

# LESSON 225

## LAW OF LOVE

Related Scripture: Acts 10:27-43

**KEY VERSE:** "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."—Romans 13:10.

Lesson Scripture: Luke 10:25-28; Gal. 2:11-14; Col. 3:9-11; James 2:1-9

### Introduction:

The law of God is the law of love, for God is love. (1 Jn. 4:8.) Sinful man has learned from Satan to doubt the goodness of God, and to see in law only a means of deprivation and oppression. (Gen. 3:1-5.) And indeed the laws of Satan, the laws of sin, human laws imposed by worldly authorities, and even the laws of human religions, may be very oppressive, unreasonable, and pernicious. But "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." (Ps. 19:7.)

Scripture selections for this lesson need to be studied in context. We may outline the printed text as follows:

1. Love by Command, Luke 10:25-28
  - a. Questions of law, 25, 26
  - b. Quandary of law, 27, 28
2. Love with Conviction, Gal. 2:11-14
  - a. Peter's dissimulation, 11-13
  - b. Paul's determination, 14
3. Love of Christ, Colossians 3:9-11
  - a. Putting off, 9
  - b. Putting on, 10
  - c. Putting out, 11
4. Love and Conscience, James 2:1-9
  - a. Admonitions to conscience, 1-4
  - b. Arguments for conscience, 5-7
  - c. Alternatives of conscience, 8, 9

### Notes on the Printed Text:

#### Love by Command, Luke 10:25-28.

False ideas about love are revealed in the expression, "to fall in love," as if love were an unavoidable accident which happens to some people often and to others not at all. Such "love" is mere fascination or infatuation, showing no more intelligence than the "charmed" bird which tremblingly waits to be devoured by cat or snake.

Human beings of normal intelligence are supposed to have some mental control over their animal emotions. So God's holy law commands men to rise above the level of the brute. Human beings are not to be bound by selfish lust, but guided by unselfish love.

#### Questions of Law, 25, 26.

Even the best of laws, even God's holy law, cannot give life. "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21.) The "certain lawyer" should have known that imperfect men cannot obey a law that demands perfect righteousness; but, like many lawyers today, he was more interested in justifying a criminal than in maintaining the law—especially since he was the criminal.

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Coming from the lawyer, it was not an honest question, but was framed to "tempt" or test Jesus. But, as always, Jesus knew what was in the man's heart, and so threw the question back to him:

"What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

#### Quandary of Law, 27, 28.

As a lawyer, the man knew the correct answer to his own question from a legal standpoint. He knew that in principle the commandment to love embraces all the commandments of God. However he might quibble over interpretation and application, he must acknowledge the principle.

Now, let us not try to avoid the answer of Jesus:

"Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

But a dead man cannot love. A physically dead man cannot demonstrate physical love, and neither can a man without divine life show divine love.

God's law is "holy, and just, and good"; but it is "weak through the flesh." (Ro. 7:12; 8:3.) By itself, it condemns but cannot save.

#### Love with Conviction, Gal. 2:11-14.

Sometimes even the children of God, who have new life and love within through faith in Christ, fail to be consistent in the outward expression of love. We need the courage of conviction with our love.

#### Peter's Dissimulation, 11-13.

Love for God demands love for our brethren, who also are children of God. Peter "was to be blamed" because he understood this very well, and even "did eat with the Gentiles" when there was no one around to find fault with his fraternizing; but "he withdrew and separated himself" for fear of being rebuked by others who might not have learned the lessons of love.

Racial, social, religious, or other prejudices ought not to keep us from showing our love for other believers in Christ. This does not mean that we are to compromise our stand for any truth; but it is well to remember that the necessity of brotherly love is part of the truth of God's word that we must stand for.

Note that Peter's dissimulation or hypocrisy influenced others to like shameful conduct. It is a solemn thought that our own personal conduct may influence others for good or bad.

#### Paul's Determination, 14.

Love sometimes demands an "open rebuke." (Prov. 27:5.) Private offenses should be settled privately if possible (Mat. 18:15-17); but Peter had acted the hypocrite publicly, and so Paul rebuked him publicly. It takes courage to defend the truth when we have to stand alone or almost alone with God against our brethren; but real love for God and His word sometimes demands just such a stand.

Genuine love on the highest level does not appear in Peter's dissimulation, but rather in Paul's determination to be faithful to the truth.

**Love of Christ, Colossians 3:9-11.**

Christ is the supreme expression of divine love. Our love for Him is but the reflection of His love for us, and it is only His Spirit within us that can enable us to love as He loves, and so let Him love through us.

**Putting Off, 9.**

Shame on us as children of God, that God in His word must tell us to stop lying to one another! Have we forgotten that there was a time when we put off the old man with his practices? Let him stay put off, and keep his lying tongue out of our mouth!

**Putting On, 10.**

At the same time that we put off the old man, we put on the new. Now, this new man was not only new when we put him on (in the new birth); but also he is continually being "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Ideally, each day we live we should be more like Jesus.

**Putting Out, 11.**

In this realm of spiritual life and growth, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free."

Of course, these distinctions remain in the world. But with children of God, "Christ is all, and in all," so that as we live His life and show forth His love the distinctions of this world become comparatively unimportant.

**Love and Conscience, James 2:1-9.**

True love is conscientious. (I Cor. 13:4-7.) When professed "love" is used as an excuse for wrongdoing, it is not love but lust and selfishness. Without love, we do what we have to; with love, we are free to do what we want to, because we want to do right.

**Admonitions to Conscience, 1-4.**

"Respect of persons" is from a word that means literally a receiving of faces, or accepting people for what they are outwardly in appearance or position. Now, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and we ought to act like children of God. When we discriminate between people because of mere outward appearances, we show ourselves to be judges possessed by evil thoughts. Such thoughts do not belong with "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Arguments for Conscience, 5-7.**

James reminds us that, so far as we can know, our judgments should agree with God's. If we are not careful, we may find ourselves slighting God's children and catering to His enemies.

**Alternatives of Conscience, 8, 9.**

We do well and can enjoy a clear conscience when we love as God commands in His "royal law"; we are rebuked by both law and conscience when our regard for people is determined by their mere outward appearance or by their station or position in this world.

**Key Verse:**

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."—Romans 13:10.

This text is sufficiently explained in the preceding verse:

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."