will do almost anything to get it if we get hungry enough.

Everybody wants to drink and not die of thirst and we will do almost anything to serve ourselves with drink if we get thirsty enough. Everybody wants to avoid injury and death and we will do whatever it takes not to walk in front of a train or a truck or drink poison or get ourselves killed in some other way. We love life and our health big time.

And if somebody raises the objection, well, what about masochists and suicide victims? Are they exceptions? I mean, they don't treat themselves well, do they? The answer is that masochists and suicide victims are not exceptions to this rule. A masochist is a person who, for very sad and sick reasons, finds pleasure in hurting himself or pleasure in the tending of the doctors. I've talked to these people who cut themselves.

And I asked one young woman we were working with, why do you cut yourself? Big lacerations on her stomach. And she said, it's the only time anybody ever touches me. She wanted to be touched.

She loved herself massively. Touch me, touch me, doctors. Same thing with suicide.

The only reason people commit suicide is because life has gotten so painful they can't stand it anymore and they want to escape. They just want out of the pain, which is self-love. I don't want the pain anymore.

Everybody likes to be praised. And apart from grace, we all subtly say things and do things to be liked, to be praised. It takes a massive work of divine grace to free you from that idol.

We love the praise of men. Everyone has self-love. Jesus does not command it.

He assumes it. Now, lots of people think it would be very radical if Jesus said, so stop loving yourself like that and start doing the duty of love to other people. Stop having those strong cravings for your own happiness and your own welfare.

Stop that. Kill that. Crucify that.

Die to that. And start doing something that doesn't flow from desires for your happiness and just do dutiful, loving things. Some people would say that's really radical.

And it would be, I suppose. But it's not as radical as what Jesus says. And Paul says, and James says, and Leviticus says.

They say, love your neighbor that way. Like you massively love yourself. Make your desire to be alive.

Make your desire for happiness the measure of your desire for other people's happiness. You talk about radical. You talk about life-changing, heart-exploding, impossible demands.

Love your neighbor as you love yourself. If you are energetic in pursuing your own happiness, be energetic in pursuing the happiness of your neighbor. If you are creative in pursuing your own happiness, be creative in pursuing the happiness of your neighbor.

If you are persevering and enduring in pursuing your own happiness, be persevering and enduring in pursuing the happiness of your neighbor. Paul is not mainly saying, seek for your neighbor the same things that you want. He's saying, seek their good in the same way that you seek your own good.

Make the degree of your own self-seeking, which is very high, the measure of your seeking their good. This is devastating. You're sitting at home, you're just enjoying an evening, feels good, watching television, watching a video, eating a good meal, talking, and you hear Jesus say, love your neighbor as you want this evening.

That's just devastating. Measure your pursuit of the happiness of others by the pursuit of your own. How do you pursue your well-being? Pursue their well-being that way.

Are you hungry? Find a hungry neighbor and feed him. Are you thirsty? Give your thirsty neighbor a drink. Are you lonely? Find someone who's lonely and befriend them.

Are you frightened? Find someone to comfort. Do you want to make a good grade on the next exam? So do others. Help them.

Help them. That is radical. It's far more radical than saying, stop desiring and start doing duty.

It's far more radical because it says, now all these massive desires that I have for my happiness are not sent away. They are transposed into another kind of music. The same energy, the same longings, the same desires are now desires for you and your salvation and your happiness and your good, your stomach being full, your mind being educated, and your life having significance.

All the things I want, I now, with that same energy, want for you. Christianity is an impossible religion. This is a standard that is overwhelming and it just makes me long to have a miracle done to me.

Don't you? Wouldn't it be phenomenal if we were this way? What a church! What neighborhoods! What a nation! What a denomination! What an amazing thing it would be! Let's get on our faces and ask for the miracle together. Sum up number three. How is the debt of love that we owe to others related to our self-love? Self-love is the innate desire to be happy.

Take that deep, unshakable desire and make it the measure of your desire for other people's everlasting and temporal joy. Final question, briefly. What would Jesus' new commandment add to that? Jesus said, Love one another as I have loved you.

Not as you love yourself, but as I have loved you. What does that add? It's not a contradiction. It's a clarification.

And it clarifies lots of things about the nature of love. And I'm only going to mention one in closing. You know, love your neighbor as you love yourself is an inadequate guideline.

What it so wonderfully does is pierce to the core of our selfishness and get at the energy and the creativity and the perseverance of our desire to be happy and how we should make that the measure of our longing for other people to be benefited. But it doesn't tell us where in the benefit consists. There are sick people in the world, like all of us, who don't know what's good for us.

It only goes part way to say whatever you would that men would do to you, do so to others. A lot of people get that wrong, really wrong. Oh, I just want money.

I just want... It won't work. It's not enough. This new commandment blows all the clouds away.

Love like Jesus loved. And the one clarification I would point out is this. Jesus loved in such a way as to give us the highest, best, most lasting, most satisfying gift of all.

Namely, God. I'll read you the key text. 1 Peter 3.18 Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.

How did Jesus love you most? We could talk about His suffering, and we should. I feel bad that I'm not at this point. Or we could talk about what did we get from His loving us.

You could say heaven, or forgiveness of sins, or no more guilt. That's not the main point. What we get mainly is God.

Forever, for our enjoyment. And now, I conclude by saying, love your neighbor as you love yourself has been suddenly clarified. All my passions to be a happy person, a satisfied person, forever, are shown by Jesus to be in God.

If I want to be happy forever, I must have God. God must be my treasure. No longer money, no longer power, no longer success, no longer looks, no longer a successful ministry.

It's got to be God. Now, if that's where my joy is, then as I begin to love others as I love myself, that is, as I have found my joy in God, it's got to be God. So I'll define it for you.

Love of your neighbor is doing whatever you have to do at whatever cost to yourself in order to enthrall your neighbor with what will make them fully and eternally satisfied. If you don't lead them to God, you can't make them drink. But if you don't lead them to God, you haven't loved them, Christian, as you love yourself.

Let's pray. Father in Heaven, we at the North Campus and we here, I believe, find in our hearts right now longings rising up for what looks so impossible. I'm going to take my desire to go home and have a bowl of cereal tonight and make that the measure of my longings for the hungry of the world near and far.

And the list goes on and on. Father, I pray for the miracle for Bethlehem to experience the transposing of the music of self-love into the music of delight in God, which then spills over onto others. Lord, we want very much to walk as children of the light.

Come, help us we pray in Jesus' name, Amen. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of

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