

## Christ's Law of Love

By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture References – Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:31- 13:7; Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:12-14; James 2:8-13

**Unit Theme:** Christian Ethics

**Central Truth:** Christ's law of love is to be the guiding principle for a Christian's Behavior.

**Key Verse:** James 2:8 - If you really fulfill *the royal law* according to the Scripture, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*" you do well;

**Introduction:**

Think about love, what does it mean to you? How do you use the word from day to day, or better yet how do you demonstrate love? Our culture seems to be bent on love, we love pizza, we love baseball, we love this and that, but do we really understand love from Christ's perspective? Are we able to walk in love as He did? Certainly for non-Christians this isn't even a consideration, but what about for you? Love is more than a feeling, saying or thing that one can grasp. It is in fact a demonstration of God's very nature. One cannot love apart from God. The scripture makes very clear that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) and since He is, this means that everyone that says they know love or admits there is such a thing as love is really stating that there is a God. However, the modern day company of skeptics would not agree, though most of them will admit that they have experienced love in some way shape or form. I make no apologies to the skeptic or anyone else for that matter, the fact is, one cannot love without God. He is the designer, and enabler and it is His desire that we love each other unconditionally. In so doing, we demonstrate the character of God to a lost and dying world. Years ago (1985) Huey Lewis and the News performed a song entitled "The Power of Love" - what a revelation! Throughout the generations the power of love has driven men and women alike to do the unthinkable. Love in its proper context is indeed a powerful force that simply changes all who embrace its truth. What we have to ask ourselves is have we embraced the worldview of love, or have we taken hold of Christ's view?

**I. Love Commanded By Christ** – Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35

When questioned about the greatest commandment Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 the "shema". This is the key to fulfilling all the other commands of God. Jesus summed it up by stating and the second is like the first, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The current dilemma in the world and the church is they have ceased to love God. Remove the love for God and it's impossible to love one's neighbor. We cannot go on deceiving ourselves and pretending to love God when we know good and well we don't love our neighbor! One may ask as the lawyer did of Jesus "who is my neighbor?" The answer is simple – everyone! What keeps one from loving others is it not pride, offense or indifference? The word of God says (1 Peter 4:8) that love covers over a multitude of sins; the Christian above all else should walk in this love, the same love that Jesus demonstrated toward us that while we were yet sinners, He died for us. Anyone can love another who loves them, or one who has never wronged them, but Christ commands us to love as He loved, unconditionally, no ifs, ands, or buts. Know for certain that the only way one can do this is to first fall in love with God and love Him with all the heart, soul and strength.

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➤ **Note Taker:** What does “love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength” mean to you?


## II. Love Meets Law's Demands – Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8-13

One may ask how can this be, how is it possible to fulfill the entire law simply through love? Think about your own experience with love, if you are married; think about your love toward your husband or wife. I would venture to say that in each case the other was driven to do things solely to the pleasure of their spouse. One's behavior is changed when one lives to please the one they love. To love God with all one's heart, soul and strength means that one will always live to please Him. Therefore, compliance with the second commandment is the natural byproduct of living out the first – loving God. 1 John 4:20 says one cannot hate his brother and love God, it simply can't be done, one either loves God or hates his neighbor. The evidence of whether one loves God or not is revealed in their actions toward their neighbor. Perhaps these are the greatest commands because they are perceived to be the most difficult. However, if one loves God with all their heart, soul and strength, 1 John 5:3 says the commands of the Lord are not burdensome. Think about it, God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) and since man was created in His image love should be natural, if it is not, perhaps we have forfeited His image.

➤ **Note Taker:** How did Christ demonstrate His love toward you and when did you first realize it?


## III. Love Motivates Service – 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:7; Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:12-14

In no way is Paul taking away from any of the spiritual gifts, but instead reveals that love should be the motivator for them. Without love, the gifts are useless; it should be love for one another that causes one to seek the gifts. One must remember that the gifts are not for the puffing up of the ego, but on the contrary they are for the edification (1 Corinthians 12:7) of one's brothers and sisters. Therefore, if anything but love is the motivator behind the gifts – the gifts become useless.

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Paul then goes on to describe the nature of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Based on the description Paul gives, one can search their life for the evidence of love. I don't know about you, but I have room in my life for more love. One lives out this love, when they love their brothers and sisters enough to restore them when perchance they fall into sin. This is bearing one another's burdens. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest..." As hard as it may be to grasp, there are those who will never be released from their burden because they don't have a brother or sister who loves them enough to restore them. Only the immature mistake this for judgment, it is not judgment but discernment and reconciliation driven by love. Psalm 141:5 says let the righteous rebuke me.... Where there is no rebuke there is little hope for peace and restoration. Finally, love is the bond of perfection – it truly makes one complete in Christ Jesus.

➤ **Note Taker:** Name some ways you can live out Christ's law of love.


### Conclusion:

Jesus said in John 15:13 that there is no greater love than when a man lays down his life for his friends (one could say neighbor). One can hardly claim the title "Christian" if they do not love as Christ loved. Jesus emphasized this principle of followership by stating that the evidence to the world of our Christianity will be in our love for one another (John 13:35). The sinful nature is the antithesis of Christ's law of love. Without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the elimination of the sinful nature (2 Corinthians 5:17) it is impossible to walk in love. He who hears the words of Christ and believes in the Lord has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24) and now through the Spirit walks in Christ's law of love and therefore is free from the condemnation of men. Finally, the redemptive work of Christ in one's life is duly manifest in the nature of love – *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;*<sup>5</sup>*does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;*<sup>6</sup>*does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;*<sup>7</sup>*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*<sup>8</sup> *Love never fails* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

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*Except where I have paraphrased all scripture is taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

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