

Life in the Local Church, Part 5

Selected Scriptures

we're going to finish our one another study and let me begin reminding you of the first two points we made about these external one another commands. This external behavior, as love, unity, humility, as they are coursing through our inner life and our thinking, they're going to become manifest externally. And we covered, those internal attitudes already, but we're gonna, we're moving on to external actions. We started first by observing, the first category of eternal one another commands, and the first one is, we're to reinforce the truth with one another. We're to reinforce the truth with one another. We talked about that; reinforcing the truth involves talking with one another, talking truthfully with one another, talking from a biblical worldview. That's the worldview that permeates our speech. Through that, we also encourage one another with the truth. We reinforce the truth also when we instruct each other, when we exhort each other with the truth, when we admonish each other with the truth.

We're also going to reinforce the truth when we, practice the truth, when we put it into practical effect in our lives, being "doers of the word, not mere hearers who deceive ourselves," but we're going to be doers of the word. We saw that fleshed out in Ephesians 5:18 where it says, "And do not get drunk with wine, which is dissipation," and debauchery, "but be filled with the Spirit." We're going to be filled with the Spirit and, really, out of Colossians 3, Colossians 3:16, being filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word. To be filled with the Word is to be filled with the Spirit. As the Word, as the Spirit's authored Word washes through our lives, as it permeates us, as it saturates us, this is what comes out. Ephesians 5:19 says, we're addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we sing and make melody to one another in our hearts to the Lord. We give thanks always. We become a thankful people. We become people filled with gratitude for what God has done. "We give thanks always and for everything to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then it says this, we're also "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." We submit to one another.

Paul unpacks that last phrase, "submitting to one another," in verse 21, Ephesians 5:21. He unpacks that little phrase in the rest of the letter. Wives submit to husbands, husbands love

wives, children obey parents, parents raise children in the Lord, slaves are submitting to their masters, masters are treating their slaves with dignity and respect. So out of a life that is filled and saturated with the Word of God, out of that comes God-honoring marriages. Out of that comes healthy families. Out of that comes respectable, productive members of society. All of that flows out of a church that's filled with the Spirit and filled with his Word. That grows out of a church that reinforces the truth with one another, as it says in Ephesians 5:20, "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." That means our, our most elevated forms of speech, poetry, song writing, all that expressed in harmonic, melodic, joyful singing accompanied by skillful, excellent musicians, all of that is going to provide an overwhelming testimony of the transforming power of the Gospel to watching world.

Second external, externally focused one another command is this: We're to honor one another. We're to honor one another. We are to, Romans 12:10, we're to "outdo one another in showing honor." Outdo one another, that is, we are to esteem others, esteem other Christians highly. We're to treat them with dignity, respect. We're to consider them as weighty in our eyes, important in our eyes, and give them honor. And as we said, just

practically speaking, how do we do that? We can start simply by getting to know one another. Just get to know folks. Go further with your own personal life, invite people over to your home. Or if your house is messy and you don't feel comfortable with that, invite yourself to somebody else's home. I mean, if you want to do that, see what their house looks like, get into their business, you know, just whatever. Just make it happen. Get together. I have been actually just thrilled to hear how this is going on more and more. How people are getting together outside of the church, outside, you know, during the week. Listen, that's just normal Christian living, getting together like that.

God is going to use all of our investment in building relationships; I guarantee it. He is going to use the investment as we build relationships with each other. This concept of honoring, receiving, welcoming one another, bringing them close, as it says in the Scripture, "Greeting each other with a holy kiss," so to speak, this is the glue that's going to bind us together. This is the cement that holds our life as a church together, honoring each other. In fact, being committed to honoring one another, that's what's going to bring all kinds of different people together. We're all very, very different people, different backgrounds, different personalities, different experiences. How is all that held together? How is it

we don't fracture and divide into our little camps? Well, it's God by his Spirit, by his Word, by his truth, and us energized to honor one another, appreciating each other. This is actually what brings the generations together, as well, so we don't fracture and divide like the rest of our culture does, the rest of our culture that pushes the old into the grave.

Here in the church, we don't do that. You know what? We appreciate those who are older, those who have wisdom, because we need their wisdom. We need to learn to count these relationships here in the local church as the most important relationships in our lives. Older serving the younger, giving up their wisdom, teaching the younger. The younger serving the older, appreciating them and honoring them. These are the relationships that we need to build and strengthen. They need to be the most important because these are the ones that are going to last throughout all of eternity. We're going to be together, beloved, together all eternity. So let's learn together to honor one another for the sake of Christ, okay?

So reinforce the truth, honor one another. Let's go to a third external action, a third external reaction. We need to serve one another. We need to serve one another. A number of the one another commands in the New Testament I've organized

underneath this heading, serve one another. And let me start by just reading some of them for you, making a couple comments, but serving one another. A couple of the one another's say plainly, just plain, serve one another. Galatians 5:13 says, "you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love," here it is, "serve one another." Serve one another. First Peter 4:10, "And as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another," use it to serve one another, "as good stewards of God's manifold," or God's varied, "grace."

Another way of saying serve one another comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:15, slightly different focus there in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, but Paul writes there, "See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to," here it is, "do good to one another," seek to do good to one another, "and to everyone." So we're not only talking about one another here in the local church, but seek to do good to everyone, even outside the church. The command to do good, pretty much synonymous with serve one another, but it really is focusing the attention on the goal of serving, which is *agape* love. We talked about that, right. *Agape* love: Our service to one another is not beneficial unless it's aimed, directed at, what is truly good for somebody else. So we're to serve one another, but with their

ultimate spiritual good, or their immediate practical good sometimes: all of that is in the forefront of our minds and we need to be intentional about this. We need to be directing our energies, our efforts in serving toward their good. That's loving.

Several of the serving oriented one another commands in the New Testament, they get a little more specific and then they start to get uncomfortable for us because they force us out of our comfort zone. Galatians 6:2, Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens." There's another one another command. "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ is summed up in "be loving one another," right? That's the law of Christ. It's to love one another, and you're going to do that when you bear one another's burdens. Obeying that command, that involves some investment, doesn't it? That requires some time, energy, to bear burdens. First, we've got to understand the nature of the burden. Then we have to assess all that biblically. Then we have to enter in to that with compassion and sympathy. We need to take up somebody else's weight. We need to understand the weight first, and then we need to take it up, so we're actually truly helpful to other people. We need to help them shoulder the load. Right? And sometimes, it's not just a practical, I need a meal, I need some clothing,

or something like that. It's not that. Where it really gets tricky is when you enter into their burdens, which are spiritual, when you enter into their fears, when you enter into their anxieties, when you enter into their disappointed hopes, when you enter into the loss of a child, a loss of a friend, a loss of a loved one. When you enter into that, that's bearing burdens.

Another of these is in 1 Peter 4:9, it's one of these service-oriented one another commands. 1 Peter 4:9 says, "Show hospitality to one another," and get this, "Without grumbling." Without grumbling. Anyone who opens their home to others understands this. Allowing people to stay with them, even just having someone over for a meal, there's a lot that goes into that. There's a lot that stretches, hospitality stretches you, it starts to expose your selfishness, and that's where the, without grumbling, thing comes into play. I don't like to see that. That's kind of ugly. You start to look in the mirror of God's Word and realize you've got some growing to do. We need to grow in our selfless service to other people, and Peter says do that by showing hospitality to one another. Look, if you're not inviting anybody into your home, if you're not bringing anybody near, if you're not giving of yourself to them, start to look at yourself in the mirror, ask some hard questions. Why is that?



What is it in my life, in my thinking, that is preventing me from showing hospitality?

And we need to embrace the fact, folks, that there is no territory in our lives that is off limits to God and his Word. God has the right, as your Lord, to speak into everything in your life. He can get into your home. He can get into your thinking. Even your thoughts are not your own thoughts. Your feelings, you don't have a right to feel whatever you want to feel.

Now, all those specific commands, all of these are going to grow out, they're going to stem from, they're extensions of Christ's most fundamental command, Love one another. That's why back in Galatians when Paul said, "Bear one another's burdens," he said, "And so fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? It's to love one another. It's to love one another. This attitude of love it's going to produce an action of love. If it's an attitude only, just some warm sentimental thoughts about somebody else, that's not love if it's not accompanied with action. It's got to show action. If there is no action, you know what? There is no love. Jesus said in John 15:12, "This is my commandment that you love one

another,” and get this, “as I have loved you.” His life, his love is an example to us, right?

John 13:34, in fact, turn in your Bibles back to John 13. I want to show you something there, John 13. But as you turn there, listen to this. We want to set Jesus’ example before us in how he loved because that’s the comparison, “As I have loved you.” John 13:34, Jesus said much the same thing. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.” And says it again, “just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another.” He’s getting emphatic about this point. Twice he gave the command, “Love one another.” John 13:34, John 15:12, twice he pointed to his own love as the basis of the comparison. That’s the standard. You’re to love one another “as I have loved you.” Right?

If you’re there in John 13, let me get there, as well, John 13. Look at John 13, verse 1. I want to show you there. It was before the Feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, so he’s, he’s anticipating just in a few hours his crucifixion, his arrest, just this kangaroo court of a trial that he went through before Rome, before Herod.

So he knew his hour had come, verse 1, “to depart out of this world, to the father, having loved his own who were in the world,” that is, his disciples there, “he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that his father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from the father and was going back to God, he rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” Stop there. The way Jesus loved is the standard by which we measure our love. That’s the example that is our standard set by Christ. We need to love in that way. Verse 1 says, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” That’s what my translation says there in the ESV. He loved them to the end, *eis telos*. He loved them to the uttermost. He loved them to the fullest extent. He didn’t hold anything back in loving them.

The Apostle Paul helps us grasp the significance of what Jesus did there for his disciples that night in the Upper Room. In Philippians 2:5-7, he writes this, “Have this mind among yourselves, which was yours in Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God.” Stop there for a second. Though he’s “In the

form of God.” Look there in your text, there, verse 3, John 13:3, “Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands.” Jesus has all authority, all power, all honor, all things are given into Jesus’ hands and that he had come from God and he was going back to God. Jesus knew where he had come from, where he was going. He was face-to-face with the father. What does he do? Philippians 2:5, 6 and 7, “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped,” or held onto, or clutched onto, “but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” The Greek word there is *doulos*. He took the form of a slave, a lowly slave. He took up a towel, filled a basin with water, stooped down, washed dirty feet; is that incredible? I mean the, the highest that you can go is God himself and Jesus is God. And he was face-to-face with the father and then he comes down. The lowest you can go is to wash dirty, stinking feet in the Middle East. That’s the lowest form of service and slavery. It doesn’t seem fitting, does it, to see the Lord of the universe to stoop to take the form of a slave? It doesn’t seem fitting, does it, that he would stoop down and wash the filthy feet of proud, dull-hearted, argumentative disciples, but he did. He did.

You know what, Jesus went even further than that. His love was not only demonstrated in the superficial cleansing of dirty

feet, but his love became manifest deeply, very deeply in fact, in the next verse. Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." There's no more humbling, more exposing death than to die on a cross, stretched out, all your power taken away, all your dignity taken away, stripped away, and you're exposed, bare before the watching, mocking world. Jesus' love went to the very bottom of the barrel, dealing with the most profound defilement of mankind, the ugly stain of human sin, your sin, my sin. That sacrifice is our salvation through penal substitution. But that sacrifice has also become our example.

So there in John 13, skip ahead to verse 12. Take a look at verse 12, "When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.'" Stop there. Jesus' command to us to love one another, it's based on his own example of loving us. That's what he said. You should do just as I have done to you. The way Jesus loved is the standard. His example is

the example we follow. His example is the goal we continually pursue.

Now clearly, we can't replicate the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. We are utterly unqualified for that. We are eternally, infinitely unqualified for that, but that is the good news of the Gospel. It's not up to us. Turn over to Romans chapter 10, Romans chapter 10, Romans 10 in verse 5, this good news of the Gospel is that it's not up to our striving, it's not up to our attaining, it's not up to our own self-atonement, it's not up to our own good works, it's all up to God. It's up to Christ. He did what we cannot do, and that is the good news of the Gospel. Look what Romans 10:5 says, "For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them." You want to be righteous according to the law? Do all the commandments. Do them perfectly. Do them internally and externally without fail. Don't even falter in one command for one second, even in your thinking. Okay, we've all blown that.

So Moses says, the righteousness is based on the law, if you want to get righteousness based on law, you've got to do everything perfectly. "But," verse 6, here's the good news, "The righteousness based on faith says, 'Do not say in your heart,

"Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." So don't say in your heart, how am I going to attain all the law? No, Christ came for that very purpose, to attain the law. He's the one who fulfilled everything on our behalf. Don't say in your heart either, how am I going atone for my own sin? That's to bring Christ up from the dead. You know what? He already did that. So don't try to do that. Don't try to think about that on your own, how am I going to atone for my sin? How am I going to pay the penance or the penalty required? How am I going to do enough good works to atone for my sin, to cover it over? Don't do that. Christ has already been risen from the dead. That means he died as a perfect sacrifice. God raised him from the dead showing his approval of that sacrifice. That's been accomplished. Don't try to do this yourself.