Love as the Supreme Ethic of the Christian Life

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Preacher: Jarrod Adams

[0:00] I am excited to be able to preach this morning. I'm going to make sure this works here. I'm not really good with these things here. This morning, we are going to be continuing through the book of Romans as we have been.

Romans is a very wonderful letter or book, whichever one you want to call it. And it's one of my favorite letters to read in the scriptures. It is hard to go over two chapters.
That's what we're doing today. We're going to go through Romans 13 and 12. And for Romans, one Sunday is not enough simply for one chapter and let alone two. So I will not be covering every single point of each thing in Romans 12 and 13.
But my hope is that we all come to understand what the scripture is saying. Let's see. I'm not quite certain if I've got this working or not.
If I point to you guys, will you change it because it's not working for me. Oh, there we go. Ha-ha. Fantastic. Good. Okay. So this morning, the message is titled two chapters, one focus because we have two chapters to cover, but they all have one focus.
[1:08] So as Pastor Samuel will preach through Romans, one of the things that's beautiful about Romans is that Paul is making this huge theological, you could use the word treatise or treatise, whatever you want to call it.

He's making this huge theological argument about God's sovereignty, his righteousness, his holiness, his goodness, all these awesome things. And it leads up to 12 on to 16, right? So from 12 to 16, what we see is how do we live as believers?
That's kind of what we see from 12 to 16 onward in Romans. So last week we talked about God is love. Does anybody remember that slide that Sam put up, that God is love? You remember that? We've got great memories. Awesome. Okay. So God is love, and he also said that love is sacrifice, and that is true. God understands sacrifice. Jesus understands sacrifice. And then the beautiful thing is that God's sacrificial love has been manifested to us in this church and throughout all of time through the person and the work of Jesus and his continual pursuit of us.
We did not pursue Jesus first. It was Christ who pursued us because Scripture says that we didn't love God, but God loved us first. So as my desire this morning is that we would see that God loves us infinitely and intimately, we serve this awesome God who loves and cares for us to a degree we cannot even begin to comprehend or fathom.
[2:31] So love is what we're going to talk about this morning. The first thing is this. A supreme ethic of the Christian life is love. So hopefully I don't spend too much time in this one here.

This is the thing that I was really drawn into when I was reading the Scriptures and going through Romans 13. But there are three points I want us to see here, and these are the main points of Romans 13.
It is to submit to authorities, only owe love, and make no provision for the flesh. So all those things do lead into loving our neighbors and to loving God.
And let's kind of dive into how that works. So the first thing is this, submitting to authorities. We're not going to read the entire chapter of Romans 13 in one go because our brains would all fry.
And so let's just kind of go into Romans 13, 1 through 7 to start with. And I'll read it for us. Please follow along in your Scriptures there. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.
[3:26] For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed.

And those who resist, they will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad conduct. Would you have no fear for the one who has an authority?

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Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid.
For he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, this governmental authority. He is a servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience, Christian conscience. For because of this, you also pay taxes for the authorities or ministers of God attending to this very thing.
[4:29] Pay to all what is owed to them, taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

So Paul, in this little bit of Romans 13, he's making a quick case, but a logical case, for the submitting to civil authorities. Submitting to civil authorities.
Because they are an extension of his own, God's own authority. They are an extension of God's grace and of God's care for creation. If we didn't have any government, I'm not condoning this movie, but if we had no government, we would have the purge.
Genuinely, we would. If you want to see the truth in that, go read the book of Judges, where you see many times after awful things, the scriptures say, man, and the men did what was right in their own hearts.
Because the heart of man is wicked. It's evil in its natural carnal state. It's evil. And so the law is there to bless those who are good doers and to judge those who are evil doers.
[5:40] Now, the thing is, we see a lot of times in our world, we see the bad guy get away, right? There have been plenty of bad guys in our lives we've seen get away with things. But God's justice is not able to be outrun.

We may see people who have petty crimes or petty whatever kind of things may have capital crimes, and they will receive judgment here on earth via the court systems. That's the civil authorities. And that's God's, that's the sword for the Lord there, right?
That's what civil authorities are for. But we also see that sometimes they slip through the cracks because we are humans and we are flawed. And so God's ultimate judgment is eternal conscious torment in a place called hell.
Now, that hurts us, I think, in our modern sensibilities to hear that there is this place that's eternal and it's tormentous. But God's justice is poured out there.
And so the governing authorities, realistically, they are meant to show the wrongdoer grace in how they proceed with governing.
[6:45] So when someone goes to jail, it's supposed to show them, like, look, this is wrong, and you have a period of grace to repent, to turn your mind to the right way.

So all that being said, there's a reason why this seems so random in the scripture, why all of a sudden we go from, if you read Romans, you go from talking about spiritual life, and then here's authorities.
Why? Well, here's the context of Romans. So there's a guy named Emperor Claudius. I'm not perfect on my Roman history, but when I studied, at least, a guy named Claudius, and he's the emperor from about 54 or 41 AD to 54 AD.
And then you have a young emperor, Nero, who comes into place. If anybody here knows Nero, young emperor Nero comes in. And in 64 AD, he begins his persecution, kind of like formerly of the Christians, like officially, right?
So Romans is written in this period of time, 56 to 57 AD is what most scholars think Romans is written in. That is hugely significant because Paul is calling the Romans here to submit to the very ones who are slaughtering them.
[7:58] This is the context. And this is the love which God calls us to, to submit to the ones who actively hate us. That's not easy when you are persecuted, whether in name, in word, in deed.

That is hard to, it is hard to love somebody like that. But again, like we were saying, the authorities are there. They're supposed to protect us from the evil things. When they don't, we don't have hope in the authorities.
We have hope in who? Jesus. Jesus. The eternal hope we have is in Christ, not in the earthly authorities to take care of these things.
Which means then that it's not on us to take vengeance. It's not on us to take vengeance. And we'll kind of go through that in Romans 12. But if you want to, you feel free.

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Go Romans 12 and in verse 19. It says, beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. Leave it to the wrath of God. For God says, vengeance is mine.
[9:03] Our pay, says the Lord. We don't take vengeance. The civil authorities do that. There's a difference between civil authorities and the church. Church, we are called to administer the gospel, to administer grace and truth to the world, not cast judgment.

That's a civil authority's job. We allow them to cast judgment on the evil, wicked people. We share the gospel with them, and we love them. Now, we may have Christians that are in civil authority. That's wonderful. Please keep doing that. But you uphold justice in that place and uphold grace in this place, right? So that's kind of like where we're going with this is that we submit to these ones. So when the authorities, if they're good, protect us. When they're evil, we are still called to obey them.
When the authorities are not explicitly calling us to sin, and we choose to disobey those authorities, or we just don't honor them, we don't respect them, and we don't pay our taxes properly, or you kind of like hide a little bit of the taxes back, because you know, like, you know, I can kind of speak by those.
[10:14] You know, I don't know how you do that. If you are, don't tell me, please. But when we do those things, we're choosing to disobey not simply man, but also God.

Paying all of our earthly debts is actually an indicator of how seriously we take God and his word. So we have to ask you this question, and you don't have to answer this.
Think of it yourselves, because it was something I had to pour over my heart. We know the scripture tells us to pray for our rulers, our leaders, but do we always want to pray for our rulers and leaders that we don't care for, that we don't agree with, that seek our harm?
Because that's what Paul is doing here. Paul would call them to love the ones who are actively attacking their very way of life. Do we love God and submit to authorities only when it suits our fleshly desires?
And what I mean by that is, do we only submit to God when that political candidate I like gets into office? Do I only submit to authorities and submit to God in this way when at the city, county, state, national level, the right people are in office for me?
[11:30] But then when the wrong people are in office, oh, I'm going to pray against those guys. I'm going to pray imprecatory prayers against those guys, and they deserve all that's coming to them. Do we only submit to God when our flesh desires it, or should we submit to God at all times?

Because in submitting to authorities, we are showing that we love others, and we love God. 1 Peter 2.13 says this, Be subject for the Lord's sake.
Not for our sake, but for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Now, of course, when they call you to sin, you do what the Lord calls you to do. But if they're not calling you to sin, they're just calling you to submit.
It says do it for the Lord's sake. I want to continue on in the next point here of Romans 13 so that we don't get too bogged down to this. But the next point is this. Romans 13, 8 through 10.
A little bit less for us to read. We only owe love. So Paul says this. Read along with me, just in your minds. Owe no one anything except to love each other.
[12:34] For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For 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. So you see how we've just moved from a civil authority to more spiritual law. So you see Paul makes this like logical step forward so that in all aspects of a Christian life, we submit to God and submit to authorities so that we can love. So let me ask you this.
What is the law of God? What is the law of God? I feel like sometimes we say that we have no clue really what we mean by the law of God. Some people just say it's the Bible. That's the law of God. The law of God is this moral conscience I have.
The law of God is the Ten Commandments given to Moses, right? These Ten Commandments were the law given. Paul defines this here because he's saying this is the law of God.
[13:37] Right here he says the commandments. He says when he says the one who loves one another has fulfilled the law. And he says for the commandments. So he shows us that the commandments are the law, in fact.

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So the law of God is fulfilled or kept in us when we love God and each other and those around us. But the law is broken when we choose to fulfill ourselves.
The law is broken when we choose to fulfill ourselves. That can look like so many different things. Like I said, did you choose to submit or not to submit to authorities? Do you pray for them or not pray for them?
Do you love your neighbor as yourself or do you not? Do you have some sort of bias against them because, oh, that person doesn't love the way I live. Oh, that person looks different than I do. I don't like how they do this.
So I'm not going to, I'm going to give a little bit less love to them and more love to them. The laws that were given to the Jews, the Ten Commandments, again, the context is to some of these Jewish believers.
[14:45] The laws were not meant to actually just beat people down. Now, they are impossible to keep morally for us, but they're not meant to beat people down.

They were to teach everyone or teach the Jewish people how to love God and one another. That's the basis of the Ten Commandments is how do I love God? How do I love other people?
Now, I think there's also this understanding some people think that the law of God is evil in the sense that it's so, it's so strict.
It's so binding. It's so, oh, no. The scripture says the law of God is perfect. It is holy. It is good. And we see King David and many other people meditate on the law to know how to best live out the law and how to serve the Lord and serve others in the law.
The law of God is a good thing. The Ten Commandments are a good thing. They're not evil. And they're not this, I don't know how to explain it, but not this like strict grasp on your life that just controls.
[15:52] No, it is this freedom to know how to now live in love towards God and towards man, to our brothers and sisters. The law, the Ten Commandments, it is binding on us today in the sense that we are loving God first, God chiefly, and then we are loving our neighbors as ourself.

So whenever I choose to transgress or to sin against my brother or my sister or my family, whenever I choose to sin against God, what I'm saying is I choose me and then I forsake everybody else.
Like I am the most important part of my life, so I will do what pleases me in this moment. And that may be to put you on blast, to call you out, but not in a loving way, just so I look better, I'm going to call you out and say, well, so and so, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.
I don't know what language that is, but that would be something you could say in that language. I don't know if I just cursed in that or not. I'm worried. The point of this, though, is that Paul tells us to only owe one thing.
He said, owe no one anything except to love each other. I love this. I don't know the man's first name, but from enduringword.com, he quotes a man named Morris, and he said this, We may pay our taxes and be quiet.
[17:12] We may give respect and honor where they are due and have no further obligation. You've done all that you had to do. You've paid your honor and your due to the people that you needed to, and you're done.

It's done. It's settled. But we can never say, I have done all the loving I need to do. Love, then, is a permanent obligation, a debt impossible to discharge from our account.
We are in debt to everybody around us. Knowing this person, whether I know the person, I don't know the person, whether I like the person or don't like the person, I agree or don't agree, I am in debt to them in love.
I must love that person. That's why I said earlier that this point is called a supreme ethic, love, because that is the supreme ethic of a Christian life.
It is to love. To choose them over myself. We'll get into the context of what love is in a moment. But one thing that's interesting, you know, in 1 Corinthians 13, 13, it says this.
[18:19] So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three. But the greatest is love. It's love. That's Paul writing that again, by the way. So Paul's got, he's on the same track with himself here.

Consider this. Faith is meant for us personally, in our personal lives, in believing. Faith is our believing in the Lord Jesus.

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Hope is what we have had to look forward to in eternity. Our hope is in Christ in eternity. And in a sense, those two things, faith and hope, are internal realities.
It's like I couldn't walk up and say, hey, you know, I've never met this man over here. I've never seen him anywhere else. I've seen him on the streets. I can't tell if he's a Christian or not. He could be a faithful, hope-filled man.
Or he could be a faithless, desperate, hopeless man. I have no clue because there's not a lot of external, on first glance, external, external explanation and expression of the faith and hope that's in or not in a man.
[19:23] But how do I know that somebody is faithful and hopeful in Christ? By the way they love the brothers and sisters and the way they love the world. So faith and hope are internal realities.

Love is the external expression of what God has produced in you, the fruits of the Spirit. And love is also the external expression of what God is producing still inside of you.
Who here can say they are perfect? Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. I can't wait to look in the mirror. I keep getting better looking every day, right?
Anybody know that song? Come on, this is Henry. Y'all know that song. I love country too. Y'all gotta be not ashamed of country music. I love country music too. But the idea is that I'm perfect. I'm good. I'm loving enough. I'm kind enough. In the Christian life, holy, as in this life here now, holy, I'm holy enough.
[20:23] Those words don't go together. I'm loving enough. I'm kind enough. I'm patient enough. Enough does not work with Christ in the Christian life.

We are never loving enough. We must be loving and growing in our love for God and for others. That is the call Paul has here for the Jewish and Christian believers in Rome.
What our faith and hope are in, though, informs how we love and who we love. If your faith and your hope are in your business, you very likely will love your business and your money more than your workers.
If your faith and your hope are in your children and your children grow up and become crazy hooligans doing all sorts of wild things, at some point you will say, I have failed and your identity was in yourself.
When you focus on anything other than Christ as your central rock in formation of life, you will find that you will crumble. You will crumble as a person.
[21:36] My kids doing travel ball and they're finding their identity in that thing. So that when they get to be in the college and they can't do travel ball anymore because they hurt their knee and they can't play the sport anymore, what do they have?

Maybe their grades. Maybe they start failing in their grades. What do they have? If there's no Christ in there, you have nothing. If we have love for others, but our love is not based in the love that Christ has for us first, what kind of love do we have?
A superficial love that only works as long as I can get along with you. Have you ever met a superficial Christian before? You don't have to raise your hands.
I don't want to get any implications in here. But have you ever met a superficial Christian who says, yeah, I love everybody. But then when you go to talk to them, like, oh my goodness, that Jared guy, he's just the worst. He just talks too much.
Man, you know, that person's love is enough. It's just enough. They're not fully loving for the first that they could do so in Christ.
[22:47] So to continue on then in Romans 13 and kind of land that thing into this next part is Romans 13, 11 through 14. And we're almost done with Romans 13. We'll go to 12.

And I love this so much. I'm actually only going to read verse 14. I think that's enough. Get it? No one laughed there. No one laughed. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.
Now, before that, he does say this. He says, besides, you know, this, you know, the time, the hour has come for you to wake from sleep, for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. Hey, Jesus is coming back soon, guys. He genuinely is coming back soon. It's actually going to happen. And some people just sleep on that. No, probably not in my lifetime.
It's fine. Or, you know, I'm pretty ready whenever he's here. I'm ready to go whenever he's ready, you know, just kind of hang around here. Paul calls for the believers there and for us as well to make no provisions, no chances, no place for the flesh to gratify our sinful desires.

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[24:01] Now, here's the thing. And the text, that means if you look at the, if you read the scriptures, it understands that we do have flesh to desires. So I'm not saying that everybody here is perfect.

We have no flesh to desires. But if you do have them and where you have them, don't give provision for it. Don't make space for it. Like, if there's an area in your life that's like, yeah, if I tiptoe into that, I'm definitely going to fall into that thing for sure.
You know what you should not do? Don't tiptoe into that thing. Like, stay away from the box of temptation, whatever it is, and go the other way. Make no provision for the flesh there to gratify it.
We are called to remember Christ, the greater beauty, the truer truth, because he died for our freedom from the sin that enslaved us. So, the coming of Christ being soon, this darkness, the former ignorance, as the scripture would say, veiled the understanding of the Messiah, but the Messiah is revealed as Jesus.
Love this from the book of John. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. So we walk in the daytime. We walk in the light. We walk in Christ, not in the darkness.
[25:14] The darkness was defeated on the cross when Jesus rose from the grave, and soon the king will return to bring the saints home and make his enemies his footstool. Now, let me ask you guys this.

What's that man doing? He is sleepwalking. That dude is out. I've never seen somebody with those kind of jammies on in my entire life. If you wear that, we'll have to have a discussion about that later.
But, especially the hat. Who sleeps in a hat? Come on. Um, so, sleepwalking is an odd thing. Sleepwalking is an odd thing, because you can have a completely coherent conversation with the person who's sleepwalking, and their eyes are wide open.
Um, I recently had this happen in my life with a family member. Um, I won't name names at the moment. But, I had somebody who, like, I was in the kitchen, washing dishes, AirPods in, I'm locked into my music, man.
I'm jamming out. And all of a sudden, I hear a, and I feel that on my back. I jumped, freaked out a little bit. And I look around, and there's a certain person in my house, close to my height.
[26:18] Um, I didn't say names. I didn't say names. I love you, babe. I didn't say names. But, she begins a conversation with me, full on, asking me about my day, you know, seeing how the day at the office went, what else do I have to do tonight for my chores I'm doing.

And I'm like, I'm like, yeah. And she, full conversation. And then, she, like, about faces, and then turns and walks back to the bedroom, goes out. It's gone.
It's sleep. Anybody here ever had an experience with sleepwalkers before? You don't have to tell me, but just, like, you know, raise the hand if you have. No judgment. I've dealt with it. It is scary. It is genuinely a scary thing. Because I thought I was talking to a coherent person, and they were, just not in this realm of existence. And so, it really scared me.
And, the reality is, sleepwalkers can do many things. But, they're not living in reality. They don't live in the truest of realities.
[27:20] They're kind of there, kind of not. And when they wake up, they don't even realize they've done a thing sometimes. And that's scary. Because, Christians, sometimes we live in this sense with the Lord, where we have been sleepwalking in our faith.

Where we say, I'm a Christian. I love Jesus. And somehow, you stumble into good works. And what I mean by asleep in Christ, I don't mean that you're dead.
What I mean is that you have not been vigilant and diligent to walk regularly with the Lord, to be with the Lord. And you're being dragged along, almost, into a good thing.
And so, you serve in that good thing. You do that good thing. But, you're not truly, like, awake in it. Like, when I went back to said person in my household, and asked, do you remember this conversation?
Said person did not remember a single thing that was done in that conversation. Like, the tap, the me freaking out, any part, the plate I almost dropped on the ground, right?
[28:33] Nothing was remembered. And so, for a Christian sleepwalking in the Lord, are you there? Are you actively engaging with God in your life, walking with Him actively and intentionally, or are you just kind of going through the motions with Jesus and claiming Christ?

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Because, I promise you, the Jewish people and the Christians in Rome at this time could absolutely not sleepwalk through their faith. And if they did, you know what happened?
Nothing. They would probably live happy lives under Nero and under Claudius. Or, whatever his name was. I don't remember his name now. They would live happy lives. Unoffended by the world, unattacked by the world, if they were sleepwalking in Christ.
But to actively live for Christ means you're an enemy of the world. Not easy to be an enemy of the rest of the world. When maybe you're like the 10% or so that are different in the world.
When it means persecution comes against you, people come against you, people say things against you. It's not easy. And then, we're even called to love those people. The Christian life is such a radically different life from the rest of the world.
[29:53] But somehow, we always look so similar lately. The church just looks like a bunch of dressed up holy people in a building. Not living out the faith, but simply staying the faith.

I call it egghead theology. It's my favorite term I learned the other day. I came up with it. I don't know which one. But egghead theology is when you get so much Bible in your head, somehow your hands aren't moving.
This is important. But it better translate to this, or you have a dead faith. Don't be asleep in Christ. If you are a believer, get active.
Maybe not in the church, in a parachurch ministry. Some way that you are actively sharing the gospel, living out Christ, in your workplaces, in other areas that you get to live in.
Your circle of influence. Don't sleepwalk in Christ. Walk actively with the Lord Jesus. So as we transition to chapter 12, as we transition there, I'm going to get off those silly sleepwalking things, be focused.
[31:02] The flesh will be as active as we allow it to be. Are you making provision for your flesh, or are you giving every chance to the Spirit in you, within you, to guide you, to inform you, to lead you into all righteousness, to do good works?

So, I have to ask this question, because I started at the beginning here. How is then, with all this evidence, and our brain's already fried a little bit, let's take a second here. How is love, the supreme ethic of the Christian life, how is Paul then making his argument, that love is this important?
I don't think it's that way. It's not like that. I got that one kind of mind, where like as soon as something happens, you got to look at it. It's terrible. I'm awful in Walmart, man. It's awful. So, the way that Paul is making the argument, that love is so important, it's because this, God's love for us, starts here in 13, that we have civil authorities, to govern and protect us.
So, God has care, love for us, and has a grace, that we have civil authorities, to protect us. It is God's love, that we have the law of God, to guide us into how to love him, to love others, and how to live out rightfully.
And it was love, that drove Jesus, to the cross. One of my favorite verses, in scriptures in all the Bible, is Romans 5, 8.
[32:38] So, I'm going to read a little bit before that though, Romans 5, 6 through 8. And it says, these are some of the scriptures, you want to take notes right down, in your stuff. These are the scriptures, we're going to go through here, over this next few minutes.

But, Romans 5, 6 through 8. For while we were still weak, did not have faith, while we were still enemies of God, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.
For, one will scarcely die, for a righteous person. So, you don't have to raise your hand, but think about this. Would you, if you didn't know somebody, you knew they were a good person, would you say, you know what, that guy's going to die, I'm going to die for him.
I've got my whole life to live, I've got my family, everything, my business, everything, but you know what, I know that guy's a good guy, I'm going to die for him. It would be a hard decision to make.
But, Paul goes even further, he says, though perhaps for a good person, one would even dare to die.
Would you die for an unrighteous person, though? Would you die for somebody who is evil, wicked person, who has committed many crimes?
[33:42] Would you die in their stead? Christ did. That's the love that he has. Verse 8, my favorite verse, it says this, but God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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Jesus willingly died for us, while we were enemies of God, and not all cleaned up, not the cleaned up version of us. God loves those, who will come to him, while they were still his enemies.
And then in 1 John 4, 10 through 11, it says this, in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son, to be the propitiation, or the sacrifice, for our sins.
Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. So what we see here, is we didn't even love God, to start with, but God pursued us. If you were in a relationship, with somebody, and that person was a wicked, evil person, would you pursue them?
Would you pursue them? No. You'd cut them off, like dude, you're toxic, you're terrible, you're mean, you're kind of, how your personality, is kind of like ugly to me now, like I'm not going to be around you.
[34:59] You'd cut them off, but God pursued us, even in our sin. In 1 John 5, 3 it says this, for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments, are not burdensome.

Right, the 10 commandments, they're not burdensome, they're not something, that weighs you down. For most of us, that grew up in church, they're the foundation of our life, how we treat others, and how we love God. They're not burdensome.
How do we show, we love God though? Because this is all about love, as you can see, this is a very, very loving passage.
How do we show, we love God? By keeping his commandments, to greater degrees, as we grow in sanctification. So from the submitting, to civil authorities, to loving those who hate us, on into this next part, we see that, that Paul is showing us, that love, is our supreme ethic, as Christians.
This is the last little bit, we're going to go through here, Romans 12. 1 John 4, 19 says this though, we love, because he first loved, us.
[36:15] So God is love, and love is sacrifice. Which leads us, all the way back to, which is kind of weird to say, all the way back to, Romans 12. So go ahead, and look in your scriptures, Romans 12.

We're going to go through, verses 9 through 10, and then 14 and 21. It's a really, I didn't know how to write that up there, but we're going to go through that. So, beginning in verse 9 and 10, verses 14, and then verse 21.
Let love be genuine, abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor, bless those who persecute you, bless, and do not curse them.
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Paul is calling us, call the Jewish people here, and the Romans, the Christians here, calling us now as well, to a radical life of love.
A supreme life of love. But the problem is that, the world has redefined love, in so many ways. Very simplified it, or has taken it and stretched it to, extent, it's not supposed to go to.
[37:33] I think of one thing, I call it sentimentalism, where they reduce love to kind of just these feelings, like the butterflies in the tummy, when the person walks in the door, like, oh, you're so pretty.

Like, that's the sentimentalism, so that, you know, when the love, the love fades, the feelings fade, the love goes away too. That's that sentimentalism. We use the word, I love pizza, in the same sentence as, I love my wife, but we know they have two different meanings, but, man, the way we have diluted the word love, it's insane.
The problem is, you know, in the Western world, in the Western Christians like us, we have this view of love, that's so weak, that we can fall in and out of it. Oh, I fell in love with that person, I fell in love with that person.
It's all over the place. Love is not about burning intensity, or calm, cool seasons of calmness. It's not about whether or not I'm currently a huge fan of you, or I can't stand your guts right now.
It's about actively choosing the other over yourself. It is covenant keeping. And that goes for marriages, and it goes for churches.
[38:51] In your marriage, you may not always love your spouse the exact same way as when you first met them. John Piper, I read an article, and John Piper, he's a pastor, he wrote this, and he said, he said, if you love, basically he said, if you love somebody for 60 years, the same exact way, you've neither grown with them, or really known them.

If you love somebody the exact same way when you first met them as you do, now, have you actually grown with them? Do you know more about them, or do you just live off the scraps you got in the beginning?

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And in the church, the way we love each other, I might not be a huge fan of everybody, or maybe a huge fan of everybody. You might not be a huge fan of me, or maybe a huge fan of me.
Might be hot or cold some days. Does that change how you love one another in the church, though? No. No. It ought not to. Love has also been equated with tolerance rather than truth-telling. Love has been turned into a term for the acceptance of sin rather than a driving conviction to call people out of sin. When we share the uncomfortable truth, we do it not to hear our own voices or to be right, we do it because we love others.
[40:12] I've told the students this before, and I love this phrase, that a really incredibly awkward five-minute conversation with the gospel for somebody could cost them an eternity in heaven.

Like, is it easy to share the gospel sometimes? No. It's awkward to just start a conversation with somebody and say, hey, do you know if you're going to heaven or hell? That's a really hard conversation to start. It's hard to break into the gospel conversation sometimes.
But that five minutes with somebody could start the conversation for them to know the Savior. And it's awkward and uncomfortable. But sometimes love does require sacrifice.
Sacrificing my comfort, my desires, my reputation for someone else's good. For someone else's good. So when Paul says to let love be genuine, he's calling for believers to love how Jesus loved. We don't love so everybody can see how holy we are, though. If you're loving people, they gain some following, or you're loving people so that people would see just how much holiness you have.
[41:26] Oh, look how holy I am. I love the unloving person. Look at me on Facebook and Instagram and Twitter and all. Look at all the things I'm doing. I'm so holy. I'm so loving. I'm so loving. Is that really love? No.

Let love be genuine. Let it be real. Let it be authentic. And it ought to be an overflow of your life with Jesus. Part of that love is our hatred of evil, though. And that's a huge part of this text here.
He tells us to abhor. How many of you are using the word abhor in your daily life? Not many, apparently. Nobody's saying that. Like, we're not using that word.
But the word is a very strong word. It means to cast away, to detest, to loathe, to despise, to reject all evils. And hold fast to what is good, to truly love.
And here, like we were saying, God is love. Love is about sacrifice. Say it with me.
[42:24] Love is about sacrifice. Absolutely about sacrifice. So at 2 in the morning when my, or sorry, about 10, 30 in the afternoon, in the evening, when my sweet little daughter was crying.

And I'm tired. I'm typing up some final things on this message. I'm like, I'm so tired. My poor wife is laying in the bed because she's been exhausted because this week has been crazy.
And so she's just dead on her feet. And I look over her in the bed as I'm sitting in the computer. And I'm like, lazy bones. Get up and go take care of the kid. Is that love?
Love is sacrifice, right? I'm dead tired too. So you know what I have to do? I have to get up and go take care of my baby. Church, when you see somebody on the side of the road that you don't, that you think, oh, why aren't they working?
Lazy bones. Get up and do something. Is that love? No. Love would be sharing the gospel with them and seeking to provide for them.
[43:24] It's not your job to judge what they're going to do with it. It's your job to love them. Remember, because the civil authorities deal with the governing side. And then we have the church that extends the gospel and grace.

Grace. We extend gospel and grace, not judgment. Love is about sacrifice. And we sacrifice our prides and egos. I'm going to wrap up here. I know it says 12, 11, 58 right there.
Some of y'all are looking at your watches like, get this kid off the stage. Love is about sacrifice. And the one thing we sacrifice are these, our pride and our ego. So the person who trashed you on Facebook, speak good of them.
It's crazy. The person who bullies you in school, serve them. The person who cheated on you and broke your heart and caused your marriage to fail, pray for them.
The person who stole money from you, forgive them of their debts. If they won't pay you back at all. The person who voted opposite of you.
[44:26] And I hear that again. The person who voted opposite of you, genuinely love them. The person who doesn't do as good a job as you would, drop your pride and help them.

And lastly, the family member you're holding a grudge against right now, whoever it is. Forgive them and love them.

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Love one another with brotherly affection. Seek to build each other up. Stir up each other in good works to do good works. And I want to end with this last little bit here on living sacrifice. I think this is the most important parts of the scriptures to me.
A radical life is a living sacrifice. I don't know how far I am on this. I'm terrible at these things. There we go. Sacrifice.
I looked at the word. Sacrifice means to give up something valued for something else regarded as more valuable or worthy. Are you willing to sacrifice something in your life so that somebody else you may not even know could benefit from it?
[45:34] Because Christ did. Now Christ knows everybody. Christ already knew us. But he gave up his life, a sacrifice, so that we may be able to enter in the gates.

With thanksgiving and praise, like Brother Greg sang with us this morning. With thanksgiving and praise. And he's made us glad because of what he's done. But if he's not made you glad, if he's not the thing that makes you glad daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, hourly, minutely, I think, you have to ask yourself, what is your hope in?
Who is your hope in? What is informing how you love and who you love? A living sacrifice.
The Jews would have had a hard time with this because they'd give up animal sacrifices. And you can look at this if you want to. We can get to that. You can come back to me and ask me later. But I just want to put that up there for you guys to see.
A living sacrifice involves not just giving something up now, but living out the new thing. We were born one way.
[46:48] We are called to be born again. In our lives now, we are called to give up our old ways and our old desires in gratifying the flesh for the joy of the promise of newness in life and eternal life in Christ Jesus.

So, I want to land us here on this last part. The ultimate goal of any preaching on a Sunday morning in any place is that you would see the power of God in the work of Christ Jesus and that you would love him more.
That's the goal of the preacher, is that you would love Jesus more after the guy is done. And because of Jesus' obedience to the Father unto death, because of Jesus' desire to glorify the Father in all his ways and circumstances, because of the great love the Father has for us, we who have believed and trusted in Jesus have been made right with Christ.
But if you haven't trusted in Jesus, if you're here today and you're questioning your walk with the Lord, if you're questioning, what is my hope truly in? What am I really loving? Are the indicators of my life showing that I love God?
But if they're not, if they're not showing that, I'm not calling you not a Christian. What I am saying is examine your life and seek counsel from people who have walked with the Lord for a long time.
[48:12] And the best thing to do is seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit and the Word. That's where you will find the truth. If you don't know Christ this day, if you've not trusted in Jesus as your Savior, please come talk with me.

I'd love to discuss with you after the service. I'd love to discuss with you what that looks like. If you have any questions on the message and you want to talk further about it, please come talk with me.
But that's all I wanted to bring to you this morning is that the supreme ethic of the Christian life is to love. It is to love. Our lives are a living sacrifice to the Lord. We give ourselves over to God and always say things and do.
And so this morning I would like to close with some prayer. And we will be dismissed. And I actually have one more message before we actually walk out the room. So let us pray. And I'll close this.
Lord Jesus, thank you so much for this morning. I pray, God, that as we close this message that you would be glorified and honored, made much of.
God, I pray that you would work in our hearts to continue to desire you to grow in love for others. God, where we are failing, where we are falling short, Lord, show us that we can walk in greater love for you and greater love for others.
[49:24] Lord, as we leave this place, remind us that our lives are not our own. We've been bought with a price. And that we would now go out and live not a sleepwalking faith, but a very active, awake faith.

So Jesus, I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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