Commanded to Love

By Derek Prince

I'm excited about what we're going to experience today, I believe from God. I believe God has planned a kind of sandwich for us.

Last night we talked about warfare. Tonight we're going to talk about warfare, but this morning we're going to talk about love. And you see there's two whole-meal slices of bread, very healthy but hard to chew. But in the middle of them there's something very sweet and very tasty—the love of God.

I was reading the Bible as I do from day to day, and I saw something that surprised me and I want to share it with you. But first let me ask you this question. Would you really be excited if you knew that we collectively could impact our neighborhood, if we could impact San Antonio, if we could impact Texas? That's a big job isn't it? Suppose we could impact the whole of the United States. Would you be excited? Well I believe God has shown me very simply out of the Scripture a way it can be done. Now I'm not talking about all of them getting saved, but I'm talking about all the people that we have in mind being confronted by the testimony of Jesus in a very real and powerful way. I believe that Jesus Himself explained to us how we can do it. I'm going to read from John 13 verses 34 and 35. These are part of the final words of Jesus to His disciples. John 13:34 and 35.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

That's very simple, isn't it? All will know that you are My disciples. You can confront everybody with the testimony of Jesus. I'm not saying they'll all be converted, but everybody can be confronted with the testimony of Jesus. Jesus said, "By this all will know wherever you are." In San Antonio, wherever you go to the ends of the earth, by this all will know that you are My disciples. They'll be confronted with the reality of Jesus and with the reality of a life committed to serve

Him. But what is the this? By what will everybody know? The answer is so simple we could pass it by.

You know I came from a background of philosophy to the Lord Jesus and then to the Scriptures. And one of the things that has always impressed me most, it impressed me so vividly when I first began to study the Bible, it's simplicity. I was used to long complicated phrases. The philosopher Kant once wrote a sentence that extended over two pages without a period. Can you imagine reading a sentence like that? And then I came to the Bible and I came to Jesus and it's so simple, so down to earth, so practical. It revolutionized my whole way of thinking.

There was a brief time when Lydia and I had fellowship with Corrie ten Boom whom all of you have heard about, and you know her simple little statement? Kiss—KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid. That's my aim. I'm not saying you're stupid, but my aim is to keep it simple. When I get complicated I get frightened. I think what am I doing wrong.

So this is so simple but not altogether easy. Jesus said, "By this all will know, everybody in the whole area will be confronted by the reality of the fact that you are believers in the Lord Jesus." They won't all be converted, but they will all be confronted. I believe we have an obligation to confront the whole world with the testimony of Jesus. "Go into all the world," Jesus said, "and proclaim the gospel."

But I want to point out to you something else very simple. Love is not a choice. It's a commandment. Jesus said, "I'm not giving you a recommendation. I'm not making a suggestion. I'm giving you a commandment. Love one another." How are we to love one another? The same way that Jesus loved us. That is an unselfish, self-giving, seeking first the good of others. Jesus said if you will have that kind of love the whole world will sit up and take notice, because they don't see it. They don't see it anywhere. What they see is selfishness, self-seeking, grabbing. You can revolutionize a whole situation by demonstrating the love of God. But bear in mind it's not an option, it's not a recommendation, it's not a suggestion, it is a commandment. So if we don't do it what are we in one simple word? We're disobedient. That's right.

So we have two options. We can either love one another the way Jesus love us and be obedient, or we can fail to love one another and be disobedient. But remember this is not a suggestion. It's not a recommendation. Jesus said very clearly and precisely "It is a commandment and He said

it's a new commandment." The Jewish people were used to the Ten Commandments of Moses. In a certain sense you could call this maybe the eleventh commandment and I believe it comprehends all the Ten Commandments. If we do this we are keeping all the commandments. Who will know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another. A commandment I give you that you love one another; as I also have loved you.

And there's no options as to the kind of love. It's not a self-seeking, self-gratifying love. It's a self-giving love. A love that lays down its life for those whom we love. That's very simple, very basic and very seldom practiced. If you were to ask most people in America today what their impression of the Christian church is they would not speak in terms of love. That isn't the way the world sees us. There are wonderful and glorious exceptions, but basically they see us a religious people. People with a set of rules. People who meet inside strange buildings, that they never really feel want to go into because they never been confronted with the real testimony. I think history proves this. I'm not a historian by any means but I do know that in the Roman Empire, which was one of the most powerful and long enduring empires and widely spread empires that history has ever recorded, the unbelievers said about the Christians, "See how these Christians love one another." That was their impression.

Do we give the people of San Antonio or Texas or America that impression? Is that the impression they get about us? "See how these people love one another." And it won. Within three centuries the most powerful empire on earth at that time had capitulated to the claims of Jesus, a Jewish Carpenter who had perished on a Roman gibbet. What changed them? The way Jesus said they would be changed. By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another.

I just want you to meditate on that for a moment or two. It's not something out of our reach; it's not something impossible. It's something we can do. If we don't do it with the help of God, it's not because we can't. It's because we're failing. This has become so vivid to me. I've been a preacher of the gospel for almost sixty years. I've traveled in more than fifty nations. My books are in more than fifty languages, but am I really doing the job? Are you and I together really doing the job? Are we confronting the world with this testimony? Will the world say, will America say today about us what it said about the Christians of the first centuries? "See how these Christians love one another." They couldn't explain it. They couldn't understand it. People from diverse backgrounds, different races, very different social levels, some were slaves and some were members of the

Emperors family, but they loved one another and it impacted the whole Roman world. It can be done. Jesus never used idle words. He said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another."

Now I want to speak a little bit about love. The kind of love that I'm speaking about is really not an emotion. People are very prone to get excited about emotions. I think particularly in our contemporary culture a whole lot depends on peoples' emotions. But the love that the Bible talks about in God's people is not an emotion. It's a decision. I want to turn you to the first verse of Psalm 18. These are the words of David.

I will love You, O LORD, my strength.

That's not an emotion. It's a decision. Psalm 18 verse 1.

"I will love You, O LORD, my strength."

David made a decision. Furthermore the word for love there is not the usual Hebrew word. It's a word that's directly connected with the womb, or with the entrails. In other words as Americans would say, it's a gut feeling. Now we tend to think that kind of feeling is not under my control, but David said, "Lord I'll give you that kind of love, gut love, total commitment, my whole person involved in it." It's a decision. Have you ever made that decision? Have you ever really decided I will love the Lord with all that's in me? Everything I have is His. I'll hold nothing back. Whatever He asks me to do, I will do it.

So far as I know my own heart, and the heart is deceitful and we can't trust our own hearts, but so far as I know my own heart I have decided to love the Lord. I've made that decision. It's not an emotion. You could say I'm not an emotional person although you would be wrong. You might have the outward impression I'm not emotional, I am very emotional and getting more and more emotional as I get older. But this is not an emotion. It's a decision. I've made the decision. I'm not boasting but I'm simply speaking the truth. I've decided I will love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. He's worthy. He's done everything for me. The least I can do is love Him and it's not painful. It may be costly at times, but it's definitely not painful. So remember, love is a decision—this kind of love—and it's a gut feeling. It goes much deeper than superficial emotions

and sweet words. It's a decision.

Now David made it a personal decision, an individual decision. I will love you. But in 1 John chapter 4 we're confronted by a corporate decision which takes us even further. First John chapter 4. I counted once in 1 John chapter 4 between verse 7 and verse 21, the word love either as a noun or a verb occurs twenty-nine times. Surely God has put some emphasis on love, hasn't He? I mean it's almost impossible to imagine an author using the same word twenty-nine times in twenty-one verses. God must surely have been saying something to us. And then I want to point out to you that the kind of love that John is speaking about is also a decision, but it's a corporate decision. I want to read these words. Verse 7.

"Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

You see that's a corporate decision. Let us love one another. How would it be if all the people in this wonderful congregation were to make a corporate decision: let us love one another, for love is of God? And then one of the most amazing statements in the Scripture, so simple that we pass it by, it says everyone who loves is born of God. It's very simple, but think of the implications. It means that there is a kind of love that can only come through being born again. If you ever encounter that kind of love in anybody you know that person is born again. It also means if you don't have that kind of love it's questionable whether you are born again. You see we can make this a doctrinal issue; explain salvation, the steps and I've done it more times than I can count, but that isn't the final test. The final test is not assent to a doctrine, it's love. Everyone who loves is born of God. You cannot have that kind of love unless you are born of God. But if you are born of God the evidence should be that kind of love.

Let's say that together shall we? I'll say it first and you say it after me. "Everyone who loves is born of God." "Everyone who loves is born of God." Say it again. "Everyone who loves is born of God." Now turn to your neighbor and say it to your neighbor. It's wonderful. So this is the collective decision.

Just let me compare another Scripture just to confirm what I've been saying. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 22 and 23.

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit."

How do you purify your soul? In knowing the truth? No. In obeying the truth. If you want to be pure, obey the truth consistently, continually obey the truth.

"Since you have purified your souls."

How many of you agree that our souls need to be purified? That's right. Well this is the way to do it you see, by obeying the truth. Not by knowing the truth. You need to know it but that's not enough. You have to obey it.

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit [and that's not in some versions] in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

Do you love your fellow believers fervently, passionately? You know I have another message which I'm not going to preach but it is How Much Passion Is There In Your Faith? I've come to see that faith is something passionate. Love one another with a pure heart fervently, passionately. And then it says how you can do that.

"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

How is it possible to have that kind of love? Only one way if you've been born again of incorruptible seed of the word of God.

A friend of mine whose name is fairly well known—he's a preacher—said that being born again has become a kind of cult in America. I read somewhere, some statistic that forty-seven percent of

Americans are born again. I say nonsense. Where's the evidence? Forty-seven percent of Americans may know doctrinally about being born again, but they haven't been born again. If forty-seven percent of Americans had been born again this would be a very different nation than what it is. I doubt if five percent are really born again. I mean, I'm no statistician, I may be wrong.

Now I want to tell two things about love from the epistle of James. It's rather interesting. I'm reading from James, Peter and John, which I don't very often do. James chapter 1 verse 25 and then chapter 2 verse 8.

"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

And then in chapter 2 verse 8.

"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."

So that law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," is called two things; it's called "the perfect law" and "the royal law." It's the perfect law because it includes all other law. When you do that, you are obeying all law. It's the perfect law; it's the royal law. It's the kingly law and it's the perfect law of freedom. This is very simply but very profound. Nobody can stop you loving. If you've made your mind up to love nobody can stop you. They can say all sorts of hard things about you, they can treat you in a very mean, miserable way, but they cannot stop you loving. Is that right? So it's the perfect law of liberty. Furthermore it's the perfect law because it contains all other laws. When you really love your neighbor fervently with a pure heart, you'll keep all the other commandments. And it's the very law of liberty. In other words who is totally free? The person who loves. Nobody can stop you.

The perfect example of that is Jesus. They did everything to Him. They beat Him, they pierced His hands and His feet, they put a crown of thorns on His head, they gave Him vinegar to drink, they abused Him, they reviled Him, but one thing they could not do was what? They could not stop Him loving. He loved them to the end. You see, if you love with that kind of love nobody can stop you.

It's the perfect law of liberty. You are the only really free person on earth because nobody can stop you doing what you want to do. Isn't that wonderful? I mean I'm impressed when I think about it. Nobody can stop you. That's why it's called the perfect law of liberty.

Now I want to make this personal. Don't cringe. It will work out all right. I'll make it personal to myself first. I just want to read an incident from the end of Mark's first chapter. Mark chapter 1 verse 40 and 41 and 42.

"Then a leper came to Him, [that's Jesus] imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus, moved with compassion, and put out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed."

It says there Jesus was moved with compassion. It's very interesting because its exactly corresponds to the word that David used in Psalm 18. It's a gut feeling. It refers to the bowels. I think the Old King James used to speak about the bowels of compassion. And that's where our deepest feelings are. They are not in the heart, this physical heart. They're here. This is where it all begins. This is the source of everything. And the word that's used says, Jesus, His bowels were moved.

I remember when my first wife was writing her book she was talking to the Sherrills who were auditing it, editing it, and she said something about my bowels were moved. And they had to explain to her that that wasn't the right way to say it in English. But it's exactly right. That's what it's talking about. You know, in every language that I know—Latin, Greek, Hebrew—the real deep, innermost part of you is not this physical part, it's this and I think all of us will know that's where it really begins; whether it's love, whether it's fear, whether it's hate, that's the place it starts.

So it says, "Jesus' bowels [if I may say that reverently] were moved for this man." The word compassion actually isn't there in the Greek. And when I read that I asked myself a personal question. By what am I moved? What moves me? What prompts my actions? Am I really moved

with compassion or am I moved with personal ambition, self-seeking, a desire to get my own way?

Let me just read something from Philippines chapter 2. I may seem to be overemphasizing this but I have really come to the conclusion that the greatest single problem in the church today is personal ambition on the part of ministers and I'm not saying I'm exempt. In Philippians chapter 2 beginning at verse 1, Paul says,

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, in any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy."

Those are all very powerful words. They're not superficial feelings. They go right deep down.

"Fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

I don't know whether I'm, you could accuse me of overemphasizing this, but I see so much personal ambition in the church to be honest. And I meet a lot of wonderful ministers. But most of the driving force in the church today as I see is ambition. It's to get a bigger church, to hold a larger meeting, to get more names on my mailing list. It's to make myself known. It's to get people interested in me. Maybe I'm cynical but that's what I see as one of the main driving forces in Christianity today. And Paul says, "Cut it out. It's got no place. Let nothing be done through personal ambition."

What are we to be moved by? What's the answer? That's right. Love or compassion. So I'm going to ask you—many of you are in the Lord's service; in fact you all should be in one way or another. By what are you moved? What motivates you? What prompts you to do the things you do, to speak the words you speak, to relate to people the way you do? Beloved, let us love one another. Love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Is that really what is motivating us? Is it the love of God? Is it compassion?

I'll share something which God sometimes impels me to share. It's very difficult to share; it's very painful. But after God called my wife, Ruth, home to Himself, I went through a time of deep grief. But I learned how much people loved me. It was a revelation. I got letters from many different parts of the world; people from different races, different denominational backgrounds, comforting me, assuring me of their love and their prayers. I never knew there was so much love in the world till that happened. I didn't know that so many people loved me. And I'm sure not an easy person to love. But after all the perseverance then you can achieve it.

But I got one letter from a lady—I don't even remember her name. And she directed me to Psalm 84 and it says in verse 5,

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage."

In other words, he has no permanent residence in this world. He's on a pilgrimage from one world to another. And then it says about these people and this is the verse the lady quoted to me.

"As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools."

Now you need to know that Baca is the Hebrew word for weeping. You can't understand that Psalm unless you know that. So as they passed through the Valley of Baca they make it a spring. What this lady said to me was this, you may have to pass through the valley of weeping, but you don't have to stay there. And that impacted me so deeply that I couldn't read any further for one hour. I just sat and gazed at that verse. And God did something. It says,

"As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring [or a fountain]."

And at that moment God opened a fountain inside me. Something—I mean I've been a Christian nearly sixty years, speaking in tongues and doing all those things. But there's something completely new happened in me. A spring, a fountain was opened inside me and it was a fountain of compassion. And it was unlike anything I've ever experienced before. I've known the love of God, I've loved many people, I've certainly loved each of my wives and my family. But this was

something not from Derek Prince. It has another source; it was a spring, it was a fountain. And it was compassion and I've never experienced anything exactly like before, and I began to understand what it means when it says Jesus was moved with compassion. And I realized God was sharing His compassion with me. At that time I prayed two prayers. I prayed, "Lord, let this fountain never become defiled, let it never become contaminated and let it never become stopped up."

Now it's not under my control. I don't decide when it will spring up. God does. But I've learned something very interesting. When that fountain of compassion is flowing in me it attracts people to me. They don't know why they're coming but they're feeling something that they've been longing for. And it really gives me, also, a kind of power over people. I have to be very careful that I don't exploit it, because when people feel real diving compassion you can get them to do almost anything. But that's what I believe God is waiting for—it's that we love one another with His divine love. Something else God has done in me and if you come Sunday night you'll hear it all. I'll give you everything, both barrels.

But God has given me a supernatural concern for orphans, widows, the poor and the oppressed. I mean, I, by the grace and mercy of God, I'm the head of a family of twelve adopted children, so it's not that I've never done anything for them. But I have seen with a new intensity—I don't want to preach Sunday night's message this morning, but I've seen that's what God is looking for. We can talk as much as we like about faith and righteousness, but if we do nothing for the people who really need us we're just using empty words. And there's no shortage of people who need us. That's one thing we cannot complain about. They are not far from any of you. There are people who desperately need to be loved. They are lonely, they are not cared for, they have no answers, they're desperate, and you don't have to walk far from where you live to find people like that. I'll talk to you, if God wills and we live, I'll talk to you on Sunday night about that. But I've come to see that this is the purpose of God. It's what God is waiting for.

I was preaching, even before I had this experience, I was preaching in the state of Virginia to a group of black brothers. And at the end of the message a young black man came up to me and he said, "Brother Prince would you pray for me." I said, "What do you want?" He said, "That I may speak to people with the same compassion that you have." I looked at him for a moment. I said, "There's a price to pay," because I knew I was paying the price. He was silent for a few minutes, then he said, "I want it anyhow." And I prayed for him and I don't doubt that God's hand is on that

young man's life. I want it anyhow, no matter what it costs. Do you feel that way this morning? There's this fountain that God sovereignly will open up in you. It's not under your control. You don't decide when it will happen.

You see there's some things that don't come without suffering. I've always been amazed at Paul's prayer in Philippians chapter 3, "That I may know Him, Jesus, [that's wonderful. We all say 'Amen' to that.] and the power of His resurrection [well we all say that, but the next verse] and the fellowship of His sufferings." And many, many times I've said to the Lord as I read that verse, "Lord, I don't know that I can really say that. Do I really want to know the fellowship of your suffering?" I'm an honest person. I think perhaps that's one of the basic benefits of God's dealing with me. I am honest to myself; I am honest to others. And the Lord is very patient with me. He didn't pressure me. But you see I've come to see that some things only come by suffering. Suffering does something that nothing else will do. It prepares the soil for that fountain.

And then I remember when I was in the military in the army I was what they call in the British Army a medical orderly. I was supposed to be looking after wounded and sick people, but in actual fact I was too useful in other capacities. They never gave me that job. But anyhow I learned by my association with my British soldiers that people who've passed through a real hard, dangerous time together, they've been under fire, they've been in the trenches, they've been wherever—they are bonded together in a way that other people are not bonded. They may be very different in their personality, their social level, many other things, but having been through it together bonds people. And I think Jesus wants to be bonded with us, and when we go through it together with Him we have a bond with Him that cannot be broken. So I'm not welcoming suffering, but I'm prepared for it. I don't seek it, I don't run after it, but I realize there are some things God cannot do in me without suffering.

So I've passed through the Valley of Baca. God has opened the fountain. I'm not there in the Valley of Baca. If I weep today it's not for sorrow; it's for compassion with people. How about you? Would you like to make a commitment? It's a scriptural commitment. You don't have to do it. You can still get to heaven if you don't do it, but you will have missed something on earth. Will you say in the words of Paul, "That I may know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering." Then you see I realized that things that come that way that cannot come any other way. I've said for many years God is a self-revealing God. He loves to reveal Himself. He loves to share Himself. But I've realized lately through what I've been through that God has a deeper desire

than that. He wants us to share what He goes through, to share His experiences with Him. And when you go through the valley you're sharing something very precious, very wonderful. You'll come closer to the Lord than you've ever been. And that's what God wants. He's not interested in us suffering, but He's interested in us sharing His sufferings with us. I'm not talking about the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. Those were unique. Only He could do that. But I'm talking about the sufferings of Jesus for the Church. Don't you think that Jesus is grieved sometimes by the way the Church acts and behaves? We can be critical, we can accuse, we can point, and believe me nobody can do that more effectively than I can. But that's not what God is waiting for. He's waiting for, "Will you share My deep concern for My bride, for the one I love so much? Can I share some of My sufferings with you?" That's really when you're getting into deep water at that point.

I've never been a superficial person. I'm tired of superficiality. I'm tired of empty religion, I'm tired of empty confessions which are made to get something out of God but were never expected to fulfill. I really believe God has sent me here at this time to confront you people with a decision. How shall I express the decision? "Lord, no matter what it takes, open that fountain in me. I don't want to be superficial. I don't want to be just a church-goer. Lord, I want to bring joy to your heart. I want you to be satisfied with me, not with what I do, but with me. I want to share fellowship with You in the deep places." There's another interesting thing in that verse from Psalm 84 it says,

"As they pass through the Valley of weeping, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools."

The word for rain there is the word that's used for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. And I believe that's where the latter rain falls. And it's interesting to me, it covers the pools. It doesn't cover every place. It covers the lowly places and I have observed that too. When the Spirit of God moves it's the humble that get blessed. It's the people who have no claims, no pride, no self-righteousness. "Lord, here I am. I'm just a pool. Fill me."

I think I'm going to invite you, if you wish, and I'm not going to check on you whether you do it or not, but I want to suggest that you would say to the Lord, "Lord, I want to know You. I want to know the power of Your resurrection. And I want to know the fellowship of Your sufferings. If You're suffering, Jesus, I don't want You to suffer alone. I'll suffer with You."

Would you be prepared? You don't have to tell me. I'm going to say it and you can say it after me or not, whichever you want. All right. It's your decision. I'm not supervising you. I'm just putting something before you. But consider carefully what you say, because you'll be held accountable by the Lord. You know it says in Ecclesiastes, "Don't tell the angel it was a mistake what you've said." There is an angel recording everything we say. It's a privilege and an honor that God is so interested in us, but it's also a responsibility. So I want to offer you the privilege of saying quietly, not out loud, the following words.

"Lord Jesus, I thank You that You died for me on the cross. That You've love me with an everlasting love. That You've drawn me to Yourself with lovingkindness. And now, Lord, I have a request that I may know You and the power of Your resurrection and the fellowship of Your suffering. That I may be drawn to You in a closer union than I have ever yet known in my life. Lord, I give myself to You without reservation. Take me as I am and make me what You want me to be for Your glory, Lord. In Jesus name. Amen."