

Main Idea: We can only love as our Father loves if we trust Him completely.

Introduction: Funny if it weren't so painful: watching someone learn to drop in

PRAY AND READ.

1. Walk through passage

- A. We know what love is by Christ's example
- B. We are called to follow his example.
 - i. We flatter ourselves to think we would lay down life, but... close our hearts to our brother in need
 - ii. Thus do we fail to exhibit the divine nature, to show that we are children of God
 - a) But love is not in word only (talk is cheap), but in deed – by this (v. 19) we know that we are in the truth (as Christ is, as Christ is the truth, that we are in Christ)

2. By this we assure our hearts before God

- A. The ground of our salvation *and* assurance is Christ – but when we are like him in our love, we give evidence and assure our hearts
- B. (v. 20) If our heart (conscience) condemns us – surely God does
- C. If our heart does *not* condemn us, we have confidence toward God

3. How could our hearts not condemn us?

- A. How could we measure up to the standard of Christ-like love?
 - i. Only through trusting Him completely

ii. **Romans 8:32**

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

iii. If we really knew this, really believed this... we wouldn't feel the need to reserve that little corner of our hearts, that precious self-focused, self-interested, self-directed part of us with the oh-so-important job of preserving that delicious delicacy we are afraid we will not be afforded if we wholly submit to the law and providence of God...

iv. **Luke 18:18–23**

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, *and you will have treasure in heaven*; and **come, follow Me.**” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

v. **Luke 19:8**

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

- a) Parting with all wealth is not the issue – Jesus perceived that the ruler *trusted* in his riches, that is where his heart was reserving unto self, where he was hedging his bets, the place where he was not willing to submit, because if he did...
- b) Aren't we afraid that if we truly let go... He won't catch us?
- c) But that's why we can't love like He loved us – He trusted the Father wholly – but we, though He gave Himself up for us, fear... that if we stop reserving that last sliver of cheesecake, that rainy-day fund, that secret indulgence for ourselves... that He will disappoint us, that He alone and by Himself will not be enough. And that leaves us self-focused

Conclusion: He who can lay down his life for the brethren, and thereby assure His heart and gain confidence before God, is not he who has determined to work harder than the rest at loving. It is he who “knows love, because” he knows that Christ “laid down His life for” him. It is he who couples that with Romans 8:32. This is the one who can heed our Savior’s teaching: **Matthew 6:25–26**

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

And having gained freedom from the tyranny of the self, the fearful sense of need to watch out for self, liberated from the compulsion to guard what the self fears will be lost if the Lord is all his hope – that soul can love, can love others self-sacrificially, like Jesus – and know that he is in the truth, is in Christ, and therefore will have confidence toward God.