

Adding Charity

Sermons in 2 Peter 1:1-11

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Bible Text: 2 Peter 1:7; 1 John 4:7-11

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I invite you to 2 Peter 1. 2 Peter 1 where we will resume our study of this passage that we've been engaged in for about nine weeks now, although there's been many interruptions in those nine weeks. It's been a month since I had you turn to 2 Peter 1, and we find ourselves this morning at the end of the list of virtues that is in the middle of this section. And so I'll go ahead and read these first 11 verses to set the context in our minds once again and I hope that as I read, that you can remember the matters that we've drawn out of this passage and then we'll be focusing at the end of verse 7 this morning. Hear now the word of God. 2 Peter 1:1-11.

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

So as we've spent time in this list of virtues in the middle of this paragraph, I really have tried to be careful to each week make sure that we understand the place of the list of virtues in the paragraph. We don't want to be looking at this like some kind of checklist or some kind of way of meriting favor with God. This is not a Christian self-improvement plan, rather this list of virtues flows from what comes before and then results in what comes after. It flows from what comes before, all of these great acts of God in the gospel, how we are partakers of the divine nature; how God has given us exceeding great and precious promises; how he's given us a faith that is equal in value to even the apostles' faith because it is a faith in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus.

We learn in that opening section how God has given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through our knowledge of him, through our relationship with him, and so it's on that basis, then, that we pursue these seven qualities. We're not doing so somehow separate from what God has done for us in the gospel, and rather we are working out what God has already worked in. And so we've seen that this list is, in itself, not a means to not like an end in itself, but a means to an end, and he says everything's going in this passage toward firming up your calling and election so that you will not fall, so that you would have this abundant entrance, so that you have this fruitfulness in the knowledge of God so that we won't be left barren or blind. And so if we feel this morning any sense of barrenness in our Christian lives, any kind of unfruitfulness in our walk with God, the cause is not giving diligence to add to our faith these virtues, but what we've seen as we've gone through is that you can't just treat this as a checklist and say, "Okay, I feel barren therefore I need to work on some patience," and then just kind of work on patience as the abstract. We have seen in every one of these virtues that the way to cultivate these virtues is through your relationship with Jesus Christ. It is only by looking to Christ that we can grow or cultivate or add any of these things to our lives.

So when Peter tells us to be adding these things, he's really talking to us about growing in a deeper knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and then knowing his grace in our lives forming in us these qualities. It's good for us to single them out and to take them one by one and to ask the question: what is this and how do I cultivate that? And we should be growing in these seven areas as we've been going through this series. Hopefully this is making an impact on us and these qualities come back to our minds throughout the week, but we don't want to just think of the quality abstract from the person of the Lord Jesus and his work which is the greatest manifestation of any of these virtues in the list.

So remember what we've said so far about the virtue list here. The first one was: add to your faith virtue, and that word "virtue" talks about the glories, the unique excellencies of the Lord Jesus. And so a call to virtue is a call to showcase the glory and the excellency of Christ and we don't do that merely by talking about him, biblically we do that by being transformed into his image. That's how we show his excellency to a watching world. And so pursuing virtue is pursuing Christ-likeness.

The next virtue is knowledge. Knowledge. And of course, knowledge is necessary for growing in Christ-likeness because you can't be like Christ if you don't know what he's like. And so therefore Christian transformation always comes through the renewal of our

minds. We must have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom. We want to know more of the mind of God on every matter.

So the first two virtues, virtue and knowledge, are really the foundations of Christian growth. Really it's the same as Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." It's the same as that classic text on what the Christian life looks like, and it goes without saying that the only way, the only way to cultivate Christ-likeness and the only way to cultivate knowledge is through our relationship with Christ. If we pursue Christ-likeness without a relationship to Christ, that's just moral self-improvement. The world can do that, they can get together and sit in a circle and talk about their problems. And if we pursue knowledge outside of our relationship to Christ, well, that's just academic advancement and the world can do that too. Nothing special about that. It has to be through our relationship with Christ.

Then the list proceeds to go on to talk about, okay, what are going to be the obstacles when you go about to do this? When you go about to pursue Christ-likeness and knowledge, what are the obstacles? There will be obstacles within, obstacles without. Obstacles within, that's the temperance. I need self-control, victory over desires which would lead to my corruption if left unchecked. And so I must have temperance, self-control and cultivate that. I must also cultivate endurance because life is a race, it's an arduous race. It's full of many dangers, toils and snares. There are many things, weights to carry, and so I am called to remain faithful and constant under those pressures and that's what patience has to do with, endurance, remaining under. And so these two qualities which deal with the obstacles in the Christian life, they too are both found in the Lord Jesus and that was our whole point last Sunday when we were looking at Hebrews 12 and that call to endurance in the Christian life by looking unto Jesus.

Then he proceeds to talk about godliness and godliness comes in the middle of the list to remind us that everything coming before could be erroneously pursued outside of a relationship with Christ and so could the ones coming afterwards, and so let's have a reminder right in the middle that this all must be in the fear of God and that's what godliness really comes down to, living in the fear of God. It summarizes all right attitudes and right actions toward God, and so what I want to pursue is godly knowledge, godly patience. There are some people who are just wired to be "patient," they're just easygoing, nothing really riles them up. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about godly endurance or godly brotherly love, godly charity. And so godliness comes in the list.

Then he wraps up the list by talking about social virtues, what ought to be the Christian's demeanor toward other people and, of course, that's always going to come last. There's a nice progression to this, right? It's the basics, then my internal life, patience and endurance, patience and temperance, and then my external relationships and they are characterized by brotherly kindness and charity. Brother kindness we looked at a month ago and that was the word philadelphia, and we said that what we're called to when we're pursuing brotherly kindness is to have a warm affection toward people within the family of God. And so we talked about how the New Testament applies this toward hospitality

or bearing one another's burdens in a financial resource kind of a way, or by affection or respect or sensitivity or sympathy toward others; that we want to relate to one another in the body of Christ as family and relate to one another based on the commonality that we have in Christ and not based on the differences which often irritate us about each other. Rather we focus on what we have in common, we're in the family of God, we're children by grace, sons and daughters of the King.

So today we come to this last virtue, the topic of charity, and so our theme is simply "Adding Charity." Adding charity. Charity, as you know, is the word "love" and it's the word, the Greek word behind this word is the word "agape," which is a word that you've heard used many times I'm sure in your Christian experience. Now what I've done with the other words in this list is I basically did a word study. I looked up every time in the New Testament, sometimes even in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, that the word occurred and I kind of packaged it into a sermon, and we basically as we went through those words looked at every single reference to those words, in many cases we looked at every reference. We can't do that with this word. This word is used 106 times in the New Testament and if I add in the verb forms, you triple that number, and so we can't just do a word study. We can't just march through various texts and start to glean things out of what we're talking about when we're talking about adding charity or adding love to our faith, and so rather than approach it that way, we're going to approach this differently. I want us to turn to the chapter of the New Testament that uses the word more than any other chapter.

There's one chapter of the New Testament that uses this word 30 times in one chapter and the chapter only has 21 verses. What chapter of the Bible uses the word "agape," uses the word "love" or the verb "to love" more than any other chapter? It's not 1 Corinthians 13. It's 1 John 4, so that's going to be our focus, just a couple pages over in your New Testament, 1 John 4, and rather than going hither and yon through our New Testament looking at words all the times we have the word "love," let's just bring this down to a focus and I want to look at just five verses in the middle of this chapter on this theme of adding charity to our Christian lives, verses 7 through 11. Verses 7 through 11.

Now here's why I chose this passage. Look how it begins, "Beloved, let us love one another." Isn't that basically the same thing as 2 Peter 1:7, "add charity"? Look how the passage ends in verse 11, the little unit ends, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Again, the same as "add charity." And so we have a little section here of five verses that begins and ends with "add charity, add love, love one another," and so what we're going to see then in this little section are two motivations for doing this. Two motivations. 1 John 4 is a list of six or seven motivations. We can't look at all of them. We could just keep going with motivations and we could number down through six, seven, eight, go all the way down to the beginning of chapter 5, look at all these motivations for pursuing love, okay? We're going to narrow this down to two. Okay, just two motivations for adding charity from 1 John 4:7-11, and as we do this, as we look at the motivations, what we're also going to find are the qualities and the characteristics and applications of what it means to add love, what does love even look like. Okay, we're going to see that as we go through.

Okay, so let's read these five verses together and focus in on them. 1 John 4:7,

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Two motivations for Christian love. The first is simply this: God is love. God is love. Love is a manifestation of God's nature. John is very clear about that. He says there in verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for," so there's your because word, so you kind of think about that word and then you know what's coming next is a reason to do what he just said. Okay, so he's very clear. Okay, "love one another: because love is of," or from, "God; every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." And what he's simply saying here is that we who are the beloved of God, we who belong to God, we who are born of God ought to love because that is consistent with who God is. And isn't it interesting that John starts here, that the reason to add charity is because it's God's nature to be charitable, to love, so you should do that too. Isn't it interesting that he would start there because that's where Peter started too.

What verse comes before the virtue list in 2 Peter 1? The fact that God has by grace made us partakers of the divine nature. He's made us partakers of the divine nature and so John is going to narrow that down and say, "Okay, you've been made a partaker of the divine nature. Now God is love, therefore you ought to love as well." And in fact, whether or not you love will be proof of whether you are a partaker of the divine nature. If you're a partaker of the divine nature, you will. If you're not a partaker of the divine nature, you won't. That's what he says in those opening two verses. He starts with the nature of God, that God is love.

Now of course, love is not all what the divine nature is. Even 1 John acknowledges that. In 1 John 1, he has a very similar statement and says, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." So it's not as if he's only love but it surely is a component of his nature, and since God is love and love is from God, everyone who truly is born of God and knows God loves. There's no other source for the kind of love that John is talking about. There's no other source for other than a supernatural work of grace changing your heart and shedding abroad the love of God in your soul. That's the only source of this kind of love so that he could actually say if you have it you're a Christian, and if you don't have it you're not.

So that tips us off, then, that when he's talking about love it must be something different than human temporal love. It's not affection. We're not talking about affection here. We're not talking about a love based on physical attraction or mutual interests. That's not the

love of emotion. That's not the love of friendship. The world is capable of all those kinds of love. If that's the love he's talking about, then he certainly could not say if you have this you're born of God, and if you don't have it you're not. He couldn't be that strong. There must be something different about this kind of love. The love he speaks about transcends all of that love that we're used to in a fallen world and it is a unique kind of love that has its source only in God and in his nature.

Now the fatal flaw when talking about love whether it be God's love or the love that we are called to show is importing an erroneous definition into the concept. The minute we do that, then we're on a terrible road. We're going to make conclusions about God that are not proper, or we're going to be self-satisfied with our own place about this because of our low conception of what love looks like. So to keep us from doing that, let's just reread a little section from 1 Corinthians 13. Turn back to 1 Corinthians 13, just want to spend a moment here and just read and comment the heart of the matter, verses 5 through 7, the heart of this section. This is what the love that John is talking about looks like. This is how it behaves. Here we have an entire chapter that's set aside as the premiere description of love. Let's just read and comment starting in verse 4.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind." So that's love's response to interpersonal difficulty. Whether it be from irritation all the way to injury, anywhere on that spectrum, love's response to interpersonal conflict is patience, to suffer long with this other person's irritations or annoyances or whatever it may be, but not just to be so passively but to be kind, to be actively kind in the face of that kind of annoyance or irritation or even injury. It suffers long and is kind.

Then the next five phrases starting in verse 4, the middle of verse 4 where it says "charity envieth not," the next five all have a "no" in them, they're all negatives, but they're all having to do with love's reaction to itself, something about love itself, things that love will not allow in itself. Okay, just tick them off with me. You can see them right in the text. What are the five things love will not allow in itself? It will not allow envy. That word means "to boil." It doesn't boil on the inside over someone else's recognition or someone else's achievements or successes. It doesn't allow vaunting of itself. That means it doesn't brag or boast or continually call attention to itself. Third, it will not allow being puffed up. It's not proud or conceited, rather it's humble and modest. Fourth, it will not allow unseemly behavior in itself. It isn't rude or discourteous or impolite, all of which would be manifestations of self-love and the opposite of the other-centeredness that characterizes love. And fifthly, it does not allow self-seeking in itself. It's self-forgetful. It's interested in others, their needs, their comforts, their success more than it is in itself. Those are the five denials of love.

Then come three more negatives in verse 5: it's not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. And these are all negatives as well but they are responses to love on the outside. Do you see the difference? The first five were like internal, now these are the external things. And so love is not easily provoked. There's no sudden outburst. It's not irritable. It's not irritable. It thinketh no evil. That word "thinketh" is the word "impute." It's an accounting word. It has to do with crediting

something. It doesn't keep score. Love does not focus and remember the wrongs that are committed against me with the hopes of using them some day when I want to win an argument. It doesn't keep score. It doesn't credit and keep a running tab of wrongs committed against me. It's a very helpful thing to remember in a marriage. It rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth. It's not indulgent and wrong at all, rather it rejoices in or with truth, not with wrongdoing or evil but with truth.

Then come four phrases that all have the word "all." Do you see them? Beareth all things, which means to cover. That word "bear" means "to cover," and so it doesn't broadcast, it doesn't expose matters that ought to be kept hidden about other people. It covers all. It believes all things. In doubtful cases, love prefers to be generous. It's trusting rather than skeptical or critical or cynical. It hopeth all things. It's optimistic about the possibilities. It's expectant. It credits people with well-meaning. And it endures all things. It suffers hardship for other people's sake because really loving people the way that this describes is going to cost you. It will. We've just zoomed right through this but if you think about any of those qualities, if you're really going to treat other people that way, it's going to cost you. It'll cost you time. It'll cost you money. It'll cost you disappointment. It'll cost you. People will take advantage of you perhaps. It's going to cost you but love endures those things. It suffers hardship for others. It endures those hardships and it outlasts all else. It never faileth.

So now do you see why John could say love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God, and he that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love. So the first reason to add love, to add charity, to add this love for one another, this kind of transcendent habitual kind of love that's not based on anything in the other person, not expecting anything in return, the first reason to love like that is that God is like that. God is love. Clement of Alexandria, one of the church fathers, is quoted to have said that a Christian practices being God. A Christian practices being God. We're to bear the reflection of God. We're to adorn the teaching of God. We're God's children who manifest his nature, the divine nature that he's made us partaker of, and Peter also says that we are called to his glory and virtue. It is our calling to manifest the excellencies of him and so we are called to love. That's the first reason we ought to love and add charity to our relationships.

Alright, the second reason, back to 1 John 4. The second reason, it really is an application of the first. God is love is the first reason and the second reason that we ought to love is that God loves us. That's what he says in verse 11 when he sums up this second point, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And so the second reason we ought to add charity is that God loves us and in verses 9 and 10, there's two manifestations of that. Do you see them? See it in verse 9? "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And so the first is speaking about the Incarnation, the giving of God the Son. The Incarnate Son of God, God's unspeakable gift. He's perfect man and glorious God in one person. He's the Creator of all things for without him was not anything made that was made, yet he's made of flesh and he dwells among us. He is the Word who was in the beginning with God. He's the Word who was God. He fills all

things by his omnipresence and yet he comes and tabernacles among men on earth. God gave God. He gave his Son. He gave his Son that we might live through him, that we might have eternal life through him. That would be the meaning there, that we might be receivers of eternal life, that we might be partakers of the divine nature, that we might live through him.

There have been many manifestations of the love of God but the preeminent one is the gift of the Son of God, and when he sent his only begotten Son into the world there could be no greater gift, there could be no greater display of humility, patience, kindness, loving forgetfulness of wrongs committed, hopefulness, willingness to suffer hardship for others. There is no greater manifestation of that than the gift of God's Son in the Incarnation, and then secondly and more specifically in verse 10 he says that God manifested his love by sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." You know that word "propitiation," right? It's a beautiful word. You ought to know what it means. Do the children know what it means? Do you know what that word "propitiation" means? It has to do with satisfaction. Satisfaction, that God is satisfied.

The apostles used the same word in talking about this aspect of salvation that the translators of the Old Testament used to talk about the mercy seat. The mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant where the blood was sprinkled on the day of atonement and God was in type satisfied on that day because the offering had been made, and so he passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage, and that's what the Lord Jesus is. He is our propitiation. He's our mercy seat. He has in his body borne our sins. He has received the wrath of God that was due to us and he has satisfied God. He's satisfied God's justice. He's satisfied God's law. He's satisfied God's offended character. God is satisfied in Jesus Christ. He is the propitiation for our sins. It means that God is satisfied. So no condemnation now I dread because Jesus and all in him is mine. That's what it means to have Christ as your propitiation.

Herein is love, and the manifestation of the greatness of this love comes into sharp focus when you stop and you think about for whom he was given. He's the propitiation for our sins. What kind of people is he sent for and is he given for? God gives his Son for his enemies, for people who are poor, for people have misspent and squandered all of his blessings of the past. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

Jesus is the propitiation for sinners. For sinners. Gabriel told Joseph to call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins. He's the friend of sinners. He receives sinful men. Paul told Timothy that he was come into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Jesus is the propitiation for people who are undeserving, who deserve no good at the hand of the Lord, who deserve much less the greatest good that he could possibly give, who deserve no good. We cannot earn a drop of water by merit, let alone deserve the Lord Jesus as our propitiation. Not only that, he's the propitiation not only for the undeserving but for the ill-deserving. He's the propitiation for those who deserve death and damnation, who are justly lying under the condemnation of a holy God. He's given

for people whose demerit would have sunk them into hell and they would have known nothing but his wrath and curse, nothing but hell, and he gave his Son as a propitiation for those kind of people.

Jesus is the propitiation for those who aren't even seeking it. Christ says of all of his people, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you." The Father presses the gift of the Son upon poor sinners even when they are off as prodigals thinking that life is better outside the Father's house and feeding husks to the swine. It's then when he presses his gift of his Son into the hand of sinners, when they're undeserving and ill-deserving and not seeking him. No man seeks after God. And he's the propitiation for people who have often refused him, isn't he? Who have frequently been bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb who have refused to come. He still is offered as a propitiation for their sins. Jesus says, "You will not come to me that you may have life."

It's the largeness of his grace, the largeness of the gift that he is, the largeness of the love that is displayed and manifested. Look at who he is the propitiation for. That's the measure of the love. The greatness of the gift in the Incarnation and giving of the Son and the ill-deserving of those to whom he is given, herein is love not that we loved God but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This is the consideration that we need in order to add charity. At the end of the day, nobody adds charity by examining 1 Corinthians 13 and working hard at the checklist, and nobody adds charity by being berated for all of their uncharitableness in the past. The only way to add charity, to know this grace multiplied in your Christian experience is through the knowledge of Christ. And so it is beholding the love of God displayed in the giving of his Son as the propitiation for ill-deserving sinners, that is what produces in the Christian more love for others, beholding this supreme example and manifestation of the love of God.

Could there be, could there be a greater manifestation of love than the cross of Christ? Has there ever been a time when a man loved God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength more than when the Son was offering himself obedient unto death even the death of the cross? And has there ever been a time when a man loved his neighbor as himself more than when Jesus laid down his life for his friends? Greater love has never been seen than in the cross of Christ. It was appropriate for Augustine to say that the cross is the pulpit of God's love. The pulpit of God's love. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another habitually, sacrificially, humbly, patiently, hopefully, expectantly, expecting nothing in return. We ought to love one another. We ought to add to our faith charity.

Now I want to ask us one further question to add to aid us in applying this to our Christian experience. Who are we called to love in this sacrificial way? Who are we called to love in this sacrificial way? I think we all immediately think of our family because those are the people that we are around the most, and when we read 1 Corinthians 13, we think about loving people more, we think about how we're deficient in our love for our wives or our love for our children, or a child may think, "I need to love my parents more," and that is all very good. We need to have more of this love

characteristic in our homes but that's not really what Peter was getting at in 2 Peter 1:7 when he said to add charity. He was not talking about love within a family. This kind of love ought to characterize our church, our church fellowship. We need to be more patient and kind and optimistic and enduring in our love for our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but I don't think that's what Peter was getting at either in 2 Peter 1:7. I don't think he's talking about love in the church community because that was what brotherly kindness was all about and Peter thought about repeating himself in this list of virtues. Beloved, the kind, the brotherly kindness that he talked about and his virtue list was the Christian's character in relation to the church, so the charity that he talks about in his list is the Christian's character in relationship to the world, to those outside the body of Christ. The love we've spoken about this morning, it must characterize all of our relationships, especially those relationships to those who are outside of Christ. That is what you would have to take away from the fact that brotherly kindness and charity are side-by-side. What's the difference? Why put these two words for love side-by-side? The difference has to be one is centered in the church and the other one is centered outside the church.

So you need to characterize this love more in your relationship to your co-workers, your boss, your next door neighbor, people you hire to do work in your home, people you interact with in the community. And let's bring this down to a real sharp point for us this morning for our help so that we can be corrected by the word of God about this, you and I as those who are partakers of the divine nature and who are called to live out God's glory and virtue by loving our neighbors as ourselves, when that even includes lost people, what would be, what would be the best practical application starting point of manifesting this kind of love? A love that's motivated by the nature of God, a love that's motivated by the sacrifice of Christ, a love that's supposed to be shown to lost people, what would be the starting point for displaying that kind of love? Wouldn't it be by telling them about the God who is love and who has manifested his love in sending his Son as the propitiation for sin? I can't think of any better application of adding charity than this principle of our personal evangelism. Can you think of a better one? Wouldn't that be the most natural application of this? Showing that kind of love that only comes from God to lost people must first and foremost be in our witness. We have not added charity unless we have laid ourselves on the line, said no to the resistance of the flesh, gone out on a limb, as it were, and shared the gospel with that lost person.

I want us to leave here today filled with wonder at the love of God for our poor, ill-deserving souls, and I want you to leave inspired to share that good news with some specific person. That has to be the application here of this. So later this week when an opportunity presents itself to you, perhaps the opportunity with a person that the Holy Spirit lays on your mind right now as we're sitting here, or perhaps an unexpected opportunity, that this falls in your lap later in the week and you know the resistance of your flesh, like we all know in those moments, when your flesh rises up and your double-mindedness plagues you and you say, "Ah, if you do that, you're gonna wreck this relationship. They're gonna think..." Okay, all those thoughts come in, the flesh rises up in resistance and you will be prepared to say, "God is love and God loves me." And so, beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another and this is the motivation for showing love, true Christian charity, sacrificial love, a love that lays itself down on

the line in self-forgetfulness. The only way to overcome the resistance of the flesh in that moment is to recall the work and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and to know grace and peace in that moment through the knowledge of him. May God give each one of us grace to work out the love which God himself has worked into us and has shed abroad in our hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Well, let's pray together.

Lord our gracious God, we are amazed at the love that you have shown to sinners like us and we are ashamed that we have loved so little in return. We have not loved thee as we ought, we have not loved our neighbor as we ought and we need to add charity. And so help us to behold the cross of Christ more. Bring to our minds the manifestation of the love of God for our poor souls that we might overcome our selfishness and our desire for comfort and ease, and might be willing to sacrificially love those we come in contact with this week. We pray this for the glory of our Lord Jesus, that his glory and virtue might be manifested in the lives of his blood-bought people. We pray it in his name. Amen.