

A Study on
Biblical
Love

12 Lessons

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2007

Senior High Studies

Fulfilling the Law of Christ

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Lesson One

"An Over-View of Love from Scripture"

In order to adequately study a subject in the Bible it is important to compile all the Scriptures that mention the subject and draw conclusions that harmonize all the passages. Often-times it is possible to group them under various topical headings, which we will attempt to do in this study. The purpose of this first lesson is to give a brief over-view of how Love is dealt with in Scripture. We will group our thoughts under seven headings that will give a comprehensive view about Love. It will not be possible to quote or read every reference in this lesson, but we will express the key thought about Love in the comments that will be made. It would be wise for the teaching to give a copy of this first lesson to each of the students in class for their own personal study.

I. God's Love is directed towards:

A. All mankind in general (Jn. 3:16; Tit. 3:4).

B. But in a special way towards:

1) His Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23-24, 26)

2) His disciples (Jn. 17:23)

3) His spiritual children (1 Jn. 3:1; Rev. 3:9)

4) Towards the nation of Israel (Deut. 7:7; 1 Kgs. 10:9; Ps. 91:14; Isa. 63:9; Jer. 31:3; Hos. 3:1)

II. Jesus' Love is directed Towards:

A. All mankind in general (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4; 5:2)

B. But in a special way towards:

1) His Father (Jn. 14:31; 15:9)

2) His disciples (Jn. 13:1)

3) His church (Eph. 5:25)

III. Deity's Special Love for Man:

A. Is given to the cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7)

B. Helps Christians to be more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37)

C. Gives everlasting consolation and hope (2 Thess. 2:16)

D. Will cause God to chasten man whom He loves (Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19)

E. This love should bring man to love God in return (1 Jn. 4:10, 19)

F. It should cause Christians to love their brethren (1 Jn. 4:11, 21)

IV. Man's Love is to be directed towards Deity:

A. God, the Father (Exo. 20:6; Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 30:6, 16, 20; Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30, 33; Lk. 10:27)

B. Jesus Christ, the Son (Jn. 21:15-17; 1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Pet.. 1:8; Rev. 1:5)

C. When we love God:

D. We also love His Son (Jn. 8:42)

- 1) We will be loved of God and Jesus and they will abide with us (Jn. 14:23)

E. When we love Jesus:

- 1) We will be loved of God (Jn. 14:21)
- 2) It will cause Jesus to love us and to be manifested to us (Jn. 14:21)

F. Man is to love Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8)

G. Man is called upon to choose whom he will love: God or Mammon (Matt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13).

H. Love for God and Jesus leads to:

- 1) Keeping His commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21; 1 Jn. 5:2)
- 2) Keeping His words (Jn. 14:23-24)
- 3) A rejoicing that Jesus has come (Jn. 14:31)
- 4) All things working together for good (Rom. 8:28)
- 5) Great reward (1 Cor. 2:9)
- 6) Being known of God (1 Cor. 8:2)
- 7) Receiving grace and mercy (Eph. 6:24; Exo. 20:6)
- 8) Receiving a crown of life if we endure (Jas. 1:12)
- 9) Heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5)
- 10) Love of brethren (1 Jn. 5:1)
- 11) God loving us (Jn. 16:27)

V. Man's Love is to be directed towards his Fellow-man:

A. Relatives:

- 1) Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, etc. (Gen. 22:2; 25:28; 37:3; Ruth 4:15; Matt. 10:37)
- 2) Wives are to love:
 - a) Their husbands (Tit. 2:4)
 - b) Their children (Tit. 2:4)
- 3) Husbands are to love their wives (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Col. 3:19; Gen. 24:67; 29:18, 20; Prov. 5:19; 7:18; S. of S. 1:4; 4:10; 8:7)

B. Good men (Tit. 1:8)

C. Self (Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31, 33; Rom. 13:8-9; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 5:28, 33; 2 Tim. 3:2; Jas. 2:8)

D. Neighbor (Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 10:18-19; Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31, 33; Rom. 13:8-9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8)

E. Enemy (Matt. 5:44-46; Lk. 6:27-35)

F. Those easy to love (friends) (1 Sam. 18:1; Prov. 17:17; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 7:5, 42, 47; Jn. 11:1, 5, 36; 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20; Rom. 9:13)

G. Brethren:

- 1) General command (Jn. 15:17; Rom. 12:10; 2 Cor. 11:11; 12:15; 1 Thess. 4:9; Tit. 3:15; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:23; 5:1; 2 Jn. 1, 5; 3 Jn. 1)
- 2) As Jesus loved us (Jn. 13:34; 15:12; Eph. 5:2)
- 3) Unfeigned (1 Pet. 1:22)
- 4) With a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22)
- 5) To do so is a way of **knowing** the following:

- 6) That we abide in light and not darkness (1 Jn. 2:10)
 - a) That we are children of God (1 Jn. 3:10-11)
 - b) That we have passed from death to life (1 Jn. 3:14)
 - c) That we are born of God and know God (1 Jn. 4:7-8)
 - d) That God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us (1 Jn. 4:11-12)
- 7) We show our love for God's children when we keep God's commandments (1 Jn. 5:2)
- 8) Not to be in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18)

VI. Things Man is to Love and not to Love:

A. To Love:

- 1) Life (Jn. 12:25; 2 Pet. 3:10)
- 2) Righteousness (Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:9)
- 3) Mercy (Mic. 6:8)
- 4) God's Salvation (Ps. 40:16)
- 5) God's Law (Ps. 119:97)
- 6) Instruction (Prov. 12:1)
- 7) Hospitality (Tit. 1:8)

B. Not to Love:

- 1) Exalted positions over others such as:
 - a) Chief seats in meetings (Lk. 11:43; 20:46; Matt. 23:6-7)
 - b) Greetings of men (Lk. 11:43; 20:46; Matt. 23:6-7)
 - c) Praises of men (Jn. 12:43)
 - d) Pre-eminence (3 Jn. 9)
- 2) Darkness (Jn. 3:19)
- 3) The World and things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:10; Jn. 15:19; Matt. 5:46)
- 4) Wages of Unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15)
- 5) Pleasures (2 Tim. 3:4)
- 6) A Lie (Rev. 22:15)
- 7) Money (1 Tim. 6:10)
- 8) Evil (Ps. 97:10)

VII. Admonitions, Characteristics, and Facts of Love:

A. Admonitions:

- 1) Follow after love (2 Tim. 2:22)
- 2) Walk in love (Eph. 5:2; 1 Cor. 14:1)
- 3) Put on love (Col. 3:4)
- 4) Continue in love (1 Tim. 2:15)
- 5) All things to be done with love (1 Cor. 16:14)
- 6) Cause love to abound towards one another (2 Thess. 1:3)
- 7) Be fervent in our love towards brethren (1 Pet. 4:8)
- 8) Be sound in love as well as in the faith (Tit. 2:2)
- 9) Let our love become known by acts (1 Thess. 3:6; Prov. 27:5; 1 Jn. 3:16-17)
- 10) Love is to be added to all other virtues (2 Pet. 1:7)
- 11) We are to greet our brethren with a kiss of love (1 Pet. 5:14)

B. Characteristics:

- 1) Edifies (1 Cor. 8:1)
- 2) Covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8; Prov. 10:12; 17:9)
- 3) Cast out fear (1 Jn. 4:18)
- 4) Suffers love and is kind (1 Cor. 13:4)
- 5) Envy not (1 Cor. 13:4)
- 6) Vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up (1 Cor. 13:4)
- 7) Does not behave itself unseemly (1 Cor. 13:5)
- 8) Seeks not her own (1 Cor. 13:5)
- 9) Not easily provoked (1 Cor. 13:5)
- 10) Thinks no evil (1 Cor. 13:5)
- 11) Rejoices not in iniquity, but in truth (1 Cor. 13:6)
- 12) Bears, Believes, Hopes Endures all things (1 Cor. 13:7)
- 13) Never fails (1 Cor. 13:8)

C. Facts:

- 1) Without love:
 - a) We are profited nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3)
 - b) We don't know God (1 Jn. 4:8)
- 2) Love can be perfected to cast out fear (1 Jn. 4:18)
- 3) Love is greater than faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13)
- 4) It is the end of the commandment (1 Tim. 1:5)
- 5) All the Law and Prophets hang on love (Matt. 23:40)
- 6) Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:8)

Concluding thoughts:

1. With this much being said about Love in the Scriptures:
 - a) We need to study the subject diligently;
 - b) And we need to put such into practice.
2. Many of us are familiar with much of what the Bible teaches on these things.
3. Our biggest problem is applying these great teachings to our lives!
4. The following lessons will give better insight and understanding on what God is trying to get across to us in this great subject.

Lesson Two

“The Importance of Biblical Love”

Jonah, a Prophet of God, was sent to preach to the Ninevites! The results was outstanding! The whole city was turned to repentance, including the King, himself. In view of such, we tend to exclaim *“What eloquence, what power, and what persuasion!”* But when we see Jonah’s attitude we are completely turned off—he was without love for the Ninevites (Jonah 4:1). The church at Corinth had all the miraculous gifts that could teach them, correct them, and build them up. In their eyes, they probably thought... *“What a great church!”* But their attitudes were far from being what they should have been—envy, strife, division, party spirit, carnal, etc. (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was written to correct the many problems in their midst. Chapter thirteen hit at the very root of their problem—lack of love! Men look on the outward, but God can look at the heart of men. Men may see things that we do and praise us for such, but God may condemn us because of our heart not being right. He can justly and accurately evaluate man’s motives for his actions. He is never deceived!

The first lesson in his series of studies should have given you a good over-all of Biblical Love, and emphasized its importance as well. We would like to dedicate this time together to look a little closer at why Biblical is so very important.

WITHOUT LOVE.....

MY GIFTED ABILITIES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN NOISE MAKERS!

1 Cor. 13:1—*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”* Yes, Corinth had their gifted people as well as “Miraculous gifts.” They could impress the carnally minded with them. But their lack of love was also obvious in their assemblies when using the gifts. Thus, to be gifted (to talk eloquently) is not enough; Love needs to be there to guide the use of that eloquence. Without Love, the gift is compared to a noisemaker.

WITHOUT LOVE.....

MY GREAT KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH IS NOTHING!

1 Cor. 13:2—*“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.”* The church at Corinth had their gifted people with miraculous knowledge and faith; but, they were mishandling the gifts because they did not possess Biblical Love in their hearts. Paul made it very clear that knowledge can cause a person to be puffed up, but Love has the ability to edify (bless, build up) each other. These gifts needed to be directed by Love to be the most effective.

Balaam was a Prophet of God, but Love was not in his heart. Caiphas prophesied in the presence of Jesus about one having to die for the people, but where was his love? Judas was numbered among the twelve, but where was his love? We may have our great Bible Scholars and Teachers today, but without love, they are just puffed up...they are really nothing! Without love, they are cold and dead. A person may know all about Christ, but not really know Him. To know God, a person must have Biblical Love. Jesus exemplifies the Love of God for all mankind. Thus, how sad for people to get so near the cross of Christ and fail to catch the great motivating spirit of its victim. Without love, the one who thinks he is something is really nothing.

**WITHOUT LOVE.....
MY GIFTS TO GOD AND MAN PROFIT ME NOTHING!**

1 Cor. 13:3—*“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing.”* Giving to God or man is no guarantee that it is acceptable to God. The **motive** behind the gift becomes imperative! Men who give without love do not really give but they invest! It is not a spiritual act but a commercial speculation. It is to get what they want in return...that is, to buy someone or some deed. But when a gift is given with love, both the gift and the giver are sanctified. He also added that there is nothing in martyrdom that redeems man. If a person gives themselves up to martyrdom without proper motive of Love, the act is made worthless! Our giving to God and man needs to be out of love for both. It is then that the act of giving takes on real meaning and significance.

**WITHOUT LOVE.....
IT SHOWS THAT I NEVER BECAME A CHRISTIAN...OR,
THAT I HAVE TURNED FROM BEING A CHRISTIAN!**

1 John 4:7-8—*“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.”* To know God is more than a mere knowledge of God. It is learning to love like God; for God is love. If we are not continuing in love, we never were born of God and never knew God as His child. No matter how much we protest by saying: *“Yes, but I was baptized and became a Christian.”* But one’s baptism may have only been an outward form and no real change took place inside of us. If one is truly born of God, he would strive to love as God loves (1 John 4:16). The opposite would also seem to be true: *If we do not dwell in love; God does not dwell in us, nor we in Him!* Do you really want to know if you are a Christian—see if you love your brethren! (1 John 3:14). Lack of love for brethren is a sure sign that we are still abiding in death!

**WITHOUT LOVE.....
THE WORLD WILL NOT SEE THAT WE ARE DISCIPLES OF JESUS!**

John 13:35—*“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”* No amount of adhering to outward forms will prove my discipleship to Jesus. No amount of years of service to a church will prove it. What does prove to the world that I am a disciple of Jesus is to show my love to my brethren (Gal. 5:6). No wonder love is called the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31). Love is a higher motivation than fear or duty. It is ever greater than

faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13). It is this Love that can give us assurance and confidence in the Day of Judgment (1 John 4:17).

Concluding thoughts:

1. When we fail to show sincere, unconditional love to our brethren:
 - a) We are only deceiving ourselves about our true relationship with God.
 - b) Everyone else knows that our profession to be a child of God is only outward.
2. Love is not an option in Christianity—it is the very heart and soul of it! It is that redeeming, conserving quality that gives to our deeds a God-Like Character!
3. We must be greatly concerned about our motives:
 - a) Why do I act as I do?
 - b) Why do I attend services, worship, give, etc.?
 - c) What is motivating my actions?
4. Without love, we are nothing!

Lesson Three

“What Makes Divine Love so Different?”

The value of Love among humans is a well-known and well documented fact of life! Believers, as well as non-believers, extol the great importance of love. Psychiatrists have well noted that Love holds the answer to most of man’s problems in life! Without love, man would not last long on the earth. While mankind can see the great value of Love in their lives and those about him; yet, not many are willing to put out the effort to exemplify such. Man has his moments when he is able to show human love towards each other. Jesus spoke about people who loved those who loved them, but then challenged them to a higher concept of showing love.

CONTRAST BETWEEN HUMAN LOVE AND DIVINE LOVE

Matt. 5:46—*“For if you love them which love you what reward have you? Do not even the Publicans the same?”* It is normal, natural, and expected to love those who love you. Parents love their children and children love their parents. If they do not, they are classed as among the wicked (Rom. 1:29, 31). It is natural to love those we know and accept. But God’s challenge is to go beyond the natural to the unnatural! (Matt. 5:43-45). To take the step beyond what man normally extends to others is man’s best hour. To Love those who would do us harm, who hate us, persecute us, or spitefully use us becomes the great challenge of Jesus to His followers.

DEFINING OF BIBLICAL LOVE

The process of defining a word is in how it is used in a context. We can see how the Greeks used a word and then see how it is used in the Bible. The primary definer is the New Testament. The greatest definition of Love is God, Himself! (1 John 4:16). The Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign of the universe is LOVE! The very nature of the Eternal One is Love.

In what ways has God exemplified His love so that we can know what it really is? The position that God has given man over His creation is a significant thing (Gen. 1:28). The fact that we were created in the image of God is also significant (Gen. 1:27). But the fact that He sends His rain and sunshine on the just and unjust truly shows His love as well (Matt. 5:45). Whether man obeys God or not...He still showers upon man the needed blessings to sustain life on earth.

The great example of God’s love was demonstrated in his giving of His Son to die for sinful man (John 15:13). Mankind may not have fully comprehended just how much God loved us, but in the sending of Jesus to die in our stead while we were rebellious sinners clearly defines the extent of His Love for us (Rom. 5:6-8). No matter how bad or wicked, God loved us enough to let His Son die for us. It is an act of Love which is heaven’s last argument to convince man that God wants to save us.

What do these things indicate about Divine Love? The following passages help to answer this question:

John 3:16—“*God loved the world—it is universal in nature!*”

1 John 4:10—“*God’s Love is spontaneous, unmotivated by man.*” God was not returning our Love—nothing on the part of man motivated God’s Love.

Rom. 5:8—“*God’s Love is indifferent to values.*” The worthiness or unworthiness did not enter into the picture. God’s Love was extended unconditionally to all mankind through Jesus.

Rom. 8:38-39—“*God’s love has no limits or ending!*” No thing or no one can separate us from this Love.

DIVINE LOVE ILLUSTRATED IN THE CALL OF SAUL (PAUL)

The life of Saul of Tarsus was a very religious one—He strove to keep God’s Old Testament Law correctly. He was very zealous for God (he thought)! But he became a persecutor of the church, rejected Jesus as the Christ, and gave his consent to the death of these followers of Christ. It is quite obvious that He did not deserve the Love of God (1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:15). God extended His Love to Saul by offering him mercy and forgiveness (1 Tim. 1:16). Saul thus became a perfect pattern of God’s unmotivated and unmerited Love. Saul could proclaim to the world that God loves even sinners like him! But God’s love does not save all; it only provides salvation for all. Man must respond to God’s love and reach out to obtain what that Love has provided. Saul was told to get up and be baptized so his sins could be wash away (Acts 22:16). When men come to perceive God’s love and willingness to forgive their sins, then they are ready to respond and reach out to obtain God’s mercy. Everyone needs to “repent” and “be baptized” so that we can be forgiven by God (Acts 2:38).

Concluding thoughts:

1. God loves sinners, but He does not love nor condone our sinfulness.
 - a) It is wrong to say that God does not love s when we do wrong because He does!
 - b) But He does not love the wrong actions of which we are guilty.
2. Therefore:
 - a) We must not presume that God’s love for us condones our continuing in the way of sin (Rom. 6;1-3).
 - b) Such assumptions can cause our eternal ruin.
 - c) God is not an over-indulgent grandfather!
 - d) We cannot do as we please and then get up in God’s lap and everything is okay.
 - e) ***“Behold the goodness and severity of God!”***
3. The Devil would like to convince man that God doesn’t love him. Failing here, he then over-emphasizes that His love allows us to indulge in sinful practices.
4. God loves man and has richly shown it.
 - a) Such love is far above the normal human love that man can show.
 - b) God challenges us to respond to his love and begin to live a life exemplifying this Love to others.

Lesson Four

“Love in Action!”

Life is before us and we will live it just once; therefore, what is the supreme good to which we may devote our life? What is the noblest object to seek after and to attain unto? God says that **LOVE** is the supreme thing! (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Pet. 4:8; Rom. 13:10). The results of Love bear testimony to its greatness! It changes society for the better. It makes better citizens, workers, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. It helps to keep down evil and brings happiness and contentment to mankind, etc. Love can be defined, but it is much better to see what Love does. That is the purpose of this short lesson—to see how God describes what Love will DO! (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

1. Love is Patient. “Love suffers long.” “Love is slow to lose patience.” Love is passive, waiting, calm, and understanding. In society, we encounter many occasions of irritation, conflicts of disposition and bad habits. This is also true in the family, as well as in the church. Impatience and irritability are among the most common problems we have. Forbearance, tolerance, patience is greatly needed to overcome them. To follow Christ, we must be willing to suffer, bear up under, and endure things. Love enables us to suffer long under provocation and injury. Love helps us to bear burdens that others may be freed from such. Love helps us to endure injuries, and avenge not ourselves.

2. Love is Kind. Love looks for ways of being constructive, useful, profitable, and encouraging to others. Mark’s Gospel pictures Christ as busily engaged in doing good for people. His life was filled with kind deeds and a sympathetic heart. And....one of the basis of judgment will be on whether we have shown this Love to those about us (Matt. 25:31-46). The Golden Rule states it clearly: **“Do unto others what you would have them do for you.”** (Matt. 7:12). It is doing kind deeds to others—because we would enjoy those same things ourselves. *“I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”* It is important to do good deeds for the poor and needy where it is easy.

3. Love is Generous. *“Love envies not.” “Love never boils with jealousy.”* Love is being generous hearted to others. This is Love in competition with others. Any work that we try to do, there will be others doing the same thing and maybe even better. Love helps us to rejoice with them—not envy them. Envy is generally defined as:

- a) A feeling of ill-will to those who are in the same kind of work as we.
- b) Pain at the sight of superior excellence in another.
- c) Discontent at one’s own condition in comparison to others.
- d) It is jealousy of others’ honor or success.
- e) It is to harbor hard feelings toward those used more than we.
- f) It is to have bad feelings when given a lesser important job.

Envy can reveal that we have selfishness in our hearts, or malice, hatred, or strife. Envy can be a main cause of division in the home or church.

4. Love is Humble. *“Love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up.”* Love is not arrogant, conceited and does not put on airs, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. This is Love hiding itself! It does not “toot” its own horn. It does not do good works to be seen of men, but rather to be seen of God. It does not seek to win praise or applaud. It is not a “show off,” nor a braggart. Love is not pretentious or arrogant, nor have a mind full of itself.

5. Love is Courteous. *“Love does not behave itself unseemly.”* Love is not rude, unmannerly, nor is it indecent. The church at Corinth had all kinds of unseemly behavior. They were using their gifts without concern for other people. They were elevating men beyond what they should have. They were wrangling over possession of spiritual gifts. They were guilty of division, immorality, going to Law with brother, etc. Love causes our behavior to be very fitting for the occasion. This is love acting in society. It is courtesy in little things. It is to be considerate of others—their feelings, wishes, well-being, etc. (1 Pet. 3:8). *“Noble manners are the fruit of noble minds.”*

6. Love is Unselfish. *“Seeks not her own.”* Love does not insist on its own way. It does not insist on its rights. It is never self-seeking, nor does it pursue selfish aims. Selfishness is at the root of most of our problems in life. Most sin can be attributed to seeking for self, rather than for others. (1 Cor. 10:24, 33). Love helps us to become other-person centered, rather than self-centered. ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*** (Acts 20:35). There is no real happiness in having and getting—it is only in giving!

7. Love has a good Temper. *“Not easily provoked.”* Love does not bear malice toward others, nor is it quick to take offense, or to be irritated, or become resentful or touchy. A seeming good disposition can be marred by easily ruffled, quick-tempered, touchy disposition. The elder brother in the story of the “Prodigal Son” illustrates this disposition. (Luke 15). Love is needed to control such actions towards others. *“Much of peevishness, anger, resentment springs from wounding the imaginary being whom we call by our name, pet and pamper with our caresses, and idolize in our vanity.”*

8. Love is Guileless. *“Love thinks no evil.”* Love does not keep score of wrongs, nor does it keep account of evil. Love is what the overly-suspicious person needs. Guilelessness is one secret of personal influence. The reason is that they believe in you. In an atmosphere of suspicion men shrivel up. In an atmosphere of faith and trust men expand and find encouragement. So, Love thinks the best of people. It does not impute bad motives to others. It sees the bright side of things. It puts the best construction on others’ actions. Love is forgiving and does not hold a grudge. Many people are unhappy and are unable to get along with others because they keep score.

9. Love is Sincere. *“Love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.”* Love takes no pleasure in others’ wrong doings, It does not gloat over other men’s sins. It is never glad when others go wrong. Rather, it rejoices in the victory of truth in a person’s life. It joyfully sides with truth. It is always glad when truth prevails. Love does not take pleasure in people who sin, nor in those who fall into sin. It does not like to expose the weakness of others or make “capitol” out of

other's faults. It does not rejoice in error, but accepts, keeps, and upholds truth. It also rejoices when truth triumphs in the lives of others.

10. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. Love can overlook the faults of others. It wards off the insults and injuries of others. It can bear up under many things. Love is always eager to believe the best about others. There is no end to its trust in others. Love makes our hope strong that can keep us steadfast, faithful, and stable. Love gives us endurance under all kinds of undesirable circumstances.

11. Love never fails. All else will come to an end, but not love. It is the ever-enduring quality of God Himself.

Concluding thoughts:

What a challenge we have and what a life to be lived. The greatest goal in life—the supreme goal or purpose—is to have and express the Love of God towards God and others. (1 John 4:8). We have many opportunities each day to learn. The world is not a playground, but a school room. Life is not a holiday, but a means to an education. One eternal lesson to be learned, and learned well is **HOW TO LOVE LIKE GOD!**

Lesson Five

“Love for God: The Greatest Commandment”

Religion has very little meaning for many people. They do not consider it to be that important in their lives. What little religion they might have is mostly superficial. When one considers the things that Jesus said about the Scribes and Lawyers, it seems that they were in the same boat. They were more concerned about which commands of God had to be kept and which ones could be neglected....or, which were more necessary and which were not. Jesus' answer to them showed that all of God's commands were important and the basic motivation behind keeping them is Love for God. (Mark 12:28-34).

THE GREATEST COMMAND

The first and greatest command is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. While it is proper and right to love others about us; yet, our primary affection belongs to God! It is the first and greatest command because:

- 1) It is just! God loved us supremely and it is only just that we return His love.
- 2) It is reasonable! What other command could be greater than this one?
- 3) It is basic! All other commands find their value and basis in this one. Without this, of what value is the rest?

EXPRESSED FOUR WAYS

1. He is to be loved with our mind. Our mind is our intellect, the thinking part of us—that which learns and decides. God must command our intellectual respect! God must be real and we must come to know Him. A shallow love could indicate a shallow knowledge of God. To know God is to love Him (Acts 17:23). God has revealed Himself in Nature, in written Revelation, and in the life of Jesus upon earth. Man is without excuse for not knowing God. To love God with our mind means we will devote our minds or intellects to a great search to know God (Matt. 5:6). The world needs men and women who will stand up and make known to them the only True and Living God. There is no work more desperately needed.

2. He is to be loved with our heart. Some feel this has reference to our emotional, feeling part of man. Religion has its greatest power when the knowledge of God is supplemented with a strong emotional feeling for God. These feelings can make daily duties significant, and not common-place. The ordinary can become extraordinary. That to which we give the affections of our heart is the most powerful force in our lives. Jesus said: **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** (Matt. 6:21). Feelings are powerful motivating forces. In fact, they often over-shadow the intellect. Here is the great problem in religion—not being concerned about true knowledge and understanding, but only concerned about how they feel. The heart needs to warm and intensify what the mind knows about God.

3. He is to be loved with our strength. God is calling us to love Him with our power, will power, our energies and our abilities. When we know God intellectually in all of His greatness and goodness to us; when we know God emotionally and are drawn to Him because of His greatness and goodness; then, we become willing to spend our energies and strength in His service. Value is often determined by what it cost. If something is cheap, it is usually of little value. But if it is costly, we are the more concerned with it. Spiritually, we are much the same way. If religion can be had at bargain prices, it has little real value to us. If it is priceless, it is because we realize its great cost. Jesus compared the value of the kingdom of heaven to a man searching for a “pearl of great price.” (Matt. 13:44-45). God needs to become priceless to us and then we can truthfully say: *“All that I am and have is for God and His kingdom!”*

4. He is to be loved with our soul. God is to be loved with our being—life itself—our existence or our very being. When our mind and heart finds someone worthy to worship and serve, then we are also willing to give up ourselves (Matt. 16:24). We will even give our very lives if need be. No sacrifice will be too much or too great for the one we truly know and adore; that as captured our minds and hearts; and that is the Supreme Being of all beings.

Concluding thoughts:

To make our religion real and meaningful, love for God needs to be first and foremost in our lives. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Lesson Six

"Love and the Church"

Jesus said to His Apostles that He was giving a new commandment to them (John 13:34). The newness is not in the command to love, but the extent to which we are to love. Jesus has shown us how to love. He has shown the extent to which we are to love! And He knew that His command would not be the easiest thing in the world to do. But He also knew that the truly converted, devoted, and consecrated person would strive to comply with His command.

As we have already begun to see, this love reveals itself in good will, compassion, and mutual helpfulness to others. It is the opposite of coldness, suspicion, malice and envy of one another. And...this love is not against church discipline, reproofs, admonitions, or rebukes. It is not against telling one another his faults, as well as, warnings and dangers of not living right. This love is universal...it is a concern for all of God's people...and more! Not to love is contradictory to all that Christ stands for! *"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that you are thereunto called, that you should inherit a blessing."* (1 Pet. 3:8).

LOVE FOR BROTHER IS A TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

John 13:35—*"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."* Such love shows that a change has taken place in our hearts! It shows to the world that we are truly a follower of Jesus! Men use various outward signs to identify their group, such as: Insignias, uniforms, special dress, special hats, etc. They are automatically known by these signs. But Jesus chose a different kind of a sign. It is not something we wear like a cross around our necks to get recognition, but our outward sign to the world is to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Men may have many fine qualities—moral, ethical, and spiritual—and still not be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus chose a sign of discipleship that the devil and his followers will not desire to do—love the brethren!

THINGS THAT TEST OUR LOVE FOR OUR BROTHERS

1 John 2:9-11—*"He that says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not whither he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes."* Love of brethren and walking in darkness does not go together. To hate a brother and still claim to be in the light is to say that righteousness is compatible with sin and darkness. Those who do love their brethren, do so, because they are walking in the light. Light and Love go together.

1 John 5:2—*"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."* If we love our brother, we will also love God and keep His commands. This

shows that our love is genuine when we love God and do His bidding. And one of God's commands is that we are to love our brother! This love is not a selfish love or a feign love, but a genuine love (Rom. 12:9-10).

1 John 3:17-19—*"But whoso has this world's goods and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."* How inconsistent to the spirit of Christ to see a brother in real need and to send him away unhelped or to look the other way. It is our conduct that proves that we are destitute of divine love—no matter what we may profess!

Gal. 5:13—*"For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."* If we love our brother, we will serve him. Jesus said: **"He that is great among you, must be the servant of all.....I came not to be served, but to serve."** (Matt. 20:26, 28). Giving, not getting, is true Christianity!

1 John 3:16—*"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* Giving up one's life for another is considered the supreme sacrifice. Our love for our brethren needs to be developed to the point of our willingness to lay down our lives for him or her—but primarily the willingness to give of ourselves to others.

THE OBVIOUS CONDITION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE THEIR BRETHREN

1 John 2:10-11—*"He that loves his brother abides in the light, but he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness."*

1 John 3:10—*"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother."*

1 John 3:14—*"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death."*

1 John 3:15—*"Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*

1 John 4:8—*"He that loves not knows not God; for God is love."*

1 John 4:20-21—*"If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God loves his brother also."*

The above Scriptures would seem to be easy to understand. May we strive to show that we truly are the children of God and disciples of Jesus!

Concluding thoughts:

1. One of the great blessings of Christianity is its teaching on love. There is no question that our world would be a better place in which to live if this teaching was universally put into practice.
2. Our acceptance and application of this command is continually being tested in our lives.
3. How strong is our effort to truly love our brethren?

Lesson Seven

"Love in the Home"

Problems in one's marriage or in one's home must ultimately come back to the question of love! We are not talking about the Hollywood type of infatuation or sensual attraction, but real love to one another or the absence of it. One of the main reasons why love is so important is that it is the real basis of all good relationships. There is a constant evaluation going on in the minds of people concerning: (1) How we love or do not love one another; (2) How we respond or do not respond to God's love to us; and (3) How we respond to other's love toward us. And it should be obvious that in the Day of Judgment we will be judged on the basis of our love.

In view of the above thoughts, it is easy to see that love needs to be in the home. And God has set the pace for us showing us how to love each other in the home.

- a) Jesus said that the Father loved Him (Jn. 17:24).
- b) This love was shown by His willingness to let His Son die for mankind (Jn. 3:16).
- c) Jesus showed His love for the Father by completely submitting to His Will (Heb. 5:8-9; Jn. 5:30).
- d) He was so submissive that He never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21).
- e) Deity's pattern for good relationships is **Love and Submission!**

GOD CALLS FOR ALL MEN TO FOLLOW THIS PATTERN

Jesus has shown man how to have good relationships. He clearly expressed His love for mankind (Jn. 15:9). But this love needs to be displayed by submission (Matt. 20:28). Jesus' submissive spirit for man's benefit proved His love. And we too can prove our love to Jesus by our submission unto Him and the Father (Jn. 14:21). This pattern is a continuous cycle of love, submission, love, submission, etc.

LOVE IN THE HOME

Without love, the home will perish! It is not a matter of choice, it is not an option, but it is a command—a must! It is interesting to note that all three Greek words are used with reference to the home:

- 1) **Storge**—Family love, natural love that should exist between family members. The Gentile world was condemned by God for their lack of this natural affection (Rom. 1:31). The term "kinship" is a way of referring to this natural affection that should exist in a family. This should automatically be there unless it is destroyed by wrongdoing.
- 2) **Phileo**—Warm, close companionship, friendship, or a special relationship. The Home should be made up of a close-knit loving family. But Christ must be first if a choice must be made between family and Him (Matt. 10:37).
- 3) **Agape**—A self-giving love—passionate good will—sacrifice of self for others. This is the kind of love demonstrated by God and Christ for mankind. This is the kind of

love that a husband should have towards his wife and the wife towards her husband (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33).

The cycle of love and submission needs to be in the home. The husband is to love his wife. But he must prove his love to his wife by his submission (Eph. 5:25). He makes a decision to freely give of himself for her (Eph. 5:28). This love will involve:

- 1) A respect and honor of the wife (1 Pet. 3:7).
- 2) A deep sense of responsibility for her (Eph. 5:23).
- 3) Caring for her needs (Eph. 5:29).
- 4) A sacrificial concern for her (Eph. 5:25).
- 5) A commitment of life and heart to her.

This same cycle is shown by the wife. Her love needs to be shown for her husband. It is shown by the following:

- 1) Her willing submission to his headship (Eph. 5:22-24).
- 2) Her reverence or respect is shown by her obedience or submission (Eph. 5:33).

This same cycle is to be shown by parents toward children. They are to love their children (Tit. 2:4). But this love needs to be proven to the children. It is proven by their submission to the child's needs. It also helps the child to see their parents in submission to God. Parents show their love by doing those things that are needful for their children (Eph. 6:4). This requires a lot of time, effort, and patience.....this is submission! The parents loving submission sets an example for their children. God commands that children submit or obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). They show their love by their submission.

LOVE AND SUBMISSION IN ALL RELATIONSHIPS IN LIFE

It would be great if all relationships were built upon this principle of love and submission. Love is the greatest motivation for submission. Love helps to make the best of relationships. Without love:

- 1) We don't know God;
- 2) We walk in darkness;
- 3) I am not a child of God;
- 4) I have no hope of heaven!

And without love, nothing else really matters.

Concluding Thoughts:

1. We need to ask ourselves:
 - a) Is my home a place where love is demonstrated?
 - b) Do we men (husbands, fathers) take a lead in showing this love in our homes?
 - c) Have we learned how to demonstrate our love by our submission unto others?
 - d) Are we willing to follow the example of Deity—in His submission unto man for our redemption.
2. Love is only a word until it is shown by submission!

Lesson Eight

"Love in the Community"

The Jews had more than 600 precepts of the Law counted out! And, because of the hard task of keeping all of these commands, they had divided them into heavy and light commands. They were trying to find those that could be neglected without fear of God's wrath. Others had attempted to find some great principle they could follow and safely disregard the Law. When the question was put to Jesus about these questions, His answer was that there were two commands that are basic: (1) To love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and (2) To love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:34-40). He also pointed out that upon these two commands rest the whole Law. The Law tells us of our duty to God and our duty to our neighbor. Love gives us the proper motivation to fulfill these duties. Thus, love itself is not an option. To love God and man is an inescapable necessity!

WE SHOULD LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

We should love our neighbor because God has commanded it! But why has He commanded it? What reasons can we see as to why such a command is necessary? May we suggest the following:

- 1. Because neighbors are inescapable.** I am a part of mankind and all men are a part of me! All of us have neighbors. We are even dependent upon our neighbors—not only for the food we eat, but for the jobs we have to earn a living...etc. No one can truly be a hermit in our society without great problems.
- 2. Because it is better to love them than to hate them.** It is not always easy to love one's neighbor, but it is better to love him. For example, a man planted and nurtured a hedge for years between he and his neighbor. It added greatly to the looks of his yard and gave privacy. One day his neighbor announced: *"I've just cut down your hedge!"* His reasons were "personal!" It isn't really easy to love a neighbor like this, but he is a neighbor. He won't go away. We have to live in a world of neighbors. So, what was to be gained by hating his neighbor? Instead he calmly discussed the problem with him and became great friends. Force never wins friends or neighbors, but love does! Where force and hate fail, love has a magic way of succeeding. The only real and enduring victory is to make friends out of your enemies.
- 3. Because God has loved us.** He didn't love us because we were so loveable, but in spite of our unloveableness! He loved us even when we were enemies (Rom. 5:6). Jesus even teaches us to love our neighbors who are our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Thus, to love my neighbor (even if he is an enemy) is to be like God! To do the deeds of God shows we are fitting offspring.

HOW DO I LOVE MY NEIGHBOR?

1. **As I love myself** (Matt. 22:39). We need to look at the way we love ourselves and extend the same to our neighbor. We can forget our own mistakes, then why not my neighbor's? We can see good in ourselves, then why not my neighbor too? Even in our darkest hour, we still love ourselves, then why not our neighbor? We are not hypocritical about our love for ourselves, neither should we be towards our neighbor. I do not want people to talk about me maliciously, neither should I my neighbor. We love ourselves by desiring our own blessedness, by wishing and seeking our own good, then why not our neighbor too? This love will help me:
 - a) To be a friend in trials;
 - b) To be careful of others' feelings;
 - c) To promote others' welfare;
 - d) To help cover a multitude of imperfections.

A man's estimate of himself will determine his estimate of others.

2. **Execute the Golden Rule** (Matt. 7:12). The golden rule becomes an important consideration as a guideline. It will help me to do unto others what I would like to have been done to me.
 - a) Love will rejoice in another's happiness and joy.
 - b) Love will mourn in another's adversity and sorrow.
 - c) If he is honored, we will be pleased.
 - d) If he becomes wealthy, we will not covet.
 - e) If he is sick and suffering, we will visit and comfort him.
 - f) If he is disappointed, we will encourage him.
 - g) If he is disgraced, we will help to deliver him from the snares of the devil.

Paul's inspired statement in Rom. 15:2 is straight to the point: ***"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."***

WE NEED TO SEE THE GREATNESS OF THIS LOVE

For just a moment, let's see what Jesus did not mean in the expression to love! Agape love does not necessarily include the same close tender sentiment of our friends and family. We may not even have an affection or fondness for him and his ways. Jesus is not commanding something we are incapable of doing. He did not mean for us to: (1) Ignore criminal actions; (2) Refuse to discipline when it is called for; and (3) Not to carry out punishment when called for.

Just what did Jesus mean? It is a purposeful, intelligent, and comprehending love which:

1. Cannot ignore the hatefulness and wickedness of our enemy, but a love which seeks to free him from the sin that blinds and binds him.
2. It is a matter of exercising our will.
3. It is something we must do, but which does not come naturally to carnal man.
4. A determination of the mind expressing itself because of it's spiritual outlook.
5. To do what is in the best interest of the person.

Its greatness is seen in its ability to motivate us to do the "impossible" commands of Jesus. Such certainly would surpass the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. It is not a lovely theory, but a very practical one. It causes us to evaluate our motives. It makes us aware of our actions. It causes us to evaluate both by the principle of true Biblical Love! Such brings about a complete transformation in man.

Concluding thoughts:

We need to aspire to have this kind of love (Matt. 5:48). Our goal is not to be like sinful, fleshly man, but like God! We are to compare ourselves with God, not our fellowman. Such a command will keep us humble and help us to see our need of God's mercy in our lives. All our days we can say: "*Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!*" It will help us to realize that our forgiveness depends upon our having a merciful attitude toward others. Neighbors are inescapable! So is our necessity for loving them as ourselves. If we ever reach our neighbor with the gospel of Christ, it will be done because of our love expressed to them and by showing a loving concern for their eternal welfare. Are we aspiring to possess and show this kind of love to our neighbor?

Lesson Nine

"Love of Self"

All of us have had to struggle with selfishness! And more than likely, some have a greater struggle than others—depending on their upbringing, among other things. But all of us have this battle to win or lose. Most people recognize that selfishness is wrong and can be harmful to us and others; and, in our better moments, we strive hard to rise above such. When we do so successfully, it brings a great sense of satisfaction. Because of this struggle with selfishness, we have a problem reconciling the idea of "self-love" with "selfishness." Self-love is often looked upon as a sin or selfishness. It is even advocated: *"To the degree that I love myself, I do not love others."* The purpose of this lesson is to examine both terms and see if they are the same. We need to better understand why the Bible teaches us to love my neighbor as I love myself. Hopefully, we can see how love for others and love for self have to go hand in hand!

SELF-LOVE AND SELFISHNESS

What is inferred by Jesus' teaching on loving my neighbor as myself? I believe it infers that self-love is not selfishness. Someone has suggested:

- 1) If it is a virtue to love my neighbor (who is a human being);
- 2) Then, it should also be a virtue to love myself (also a human being).

Jesus tied the two concepts together in His statement. He has to be saying that:

- 1) Respect for one's integrity, uniqueness, love and understanding of self;
- 2) Cannot be separated from respect, love and understanding of another individual.

We would then conclude that to love my neighbor correctly, I must love myself correctly.

What is selfishness if it is not love of self? How do we identify the selfish person? The following ideas may help with this question:

- 1) He is interested only in himself.
- 2) He wants things for himself primarily.
- 3) He finds no pleasure in giving, but only in taking or receiving.
- 4) He has the philosophy: "What can I get out of it?"
- 5) He lacks real interest in the needs of others.
- 6) He has little respect for others' dignity and integrity.
- 7) He sees primarily nothing but himself.
- 8) He judges everyone and everything from its usefulness to himself.
- 9) He is basically unable to love.

This may represent more of an extreme position of selfishness, but hopefully we can profit from this list of things.

From a Biblical standpoint we know that God should have first place in our hearts and lives. If someone else or our self is supreme, Deity is dethroned! God's Will and Ways must be before all others. Selfishness is placing self first before God and others. We become self-willed, self-seeking, and self-glorifying. When we do so, it is to our own destruction. Thus, proving that we do not really love ourselves! Look at what Jesus said in:

Matt. 16:24—*"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."*

Matt. 16:25—*"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."*

From Jesus' statements, we believe that selfishness and self-love are really opposites. Selfishness is a way to destruction. Love of self is a way to life. The selfish person doesn't love himself too much, but too little. Selfishness is not self-love, but self-destruction.

SELF-LOVE AND LOVE FOR GOD

God's love to us should help us to love ourselves (Jn. 3:16). He loved us when we were unlovely. We did not deserve this love, nor even really ask for it. But God extended it to us because we needed it. No matter how far we have fallen, God still loves us and values us. Thus, God's concern for us should motivate us to be concerned about ourselves. If no one cared, it would be hard to love ourselves. God's care drives out depressive feelings of loneliness (Isa. 53:4-6). So, we should love ourselves even though unlovable. We love ourselves because God's love has shown us our value. We are not unworthy of self-love. God showed us that (Jn. 3:16). We must learn to love ourselves in spite of what we have been. And because we love ourselves, we seek God's forgiveness, salvation, and blessings.

SELF-LOVE AND LOVE FOR OTHERS

When we learn to truly love ourselves, we do not stop there. We will in turn show our love for God by keeping His Will in our lives (1 Jn. 5:3). We will allow God first place in our lives—for it is for our own good. Not only does God rightfully deserve first place, but I gain my life by putting him first. When we learn to truly love ourselves, we can then reach out with love to others. We have learned how to exercise good will and long-suffering to ourselves; so, we are better able to extend the same compassion to others. If we can accept ourselves in spite of our failures, we can the more easily accept others in spite of their failures. The "Golden Rule" takes on full meaning to our lives. Positively—We do unto others what we would have them do unto us. Negatively—We will refrain from doing to others what we would prefer they not do to us.

To have a wholesome self-love gives us a solid foundation upon which to love others. We find our dignity and worth in being God's child! We do not have to depend upon what others may or may not think of us. Others may even look down upon us because of race, color, position, etc. We do not need to feel degraded nor should we take a dim view of ourselves—nor become bitter. God loves us and we can love others.

Concluding thoughts:

We believe that the selfish person has not yet learned to love himself. And until he does he is on the way to destruction. Jesus is suggesting that love for God and love for others depends upon our learning to love ourselves correctly. And it is God who gives us that insight, opportunity, and power to learn to love ourselves and thereby others.

Lesson Ten

"Love of Truth"

The people at Thessalonica had been idolaters; but, upon hearing the message of truth from God, they turned from idols to the living God (1 Thess. 1:9). Some were shaky in holding to that message of truth. Paul exhorted them to stand fast in the message delivered to them (2 Thess. 2:15). He gives as the reason—in the future many will turn from this truth and be turned unto a lie, unrighteousness, a delusion (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Their safe-guard against this great delusion is **LOVE OF TRUTH!** (2 Thess. 2:10). We believe that this topic should absolutely be included in this study on Biblical Love because men need to love the truth today just as much as they did in the beginning of the preaching of this Truth.

THE VALUE OF TRUTH

All men should realize the value of truth! Common sense teaches this fact. People do not normally like to be lied to about anything. Even though the truth may hurt at times, most people still do not like to be lied to. Basically, all of us know when we are speaking truth to others or when we do not. We also know when we are trying to delude someone by telling them a lie. The desirability of truth is obvious to moral and thinking people. Our whole physical existence, in reality, depends upon truth. Scientifically, we could learn nothing without truth. Our living depends upon our being told truth, and living up to that truth. If an employer tells me he will give me so much money to work for him each week. If, at the end of the week, he does not do what he says—he has lied to me and I am left empty and hungry. Men, through all ages, have seen the value of truth.

If we can agree on the above, then why is it that man is skeptical when it comes to the concept of Religious truth? Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine in Jesus' day, illustrates this skepticism. Jesus had been condemned to die by the Jewish leaders, but had to have the Roman Governor's approval to be put to death. When brought before Pilate, Jesus stated: *"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* This encouraged Pilate to ask his famous question: *"What is truth?"* (John 18:33-38). I don't believe that Pilate was skeptical of the concept of truth, but skeptical of how to identify the truth. How do you really determine what is truth? Men struggle with this concept continually. We say: *"I want truth, but how do I know when I have found truth?"*

JESUS IS THE TRUTH

Those who believe in Jesus believe they have an answer—Jesus is the truth! (Jn. 14:6). He is not only truth, but He came to reveal truth unto man (Jn. 1:17). He stated that God's Word was truth (Jn. 17:17). He sent His chosen Apostles out into the world to speak that truth to all men (Jn. 16:13; Matt. 28:18-20). They went forth everywhere teaching Jesus (Truth)! They found receptive hearts everywhere they went throughout the world.

DESIRE FOR TRUTH

Why should and why do men desire truth? Jesus gave an answer: "*The truth can make us free*" (Jn. 8:32). The truth frees us believing error or a lie (2 Thess. 2:11-12). We will believe one or the other—truth or error! We make the choice! But truth also makes us free from the results of believing an error or a lie. Truth makes us free from sin and its penalty (Rom. 6:23). And, it is through obedience to this truth that we can escape the wrath of God (Rom. 2:8). Truth can sanctify and cleanses us (Jn. 17:17). Our purification comes through our obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). By obeying truth: (1) Our souls can be cleansed by the blood of Christ; (2) Our lives are given a true direction and purpose for glorifying God; and (3) We will not fall into the pit of error and delusion that leads to death.

SHOWING LOVE FOR TRUTH

We can make it very clear that we want truth by pursuing truth (Matt. 5:6). If you have an extremely dry throat, you long for a cool drink of water—and you will seek after it. What we love, we normally pursue. We show we want truth when we are willing to give up all error. A clear-cut distinction must be made between truth and error. I must take my stand for truth. All false notions, opinions, commandments of men, creeds of men, vain philosophies of men, science (falsely so-called) must be given up! The devil uses effectively two basic approaches:

- a) To encourage us not to accept truth;
- b) If that fails, to encourage us to look upon truth as unimportant.

He would like to get all men to measure all things by our own subjective standard—"what I think," regardless of what the Bible says. Or, He would like to cause people to think that they are at liberty to believe and do anything they choose, just as long as the Lord has not specifically prohibited it. Until these rebellious attitudes are given up, we can't hold to truth. We show we want truth when we are willing to pay the price for truth! (Prov. 23:23). The price to be paid for truth is:

- a) An untiring search for truth all of our lives!
- b) A diligent, persevering application of truth in my life!

Jesus showed this to be true in Matt. 7:21. The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price illustrate these concepts. Jesus also pointed out that we must love Him (truth) more than our fathers, mothers, lands, houses, etc., or anything that stands in my way of obeying truth.

Concluding Thoughts:

The cost of truth is great, but its rewards are far greater! What a great blessing it is to those who have found God's truth and have become obedient unto it. Are you desiring and seeking truth, and are you willing to pay the cost for truth?

Lesson Eleven

"Love and the Wrath of God"

Many people have a real problem being able to harmonize the love and wrath of God. In many instances, they just don't want to believe that God will punish people in "Hell!" They want to believe that He will warn, and then warn again, and then warn some more; but, that he really doesn't intend to carry out His threats. They will ask: *"How can a God who loved man so much to send His Son to die for them, and then turn around and punish those with such terrible punishment?"* To them, such is incomprehensible! Thus, they search for ways to explain away the "fierceness" of God's wrath or temper it down greatly. This is done by advocating annihilation at death for the wicked. Some deal with it by advocating a "second chance" after death. The outcome of such an outlook is over-emphasis upon the love of God and playing down His wrath. They pit Scripture against Scripture, rather than accepting both and harmonizing them. They end up making God a glorified, over-indulgent grandfather. They think that God can be pushed around almost anyway they like. Men become presumptuous and take liberties with God and His Word. Why do men do this?

- 1) Part of it may be confusion over how to harmonize the Scripture teachings.
- 2) Part of it may be man's instinctive desire for happiness and his dread of punishment.
- 3) Part of it may be outright unbelief.

Whatever the reason, we need to be concerned about what God does say and accept it.

THE WRATH OF GOD

What are some basic teachings in the Bible about the wrath of God? What does God Himself say about His wrath?

Ps. 95:11 _____
Hos. 5:10 _____
Rom. 1:18 _____
Eph. 5:6 _____

With what is man threatened?

- 1) With physical punishments in this life.
 - a) **Ps. 11:6** _____
 - b) **Ps. 32:10** _____
- 2) Punishment in the existence after death.
 - a) **Matt. 25:46** _____
 - b) **Rev. 20:10, 15** _____
 - c) **Quote:** *"God is just. This all acknowledge. But many sinners have had their departure into another world without punishment, while many righteous men have had their departure after suffering ten thousand grievous things. If then God be just, where will He reward their good to the one class, and their punishment to the other, if there be no perdition and no resurrection."*

That God will punish is clearly stated—not only in this life, but after this life is over. This punishment is tied in with the punishment of the devil and his angels. It is stated in such a way to leave the impression that there is no end to this punishment.

Will God carry out His threat? Men threaten with many things—some carry out their threats, while others do not. The reasons for not carry out their threats may vary: (1) Some because they are unable to do so; (2) Some don't have the heart to do so; and (3) Some may even change their minds. But God has threatened time and again in His Word—will he carry it out? One of the great values of the Old Testament is that it gives an answer to such questions clearly. The following passages illustrate such:

Deut. 29:24-28 _____

Gen. 6:6-7 _____

Lam. 2:1-6 _____

Jude 5-7 _____

1 Cor. 10:5-11 _____

If God will carry out His threats; then, He will also carry out His promises! But, if He is unable to carry out His threats, what assurance do we have that He will carry out His promises?

HARMONY OF THE LOVE AND WRATH OF GOD

Both concepts are clearly taught and exemplified in God's Word. To emphasize one to the neglect of the other is wrong! God has shown His love to all mankind:

- 1) By giving rich provisions materially;
- 2) By giving of His Son to die for all;
- 3) By giving of his Inspired Word to guide us;
- 4) By giving us the Hope of Heaven if we serve Him faithfully.

God has also shown his wrath to mankind:

- 1) By His dealings with sinful people in the past.
- 2) By recording examples of his wrath (both in the Old and New Testaments).
- 3) Most of all, by the death of His Son to pay the penalty for our sins!

The problem is not really one of harmonizing His Love and Wrath, but something else! God has given us the choice to: (1) Gratefully receive and enjoy his love; or (2) To reject His love and receive His wrath! We make the choice!

Concluding thoughts:

God has not left us without warning (2 Pet. 3:10-11). We have been specifically told. These warnings are not to amuse us, but to jar us into action to make the proper choice. God extends His love now, but if we reject it....His wrath will come!

Lesson Twelve*"Love and the Chastening of God"*

One of the most puzzling of all human problems is the question of human suffering! Why must there be heartache and disappointment? Why must there be disease and death? Why must the "innocent" suffer? If God exists, and if He loves His creatures, then why does He allow such things to come into their lives? And more in particular, if we are striving to serve Him; then, why do we have problems, have to suffer, etc.? Such questions have been the search of men for centuries. They are usually brought on when we, or someone near us, is afflicted. Many possible answers have been suggested. We would like to use this lesson to look at some of these suggested answers.

THE RESULT OF SIN

Man suffers as a result of His own sins! This is certainly true at times, but it is not a full answer. Men do suffer for their sins. A man drinks heavily and after awhile, he pays the price in his body and in his life. All who misuse their bodies will sooner or later suffer because of such. But it is obvious that many who are "innocent" still suffer. The man who drinks heavily may be driving a car under intoxication and badly injure another person who is innocent in regards to the accident. It is like in the Book of Job when his "friends" kept saying: *"You must be a terrible sinner to suffer so much."* And Job kept saying over and over: *"But I have not sinned; I am innocent; there must be some other explanation."* There has to be and there is another answer.

LIVING WITH OTHER HUMANS

Man suffers as a result of living together with other humans. In other words—because others sin! (Rom. 14:7; Exo. 20:5). Sin brings suffering, not only to the guilty at times, but often to the innocent as well. Parents sin and their children suffer. When God created man on the earth and have him to live among other humans, it was inevitable that the innocent should sometimes suffer. There is no way to get around the concept—it is a fact of living! However, living together also brings many of the most cherished blessings in this life. If we were given a choice to either live alone or live with other humans, most of us (if not all) would choose to be together and accept the sorrows and sufferings—along with the joys and blessings.

THE LAW OF NATURE

The very Laws of Nature explain suffering. The uniformity of Laws can be a blessing or a curse! Fire can be made to cook our meals or warm our cold bodies. But fire can also be used or accidentally burn our houses or destroy our bodies. The principle in regard to the Law of Nature is—if used properly, it will result in good; but if used improperly, they have within themselves the power of destruction.

GOD HAS VOLUNTARILY LIMITED HIMSELF

God created man in His own image and therefore had to give him the freedom of choice. If man has a choice, he can choose good or evil. If he chooses evil, he usually will suffer. If he chooses good, he usually will not suffer. We do not believe that God purposely ordained suffering maliciously (Lam. 3:33). But God does make use of such suffering for man's good. (Jas. 1:2-4).

ALL SUFFERING IS NOT EVIL

Man's purpose on earth is to be like God, glorify Him, and be prepared for Heaven. Whatever hinders or takes him away from God is evil. Whatever brings him towards God can be considered good. To illustrate:

- 1) Riches, honors, and pleasures can actually be a curse to a man.
- 2) On the other hand, illness, loss of money, or even loss of friends might ultimately serve a good purpose in a person's life. (Lk. 12:15).

All too often, material things blind us to spiritual things. Riches, honors, and pleasures are not necessarily evil in themselves. Much depends upon our attitudes towards them and how we use them. Suffering is not good in itself, but what it brings is often most desirable. If it brings us into submission to God's will, then it is good! (Ps. 119:71).

Suffering can help to build character. When all goes well with us, we have little desire to give up error or sin. When we hurt, we can better see our need for God. Suffering usually helps us to overcome the world. The man with no sorrow in his life is often immature. Suffering helps us to see the real meaningful things in life. It helps us to see the real issues of time and eternity. It helps us to see which is most important in life. (Heb. 12:11). Suffering can help give us great strength for life. Many of the greatest contributors to society are handicapped people who have had to come to grips with suffering.

Suffering can beautify and ennoble the character. We may often think: *"If God loves me, He will give me everything I want."* God is not pictured this way in Scripture. He is not a soft, indulgent, humoring person. God is one who disciplines, not indulges!

- a) As a Potter who works carefully to make clay into a vessel of honor.
- b) As a Shepherd who guides and restricts his flock for their own safety.
- c) As a Builder who cuts and places stones to make a beautiful house.

As human fathers must discipline their children because of love, so does God! (Heb. 12:5-11). They do it so we will not destroy ourselves or bring greater suffering upon ourselves by our blunders. So does God! If God promised immunity from all suffering if we served Him, all men would be willing to serve Him. But this would defeat the purpose of Religion—willing service! God wants genuine and earnest worship by His creatures. Thus, suffering can help to build beauty and strength of character: (a) to be like God; (b) to love like God; and (c) to be long-suffering and patient like God. God does promise all things will work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

SUFFERING CAUSES US TO LOOK HEAVENWARD

Our sojourn on this earth is temporary. We are suppose to be preparing for a better and a more permanent abode (Heb. 11:10, 26). God has prepared for his children a home to which He wants us to come. Heartaches, disappointments, and suffering can help us to become disenchanted with this world and cause us to look for that city whose builder is God. A partial design of suffering is to cause us not to be satisfied here, but to look for a better place. The very description of Heaven infers the need for suffering (Rev. 21:4).

Concluding thoughts:

These thoughts do not exhaust the possibilities of why we suffer, but we hope such will help. The will have the ultimate answer some day from God directly. We have to accept the fact that suffering is much with us and we cannot change it. Suffering can be useful and helpful if we accept it with the right spirit and make the best use of it. We also need to be aware of the chastening hand of God and the great potential value of suffering. We believe that God allows problems to come into our lives because He loves us and wants the best for us (Heb. 12:5-6). We can be trained, instructed, and developed as God wants us to be. We all need discipline and chastening. Our salvation depends upon seeing the Love of God involved in our chastening.

