

SUMMER 3 - What Does the Lord Require?

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Preacher: Andrew Reid

- [0 : 0 0] Please sit down. Now, I'm taking what some may consider a bit of a risk tonight, and maybe I might at the end of the night, and that is I thought we'd allow an opportunity for questions tonight.
- So if there are questions at the end, that's what that microphone is for, and we'll see how we go. And if the mic disappears next week, you'll know that I thought that wasn't so good after all.
- Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your word to us. We thank you for the encouragement and strength and help and comfort that it brings.
- We thank you also for the way that at times you threaten us with your word, and that you reach out to teach us through it. We pray tonight, Father, that you might do all of these things.
- And Father, we pray that your word might teach us about the Lord Jesus, and might instruct us, might encourage us, might help us, might lead us, and might draw us closer to yourself and to your Son.
- [1 : 1 4] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Also tonight, there'll be some tea and coffee if you want to stay around afterwards, and you're very welcome to do so. Friends, I want to begin tonight by reminding you of where we've been so far and what we've learned from Amos so far.
- Now, we know that Amos came from the southern nation of Judah. And we know that the bulk of his prophecy is not directed so much to his own people, but directed to the northern kingdom, the ten tribes in the north.
- We know that the prophecy that he utters is largely a prophecy of doom and of devastating judgment. And we know that because of chapter 1, verse 2, which we looked at last Wednesday night.
- In 1, verse 2, the prophet declares, Now, on Sunday night, we worked through the seven prophecies by Amos against the seven nations that surrounded Israel.
- He then tells each of them that God is fed up with their behavior, and he promises that each of them will face God's fire. God will be a divine warrior, waging war on them.
- [2 : 3 5] We also saw on Sunday that the first six nations are nations that had no formal relationship with God. Nevertheless, it was clear that God viewed these surrounding nations as having some sort of relationship with him, probably because they're part of his created order.
- They owed allegiance to him. They lived in his world, and therefore, they had obligations to act with common justice, the sort of justice that they could tell even from observing his world.
- But instead, we found that they brutalized and tortured and mistreated each other. And there are classic examples in those verses running from chapter 1, verse 3, verse 4, all the way through to chapter 2, verse 5.

The seventh nation, or in fact, just before verse 5, the seventh nation was very different. You see, the seventh nation was the nation of Judah. That is the southern nation from which Amos himself came.

And that nation did have a formal relationship with God. It had a covenant relationship with God. And that nation had broken that relationship by rejecting the law of God that governed the relationship.

[3 : 45] They'd also gone off after other gods rather than worshipping the God with whom they had entered into relationship and who had entered into relationship with them. They had other gods but him.

And that is the ground that we've traversed so far. That's where we're up to now. And so what I want to do with you now is to imagine for a moment that you have been listening into this dialogue, listening into these oracles against the nations, and that you are an Israelite.

That is, you come from the north. You come from those ten tribes up in the north based around Samaria. I want you to imagine you come from there. You live there in the north.

And there is no love lost between you and the south from which Amos comes. So imagine you're listening into that prophecy. And imagine now how you'd be thinking and feeling at this point.

You've gone through seven nations. My guess is that you'd listen to those first six oracles. And then you'd be saying that's the ones about the pagan nations. You'd be saying, ah, yes.

[4 : 50] Those pagan nations, they're a godless, clueless lot. Look at their conduct. Look at their barbarity towards each other. Look at how they treat each other.

They deserve everything that is coming to them. God will rightly judge them. And then comes the oracle about your brother nation, Judah. And it stirs up all your nationalism, all your pride.

And you find yourself agreeing with Amos. And you say to yourself, yes, yes, that nation, that Judah, well, they're a faithless lot. They always speak so arrogantly about Israel in the north.

But they themselves are rotten to the core. They always condemn the north for its idolatry. But they're idolatrous and disobedient to the core.

They deserve. That nation deserves the heat of God's anger. Friends, I wonder if you can hear what I'm saying. I think this prophecy is designed to create a sense of arrogance towards all the other nations, including Judah in the south.

[5 : 54] And I think it's designed to create a sense of them being in the wrong. And therefore, perhaps the implication that Israel may be in the right. And that's enhanced by the fact that you've got seven prophecies, six surrounding nations, one, their brother nation, Judah.

Seven's the number for fullness. And you think, yes, he's delivered a full oracle. If you're listening, you'd be nodding in agreement. You'd be feeling that Amos had finished the oracles against the nation and he'd got it all right.

And so Amos and God have designed this very special surprise and shock for the northern kingdom. And it's with that background that Amos delivers his prophecy in Amos 2, verses 6 to 16.

See, Amos plays a trick at times in his prophecy. He loves going for seven and then adding an eighth for a surprise factor. And he does it here. Look at what he has to say.

First, I want you to notice that his oracle lines itself up with the previous ones by beginning in the same way. It starts with that familiar ring we've heard seven times now. For three transgressions of, even for four, I will not revoke the punishment.

[7 : 04] However, it is a little bit different in that it does not go on to speak of fire as all the others have. And not only that, it is, as was observed by Graham, a little longer.

And I want you to notice the structure of this oracle. Well, it falls into three sections. First, there are indictments. There are seven indictments in verses 6 to 8. We're going to go through them in a moment.

Second, there is a punishment. It's introduced in verse 13. And then seven aspects of that punishment are outlined in verses 14 to 16. You can see he loves the number seven, can't you?

And then in the middle of those indictments and punishment, God's actions towards Israel are listed. There are five actions referred to in verses 9 to 12. So there's a broad outline.

Now, let's have a look at its details. Now, first, the indictments. Did you see them there? Verses 6 to 8. I need to say that there are difficulties about the Hebrew throughout this. And there's some debate as to what's exactly being referred to.

[8 : 02] But I think the general tenor of them is clear. Let's have a look at each. And let's see them as the NRSV presents them. Charge number one is that they sell the righteous for silver.

Now, you can see what's going on here. The implication is of this charge that people are being treated as commodities to be bought and sold. In other words, this nation is doing just as the nations in the previous seven oracles had done as well.

Charge number two. They sell the needy for a pair of sandals. Now, whatever this means, the implication is that the needy have been improperly manipulated by the wealthy for the benefit of the wealthy.

Charge number three. They trample the head of the poor into the dust of the ground. Now, let me tell you what I think is going on here. The image is this one. It is one of walking along and treading on someone as though you were treading dust underneath your feet.

In other words, treating something as though they are nothing but specks of dust on the ground to be walked over. It's about denying the rights of people. It's about abusing them as people.

[9 : 13] It's very harsh language. It's just walking over them as though they are absolutely nothing. Charge number four. They push the afflicted out of the way.

The image here is that of denying justice to the oppressed, of turning aside the rights of the underprivileged. In other words, the rich and the wealthy here in this nation bully and oppress the underprivileged by depriving them and blocking them from obtaining the privileges and prerogatives to which they are naturally entitled.

They are cruel. They are oppressive. Charge number five. Father and son go into the same girl so that God's holy name is profaned.

Can you see what's going on here? The charge is that this young, defenseless woman is being used and abused and the abuse is being led by the father.

And it's as though the father is leading and instructing his son in how to abuse others like this, how to act like this towards such women. It's a horrifying prospect.

[10 : 21] A father teaching a son how to abuse a woman. Charge number six. They lie down beside every altar on garments taken by pledge.

Now, let me tell you what's going on here. You see, in the world of the Old Testament, there were strict laws to protect the poor. Now, one of these laws was that when you took property in return for a loan, you never took the person's clothing as well.

Or if you did, you made sure that they got it back by night force so that they could wrap it around themselves and keep themselves warm at night. Because you wanted to treat them rightly.

Even if you had borrowed something by loan, you wouldn't push it the next step and just leave them in the cold at night. Now, here, can you see what the wealthy are doing? They're taking the garments of the poor.

And to add insult to injury, they are taking those garments and stuffing them under their elbows and behind their backs in places of worship as cushions.

[11 : 25] They have deprived the rights of others and have the hide to use the object of those rights in their worship places. Charge number seven.

In the house of their God, they drink wine bought with the fines they imposed. Now, notice the irony that is here in this verse. Here are the rich. Instead of caring for the poor, what they do is they fine or tax them.

And then what they do is they use the money that they gained from that fining and taxing people to buy wine, which they then take into the very house of God and consume in the presence of God.

I mean, how bad is that? But notice what Amos says here. And it's very, if you don't watch out, you miss it. He talks about the house of whose God? The house of their God.

In other words, you cannot help but wonder if this is the real God or a God of their creation. So there are the indictments. They are potent, aren't they? This is injustice gone crazy.

[12 : 31] I want you to notice that the charges here are very different from those leveled against the nations. The first six nations are indicted because of their conduct in war. The nation of Judah was indicted because of its failure in religion.

But this nation is very different. These are social sins. The guilt of Israel lies within their everyday oppressive behavior.

One citizen toward another citizen. One person who is a covenant recipient towards another person who is a covenant recipient as well. These are moral and ethical sins committed with a high hand.

And that's demonstrated in the fact that they often have religious connections. Now look at the punishments. So flip right down to the bottom verses 13 to 16. They're outlined there.

Now you may remember in our first week that I told you that at this time Israel's life was marked by expansion and wealth. This was a time of plenty.

[13 : 33] It was, if you like, of the north, the golden age of the north. The time when it was doing its best. It was a time when Israel gloried in its king and gloried in its army.

And this punishment hits at the very point of their boasting. God uses this imagery of wealth. Can you see that? A cart so laden up with grain that it's sort of sinking down and, you know, is overwhelmed by grain.

And he takes this image of wealth and turns it on its head. For God will use this heavy cart to crush Israel. And he then announces the seven punishments that will affect the army that they've put their confidence in.

This great symbol of strength. The swift will not escape. Flight will perish from the swift. The strong will not retain their strength.

That's what strong's being about. But they won't have it. The mighty one, the one who, you know, could overwhelm anyone, the great warrior. Well, he will not save even his own life.

[14 : 38] The archer, well, he won't stand his ground. He'll run and retreat. The fledged foot soldier won't be able to run fast enough. The horseman will not save his life.

There'll be no horse able to carry him fast enough. And even the bravest warrior, the one stout of heart, will flee naked in that day. The one, the strong, the bold one, the one glorying in their armor will be left running away naked.

So we have the indictment of God in verses 6 to 8. The punishment of God in verses 13 to 16. Seven charges, seven punishments. And in between we have verses 9 to 11.

You see, the middle verses list the great kindnesses of God toward his people. Look at them there in verse 9. God tells how he destroyed the great Amorites. Do you remember them trying to enter into the promised land?

And they said the people there are really big. These great Amorites, they occupied the promised land before Israel, but God destroyed them. Verse 10 describes how he rescued his people out of Egypt and guided them through the wilderness.

[15 : 48] Verse 11, he narrates how he gave them godly leaders in prophets and Nazarites. And he challenges people to deny his generosity. Look at verse 11, the last verse, the last line.

Is it not so, O people of Israel? He's saying, you know this to be true, don't you? Now look at verse 12. God goes on to tell his people how they shut their eyes to God's generosity.

By corrupting this godly leadership that he had given them. This gift that he had given them. These prophets and these Nazarites. Just as they had used and abused the poor.

The point's very clear, isn't it? You see, God had been massive in his generosity and kindness. He'd poured out grace, kindness, mercy upon his people. But what had they done?

They had not responded in like kind. They had not responded with generosity and kindness. Instead, they had seen God's generosity and kindness and turned it to abuse of the needy and the poor.

[16 : 45] God's attitude to the needy and the disadvantaged, which was them, is seen in his generosity and kindness toward them. Israel's attitude to the needy and the disadvantaged among them is seen in their stinginess, their abuse, their mistreatment of the poor, of their own society.

They are hardly like the God who has saved them. Now, friends, I just want to reflect on that passage a little bit by taking us back a little bit.

And I wonder if any of you or many of you have seen, and I guess most of you would have, the movie Saving Private Ryan. Now, if you've seen that movie, if you haven't, I'll tell you a little bit about it. The movie tells of this chain of events that happens in the closing days of the Second World War.

And what happens is the invasion of Normandy has taken place and it's succeeded. However, there is a certain Private Ryan whose life is at risk. And three of his brothers have been killed in this war.

And he is the only son left to one particular family. And a decision is made by General George C. Marshall to send a special group to rescue him at any cost.

[17 : 59] And the rescuers are led by a certain Captain John Miller. And a number of men lose their lives. And eventually, Captain Miller himself is mortally wounded and lies dying.

And Private Ryan finally is there and comes to him in his dying moments of life. And with his parting breath, Ryan whispers in his ear, James, earn this.

And James Ryan is left standing before the dead man. And as you sort of are there, the camera sort of pans and it moves to a different scene. And many years have passed.

And Ryan is now an old man standing in a sea of crosses. And he stops at one cross. And the one that marks the grave of the man who died to rescue him.

And he gets down on his knees before this cross. And he speaks toward the grave and he says these words. My family is with me today. They wanted to come with me.

[19 : 03] To be honest with you, I wasn't sure how I'd feel coming back here. Every day I think about you and what you said to me that day on the bridge. I've tried to live my life the best I could.

And I hope that was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes I've earned all of what you have done for me. At this point his wife goes and joins him at the grave.

And together they look at the grave. And Ryan turns to his wife and says, Tell me I've lived a good life. Tell me I'm a good man.

And she turns and looks him squarely in the eye with amazement and says to him, You are. Now there are some things in that sentiment, the sentiment of those scenes, where the parallels to the Christian message don't work as well as they might.

I admit that straight up. For example, the idea of earning someone's death on your behalf isn't a Christian one. However, there is something that I think does travel well into a Christian context.

[20 : 09] You see, what happens in the story is that this relationship is formed between these two men, between Ryan and Miller. There are elements of obligation in that relationship.

There are... Captain Miller is somewhat obliged to save Ryan. And Ryan also feels a response in return to respond to Miller's sacrifice by living a good life.

However, it's clear from the movie that there is something far more than just a legal obligation or a formal obligation there. You see, Ryan watched Miller die for him.

He has grasped the core of what this man did. He has grasped that this man had extraordinary kindness in his deeds toward him. And he has sought in life to replicate that kindness.

He has sought to replicate what Miller did for him in how he lives in the family that Miller enabled to come into existence. He has been a good father and a good husband.

[21 : 10] Like Miller, he has been a good man. Now, friends, this is exactly what God's complaint is about in Amos. God is aggrieved. He is aggrieved.

He is aggrieved. He is aggrieved not so much because Israel has not followed the law. He is aggrieved because they have not grasped what came before the law.

He's aggrieved because they have not grasped God's great kindness toward them in their need. What was in the center of this passage. They have not reflected the kindness that he demonstrated toward them in their kindness and generosity toward the disadvantaged and the needy.

Instead, they have abused the needy and the poor and they've used them as fodder and tools and objects of oppression and abuse. Now, there are times when they have not strictly broken any laws.

But that is not the point of what God is saying here. The point is that they have broken the very heart or core of the law. They have not loved as they have been loved.

[22 : 18] They have not been kind as kindness has been expressed toward them. They have not been like God, the God that they profess to know and be in relationship with.

They have not been like him. And yet they know what he is like, for they have experienced it. Now, the Christian impact of this and of what Amos says is clear, isn't it?

Firstly, we need to recognize that Jesus echoes much of the criticism given by Amos here. In one sense, there is not there's not a lot said in Amos that Jesus doesn't reiterate or in this part of Amos.

Jesus tells the Jewish people of his day that although they might be great law keepers, they had forgotten the very thing that was at its heart. In Matthew five, he tells them that at the core of the commandments is love.

And so while a person may not have actually murdered anyone, it is possible that they have hated their neighbor. While they may not have committed adultery, actually, they have virtually done it with their minds when they have looked upon someone with lust.

[23 : 31] Matthew nine, Jesus tells them that God is after mercy, not legal requirements or sacrifice of sacrifice. In Mark seven, he talks about using what looks to be a godly tradition to avoid having to adequately care for your parents.

In Mark 12, one of the religious leaders of the day asks him about the most important commandment. And he says this. The first is here, Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is, is this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

See, Jesus has been very clear. God being God's person is not so much about keeping the letter of the law. God's person will want to do that. They'll have a hunger and a thirst to do that.

But they will be motivated. They will not be motivated so much by duty to keep the law. They'll be motivated by the relationship that has been won for them and is expressed through that law, through God's kindness and mercy toward them.

[24 : 43] They will have grasped the core of what God has done for them. So the writer of Psalm 119, he's not so much keeping the law and loving the word because it's the word or the law. It's because it represents who God is and what God is like.

And he loves God. And so he loves God's word for God's word tells him more about this God that he has come to know. And so the godly person will reflect on this, will reflect this in the way that they think and they act like God.

They will be people of mercy and kindness. They will search God's word to find out what would God have me do. And they will do it because it is God who is behind that.

Now, let's think about this a little more from the New Testament. You see, it's clear, isn't it, that the New Testament people pick up on what Jesus says. And so we find people like Paul talk about the core of Christian faith being about love.

I wonder if in your Bibles you'd turn with me to Romans 13. So Romans 13, verses 8 through to 10.

[25 : 57] Oh, no one anything. Except to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandments are summed up in this word. Love your neighbour as yourself.

Love does no wrong to a neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. And then, as Paul goes on in the next few chapters, he gives many, many examples of how this would work out in practice.

You see, if someone has grasped this, these are the sorts of things he says they will do. They will welcome those who are weak in faith instead of standing firm on their privileges and saying, You just come and learn like I am.

Be informed like I am. Come and be like me. No. They will welcome those who are weak in faith. They will respect and not despise people who have different attitudes than they about keeping certain days.

[27 : 07] Romans 14, verse 3. They will not live for themselves. Romans 14, verse 7. But for the Lord. They will resolve never to put a stumbling block or a hindrance in the way of another Christian.

Romans 14, verse 13. They will refuse to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything that makes their brother or their sister stumble. Romans 14, verse 21.

They will put up with the failings of the weak and not please themselves. Romans 16, verse 1. They will welcome each one, even as Christ has welcomed them. Romans 16, verse 7.

They will love as God has loved them. For he accepted them. They accept others. He forgave them. They forgive others.

He loved them. They love others. He sent his own son into the world to die for them. They will do anything. They won't eat meat. They won't drink wine for their brother or their sister's sake.

[28 : 09] John talks about the same thing, doesn't he, in 1 John. Go to that passage we read earlier on, 1 John chapter 2, verses 7 to 11. 1 John chapter 2, verses 7 to 11.

1 John chapter 2, verses 7 to 11. Beloved, I am writing to you no new commandment but an old, that you have had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing to you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Whoever says, I'm in the light, while hating a brother or sister is still in the darkness. If I might put this in Old Testament Amos terminology. Whoever says, I'm a covenant recipient, while treating their brother and sister like they do in Amos chapter 2, is still in the darkness.

There's not much difference, is there, between Amos 2 and here. That's what's being said. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

[29 : 21] But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness and does not know the way to go because the darkness has brought on blindness. There is Amos chapter 2.

That's what he's saying. He's saying, you people have been loved by me and you cannot love your neighbor. You say you love God, you lie about on your cushions in his temple, but it's a lie.

Can you hear what he's saying? He's saying that although the Old Testament law told people to love God and their neighbor, they did not. But he's saying that that old commandment still stands.

However, he is saying that there's something new about that commandment, that love commandment in the New Testament. Have you ever wondered why Jesus says, a new commandment I give unto you? It wasn't new, was it?

It's there in Amos, isn't it? It's there in Deuteronomy. It's been there before. What's new about it? I take it is that the new thing is that we have seen God's love lived out in Jesus on the cross, haven't we?

[30 : 30] We have seen how great the Father's love for us is that he should send his only son into the world to die as a human being. We have seen the enormous and overwhelming kindness of God, not the kindness of bringing us out of Egypt, not the kindness of destroying the Amorites and giving us the promised land.

No, God has shown us a greater kindness. He has acted in such a manner that he has fulfilled the deepest wishes of Old Testament saints. He has given us a new covenant where he forgives our wickedness and remembers our sins no more.

Jeremiah 31 verses 31 to 34. He has made us his people. He's made us his children. And he's drawn us into his very presence with love and kindness.

And it's here that the rubber hits the road, I think. You see, we have looked into the very core of God's being and found the most extraordinary love and grace and kindness.

And friends, in Amos, with greater revelation came greater obligation. Well, we have had the ultimate revelation.

[31 : 45] And with greater revelation comes greater obligation. We must love as we have been loved. And if we do not, then surely we have not understood God's great love for us.

And I think that's what John means in verses 9 to 11. Whoever says, I am in the light while hating brother or sister is still in the darkness. How can a person treat another person like that if they have seen what God has done in Christ?

Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light. And for such a person, there's no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in darkness.

They walk in darkness. They don't know the way to go because the darkness has brought on blindness. Brothers and sisters, let me urge you to hear what Amos and Jesus and Paul and John are saying.

Because I think it is a very sound word for us that springs from Amos and echoes into our present world. God does not so much want duty from us.

[32 : 53] He wants us to understand what motivates and drives him. And he wants us then to be filled with that same sort of compassion and mercy and justice.

He wants us to act toward each other as he has acted toward us. He doesn't want a mean-heartedness that treats each other as an obligation. As something to be sort of trotted out and done in a mean-spirited way or in a just adequate way.

He doesn't want our love to be systematic and legal. He wants our love to flow from a heart that overflows with the love we have seen and come to know in Christ.

A heart that overflows with generosity and kindness and love and justice just as his does. And that is what we are to be like to everyone we meet. That is what we are to be like in our life together.

We are to be people who reflect great love because we have been loved with a great love. We are to be known by our love. And friends, whichever church you come from, is your church like this?

[33 : 59] Are we like this as individuals? Or are we like our predecessors in Amos? Risking the same judgment that God warned against them or warned them against?

Friends, are our churches places of welcome or of ostracism? Are they places where we welcome people of different skin colour like God does or not?

Are they places that welcome different languages or not? Are they places of forgiveness or of grudges and bitterness? Are they places of mercy or of a sort of harsh judgment?

Are they places of kindness or brutality? Are our households places of kindness or brutality? Sisters and brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, those who have received the love of God and Jesus, those who have been loved and forgiven.

I want to close with the words from Jesus and then from John. Warm words. And then one not so warm. Jesus says in John 13, A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.

[35 : 19] Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love, if you have love one for another.

And John says in 1 John 4, 7-12, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

And anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. And in this was the love of God made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. This is one side. Love, even as you have been loved.

[36 : 18] Let me give you the other side. It's the side that's prevalent in Amos. The other side is drawn out from Amos. The other side is equally set out by Christ.

Where he tells the story of a servant who has been forgiven a great debt by a master, by his master, but who he himself could not even forgive a little debt by a fellow slave.

You remember it there from Matthew 18? Do you remember how Jesus closed the story? I think they are some of the most sobering words in the teaching of Jesus. And then his master summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant.

I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?

And in anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also, my heavenly father says Jesus will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from the heart.

[37 : 23] Love as you have been loved. Friends, if God has caught you out tonight, then let me suggest that you do four things.

Now first, head back to the cross and soak it in. Soak in again that great love and forgiveness and justice provided in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two. Go to the Christian brother or sister that you might have mistreated. Go to one if, you know, just remember one. Go to that Christian brother or sister that you've mistreated and ask for forgiveness.

Three. Set yourself three goals for how you're going to express practical and godly love toward three Christian brothers or sisters in the next week. It shouldn't be too hard a task, I think.

But choose to do it. And four. Work out how you can practice it regularly. Because this is the way we are designed to live by God.

[38 : 34] Loving even as we have been loved. If we can't get that right, we haven't got the most basic thing of Christian faith right. Let's work on it. And let's pray.

And then we'll see if there are any questions you have for me.