

# The Case for Mutual Affections

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us pray.

Gracious God and Father, this morning, as we take your word in hand, we remind ourselves! The fact that you have given to us the Scriptures, they are one of the sure indicators of your love. They are to be prized. They will abide forever in heaven. They are the means of blessing and counsel, comfort, correction.

And we are blessed to be able to open this book this morning and rely upon the work of the Spirit of God.

We ask that you would do a work in us this morning that leads us to confess that what you've done is of you, not of us, and that it is of eternal significance.

[ 1 : 20 ] We ask this in your precious name. Amen. I want to start. We're going to be in the book of Ephesians this morning, but I want you to look with me, if you would, to Psalm 119, verse 18.

Turn to that passage. Psalm 119, verse 18. If you don't have a Bible, I want to encourage you to go ahead and take the one that is in the pew, or if you're sitting on the edges there, you can get it underneath.

But I want you to look at it. I want you to put your eyes on that text.

We'd have to confess that there are times where we've read the Bible and it hasn't made a bit of difference. You ever had one of those moments? There are times where we have opened the Word, we've either heard it, we've sung the words.

I remember, and I don't remember who it was that said it. It was a pastor of a previous generation. He said that the most amount of lying that Christians do is when they sing. How many of you followed what I said?

[ 2 : 36 ] Christians lie most often when they sing. Now, I'm not accusing any of you of being liars, nor am I drawing attention to that in my own life, but I'm just saying that sometimes we say things and really don't think about what we're saying.

And sometimes we sit there and we hear what other people are saying. It doesn't make a bit of difference. I want you to look at a psalm, one verse, and I am just curious if you have it underlined in your Bible.

Now, I want to say something. There's nothing magical about underlining, and I don't want you to ever think that you get extra points in heaven for having anything underlined in your Bible. How many of you have seen people that have Bibles that are so full of ink that you're not sure whether you can really parse what's the rest of it?

You know, it's like I've seen some people, and I hope I'm not tweaking anybody today, but they have, you know, red for one thing, and they have green for another, and they have yellow for another, and blue for another. And their Bible is so color-coded that I'm wondering if they can remember how many of the different colors are, you know, related and what all the little signals and keys are.

Nothing against that. But I guess I would say this. Underlining is one of those things that maybe helps you connect a little bit to things that are really important.

[ 3 : 53 ] Agreed? Look at this passage. I wonder if it's underlined. If it's not, I would encourage you to maybe do that.

But more importantly, I don't want you to underline and forget it. I want you to underline it and weave it into your prayer life. I have to confess that I remember this in King James, so bear with me. Open thou mine eyes, that I might behold wondrous truths out of thy law. That's the psalmist. He says, I want you to do something with these eyes of mine.

I want you to open them up so I can see what you have for me. Elsewhere in Psalm 119, it says, every word of God is pure.

It's all valuable. It's all precious. It is all significant. And we, in our natural tendency, come and can sit and endure for a period of time the preaching of the Word of God.

[ 5 : 08 ] And apart from the enabling and our desperate dependence upon the Spirit, we can leave relatively unchanged. It's easy to do.

And so it's appropriate for us to remember, if you think back to the last several sermons that I have preached in Ephesians, you'll remember that I preached about the importance of you praying for your pastor.

And I am so very blessed to hear numbers of you have said to me this morning. And it's been a characteristic of our ministry for many years.

People will say to me, I'm praying for you this morning. I have been praying for you this morning. I was praying for you earlier. And I appreciate that.

It is nothing other than a simple reflection of your obedience to the Scripture and a recognition that the Spirit of God has given us careful instruction that it's right to pray for the man who handles the Word.

[ 6 : 12 ] It's right. It's right. The next thing that we looked at was that passage there in Ephesians chapter 6 where Paul says this.

He says, hey, listen, I want you to understand that preaching is also dependent upon the Spirit of God. Preaching is not an exercise in rhetoric.

Preaching is a declaration of the glory of God through the enabling of the Spirit of God. Preaching is not an exercise in the Spirit of God. Thus saith the Lord. It is a holy, it is a humbling responsibility.

And at the end of the day, it is one that when it is finished, you should walk out of here and say, I saw an evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in an earthen, frail vessel.

And it's the Spirit that challenges and makes a difference. I do say that by way of introduction because this morning we are coming down to this will be the second to the last sermon that I preach on the book of Ephesians.

[ 7 : 21 ] Lord willing. Okay? Now, I mean, where's John? He's out here. John, we only have one more because John wants to know months in advance, so what are you going to be preaching on?

He works on our music. He wants it to be connected to the passage so that there's a direct correlation. And there's just one more, John.

Okay? In fact, John emailed me earlier in the week. He says, can you help me a little bit by telling me what the last... You're in verse 24. What are you going to do with verse 24?

That's next week. This week we are in verse 21 through 23. Okay? And as we look at this passage, let me read it to you, lay it out for you, and then we'll get into this passage.

And here's what I want you to understand. I'm going to tell you ahead of time what the effect of Spirit-enabled preaching will be in the life of humble believers that are dependent upon the Spirit of God to work.

[ 8 : 24 ] Do you follow that? You know what's going to happen. Here's what the effect will be. You will be unrelenting in your pursuit in loving the people you're with.

Oh, by the way, is it easy to love people you're close to? Smile, everybody. I remember the little poem that... Is Becky Radcliffe in here?

Yeah, there you are, Becky. I owe a lot to Becky. She was the first secretary that worked tolerated me here. And Becky taught me lots of things. One of them is that you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Remember that, Becky? See? I needed that. The other thing that she taught me is that little... a poem that goes somewhat like this. To dwell above with saints we love, oh, that will be glory.

To dwell below with saints we know. Well, that's another story. And... And... Huh? You know that, right?

[ 9 : 31 ] That's the laugh of familiarity. You're saying, yeah, I'm there. Ephesians closes off in a very interesting way with the apostle under the prompting of the Spirit of God saying, let's bring all this grand theology of the work of God in saving us and the Spirit of God in changing us down into very practical terms of how we get along and stay together.

So, verse 21, I wrote it out here in notes so I could remember how to pronounce it.

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. I've sent him to you for this very purpose that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers. Peace be to the Lord, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It's very interesting that Paul would close off this way.

Because if we were thinking of bringing a grand theological discourse to its conclusion in our own practical thinking, we probably may not be inclined to think of the last thing that we really should drive home is this issue of love.

[11:08] But that's what he did. And it is completely consistent with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to reference it later.

But one of the things that characterized the early church, the New Testament church, in the profoundly pagan world, was the undeniable affection that believers had for one another.

I have spent some time at various moments in my life going back and reading some of the references in ancient literature about the testimony that early believers gave in their relationships with one another.

An illustration would be this. There was a Roman governor that appealed very strongly to the Senate, and the Senate finally passed an edict in which they said, all right, all right, we are going to send X number of whatever it was, you know, let's just use the term dollars because we'll identify with that.

We're going to send X number of billions of dollars out to the areas of the country so that those who are in authority can then show benevolence to the needy.

[12:29] Now, guess what happened in the ancient world with all that wonderful money that the Senate allocated for the poor people? Guess who got most of it? Does anybody know?

Does anybody have any idea where most of the money went in the ancient world when it was sent with all this benevolent intention from Rome to the outlying regions?

It somehow or another ended up in the pockets of those who were the distributors of kindness. Do you realize that's the way it is today?

I might be a surprise to you. But every time the government has a good idea, and it appeals to the impoverished conditions of certain... The vast majority of what is actually translated into pockets ends up not in the pockets of those that are desperately needy, but those that have been employed to see to it that the government's benevolence is cared for.

In the ancient world, they were so ashamed when they saw the testimony of the early church's love for one another that they had the Senate pass laws to officially show the government's benevolence towards other impoverished people.

[13:49] And it never worked. In one case, when one of the bishops was called to bear testimony to Christianity, one of the things that he said as he was speaking to the Caesar and defending Christianity, he says, the common statement being made throughout Rome is, see how they love one another.

Speaking of Christians, see how they love one another. And I want you to understand that unbelievers were struck in the ancient world most of all by how the early church cared for one another and loved one another.

And I want you to understand that that genuine affection, that love and that interest in one another, did not just kind of pop out in a vacuum. It took the work of the Spirit of God, and it took persistent nurturing.

Now, what do I mean by that? Important things that are hard need to be said, can I say it carefully, again and again. Would you agree with that? Important things that are hard need to be said again and again.

And so here we are coming to the very end, and Paul wants to remind us about the importance of loving one another. And so as he goes about it, I want you to see that first of all, he gives us an illustration from his own life.

[15:11] You look there in verse 21 and 22, he says, Now, some of the things that help us stay connected and care about one another, when we are at distance from one another, were not available in the ancient world.

Do you follow that? I have two sisters that, not presently, they're here with dad and mom, but as a general rule, they're over in Egypt. And in the olden days, in order to get to Egypt, it was a journey of biblical proportions.

Do you follow? It took an incredible amount of time to travel from point A to point B. And the only way in which you really could continue to stay connected was, first of all, to make a conscious and deliberate point of remembering those individuals and praying for them.

And here is Paul, as he is bringing his letter to a close. He says, Hey, listen, here I am. I'm in prison. I'm not where you are.

But I know that you care about me, and I am interested that your heart be comforted. They knew that Paul was in jail, and they were concerned for that.

[16:39] Ancient jails were not the club fed. They were miserable, despicable environments in which people were kept only temporarily until their judgment or their execution or whatever it was.

And Paul says, Hey, listen, I know you're concerned for me. I know you're interested. And so I'm going to send Tychicus to let you know how things are. I'm really struck, as I was reading this passage, by the confidence that Paul had in the Ephesian believers.

He hadn't seen them for a long time. And for a lot of us, when someone is out of sight, they're also out of what? Out of mind. We have a tendency of forgetting.

We have a tendency of, well, that was then, and this is now, and we kind of move on in relationships, and we're done. Paul says, That's not the way it is with me, because you're my brothers and my sisters, and I care about you personally.

Given the natural heart of man. Now, what do I mean by the natural heart of man? I mean the way we are by nature. Apart from the work of the Spirit of God and His grace, we are not inclined towards lasting relationships.

[17:55] Do you follow that? We just kind of play it the moment, and we deal with the things that are directly in front of us, and it takes effort, and it takes the work of the Spirit to sustain and nurture lasting relationships.

That's one of the reasons why when you bump into people today that have been married after 40 or 50 years, you know the attitude of our culture is, What? How did you do that? Well, it takes work. It takes prayer. I want you to understand as you look at this passage, what we find in 21 and 22 is an illustration of this fact, that when the Spirit of God is at work in people's hearts, He breaks down the natural tendencies of separation and malice.

Let me say that again slowly so it sticks in your mind. When the Spirit of God is at work in a people's heart, He breaks down the natural tendencies of separation and malice.

Do you know that when we're close together, over a period of time, we inevitably end up doing things that are an irritation and an offense to other people? Some of the things that are perceived offenses really don't rise to the level of being significant.

[19:10] However, we all over time, by virtue of our own sinfulness, do things in relationship that cause problems. Would you agree?

I remember hearing John MacArthur say that if you are going to sustain a relationship, you must consciously choose to forgive again and again and again.

And I want you to understand that when the Spirit of God is at work, He helps us go against the grain of our nature and against the natural tendencies that we have of being unforgiving, of being indifferent, being unwilling to invest in the lives of other people.

I don't know if you know, but I don't have bumper stickers on my car. Now, I'm going to have the youth group use my SUV. Pastor Andrew, do not bring it back with a bumper sticker. Do you follow that?

That is a no-no. No. No. No. But I like reading bumper stickers.

[20:20] Some of the best bits of philosophy have been stated on bumper stickers. Now, some of them are just over the top. But I have to tell you, bumper stickers say something about people, right?

Isn't that true? And so, when I see a bumper sticker as I'm kind of driving along and I see this bumper sticker go by, it says, I'm spending my children's inheritance.

Or, the other one that I really like is the one that, no, you can't use my truck. I'm not helping you move. I read those bumper stickers and I say, well, those things tell me what people's hearts are like.

And that's the attitude of the world, isn't it? It's all about me. It's for my own interest and really, at the end of the day, it's, what do I get out of this?

On the other hand, I think about the illustrations that I just think of the last couple weeks. I think of the fact that later in the week, the week before Vacation Bible School actually started, it became evident that we needed, I think it was 220 cupcakes that some of the ladies in our church were going to frost and then they were going to stick little red Twizzlers on top.

[ 21 : 45 ] They were called, what were they called, Jody? Cupcake bombs or something? Dynamite cupcakes or dynamite. Anyway, I saw the, I thought that's a great idea and so, actually, honestly, I went out on Facebook and so I posted, hey, we need, bang, it was done.

I mean, minutes, it's like, did we have too many we had to give them away? Yeah, it's like, yeah, wham, it happened. And while we're talking about moving, I can't help but bring up the fact that, John, you're moving, when are you doing it?

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. 26, okay. Testimony to our fellowship is that we're willing to help one another move, isn't that right?

When I was at, by the way, Mrs. Holopeter, where are you? I'm not talking about Carolyn, I'm talking about Megan. When I was at Aaron and Megan's wedding, I got a text and it really made me, it made me happy.

I got a text saying that there were 23 of our people there to help Steve and Marsha move.

Somebody, somebody stopped and went off to the side, I think you sent him over there, didn't you?

[ 22 : 59 ] It was Henry. Where are you, Henry? You're out here somewhere, probably working with the kids. Anyway, I get a text that says, hey, guess what, Pastor? Because I was a little fretful, you know, it's like, I wonder how many people are going to be there to help them move and I'd like to be there but I want to be at Aaron and Megan's wedding and I get this text that says, hey, it's good, there's 23 people.

In fact, they were standing in line and you know, some guys want to be able to carry three or four boxes, you know, and when you have that many people, it's like, you know, shoebox, shoebox, shoebox, you know, it's like, no, no, no, that's two, you know, it's like, okay.

Do you know what that says about people? I know one of the men in our church shared that one of his neighbors moved that same week and there wasn't a single person from the body of people that he's involved with that was there to help.

You see, I want you to understand that what Paul is illustrating here in this passage is that when God's at work in our hearts, we end up caring for one another. Genuine Christian affection drives us to help one another in need.

It drives us to help problems and tensions within the family of God with the intention of bringing about reconciliation rather than flaming out. One of the things that as I've gotten older in the Lord, I have been I have been so blessed to watch is that I have learned that in many cases the body that is healthy heals itself.

[ 24 : 49 ] How many of you understand what I said? If someone has an attitude with someone else and someone shares it with other individuals, often what will happen in our fellowship is that the someone else's will say, yeah, how did it go when you talked with them?

By the way, that's Matthew 18. Am I right? How many of you understand that? Will you please nod your head so I know that I don't need to give a little rendition here. Okay? Okay? It's important. That's what I mean by the body heals itself.

It takes care of a lot of the little issues that happen in life. We help each other with that. A husband has something to say, struggling in a relationship or a wife has something, someone else will come alongside and say, hey, let me help you with that.

I love you. Don't go there. Furthermore, when people have a genuine affection for one another, they encourage those who are wounded and are struggling.

You know, the truth of the matter is that when you are close to people, you know what's going on in their lives, whether they intend to let you know or not. You don't know all the details, but how many of you know when someone's countenance has fallen?

[ 26 : 11 ] Now, what do I mean by countenance? How many of you know when a person's kind of disconsolate or discouraged or kind of despondent? You know, what happens?

Their face falls, right? Now, I don't mean to the point of needing surgery, but I'm talking about, you know, it's like, hey, you're discouraged. I can see it. What's the problem? Now, don't ask them in the lobby.

I want you to know the lobby is the place where everything is good. But, you know, catch them on the side and say, you know, in the lobby, I noticed that instead of having that, hey, I'm great look, what's wrong?

Genuine Christian affection leads us to stay through relationships despite the challenges and heartaches that come over time.

And so, I want you to stop and think just for a moment and put it in very practical terms. We're looking at this little passage where the apostle says, hey, listen, I care about you and I know you care about me.

[ 27 : 17 ] I want you to ask yourself, do my actions and my inner thoughts reflect the heart of Christ? Do my actions and my inner thoughts reflect the heart of Christ?

So that we frame this properly, you're in the book of Ephesians and we're going to come back there, but I want you to turn back just for a little bit to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Now, with your eyes closed, most of you who are well-versed in the Scriptures know that 1 Corinthians 13 is the what? It's the love chapter and we all got that down. I mean, we don't need any coaching in that, but let's take a look anyway, okay? 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Picking up in verse 4, it says, love is patient and kind.

Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Probably the simplest illustration I can give you of a love like this is that Judith and I are going to play grandparents to two of our grandsons.

[ 28 : 35 ] Sam, my youngest, is at Fort Sill for his military responsibilities, and he's down there, and they took two of their four, and guess who has the other two?

Well, Heather and Todd kept them for a week, and now we're going to keep them for a week, and guess what we're going to do? How many of you understand that having children when you're young is a very intelligent thing? But, we're going to enjoy, and we have a wonderful time entertaining, and I've set up a tent in the bedroom.

Does that make sense? They're going to tent with Grandpa in air conditioning. Could I have the tent outside? The answer is yes, but my neighbors have attacked squirrels, and I thought it'd be much better to put it inside, and so I pushed the bed out of the way, and I set this little four-man tent up, and we sent pictures to Sam, said, guess where they're going to stay?

And my affection for them is Judith has bought candy. Now, I'm a diabetic, and should candy be in the house of a diabetic? What's the answer? No. I mean, I like that, Seth.

Just more insulin, right? Is that what you're thinking? But here's the deal. So, Judith hides the candy from me, but I want to tell you something about somebody that grew up in boarding school.

[ 30 : 10 ] Everybody listen. You have to get up pretty in the early morning to get ahead of me. And so, being as astute as I am, I think, well, grandkids are coming.

Hmm. I wonder what's in the bottom drawer here. In fact, I happen to open a thing of Cheetos, and she says, I mean, you know, kind of that soft, loving voice, don't do that, that's for the kids.

Okay. Oh, yeah, let's talk about music, right? Music. How many of you realize that all of us have our favorites? Smile.

We all have our favorites. Do you understand that? We have favorites, am I right? When my grandkids are in my house, guess what kind of songs we sing? Ad nauseum. So, what song would you like to sing, Calvin?

Well, let's sing Jesus Loves Me. And after we've sung Jesus Loves Me Once, okay, and what song would you like to sing, Eliab? Well, why don't we sing, do you follow that? And my affection for my grandchildren leads me to willingly do what their hearts inclined to do, right?

[ 31 : 24 ] I do ask myself the question, are there any Bible verses that go along with that? Yeah, okay, so we're okay. So, ask yourself the question this morning as you think about this concluding little portion to the book of Ephesians.

Here's the apostle saying this, when the Spirit of God's at work, He works to help me love other people. Well, Paul's given us an illustration, but I want to finish off by looking at verse 23, where we find a very interesting theological summary that is given for us.

He says, Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith. Now, circle the little word from. What we are looking at here in verse 23 is the fact that genuine conversion brings peace to us in our

relationships that the unbelieving world cannot understand.

It's interesting that the unbelieving world looks at peace, honestly, as the interlude between conflicts. Do you understand that? Let me say that slowly. The unbelieving world looks at peace as being those brief breaks between conflicts.

It's incredible to believe or to discover just how much turmoil and conflict is going on around the world. It's everywhere you look.

[ 32 : 54 ] You can't turn on the news without finding some turmoil and some conflict that's really life-threatening. Genuine salvation, on the other hand, brings peace that is more than just a cessation of strife.

God's peace brings a sense of well-being and it brings peace in relationships. When the sinner is changed by the power of the cross, he's changed from being a child of wrath and one who lives a wrathful lifestyle to being a child of God and one who is interested in those things that bring glory to God.

He no longer lives under the shadow of God's judgment. judgment. And a heart that is received complete forgiveness and savors the gift is that peace with God.

And that peace translates into relationships with other people. Do you follow that? I was talking with an individual just a couple days ago where they were dealing with kind of working through an offense that someone had done to them, someone in the family of God.

And they came first to kind of commiserate. How many of you know what I mean by commiserate? It's like, you know, you kind of chew on this and it kind of begins to eat you up a little bit and then you have to say something to somebody.

[ 34 : 19 ] It's like, you know, I can't believe they did this. You know, and as this person was talking and by the way, it's not a good idea to talk to pastor about things like that because you know what pastor's going to do?

What's he going to do? Huh? Well, what's the pastor going to do? Probably going to bring a little passage of scripture alongside and say, you know what, I'm wondering.

And providentially, the Lord allowed this person to have what I call spiritual belch. How many of you know what a spirit, it's kind of a and I, whew, man. And it dawned on them that they'd done this in front of the pastor and then they began to self-diagnose.

Do you know what it is to self-diagnose? Yes. Okay? And then they said this, they said, you know, I have to think that God has actually been more patient with me than I'm being with Bubba.

You know, is there any Bubba? No. Okay, it's more patient with me than I'm being with Bubba and I need to get over this. I said, well, yeah, that's right. Here's the point.

[ 35 : 25 ] It says there in verse 23, peace be to the brothers. Listen, God wants us who are part of the family of God to be at peace with one another, to be in unity, to have mutual affections for one another.

And that doesn't just come because we all happen to like to play golf together. It happens because of our affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. And honestly, when you run into people who profess to be believers but are always at odds and all stirred up about things and relationships, one of the legitimate questions that you can ask yourself is, I wonder what's going on in this person's life spiritually.

It can't be that way. Now, look also at the second part of this verse. It says, peace to the brothers and love with faith from genuine conversion moves the believer to being a loving person.

I want you to have that stuck in your mind. Genuine conversion, it's not going to pop out on the slide, so just kind of write it down anyway. Genuine conversion leads you to love other people.

Let me argue this from the scriptures. believers. And I'm not going to have you turn at the passage just because of the time, but in John chapter 13 verse 35, here's what Jesus said.

[ 36 : 59 ] He said, this is how people are going to know you're a Christian because you love others. Now, I do want you to turn.

You're in Ephesians. I want you to go to John, 1 John. And by the way, 1 John is a book that was written to help people know whether they're saved or not.

Stop, just for a second. Let's understand this because it's important. It's amazing how easily we are deceived. I am convinced there will be people that when they slip from this life into eternity are going to be absolutely stunned to find out that they have never come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And because of their lack of belief in Christ, they will spend eternity in hell. Satan deceived them in thinking that because they got baptized when they were 11, or because they showed up on a regular basis, or because they were a Sunday school teacher, that in and of itself is what guaranteed them a rival into eternity.

That's not the case. And Scripture is often interested in having us kind of question whether or not we're the real thing.

[ 38 : 30 ] Do you follow that? Now, having said that, can I tell you that next week's message is going to deal with that? But in 1 John, if you look, in 1 John chapter 4, let me just read it to you.

It says in verse 7, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. That's not Hollywood. That's lasting covenant commitment and enduring genuine affection.

Love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. I have known people that, boy, they're orthodoxy, they can slice and dice verses with the best of them, but when it really comes down to relationships, there is no evidence of love at all in their life, and here's what the passage says, love's from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not know love does not know God because God is love. Well, if you go on to verse 12, and I want you to look at that, no one has ever seen God. That's a theological statement, it's true, but if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

How do I know that God is at work in me because I love other people? It's not natural to me. And by the way, lest you're surprised, it's not natural to you. And so the argument that John is making is, hey, when God's in us, we love other people.

[ 40 : 00 ] Now look at verse 19 and 21. We love because He first loved us. So how do we get started at loving, period? Well, He chases us down in our miserable, despicable condition of being an unrepentant sinner, rebellious against the glory of God, seeking only our own glory.

And He finds us in our despair, and He convicts us of the darkness and the wickedness of our heart, and draws us to the cross by His grace, and leads us to cry out and say, I am a sinner, deserving judgment, but Jesus died for me.

Jesus loves me. And I cast myself upon His finished work and His mercy, and I ask Him to be my Savior. We love Him because He first loved us.

If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he's not seen.

What we're looking at in this passage in Ephesians, going back to it as we close, is Paul is very, very interested in our understanding that this whole book, which begins by explaining the glory of Christ in saving us, and the wonder of the work of the Spirit of God in transforming us through progressive sanctification, ends up in very, very practical terms in the relationships we have in the body of Christ.

[ 41 : 46 ] So here's what I want you to think about. Everybody look at me for a minute, please. I know more of what's going on in your lives than you think I do. Does that mean I know everything?

No. But my appeal to you this morning is this. Don't allow the enemy to dishonor the testimony and the power of the cross by nurturing an unforgiving and ill spirit towards another brother or sister.

That's not of God. And he who saved you wants your conversations and your affections when you are working at McDonald's or at Meijer or at Walmart or at Chase or at wherever to cause people to say, you know, there's something about you.

You actually have loving spirit towards other people. it's very unusual. And you can say to them, well, it's not because of me.

Amen? It's because of the power of the Spirit of God. Everybody smile. Who won't let me get away with an unloving, embittered, sour spirit towards those who are part of the family of God.

[ 43 : 21 ] Amen. Paul wants us to remember that. People that are deeply affected by His love show that love to others.

Let's close in prayer. Father God, this morning our heart cannot help but remember what Zachariah the prophet said, not by might nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord.

You who loved us before the foundation of the world, who willingly sent Your Son to be the example of Your love and His willing, loving death for us, has given us the opportunity of salvation through His blood and You have saved us and called us to be an exception in an unloving, unbelievably wicked world and we want to be all that You've called us to be.

Help us to have a holy dissatisfaction with an unwholesome, ungodly, despicable spirit. where it exists towards a brother or a sister.

Cause us to be ashamed of what that says for Your love and to repent and forbear. I pray for those individuals that are here this morning that do not know Christ, that this morning Your Spirit would draw them to the cross to know the complete forgiveness for all sin that may be found only in the blood of Christ.

[ 45 : 14 ] And we ask this in Your precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen.