

Membership - love

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[0:00] This is my introduction. How difficult it is for human beings to find unity that works.

! Think of the political party, the conservative party,! In caricature, if not in real life,! We think of them as being similar people in social background.

Perhaps we're wrong in thinking that. But the conservative party has got the pro-Europeans and the Eurosceptics, and there's a huge tension. The Labour Party, and by caricature, if not in reality, we might think of being people from a similar background, yet they too, correct me if I'm wrong, perhaps this is just a rumour, there is a left wing of the Labour Party and the Blairite wing, and they don't find it easy to get along.

And... People talk about the community. That's a rather optimistic word. There might be people who live in the same area, or have some similar characteristics, but how difficult it is not to alienate one person or another within a community, and have one group within a community against another. Would I be right in saying that the USA is one... quoted as one nation under God? Is that right? And yet, in their voting for the last presidential election, it was pretty much split down the middle.

[1:34] We think of the UK. Well, we're all together, aren't we? Well, over Brexit, we voted sort of 50, 50, almost one way, with a very narrow majority.

It's difficult to get people to live and work together. But there is one institution on earth that is supposed to have success where others fail.

And it does have this success in substance, but not necessarily in perfection. And I'm talking about the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ is not made of one social group or one political group.

It's made of a whole range of hugely different people, differing in social background, differing in educational attainment, probably differing in politics, differing in character.

And yet, Jesus Christ brings those people together with the secret power from their founder of love. And we're going to look at Christian love and the way this produces Christian community.

[2:49] That's what we're going to look at this morning. Now, for those of you who are here for the first time, let me just explain. We've been looking in past weeks at the subject of belonging to church, church membership, and these next few sermons are going to enlarge on different aspects of that.

And when we started it, I raised the objection that you might have there's no such thing as church membership in the New Testament. And you might think signing up to belonging to a church rather than simply belonging to a Christian union or rather than going from church to church or going to church occasionally or whatever it might be.

You might say, well, that's unnecessary. You might say it's useless. You might say it's legalistic. You might say it's actually opposed to the main points of Christianity. And I would agree with you that the way we do church membership, we ask people to come up to the front and say yes to the things of church membership.

Well, you can't find an exact reference to that in the New Testament. I certainly agree with that. But I would also point out that in the New Testament there's no word Trinity, but that doesn't stop Trinity being there in the New Testament.

And I'm trying to say that the ideas that we, we Calvary Church, mean by church membership, the ideas flood the New Testament.

[4:21] And we're going to look this morning at love which floods the New Testament. So what is the religion of Jesus about?

Well, it's certainly about Jesus. But when you buy into Jesus, you can't help but buy into his people because he said that it is his intention to form a new community.

And he used the word ecclesia, meaning an assembly, a gathering. We use the word church.

And Jesus' intention was to build a new community. He said, upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it.

Matthew 16, 18, meaning to imply that there is something powerful and significant about this community.

[5:23] It won't be overcome. It has strength and power and glory. So my sort of working definition is to say that the New Testament makes it very, very clear that Christianity is about forming a functioning community that is ordered from outside this world.

And I won't stop to say too much more about that. It will become clearer. In other words, here's a pepper pot with pepper falling out of it. Christians are not like the individual grains of pepper that just fall out somehow.

Here's a snooker table with snooker balls banging into each other and then going off in different directions. Very clear that in the New Testament, Christians are not like snooker balls that just bang into each other now and again and then go off on their own way.

Here are water droplets. Here are water droplets. And water droplets are a bit more like Christians because if you scatter water and allow it to get close and touch, it will sort of coalesce into a little globule.

And Christians do tend to do that. So this is Christians in a town or a village will tend to coalesce to pray together and study the Bible together and form something like a church.

[6:51] Christians in a church. Christians in a college or university tend to get together to pray together and encourage one another and form a group which is a little bit like a church. So the water droplets is a better analogy.

But the analogy that the Bible uses or one of them is to say a body. And a body has unity. It all is one body. It has functionality.

It has direction and purpose. And the intricacies of the different parts of the body working together, although they're different, they work together in unity and in harmony.

So Christians are not like the grains of pepper that are isolated. They're not like the snooker balls that just bounce off one another. Not even like water droplets, although they do join together.

That's right. But like a body with many parts that belongs together, works together. So that gives us a general idea of how we're going to approach this as a functioning ordered community of love.

[7:57] So what I'd like to do this morning is ask these questions. Number one, what is love? What is meant by this?

Number two, are you sure? This is a question to me. Am I sure that it's a church thing or am I hijacking this idea in a scurrilous way?

Question three, what's that got to do with church membership? And question four, so what? Are there any encouragements from this? Are there any action points?

Are there any learnings? What a horrible word, learnings. I hate that. I don't know why I put that up. That is taking a verb and turning it into a noun. Anyway, I'm not worried about learnings.

So what is the final question. So let's do this then. So what is love anyway? If you are a follower of the writer C.S. Lewis, the chap who wrote the Narnia stories, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

[8:59] He was, as you know, a university professor. He wrote a book called The Four Loves. Here are three of them. What on Wikipedia is philia.

I didn't realize it's philia. Which means friendship, brotherly love. And I would say, in the Bible, the love I'm going to talk about is that.

Yes, but it's more than that. Second word, eros, from which we get erotic. It's a Greek word, eros. The romantic love.

And I'm going to say, is that the love we're going to talk about this morning? Well, in a sense, yes. The Bible will say Christian love becomes romantic love within marriage.

And you could say the whole story of Christ coming to save his people is, in a sense, a story of eros. Although the bride is not a lovely bride.

[9:59] She becomes lovely even though she is ugly and spotty and horrible and obnoxious. So it's not quite the same as human eros, is it? But this third word, agape, is the word that the New Testament takes up and uses thoroughly and consistently, and gives its own meaning to, to say Christian love.

And it's that third word that is the thought that we're going to be working around this morning. So what is love? Not just friendship. Not romantic love.

But agape, Christian love. And the New Testament, Christian people, Christian writers, Christian thinkers, God himself uses this word in a cross-shaped way.

And it's the cross that, as it were, defines and explains and fills these letters, A-G-A-P-E, or whatever they are in Greek.

Let's look at a couple of texts. And they're very important texts. So please find in your Bible, John 13, 34, in which our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, says these highly significant words.

[11:29] John 13, 34 and 35. This is what Jesus says just hours ahead of his crucifixion, knowing that he's come from God, knowing what he's going to do, knowing all the implications of it.

He now says in John 13, 34 to his disciples there in that upper room, as we presume it was, a new command I give you, love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

And what a powerful couple of sentences those are. You notice it's a command.

It's a new command in the New Testament. And it's just one command. Jesus sort of seems to sum everything up in this. And his command is to love one another.

[12:51] And the thing that informs this love is the way he loved his people. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

And how did Jesus love his people? Answer? By dying for them. By shedding his blood on the cross. In that amazing love.

Oh, what sacrifice. That's how he loved us. And that imprints itself on us. And he says, as I've done that for you, now you must do that to one another.

Let's go to Romans chapter 5 verse 8. What is agape?

What is this? In Romans chapter 5.

[14:07] In verse 6. Paul comes back to this same point. You see, for you see, at just the right time when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

While we were in our sins, foul, obnoxious, repellent, corrupt. While we were ungodly, he says, Christ died for us.

And then Paul says, it's like but it's unlike. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man. So it's not unknown in our human experience for people to be very selfless and to put their lives in harm's way to save the life of somebody else.

It's not unknown. People will do that. Rarely. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man though. For a good man, someone might possibly dare to die. Yeah. But Christ, sorry, God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It's the same thought as I've just mentioned before.

[15:28] And he says it is a demonstration of God's love. And it's an amazing thing. It's not an ordinary thing. It's not a common or garden thing.

Even in the world of human beings, it's pretty rare. But what's described here is totally unique. Totally amazing.

God demonstrates his love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And this is where the definition of love comes from.

This is the demonstration of love. This is the quality of love that we're going to be talking about. It is selfless love. Christ didn't say, what can I get out of this?

Christ was saying, what can I give for these people? Now, I know long term, Christ has the benefit of building his church. But in terms of the immediate payback, all Christ got was the wrath of his Father.

[16:37] It was a selfless, sacrificial love. The Father gave up his Son. The Son suffered.

It was a sacrificial love. It wasn't a calculating thing. I'll get something for this. It won't be so bad. It was a total expenditure of himself for us.

It was a selfless, sacrificial love that is moved by a genuine inner motivation. Christ voluntarily died on the cross. God demonstrates his love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. There's a genuine inner motivation that the Lord wanted to do that for me. And it led to an outward act, an outward deed of a costly nature.

And that will do as a sort of the idea of what Christian love is. And please, let's notice that the magnitude of this love has got no outer boundary.

[17:55] There's lots of things that in human life we will say, well, I'll lend you some money up to a certain point. We'll have you around for Christmas.

It would be rather nice if you went before New Year. Do you know what I mean? Up to a certain point. Lovely to see you. Breathe a sigh of relief when you're gone.

That sort of thing. Christ's love does not go so far and no further. It just goes and goes. There is no outer limit on this love of Christ.

It's unbounded. It isn't as far as. It is just unbounded. And we love him. If we're Christians, we can't help but just love him because he first loved us.

That's the way it works. You need to see the cross of Jesus Christ, the magnificence of Jesus Christ, the generosity of Jesus Christ, and then you will love him.

[19:02] I hope you do see that. And I hope you do love him because you have begun to understand that he first loved you. And the New Testament insists we take this step.

We love his people because he loved us. So what is love?

The answer is the love we're talking about is the love that Jesus Christ showed to us in dying for us. And that's the love we're to show to his people.

So question two. Okay, there's love. Now what's that got to do with church? Are you quite sure, preacher, that this is a church thing?

Well, I think the way to answer that is what does it say in the documents of the first generation communities of Jesus? What does it say in the documents of those early Christians?

[20:15] In other words, what does it say in the New Testament? And of course, the answer to that is it says so much that it's difficult to mention it all. It says so much about this love, it's difficult to mention it all.

So rather than just try and say everything, I've got some references to little verses and then some references to big verses. Let's do the little ones first.

So here's some little sort of snippety verses. Please look at them with me if you don't mind, if you have a Bible.

So this is Paul's letter to the Colossians. We call it Colossians, meaning not everybody that lived in the ancient Roman town of Colossae, but to the Christian community that formed itself like a water droplet coalescing together in Colossae.

That's what it was written to the Colossians. It's written to the church of God's people at Colossae. And in Colossians 3.14, he's going through a long description and exhortation about the quality of relationships in the church.

[21:44] And he says lots and lots of things about speaking truth, about gossip and malice, about the different racial groups there and so on. And in verse 14, having said all these things, he says, And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

It's interesting that having gone through paragraphs of all sorts of important things, he says, And above all put on love, which has this function of sort of holding everything together and overarching everything and holding it together in some sort of perfection, in some sort of unity.

Isn't that interesting? Above all, there must be put on agape, Christian cross-shaped love.

There's one little verse. Here's another little verse, 1 Timothy 1.5. So this is the Apostle Paul writing to his young apprentice, his young assistant, or his younger assistant, Timothy, who's in the church at Ephesus.

And in the middle of a lot of things that he says, 1 Timothy 1.5, he says, The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

[23:42] It's interesting that he should use that expression, isn't it? He might have said, there's loads of things I want you to do in no particular order. Here's 15 of them. But what he actually says is, there's loads of things that you need to do.

There's loads of advice you need to give. Loads of things you need to tell people. But it all focuses on this one thing. The goal of this command is agape, love.

It comes from a pure heart. It comes from a good conscience and sincere faith. You see, it's not a natural thing. It doesn't grow in this world by itself.

It grows because God's planted it. But there it is. There's another little verse. The goal of this command is love. And here's another little verse. 1 Peter 2.22.

1 Peter 1.22. And I have a feeling I've got the wrong verse there. It's 1 Peter 1.22. 1 Peter 1.22.

[24:53] So this is a different person again. This is the Apostle Peter writing, as he says, to the scattered believers in their different places. And they're different churches.

And he says in 1 Peter 1.22. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart, for you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

What does he tell them to do? Why does he tell them to do it? He says, well, this is where you're at, folks. You've come to believe the truth.

But he doesn't say believe. He says obey. It's the same thing. You've obeyed the truth. And what has that done to you? It's changed you. It's put something inside you which wasn't there before.

So that you have sincere love for whom? For the brothers, for the other Christians. And what does he say that you should do? He says, now I want you to love one another deeply from the heart.

[26:15] And why? Because you've been born again. Born again. He doesn't say born again of the spirit. He says born again of the word. But it's the same thought. Just look at that sequence of thought.

This is what God's done to you. He's put love in your heart. Now what are you supposed to do? Love. Have sincere love for the brothers. Love one another deeply, really, from the heart.

And why? Because you're Christians. You've been born again. What does a born again person do? They love the other brothers and sisters in the church.

Now those are the little verses. Those are the eeny weeny tiny little verses that you could easily jump over. We haven't done the classic texts, the big verses.

Let's just have a quick look at the classic texts, the big texts. So let's look at Romans chapter 12. Now Lindsay read to us Romans chapter 12, so I won't read it all over again.

[27:30] But as you cast your eye over Romans chapter 12, you'll see how comprehensive it is and how rich it is in describing the result of receiving God's mercies and the result in terms of community.

And it's in the middle of this, almost like, it's almost a poem. It isn't actually poetic, but it's almost that in terms of the beauty of what he sketches out.

It's here that he says in verse 9, in this big text, love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. And in the midst of that very comprehensive text, he's saying love.

The love of the community. That's what there must be. Let's look at another big text, which is in Galatians chapter 5.

[28:37] And God willing, we will hear this expounded to us sometime before Christmas on the Sunday evenings. But here we are in Galatians chapter 5, and we're at verse 22.

And Galatians, as I understand it, is fighting to establish what Christian faith actually is and how we stand before God not on the basis of what we've achieved, but because Christ has done it for us and has brought us into the approval of God for nothing, nothing for us that we've done.

We're justified by his grace because we simply trust him, what he did. And he says this is the key to the life of the Spirit.

Being justified freely, we receive the Spirit. And then walking this way, that's how we become a beautiful community. And what does a beautiful community look like? Galatians 5.22.

What is the fruit of the Spirit? Well, he's got this list, hasn't he? Number one on the list. First, the fruit of the Spirit is love, then joy, then peace, then patience, then kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control.

[30:15] Here's a cluster of things. I don't think it's nine fruits. I think it's one fruit with nine flavors. They all go together. It all fits together. That's what the Spirit does in a community of God's people.

Last big text is 1 Corinthians 13. So we're looking at 1 Corinthians 13.

The Corinthian church was commended by Paul for their energy and their vitality and their giftedness. But in many ways, they were a pretty dysfunctional lot.

They didn't wait for one another at the communion table. There were one group versus another group. All sorts of things going on like that. And I think Paul has this in mind in 1 Corinthians 13, where he says, I will show you something more excellent than fighting over speaking in tongues or whatever.

He says, if I speak in the tongues of men and angels but have not love, I am a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, if I have a faith that can move mountains and have not love, I am nothing.

[31:39] If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but I don't have the inner motivation of love, I gain nothing. Love is patient.

Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast.

It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered.

It keeps no records of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects.

It always trusts. It always hopes. It always perseveres. Love never fails. Where there are prophecies, they will cease.

[32:39] Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, we prophesy in part, when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child.

I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see that a poor reflection is in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face.

Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And these three remain. Faith, hope, love.

And the greatest is love. You see the sort of qualities he's ascribing to love. Preacher Dick Lucas has a favorite sort of thought on this.

His thought is that as this was said to the Corinthian church, there would have been a lot of red faces because they knew perfectly well they weren't patient with each other. And they weren't kind to each other.

[33:43] And they boasted about one another. And they were rude to one another. And they got angry with one another. And when Paul says, you know, love is none of those things, they'd probably have been embarrassed.

That's a big, big text on love. And the New Testament breathes agape love. And the New Testament shines agape love.

And the New Testament lays the groundworks for everything that's achieved in love. Unless we should become too sentimental about it, it pays the hefty bills.

It pays the hefty price in love. So am I sure that it's a church thing? Absolutely right, it's a church thing.

It's the New Testament thing. Whenever something is said to the churches, somewhere in there, either at the top or in the middle or sneaked in, is something about love.

[34:50] Too right, it's a church thing. Third question. What's this teaching on love got to do with church membership? Of course, it depends what church membership is.

I think my working definition was, it's just simply saying yes to all the community things that the New Testament says churches should be. It's just saying yes to all of that.

It's not being a super Christian or anything like that. What's this teaching on love got to do with church membership? Well, if church membership is simply a formality, so when you update something on your app, when you update an app on your phone rather, you might get to a box which says, I've read the terms and conditions and I approve these new permissions so that I agree to this new app knowing my date of birth, every time I breathe, all those sort of things.

You just say yes, don't you? Do you? Yeah, I think you probably do actually. It's just a formality. You say yes, yeah, no problem. If church membership is just a formality, then the teaching has got nothing to do with it.

If church membership is actually a form of control and oppression to produce conformity out of fear and pressure, then the teaching of the New Testament has nothing to do with it at all.

[36:16] It's completely different things. If church membership is basically some sort of competition to see who can attend the most meetings and who can last out the longest meeting, if that's what church membership is, it has nothing to do with what the Bible teaches.

But if church membership is saying yes, we are tied together in the same bundle of life, we're in this together, if church membership is saying yes, I am bound to you in the courts of love and you are bound to me.

If church membership is saying, I cannot just stay on the sidelines and be indifferent to the solemn charge from my Savior to love my Christian family on earth, if that's what it is, then it means everything.

You cannot face continuing the Christian life without saying yes to this.

So what? Fourth question, so what? So what? Well, I think Jesus and his apostles are saying something very powerful.

[37:46] And I try to draw it out in four points here. So number one, there is no alternative but to love the Christian brotherhood.

There is no alternative. The Bible doesn't say, well, you can live the Christian life this way, you can live the Christian life that way. It says it about some things. It says you can be a slave or you can be free.

It doesn't really matter. It says you can be a Jew, you can be a Greek. It doesn't really matter. It says that you can be married, you can be single. That doesn't really matter. But it never says you have an alternative to loving the Christian brotherhood.

It says you must do that. And this love, I remind you, is modeled to us as selfless, unsacrificial, unmotivated from within, unnoticeable and measurable from what it does on the outside.

Number two, there is no alternative but to put this into action in all our dealings with each other. There isn't an alternative method of living the Christian life.

[39:01] Now, you might say, oh, those Christians, they're such lovely people. And in a sense, that's right. I think you are lovely people. I don't know what you think about, I don't know what you think about one another.

I don't know what you think about me. I think you're lovely people. But I also know that each and every one of us is a sinner. Let's not be taken in.

We're all sinners. When we come to the Lord's table, we don't come because we love Jesus so wonderfully much. We come there because actually we're all sinners and we all need forgiveness. That's why we love Him. So when the Bible says love is patient, you say, why does it say that?

Because they're all such lovely people. Well, actually, because you need to be patient with people. And he says, this is how you live the Christian life.

[40:01] You're going to have to be patient with people. Because some people, you're going to go home and say, oh, I couldn't, you need to be patient.

Because that's what love is. You need to put that into action. And it says, love keeps no record of wrongs. Why does he say that? He says it because he knows that one Christian or another at some point or another with some degree of regularity or another is going to do you wrong, say something wrong about you, take you wrong, mistake what you meant or something like that.

And you are supposed to not remember it. If you see what I mean, you understand what he means by keep no record of wrongs. It doesn't mean you've completely forgotten that something's happened.

But you don't act on the basis of that. Oh, he did that last year. I remember that. He did that a year before as well. Did he do something?

I can't remember. I'm not that bothered. What did he do last year? I can't remember. It doesn't matter. We're today. Love keeps no record of wrongs because you need to know that.

[41:08] Love is kind. Why does he say that? Because you're going to need to be kind to one another. Love protects. Love trusts.

Love hopes. Love perseveres. And he says you're going to need every single part of that because there's some things you're going to need to protect people over.

They didn't mean that. I know they said it. It didn't mean that. It didn't mean it the way you, I want you to want to protect that brother or sister on that issue. Love trusts. Well, it sounded as though that's what they meant, but I don't think they could have meant that.

I don't think they could have trust them over that. Love hopes. Oh, dear. Brother so-and-so, sister so-and-so's, done that again, but I'm counting on them.

God will enable them to get over that. Love perseveres. Yet again, X, Y, Z. But we're going to keep going.

[42:12] We need all those things and we don't have an alternative. We need to put these things into action in our dealings with one another. And shall we do that?

Shall we do that? Shall we love one another deeply from the heart? Shall we keep on loving one another? Number three.

We're commanded to love each other in the Christian life, in the Christian community, functionally, so things actually happen. So, for example, what should we do?

Shall we care for one another? Or shall we only care for ourselves? Shall we only care for our own interests, our own family, our own well-being?

It's a very, I'm not asking this as a facetious question, because the reality of it is we care about our own interests, our own family, our own health.

[43:14] But Christian love says we don't just care about those things, we care about one another's interests, care about their family, care about their health, their well-being.

Shall we do that? Here's a very functional thing. Shall we all know each other's names? If you're a church member, can I encourage you to make sure you know the names of the other church members?

Corinne and I are working on a prayer list, aren't we, Corinne? Which we, there will be a list of all the church members and various things we could pray about. It's not compulsory, but I think that's helpful.

I think we used to have that overdue. That would be a helpful thing, wouldn't it? We can pray for one another because we know one another's names. We're getting to the point where there is enough of us that you might not know the names of the other church members.

But shall we make sure we do know the names? Shall we make sure we know where they are, where they're at and how we can pray for them? Shall we have a reasonable idea as to how to pray for each other? It's easy to come into a group this size and just be completely awed.

[44:29] There's so many faces, I don't know where to begin. Which are the regulars? Which are the newcomers? I don't know. Don't even bother to

try. Please do try. Please do try and work out who's who and how to pray for one another.

And if you're thinking about whether you might come to this church here, we do want it to be a church where we know one another's names. We don't want it to be a church where we have the old people, whoever they may be, and the internationals, whoever they may be, and the married people, whoever they may be, and the children, whoever they may be.

We want to actually know one another's names. We're not so big that we can't realistically do that and pray for one another. And shall we help each other? Shall we know one another well enough to say, ah, so-and-so needs help in their garden or so-and-so needs help moving something or so-and-so doesn't have anywhere to have lunch today or something like that.

Shall we, in a practical way, help one another? And shall we try to develop in this so that we learn how to encourage one another and spur one another on to love and good works, as it says in Hebrews?

Shall we think about it sufficiently as to say, I met so-and-so, had a little chat with them last Sunday. I remember what we said. I've been thinking about that.

[45:58] I know what to say next time. I know what to pray for. I know what I might say next time to encourage one another and spur one another on. Fourth and final thing.

What is love then? It's a command. Isn't it? Love one another deeply is an imperative command. It is also a gift.

We love one another because we receive this love into our hearts for we've been born again. It's also a fruit because as we look more to the Lord and appreciate Him more, the Spirit produces this fruit in our lives.

love is a command and it's a gift and it's a fruit to be and do what God has put deeply into our hearts and lives as we have been born again by His Spirit and walk in the Spirit.

It's subtle. It's nitty-gritty. It's what the Christian life is about. So let me close by asking, are you part of this?

[47:14] Because if you're not a believer, if you're not a Christian, you are actually still on the outside of this. You are not part yet of this bond of love that exists between the people of God.

And let me say, would you like to be part of it? If you're not a Christian, isn't this an attractive thing to be part of? And wouldn't you like to be part of it?

And the way to be part of it is not to try and sign up to be a church member. The way to be part of it first is to go to Jesus and ask to belong to Him and to be forgiven by Him and to be His servant.

That's the first thing if you'd like to be part of it. And brothers and sisters, shall we be part of it as the Church of Jesus Christ here at Calvary Evangelical Church in Brighton?

And when we fail, as we shall, shall we be refreshed and replenished by the love of Jesus Christ and pick ourselves up and keep on loving and not give up, shall we do those things?

[48:27] I hope the answer is yes. Let's close by singing together.