“If anyone does not hate …”

Love and Hate

Matthew 16:24-26 (Par. Luke 14:25-27)

by Pastor Eric Chang
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Let us turn to the Word of God in Matthew 16:24-26.

> Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Luke 9:23 is very much parallel to Matthew 16:24.

> And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

This is the second time the Lord Jesus teaches this vital principle

The importance of these words we need to ponder today, are stressed by the fact that it is already the second time that the Lord Jesus repeats these words. These words are so important in the mind of Christ; and it is so important that the disciples need to understand this vital principle contained in these words, that within a space of a few chapters, we find it repeated once more.

The previous time was in Matthew 10:37-39:

> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Notice in Matthew Chapter 10, the Lord Jesus has already taught his disciples this, but the message has not sunk into their spiritual understanding. Therefore only a few chapters later, we find the Lord repeating this teaching to his disciples in these words. This teaching of the Lord appears again and again, in the Gospels to stress its vital importance to Christian life.

3 parallel passages in Luke say, "you cannot be my disciple"

This teaching of the Lord Jesus is also found in Luke, and it occurs three times. The first time is in In **Luke 14:26**, and **Luke 14:27** is the second time. The third time is in **Luke 14:33**.

Today, God willing, I will base the message that he gives me on Luke 14:25-27, which is the second time the Lord Jesus teaches the vital principle in Matthew 10:37-39. I pray that he will open our

understanding to what he is saying in Luke. First, let us read Luke 14:25-27.

> Now great multitudes accompanied him and he turned and said to them, "If any man comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he ***cannot be my disciple***. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, ***cannot be my disciple****."*

It is as though the Lord Jesus feared that his disciples would not understand that without fulfilling these requirements, they cannot be his disciple even if they would love to be his disciple. So he says here "cannot be my disciple" twice, and explains. There is one more repetition of "cannot be my disciple" as we continue to read verses 28-33:

> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has ***cannot be my disciple***.

"Terms of peace" is more correctly translated, "terms of unconditional surrender."

I have already touched on Luke 14:25-33 in March 1979, and the central point was: the call to discipleship is the call to faith. But I shall approach this passage rather differently from what I did last time because this passage has such riches that one message does not exhaust its content.

I also preached on Matthew 10:37-39 in August, 1977. So this too, is a second time, as it were, that we return to this passage. Just as the Lord taught his disciples, so we must learn the second time. Perhaps, if God grants us insight and mercy, we may understand it deeper than we did before.

Jesus taught us to "love," but now he teaches us to "hate"

This passage is simply a stumbling block. Let us not mince our words, it is simply a stumbling block. This chapter is simply an offence to our hearts. Why is it an offence? The word "hate" is already an offence to begin with. "If anyone does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, brothers and sisters cannot be my disciple." You are already offended by these words. To many Christians, these words are an embarrassment. They are such an embarrassment that they should be subjected to unlimited dilution and explaining away in the hope that we can get around it somehow and circumvent the problem. The great problem to the Christian lies in this matter: Jesus taught that we are to love even our neighbor, even our enemy. And then having told us to love our neighbor and to love our enemy, does he go on to say, "You shall hate your father and mother"? Let's forget this Bible! This is a hopeless contradiction! We've had it!

So this passage is an offence to us. We don't know what to do with a passage like this. The best we can do, as most commentaries will try to do, is to speedily dilute the meaning of the word "hate." Actually, "hate" is not hate. What is "hate"? "Hate" means to love a little less than you would love others. So "hate" is a form of loving. That's very nice. Maybe there is truth in that. It is only a form of less-loving. Even from the linguistic point of view it has certain problems, but we can get by with this.

We can, of course, turn to Genesis Chapter 29, that Jacob loved one of his wives and hated the other. He loved Rachel and hated Leah. He did not really hate Leah; he just loved her less. Perhaps there is truth in this to some extent. It's rather an interesting concept that "hate" is after all some form of loving. I think there is truth in this, but perhaps, not necessarily depending on a dictionary definition as we shall see in a moment.

But this passage is an offence to us. It's an embarrassment to us. And the one thing we hope is that when we go out to preach the gospel, someone is not going to catch us and say, "Didn't Jesus say you should love your enemy and your neighbor as yourself? Why does he go on to say in Luke 14:26, "You shall hate your father and your mother and your wife and your children! What kind of man is this?" It is true, he has a point.

Jesus teaches us to count the cost, but we stress we don't bear any cost

For those who are concerned with church dogmatics, there is a further point – not less serious and not less difficult to handle. What is the further point? For those who preach salvation as a free and unconditional gift, the Lord Jesus tells the person in verse 28, "You must first sit down and count the cost." What cost? Did the preacher not say it was free? Suddenly, you end up with a cost? How can a thing be both free and costly? First, he tells me it costs me nothing, and the next moment, he tells me it costs everything.

Does it cost me everything or does it cost me nothing? I mean, make up your mind! Therefore very understandably, the passage is an offence, an embarrassment to be circumvented, to be explained away almost to desperation. Desperate measures are taken to try and get around this. Didn't we say eternal life is the free gift of God? It's free! And suddenly, the Lord Jesus says, "Oh no, sit down and

count the cost." What cost is there to count? The preacher said it's free. How shall we answer this most embarrassing problem?

These are the two central problems of this passage: the offence, and the cost. Any man who ignores the words of the Lord Jesus, or tries to explain his words away, will do so at his own eternal cost. You can explain anything away, or play around with any other kind of words, but the one kind of words that we must not tamper with are the words of Jesus. These are words of eternal life. We must look at them very seriously.

How shall we answer the problem? Salvation is a gift, so why do we have to sit down and count the cost of a gift? A gift costs me nothing. What is there to count? Therefore, if you ask the average Christian today to sit down and count the cost, he doesn't even know what he's supposed to count. There isn't a cost to count. He has constantly had it drummed into his head that salvation is a free gift. And when God presents you with the gift, all you've got to do is stretch out your hand and receive it. Where is the cost? If you give me a present and then you tell me to sit down and count the cost, I don't know what you mean. Is this a present or are you selling it to me? If you sell it to me, then it costs me something. But if you are giving me a present, what is it supposed to cost?

A comparison with a restaurant

Or does it mean then, it is like eating at a restaurant. You go into this expensive, beautiful restaurant, and you put your hand in your pocket to pay, and the waiter says, "Oh no, here's a seat. Sit down please." And he dusts the chair. And you eat and you eat and you say, "Hey! How come the bill hasn't come yet? I haven't paid a cent and I'm eating all this delicious food!" And so you're gobbling this food and saying, "This restaurant must function on charity!"

Having finished your meal, you take off your napkin and say, “Thank you very much!” and walk to the door. And someone grabs you by the shoulder and says, “Excuse me, sir, you haven’t paid yet.”

“You’re supposed to pay for this?”

That’s ridiculous! We know that we pay at the end. It’s free when you go in. There is no entrance charge to go into a restaurant. But you pay when you leave. So Christianity must be a bit like this. When you go in, it’s free, but when you come out, you have to pay. Is this it? So we got caught somewhere in between. The church says, “No entrance charge! Everything’s free!” So you walk in there, and suddenly, they say, “Do you mind giving us a donation?” What is this? Is Christianity like that?

Many times, when someone comes to me for counseling, I get the feeling that he feels really cheated, because when he was asked to raise his hand to receive Jesus, he was simply told that God’s gift was there and everyone just had to open his hands and receive it. So in all good faith he said, “Well, okay. Eternal life is a free gift. Who cares to object to a free gift? You tell me to raise my hand, sign my name on the dotted line, and confess my sins; I agree to that. You give me a present and I accept that, and then suddenly, you tell me it’s not free.”

He feels cheated. He is told that becoming a Christian means peace and joy and all this, and when he goes out, Satan hits him with everything. He comes out with one bump here and another bump there, a black eye here and swollen jaw there. “You said when I become a child of God it’s free, and look what happened to me! I’m a casualty. Why didn’t you tell me this before?”

We won't be able to be Jesus' disciples if we don't count the cost

Notice that the Lord Jesus doesn't preach in this way at all. I have emphasized this before and I want to emphasize it again, the Lord Jesus does not preach like this at all! Do you hear him preach like this? No! He said, "If any man become my disciple, you have to fulfill these requirements. You sit down and count the cost." Three times he said, "If you don't do this, you cannot be my disciple. I tell you the truth, plain and simple."

Why can't we be his disciple without counting the cost? Can we just preach salvation as gift without ever mentioning these vital teachings of the Lord? Are we responsible in preaching the gospel in this way? Or shall we join the crowd not to read this passage and say, "Well, this passage is here but it's very mystical and hard to understand. Let's get on to the next chapter"? Oh no! We must face these words honestly because we realize that perhaps our concept of grace is entirely mistaken. We preach grace as a free gift that is unconditionally given to people and just hand it on like this. Then when things don't work out, when all the roof caves in on their spiritual lives, they wonder whatever happened to them. This Christian life does not work. They are disillusioned.

Two problems arise if salvation is free, involving no cost

1. Enormous drop-out rate

The Christian life works. It works like a bomb! It will explode and blow this world sky high with God's transforming power! But no wonder where this kind of teaching is propounded, the church has two great problems. One is the enormous drop-out rate of such churches which preach without any regard for what the Lord Jesus is saying here.

I was just talking with a brother the other day as we looked back at our church in London and trying to count who is left, who are the handful of survivors from that church. That church, which was once visited by revival, is left with a handful of survivors, some of whom are not even active anymore in the Lord's work. They are just crawling to church on a Sunday, if they are even getting that far! That is all that is left of that once-flourishing church back in those years.

How many are left from the hundreds that passed through that church in those two or three years alone that we were there, how many are left? A bare handful! They didn't survive. They are the spiritual casualties. If they had only got a black eye or a bump on the head, a swollen jaw, that wouldn't be so bad. They have been completely knocked out! They simply don't walk with the Lord anymore.

So we must look at this matter very, very carefully. That problem arises because they were not told this three-fold warning in this passage: "*You cannot be my disciple* unless you fulfill these requirements." We are going to suffer terrible casualties.

2. Lack power and dynamism

The second thing is for those who survive as so-called "Christians," still remaining to this day, one senses immediately there is a total lack of power, a total lack of dynamism. They are just hanging on by the skin of their teeth. Who knows? Given another five or ten years, even these will not survive anymore. Even these will go down. There isn't this overcoming power, these rivers of living water the Lord Jesus talked about in John 7:38 that flow out. There are hardly drops to be seen let alone the rivers.

Why? Because we have ignored the Lord Jesus' teaching right here, in the interest of some kind of dogma that we wanted to maintain, a teaching of grace which is only partly true, and that makes it all the more dangerous. A total lie is easily detected and rejected, but a

thing that is partly true, as I have many times pointed out to you, is dangerous precisely because there is a great element of truth in it, and so you swallow the falsehood with the truth.

What does the Lord Jesus want to say to us here?

After Peter sees the revelation of the glory of Jesus as the Christ, he falls

The Lord Jesus told Peter, "Flesh and blood hasn't told you about this, but my Father has revealed this to you." And hardly a moment after having had this tremendous revelation of Jesus, he collapsed. Then the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 16:24-26,

> "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

He goes on to tell Peter, "The problem that you have, which will not only result in this present collapse, but will result in a collapse later again, when you deny me three times, is because you still don't understand the message. And unless you understand this message, you will not only collapse, but you will go completely away from me because you won't be able to be my disciple."

These are vital things that Peter needed to understand. These are things we need to understand and implement in our lives.

Jesus' teaching on "hate" frightens us

How can it be that he who said that we are to love our enemies and our neighbor as ourselves, goes on to tell us that we are to hate our father and our mother? Now I find that the beauty of the Lord Jesus' teaching and the depth of his wisdom is that he speaks in such a way

that it shocks you immediately. Imagine these people who were with Jesus for three days, listening to his preaching. Just trying to absorb all that the Lord Jesus was saying was creating spiritual indigestion. But imagine when he is teaching, and you suddenly hear him say, "You are to hate your father and mother," you would say, "Did my ears deceive me? Is that what he said?" That is exactly what he said. How shall we understand this?

The Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of love

Let us go a little further back and try to understand that what the Lord Jesus' whole teaching is in the Sermon on the Mount, can be summed up in one single word which covers it all. The whole Sermon on the Mount is simply an exposition of love. That's all it is. Without being poor in spirit, you cannot love; without being merciful, you cannot love; without being pure in heart, you cannot love.

Then the Lord Jesus goes on to say, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things that I say?" If you ask the question, "What are the things you tell me to do?" There it is: to love. "If you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and you don't love, then I will say to you on that Day, 'Depart from me, you evildoers. I don't know who you are.'"

He doesn't recognize you because *the only mark he will recognize you by, is the mark of love in your life*. If you don't have that, you can go on saying that you are saved by grace, and sing at the top of your lungs, you can go into church holding the biggest Bible under your arm, and the Lord Jesus will say to you on that Day, "Depart from me, you evildoer. I don't know who you are because you didn't do the will of my Father."

The Lord Jesus said. "It is a command. You have no option in the matter. If you are my disciples, I command you to love." Therefore, if you call him "Lord," and do not fulfill that command, you and I prove to be a liar and a hypocrite, nothing more, nothing less than that

since his whole teaching is the focusing and channeling of God's mighty river of love.

Catch a vision of the plan of God's purposes in the world. God's plan is to pour forth his love into the world, a love that will transform, that will cleanse the sins from our hearts, that break our hard hearts down in repentance when we recognize and experience the might of his love. I'm sure that we see that. If you haven't experience it, I hope at least you will have seen it with your understanding.

The Sermon on the Mount teaches love, why does Jesus want us to hate?

Having said all this, we face this matter of hating. And notice what the Lord Jesus tells us to hate. We are to hate not only our immediate circle of relatives, but even our own lives! Now, the Lord Jesus deliberately uses this mighty word, and as some commentators have rightly seen, the Lord doesn't intend his words to be watered down. As one of the recent commentators such as Marshall in a very fine commentary in the Greek text of Luke says, "The Lord is deliberately expressing himself even more strongly for fear the disciples could not understand what he had said earlier."

If we say, "You should not love your father even more than me," we can swallow that; that is tolerable; we agree to those terms. "Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me" is putting it very truly, but somewhat weaker, because so long as we say, "Well, I don't love my parents more than you, but I love God and my parents on the same level, that will fulfill this." But here, the statement goes beyond that. It isn't enough to suppose that, "As long as I love God and I love the others no more than I love God, everything is fine." Here, it is put so much more strongly: "Unless you hate."

What I am talking about is this: The Lord Jesus teaches that God has an understanding of love that is far deeper than our understanding

of love, so that we realize we don't even begin to have an understanding of love. God's love is so powerful, and the Lord Jesus' teaching of love is so profound, that if only we could understand what God's love is, we will have no problem here whatsoever. And we wouldn't worry about diluting words.

Let me try to explain, and may God help me to explain. Sometimes, you can see a thing as clear as daylight, but when you are trying to communicate what you see, you don't really know how to explain it. But we shall try.

Peter's love is human love that is constricting, confining

Let me put it like this. What we call "love" is narrow, constricting and confining. And this so-called "love" is in fact, the very opposite of God's love. Let us take Matthew 16 alone and just ponder for a moment. When Peter said to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, forbid it that you should go to the cross! You must never die!", isn't Peter expressing love? He is now expressing his love for the Lord Jesus saying, "I don't want you to die. I don't want you to go and suffer." That is love, isn't it?

What does he get because he expresses his love? Instead of saying, "Peter, I understand that you love me. I understand. But I've got to explain a few more things to you, Peter." That would have been, and we would have thought is a loving approach. Instead, the Lord Jesus looks at Peter and says, "Get behind me, Satan!"

Peter would think, "I love you and that's what I get for loving you? Don't you understand, Lord, that I love you, so I don't want you to die, I don't want you to suffer? And you call me Satan? I'm not talking to you anymore! And you are a preacher of love? And you call me such a name? Finished!" If Peter stomped out of the place in a rage, I suppose we would be quite sympathetic to him, wouldn't we? What happens if you were saying to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, please don't die. I love you so much I can't bear to see you suffer," and the Lord Jesus

says, “Get behind me, Satan!” I think you will turn blue and red and green and all kinds of colors!

The shock is too much! Why “Get behind me, Satan!”? It’s because *there is a love which is satanic*. Can you call it love? I suppose you could, but that love is the very opposite of God’s love. You must catch the insight to see that this love is the very opposite of God’s love. It is the love that stands in the way of God’s love, that would constrict, choke, smother and so kill the operation of God’s love. You cannot even sympathize with this love because to do so would be to destroy the outgoing of God’s love. Can you understand that?

Human love is possessive. It’s constricting. Constricting means to grab hold of, to crush, to seize, to hold on to. Mary Magdalene still had that kind of love. When Jesus rose from the dead, she held onto his feet. And the Lord Jesus said, “Let me go. Put away this *possessive love*. A love which takes me away from others and keeps me just for myself is not of God.

The Lord Jesus’ words: “Get behind me, Satan! For you are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do,” (Mk. 8:33 NJB) was a hard lesson that Peter had to learn. And it was like performing an operation. The Lord Jesus, as it were, took out his spiritual knife and performed a deep incision into Peter’s heart. It cut open his heart in order to take out the cancer of a *selfish love*.

Human love is opposite of, is the enemy of God’s love

Human love is not just a weakened, diluted form in this context of God’s love, it is opposite of God’s love. Hence the word, “Satan.” The word means adversary. Human love becomes the enemy of God’s love. It is a frightening thing. Yet, so many Christians cannot distinguish between these two kinds of love. They confuse the one with the other. They think that this *philia*, this nice feeling is simply a sort

of a lower grade of *agape.* It's more or less the same thing, just slightly different. Here it isn't talking of *philia*, whatever the definition.

Once we focus on loving our father, mother, wife, children, they become a hindrance to the mighty outpouring of God's love. How can we become fountains of living water to the world when we are constricted, choked and crippled at the very outlets of our love by our selfish love? God cannot work through us! Hence what happens? You will slowly crumple up and die because God's vitalizing love is not able to operate in your life anymore.

Do you think that loving father and mother in the selfish way is the same as loving God? How many Christians think so! This is where the Lord Jesus brings down his surgical knife to perform this spiritual operation in his teaching. It's terrifying and painful. How many people would say, "Yes, I want to serve God, but I've got to love my children, I've got to love my wife, I've got to love my father and my mother, I've got to love them all. (And doesn't God want us to love them?) Therefore I can't serve him!"

Here the Lord Jesus says to you, "I don't accept that explanation."

> "At least let me go and bury my father."
>
> "Leave the dead to bury the dead. Go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (Lk. 9:60)

How can the merciful Lord speak like this?

Here is where we have a problem of comprehension. We have not known that boundless, unlimited, unconstricted love that does not see: "This is mine. Here I draw the line. Where is the line? The line is the fence of my house. Inside this line there is my father and mother, my wife and my children, my brother, my sister. My love is restricted to this area. A little bit might seep out beyond that fence but it is basically in here." We have drawn the demarcation line. God's love

cannot pour out from us. It is cramped, hindered, constricted, destroyed.

God's love is contrary to human nature, it's beyond our understanding

Can you understand this? If I'm not mistaken, I'm sure you have a very hard time understanding. Why? Because this is contrary to human nature. This is not of man, but of God. We cannot think like God! Man thinks in small little circles: "My this, my that." Just look at a Christian's prayer: "Bless my father, my mother, my children, my daughter, my dog, my cat, my car, my house. God bless them all." Is this called prayer? This is the sum total of our "Christianity." This is why we became Christians.

But you might say to me you want blessing: "I want blessing. God bless my father and my mother. Bless, bless all the time. Why do you say I shouldn't be so selfish?"

That is exactly what the Lord Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:23, "You set your mind on the things of man, not of God. Yours is a human love, Peter. And your human love would destroy me." That is what enemies do. The word "Satan" means enemy. What do enemies do? Enemies have one objective: to destroy you. The very love on the human level will destroy you." That is what Peter had to learn. You must change so completely that you understand that kind of love is not God's love. God's love has no boundaries. It knows of no limits of garden fences.

Matthew 12:46-50 tells us:

> While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For

> whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

You will think, "How can the Lord talk like this? I'm offended! That's not the way to talk to your mother! It's rude! Just tear this passage out of the Bible. I don't like this!" Haven't you felt like this? Surely you have! Be honest! You felt like that, didn't you? I felt like that. How can Jesus talk like that? It's embarrassing! Why? He wanted to teach us that there is a love well beyond these narrow confines. "Who is my brother? Who is my sister? All who do God's will. They are as precious, amazingly more dear to me than the brothers and sisters of the flesh, that is, my family. Go out into the world. Look throughout these nations in the world. There is my brother! There is my sister! There is my mother! There is my family!"

You cannot think like this, can you? If you can think like this, you have known the love of God that pours in. You have been transformed, you're not the natural man anymore, but a spiritual man who can look out to those people and say, "That's my brother, my sister. That one there who loves God, and does God's will is dear to me."

Human love limits to loving one's family

When your child asks you for a dollar, do you hesitate? No. "It's my child. Take a dollar."

When your wife asks you for money to buy groceries, you say, "How much do you want?"

"Forty dollars."

"Forty dollars? Okay." You realize if you don't give her forty dollars, you don't get your supper. Forty dollars it is.

But if a sister comes to you and say, "I need to buy some groceries, can you give me forty dollars?"

You'll say, "Who are you? Have I seen you before?"

"Yeah! I'm your sister in the church."

"Well, don't you have your own family? Why are you coming to me?"

We have drawn the line right there. Look around in the church. Do you really look at the person in front of you, or behind you, or next to you and say, "Hallelujah! My precious brother and my sister? Who said you're my brother? My brother's over there! The fellow with the glasses!" We are quite happy to have the words "sister" and "brother" in a diluted sense as courtesy titles. But do you treat him as a brother? Do you receive him into your heart as a brother? No way! Since when are you interested in his problem? You have enough problems of your own. You don't want him to drag his problems to you.

But if your immediate brother or sister had a problem, you would be interested. If your child had a problem, you would be even more interested. But if that fellow has a problem, you would say, "Forget it! Go and look for someone else. If you need a counselor, there is a pastor in the church. What is he for? Go and talk to him."

We are courtesy term "brother" and "sister." When it comes to really treating him as a brother or a sister, we have already drawn a line. God wants to change this. This is the point of this passage. We must change this narrow concept of selfish, grasping love.

There is a loving that gives the feeling of hate

I'm just now laying a foundation in the understanding of love. Let us go a step further. There is a loving that in the process of loving, there is a hating. You will say, "What do you mean? You're talking enigma now – loving, hating."

Let me explain to you. Try to get that for a moment: God *so* loved the world that he kept his Son to himself. That would make very good

reading of John 3:16. God *so* loved the world so desperately that he seized his beloved Son and held on to him. You will say, "What are you talking about?!" "*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son*."

If you had fifteen sons, and you give one, you would say, "That's good. I've done my duty to my country. That one died in the war. I still have fourteen others, but at least I gave." If you have only one son, one child, you would say, "No sir, I love my country a lot, but son is son. Blood is thicker than water."

The Father giving his Son is hate

Can you understand that love in the Father giving the Son? Can you really understand it? In loving us, he hates his Son. What do I mean by "hate"? You must understand one thing about the word "hate" here. Hate has nothing to do with a feeling. The Lord Jesus is not saying, "Look at your father and mother and work up a hatred. That is the way to be my disciple. If you don't go and glare at your father, grind your teeth and hate him, you're not my disciple." That's nonsense!

Hate here has nothing to do with emotions. And when he says you hate your life also, you will say, "'Hate your own life'? When you hate your own life, you commit suicide. I'll go home and I'll hang myself!" "Hate" has nothing whatever to do with a feeling. It has to do with is an action, a commitment, a giving.

Let's ask ourselves again: Haven't you sometimes thought of the Lord Jesus hanging upon the cross for so many hours, in agony, pain, and suffering? His tongue swelled up in his mouth as happens to people who get crucified, and the blood dripped away from his hands. And the sin of the world was upon him as he agonized. Haven't you had the feeling: How can God do this to his Son? No father would do that to his son. How can God hate his Son so that he let him go through all this? I can't stand it! Now this is what I meant. There is a

loving which makes hating necessary, not in the sense of a feeling, but in the sense of giving. I implore you to understand.

God loves mankind, so he has to give us his Son!

There is a loving which can only be fulfilled in a hating. Even if that hating, that giving hurts you to the core of your being; it stabs into your heart like a sword, exactly as the prophet said to Mary, "This child of yours who is born is set for the rising and falling of many. And a sword shall pierce through your own heart." (Lk. 2:34-35) She would stand there and watch her son die on the cross, slowly but surely, with a sword piercing through her heart.

If a sword pierced through Mary's heart, I beg of you to understand what kind of sword went through the Father's heart as he watched his Son die! As the heavens darkened and the earth shook, what kind of a sword went through the Father's heart? Can you understand that pain of a father giving his son? Which of us have given a son or a daughter anywhere? We don't understand the pain. God, in loving us, had to forsake his Son. *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Mt. 27:4; Mk.15:34) Why? In loving the world, God had to forsake his Son. There was no other way.

We forsake our family to serve God

As I say, there is a love which can only be fulfilled in hate. This word "hate" here, in fact, in the Hebrew has the sense of forsaking. It has nothing to do with an emotional feeling. It is a turning away from, and in the very turning away, there is pain. We turn away perhaps, with tears in our eyes, with suffering. But we must forsake them if God's love is to be poured forth through us. There is the cost.

There is the cost to count. Can you stand it? The Lord Jesus says to us very gently, very understandingly, because if anyone understands us, the Lord does. He says, "I truly know how difficult it is. If you can't do it, just leave it. Don't even start because you cannot be my

disciple. Don't start building a building that you can't finish. Don't fight a war at the end of which you have to surrender. What's the point of fighting a war? You don't start a war in order to lose. You start a war in order to win. If you are going to surrender at the end, don't even start the war. And if you are going to start building a tower which you cannot finish, then at least have the wisdom not to start it."

Jesus cannot lower the condition for us to be channels of God's love

The Lord Jesus is very understanding but he cannot lower the condition. Why? I hope by now you understand why. It's because ***you and I are called to be the channels of God's love in this world***. There is what it means by "Out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water" (Jo. 7:38-39). That is what we are called to, not just to drink rivers of living water, but to become fountains of living water. In order to become that, every hindrance must be removed. That constricting selfishness which prevents the outflowing of God's love must be removed.

Discipleship is not just a call for our own salvation, for our own blessing, but in our being blessed, we become a blessing to others. In our receiving the water of life, we become a fountain of life for others. A Christian who lives solely for himself and for his own salvation, to get a reserved seat in heaven, doesn't begin to understand what Christianity is about in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. You don't begin to understand what Christianity is about. Christianity is not about getting a reserved seat in heaven. It is about becoming a fountain of life for others here and now. God is looking for channels of blessing. He gives you the water of life. He satisfies your innermost being with that life. And having filled you, the living waters may flow forth from you!

Remove every obstacle to let God's love flow forth

Therefore there is a love that involves hating. In my being able to fulfill the condition of discipleship, if God's love is to flow forth boundless and free from me, the little fountain that I am, I must remove every obstacle to it. I must not draw any lines. I must not say here is the limit of my love. I must not say I will only love my father and my mother, my wife, my children. I cannot serve God because I have to love these people.

I ask you to judge for yourself what the Lord is saying here. I ask you to examine whether what I say is true or not. If what I say is not true, reject it. Just tell me what the Lord Jesus means. If you can understand better what he says, tell me what he says.

There is a time which comes, and with tears in our eyes if need be, we have to say goodbye – goodbye to father, goodbye mother, and if necessary, even goodbye wife, goodbye children. God bless you. I shall ever love you to the end, but my love cannot stop at you. It must flow out there, well beyond the confines.

A new depth of love comes from forsaking human love

Now, there is one more thing that is exceedingly wonderful about this. When God gave his Son such that in loving the world, he had to forsake his Son, can you think how much deeper will be the love between Father and Son thereafter? Can you understand it? Can you perceive what new depth of love—if we may reverently put it that way—would be between the Father and the Son when they meet again, when he rises to the right hand of the Father? What new depth of love! As a result of this forsaking, new love comes into being.

I speak of these things from experience. In hating my parents, in the sense of my forsaking them, I never loved them more deeply than at that moment. Can you understand that? When I first stepped forth

to serve the Lord, my family was up in arms! They were furious about it. I had forsaken them. I had hated them in this Biblical sense of hate. Yet, had I not forsaken them, had I not hated them, I wonder whether to this day, they would have come to God. In other words, it was in the very pain of this forsaking, in the very pain of losing that I gained them. If you lose your life, you will find it. In losing your parents, you will gain them. In losing the Son, the Father gained the Son in a new and deeper way. When you take a seed and you throw it into the ground, you feel that you have lost it, haven't you? But in the losing of that seed, that is precisely where you gained it many fold back.

My mother had rejected me because she felt that I had forsaken her. Yet years later, when she came to God and knelt down with me, and the tears ran down her face, I realized she had understood that in that action of rejecting her, I had never loved her more dearly. I had done that very rejection precisely with the intention that not only she would be blessed, but that beyond her, she would receive blessing by a kind of returning wave. In other words, as God's love pours out from you in widening circles, what you will find is that your love becomes purer and deeper, and that when you love your parents with that kind of love which they may think to be forsaking or hating them for the moment, they will in due course discover that love was deeper and more powerful than anything they have ever known.

My mother began to realize that in my rejecting her, I had come to love her with a new kind of love, no longer the selfish, possessive love, but the love of God which gives itself for others. Even when I said goodbye to her, when I had to forsake her, I said to my mother, "I have to leave you. I have to forsake you. But I tell you one thing, and I promise you one thing: as long as I have one bowl of rice, you will have one bowl of rice to eat. As long as I have one dollar, you'll have one dollar. As long as I have something to wear, you'll have something to wear."

Now I am loving her with God's self-giving love. From now on, she began to realize that I was loving her with a new kind of love, even if she felt rejected for the moment. I had cut the links of human love. I was now loving her with a divine love, a love that would refuse to be constricted only to her. However, because of its overwhelming power, it would include her as well, but go beyond all these confines which constricted God's love before. Do you understand this? That is something wonderful! That is why my mother knelt down with me that day, as the tears poured down her face.

I thank God that he gave me the courage to hate her in the Biblical sense, to forsake her, in order that I may gain her.

You lose what you try to gain, but gain eternally what you lose for God

That is the mystery of the whole thing. If you try to save it, you will lose it. What you lose for God, you will gain. That is what the Lord Jesus just said in Matthew 16:25, and in those parallel passages. Can you understand the mystery? God will give it back to you. Rather like Abraham when God said, "Give me your son." He drew out his knife to kill his son. He hates his son! He is going to kill him! And God gave him back to him. He showed it in a sign that what you lose you gain. What you had kept, you would have lost.

Do you realize that if Abraham had refused to offer his son, he would have had no son? What he had not offered he would have lost. God would have taken his son away from him, and all the promises would have ceased because of his disobedience. But in giving of his only son, and thinking, "How can God's promises be fulfilled, seeing that all my promises are in my son?", he obeyed. How can God's promises be fulfilled? Hebrews 11:19 says he believed that God would even raise his son from the dead to fulfill them. Therefore he pulled out his knife.

You must forsake the carnal love in order to have the spiritual love

No one can understand the feelings that went through Abraham's heart. You see there is a loving which must even find expression in this forsaking. That is spiritual loving. *You must forsake the carnal love in order to have the spiritual love*. That is to put it as simply as possible. You must forsake the selfish love in order to be able to love as God loves.

Hence the further condition as it says here: "Unless a man hate his own life." Why? Because we would absorb such little love as we have into ourselves. We would stop God's love from flowing forth until a man hates even his own life and says, "I finish with my life no matter what it is! My job, my prospects, my this, my that, everything goes!"

It says of the disciples, "They loved not their life unto death," in Revelation 12:11. They are given the crown of life, eternal life because they love not their life. But if they had loved their lives, they would not get the crown. In saving it, they would have lost it. In losing it, they gained it. Here is the beauty of it all.

You must learn to love others with God's love

I hope that you can begin to understand something of the depth and preciousness of this truth. I don't know how well I have been able to put across what I see so clearly by his grace. I only pray that God will enable you to see what the Lord Jesus is saying here. Unless you remove every barrier from your life, the constricting love that holds you in, that constricts and confines the outworking of God's power and love, *you cannot be the Lord Jesus' disciple*. He never meant to have disciples who are always looking to their **own interest**, and justifying their concern for their **own interest** by saying that is what is expected of them as good Christians. That is nonsense!

You must learn to love your father and mother (wife, children, brothers and sisters) with God's love, no longer with your human love which is going to destroy them, which is going to constrict them, suffocate them. You must learn to love them with God's outgoing, transforming love. And one of these days you will see what that love will do in their lives.

I saw what God did in my mother's life when I renounced human love and determined to love my parents with God's love, which means also there are no boundaries. It doesn't stop at them. It goes far beyond them but includes them in it. Would to God that we understand, because unless you understand the Lord Jesus' teaching, unless you give yourself to love with God's love, unless you become a channel of God's love, unless you deny your self, you cannot be his disciple. It's not because he doesn't want to accept you, but because you cannot survive, because you cannot be a channel of his love. You cannot fulfill the divine purpose in your life. You are going to start building, but you will collapse at the end. You cannot finish. You are going to go to war, and you will surrender at the end, like so many Christians have.

You can only love others with God's love by God's grace

Let us look at one last thing. And there are so much more riches in this passage that we cannot look at now, because I have tried to only expound its central principle: ***Human love is in opposition to God's love***. Human love is not a complement or supplement to God's love. When we love with God's love, we are going against our human nature.

When you ask where does grace come in? That is exactly where grace comes in. We cannot do any of these things. We cannot do it except for God's transforming grace. That is the preaching of grace according to the Lord Jesus. Grace is not a free gift that you can put

into your pocket and do what you like with it. No! Grace in the Bible, is God's free gift of power to you to do what you could never do in your own strength.

I cannot hate my father and mother. I cannot! I only know how to love my father and mother in this human, selfish way. I only know how to love my children in this way. I only know how to love in this way. How can I love with God's divine love, with this outgoing, vast, boundless love? I cannot do this. There is where grace comes in, to make all this possible. God's power, God's Holy Spirit—which is the gift of his grace—comes into our lives and enables us to do, what left to ourselves we could never do. That is redeeming and transforming grace, redeeming us from the bondage of self, the bondage of sin. That is glorious grace! The grace of God that comes in, breaks the chains of selfishness asunder, the power of sin removed, enabling us to do what by ourselves we could never do.

God gives all grace to Christians who love with his divine love

As Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." His grace is sufficient to enable me to do this.

The gospel is either supernatural or it is nothing. It is supernatural because it is God's mighty, grace-filled power operating through our lives. There is the wonder of grace! People look at you and say, "Now I can see a Christian. I can see that no man left to himself could ever do these things, but I now see God's power manifested in his life. He can love in this way, he can do these things by God's power."

There is grace! Grace upon grace! He will supply it to you as you need it. Do you need some more? You will get some more. Do you need some more? You'll get some more. **All you have to do on your part, is not to allow these hindrances of selfishness cripple the outworking of his grace**. You will become a channel of his grace. You don't just receive grace; grace pours forth from you, going forth

from your life, like light, like salt, transforming all that it comes into contact with.

I pray to God that you will perceive these wonderful things of God's redeeming, saving, transforming grace. There are so many more riches in this passage but we must close. But I hope this vital principle has become clear to your mind. If not, I beg of you to continue to meditate upon it until the sun rises upon your heart and fills your whole being with light.

Let us be quiet now before God in prayer.

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Sermon by Eric H.H. Chang and edited by Winnie W.Y Yee.
Picture by Bentley C.F. Chan using Google Gemini.