

The Greatest of All is Love

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Ephesians chapter 5 verse 1. Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This is the Word of the Lord. The British playwright George Bernard Shaw has written, Christianity might be a good thing if anyone ever tried it.

Mr. Shaw is sarcastically exposing one of the church's most persistent problems, not living out what we proclaim to believe.

Many others over the years have rushed in to add their voices to Mr. Shaw, over pointing out what believers are or are not doing, what the church is or is not doing.

[1 : 18] Some have said the church is not helping the poor enough. They have that accusation of our Lord. Others have said the church is not engaging enough.

Others have said the church is not diverse enough, not working for racial reconciliation and racial harmony enough. Still others have said the church is not politically active enough.

While their counterparts have said the church is too politically active, enforcing their morals and their moral standards on those who do not want it.

The list could go on and on with the things the church is or is not doing. But a church that continually tunes its ears to the ever-changing cries of the outside will be the first to die.

There is one whose voice the church must continually tune its ears, the voice of God in Scripture. In the Scriptures, God speaks authoritatively to every church in every generation.

[2 : 23] And what does God say to every church in every generation? How does God call us to live with one another and live in the world? There is no more accurate answer than to say God calls us to love.

In a cluster of verses, I just want to read and for us to hear again. In the Gospel of Mark, our Lord said, When the scribes came to Him and said, Which commandment is most important of all?

And Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, With all your soul, With all your mind, And with all your strength.

And the second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. In Colossians 3, In a text that in many ways mirrors our text this morning, The Apostle says, Put on then as God's chosen ones, Holy and beloved, Compassionate hearts, Kindness, Humility, Meekness, And patience, Bearing with one another, If one doesn't complain against another, Forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, So you also must forgive.

And above all these, Put on love, Which binds everything together In perfect harmony. Galatians 5, The Apostle says, For in Christ Jesus, Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count for anything, But only faith working out through love.

[4 : 00] The only thing that matters is faith working out through love. 1 Corinthians 13, At the conclusion of the great chapter on love, The Apostle says, Now faith, hope, and love abide.

These three, But the greatest of these is love. So too, After unpacking how we are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called, After unpacking how we are to live now, The Apostle calls us above all to love.

In these verses, The emphasis on love is clear. He says, We're beloved children. We're to walk in love, As Christ loved us. On the one hand, Love is the sum of all the commandments.

That's what our Lord said. On these things hang all the law and the prophets. Love sums it all. If you love the Lord your God with all your heart, And your neighbor as yourself, You obey every commandment in the Bible.

All 643 of them. But love is also a summary of what the Apostle has been teaching. How do we walk in Christ? How do we grow up in Him? How do we be rooted in Him?

[5 : 09] How do we know Christ dwells in us? In a word, We love. In a word, Where we're going, Nothing else matters except faith working out through sacrificial love.

Nothing else matters except faith working out through sacrificial love. We're going to break this out in three points. Love is a fruit, Not a root.

So firstly, Love is a fruit, Not a root. What is love? Is it kindness? Is it others' focus? Is it a willingness to overlook the wrongs, Or the peculiarities of other people?

Well, the first thing we must understand is that love is from God. The command in verse 1 is a bit surprising. The Apostle Paul says, Therefore, So on the one hand, Summing up what he's been saying, Therefore, Be imitators of God.

That's the same word for mimic or mime. Perhaps you've seen a mime on the street or in the movies, Acting out the actions and the movements of someone next to them.

[6 : 15] Perhaps you've mimicked your little brother, Your sister, Your mother, God forbid. It's the same word here that's used in telling us to continually mimic or imitate God.

But in what sense are we to imitate God? This is surely not what we're meant to do. Surely the Apostle has gotten a little bit carried on, Or carried on a little bit, Carried off, Gone off the rails.

I mean, It's as if he's saying, Imitate Steph Curry. If I chucked you a basketball and told you to imitate Steph Curry's warm-up routine, Dribbling with two balls, Shooting all these shots, All the way into the one, Down into the tunnel, And making it.

You couldn't do it. You would be doomed for failure. Is that not what the Lord, Or what the Apostle is doing here? How could we imitate the living God?

Sinful creatures living in a fallen world, Surrounded by temptations, Harassed by the devil. Can we, after all, Imitate His glory? Can we imitate His majesty?

[7 : 25] Can we imitate His eternality, His eternal nature, His outside of time, And the timelessness in which He exists? Can we imitate His omniscience and omnipresence?

Theologians over the years have separated the attributes of God into two groups, If you will. In fact, The catechism question we just read separated them into two groups.

They talk about the attributes that we cannot share with God. That we cannot be like Him in His omniscience, In His omnipresence.

We can't be anywhere other than where we are right now. We can't imitate Him in His majesty, Or in His glory. Those attributes are, The theologians say, Incommunicable.

What they mean is, We can't share them in any way. Wonderfully, God is unlike us, But there are ways we're meant to be like Him. That's the way that catechism ended.

[8 : 27] We're meant to be like Him, To be merciful and loving, To be holy and righteous, To be good and compassionate. We can and must.

But how are we to imitate Him? It would seem that this would be either doomed to failure, Or if successful, Lead us only to being puffed up.

And I think this is why the apostle says, Be imitators of God as beloved children. Now running through these last seven or eight verses, The apostle's been talking about our identity in Christ.

In fact, the whole book of Ephesians is all about our identity in Christ. And even in this section, Filled with commands, He's been underlining our identity. He said in verse 25, That we are members of one another.

We're members of the body of Christ. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Verse 30, That's why we cannot grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We're awaiting a glorious redemption.

[9 : 36] One in which Sarah just inherited several days ago. We're completely forgiven. Verse 32, But this might be the most wonderful aspect of our new identity in Christ.

We are beloved children. It's pointing out something vital, That love is a fruit, not a root. We're not loved by God because we love God.

Our love for God is not the root of His love for us. Our love for God is not the cause of His love for us. Our love for God, our worship of God, Our service of God is not the basis of His love for us.

God's love came first. God's love came before we were born. In love, Ephesians 1 says, He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ.

God's love came to us while we were dead, Before our salvation. Because of His great love, Even when we were dead, Made us alive together with Christ.

[10 : 41] By grace you have been saved. That God's love flows to us fully and freely in Jesus Christ. Beloved children. I remember when I first became a Christian, I listened to a message by John Piper on Romans 8, And was wrestling with this question, What does it mean to love God?

For those who love God, God works out all things according to the purpose of His will. Or actually, that's not it. He works all things for our good and His glory.

Romans 8, 28. And so, what does it mean? How do you know that you're in that group of those who love God? And Piper pointed out, very importantly, You're not those who love God just because you're responsive love.

You're those who love God because of His love for you. And that's what the Apostle's pointing out right here. You get this wrong, and Christianity comes crashing down like a house of cards.

It's just transactional if that's the case. God's a mercenary who's paid off. But that's not the way it is. God does not love us because we love Him.

[11 : 48] Rather, we love God because He loved us. Think about this. Our love for God, therefore, is not the root of His love for us. Our love for God is the fruit of His love for us.

It's a fruit, not a root. I love the way Richard Siv says this. And the bruised reed. Our hearts being cold, they cannot be warm in love to Him, but His love must warm them first.

Our hearts being cold. I don't know if you feel like that. I feel like that so often. They cannot be warm in love to Him, but His love must warm them first.

His love must proceed to produce true love. 1 John 4 says, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

For whoever loved has been born of God and knows God. This is critical. On the one hand, this means that love is not good for goodness' sake.

[12 : 53] Christianity does not just teach this rule of love. You know, we hear slogans like that. All you need is love, the Beatles sang.

You know, love not war. Love not hate, as if anyone wanted to register as for hate and against love. These slogans, though, seem to teach that love is good for goodness' sake.

And in fact, some of the most unchristian people in the world are those who are generally loving. Who are living upright and moral lives. People who don't lie and cheat and steal.

People who don't sleep around. People who are satisfied in themselves and think they are okay. That's not what Christianity teaches. It doesn't teach love for goodness' sakes.

It teaches that love is from God. Love is good because it's produced from God. It's the fruit of a new life. It's the fruit of being born again.

[13 : 52] Being made new. Becoming a new creation. I think this is how this passage comes together. After becoming children of God, we're born into a new likeness.

When we are born, we share the likeness of our family. A new baby comes into the home. Everybody's talking about, who does this baby look like, right? Is this more mom, more dad, or Aunt Susie, or something like that?

You might say, that boy's a spitting image of his old man or something. But when we're born again, we share the likeness of our heavenly Father. I think that's what's going on.

Look down in verse 24. He says, in chapter 4, 24. He says, to put on the new self created after the likeness of God. So there's a new image into which we are being formed, a new creation, into the likeness of God.

And then bracketing this section in 5.1, he says, be imitators of God. And I think that's the idea. We're being created into a new person that walks in the ways of our heavenly Father.

[14 : 56] No longer to be chip-offs the old blocks, but to be one who walks and talks and lives like Him. You know, we like to think of ourselves as original and innovative, as unique and novel and special.

But the truth is, we're a lot like everyone around us. We're hardwired for imitation. It's why old couples can finish one another's sentences.

It's why teenagers follow the same trends. It's why families tend to talk so much and act so much like each other that we say, like Father, like Son.

In many ways, it's so good. I remember as a boy, I didn't just like my father. I adored him. There was nothing I looked more forward to every day than when my dad came home.

Some of my earliest memories, him throwing underwear on his head and chasing me around the house. Or coming home on our eight-foot basketball goal and watching him dunking.

[16 : 00] I thought he was Michael Jordan. Really just a businessman. I wanted to be like him. One picture from my childhood, my mom was trying to find it this week.

We couldn't find it. It was a picture of me and my two brothers following my dad while he mowed the grass. He was mowing in the push mower. And all three of us had a toy push mower following him.

That's what it's like. How much more so our Heavenly Father? There's a dramatic change that happens.

When Paul says, be imitators of God, he's not calling us to something impossible. He's calling us to something that is now most natural. It's what we want more than anything else.

To walk in the ways of our Father. Our Heavenly Father. It's the fruit of this new life that He has produced in us. And so we walk after Him.

[17 : 00] Don't you want to be like Him? Don't you want to love what He loves? Don't you want to hate what He hates? Don't you want to resonate with His heart? Don't you want to respond less according to what offends you and more according to what offends Him?

More according to what He celebrates than what we celebrate. That's what I want more than anything else. And so, be imitators of God as beloved children.

Point two, love is a choice, not a feeling. Love is a choice, not a feeling. After unpacking how our love is not a root, but a fruit, verse two continues to tell us how our love is to look.

He says, and walk in love. So the second command in these two verses, be imitators of God, first command, second command, and walk in love.

As we've said, these verses are summing up what He's been saying. He began in chapter four, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. Verse 17, He said, do not walk in the ways of the Gentiles, those who do not know God.

[18 : 07] Here He says, walk in love. As we've said again and again, walking is not merely talking about the way we get from one place to another. Walking is a metaphor for life.

He's saying, live in love. Have a lifestyle of love. The sum total and summary of the way we are to live now is love.

Love in a word. Love. But this verse also helps us see the primary way we're to imitate God is love.

Do you remember in the Old Testament, imitation is not a New Testament doctrine. In the Old Testament, the Lord said, when He delivered the people out of Egypt, He said, I have made you my people.

Be holy as I am holy. Now He's saying, as it were, be loving as I am loving. Is there any better word to summarize all that He said in chapters 1 through 3?

[19 : 07] In love, He predestined us. Even when we were dead, He made us alive. He called us into this relationship with Him where He showers on us love that has no height and depth and length and width.

And so He says, as I have loved you, so you must love. But what is love? What is love? As the 80's song asks.

Is it being nice? Is that what Jesus wanted us to do? Kindness. Is it being easy going? Is it letting things slide?

Is it not being so strict? Is love no hard feelings? You know, is that what we're going to drive away? No hard feelings? No response of offense in any way?

Is that love? Is it a kind demeanor? Is it good vibes? You know, the other day I saw on social media, I'm sending good thoughts to you. I just thought, man, imagine being the recipient of that. I just got good thoughts.

[20 : 07] I mean, that's a game changer. Talk about defining moment, core memory. You know, life changes forever. I've sent you good thoughts. Is that what it is?

Love is a choice, not a feeling. That's what he's driving home. Love, biblically, love is choosing to do undeserved acts of kindness for the good of others.

Choosing to do undeserved acts of kindness for the good of others. That's what I believe. The key to understanding biblical love is that word undeserved. You know, philosophy of life 101, is you scratch my back, I'll scratch your back.

You be nice to me, I'll be nice to you. You wrong me, I'll wrong you right back. You love me and I love you. That's the philosophy of life. That's the way everybody conducts all of life.

Okay, good. You can do that? Great. But that's not the direction and definition of love, biblically in the New Testament. Luke 6, our Lord says, If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

[21 : 08] For even sinners love those who love them. But if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

I think there's a couple things going on right here. On one hand, he's defining love for us. He's saying, If you love those who love you, and then the second sentence, or the second verse, he says, If you do good to those who do good to you.

So I think he's saying, Love is doing good. Love is not merely a thought or a feeling. It's doing good. It's not niceness. It's not being easygoing or kind.

Love is active. Love works. As 1 John says, Let us not love in word and talk, but in deed and in truth. And so love is active. You know, that's why the great Samaritan is this story.

Not of one who walks by and sends good thoughts. Over to the Samaritan. Over to the man from Jericho that was jumped. He doesn't send good thoughts.

[22 : 07] Instead, he helps him. But what precisely is true love? And that's the second thing Jesus is getting at. You know, on the one hand, there's some people we love because it's natural.

You know, we love our mom. You better love your mom. You know, we love our family. Right? It looks like love. And it may be love. But it may not really be love.

You know, as the wicked Ben Wade said in the movie 310 to Yuma, even bad men love their mama. It's natural. There are some people we love because it's reciprocated.

That's what Jesus has been getting at. We love them because they love us. Our friends, our colleagues, our benefactors. But that's not true love.

That's just I scratch your back, you scratch my back theology. So a better measure for our love is how we treat those who are hard to love.

[23 : 07] A better measure for love is how we treat those who are hard to love. A poor measure is how we treat our college buddies or our co-workers, high school buddies, girlfriends, hunting pals, or whatever.

True love is when you do good to the undeserving. That's what Jesus is saying. In another place that Jesus says in Matthew 5, 43, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. So love, if the definition is do good, do good to your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

True love is seen in how we treat the undeserving. Yeah, it's been said, the true measure of love may be inside the house and how you treat those with whom you are most familiar.

They say familiarity breeds contempt, and far too often that's the case. True love is going to be seen in the local church, how you treat those with whom you are very familiar.

[24 : 17] And so Jesus is trying to train us to love the undeserving, to do good to the undeserving. That's what love is like. Now, don't be confused. Jesus is not saying, hate your mama and love your enemies.

I know he says something very similar to that, but he's saying, don't put anything on the same level as God. But he's calling us to make sure our love is unlimited. That it's angled, and it's angled at the undeserving.

You know, sometimes we limit love to those who fit nicely into our schedule. You know, I can be a really good Christian if I plan on it. Like if it's scheduling to serve soup at the soup kitchen or something like that, where it's on the calendar and it's set there, I can be a good Christian.

I can be kind and forgiving on a day where I'm happy and everything's going well. But true love is seen on the other days.

Sometimes we limit love to those who are really needy. Find me an orphan or a widow. I'm all about love. But find me someone who's just made a bunch of bad decisions and is dealing with the bad consequences.

[25 : 26] And I may not be all about love. Sometimes we limit love to those who haven't failed us or haven't sinned against us.

Surely this is the reason the apostle hits this here. He's talking about life in the local church. We've said life in the local church is filled with conflict. Life together with sinners is hard.

Temptations to anger and bitterness, gossip and slander, withdrawal and unforgiveness. Be careful lest we begin to limit our love to those we think deserve it.

The only limit to love should be what is unloving. Deserving has nothing to do with it.

You know, in the movie Unforgiven, the town of Big Whiskey is torn up by injustice and citizens offer a reward to any man who will step forward and make things right.

[26 : 28] William Muni, played by Clint Eastwood in one of the legendary roles, Clint Eastwood. He's a former outlaw who's changed. He's given up those bad ways, but a local boy drags him into the conflict, drags him into chasing down the reward.

The corrupt sheriff on the town is on the side of the cowboys. So he's a wicked man. He protects them. Before long, Muni comes in with his boys, kills two cowboys, and claims the reward.

But something goes terribly wrong. One of Muni's friends, Ned Logan, played by Morgan Freeman, is captured, tortured, and killed.

And this is when Muni turns bad again. When he hears what happened, the boy runs to him and tells him what happened. He's sitting up on this hill, takes a big slug of whiskey, and he goes into town and takes out everybody.

He finds that corrupt sheriff, and he's loading his gun to finish him off. The sheriff says, I don't deserve to die like this. I'm building a house for my family.

[27 : 45] Clint Eastwood, William Muni, respond, deserves got nothing to do with it. Deserves got nothing to do with it. Then he finishes him off.

Now, what's that got to do with love? Deserves got nothing to do with it. If our love is just transactional, if it's just scratch my back, you scratch my back, I scratch your back, it's just all about our little petty definition of deserving.

Deserving's got nothing to do with it. We can't imitate God with an I scratch your back, you scratch my back definition of love. He's trying to strip away deserving in the way he thinks about love and telling us to love those.

The true outlaw is the one who loves the undeserving, the one hard to love. And that's what the apostle is calling us to in these verses. He's calling us to a life of love.

Point three, love is selfless sacrifice, not comfortable contribution. We've said love is a fruit of God's love for us.

[29 : 10] Love is a choice, choosing to do undeserved acts of kindness for the good of others. But love is also costly on us. It's selfless sacrifice.

After calling us to imitate God and walk in love, the apostle shows us what love is meant to look like by pointing to the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Look in that second part of verse 2. And walk in love. We see this clause telling us what walking in love is meant to look like as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Now I want to take this bit by bit. Literally the text reads, and also, or as also Christ loved us.

Most of our translations do not include also, but it's there. The idea seems to be that it was the Father's love that began in eternity past.

[30 : 23] In love, before the foundation of the world, He predestined us for adoption. It was the Father's love that motivated Him to save. Even when we were dead, it was the Father's love who forgave us in Christ.

Christ. Now, lest we be confused, the Apostle was saying, Christ also loved us. Christ also loved us.

Well, how did He love us? Modifying how He loved us. He said, He gave Himself up. You know, the verse continues and defines how Christ showed His love. God, Christ gave Himself up.

Now this very word that we use for gave Himself up is used to talk about the Father who gave up His Son for us. For whosoever, for God so loved the world that He gave His own Son.

Whoever would believe in Him might have everlasting life. He did not spare His own Son. And so wonderfully, the Father gave up His Son. We also read, using this very word, to talk about how the chief priests and the scribes and the religious leaders gave up the Son.

[31 : 31] They turned Him over to the Roman authorities. They delivered Him. They gave Him over to be crucified. But the great mystery behind all that happened on that Friday is that Christ gave Himself up.

Now surely, we know this is true. We often think about the cross though as something very different. We know Christ came into the world, but we often think about the cross as something that just took Jesus out.

As something that paralyzed Him and took Him there. But Jesus, what this text is alerting us to, Jesus went to the cross as a willing victim.

Now you've got to think about this. No other sacrifice offered for the sins of others has gone willingly. No animal in the Old Testament went willingly. Their will was submitted to the will of the sacrificer, the worshiper.

But Jesus Christ, His will was exercised in offering Himself up. Now surely, this is wonderful comfort, right?

[32 : 38] You know there's wonderful comfort knowing God offered His Son up, but there's greater comfort knowing the Son gave Himself away. And how did He love us?

He loved us by laying down His life. Greater love has no one than this, that He laid down His life for His friends. That's what He said on the night He was betrayed.

So He gave Himself up. You know, it's one thing to give. It's another thing to give yourself. They say in the book of Job, if you remember, Job began with these two great trials by the evil one.

And first, everything was taken from Him. All of His possessions, His house, His livestock, His children, everything was taken.

And that was great suffering, right? But the next wave of suffering was even greater. It covered His body with boils. So He's itching Himself with clay pots that are broken.

[33 : 48] Why? Because suffering that happens to you is greater. And that's what we're meant to see in these verses, that Jesus Christ didn't just send someone.

He didn't send an ambassador. He didn't send someone to stand up. He gave Himself away and He gave Himself for us. The death of Jesus Christ was not another Roman execution.

It was a once-for-all substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus Christ was a willing sacrifice, but He was also a substitutionary sacrifice.

Striking, He entered, He put Himself in our place. You know, if we think about all that the book of Ephesians says about us, it says, apart from Christ, we are orphans.

We're slaves of sin. We're enemies of God. We're dead in our trespasses. We're captive to the devil. We're enamored by the world. We're children of wrath.

[34 : 47] We're separated from God. We're strangers and aliens. We're without hope and without God. We are in a word far off from God in every way that is measurable.

But Jesus Christ gave Himself up for us. Now, get this. He gave Himself up as a sacrifice. It's not as if He just kind of, you know, I don't know, just ran away, jumped off the Grand Canyon and said, I'm dying for you.

Which really wouldn't mean much. Right? He gave Himself up not just by dying on the cross, but by dying where we should have died.

But by suffering where we should have suffered. What the mystery of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross is there's this glorious exchange where Jesus Christ steps in to receive the full punishment of all that we had done so that we might go free and walk freely away and be forgiven.

And so, He bore the torment of the wrath of God for us. On the night of, on the cross of Calvary in the deepest agony of what was occurring there, He said, My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?

[36 : 17] R.C. Proe famously said, it is the shriek of the damned for us. But having been set free, we're meant to see something vital about love and the death of Christ.

Love is selfless sacrifice, not comfortable contribution. true love is sacrificial. True love exacts a personal cost.

True love is not cheap and easy. True love takes things from you. True love means you cannot do all the things you could do because you choose to do something different.

I find it provoking in this chapter, in this book, all about the people that God has called to Himself. The church of Jesus Christ is put, this, He loved you and gave Himself for you, is put in plural terms.

You know, in Philippians 2.20 He says very similar, the same thing. I've been crucified with Christ, therefore I no longer live, but Jesus Christ now lives in me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

[37 : 38] But here it's put plural because true love makes demands on how you relate to those around you. You cannot say you love Christ if your life does not bear the sacrificial marks of laying it down.

Stephen Charnock, I read this this morning and it affected me greatly. He said, let our heart be as large in the capacity of creatures as God's is in the capacity of a creator.

A large heart from Him to us and a straight heart from us to others will not suit. So what he's saying is God has a large heart.

He causes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He showers. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. Comes from Him from above. So our heart should reflect Him.

A large heart from Him followed by a narrow heart from us is not right. He continues, did not His goodness strip His Son of the glory of Heaven for a time to enrich us?

[38 : 53] And shall we shrug when we are to part with a little to please Him? It is not very becoming for any to be backward in supplying the necessities of others with a few morsels who have had the happiness to have had their greatest necessities supplied with His Son's blood.

It's calling us not to comfortable contribution but to sacrifice. So I must ask and in many ways this church is filled with sacrifice.

even this week hosting the small town summit and all the sacrifice people that spent their whole day to be hospitable to serve food to provide for these pastors serving throughout our region serving in small towns and small churches.

Sacrifices everywhere. And yet I'd be remiss to not ask do your finances show true love? It's so easy to make a contribution but it's hard to sacrifice.

If someone were to look at your checkbook what would they say? Would there be any incredulosity? Would there be anyone who would say what in the world are you doing spending money in this way giving it away?

[40 : 17] Do your commitments show true love? What are the things you give a monumental effort for? You know we can summon some serious monumental efforts. What are they?

Does it all revolve around you? You know as we get older it's so easy to build our life all around ourselves and all our sacrifices around ourselves but love calls us to something different something wonderfully different.

Do your friendships show you show others that you truly love? It's calling us to love. Charles Spurgeon says it is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus.

We are not to be living specimens of men and find preservation but living sacrifice whose lot it is to be consumed. That's the goal.

Fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. It's the way it concludes. It's telling us that Jesus Christ offered himself up to God and it was accepted.

[41 : 23] It was a fragrant offering and a sacrifice but it's also a window into all that we do for the Lord. Pleasing to him. This life of love is the most pleasing life personally but it's also the life that is most pleasing to God.

The life that will earn his great reward. So walk in love. Be imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Nothing else matters. Nothing matters except faith working through sacrificial love.

Father in heaven we offer ourselves to you sincerely and completely we thank you that all of our love to you and any love we feel in our hearts is but the fruit of your great love for us that even when we are dead you made us alive together with Christ.

We hide in you and confess our need for you. come Lord by your spirit and produce in us that which is pleasing in your sight a life and a church filled with sacrificial love.

[42 : 56] Pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com Thank you.