

“Faith Working Through Love”
Galatians 5:6
(Preached at Trinity, June 16, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this section Paul has been continuing to apply his argument. The Judaizers had come from Jerusalem teaching the Galatian Gentiles that in order to be saved you had to trust Christ and then be circumcised. Only then could you become a part of God’s chosen people.
2. In this letter to the Galatians Paul has made some powerful declarations regarding such teaching.
 - A. He referred to such teaching as desertion.
Galatians 1:6 NAU - "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel"
 - B. He pronounced anathema to those teaching such heresy
Galatians 1:8 NAU - "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"
 - C. He accused those listening to this teaching of being under some sort of spell
Galatians 3:1 NAU - "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?"
3. In **Chapter 5** Paul doesn’t ease up on his powerful pronouncements.
 - A. In **Verse 2** he states that if you receive circumcision Christ will be of no benefit to you. In other words, to add anything to the work of Christ is to deny the sufficiency of the Gospel.
 - B. In **Verse 3** he restates his teaching from **Chapter 3** – if you insist on keeping any part of the Law as a part of your salvation you must keep it all—perfectly. Oh how we must hear this! During those times that you doubt your salvation are you doubting the sufficiency of Christ or the greatness of His promises.
 - C. He states in **Verse 4** that those who fall into a works based salvation have fallen from grace. They have denied the faith.
 - D. One of the strongest statements is **Verse 12**
Galatians 5:12 NAU - "I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves."
 - E. People are often offended by strong preaching, especially in our day where people deny absolutes. The Bible speaks strongly.
4. Now Paul begins to apply the practical aspects of justification by faith alone. Those that trust Christ alone are persevering in hope. By faith they can face the Day of Judgment without fear.
This is the continuing focus as we look at **Verse 6**.
 - A. It doesn’t matter if you are circumcised or uncircumcised. It doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile. The issue is where is the focus of your hope? Where is your confidence? Paul says here again, IT IS FAITH!

- B. In **Verse 5** he declared that through the Holy Spirit we wait in hope by faith—faith alone.
- C. In **Verse 6** Paul states the object of our faith—Christ Jesus.
5. Then he adds another component of saving faith. He writes, “faith working through love.”
6. Paul makes it clear in all of his instruction. We are saved by faith alone apart from works of the Law. But saving faith is never barren. True faith is always united with hope and love. Faith, hope, and love are inseparable – triplets born of the same Spirit.
1 Corinthians 13:13 NAU - "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of *you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father"
1 Thessalonians 5:8 NAU - "But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."
7. In **Verse 5** Paul joins faith and hope
Galatians 5:5 NAU - "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness."
8. Now in **Verse 6** he adds the all important element of love. That which distinguishes us is our new heart – “faith working through love.”
- A. We are not justified by love, but love is the fruit of true saving faith.
- B. Love is the chief distinguishing mark of Christianity.
Islam has always been characterized by the sword, by conquest.
Christianity, on the other hand, has always been characterized by love. The world looks upon us with amazement as we care for one another.
Acts 2:44-45 NAU - "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."
- C. Jesus said:
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- D. John wrote:
1 John 2:9-11 NAU - "The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."
1 John 3:14 NAU - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."
9. Paul will stress this great component of love throughout the remainder of this chapter.
Galatians 5:14 NAU - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
Galatians 5:22 NAU - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love"

I. What is love?

- A. The word here is ἀγάπη - This is a hotly contested word.
1. Some place a strict distinction between the two primary NT Greek words for love - ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη, φιλέω or φιλία
 - a. ἀγάπη is a sacrificial, Divine love. It is only possible for a Christian to manifest this high love
 - b. φιλέω or φιλία – This word refers to common human affection or friendship.
James 4:4 NAS - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship (φιλία) with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."
 - c. I myself have sometimes stressed the distinction without sufficiently calling attention to the similarities of the words
 2. They are different and distinct, and yet they are sometimes used almost interchangeably
1 Corinthians 16:22-24 NAU - "If anyone does not love (φιλέω) the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ My love (ἀγάπη) be with you all in Christ Jesus."
 3. Sometimes they are used in ways we don't expect
John 5:20 NAU - "For the Father loves (φιλέω) the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel."
 4. D.A. Carson writes, "The entire range of (the two words) are not exactly the same, nevertheless, they enjoy substantial overlap.
 5. James Renihan writes, "Scholars tell us that in about 400 BC, agape began to grow in prominence in the Greek language. Philia, among other things, was associated with kissing, while agape was not. They are not perfect synonyms, but there is significant overlap."
 6. I think the use of ἀγάπη here is distinct and particular
 - a. One would be surprised to find φιλία here.
 - b. When Paul says here that faith is working through love he is speaking of the particular Christian love
- B. So what is this love that is particularly a Christian love?
1. It is both an affection and an action. It is both inward and outward.
 2. This love works through faith. It validates our faith.
1 Thessalonians 4:9 NAU - "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;"
 3. It is an affection that sacrifices self and serves others.
Galatians 5:13 NAU - "through love serve one another."
 4. Love is a principle working within us that brings us to look upon others with compassion and mercy. It is the heart that ceases to focus only on our own needs but upon the needs of others.

- II. Love is the chief characteristic of the Christian
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- A. Love is the very foundation of Christian character
1. We are not justified by love, but faith void of love is a faith void of substance. It has no basis of reality. Love defines the Christian. It is evidence of the indwelling Spirit
 2. Over and over the Bible applies love to the Christian
 - We are rooted and grounded in love – **Ephesians 3:17**
 - The fruit of the Spirit is love – **Galatians 5:22**
 - Christians are to walk in love – **Ephesians 5:2**
 - Our hearts are knit together in love – **Colossians 2:2**
 - We are made perfect in love – **1 John 4:18**
 - We abound in love towards one another – **1 Thes. 3:12**
 3. Love has built orphanages, hospitals, food pantries. Love has sent missionaries into the darkest regions of the earth.
 We have experienced the love of Christ and this love overflows to others
- B. While love characterizes us it is also commanded of us. While it flows naturally from us we are also commanded to love.
1. Love is presented as a command in both the OT and NT
Deuteronomy 6:5 NAU - "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
John 13:34 NAU - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."
 2. Our hearts are filled with love and yet we must love as an act of the will.
1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 NAU - "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more"
 3. But notice the Gospel at work. We are commanded to love but we cannot love. Love is a Gospel grace.
 Notice **Verse 5** – "through the Spirit"
Verse 6 – "in Christ Jesus" – "faith working through love"
 In **Verse 22** we'll see, "The fruit of the Spirit is love"
 4. I think this is why Paul restates **Verse 6** differently in **Chapter 6 Galatians 6:15 NAU** - "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."
 5. God gives us a new heart and then works within us the grace of love. We are enabled through the Holy Spirit in us. By His grace we make love a high priority.

III. Faith is at the heart of true Christianity

A. Paul says in **Verse 14**

Galatians 5:14 NAU - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

1. Does this mean that love has replaced the Law – NO!
2. Notice it doesn't say that love IS the Law

John Murray put it well: "We are not to regard love as dispensing with law or displacing law as if what has misleadingly been called 'the law of love' has been substituted under the gospel for the law of commandments or precepts. Paul does not say that the law *is* love but that love fulfils the law and law has not in the least degree been depreciated or deprived of its sanction."

3. Paul is simply telling us that when a person lives by the principle of love he will also be fulfilling the obedience of the Law.

B. Without love our religion is empty and without substance

1. Outward action without love is nothing
2. Every religious act becomes worthless without love. You could give away all of your possessions for the care of the poor. You can offer yourself as a martyr. Without love it is nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:3 NAU - "And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

3. Faith and love are inseparable.

Love is impossible without faith. Faith cannot exist in the absence of love.

1 Corinthians 13:2 NAU - "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."

Conclusion:

1. Selfishness quenches love. This is why true love is impossible for the lost man. He is self-centered. He looks out for his own self-interests – *His* family, *His* possessions, *His* occupation, *His* pleasures. His greatest love is the love of self.
2. When the lost man says, "I love you," what he is really saying is, "I love me and you satisfy me." That is why divorce is so common. As soon as their mate ceases to satisfy they begin to look elsewhere.
3. But this must never describe us. We must look upon the needs of others.
Philippians 2:1-4 NAU - "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
4. As Christians we must express the love that God has placed in us.
Colossians 3:12-14 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity."
5. We will flesh this out further as we continue in this chapter.