



[Matthew 24:12-13](#)

(12) And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

[Mark 12:28-31](#)

(28) Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (29) Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. (30) And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."* This is the first commandment. (31) And the second, like it, is this: *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* There is no other commandment greater than these."

New King James Version

The apostle John declares that [sin](#) is the transgression of God's commandments ([1 John 3:4](#), KJV), including the two great commandments Jesus spoke in [Mark 12:28-31](#). The word translated as "sin" literally means "to miss the mark." Combining these principles gives us a very broad definition of sin: *Sin is imperfectly loving [God](#) with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and imperfectly loving our neighbor as ourselves.*

[Romans 3:23](#) declares that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, all have sinned in the past, and in the present all fall short in reflecting God's love, which is a major part of His glory. Godly love does not have to grow cold for it to be shown imperfectly. It will be shown imperfectly when it is demonstrated by God's still-imperfect children. We all are in this state.

This is not to say that we should give up trying to perfect God's love. On the contrary, we have every responsibility to do our utmost to perfect it ([1 John 2:5](#); [4:12](#), 17-18). At the same time, it should not shock us when our spiritual brothers and sisters show God's

love to us imperfectly, for we are guilty of the same toward them—and toward God.

Perhaps we find ourselves in a situation where it appears that God's love in others is growing cold. Maybe we see God's standard of holiness being ignored or compromised, and some form of lawlessness is beginning to show up. We may see little evidence of sacrificial love, and relationships are beginning to be strained. What should we do?

There are two possibilities. The first is that our discernment is correct, and what [Jesus Christ](#) foretold in [Matthew 24:12](#) is coming to pass, perhaps not in its ultimate fulfillment, but at least in type. The second is that our discernment is incorrect, and that God's love is actually present and not growing cold, but we are having trouble seeing it.

If our discernment is correct, and we truly are in a circumstance where *agape* love is waning, Jesus has already indicated what He wants us to do. [Matthew 24:13](#) says, "But he who *endures to the end* shall be saved." When many are letting their relationships with God deteriorate, the emphasis is on patient, active endurance.

I Corinthians 13 gives a beautiful description of *agape* love, which parallels Jesus' exhortation to endure in several points. Verse 4 says that godly love "suffers long." It displays [patience](#) and endurance, even in the face of being loved imperfectly. Verse 7 adds that godly love "bears all things" and "endures all things." However, if we are not showing patience or endurance in response to imperfect love, then we are simply responding with carnality rather than with God's love.

Similarly, verse 5 says that godly love "thinks no evil." True love pays no attention to a suffered wrong, nor takes account of the evil done to it. It does not keep a running list of all the ways it has been offended or loved imperfectly. That, again, would be responding to imperfect love with carnality. So, if we find ourselves in the midst of a fulfillment of [Matthew 24:12](#), we really have our work cut out for us because we will have to endure patiently and continue to display God's love rather than allow our own *agape* to also grow cold in response.

Conversely, God's love may be present, but our discernment may be incorrect, and we are missing it by looking for *agape* only in one application. We may be continually waiting for a specific type of sacrificial love, and if we do not receive it, we may suppose that God's love is absent. However, we are not all the same in how we show love or how we recognize it. We may need to take a step back and look for facets of God's love that *are* present, rather than focusing on what may be absent.

In addition, given that human nature is still present within us, we also have to remember

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that nothing inhibits or damages our ability to see things clearly like focusing on the self. That is, we tend to evaluate whether God's love is present based on how we feel or how we are affected, rather than on objectively looking for God's spiritual workmanship in the overall situation.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:

[Is the Love of Many Growing Cold?](#)

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