

You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 6/30/2018

It was foretold by Jesus that in these last days it would become more and more difficult for the saints to maintain their Godly love for one another:

Matthew 24:12-13 Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

It is incumbent on each of us to extend our Godly love to all our brothers and sisters in the faith. Do we realize that love of the brethren is a **salvational issue**? The apostle John put it so succinctly. Godly love towards our neighbor is a matter of eternal life.

1John 3:14 We know that we have passed from **death unto life**, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

God is very clearly telling us that in order to attain a place in His Kingdom, we must love our neighbor as ourselves. We certainly hope for the Kingdom of God, but do we equally desire the same for all? Years ago, we were readily able to enjoy many like-minded brethren. Today, there are no longer the many large gatherings of brethren in nearly every city with whom we are able to spiritually stimulate and motivate one another unto love and to good works.

Hebrews 10:24 Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Now, for most of the brethren around the world, it takes far more effort to maintain bonds of fellowship. And yet, we realize that we must with all diligence persist as long as God gives us strength.

Malachi 3:16 They that feared the LORD spoke often one to another.

Many who have gone before us, like the first century Church of God, saw their faithful constituents wax and wane just as we are witnessing today. At this time, it behooves us all the more to love our neighbor as ourselves as we seek to preserve the unity of the faith.

Ephesians 4:13 Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

In our early development within the Body of Christ, we began to come out of the world. We learned about God's Law—the Sabbath, the Holy Days and the Plan of God. Some, erroneously looked down on others who had not been given that wonderful knowledge.

God, however, had other plans for our development. We are privileged to be able to continue to learn the lessons He has in store for us. In the days of the Worldwide Church of God, "love" was too often considered a Protestant concept. Never mind, that the Ten Commandments are an integral part of Godly love. Though the Protestants attempt the practice of loving their neighbor, they lack the Spirit of God which is crucial to fully implementing the Ten Commandments in their deeds. True Godly love is difficult to perform.

John 15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Never mind what the world thinks of us, it is of the utmost importance that our evaluation of ourselves matches God's evaluation of us. We welcome and desire His involvement in our lives.

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: examine me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms 26:2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Does God see us as being humble and respectful of Him? We show our humility and our respect for His law by the way we feel and act toward one another.

Galatians 5:14-15 All the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.

So how can we really tell if we truly love the brethren? We certainly do not want to find out too late! Here is the answer:

Matthew 25:34-40 The King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me... Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, **you did it to me.**

Romans 13:10-11 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law. And do this [loving our neighbor], knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now **our salvation is nearer** than when we first believed.

We cannot let down. Do we realize that love of the brethren is a salvational issue? God is very straightforwardly telling us that, to attain a place in His Kingdom, we must love one another. A key part of our preparation for the Kingdom is taking a realistic and objective look at ourselves. Are we making progress toward the perfection of the fullness and stature of Jesus Christ? Peter explained that, as Christians, we suffer for two different reasons.

1. We will suffer for Righteousness sake – this is not God's world.
2. We need to take a look at ourselves to see when we are bringing the trouble on ourselves.

Take a look at ourselves as Haggai said twice:

Haggai 1:5-7 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Consider your ways. Good advice from a prophet of God.

1Peter 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

I think Peter picked up this concept back in Lamentations – it shows how well versed in the scriptures the Apostles were – a lesson to us.

Lamentations 3:39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

Jeremiah is saying we need to take a look at ourselves.

Lamentations 3:40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Why do we need to take a look at ourselves? There is the answer: to turn again to the LORD.

This is not just sentiments – direct action is called for.

Lamentations 3:41 Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

In our early development within the Body of Christ, we began to come out of the world. Unfortunately, some of our brethren thought that they had arrived. Some, erroneously, looked down on others who had not been given that wonderful knowledge. Many reasoned, "I'm ready to go to the Place of Safety." God, however, had other plans for our development.

We are privileged to be able to continue to learn the lessons He has in store for us. Herbert W. Armstrong has been dead for 32 years - what are we to be learning now? It becomes mostly talk... For Protestants it is all about sentiments, and feelings...

As we just saw in Lamentations 3:41 Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

Psalms 66:18 If I regard [with] iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

What we need to ask ourselves is, how does God see us? And what do we need to be doing to grow spiritually?

Psalms 26:3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

Psalms 26:4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

Psalms 26:5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

God cleans us up – we all need it – continuously...

Psalms 26:6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

We can come near to God – we can be useful to God – by letting our light shine...

Psalms 26:7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

As we grow in spiritual maturity we learn to view ourselves more and more as God sees us.

We no longer justify ourselves - but ask to be justified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We ask ourselves how much we have taken on a resemblance spiritually to Jesus Christ, our older brother -- to how much our thoughts and actions compare to His.

Let's be sure to spend time in prayer and looking at ourselves.

Is Paul speaking of brethren who are physically sick and prematurely dead, or is he describing the spiritual state of some members?

Paul then calls for self-examination using the same word again:

1Corinthians 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1Corinthians 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

1Corinthians 11:31 For if we would judge [discern] ourselves, we should not be judged.

1Corinthians 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

It is Jesus Christ who is Master of our salvation..

He directs our steps... He guides our way... He measures our lessons and experiences... We are clay in His hands...

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Hebrews 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

Hebrews 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Hebrews 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Hebrews 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

If we do all of this as imperfect human parents, how much more does God's heart go out to each of us as the perfect Father?

Hebrews 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Hebrews 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

1Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

1Corinthians 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

And, we are back to where we were a few moments ago...

1Corinthians 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Perhaps Looking at Ourselves is "not our favorite" part of our spiritual lives. Actually though, looking at ourselves can be a very positive experience.

It was God who first took the initiative while we were still sinners, still ungodly, still enemies of God. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ puts away our sin and the death penalty. It puts us on the track with God.

Yet, that is only half of the salvation process. The other "half" is the life of Jesus Christ and Christ living in us that brings salvation, that produces a son and servant of God with whom God can be well pleased.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

We need to take a look at ourselves to see where we need to repent and seek God's forgiveness. At the same time, we can see where Christ has been living His life in us, and be fully persuaded that we are in the faith.

Paul was in the faith – his proof was that Christ was in his disciples.

If they would take a look at themselves – they would realize where they learned about Christ – from Paul.

2Corinthians 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

2Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, [take a look at Ourselves] whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2Corinthians 13:6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Unapproved, worthless, castaways.

2Co 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, [Paul enlists self deprecation here] though we be as reprobates.

When are we going to assume **ownership of our faith**? What is meant by ownership of our faith?

In the past, there have been those within the Church who hung around church headquarters or ministers – trying to look good. They wanted to be recognized. They wanted to be well thought of. They wanted to belong.

They thought of the "church" as something that had charge over them – and if they could convince those in positions of authority that they were loyal to them – in the organization – then – that's what would get them to the Place of Safety, Kingdom of God, etc.

They thought the “church” was like man’s government – it is who you know in high places. If you were in good with them – you wouldn’t get kicked out... You’d get special favors.

And, somehow, they reasoned that their involvement in church politics – put them in good stead with God on high.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

When are we going to assume ownership of our faith?

There are those ministers – false ministers – false prophets – who will take terrible advantage of the flock.

A trick that the false ministers use is to equate church organization [corporation] with God – they equate God’s Government with manmade organization government.

Let me check with Pasadena – they used to say. They will decide if you are married or not???

2Peter 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

They intimate that if you are right with their HQ – then you are automatically right with God. I think that they fully believe that their corporation represents God. It is like the Catholic Churches doctrine of infallibility – “we don’t make mistakes.”

“Our word is law.” Do you know what it means to “Bait and switch?”

Buy a pig in a poke? You don’t realize what you are getting...

They say things like: “We do need to examine ourselves, because we need to understand that only when we put God first in our lives, and then put our relationships with others second, are we really going to have the happiness that God wants us to have.” That is a direct quote.

You might say – I agree with that statement. Okay – so do I – but let’s take a look at what is being said...

He said, “we put God first in our lives” – we all wish to do that. How do we do that? Is it by allowing those men to have dominion over your faith.

Paul, speaking for true ministers of Jesus Christ, says in:

2Corinthians 1:24 “We do **NOT** have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.

You stand on YOUR faith. You put God first in all your own personal decisions – that nobody else knows about...

That Bait and switch minister went on to say, “then put our relationships with others second.”

Brethren, please understand this principle about our Faith – When we relate to others in a Godly way, when we serve others as Jesus Christ served us – we are NOT putting God last, that does not subordinate God to second place.

How we serve our fellow man – is how we serve God.

It is a false faith that says “You and Me Lord – forget the others!”

That is what Mat 25:40 that we saw earlier means—

The King [Jesus] shall answer and say unto them, truly I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it **unto me**.

We put God first—**in our relationships with others**—when our motivations are based on Godly principles.

No one at Pasadena (then) or some HQ (now) is judge of our actions or motivations.

That is what Paul meant when he said:

1Corinthians 11:31 For if we would judge [discern] ourselves, we should not be judged.

It is a wrong concept. to strive to rule and dominate over many people now – so as to have a high position in the Kingdom of God.

Some men think way too highly of themselves...

Galatians 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

We better take a look at ourselves...

Galatians 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Let’s repeat that verse:

Galatians 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Galatians 6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

We take a look at our own motivations – and there is no one between us and Christ who is able to second-guess our heartfelt decisions.

We don’t always have our motivations in line with God’s Will.

That is why we must continually be taking a look at ourselves.

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Acts 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Here is the point – Jesus took it personally – the way Saul was treating church people. why persecutest thou me? Not them.

Jesus, Himself, was being abused. Notice:

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Paul was exercising wrong government domination over their Faith. Later he would write in:

2Corinthians 1:24 “We do NOT have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.

At that point in his life Paul [still Saul] had not taken an honest look at himself – he hadn’t asked himself, “How are these Christians that I am killing and locking-up, my enemies? How are they enemies of the True God?

‘kick against the pricks’ = fight against what stings and hurts. Paul was violating his own conscience by destroying that which was good.

Jesus told Paul that he was fighting against “Right,” “Righteousness.”

Instantly, upon being rebuked, Paul yielded to Christ...

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

An important concept, that we must understand is the concept of personal responsibility for ourselves.

To the best of OUR ability, we choose good. The Ministry’s responsibility is to teach Godly principles, and then allow brethren to make their own decisions.

Catholics believe that Mary is the mediator between man and Jesus.

A few COG groups teach that their Leader stands between members and Jesus Christ.

Brethren, make no mistake about it. No HQ or Organizational leader is allowed to come between a person and Christ.

1Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Brethren, have you taken Ownership of your faith – or do you believe that you can “pass the buck” by just following orders. It is a lesson that is slow incoming to some.

Somehow we all know that it was wrong for those in the death camps of Nazi Germany to follow the extermination orders of Hitler.

But, we aren’t so careful to evaluate what we hear from so-called Church leaders...

Do we measure every teaching – by the word of God?

Before the Plan of God comes to fruition – is complete, every single person who has ever lived will have been given the same opportunity as Adam and Eve...

Will we take of God's Holy Spirit, the Tree of Life – or will we take a little here, and a little there, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Are we doing all we can do? Are we doing all that we must do? Do we want to wait entirely of God's chastisement – before we take a good look at ourselves. We can use the 10 Commandments as an outline...

#6 Thou shall not kill – I'm okay on that one.

Is that the way we take a look at ourselves... We'd better take a **closer** look at everything we do or accept.

Let's look at ourselves with respect to each one of the 10 Commandments – the magnified version.

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Matthew 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

God's judgment is thorough. Ask God for help in ferreting out our hidden faults. None of us has it all together. Pride is thinking we have nothing to learn. Humility is knowing we come short in unknown areas of our lives. We must take a good look at ourselves and deal with our shortcomings.

Psalms 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

That is someone who has taken a look at himself and admitted to God his sin – changed - repented – asked forgiveness and is clean—whose sin is covered.

Then verse 2 applies to him:

Psalms 32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

David recalls a time when he was not Looking at himself – he was not dealing with his problems.

Psalms 32:3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

He was being drug down spiritually because of his sins. He was about to lose God's Holy Spirit – rivers of living waters...

Psalms 32:4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

Psalm 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Psalm 32:6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:

The night comes...

There will come a time very soon when it will be too late to buy oil.. ...but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Matthew 25:9, 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came;

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

End: You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself