



## Winning Through Love

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024

GALATIANS 5:11-15

1 Love is not an emotion you need to conjure up to do whatever you feel led to do. Love is the definition of being a Christian. It is the core of who you must be if the battles that rage within your hearts and spirits and the battles between you and this world are to be won.

2 In Mark 12:28 Jesus answers probably the most important question He was ever asked,

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

3 Then in the following verses Jesus goes on to teach like no other man has ever taught.

Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’<sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.<sup>31</sup> And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

4 Let me be clear, Jesus was not saying print this one on a t-shirt and make this your life verse. He was not trying to create a point of difference so Christianity would have something unique to stand on. He was not providing the church with some clever memorable strap line for their marketing.

No, He was declaring the heart of God. He was saying. This is God. This is love. Look again at verse 31, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one’. The Lord is one. There is no disunity in the trinity. God is the perfect example of love. There is no argument, no war, no disagreement, no sides, no protests, no votes, in heaven. Because God is love.

5 In Galatians 5:11, Paul asks,

And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.

If I was preaching a gospel that says 'you do you' then how is it that Paul was still suffering persecution? As he says, the cross is offensive, it was then and it is today. It is an offense to those who do not believe because it still speaks today saying, "this is how dark, violent, and expensive your sin is." He goes on...

6

I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

7

Paul is literally saying I wish those who think circumcision is going to get them somewhere would not just circumcise themselves but actually cut everything off! You see when we decide to do a little bit of religion and think God sees and then God saves/blesses, Paul says, why stop at a little – let's do the whole thing. Because keeping the whole law is as futile as keeping a little.

8

And now comes the big reminder (v13),

9

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Christian you are free! You have been set at liberty. You can do as God pleases, because of the grace and mercy of God expressed through the perfect love of the cross.

But when you use your freedom as an excuse to do what you want you are trampling God's grace and love under your muddy feet. In Romans 6:1-2 Paul writes,

10

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?  
<sup>2</sup>Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Don't treat God's mercy and grace like a 'get out of jail free' card, BUT – through LOVE serve one another.

If we will not serve one another in the body of Christ then where is the love? And how is the world EVER going to see that love if it will not humble itself and treat others as better than yourself. The Bible says in Philippians 2:3-4,

11

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

12

Until in your mind everyone in every room you ever walk into is better than you then there will be no love shared, no one will be truly served, and few will be saved.

13 The Bible goes on in Galatians 5:14,

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

14 This is your calling. This is God’s word to you today. Why are you waiting for the Lord to speak to you when you won’t even move on account of what He has said thousands of years ago?

15 And Paul closes this section with a warning in verse 15,

But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Or as the Contemporary English Version translates it,

But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals, you had better watch out or you will destroy yourselves.

Some of you are masters at pointing out what’s wrong with the theology or faith of others. Some of you are full of ideas, we could do this or that, but there is no love – no love for the Lord, no love for people, only a lust for your own ideas and your own vain-glory.

16 When you stand back from all that the Spirit says through these few short verses today, there is one thing that shines brighter than anything else – one thing! LOVE. Verse 13, ‘THROUGH LOVE serve one another’.

Without love you will be nothing more than a clanging cymbal! You could lead the church with a pitch-perfect voice and not play a note wrong on your keyboard, guitar, or drums, but without love – it is just noise. No substance, no building up, no worship, just an empty religious noise.

The Scriptures, call us to understand and live life through any entirely different way than this world does – through love, that’s how.

17 Nothing is redeemed without love because God IS love. Without Him, who is love, nothing even has its existence. Without love, Jesus would never have come down to earth. Without love Jesus would never have spoken to much less touched a leper. Without love He would never have gone to the cross. Without love His Father would never have resurrected Him. Without love...you...me...and everyone else are nothing, nothing at all.

God's love can reach you wherever you are today no matter how far you have fallen, or wandered from His truth. And that love does not justify your actions, it magnifies who God is and the world has NEVER needed to know who God is more than it does today.

When your enemies come up against you and persecute you, and trouble you with all sorts of clever words and empty threats, this is how you are called to respond – listen to words of Christ from Matthew 5:44,

18

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

19

What shall we do?

- Firstly receive that love of God – by faith accept His sacrifice of love for you on Calvary
- Secondly put down your ideas – and take up God's love
- Read the word – day and night meditate on it
- Ask God to reveal His love to you more than you have ever known, so much that you cannot contain it.