

Love and the Gospel

Pastor Reggie Sanchez, Gospel Community Church
9/25/2016

I. Introduction

1. The Greatness of Love

Paul said in [1 Corinthians 13:13](#) that the greatest of all Christian gifts and virtues is love. If you equate loving God, with worshipping God, which I would argue is synonymous, then I believe it is true that love is the greatest experience we can have. To both be loved by God and to love God is the greatest source of life, peace, and joy that a human being can possibly have. It is also extremely powerful to love and be loved by those who are made in his image, namely, human beings. Everyone longs to love and be loved. Our most treasured memories and moments are times of love. And it is my deeply held conviction, that nothing has the power to overcome evil, sin, and destruction like love does. I guarantee you that no matter what you are going through right now, what difficulties and discouragements you are having in your walk with God, what human relationships you might have friction or strife in right now, I would bet my life that if you powerfully encountered God's love for you, it would so change your inner being that you would be filled with joy, even if your circumstances didn't change, and your joy had to co-exist with much grief and many tears that come in the trials of life.

We just finished our midweek recently on our study of love. Hopefully we have gained a much more biblical view of what it means to love. As we try to walk in love, has anyone else found it difficult to do this? The funny thing about genuine biblical love, and not the Satanic fabrication of love that the world promotes, is that it is the thing we desire the most, it is one of the greatest powers in the universe, it gives us more joy than anything else, but it is one of the most difficult things to do. In fact, the Scripture would argue that it is impossible to do without God.

Some of our greatest disappointments are bound up in how little we know and perceive God's love, how little we ourselves love God, how little we love others, and how little we are actually loved by others. Unfortunately, in our pursuit to grow in love there is an enormous amount of false teaching not only on what love is, but also, on how to grow in it. It makes sense to me. A genuine definition of love, a genuine and true understanding of what God's love actually is, and an understanding of how we receive it and live into it, is one of the biggest threats to Satan and one of the mightiest weapons to build the church and save the lost. So no wonder Satan goes to great efforts to confuse and distort this through false teachers.

2. Heresy in Ephesus

Timothy was ministering as Paul's representative in Ephesus and that church was being threatened with false teaching that would ultimately destroy a person's grasp of God's love, of how they are to love God, and how they are to love others. As the letter begins, Paul charges Timothy to deal with this right off the bat. As we examine this issue, we will have to cover a fair amount of background information as we attempt to piece together who the false teachers are, what they taught, and what the truth actually is. It is my hope and prayer that as we do this, we

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will either gain or be reminded of some insights about love and how to pursue it, and how not to pursue it. So our text for tonight is [1 Timothy 1:3-11](#)

II. Timothy to Deal with False Teachers vs. 3-11

1. Paul's Urging vs 3

Let's begin working through our text (read vs. 3). This verse sets the scene for our passage tonight. Paul can't be in Ephesus, so he has Timothy, his true child in the faith, there in Ephesus to deal with the problem of those in the church who are teaching false doctrine. The first thing that stands out to me in the text is the fact that Paul is urging Timothy to do this. By using that Word we can feel how much this means to Paul. He isn't suggesting this, he isn't hoping Timothy gives this some thought, he is not saying this in a take it or leave it fashion, rather, he is passionately urging Timothy to remain at Ephesus and deal with the false teachers. About 5 years earlier in [Acts 20:29](#), with tears, Paul warned the Ephesian elders that savage wolves would arise from among them and seek to devour the flock with their false teaching and to draw away disciples after themselves, and now it has happened and it needs to be dealt with. So, just as he warned the Ephesian elders with tears 5 years earlier, so also he is urging Timothy to stay and deal with this problem.

We also notice that the fact that he had to urge Timothy to remain in Ephesus and deal with us tells us that perhaps Timothy was considering moving on. Every problem that we encounter in 1 Timothy, and there are many, were all happening at the same time in this congregation and Timothy is called to deal with all of it. This is an intimidating and daunting task. I think it may have especially been difficult because [1 Timothy 4:12](#) tells us that there were some in the church who were resistant to his leadership and teaching because of his age. This is such a petty thing to be hung up on. The older have too much pride to humble themselves and learn from a younger minister, while the younger in the church are likely so filled with rivalry and jealousy that it blinds them and keeps them from receiving all of the blessings God intends to give them through Timothy, and all because of the bogus notions that he is younger. So if you are Timothy, and you are facing many problems in the church, including some serious problems in the eldership, and there was a problem in the congregation wherein the church was resistant to you because of your age, would you be very thrilled about remaining here? Timothy needed to be urged, strengthened, and encouraged to fulfill his ministry among such a difficult people and no doubt Paul's urging helped with that.

2. Dealing with False teachers vs. 3b

Now verse 3 makes it very clear that the reason he is to remain in Ephesus is to "charge," or command, certain persons not to teach false doctrine. This doctrine is a doctrine that is contrary to the Apostolic teaching of the Gospel. Dealing with this issue requires a great amount of courage because in going after these "certain persons," and their false teaching, he will have to

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be specific, clear, direct, personal, and authoritative, and he must make it known that a failure to repent of this teaching will result in serious consequences. In fact, if you look at verses 18-20 of chapter 1, we can see that Paul himself had already disciplined Hymaneus and Alexander out of the church for this.

3. Who Were the False Teachers?

So who were these false teachers? Unfortunately, we are not able to gain the particular details about who exactly they were from our text. But we can gain some clues in the text about who they were and what they taught and from these clues, we can then make reasonable application. I personally take the position that it is likely that these men were elders, though that can't be dogmatically proven. But I think that the weight of evidence seems to suggest that. In verse 7 Paul says that these men posture as teachers of the Law, which was something usually done by elders. One of the major issues in this book is the qualifications for elders, which is likely present because Timothy is going to have to remove unqualified elders and appoint new ones who are qualified (ch. 3). Later on in chapter 5 Paul gives Timothy instructions on how to discipline elders who are in sin and he tells them, that when necessary, it is to be public. Then, at the end of chapter 1, after charging Timothy to demand repentance by those advocating false doctrine, Paul specifically and publicly names out two men who have not repented of this, namely, Hymaneus and Alexander, and this is probably because he is keeping with his exhortations to publicly discipline elders when they are in sin, especially when the sin is the public teaching of false doctrine.

So because of these reasons, I lean towards the view that Timothy was being charged to correct elders who were teaching false doctrine. However, as a side note I would add that one of the dangers of taking this view, is we can start to assume that false teaching can only harm the body if the elders are doing it. For anyone who has been around a church for any prolonged period of time, it becomes quickly apparent that many people in the congregation share their views with the body and are informally teaching all of the time. If false teaching rises in the congregation, that also needs to be dealt with because I have personally seen false teachers sow heresy into the church and harm many people and they never were given a public platform to do it, nor a formal title of elder or teacher. They ended up being disciplined out of the church for this. So, even though this was likely an elder issue Timothy was dealing with, it is important for us to be on guard for false teaching from those who are not given a public platform as well.

4. What did They Teach?

So what did these false teachers teach? We know from verse 3 that it is doctrine that is contrary to the Apostolic Gospel. If we look at verse 4 we can see some of the specifics as it pertains to how they were promoting false doctrine (read vs. 4). Somehow they were taking the genealogies from the Old Testament, which are everywhere, and they were using them to

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create and promote bizarre speculations from the Old Testament. We don't know the specifics, but taking random bits from the Old Testament and promoting bizarre speculations is something we see in our day as well.

Over the summer I read some excerpts from a man who claimed to have a vision in Israel and he was given the Key of David. He interpreted this key as a musical key and he claimed that his music could heal your body and he tries to prove this from wild speculative uses of the Old Testament. We could give many more examples but we won't for time's sake. So something similar was happening in Ephesus and the end result was the promotion of false doctrine. It is so important that we use good hermeneutics in promoting our doctrines, because if we do not, we will end up in wild speculations that will undo sound doctrine and destroy the church.

We also know that this false doctrine wanders away from love. If we read 5-6 we can see why I believe that. In verse 5 the goal Paul hopes to achieve is love and he tell us where love comes from, which we will cover in minute (read vs. 5). Right after saying his goal is the production of love, in verse 6 Paul says that "certain persons" have swerved from the things that lead to love and have wandered into vain discussion (read vs. 6). The "certain persons," he has in mind here are the same "certain persons," from verse 3 that Timothy is to rebuke. Their teaching amounted to nothing more than, "vain discussion." It is profitless, it is empty, it cannot produce love, and it is talk that is pure vanity.

We also know that the false teachers misused the Law in order to promote their false teachings. (read vs. 7). They desire to be teachers of the Law, which means they love teaching God's Law. However, when they teach it, it becomes obvious to Paul, but not to them, that they have no idea what they are talking about. Though they have no idea what they are talking about, nevertheless, verse 7 tells us that they make confident assertions in their ignorant proclamations. Don't you hate that? Easily one of my biggest pet peeves in life is listening to someone boastfully rant on things that they know nothing or very little about. They are flaunting their ignorance for all to see and their use of the Law amounts to the promotion of heresy but they are proud of it.

So what exactly was their misuse of the Law? I believe, as was very common by false teachers who taught from the Law, that they were teaching a works righteousness based on the Law in place of the sound doctrine of the Gospel that saves us and provides a righteousness for us, not based on our works, but based on us receiving Christ by faith.

The first reason I believe this, is because in the middle of charging Timothy to rebuke these false teachers, Paul states the truth that is opposed to their false teaching in verse 4 and in verse 5. In verse 4 Paul states that their teaching doesn't promote what is right, namely, "the stewardship from God that is **BY FAITH.**" In emphasizing that the stewardship of sound doctrine from God is, "by faith," I believe Paul means that to be a contrast to the false teachers who misuse the Law

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to promote righteousness by works. In verse 5 again Paul says that one of the key things that love issues forth from is “sincere faith.” Again, I believe that highlighting, “sincere faith,” is an intentional contrast on Paul’s part to the misuse of the Law by the false teachers.

But the biggest reason I believe the false teachers were promoting works righteousness by the Law is because of Paul’s correction of them in verses 8-11 wherein, he articulates the proper use, and misuse of the Law in relation to what the false teachers are saying. (read vs. 8). When Paul rebukes false teachers who misuse the Law he wants to make sure he makes it clear that the law is good, which is the same thing he said in Romans 7:12. After declaring that there is a proper use of the Law, he then moves on and tells us what that proper use is in verse 9 (read).

The first crucial understanding of the Law, is to know that it is not laid down, “for the just,” or some of your translations may say, “for the righteous.” So what does that mean? Who are the righteous, or the just, that Paul is referring to? The answer to that question is critical. One option suggests that he is referring to believers as the righteous, because we are righteous by faith. The problem I have with that view is that if this is who he is referring to, he is saying that the Law has no place in a believer’s life. Just looking at what Paul has taught Ephesus alone causes this interpretation to be invalid. In [5:17](#) he tells the church that they are to financially support their elders, and the justification for this command in Paul’s mind is found in DT. 25:4, which is from the Law ([1 Cor. 9:9](#)), and says that you are not to muzzle the ox while he is treading out the grain. In other words, an ox is to be fed for the work of grain treading that he is doing. Paul applies this truth from the Law to the NT church as a reason for why they need to pay their pastors. But if the “righteous” in this text refers to believers, and the Law is not for them, then Paul contradicts himself in 5:17 by appealing to the Law as the authoritative call to pay elders.

Furthermore, if the Law is not given for believers, then Paul also contradicted what he had previously taught this church when he gave them instruction on how Christian households are to function. In [Eph. 6:2-3](#) Paul quotes the 5th Commandment that calls us to honor our parents, while instructing children that their role in the family is to be obedient to their parents. Again, he is addressing the Spirit-filled, or “Christian,” family and he quotes the Law and expects that they will apply it, so if the Law is not for believers, then Paul is contradicting what he has elsewhere taught this church. So because of this I reject the notion that “the righteous,” are believers.

In my mind the only other valid option here is that what Paul means when he says the law is not given for the righteous, is that the Law is not given for us to use in order to achieve righteousness, because that is an impossibility. The Law is not given for a man to become righteous through it, or to look at it, think he has performed it, and wrongly declare himself to be righteous. This is similar to Christ saying he hasn’t come for the righteous but sinners ([Mark](#)

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[2:17](#)). Similarly, the Law wasn't given for the righteous, but to expose sinners, and that is exactly where Paul is going with this.

(Read vs. 9b). How is the Law for these types of people? I believe it is because through the Law, these people will become aware of their sin and their need to be saved, which is exactly what Paul taught the church in Rome in [Romans 3:19-20](#). In proving his point, he draws attention to particular expressions of sin and how they blatantly contradict the Mosaic Law.

The Law is for, "those who strike their fathers and mothers," which is a direct violation of the 5th Commandment. Paul also tells us the Law is for "murderers," and committing murder is a direct violation of the 6th commandment, which says, "You shall not murder." By the way, Jesus told us on the Sermon on the Mount that if you have ever hated anyone, even if you didn't commit homicide against them, you are guilty of being a murderer by committing it in your heart ([Matthew 5:21-22](#)).

From there Paul moves on and says that the Law is for, "the sexually immoral," as well as, "men who practice homosexuality." Anyone who commits adultery, fornication, or homosexuality is in violation of God's prohibition against these things. The 7th commandment prohibits adultery, and [Leviticus 18:22](#) prohibits homosexuality. Just as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that we can violate the prohibition to murder through hatred, so also we can violate God's standards on sexual purity simply by lusting in our hearts ([Matthew 5:28](#)). So if you have ever lusted after someone who is not your spouse, you are guilty of adultery, and if you have ever lusted after someone who is of the same gender, you are guilty of homosexuality in the heart and you stand under the judgment of God's Law.

Paul also says that the Law is for enslavers, that is, those who traffic and sell other people into various forms of slavery. This is a vile and wicked sin because it appraises the value of another person's life as worth nothing more than to serve your selfish ends and to make you money while you ruin their lives. Fierce judgment from God hangs over slave traders as we see in Revelation 18 when the wicked city of Babylon is judged, verse 13 tells us that the slave traders weep over the judgment of Babylon and the implication is that this judgment is going to fall on them too. Slave trading is a direct violation of Lev. 19:18, which commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Law is also for, "liars and perjurers," which is a direct violation of the 9th commandment that prohibits bearing false witness. So if you have ever lied, you are in violation of this. Finally Paul said the Law is also given to testify against the wickedness of, "whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." That is a broad definition of unrighteousness that is condemned by the Law. Anything that contradicts the sound doctrine of the Gospel, such as the Ephesian false teachers who are using the Law to promote works righteousness, is under God's just condemnation.

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So I believe it is fairly obvious by Paul's correction of their misuse of the Law here, that they were promoting works righteousness. The Law is given not to make us righteous, or declare us to be righteous, but rather, to expose and uncover the truth about us that we are not righteous, we have transgressed it in many ways, and we need to be saved through the Gospel. Any use of the Law that contradicts this is heresy and Timothy must deal with it, because the Law is crying out against us that we are guilty in every way, it is not patting us on the back!

III. The Antidote to the Heresy vs. 4-5

1. Sound Doctrine Stewarded by Faith vs. 4

So Timothy is charged with being the antidote to the false teachers. As we have already mentioned, the false teachers spread false doctrine and promote speculations. As a stark contrast to that, we see in verse 4 that Timothy is to embody in his ministry, what they are failing at. Specifically, Timothy is to promote, "the stewardship from God that is by faith." Unlike the false teachers, Timothy is not to misuse the Law and abuse Scripture to contradict sound doctrine and promote speculations, rather, he is to steward what God has revealed in his Word. This stewardship is a message that reveals what God has said to be true, and Timothy is to hold to it, trust it, believe it, and deliver it unaltered.

2. Love is the Goal of Dealing with False Teachers vs. 5a

Paul charged Timothy to rebuke the false teachers in verse 3, and in verse 5 Paul gives him the reason for this charge (read). The goal of correcting false teachers is love, because to try to love God or people through the heresy that is promoted by false teachers who are advocating works righteousness, is impossible. Therefore, their error needs to be exposed and corrected, and the truth needs to clearly supplant it, because what is at stake here is the ability, presence, and reality of love for God, and love for people, which is the most important thing we can ever pursue! Heresy can't produce love. You cannot look at God's commands to love in his Law, and then by your own strength, perform them in a truly loving way. In order for us to be able to love we need something outside of ourselves. We need divine power to move in us and create that ability to love within us. How do I know we need divine power from this text? I know it because of what Paul says produces love.

3. The Producers of Love Read vs 5b

Paul says here that love, "issues forth from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith." Now I want you to think about what we briefly covered about the Law in verses 9-11 a few minutes ago. When we considered the fact that sexual immorality and murder can be committed in the heart, when you look back at every lustful thought, word, and deed in your life, do any of you feel pure in heart?

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When we see that we have violated these commandments, when we realize we have not perfectly honored our parents, when we are reminded of how many times we have lied in our lives, and we look at a holy God who will judge us for violating his Law, does anybody have a good conscience? Our conscience is that inner voice that [Romans 2:15](#) says will either accuse us of doing wrong, or acquit us. When we see how we have violated God's Law, if our conscience is operating according to truth and is in harmony with God's ways, our consciences should be on fire before him.

When your heart is impure and is focused on gratifying your selfish desires, how loving are you in those seasons? We aren't loving at all during those times, all that we are focused on, all that we can see, is the gratifications of our selfish desires that flow out of our corrupt hearts, and anybody who gets in the way of that is not loved by us, rather, they are despised by us, and possibly even attacked by us be it verbally or physically. It is not possible for love to flow from an impure heart, because everything we do and say comes as an overflow of what is in our heart. Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander," ([Matthew 15:19](#)). One of the most unbiblical notions is to suggest that you are okay with God after seeing these things in your life, by saying, "I know I've made some mistakes but God knows my heart." How is that a comfort to you? Others might say, "Well yes so and so has these destructive things in his life, but his heart is in the right place." Really? What would Jesus say to that?

Not only can we not love with impure hearts, but I would also ask you, "How loving are you when your conscience is feeling guilty?" I know that when I do something that violates my conscience, I am completely preoccupied with it, distracted by it, my peace is gone, my joy is taken away, and I am very edgy! Walking around with a conscience that is accusing you of sin and wrongdoing is not going to make you a loving person. It will make you a depressed person, a self-absorbed person, an angry person, and a very critical person. One of the reasons we become so angry and critical when our conscience is defiled is because we don't like the feeling of having a defiled conscience, and when we aren't willing to face the fact that it is our fault that our conscience is defiled, we try to get rid of the feeling of a burning conscience by seeking to blame other people for what we believe their role was in the defilement of our conscience, whether that role is real or perceived. Or maybe we just feel hopeless that our conscience can ever be cleansed and that is what is making us so unloving and desirous of tearing others apart so we can bring them down into our misery. Some of the most un-loving people in the world, are that way, in large part, because their conscience is on fire and they haven't dealt with it.

If you have a regular habit of violating your conscience, you are going to be a very irritable and unloving person. I believe that is a huge part of the reason Paul said in Acts 24:16 that, "I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."

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Now if you look into God's Law and you try to use it to prove you are a righteous person, all that is going to happen is that the impurity of your heart will be revealed, and if you have eyes to see, this will wound your conscience, and as a result, you will not love God or people. So how do we get a clear conscience and a pure heart? You won't get a clear conscience by good works, you won't get a clear conscience by trying to atone for your failures, you won't get a clear conscience by denying your sin and resisting your conscience and lying against the own testimony of your heart that tells you that you're guilty. There is only one way to get a clear conscience and a pure heart and it is in our text.

Our first clue is in the last thing said in verse 5 that Paul says produces love, namely, "a sincere faith," a sincere faith in what? In vs. 3 the false teachers are to be rebuked by Timothy for teaching a, "different doctrine," and in vs. 10 the Law rebukes and condemns anybody who is in line with whatever is "contrary to sound doctrine." In vs. 11 we see that sound doctrine is always, "in accordance with the gospel of the blessed God..." So what are we to have a sincere faith in that is consistent with sound doctrine and runs contrary to the false teacher's heresies about attaining righteousness by works of the Law? I think without question what Paul is saying is able to produce love, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are going to love, then the Gospel that we are called to have sincere faith in, is going to have to deal with the problem of our impure hearts, and our wounded consciences! And these things are dealt with gloriously by it!

IV. Love: A Gospel Creation

1. The Gospel and a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith

Now the first key ingredient to love according to verse 5 is a pure heart, which we have already seen, God's Law testifies that none of us has. So how does the Gospel deal with this problem? [Romans 5:5-10](#) is one of my favorite presentations of the Gospel. (Read vs. 5). Right here in this verse we see that the antidote to an impure heart, is having the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that is given by God. When the Spirit indwells your heart, it makes you a new person, it gives you new and holy desires for God, his glory, his presence, and the things that please him. This is an experiential reality and you literally encounter and rejoice in the presence of the living God when the Spirit is poured into your heart and bears witness with your heart about how much God loves you! This Gospel reality is the most heart purifying power there is. Knowing the love of God for you in your heart, by the Spirit will thrill you and give you a new distaste for sin, worldliness, and impurity.

Despite what false teachers in Ephesus might say, receiving the Spirit does not happen "by works of the Law, but by hearing with faith," (Gal. 3:2). Eph. 3:17 says that, "Christ dwells in our hearts through faith." Ezekiel 36:26 God promised that in the New Covenant, he would, "...give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." In the New Covenant God promised Jeremiah he would write the Law on our hearts and minds ([Jeremiah 31:33](#)). So the

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Gospel solution to an impure heart that is a destroyer of our ability to love, is a new heart, and these texts tell us that it happens by faith ([Gal. 3:2](#); [Eph. 3:17](#)) Faith in what?

Let's return to Romans 5:5 and following to see. Right after saying God has poured the Spirit into our hearts in vs. 5, he connects that idea with what he begins to say in verse 6 (read). The Word, "For," which starts verse 6 is a conjunction that joins what he said in verse 5 to what will follow. If your translation doesn't have that word, it is wrong, because it is present in the Greek. So what is being joined to receiving the Spirit? Verse 6 tells us it is Christ dying for the ungodly, or the impure of heart. Read vs. 7-8. It is rare to find a human who will die for another human, but it may happen if the person being died for is a very good man. Christ however, died for us, not when we were noble and worthy of it, but "while we were still sinners," while we were corrupt in our hearts and plagued with a guilty conscience! This death is sufficient to provide us with the forgiveness of sins because when Christ shed his blood on the cross for us he was punished in our place for the impure things that erupt from our wicked hearts.

The way Christ's death affects a believer's relationship with God is found in vs. 9-10, listen for it (read vs. 9). We are justified, that is declared not guilty by God, because the penalty for our sin has been paid by the blood of Christ. As a result, we are saved by Christ, "from the wrath of God." The awful consequence of God's wrath has been removed for the believer who is trusting in Christ. What a wonderful gift and blessing!

Verse 10 shows us another blessing we receive by the death and resurrection of Christ (read). We are now reconciled to God by his death. We are no longer his enemies, we are no longer opposed to him, but rather, we are in a loving relationship with him and he is our great treasure and joy! Verse 11 goes on to say, "We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." And if you look back at Romans 5:1, where this chapter began, we see that we receive this Gospel, not by works, but by faith, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So what is gained here in summary? Paul said love comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Here we see in Romans 5, that through the Gospel, our impure hearts are made new by the filling of the Holy Spirit, our consciences are cleansed by the death of Christ because he shed his blood for us and we are declared to be righteous, rather than guilty, and it is guilt that keeps our consciences wounded. And we are also reconciled to God and we now rejoice in Him. All of this is received by a, "sincere faith," Romans 5:1. This will make a person love.

The solution to the impurity of our hearts is to have them filled with God's Spirit who testifies to God's love for us and presses it in on us in the sweetest ways that causes us to not just intellectualize the love of God, but feel it and experience it, so much so that Paul can say later in Romans 8:15 that we have received, "the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba Father.'" The Spirit within us makes God so real to us that our

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almost involuntary and compulsive, joyful reaction to it, is to cry out like a child, “O I love you father!”

This can happen because our hearts are new, but also because that awful nagging guilt of our conscience has been removed! Hebrews 10:22 tells us that because of the Gospel we may come to God and I want you to pay attention to what it says about the heart, the conscience, and the sincere faith Paul spoke of in 1 Timothy 1:5, “Let us draw near with a true **heart** in full assurance of **faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil **conscience**...” You see that, the faith is sincere and fully assured of the sufficiency of the Gospel, as a result our hearts are true and pure and steadfast, and our painfully wounded conscience, O the pain of a dirty conscience, it doesn’t have to be suppressed, ignored, denied, numbed with substance abuse, but instead, it is literally and actually cleansed, by the death of Christ!

2. The Power of Love

That, and not works righteousness or anything else, has the power to make you a loving person. This Gospel-centered creation of our love for God and others begins at conversion, and as we walk in him as Christians, even 50 years after being saved, this is still the way we are to pursue love.

When you are stumbling in sin, you have become earthly-minded, and your conscience is wounded and your heart is defiled by your remaining corruption and you see how unloving, angry, and sinful you have been acting towards God and others, what are you to do as a Christian? Do you look to the Law to change you? The Law is good because it shows you a concrete definition of how we are failing to love, but it is not going to give you the power to love on its own. Instead, you need to draw near to God through the Gospel. It is so important for you to realize that no matter how long you have been a Christian, you never outgrow the Gospel, God never tires of applying it to you, and you are never without need of it

A subtle self-righteousness and pride can sneak in on us as Christians. When we get saved, we love the Lord, we treasure the Gospel, and we grow. After seeing such a radical change in ourselves, we can slowly and subtly become deceived into thinking we do not still need the Gospel, though we may not consciously think that or say that. Doing this will make you an arrogant person, it will make you an impatient person, then when you sin and your conscience is defiled, it will make you a very discouraged, self-absorbed, and irritable person.

In your sin as a believer, you must continue to confess them to God, cast them anew on the cross of Christ, let the wounds of Jesus cleanse your conscience, repent of anything God puts on your heart, reconcile any wrong with any human relationship that needs it, ask the Spirit to purify your heart, and make a conscious decision, to choose to exercise a sincere faith that God is going to forgive you, cleanse your conscience, and purify your

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heart. You are not capable of out-sinning God's grace in Christ. His Gospel is too powerful, Christ's work is too glorious, King Jesus is too triumphant, God's glory at the cross is too overwhelming, and his love for you is far too great for that to be a possibility. The more you give yourself to Gospel-centered living, the greater your love will be for God and for people. The more you give yourself to self-righteousness, the colder and weaker your love will be for God and others. Don't be embarrassed that you still need the Gospel!

He loves you! He loves you so much! But you have to believe it or you will never experience it, be saved by it, or grow in sanctification by it. He rejoices over you with singing! His goodness and mercy follows you all of the days of your life because of his grace! He is glad to see you, he is glad you are part of his family, all of his thoughts and ways towards you are loving, in Christ you stand in his grace (Romans 5:2), he delights in your faith, he delights in your repentance, he delights in your seeking of him, he rejoices over your love for him and others! He just...loves you!

What would it do to your love for God and others today, if the worldly impurities of your heart were cleansed by the Spirit, if the awful nagging and accusing of your conscience was cleansed by the cross and repentance, and if all of your doubts that God will forgive you, change you, and draw near to you were overcome by a sincere faith that he loves you more than you could ever know and he will sing with joy if you repent, believe, and return? My guess is you would not be able to contain your love for God or others and you would be overjoyed! He was crushed for your sins and he welcomes you with open arms! But whatever you won't confess, bring to God, and deal with through the Gospel, will continue to haunt you. Believe, be cleansed and love!