

What It Means To Love One Another – Part 2

Selected Passages

We return once again to a series that I have been doing over the past several weeks on the heart of love and we are going to be looking at several passages this morning, but I would like to focus primarily on Romans chapter 15 for a few minutes. So if you will take your Bible and turn there, Romans chapter 15...

Last week we examined what it means to pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another as we studied Romans 14, issues pertaining to how we should resolve the inevitable conflicts between those who are weak in the faith, those who struggle with their freedom in Christ versus those who are strong and the inevitable judgment and contempt that goes back and forth. And in the context of that teaching we examined a variety of other one-anothering passages where we learn more of the practical ways to love one another as believers and what it really means to have fellowship within the body of Christ.

And today I want to examine a few other key one-anothering passages in an effort to answer the question: What does it mean to really love one another? This morning we will be answering that with respect to the spiritual needs that we have. Last week we answered that with respect to fellowship, now more about spiritual needs. And next week I will summarize it all, look at some of the ways we love one another with physical needs and some other things as well.

So, let's think about how do we love one another in terms of our spiritual needs. First of all, I want to give to you an observation that I think is without dispute. Most Christians will simply not confront one another about spiritual issues. The attitude is to kind of live and let live. After all, we don't want to meddle.

Ask yourself. When was the last time you saw a close friend, a brother or sister in Christ who was living in sin and you initiated an act of love and went up to them and said, "Dear friend, we need to talk"?

We just don't do that in our culture, do we?

When was the last time you saw a brother with a life dominating sin that you should really address, but instead you kind of avoided them, you kind of look the other way? Frankly, you just leave them alone to drown in their own iniquity, but not without a little bit of gossip on the side to other people about what they are doing?

How do you explain this? Well, in a word, it is selfish disobedience and a lack of love. Is it biblical? The answer is: Absolutely not.

Let me give you some perspective. Over the last 30 years or so the Evangelical Church has embraced what many have called the seeker sensitive movement, this philosophy of church growth where everybody is to be included. It doesn't matter what you believe. Everything is ok. There is really a de-emphasis if not a wholesale abandonment of Bible doctrine. Doctrinal precision and a love for truth is basically jettisoned. And as a result

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we have had this kind of pop gospel that has come forth over the last 30 years or so based upon marketing strategies and felt needs and so forth.

And, as you trace this movement, you will quickly see that the gifted and called men who are Bible expositors have been replaced by entrepreneurs who tend to preach a much less offensive type of gospel, one that is rooted in secular psychology and pragmatism rather than an exegetical understanding of the Word of God. So over the years the Church has continued to become more man centered rather than God centered and people are attracted to these types of churches because they are entertained musically, they are affirmed psychologically and they are typically pumped up emotionally.

So we now have a generation of ostensibly Evangelical Christian people who really know nothing about law, sin, salvation and especially what it means to live godly lives, righteous living. Well, frankly, most people don't care to know about that.

Now, you stir into this pot our culture's obsession with being politically correct, which is nothing more than a great satanic deception designed to eradicate genuine Christianity from the culture all together, and as a result you have this mindless acceptance of anyone and everyone, that everything is to be tolerated. No matter what people do, no matter what they think. And unless they are genuine Christians. We can't have that because those people are intolerant bigots. They believe that Jesus is the only way.

So the attitude there, again, is live and let live. Mind your own business. Nobody tells me what to do.

Now sometimes lives will get out of control and you will see in the secular world people, for example get caught up in alcohol or drug abuse or whatever and then all of the sudden there is an intervention and so a group of people come together and confront their friend or their loved one. But sadly most dysfunctional, destructive adults are never confronted by anyone. And, of course, this mindset is brought into the church. Family members tend to ignore one another's sinful habits. Most churches do not practice church discipline despite the Scripture's clear teaching to do so.

Isn't it interesting? God was so concerned about purity in the church that immediately after founding the Church at Pentecost he publicly rebuked and killed two of its members, Ananias and Sapphira. So much for being seeker sensitive. And in Matthew 18 in Jesus' really first and only sermon about the Church he carefully delineates a four fold process for church discipline.

But sadly most Christians simply refuse to get involved in the lives of those that they are close to in their church family and as a result they really see it as a virtue to kind of ignore a friend that is in need of spiritual direction and that might be moving in a way that would destroy their life. And many times when you do even lovingly confront someone, oh, they are terribly offended. How dare you. How are you? Blah, blah, blah. And then the relationship is severed and they get mad and leave the church or whatever.

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I had a friend who was heavily involved in the once famous fad called Promise Keepers and like most fads those things come up and then they float away. But I remember him showing me one time this stone that he kept in his pocket. He was very proud of it. And it was a stone that had with it the idea of never be a person to throw the first stone based on an errant understanding of Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees in John eight with the woman caught in adultery.

You remember the text. He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. And, of course, along with that I heard him talking about a completely distorted understanding of Matthew seven where it talks about do not judge lest you be judge. Yet he had no idea that the rest of the context of that whole passage is talking about how we are to judge by using God's standard, not our own and to be discerning and so forth.

So what should you do when you see a person in need of spiritual guidance? Well, what most people do is call the pastor or call a counselor, call one of the elders. Now I want to give you a caution. We don't want to be like Barney Fife and go around looking for somebody to confront. That is not at all what I am getting at here. Our role is not to police everyone. So don't jump to that conclusion. But we are to be lovingly involved in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That is part of what it means to love one another.

In Galatians six verse one you will recall it says, "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."¹ And then he says, "Bear one another's burdens,"² the idea of getting under and helping them with their burden of sin, "And thus fulfill the law of Christ,"³ which is to love one another.

I remember I gently confronted my Promise Keeper friend with that gentleness in an effort to try to correct him and I asked him about, you know, how do you explain the rest of Matthew 18? What about Galatians six? Can we talk about that for a minute? I would like to challenge your understanding of that passage and this little thing with the stone? How do you explain Jesus' words in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"⁴ How do you explain Titus 3:10 that you are to reject the factious man after a first and second warning and so on and so forth?

Well, fortunately, he responded with great humility and really changed. But many times that isn't the response. Nevertheless, we never judge the rightness of what we do by the quality of response that it elicits. We do what is right because God has asked us to and we do it for his glory regardless of how a person responds.

¹ Galatians 6:1.

² Galatians 6:2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ John 7:24.

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So the question before us is: What should we do? What would the Bible have us do when we have friends that are confused or have some errant theology or they are divisive, maybe they are weak in the faith as we talked about last week or they have some sinful bent in their interpersonal style of relating or something else that is dishonoring to Christ. What do we do biblically?

Well, I would submit to you that what the Bible calls us to do is a far cry from what we typically see in the body of Christ because we really don't know how to love one another. So to answer this I wish to look at several passages this morning that make it clear that we are required to admonish and to encourage one another.

So let's look at this text in Romans chapter 15 verse 14. And, once again, I regret that we are unable to in these passages go through just verse by verse and give all of the context. That is what I don't like about topical studies. But there is a place for them and certainly this is one of them.

So let me just read you the verse. It says in verse 14. It says, "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another."⁵

Here the apostle Paul as a partner in faith commends the believers in the church at Rome and despite his admonitions prior to this about the conflict between the weak and then strong and so forth, he says that you are full of goodness. The idea there is I look at you and I see that you are virtuous people. You are morally upright. You are pure in your heart, in your life, which really validates the genuineness of your faith.

Moreover, he says, you are filled with all knowledge. That means that you are doctrinally sound. You have an understanding of biblical truth. And because of this you have, therefore, not only virtue and truth, but you are able, he says, to admonish one another.

Able is a term that means you have the power. You have the strength. You have the capability. You, brethren, you, part of the body, not just the pastor, but you, you are able also to admonish one another.

Admonish is an interesting term in the original language. It is *noutheteo* (noo-thet-eh'-o). It means to warn or to instruct or to caution, to counsel, to encourage, to gently exhort, that type of thing. Maybe you have heard of nouthetic counseling, biblical counseling. That is the idea here.

In fact, we see the term in Ephesians six and verse four. You will recall there Paul is talking about the duty of Christian parents. He says that we are to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction or admonition of the Lord. That is the same word, *noutheteo* (noo-thet-eh'-o). So what Paul is saying here is that every believer who possesses virtue and truth has the divine enablement and the responsibility and the duty to be intimately

⁵ Romans 15:14.

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involved in the lives of their brothers and sisters in Christ and to admonish one another, to gently counsel, to warn, to encourage even to exhort.

We get a better sense of this in 1 Corinthians four verse 14 where Paul used the same term in confronting the Corinthians. He said there, “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”⁶

And then later in verse 16 he says, “I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.”⁷ How so? You, too, need to admonish.

Acts 20 verses 31 through 32 you will recall Paul calls the elders of the Church at Ephesus together to give them instruction. And one of the things he says in that context is “that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up.”⁸ In other words, you, too, need to be this way. You, too, need to do this. Beloved, this is your responsibility as much as it is mine. This is part of what it means to love one another.

Think of someone you are close to, someone right now that you are close to, that you love, that claims to be a believer, but yet you can see sin in their life or maybe some real errant understanding of the Word or whatever. Their lives are, as we would say, messed up. What are we to do? Look the other way? Just kind of pray about it? No, we are to get involved. We are to get involved.

Many times we say, “Well, we need to send them to a professional.” Well, no, wait a minute. Most professionals are not, as Paul says here, full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” In fact, many professionals are just the opposite of all of that. You see, this is our responsibility. We have the indwelling Spirit of God. We have the Word of God. In 2 Peter one and verse three we read that “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”⁹

Beloved, I fear that many times we underestimate not only the power of the Spirit, but also the power of the Word of God.

Let me encourage you to unleash the Word of God on people. I mean, you don’t want to come up to them and, you know, cram their mouth open and force it down them. You don’t want to, you know, have them be taking a drink from a fire hydrant. That is not the idea here, but to give them some basic understanding of biblical truth with respect to the issues they are dealing with because you believe in the sufficiency and the power and the authority of the Word. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is inspired by God

⁶ 1 Corinthians 4:14.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:16.

⁸ Acts 20:31-32.

⁹ 2 Peter 1:3.

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and profitable for teaching.”¹⁰ It means precise doctrine. It has the power. It is profitable to do that. But, secondly, for reproof, referring to conviction. Thirdly, for correction. It is a Greek term that means to set one upright after they have fallen on their face. Fourthly, for training. It is the idea of godly discipline, “for training in righteousness,”¹¹ it says, “that the man of God may be adequate,”¹² literally that he will be able to meet all of the demands of life that are brought to bear upon his Christian character, “that he may be equipped for every good work,”¹³ equipped meaning he is fully outfitted. He is fully, completely supplied. That is what the Word of God does. We must learn to unleash it.

Now this does not necessarily mean that you set up some appointment on Tuesdays at four. That is not the idea here. But the idea is rather that we become sensitive to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, learn to pray about some of the issues that we see coming up in their life and then purposefully and intentionally and forthrightly move into that life because we love them. It means to speak the truth in love. It means to admonish one another in tears as Paul did in Acts 20.

Again, Galatians 6:1. “If a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”¹⁴ I ask: Why do you choose to avoid moving into the life of your brothers and sisters in Christ with a gentle admonition? Why do you do that? I fear that in most cases it is because we have our own sin that we need to be dealing with. And certainly if that is the case you need to deal with it. Get the log out of your own eye before you go after the splinter in your brother’s. But then beyond that it is typically that we are more committed to our own self protection than self sacrifice. We fear man more than we fear God. We demand our own comfort. We are too selfish. We are too self centered. And to say it as bluntly but lovingly as I know how, we are so selfish that we really don’t love our brother enough to risk any kind of conflict that might make us feel uncomfortable. We would rather just let them drown in their sin.

I remember a friend of mine who over the years was morbidly obese. He had the sin of gluttony which tends to be an acceptable sin in our Christian culture. And it was destroying his body. He was overeating all the junk food, all of that that goes with it. Not only is that a bad testimony, but I knew the trajectory of his life, that health risks that are associated with obesity are absolutely staggering. Guaranteed you are going to have diabetes. Guaranteed you are going to have back problems, knee problems, high risk for what? Heart disease and stroke and cancers and all of these types of things. Your risk of dying prematurely at an early age are greatly increased.

Oh, but I was too good of a friend to really confront him and to try to help him bear his burden of sin. After all, I wouldn’t want to offend my brother, now would I?

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Galatians 6:1.

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Well, I lost track of him for a number of years and then I heard that all of those health risks assaulted him pretty much all at once and it was too late. He died prematurely. And, you know, as I think about that I find myself still struggling with a sense of guilt that I was more concerned about my own comfort, my own self protection than I was for my brother. I refused to admonish him in love, to try to help restore him in a spirit of gentleness, to try to help get under his burden of sin and say, “Brother, let me walk with you on this. This is dishonoring to Christ. You are destroying your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit,” and so forth.

Beloved, if you are serious about fulfilling the law of Christ to love your brother, you are going to be willing to risk losing a relationship in order to truly gain it for their good and for God’s glory. That is the long and the short of it. You see, this is what it means to really love one another. Listen to how the Holy Spirit describes this through the apostle Paul’s admonition to the believers at the Church in Colosse, in Colossians three verse 12.

He says:

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.¹⁵

And I love this. He says, “And be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.”¹⁶

It is the idea of let the truths of Scripture saturate every aspect of your life so that you will be controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is the same thing as being filled with the Spirit. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,”¹⁷ he says, “with all wisdom teaching and [here it is] admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”¹⁸

You see, even though our songs we can admonish. But it is certainly not limited to that. You see, the kind of Christian he is describing here is one whose life literally teaches and admonishes. It is a type of Christian whose heart is absolutely overflowing with the songs of redemption and thanksgiving. This is what I like to call a contagious Christian. This is the type of Christian you love to be around. But this is also the type of Christian that you know that if you are around them and you are living in sin, they are going to look you in the eye and say, “Brother, we need to talk.”

¹⁵ Colossians 3:12-15.

¹⁶ Colossians 3:15-16.

¹⁷ Colossians 3:16.

¹⁸ Colossians 3:16-17.

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This is the kind of Christian that has a heart that is so overflowing with praise and thanksgiving that their life literally teaches and admonishes. This is a Scripture saturated Christian that will inevitably teach and admonish with singing and thankfulness in their hearts to God.

I wish to give you another example of what it means to love one another with respect to our spiritual needs. Turn over now to Hebrews chapter 10 and we are going to look at verses 24 and 25, a very familiar text. Here the write of Hebrews is exhorting Jewish believers who were tempted to return back to the old Levitical system where they were more comfortable and where they could avoid persecution in their community with their families and so forth. And he is asking them to strongly exhort each other to make a full commitment to the local assembly of believers for corporate worship, for fellowship and so forth.

He says in verse 24, “Let us consider...” It means let us discover, let us perceive, let us observe fully “how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”¹⁹

“Stimulate” is an interesting term in the original language. It means to provoke or to incite. It means to stir up. It is *paroxusmos* (par-ox-oos-mos’) in the original language. We get our English word paroxysm which is a sudden outburst of emotion.

Well, what are we supposed to do in this stimulation? What are we trying to incite? Well, we are trying to incite our brothers to love and good deeds and to not forsake our own assembling together as the habit of some, but encouraging, *parakaleo* (par-ak-al-eh’-o). It means to exhort, to summon, to call for.

So he is literally saying, “Believers, here is what you need to do. I want you to discover how you can incite and summon your brothers and sisters in Christ to love and good deeds by not forsaking the assembling together of the saints.” Now think about it. How many of your brothers or sisters perhaps even in this church do you know that hardly ever show up? To be sure we all know people like that. Faithful church attendance is, frankly, not that big of a priority. After all, we have got more important things that we need to be about.

Well, what are we to do? Well, it says here we are to incite and summon and stimulate and exhort. That is what we are to do. Oh, really? Yes. To be able to say to someone that you are close to that you see doing this, “Brother, help me understand why you are so seldom involved in the worship services of this church. Where are you with respect to fellowship within the body of Christ? Why don’t you take advantage of the teaching that the Lord has given for you?”

¹⁹ Hebrews 10:24-25.

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In James one and verse 19 we are told to be quick to hear the word. The idea is you need to run to hear it. What is wrong with you?

I don't understand. We are told in Hebrews 10:24 we are not to forsake the assembling together of the saints. Help me understand why you don't obey that. Do you realize, dear brother, this is dishonoring to the Lord. This screams that somehow your priorities are self centered. They are not God centered. "Dear brother, I love you enough to say we need you and you need us. I warn you only because of my genuine love for you and my love for Christ."

Let me digress for a moment. The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the priority of being committed to a local assembly. Wherever the apostles established a local congregation they commanded believers to be a part of it. They would commit themselves to faithful and sacrificial service and accountability to a local assembly.

You see, beloved, the Christian life was never intended to be lived in isolation or to be lived without being faithfully committed and involved in a fellowship of a local church. You see, we are part of a body. How long would your kidney be able to live outside of the body? And the rest of the body needs the kidney, too. That is the idea.

Many Christians treat church not like a body or like a family, but like a restaurant. The attitude is, you know, "when I am hungry for that kind of stuff I will go eat there." That is the idea. "When I am in the mood, you know, when it is convenient." It is this mindset of religious consumerism. "But when I go it better be worth it. I better be treated special and the things need to meet my expectations, my satisfaction, but don't expect me to do anything. After all, I am here to be waited upon and if things aren't according to my liking, I am out of here. I am going to find another restaurant."

You see, friends, the Bible knows nothing of that kind of Christianity. Yet it is pervasive in our culture.

The book of Acts demonstrates that those who confess Christ as Savior, whether Jew or Gentile, were added to the church, these local assemblies, the universal Church as well as the local assemblies. For example in Acts 2:41, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."²⁰

Verse 47. "And the Lord was adding to their number."²¹ In other words to the *ekklesia* (ek-klay-see'-ah) to the called out assembly. He was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. So they kept count. They were added to the universal Church as well as to the local church in Jerusalem.

In Acts five and verse 14, "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number."²²

²⁰ Acts 2:41.

²¹ Acts 2:47.

²² Acts 5:14.

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Acts 11:21 we see, again, that they kept track of a, quote, “large number who believed and turned to the Lord.”²³ And then in verse 24 it says, “And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”²⁴ You see, being added to the Church and being brought to the Lord were really synonymous. The Bible doesn’t know anything of one without the other. You don’t come to Christ and then just live out there on your own. Beloved, the Bible makes it clear that the local church is the most precious assembly on earth since Christ purchased it with his own blood.

Let me give you a few more that we see as we study Scripture. It is an earthly expression of a heavenly reality. It is the realm of spiritual fellowship on earth. It is the place where spiritual truth is proclaimed and protected. It is where true believers gather to worship. It is where spiritual leadership develops and matures. It is the launching pad for world evangelism. It is where spiritual edification and growth occurs. It is where we hear the Word preached and taught, where we are called to obedience and action through exhortation. It is where other believers carry out acts of love and service to one another, where we learn how to love one another. It is where God has placed men to shepherd you, to encourage you, to admonish you and teach you, to hold you accountable.

Beloved, the local church is the visible expression of this glorious organism called the body of Christ. Why wouldn’t you want to be a part of that in every aspect of its function? This is a supernatural institution. I ask you: What reasonable biblical reason could you possibly give to not be faithfully involved in your church?

As a footnote, a few years ago I preached a sermon called “Seven Reasons for Church Membership,” arguing that biblically we are to formally and publicly commit ourselves to faithful, sacrificial service and accountability to a local assembly. And in that discourse I answered the question: Why does God expect me to be a member of a local church whereby I formally and publicly commit myself to a local fellowship? And I gave seven reasons.

Let me give them to you. I will just give you... I am not going to elaborate on them.

Number one, to distinguish believers from unbelievers.

Secondly, to facilitate the orderly administration of a church.

Thirdly, to discover, develop and use your spiritual gifts.

Fourthly, to enjoy the benefits of divine shepherding.

Fifthly, to exalt Christ in public worship.

Sixthly, to be a corporate witness in evangelism.

²³ Acts 11:21.

²⁴ Acts 11:24.

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And, finally, to enjoy the blessings of fellowship.

Beloved, if you are serious about truly loving your brother and your sister in Christ, you are going to get serious about this command. “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near,”²⁵ referring to the Lord’s return.

You see, there is this sense of divine urgency here. This admonition carries with it the idea that this is very important. You need to hear it. The question is: Will you hear it or will you rob yourself of divine blessing because of disobedience?

We see a similar admonition for us to get involved in the lives of our church family members in 1 Thessalonians five and verse 14. There we read, “And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”²⁶

Notice what we are to do. Admonish, encourage, help, be patient. Can there be anything more clear? Paul expands upon this in 2 Thessalonians three and verse six. “Now we command you, brethren...”²⁷ Now let’s stop there. Who is he talking to here? Who is the brethren? It is the people in the church, all right? It is you. And it is not a suggestion. It is a command. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.”²⁸

In other words, we are to shun those who refuse to work, those who are habitually mooching off of other people, that sap churches of their benevolence fund. By the way, all you have to do is look at the United States of America and see the welfare entitlement mentality that has grown over the years to a point where now we can’t afford all of the people that won’t work.

We are to withdraw fellowship from these kind of people praying that that isolation will bring shame upon them and ultimately bring repentance.

But later on in verse 14 he says:

And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but [what?] admonish him as a brother.²⁹

²⁵ Hebrews 10:24-25.

²⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

²⁷ 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

²⁸ 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

²⁹ 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15.

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By the way, this was one of the passages that I used to help illustrate these truths with my friend with his Promise Keepers rock in his pocket. You don't ignore people living in sin. You don't avoid them. You don't just call the pastor. You get involved.

Beloved, I pray that you begin to see the profound emphasis that the Lord places upon this. You see, fellowship is so much more than just enjoying one another's company. It is the mutual sharing of life in Christ. It is iron sharpening iron. It is all of these one anothering concepts that we have been studying.

Perhaps there is no better summary passage in all of Scripture than that penned by James. You can turn there for a moment. James the half brother of Jesus, the brother of Jude whose epistle bares his name, James who was the, shall we say senior pastor at the church in Jerusalem, he was called one of the pillars of the church along with Peter and John. He was also known as James the just, you will recall, because of his exemplary life of Christ likeness, a man who was devoted to Christ even to the point where he cost him his life.

Now I want you to notice what he said in chapter five verse 13. He says, "Is anyone among you suffering?"³⁰ Let me give you a little bit of explanation here because it is important. Sometimes people are confused about this passage. Suffering here is referring to enduring evil treatment. It is not referring to physical illness.

So what should we do? What should we do with those people? He says, "Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises."³¹ Verse 14. "Is anyone among you sick?"³² The Greek term *astheneo* (as-then-eh'-o), it can be translated sick, but it is better translated, especially in this context, weak or without strength, feeble, powerless. This is, again, this is not referring to physical illness as some people tend to believe.

By the way, that would be not only inconsistent with the context of this whole passage, but also we see the verb *astheneo* (as-then-eh'-o) used more often in the New Testament to describe weakness that is produced by the sufferings of life. Well, what are we to do? It says, "Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."³³

Again, by way of clarification, this is not referring to symbolic ceremony where the elders get some oil and go into the hospital and put it on people. That is a misunderstanding of this text. You see, the root form of the verb translated "anointing" is not used in the New Testament to refer to some ceremonial anointing. This text is not talking about some symbolic ceremony, but this is rather a metaphorical anointing, conveying the responsibility of the elders to stimulate, to refresh and strengthen and encourage persecuted and beleaguered, weak, defeated believers.

³⁰ James 5:13.

³¹ James 5:13.

³² James 5:14.

³³ Ibid.

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Verse 15. “And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick.”³⁴ Again, *kamno* (kam’-no) in the original language can be translated faint or weary. And it says, “And the Lord will raise him up,”³⁵ *egeiro* (eg-i-ro) in the original language. It means to arouse, to rescue a person from danger, to save a suffering one from perish. “And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”³⁶

Therefore, what he is saying, “Therefore saints,” catch this now. All you saint who feel defeated in spiritual battles of life, all you who feel as though you just can’t go on anymore, you are weak, you are tired, you are frail, you are in need of rescue before you drown in discouragement or some life dominating sin. What should you do? Go live out on an island by yourself, not deal with it? Live and let live? Avoid any kind of intimate and honest conversation with others that you might love and respect? Not at all. He says, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed,”³⁷ a term that means to make whole, to be free from errors and sins, to bring about one’s salvation. That is the idea.

Child of God, please hear this. Secret sins are the most deadly of all. Those sins are like cockroaches that thrive and reproduce in the darkness and continue to bring about disease to our soul. When we have sin in those secret recesses of our imagination, in our mind where we think nobody sees what happens as we feed those sins and allow them to begin to shape our character, until one day what is secret becomes public. And yet God has seen it all along.

How different is the wise saint who confesses his sins to God and seeks the aids and incites and prayers of someone who he knows loves them or loves him and loves the Word. We need all the reinforcements we can get to wage this battle of sin that seeks to destroy us.

The psalmist said in Psalm 32, “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.”³⁸ Later on he says, “I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.”³⁹

Some of you in here today are weighed down by some kind of sin or perhaps some great discouragement. What do you do? What will you do? Are you going to continue to let that sin rob you of joy and power?

What we are told here is therefore in light of what we have just discussed, “Confess your sins to one another.”⁴⁰

³⁴ James 5:15.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ James 5:16.

³⁸ Psalm 32:3.

³⁹ Psalm 32:5.

⁴⁰ James 5:16.

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Well, that is a different one, isn't it? How often do we do that? Confess your sins to one another. Find someone that you love and that you know has your best interest at heart and say, "Brother, can we talk? I am struggling with this. I need your help. I need your prayer."

"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."⁴¹ The idea here is that a godly man who actively and aggressively and fervently prays for discouraged and defeated brother to be restored to spiritual health, wields enormous power that we should take advantage of. It is a force that enlists the power of almighty God in a campaign to bring glory to himself. "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed."⁴²

In other words, seek out a prayer warrior.

Beloved, this is how we love another, you see. This is how the body is supposed to function. Each individual part must derive its strength from another. And I might also add that these are the kinds of experiences that knit us together in deep friendship. These are the types of things that form an indissoluble bond of fellowship and friendship. These are the types of things that build life long friendships that are anchored in a mutual love for Christ. This is what gives power to the church, to be able to say to a brother, "I am struggling with this. Let me tell you what it is. I know you will keep it in confidence, but I need your prayer. I need your love. I need you to help bear my burden. I need you to help me go to the Word and understand who I can gain victory over this sin."

And sometimes it also means that we need to see that person and say, "Dear friend that I have known and loved over these years, may I talk with you? I am burdened for you. I have seen some patterns in your life that I fear are robbing you of the Lord's blessing."

Beloved, this is what it means to love one another. Without question, my closest friends, my soul mates in life have been those whom I have asked to pray with me about my sins, those who have admonished me and encouraged me, who have restored me in a spirit of gentleness, who have helped bear my burdens of sin and, thus, fulfilled the law of Christ.

Beloved, here is where you will find real life in Christ. Here is where you will find real power. Here is where you will discover transcendent joy because here is where we can be obedient to the Lord's great command to love one another.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. They are so hard to hear because they are so foreign to us. Lord, we confess that we are so committed to our own self protection. We are so selfish. We have a thousand excuses to justify our lack of involvement to admonish

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

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and to encourage and to pray. But, Lord, I pray that what we have heard today will radically transform the people of Calvary Bible Church and those who are listening in other parts of the world. Lord, the body might grow strong and healthy and be used mightily for your glory and for our joy. For it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

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