

## Natural Affections Are Good

Amen. Let us turn to our sermon text, 2 Timothy 3. 2 Timothy 3, verse 3. To give context, I'll go ahead and read the first two verses. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come, for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, or literally without natural affection. Let us pray. Lord God, as we delve into a theme, a biblical, a natural law, truth, Lord, that is being lost more and more, I think, or at least forgotten, may God strengthen us in this resolve to follow your Word to flee this sin of being unloving or having no natural affection towards our fellow men, especially those near to us, and our actions, our thoughts, or, Lord, our words.

Father God above, in this matter, nevertheless, may we see it in the context of the Gospel and the truth that you have brought us into a new relationship so that we can exercise such various types of love and, Lord, the confidence that you have loved us with an everlasting love through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen. It is noteworthy that love is mentioned five times in Paul's list of perilous sins here.

That is, over a quarter of the sins listed have this explicit connection, whereas other ones have perhaps a more implied connection to each other or even to this, like being a traitor is clearly something, what, unloving. The misuse of love is mentioned positively as of love of self, love of money, and then thirdly, lover of pleasures, and you can, of course, see how a lot of that even overlaps with each other. It is mentioned negatively, that is, love, as those not being lovers of God.

They are lovers of pleasure rather than And then here, fifthly, simply unloving or, again, more precisely, I think, to bring out the implication of what this means, without natural affection, without natural affection or natural love, we can call it, because it is another one of those Greek words for love. Unloving, as the English here comes across as rather broad and vague description. What exactly does it mean to be unloving? And nevertheless, it's still a serious sin.

It may not be specific or detailed enough, but we know and can think of many instances in which we ourselves or others around us have been so bad towards us or towards one another that the first thing that comes to your mind is how unloving of them. But knowing the Greek word, I hope, which is an English word found up to mid-century, last century, wow, helps flesh out the details here. The word is storge, s-t-o-r-g-e.

It's there in the Collins Dictionary. It's there in the Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary. I have a huge, it's like a dictionary at home from the mid-century.

And it was still used at the time. Now it's considered archaic, but it became its own English word, whereas agape still really isn't as such. We recognize it as a straight, as a Greek word.

This is a Greek that's now our own word that's no longer used, unfortunately. And the word storge means affection for those near you, especially kin and family, those close to you and

otherwise. Or in this case, the lack of that, right? A storge, you can hear that from the a word or the without or against.

Whereas the word agape emphasizes preciousness, if we could focus down to one word, as B.B. Warfield does, and the word philea centers around pleasantness. And of course, there's a domain and usage of the word. It can even go into friendship and even translate a kiss at times.

This word storge highlights a natural love, like the love of a mother nursing a child. It is an instinctual affection that describes the underlying type of relationship between parents and children, families and relatives, even communities of people and national bonds of patriotism. Such, quote, affections extend far beyond the relation of mother and young, writes C.S. Lewis, or says, no, he wrote it, I listened to the audio, sorry.

This warm comfortableness, this satisfaction in being together takes in all sorts of objects. It is indeed the least discriminating of loves. It can exist between a clever young man from the university and an old nurse of his, though their minds inhabit different worlds.

The child will love a crusty old gardener who has hardly ever taken notice of him and shrink from a visitor who is making every attempt to win its regard, her regard. But it must be an old gardener, one who has always been there, the short but seemingly immemorial always of childhood. He has, I think, a very beautiful way of describing Storge in his book.

Since it always includes such a wide array of natural relationships, it is not associated with feelings in the way other loves may be associated with. It is closer to an obligation mixed with comfort and commitment due to familiarity and closeness. Or, as one Christian professor described it, Storge is the love of solidarity with those around us, especially those near to us.

Further, as such, that when it is missing, people immediately recognize the problem. We see that even if you don't love someone the same way as a friend or a family member, you may not have agape or phileia love towards somebody, we still nevertheless expect proper actions towards one another, even to a stranger. There is a natural relation we all have with mankind that to treat someone like dirt is to be considered inhuman.

And this is why we wince when we see on TV or on the Internet an innocent stranger halfway across the world get brutally mugged. That's the furthest extent of Storge. Interestingly, the word Storge is not in the Bible as such.

You already heard it before. It's the negation of Storge here and the other text in Romans 1, that long list of sins of the world. It's a Storge, literally without natural affection.

It can be translated as loveless or inhumane sometimes. That this word is merely a negation instead of a new word for a sin. Because you don't have that with agape or anti-agape or anti-phileia.

You have it here with Storge. It's quite interesting. And I think it's probably due to the fact that such a sin readily leads to so many other transgressions.

For to be without natural love to anyone around us is the first major step to the breakdown of peace and stability. Because after all, we don't have to have agape for just any person in the world, nor even phileia. You can't be friends with everybody.

But there should be at least a Storge. That's a bare, minimal kind of love. Nevertheless, as I think you will see over time in the sermon, a very significant love.

Let us look into this type of love more carefully, trying to discern the Lord's will for us and encourage us through bad examples and good examples, especially I pray, to continue on practicing natural affinity but in a Christ-like way.

## **Natural Affections and God's Law**

The first point, natural affections and God's law. Again, natural affection here or natural love.

Affection for those near you, especially kin, family, in-group preference and the like. It's a love of preference. So I had to come up with several P words or something like that to align as a pastor my thinking.

And I call this the love of preference as opposed to what pleasantness, phileia, or preciousness, agape. Preference. Why preference, pastor? Insofar it takes priority over the other loves, as I said, you may not have agape for somebody or phileia or friendship.

But you ought to have at least bare, minimal humanity, we would say, human love or compassion of some sort, the stranger on the side of the road. We see this especially in family emergencies. You have a friend.

You have someone perhaps precious to you, but you have a family member, you drop that, you go help them. Especially if it's like your father, you know, a closer family relative. That's storgy.

Because your father may be someone you don't even like. But you still have what? Storgy affection and indeed responsibility towards him. This preference makes sense because of the demand of ordered loves.

The long tradition, not only a Christian, but a natural teaching of morality. We must prioritize our relationships because we are finite and only have so much time, money, and energy. That's all there is to it.

Your spouse and children first, and close friends or family friends, you may say. And even if you don't particularly like them, as I pointed out, you still have to have this kind of storgy towards somebody. Warfield favorably quotes the following, storgy does not, quote, quote, does not denote a passionate love or disposition, not a longing after something that takes our heart captive and gives our effort a distinctive goal.

It designates rather the quiet and abiding feeling within us, which resting on an object as near to us, a person, he's writing like a theologian, recognizes that we are closely bound up with him or her or it, the relationship, and takes satisfaction in that recognition, end quote. Of this sort, he is love to parents, to wife and children, to our close relations particularly, and then to our country and our king, or in this case, our leadership in America. And so as such, storgy being called a natural love, it is built into creation, specifically the higher order animals have it.

That's some of the examples you'll see in historical usage of the Greek word in that, back during biblical times. They would talk about storks taking care of their kids, storgy, that kind of thing. We would see that with apes and the like.

Unbelievers take care of, of course, their young. Sometimes, again, I'll point out, even better than Christians in some cases. And the young take care of their parents, or expected to.

In rank pagan cultures, they have no Christian influence. How is that possible? Because although fallen in sin, they have not so fallen that they don't know what right or wrong is. The question is, will they do it, of course.

B.B. Werfel again, the love which constitutes, storgy is the love which constitutes the cement by which any natural or social unit is bound together, and which is due from one member to every such unit to another. That's very broad. It's like, Pastor, why are you having all these quotes? He's saying so many different things, because it does cover everything in life.

Again, at a bare minimum, we should have it, have this kind of natural love, which may not have much passion behind it, but it's enough to make us to move to help or encourage or rejoice with one another as a nation, as a community, and even as a church, we'll see at the end here. And so as natural, it's inbred into us, and it differs, as you already heard, from others around us, and I won't go into that. Being built into nature, part of the moral law of God, therefore.

It makes sense of all kinds of things in life, and indeed, in the Bible, because it emphasizes the close-knit nature relationship we have with one another, again, especially, it starts out first, right? The definition, if you heard, is natural affection towards those close to us, especially or like family, and then it works its way out from that center, concentric circles. Not the other way around, that's why I'm, in today's context of defining the word inhuman, for example, or unloving here, I can see it being misused so much. Where the emphasis in the word is first home and hearth, and then you work your way out from there.

And every definition and usage of it implies that behind it. So you can use it, again, for king and community, but that's because they're more close to you than another nation or another king, obviously. So it's in the Old Testament Jewish community, that's part of how God put it together.

They weren't just an Old Testament church, they were an Old Testament nation. And nation has been, up until modern times, more or less, extended, extended, extended families. Not

purely, it was never been pure, you always have a mixture in marriages and whatnot, to be sure.

And it was balanced, therefore, in the Old Testament, that natural, store-gained love for each Jew, with what? Those clear commandments to love whom? Those outside your close-knit circle, i.e., the stranger. Not treat them as though they're exactly the same, they had certain rights and restrictions, as you know, in the Old Testament, but they still had something better than just, well, you're just another dog, I'm just going to ignore you, you know, inhuman action towards them. And again, Paul, in 1 Timothy 5, insists upon it, what? Take care of your family first, your household, and those near you.

The church is not called to do that. You are, he tells us. And so, storge is there in 1 Timothy 5, although the word is not.

Clearly, the idea is there. And the Gospel, as we know, does not annul the law of God. Romans 3.31. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not.

On the contrary, we establish the law. It's established because Christ came to what? Die for us, breaking the law, yes, even for being inhuman, unloving, and without natural affection to our own parents, perhaps, our own family members, or whatever the case may be, our own nation. Christ upheld the law by dying for it, not redefining the law.

Then you don't have the Gospel anymore. So, Christ came to save us, and bring us in good relationship with God, who's no longer our judge, but now is our Father. And His law, which is now a household law, because we are adopted into His kingdom, and are now royalty, and have the royal law of God upon us, and it's a new heart.

So, He reinforces the truth of God's law, in particular here, the law of love, which is nowhere in the Ten Commandments. Right? We have the summary of the Ten Commandments. Love the Lord your God.

Love your neighbor. And we know in the New Testament, the word love, they use different ones to describe how you love your neighbor, for example, to emphasize different aspects of it. And same with this, with this idea of storgi.

It's implied in the Ten Commandments. It's built into nature. And it's required as a bare minimum kind of love.

And again, if anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. He does not come up with excuses. Paul's like, you know, it's not okay, I don't like my dad, I don't like my cousin, I don't like my uncle, I don't like my grandma.

It doesn't matter, you take care of them. That's what you're called to do. That's called storgi.

So it's, therefore, an important thing. And it's part of our calling as believers to live in accordance to what God has written on our hearts, but made more clear in the word of God. Which is to say, storgi is assumed in the Bible, brought here by negation, this is a bad thing.

But the positive isn't really explicitly unpacked the way agape is, for example. Love one another, Christ says. Or John, the gospel, the apostle of love.

He's got the whole book of the epistle there, 1 John, talking about love, love, love. Or storgi. John's like, if you don't have storgi, why am I having this conversation with you? That's the implied understanding is so embedded into the human condition and the understanding of the Bible.

I want to highlight this point for us. But again, it's there. If the A is here, then not A is here.

If storgi is wrong, clearly storgi is good. A storgi without it is a sin, which it is, that having it is a good and proper thing in a Christian context. It's the basis, therefore, of which commandment? The fifth.

It must be. You may not find your family very precious. They may be scoundrels.

And therefore, often in that case, when it comes to someone close to you, they're not very pleasant to be around. You're not very friendly with them. If they get in trouble, if they're sick, if your father needs help, who's going to change his bedpan? You are.

That's storgi. Or at least you ought to have that. Honor your parents.

That's what we're called to do. It's the basic social unit, as we know, of society, not the individual. That's a modern, made-up approach to anthropology or the study of man and what mankind is.

We are individuals in community. And thus, charity, instruction, discipline, all begin in the home. It's a small church.

It's a small school. It's a small government preparing the next generation to be adults. And that includes what holds the family together at a minimum.

I hope you have pleasantness. And I hope you have preciousness in your family. But you got to have that storgi, that natural fondness, love, affection, care that you're like.

As much as they do crazy things and they even call me hateful names, I have to take care of them. That's that storgi. And as such, the fifth is the most basic of all human interrelations.

And I would argue behind that, that kind of love is the most basic of all loves and of all humanity, because it's the glue that holds the family together. The neighborhood, the business, the club, and the government all involve some sort of natural affection or closeness. You have co-workers.

You want nothing to do with. You'll never be friends with them. But as much as they may curse you and make fun of your God, if they get stuck in the side of the road, you will help them.

That's storgi. Feelings have nothing to do with it. I hope there's some feelings, but not really what's important here.

So at the broadest, natural love is included, of course, the broadest circle, all humanity. In the example I gave, you see someone get mugged ruthlessly on TV. Guy's a complete stranger.

In fact, he may hate you and not want anything to do with you. But you're like, I wouldn't want to wish that on my worst enemy, for example. That's storgi again.

I hope you're seeing, I'm giving all these little examples. It's everywhere, and it should be everywhere. This connection that we have, because naturally we're all humans in the broadest sense, but the particulars are more important.

That's why I was highlighting, because that's the definition there. It especially begins at home. This is why we eschew unnecessary wars.

We know we're supposed to do unto others as we have them do unto us. And we also prioritize family over strangers. All this is rooted in this kind of natural affection.

## **Neglect of Natural Affections**

The neglect of natural affection is the second point. The neglect of natural affections. There in Mark 7, which I won't go into, and 1 Timothy 5, which I will.

Mark 7 is the example of them, Corbin, using gifts and not helping their families. 1 Timothy 5, which I did go over. I'm going to go over Mark 7. I said it backwards.

Mark 7.10, for Moses said, honor your father and your mother, and he who curses father and mother, let him be put to death. But you say, if a man says to his father or mother, whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban. That is a gift to God.

Whatever profit you may have received from me, I could have given you this money. You could have had a nice retirement. You could have had good doctors, a live-in nurse.

You could have lived with us. I could have supplied you. But no, no.

I'm more holy than that. And I took that money, I took that resources, and I gave it to what? God and the church. Or in this case, the temple.

They're super holy. That's what's going on in that text. It's the famous text about false worship there in the prior verse.

And he continues on denouncing their false worship, and here denouncing further false worship, because they thought it was more holy. I'm really fulfilling the first commandment, the first table, excuse me, even the first commandment, by taking these things that you could have had profit from me, as a father and mother, and calling it a gift to God, and therefore you don't get to see it. It goes elsewhere.

And Christ denounces them. You can't use the first table to excuse sins of the second, is what he's saying. God's never designed it that way.

Then you no longer, verse 12, let him do anything for his father or mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have handed down. So, of course, he hates the tradition that undermines the law of God. But the particular tradition here is clearly a lack of natural compassion for their family.

And instead of admitting that sin and repenting, they double down and take those resources or whatever it was that could have been profitable to my mother and my father and give it to God instead. That's clearly without natural affection. And doing it in the name of God makes it what? Doubly worse.

I'm super holy. Look at me. You're not taking care of your family.

It's more important I love God. That's why you hear me over and over again, because I've run across this in my existence as a Christian and even as a pastor. I want specifics when I hear someone say, I love God and I love my neighbor.

What does that mean? We can all say that. But to love God means you fulfill the second table as well. It's detailed.

And this is part of the details. Other examples, that's the biblical example of without natural affection towards those close to you. Dodging it.

Other examples today of dodging or neglecting natural affections. Lots of examples in the government, city, organizations, and peoples who put more money, time, and effort towards strangers or foreign countries, even policies in that regard, instead of local and those underneath them is one broad example. Destruction of historical monuments like during the 2020 riots is another example of being not only without natural affection.

Clearly, if you're missing something morally, it's going to be filled in with something else, isn't it? A sin. If you're without natural affection, something's going to fill that affection in. It's tearing down monuments and hating our nation.

Or the classic, I call it classic, telescopic philanthropy that came out, I like that language there, from the late 1800s, describing those who were quick to send money across the pond, across the world, more than helping the poor in their own backyard like in late England there with all the poor kids in the street working in the Industrial Revolution because it felt better to help strangers across the world. It was a known problem back then. I have a little political picture of that.

Or another example is, of course, a traitor. One of the words here in this list of sins, clearly a traitor, is someone without love towards their fellow men, their country, without natural affection. They don't have to weep over the American flag, but they shouldn't fight against it either.

That is good right policies, right? Defend your nation. They're undermining it. They're traitors.

You can be, of course, a traitor of your family. Betraying their trust over and over again and showing yourself untrustworthy as a form of being a traitor to the family. Again, that's why without natural affection covers all kinds of things that could fill that hole.

In this case, them acting it out in a very dangerous way. But I want to specify a few things here perhaps we've not thought about. Every day pastors, for example, are told to sacrifice their time for evangelism because you don't want to miss that one person that could go to heaven.

And so they neglect their family. They neglect their devotionals, instruction, family time because they're doing the work of the Lord. It's a variation of what? Mark 7 where the Pharisees were like, it's Corban.

I'm giving it to the Lord and to the church. Isn't this special? You're neglecting your family and that's somehow holy now? I don't think so. That's wrong.

And pastors above all in terms of leadership in the church should be an example of taking care of their family and not losing their time and resources to help their family while they can also do as they are able other things in the ministry. Because they are called to be one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence, which takes work. If he never sees the family, that's a problem.

And of course not just the pastor, but just our own families. And it's not going to be in the name of the first table. It could be for other reasons.

Preferring to keep all the monies and resources for ourselves instead of helping our children and our grandchildren. Paul tells them to build up resources for their grandchildren, children. In fact, it's there in the Bible.

We saw that in the me generation of the eighties, they called it and never disappeared. It just mutated over time. And when the newer generations were even more me centered, it seems to me.

Forget my family. It's all about my individual rights and freedoms. Speak politically there or socially, my own preferences and my joys and my parents, my family, my church is just putting a crimp on my lifestyle.

That's what they're told over the movies, the advertisements. You've seen it. You probably went through some of it, especially when you're younger.

You see this stuff. You're like, what's this? It's not what my family's like, but they keep promoting it. And after a while, you just swimming in it.

You don't realize it. And that's what we have generation after generation, sadly enough here, not taking care of their family, but taking all their money and resources and the like and throwing it all away. Gambling is one good example.

Come home and dad gambled the house away. What the what? So there you have a what? A double sin. He stole the money, took the money that was rightfully theirs in terms of God saying, I gave you some resources, use it for your family.

You wasted it. And that shows a lack of natural affection that you would have, at least a basic instinct that why would you do something stupid like that? And so I think Astorgy undermines, describes a lot of other sins, a doubling layer of sins or triple layer of sins. There's an Astorgy behind a lot of this, unfortunately, it deals with your family.

So murdering your child, right? Abortion, a nice way of saying murder your child is murder. It's loveless or inhumane. But I will go even deeper than that.

It's without natural affection in the most heinous sort of way, because a mother and a child should have this kind of natural love and fondness for one another. That's so instinctual. And it is, that's why women who have abortions have high rates of depression.

They've known this for a long time, but we'll fix it. In fact, we'll make money off of women's depression and men's depression by giving you more drugs. Instead of simply outlawing murder, because they know in their heart of hearts, even animals don't do this as a typical rule.

The higher level animals take care of their young. And so that's a double sin, murder and being without natural affection right here.

## **Natural Affections and Everyday Life**

Natural affection of everyday life, number three, somewhere positive here for us.

As I finish up the sermon, I'm going to go over here, a short list of relationships, starting from the nearest, which is what the emphasis of the word storgie is, the nearest. Again, depending on the context, it could be love of your country. So that's nearer to you than love of Russia or Europe or something, whenever they're far away.

That's fine. Start with the family. Now the list of details here can differ.

Of course, you have personal preferences and practices, depending on your circumstances and the freedom that you have by God's providence and his word and applying natural affection for one another in your relationships. First one, family. And you can see a lot of this in one particular book of the Bible.

It talks a lot about family, short, pithy sayings. That's right, Proverbs. Proverbs 13.22, a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

So a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, not to foreigners' children's children, to give an example, or whatever the case may be. You only have so much money and time. Do you give it all to the church? Or you have your family and your grandchildren, and you know the answer, you first give to your family.

You see that there in 1 Timothy 5. You use your disposable income for those close to you, so you work longer hours. And that's why the man does this, because he wishes to help their family, help their family's family, the children's children, in fact, if they can. Help those close to them and the like, but especially the family.

A man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, of course, if he can, in God's providence. The blessings there are also in Proverbs, Proverbs 17.6. Proverbs 17.6, children's children are the crown of an old man, and the glory of children is their father. That's that what? Natural relationship.

And they have pride and joy, which is an expression of at least natural fondness towards your children, and towards your parents, and towards your grandparents. They're a crown, a jewel, this is exciting, this is good stuff, because that's how God designed it. Many may curse about their family, but natural affection is that glue that says, yes, that crazy uncle caused all kinds of problems, but he still needs help.

Friends, after most of our life, of course, is spent at home and with the family, at least it has been for a very, very long time, and even today, you still have that as kind of the default way of acting in America. Unfortunately, it's changing as people move away, and they're far away from their families. We spend time with friends.

We have a close circle of friends, and we have other friends that are less friendly-friendly, we just use the word friend in English, in my experience, it's kind of broadly anything that's not family. Close friend, we say, far away friend, or acquaintance, we may say someone who's kind of a friend, and we don't know much about them, but we're nice towards them, that kind of stuff. We have a circle of friendship, from those we know the least to those we know the most, those we do the least with, those we do the most with.

Keep it up, this is proper and good. You can't be friends with everybody, this is all there is to it, even in the Church of God. Don't let, if you end up in another church, pastors or leaders or books tell you, why don't you kind of show more love to one another in the Church of God? Well, maybe, that may be your particular problem, I grant that, but don't think you have to be the best friends with everybody, you just simply can't.

And so we spend more times with someone else, more than someone else, than other people. That's fine, you're not in sin. Community and church.

Here's one, I was going through my notes and examples, as you know, my one note, I keep a long collection over the several years now, 10 years at least, in some cases, of categories of what's going on in the world, for my daughter, for my grandkids, to see what's, what happened in real time, so I have my own newscast, basically, if I were to convert that

through AI, artificial intelligence. One of the things I have is a category of history. Unfortunately, most of my examples are negative.

There's just so much bad stuff going out there. I don't want to keep dwelling on that, obviously, but that's just where we are. But here is a good one I found in my notes.

Harvard decided, I think it was last year, or maybe earlier this year, Harvard is going to pay tuition for families making less than \$200,000 across the board. I was like, wow, that's impressive. They're not going to find you precious.

They're not going to find you pleasant. They're not, you're not best friends with you or anything like that, but that's a bare, minimal, storgy action, right? A natural affection saying, you know, we understand there are poor people out there. In fact, we have a lot of money.

They have billions of dollars, these universities. What are they going to do with it? I think they did a good thing here. I don't know the particulars, maybe I could be wrong, but stuff like this is a good example of community showing care for those near them and going above and beyond what you would normally do for others outside of those near you.

You do that. You go above and beyond people near you, and that's to be expected, and they're doing that. I'm not saying you should go to Harvard.

It may be terrible, probably as last I heard. The repeated calls in the New Testament, of course, have for us to love one another. They have this because they have so many people now that are not Jewish.

The Jews already had that natural love because they're basically a big extended family, a huge nation, or now a shrunk down nation by the New Testament era. But now that you have Gentiles, you have no what? Shared history, shared language, right? Shared customs. It's not there, and they get together in a church.

You can imagine the kind of friction that goes on there. That happens with us, and we have a lot in common already. And so this emphasis here on loving one another is to help the church grease the wheels, as it were, in the New Testament era.

We may need some of it. We may not need as much emphasis, depending on our locality and our church. Small town churches out in the countryside, they have multi-generational people there, and so they know each other for a long time.

That kind of natural love is already there in many ways, although they may not be always exercised. They may not need that repeated, but we'll need it as well, I think especially in the cities, because we have different religious backgrounds and upbringings before we became converted, for example, and different experiences, different cultures we grew up in. I have more of a southern background.

Romans 12.10 is another way of describing this. It's quite fascinating here. Romans 12.10. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love and honor giving preference to one another.

That's a pretty dense and very strong language. Kindly affectionate, as well with brotherly love and honor giving preference. The two words there, kindly affectionate, is actually a compound in Greek of kindly, phileia, and affectionate.

You know where this is going. Storgi. It's one word, like we have Philadelphia, which is the brotherly love in the same text.

Here we have phileia, storgi. God is saying, I think there, take that natural affection and bring it to the church. You may not even like some of the Christians around you, but you're still going to help them.

That's storgi. The nation and people, last of all, as a positive example, you could put this as one step away from humanity across the concentric circles. Your nation.

The last great stop before, beyond that, you're not going to really do much with anybody else in the world. This is how it's designed. It is a domain of storgi that still has practical effects for us today.

For loving ones, nation, of course, helps maintain unity and peace as opposed to, I don't know, civil war. Now, some try to claim being a Christian contradicts a love of nation. That is, I mean that in the best sense of patriotism.

I don't mean jingoism, which is a technical term I was taught in political science class that I took in college, to mean this, we would say idolizing your nation. No, no. We should not be blind to our shortcomings and our weaknesses and even our sins collectively as a nation.

But that doesn't change the fact that you love your nation any more than you're not blind, or you shouldn't be, to your family's sins, and yet you still love them. They'll argue, our home is in heaven. Okay, then why did you go home last night? Why did you go to that domicile with your family if your home is in heaven? Why do you take care of them if your home is in heaven? It's a misusing the word of God.

In our churches, I've seen it. Not just in evangelical churches. Like, what are you talking about? I can do both.

Isn't that complicated? I can have multiple loves, but they should always, always be under the love of God and Christ. That's the greatest love. When there's a contradiction, it's always God first.

It's always Christ first. It's always His word first. There's nothing wrong in having a natural fondness for our nation, for our community, for our state.

It is biblical, natural, good, and right. And Paul exercises this kind of love of nation, and of people without a nation in this case. In Romans 9.3, for I could wish that I myself were a curse from Christ for whom? My brethren.

Not for those in Turkey. Not for the Indians in America. Although, sure, he wants them saved like you would.

And you wouldn't want them to be tortured any more than Paul would. But his focus is what? On my own people, my brethren, the Jews. I want them saved.

So bad. That's not a wrong kind of love. And it's not special because somehow they're Jews and they get the exception.

All of us can do this. Christ came to save us, brothers and sisters, not just from the consequences of sins, but from the lies of the devil, the world, and the flesh. One of the more subtle and widespread lies I've been seeing over the years, I've been collecting all the evidence, is that instinctual love, that natural fondness and care for one another, especially those close to us, is considered wrong and somehow hateful.

And it is not. It's perfectly natural and even beautiful. Ask the mother, ask the child.

It's a rightly ordering of our loves. And God has put this here as a base for all of us. May we grow in natural affection with God, the greatest object of our affections.

And whatever love it may be, let us pray. Father God above, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the way you created us, that we can see the truth of a lot of these commandments of your word and here of natural love without the Bible.

We know it instinctively. We see it by practice or the lack of practice, especially God. And may, I pray, going over the biblical texts and the teachings and the practices and therein reinforce this truth upon us in a day and age that has, it seems to me, a growing problem with exercising and showing proper affection.

Father God, help us to repent if we are struggling with this in our lives. And otherwise, Lord, to be encouraged and strengthened to carry down, and even if possible, double down on our care for one another. We pray these things by the blood of our Lord and Savior.

Amen.