

1Tim 24-04-24a

Greetings, welcome to Grace and Truth Bible Church on this Wednesday night, the 24th of April, 2024. 4-24-24. We're continuing our study in these amazing truths as they are revealed to us through the Apostle Paul.

The subject tonight is going to be the third of the three categories of love. It overlaps with the second. Specifically, we're looking at how we act and deal and live before those who are outside.

This is coterminous in many ways with those who are our neighbors. You would be hard pressed to figure out how much contact changes somebody from a complete outsider to someone who is a neighbor. Anything from casual contact to no contact is in this somewhat fading gray area that is outside the target area of one another.

I think we have a pretty good grip on one another. It requires the Holy Spirit at both ends. There's reciprocity, there is unity, there is a great close family fellowship and relationship there extending beyond that.

And there is something of a fuzzy line that goes from one another's to our neighbor. And this is a judgment call and it can change over time. And then from there out to those who are outside.

So we're going to complete our study of these three areas sort of generally defined of our love. We're gonna look at what the scriptures have to say tonight. And we can't hit every scripture, but we can hit the representative ones.

Take a look at these. And if you have your new treasury of scripture knowledge or a Thompson chain reference or some other correlating tool that can take you from these passages to others that are similar, it's a fruitful study in almost any case. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study and we'll begin.

Father, it is such a wonderful opportunity we have when we gather together in this fashion to spend time looking at your word and seeking a better understanding of it and seeing how it applies so that as we live hour by hour and day by day, we can redeem that time. We can invest it in eternity. We can be good stewards of what you have entrusted to us by way of talent, opportunity, challenge and testing.

We pray that as we look together at the scriptures, that the Holy Spirit will help us to see their pertinence, how they apply directly to us, how we should then live so that we can represent the Lord Jesus Christ in a wonderful and effective fashion as his body on this earth, that others will see your glory as it is reflected in your grace and your faithfulness to us in our lives and be drawn to you through that light. We pray it in Jesus name, amen. So our study tonight is going to begin with just a little bit of review.

We have seen the one another's. I hope everyone is fairly satisfied with your ability to locate those scriptures. What is it to love one another? What does that love entail? There is encouragement, there is forgiveness, there is long suffering and gentleness.

There is weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice. In a nutshell, it is everything you would expect in healthy family love. What we would expect in a household with our siblings, with our parents, with our children, the loyalty, the close knit bond, and yet in the body of Christ, there is a friend that sticks closer than a physical brother.

And our brothers and sisters in Christ are not merely based on physical relationship or heredity or where and how we were born or what house we grew up in, but it is our conscious choice to place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to seek a relationship with our heavenly father and to grow in grace and knowledge together with fellow believers who are our spiritual brothers and sisters through the new birth. And those who are further along in the faith that are elders and longer with more experience in the faith, we have guidance in terms of what the older women can teach younger ones, what elders can do in and for an assembly. We have those who are earlier in the faith and to cultivate humility and teachability, to be willing to listen and willing to learn.

All of these are activated by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of those relationships. Everyone involved is actively cultivating and living in the spirit, walking by means of the spirit, letting the spirit speak through the word of God. And this can be a fairly small group sometimes.

It depends on our phase of life. We might be Elijah by the brook Cherith. We may be Moses in the wilderness before he is sent to Egypt.

This can sometimes narrow down to no one or one or two other fellow believers. Other times we have the privilege and the opportunity to be in contact with more. In this age with technology, it is fairly straightforward to find other believers of like mind.

And we are enjoined to forsake, not the assembling of ourselves together. That's why we're here tonight, not just to hear a Bible lesson, but to spend time together and exploit the opportunity for the spiritual gifts to function that God has distributed to each one of us, to be an encouragement. And many times we don't even know the effect that we are having on other believers just by being present, just by showing up and being available.

And sometimes a passing comment that you might make, and I know this for a fact, because I've spoken with people across the years in our church. And many times, just an observation you make, a point that comes to your mind during the break or after class that you mentioned will strike someone else in the group in ways that you have no inkling of, and God uses it to answer a question or to meet a need or to stimulate some curiosity and further study. You might mention something that you read or something

you were thinking about.

Some of you have a wonderful gift for putting thoughts out on social media, and they are a blessing to other people in ways that you won't find out until glory. But it is this contact where the Holy Spirit can be at both ends of the conversation, the transmitting and the receiving, the sending and the giving and the taking are both superintended in God's power for God's purposes and by God's grace. So those are the one and others.

And as you look at those, we've listed them out in detail. There's close to five dozen separate statements in that regard. I feel like we've covered that pretty well.

We understand it pretty well. We just want to value that as our top love priority after the vertical. The greatest commandment is love the Lord your God.

That one never changes. It is the first in the Old Testament. It is the first in the new.

Interestingly, when Jesus says what he says about the law of love, and he says, love the Lord your God and love your neighbor, he states at that time that there is no greater commandment than this. There is no, this is Mark 12, 31. He says, the greatest commandment, love the Lord your God.

In Mark 12, 31, the second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And at the time that he spoke those words, that's true.

Mark 12, 31, we're still in the age of Israel. We're not yet anticipating the age of the church. Later on in John 13 and following, Jesus is going to say a new commandment I give to you that you love one another, different target, more specific, more limited, as I have loved you, a higher standard.

So we've seen all this in detail. We have then looked at what is outside, because this is what people like to say, witness or a testimony. What is the light that shines from our lives out into the world? This is going to first of all hit neighbors and then extend beyond them to those with whom we have no personal contact.

What is the difference between the second and third areas of love? Neighbors, we have contact. Those outside, we often don't. It is at such a distance that we don't have personal knowledge.

And it is interesting that the scripture addresses those whom we know and those whom we don't. But as a quick review for neighbor love, this is rooted in the Old Testament because it sums up the horizontal relationship commands that are specific in various areas. So this is not taking vengeance from Leviticus 19, 18.

We don't look to even the score or get an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth or a life for a

life. What does that principle apply to? In the law, it says eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life. What is it talking about? What is the context? Why would it say that? This is the standard for judges who are hearing court cases that punishment or retribution for crimes should not go beyond the level of the crime itself.

If someone loses a tassel on the corner of their garment and someone else sees it, they don't club them to death. It's disproportionate. Punishment should be proportionate to the crime.

If you commit a bookkeeping error or two, it should not cost you \$480 million. That's disproportionate. So do not take vengeance.

This is in the realm of neighbor love, where we're back to Leviticus 19, 18. Don't take vengeance. Do not bear a grudge against the sons of your people.

Notice it is plural and it is general. The sons of your people, these are, why would you want to take vengeance or bear a grudge? Because you have had some sort of negative, unhappy contact. Suppose you are deeply concerned about a people group somewhere in the world that is in an adversarial situation with some other people group.

You might support one side in a conflict that is on the other side of the world. Somebody else in your immediate vicinity takes the other side. They are supporting the other opponent, the other conflictor, wherever this may be.

Do not bear a grudge. So what would you not do to someone who is waving a sign or a flag for a cause with which you disagree? You're taking the other side, the other position, a different stance. And here is someone who is very invested, very active, in some cases, very self-righteous.

And we could talk about the motivation for people who are sucked in with a bandwagon effect on a university campus or a public venue somewhere. And they see something going on and, well, this is our Vietnam, this is our Woodstock, this is our chance to be significant, to participate in something that is historic and everybody has its eyes on. There will be cameras, there will be coverage, and it's relevant, it's important, it's significant.

If I go and participate, I will be relevant, I will be important, I will be significant. And the human heart has an inbuilt, innate need to feel like it is accomplishing a purpose, that life has meaning, that it makes a difference. That attribute was put there by God, but the only place it is fulfilled in this age is in Christ.

And shoveling political causes or social justice or a sudden stimulating need to join a crowd and be out there with the bullhorns and the signs and the manic levels of activity, walking in and walking out, going where you shouldn't go, not showing up where you should be, and feeling like this is justified because it is a worthy cause. This is the

deception, this is the substitute, this is the Twinkie that is going into the soul where there ought to be milk and meat from God's word. But those who have set aside the opportunity or have rejected the opportunity to be related to God and through Christ still have those inbuilt needs and some vicarious activity, some devotion, some dedication, some faith.

And there is, instead of righteousness that comes from God, remember what Paul said in Romans, we saw it last time, not having the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own. Everybody wants to be part of what they consider a righteous cause. What's more righteous than speaking up for defenseless women and babies? What's more righteous than speaking up for those who have been brutally attacked when they're just civilians out for a good time? You can take either side and construe a righteous cause.

And the deception is because I see a good cause I support a good cause that makes me a good person. And if you don't support the cause that I support, you are not a good person. And immediately you're into subjectivity, you're into relative righteousness, you're into works-based righteousness, you are far from spirituality, far from the plan and purpose of God.

You never see the Lord Jesus Christ. You never see the apostle Paul or the apostle John or the apostle Peter ever encourage believers to social activism. I'm sorry, but it's not there.

I just read an article in Christianity Today, scolding pastors for not leading and guiding their congregations into proper support for causes and proper social activism and that people are confused and they've taken polls and people have opinions that are majority, but they conflict. And Christians believe this, but they also believe that. And they think this, but they also think that.

And they're like sheep without a shepherd and the shepherds need to stand up and say, this is the political stance you should have. That is not anywhere in scripture. We are going to see in this set of scriptures we look at tonight, what the Bible does say we should think and do in this regard.

First of all, we are not to develop antagonisms toward other people. Do not take vengeance. I'm back to Leviticus 19.18. Do not bear a grudge against the sons of your people.

And you say, well, this would be if he threw a rock through my window or slashed my tire or ran over my dog, I would bear a grudge. There are all kinds of reasons to enter into conflict or be oppositional, antagonistic, shouting matches, brow beating, criticism, social media assassination and so on. Do not take vengeance.

Do not bear any grudge, no grudges. You can't go out there and start attacking people for their opinions. Their opinions can be as wrong as wrong can be.

We are commanded by God not to set ourselves up as judge and jury. Do not bear a grudge. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Over and over again. You remember in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, God will state a principle like this and end it with, I am the Lord.

What you can put in parentheses right after that, I'm gonna read this verse and I'm gonna add the parenthetical element. You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord and you're not, right? I am the Lord.

What is God saying? I will handle injustice. I will deal with people who are in the wrong. I am not giving you that particular responsibility.

I'm not assigning you that task. I'm not delegating you that authority. Now there are people in Israel who do have God's delegated authority to make judgments and settle disputes, but it's not anybody's neighbor.

Who is it? There are elders in the gate. There are judges. There are priests.

There is a legal system in Israel. Take a dispute to court. And we've seen it in the past.

We'll see it again tonight. It says specifically, whatever that court decides, you abide by that decision. Do not steer to the right hand or to the left.

Whatever they say, that's it. Because you're gonna take that decision as from the Lord. Matthew 19, 19, reviewing the precepts of the law, honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22, 39, after stating the first and great commandment to love the Lord, your God, the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. How many times this is repeated? Why? It has not been supplanted.

It has not been replaced. It has not been superseded by the higher and greater commandment from the Lord Jesus. It still applies, but it applies to a specific target group of neighbors who are not one another's, right? So it is still pertinent.

It is still relevant. That's why it is repeated so many times. Matthew 23, 23, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

You pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law. What are the weighty matters of the law? Can you remember them? What did Jesus say? We remember the part about don't tithe the spice cabinet. What did Jesus say

are the weightier matters of the law that the Pharisees should not neglect? And by extension, we should not neglect.

Justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Consistency, being true to our word, having integrity. The weightier matters of the law are summed up.

What does it mean to love our neighbor? It means where we are operating, not an abstraction and I want social justice down there in this neighborhood of the city or in this area of the country or in this place in the world. I'm advocating and I'm talking and I'm considering myself to be important and effective and relevant because I'm supporting a righteous cause somewhere. And it's deceptive.

People think they are laying hold of righteousness by simply embracing a cause. I can sit in my armchair and support this oppressed group. What a good person I am.

Look how good I am. And you're not good because you're not supporting the cause I'm supporting. We're not the Lord.

We don't have the ability to give righteousness to ourselves. Righteousness is defined by God. It is assigned by God.

It is imputed by God on the basis of faith, not on the basis of social opinions. What are the weightier matters of the law? Justice. This is justice in our personal dealings, our interactions with others.

If we find that somebody gave us change, this doesn't happen so much now that we're largely cashless, but in earlier days when most transactions were cash, there were times when you could walk away from a store having made a purchase and they made change for you and they gave you a 10 instead of a one, or they gave you a 20 instead of a five. And you'd come back with too much money and the books are off for them. That you've come away with extra, or you thought you were buying one of something and when you are putting it in the car, it comes apart and there are two.

And hey, bonus, I've got two for the price of one. What is justice? What is the right thing to do? Go back in and say, hey, you gave me too much change. Look, I got something extra here.

And not being opportunistic or selfish or greedy or materialistic. Justice. What is fair? What is proper? What is right? What reflects integrity? That's justice.

Mercy. Error on the side of letting it go. It's okay.

You're teaching your daughter to drive and she backed over your \$80 shrub that you just put in and destroyed it. That's okay. Well, let me pay.

Don't worry about it. It's all right. We all have to learn some way and it's okay.

And mercy. If somebody is going to take a hit, try to let it be us. If somebody is going to be short, this is general love that is sacrificial, that does not seek its own.

That isn't puffed up. You think about 1 Corinthians 13 and those definitions of love, they can apply to neighbor love as well. Doesn't seek its own.

It's not puffed up. It doesn't have a sense of entitlement. And well, you need to square things.

I would rather err on the side. If somebody is going to get the smaller piece of pie, let that be me. Justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Show up when we say we're going to show up. Do what we say we're going to do. Finish what we start.

Be reliable. Be predictable. Our moderation and our integrity are a part of our reputation.

Well, you can count on him. You can count on her. She said she'll be here.

Looks like she might be a little late, but she always comes when she says she's going to come. She always does what she says she's going to do. Just wait a minute.

She'll be here. I know her. I know him.

Reliability, faithfulness. These you ought to have done, Jesus says in Matthew 23, 23. To the Pharisees, you ought to have done these things.

These are the weightier matters of the law without leaving the others undone. If you want to tithe down to the fine details, that's fine, but don't do the small and overlook the big. You see this in our criminal justice system now where silly things like trespassing on government property can get you years in jail and even solitary confinement and gigantic felonious policies meet with no opposition at all, whether in cities or at the national level.

It's craziness that our legal system is no longer consistent. A misdemeanor is a misdemeanor. A felony is a felony, and there are penalties associated with it, and they are proportional.

That's a biblical justice system. We don't have it anymore in so many parts of our nation. The third witness in the gospels, I've given you Matthew and given you Mark.

In Luke 10, 27, you have Jesus saying again, I love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Romans 13, nine, Paul reviews the law. You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

What's the reference? Romans 13, nine, where are we now? Has this been set aside in favor of love one another? Paul is quoting it. This is just as good for the church age. It still applies.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Paul is one of the foremost proponents of one another love, but he says, we've still got neighbor love, and that is respect. If you wanted to sum this up, this is fairness, respect, justice, mercy, as we have seen.

Galatians 5, 14, the whole law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Who's this again? Galatians, who's writing? What age are we in? Two different kinds of love here. Very clear.

The whole law is fulfilled. Love your neighbor. Treat your neighbor the way you would like to be treated.

It's the golden rule. Do unto others. James 2, eight.

What age are we in? Age of the church. James 2, eight. If you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You are doing well. You're doing well. We need to ask ourselves the question that was asked of the Lord Jesus, who is my neighbor? Remember, there was no opportunity for one another love between the man in the ditch and the Samaritan because they didn't know each other.

But at the point that they came into personal contact and the Samaritan did not avoid that contact, it was in the natural course of his journey. And here is a man right next to him in obvious need. Contact, ability to personally judge that there is a legitimate need, that he's got the means and the motive and the opportunity to fulfill, and he doesn't shy away.

There is contact there. Who is my neighbor? Someone that is in my periphery with whom I can interact based on what I know from scripture, walking in wisdom. So if you love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well.

James 2, eight. Romans 13, again, verse eight, owe nothing to anyone except to love one another. The debt we have, the required love that is always paramount is to love one another.

He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. Both loves mentioned in one verse, Romans 13, eight. Our debt is to love one another.

Loving our neighbor fulfills the law. That's the lesser of the two. Jesus said in Matthew 5, 43 and 44, part of the Sermon on the Mount, you've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

There is no oppositional side to neighbor love. You can't say, well, he's not my neighbor, he's my enemy, so I'm going to hate him. Jesus said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? If we only practiced one another love and left off neighbor love or love for those who are outside, what reward would we have? Do not even tax collectors do the same? We have some quality of love for everyone, even those who are enemies. You can go back to, because neighbor love is defined in the Old Testament, we have a lot of guidance from the Old Testament about it. Proverbs 25, 21.

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

Now, in the context, this is not warfare. Oh, the logistical supply lines have been cut and the guys shooting at me from the opposite trench are thirsty and hungry. Let's parachute in some rations so they can keep on fighting and killing us.

This is not the idea. But notice your enemy is a neighbor because he is close enough that you can detect that he's hungry or thirsty and you can hand him food or water. There is contact here.

So this is a neighbor who is an enemy, who is hostile, who is engaged in conflict and is out to do you some kind of mischief. If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. This is personal contact.

If he's thirsty, give him water to drink. Jesus says in Luke 6, 27, I say to you who hear, I say to you who are able to take this on board and it's not everyone, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

Verse 35, but love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return. You see someone who is in need, even if they are hostile, even if they're of a completely different political persuasion or a different religion or a different cast of mind and they oppose you, they dislike you, they would like to see you suffer in some way, love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return. Now you don't proactively lend.

Lending is meeting a need. Somebody needs a cup of sugar, you, and we call that lending. I don't want it back.

You can have it, you can keep it, but lend expecting nothing in return. Don't go around the next week and say, hey, you know, do you have that thing I handed you? Do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High. What is it to be a son of something? If you're a son of Belial, you're like

Belial.

If you're a son of perdition, your life is characterized by loss and forfeit. If you're a son of the Most High, you reflect his glory, you reflect his policy, you reveal his grace, you shine his light. He himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

Now he doesn't bless them, he doesn't enfold them, he doesn't save them preemptively and proactively, but he does not actively punish ungrateful and evil men. His rain falls on the just and the unjust. So there is no one to whom we are told we should be hostile, antagonistic, and act like an attack dog.

Scripture never says that. Even those who treat us as an enemy, if they have a need that we can meet, we are enjoined to meet it. Very helpful when it comes to how politically outspoken should I be? How socially aware and empathetic and vocal should I be when it comes to these issues of the day and what's going on in the news? What scripture says, mind your own business, work quietly with your hands, don't get into conflicts, don't argue, don't joust, don't picket.

I would love to see the Lord Jesus and his disciples with picket signs circling a slave market or a brothel or a usurious tax collecting office and saying, shame on you. How can you, the jarring discord of that picture of Jesus going out and being socially active and vocally attacking the Roman government or what did Jesus attack? Religious apostasy. The only people Jesus ever excoriated were those who were defiling the word of God and besmirching the name of the father.

That's fair. And we should be theologically aware of currents and trends in Christianity and speak up for the truth. But as for social action and political causes, there is no warrant in scripture for engaging in the tournament with a lance and armor and a horse and trying to go tilt at some windmill.

There's no warrant for it in scripture anywhere. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. It's spiritual.

And our efforts should be directed at putting on the armor of God and deflecting the fiery darts of Satan and wielding the sword of the word of God with the shield of faith and keeping our truth speaking and our example and our focus on spiritual truth, spiritual things, primarily our one another love and that love extending and reflecting to neighbors and to those who are outside. We have not a single warrant for trying to argue somebody down because we think they are socially or politically wrong, none whatsoever. Nor do you find examples of deprecatory and spiteful talk about leaders.

You don't like the president, fine. Don't like his policies, fine. Whoever he may be to mock, to use a lot of negative rhetoric is completely unbiblical.

It is out of keeping with anything we're taught in scripture. Jesus didn't even do it. The

worst you could ever say, Jesus called Herod a fox.

That's as bad as it gets. Well, this is our subject for tonight. We're gonna pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll finish up neighbor love and we'll look at those who are outside.