

# Love & Holiness

**EPHESIANS 1:4** "For He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love."

Summary: This lesson series examines the supernatural love to which Christians are called to live out with all holiness and blamelessness.

## LESSONS IN THIS SERIES:

1. Mark 10:17-31 "You Lack One Thing"
2. Luke 10:25-37 "Supernatural Love"
3. 1st John 3:11-24 "Loving Really"
4. 1st John 4:7-21 "Love Perfected In You"
5. 1st Corinthians 13 "Perfect Love"
6. Romans 12:9-21 "Law of Love"

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part One: "One Thing You Lack"

Everyone has had a time in their life when someone they respected said something cruel that pierced their heart. We all know what this feels like. The Church today is, unfortunately, no exception; but how is it that our brothers and sisters in Christ, whom we know and respect- people who keep the traditions and laws of the church- how is it possible that there is so much strife and contention in the Church?

### LESSON: Mark 10:17-27

#### 1. Mark 10:17

1. "Came Running"
2. "Kneled"
3. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This man is earnest and humble about his question. Something in his life has brought deep conviction upon this man and sent him running to Jesus to kneel before Him and seek from Him eternal life.

**Note-** not all Jews believed in the afterlife. The "Sadducees" did not, the "Pharisees" did. So there was great intellectual debate during this age about whether or not human souls continued. So this man's question is one that demonstrates that he has been seeking.

Wouldn't we all love to have someone run to us with this kind of heart condition?

#### 2. Mark 10:18

1. See John 8:24

Jesus answers the Rich Man's question by asking him the question he must answer to inherit eternal life.

#### 3. Mark 10:19-20

1. Romans 3:1-2 "What advantage does the Jew have?"
2. Matthew 22:37-40 "Love God with your all; this is all the law"
3. Romans 13:10 "Love is the fulfillment of the Law"
4. Galatians 3:19, 22-25 "What is the purpose of the Law: to point to Christ."
5. Matthew 5:20 "Unless your righteousness exceeds the Pharisees, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Then Jesus begins to deal with the Rich Man's sincere, yet wrong, understanding of his own righteousness.

#### 4. Mark 10:21

1. Luke 9:23-26

Jesus did not despise the Rich Man's answer; He looked on him with love. But Jesus knew he "lacked one thing": the Rich Man lacked "love", which is the fulfillment of all righteousness. So Jesus told him to unbind himself from his attachments to this world, and come to the cross because it is only through the cross that we can walk in love.

Was Jesus saying the Rich Man lacked *all* kinds of love? No.

- What kind of love did the Rich Man have?
- What kind of love did the Rich Man lack?

#### 5. Mark 10:22

1. Matthew 6:19-21, 24
2. 1 John 2:15-17

The Rich Man was saddened by Jesus' response because he loved the world; he had many possessions that his heart was attached to. But his riches had robbed his heart of its love for God. Money and riches were the joy of his heart, not God. So when Jesus requested he give up his riches for God, Jesus' request robbed the man of his joy!

#### 6. Mark 10:23-27

1. Zephaniah 1:18 "Their gold will not deliver them in the Day of God's Wrath"
2. 1 Timothy 6:10 "Some have wandered from the faith because of love for money."
3. Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart."
4. Colossians 3:5 "Covetousness is idolatry"
5. Matthew 6:24 "Cannot serve both God and money"
6. Titus 3:4-7 the miracle of salvation from God

- Why is it so hard for those with money to enter the Kingdom?

"Love" and "Trust" are inextricably linked, because "trust" comes from your heart; your "trust" is placed wherever your heart is. This is why money has the ability to consume both our "heart" and our "trust".

## SUMMARY

**Mark 10:26-27** "They were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, 'who then can be saved?' Jesus, looking at them, said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God. For with God all things are possible.'"

We're going to be talking about a love that is impossible among men; the kind of love that is only possible by the miracle of God. This is what the world lacks. And this is what God has given to the Church through the cross and resurrection.

If your heart is pierced and convicted at hearing Jesus' word, "one thing you lack", and you believe that through Jesus Christ God can do the impossible in you. Please come talk to me, confess your need for Christ, and be saved!

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part Two: "Supernatural Love"

### INTRODUCTION: Supernatural Love

**The heavenly mantle of love:** It doesn't take long reading Jesus' teachings to discover that His teachings on love are entirely unattainable to sinful humanity; and faithful preaching of this love will produce complete and utter despair to the carnal hearer! "*Who is sufficient for these things!*", is the despairing cry heard from the mortal heart when confronted by Jesus' word on love.

**A great tragedy:** the single greatest tragedy to befall the modern Church is that we took the love that Jesus preached off of the high heavenly mantle that He hung it on, and brought it down within reach of mortal flesh by mortal means.

**The result:** there is no longer any difference between the Church and the world; we are simply another brand of the same worldly product. But the love Jesus preached was supernatural; it was far above the reach of humankind- it required supernatural renewal and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer.

**Supernatural Love:** we're preaching "supernatural love" to light the flame of faith in the hearts of those who are called by God so that we can truly "be holy and blameless before Him in love". We spent so much time talking about the miraculous new-birth because it is the foundation of everything in Christian living; this "supernatural love" is not possible unless you are born again! Whoever tries to walk in supernatural love by the flesh will walk away from Jesus grieving in despair like the Rich Man who kept the law but lacked love!

### LESSON: Luke 10:25-42

**Deuteronomy 6:5** "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

**Leviticus 19:18** "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

## Luke 10:25-27- The Law Testifies to a Lawyer about Love

1. If the law is powerless to transform a sinner's heart to make them alive in Christ, then what good was the law to the Jews?
  - Jews had the powerful testimony of God's love instructing them in the law for 2,000 years.
  - And they had the prophecies declaring the coming of the Messiah who would bring them into the love that the law testified about.

Jesus chose to answer the lawyer's question about eternal life from the law itself; a master of the law was shown to be powerless in his natural condition to fulfill the requirement of the law!

**Romans 8:3-4** *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

**Galatians 3:19, 22-26** *"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, until the promised Seed came to whom the promise was made... But the Scripture has confined all things under sin, that the promise through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were imprisoned under the law, kept for the faith which was later to be revealed. So the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. You are all sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ."*

## Luke 10:28, 37- Love is more than empathy & emotion.

1. Love is not mere feeling and words, but is "unmerited" and "selfless" service for the good benefit of others.

**1 John 3:18** *"My little children, let us not love in word and speech, but in action and truth."*

Jesus did not tell him to "go and feel loving to others and you will live", He told him "Do this and you will live", because Jesus knows that it is by obedience through faith that the heart is circumcised and the flesh is put to death.

Love, therefore, is more than empathy; **love is the effectual conduct of holiness.**

**Luke 10:29-** The proud spirit of legalism seeks to justify itself

**Warning:** the spirit of legalism always tries to justify itself when confronted with its own errors.

**Luke 16:14-15** *"The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things and derided Him. He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed before men is an abomination before God.'"*

**Luke 18:9-14** *"Jesus told a parable to some who trusted in themselves, as though they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed these things about himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I tithe of all that I earn.' But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but struck his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"*

1. The Lawyer knew he could not possibly keep this command, so he tried to justify himself by limiting the parameters of the commandment. When confronted by *supernatural love*, the Lawyer refused to humble himself and despair for his inability to love as commanded because he wanted to trust in himself; it was this trust in himself that prevented him from being able to inherit the eternal life that he was asking about (see Luke 7:29-30).

**Luke 10:30-** A lonely man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a rocky 8-hour downhill trip with lots of places for thieves and robbers to hide and ambush travelers. Therefore, people would usually wait at each end of the road until a group could form together before they began their travel down this road- which itself illustrates neighborly love.

1. This man traveling alone illustrates that he was lonely and unloved: he had no one to take this trip with him. He was socially vulnerable.
2. He is taken advantage of in his lonely condition and stripped, beaten, and wounded, being left for dead.

### **Luke 10:31-32**- three men

1. Notice Jesus gives no other description of the Priest and Levite; their loveless action stands alone as their only description- I think it may be the same in the Judgment.

### READ **Matthew 25:31-46**

### **Luke 10:33-35**- Jesus' supernatural love challenges worldly love

The Hebrew definition of "neighbor" was "someone with whom you are associated". Under this worldly definition of "neighborly love", Samaritans and Romans (both of whom the Jews hated) were excluded and the Jews had no neighborly obligation to love them because they never associated with them.

But Jesus' supernatural love challenged their worldly love and showed them what the love of God revealed by the love really was talking about.

1. The Samaritan was despised as dogs by the Jews; they had been enemies since the days of Nehemiah.
2. Jesus demonstrates that God does not judge by nationality, ethnicity, or gender; He judges with righteous judgment according to the heart-produced actions of our life.

How did the good Samaritan love his neighbor?

1. He had compassion on him (see Mt. 9:12-13).
2. He tended to the man's needs by using his own donkey and supplies of oil and wine (see 1 John 3:17; Hosea 2:5, 8, 22; Joel 1:10, 2:19, 24).
3. He took the man in and gave him a place to stay at the inn- paying 2 days wages for his care up front in addition to whatever extra charges were needed (see Mt. 25:35).
4. He invested his own personal time in him and returned to the inn to check on his progress (See Mt. 5:41).

### **Luke 10:36-37**- Jesus tests the reality of love.

Jesus asks the Lawyer who was really the neighbor in this parable. He did not settle for the intellectual equivocations of the lawyer who tried to change the parameters of who is our neighbor; Jesus went straight for the heart of reality and held him accountable to the truth of what his condition really was.

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part Three: "Loving Really"

### INTRODUCTION

Oswald Chambers defined holiness as "*the agreement between a person's disposition and the law of God as expressed in the life of Jesus*"; this is to say that when a person's heart, soul, and mind (attitude) agree with the righteousness of God as it was demonstrated in the life of Christ, that person has become holy to God.

This is particularly important when we consider the following passage:

**Hebrews 12:14** (NKJV) "Pursue... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord"

This agreement between the righteousness of God and a person's heart, soul, and mind is expressed in our life by love. So, love is the effectual expression of holiness in our daily life.

**Ephesians 1:4** (NKJV) "[Our God and Father] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, **to be holy and blameless before Him in love.**"

**1 Thessalonians 4:7** (MEV) "For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness."

God's eternal will for you in Christ is holiness expressed by love; this is how you will learn to walk in fellowship with your heavenly Father.

## LESSON: 1 John 3:8-24 (2:3-11, 15-17)

**Announcement Reminder:** I have assigned the book of 1st John for your weekly reading. Pray and meditate on what this book says so that the Word of God can dwell richly within you.

### 1 JOHN 2:3-6

"By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says, 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word truly has the love of God perfected in him. By this we know we are in Him. Whoever says he remains in Him ought to walk as He walked."

The phrase "so that you may know" is repeated at least 8 times throughout this book; John writes these things so that you may have confidence that Christ is in you. These things are not minimum salvation requirements- faith and love give entrance into salvation (4:15 & 5:1)- rather, these things are written so that you will not have doubt of Christ in you while you live on earth.

**Question:** Why does keeping Christ's commandments prove that we know Him?

- **1 John 5:3-4ab** (MEV) "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is born of God overcomes the world..."
- **John 14:15** (NKJV) "If you love Me you will keep My commandments."
- **John 14:21** (MEV) "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father. And I will love him and will reveal Myself to him."
- **Matthew 11:30** (NASB) "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (compare Matthew 23:4)
- **2 John 1:6** (NIV) "And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the very commandment you have heard from the beginning, that you must walk in love."

## 1 JOHN 2:9-11

"Whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is in darkness even until now. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

**Crisis:** One of the greatest tragedies of modern theology is that it has turned the phrase "walking in the light" into a mystical expression that is comprised of emotional experiences but devoid of any real expression of supernatural love.

**A Word of Exhortation:** Walking in the light is not about how you feel, it is about surrendering your carnal will to the Cross so that the Holy Spirit can empower you to walk in the supernatural love of Jesus Christ!

**Question:** Do you feel like God is nowhere to be found in your life?

- Do you hate your parents?
- Do you hate your siblings?
- Do you hate your wife?
- Do you hate your husband?
- Do you hate your children?
- Do you hate your church brethren?
- Do you hate your pastor?
- Do you hate your bosses?
- Do you hate your coworkers?
- Do you hate the authority figures in your life?

Hatred blinds the eyes and fills the soul with darkness; especially hatred for our Christian brothers and sisters. As we will soon find out in this lesson, it is impossible to walk with Christ while hating others.

## 1 JOHN 3:11-13

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning: We should love one another, not like Cain, who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's works were righteous. Do not marvel, my brothers, if the world hates you.

READ:

- **Ephesians 5:8, 10-11 (MEV)**
- **John 3:19-21 (NKJV)**

## 1 JOHN 2:15-17

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world- the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life- is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world and its desires are passing away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Love for the world is the greatest hindrance to the love of the Father.

- **Matthew 6:24** (MEV) No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
- **James 4:4** (MEV) You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

## 1 JOHN 3:8-10

"Whoever practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not practice sin, for His seed remains in him. And he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are revealed: Whoever does not live in righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

**Question:** What is sin?

**Answer:** 1 John 3:4, Sin as understood and defined in John's epistle, is breaking the law.

**Romans 13:10** (MEV) Love works no evil to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

If we have been born of God, we will not practice evil against God, nor will we practice evil against our neighbors. Why? Because Jesus lives in us!

Supernatural love is the evidence that we have been born of God. Everyone who practices this kind of holy love is born of God because only those who are born of God can live in, develop in, and grow in this kind of Christ-like love.

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part Four: "Love Perfected In You"

### INTRODUCTION

"We give thanks to God always for you all, mentioning you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patient hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father." (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

#### LESSON GOALS:

1. To know God truly.
2. To abound in the joy and liberty of knowing God.
3. To know that we are of the truth.

#### FOR REVIEW:

#### 1 JOHN 3:18-19

*My little children, let us love not in word and speech, **but in action and truth**. By this we know that we are of the truth, and shall **reassure our hearts** before Him. **For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows everything.***

Sometimes we fall into the pit of despair; we look at ourselves, and we look all around us, and we feel like we find nothing of worth or worthy of being loved. We may hear the accusing voice of all our past failures, or we may sense how spiritually dry we feel; and we despair, saying "God cannot possibly love me!" But when we are in this pit of despair we must remember: God is greater than your heart!

*"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith which works through love.**" ~ Galatians 5:6*

If your faith in Christ is working through love in action and truth, then your heart can be reassured during times of despair because "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

## LESSON: 1 John 4:7- 5:5

As we peer into the glory of God through the Word we are constantly being called higher towards the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:14**)! If we stoop to peer into these verses from the perspective of "self", we will veil the glory of God and fail to connect with the majesty of God that our hearts have been designed to enjoy! We must allow these passages to rapture us in the glory of God!

Hear the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" that beckons us to transform love from being all about self, to being all about God:

- We discover that love "is of God" (v 7), therefore it is not common to man, but holy to God.
- God's love is not revealed through man, but through His Son whom He sent to be the atoning sacrifice for the world (v10).
- Our love is not initiated by the goodwill of man, but instead, it is a response to the love that God has first shown to us (v 11-12, 19).
- Even our confidence on the Day of Judgment is not found in "self", but comes to us because God's love is perfected in us (v 17)!

### 1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, **for** love is of God, and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**. Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

If we are born of God, we will love God with sincere hearts, and through our love for God we will joyfully bestow our love upon others! Why?

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

~ **2 Corinthians 4:6**

## 1 John 4:9, 11-14

**In this way** the love of God was revealed to us, that God **sent** His only begotten Son **into** the world, **that we might live** through Him.

Beloved, **if** God **so** loved us, **we must also** love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, **and His love is perfected in us**. We know that we live in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Christian love does not originate in the heart of man, it comes from God:

"And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to us." ~ **Romans 5:5**

Because our love does not come from within, but from above, it does not resemble the love that comes from the heart of man. We love "in this way", according to the love which God has had for us through Christ.

Consider how Christ has loved us:

"Let this mind be in you all, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. But He emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in the form of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." ~ **Philippians 2:5-11**

And,

"While we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."  
~ **Romans 5:6, 8**

Therefore, **"if** God **so** loved us [in this way], **we must also** love one another [in this same manner]. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, **and His love is perfected in us**."

## 1 John 4:10

In this is love: **not** that we loved God, **but that** He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice **for our** sins.

This is the foundation of our hope: the love of God is not based in our first loving God, but is based upon His love demonstrated for us in Christ:

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by Grace you have been saved), and He raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. ~ **Ephesians 2:4-7**

## 1 John 4:15

**Whoever** confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God.

Here is the foundation of God's love for us: that anyone - rich or poor, great or small, strong or weak - that acknowledges before mankind that they believe Jesus is the Son of God, then God comes to live in that person and gives that person life in God.

"Whoever confesses Me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But whoever denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God." ~ **Luke 12:8-9**

## 1 John 4:16

And we have come **to know** and **to believe** the love that God has for us.

The revelation of God's love within our heart comes in two stages: firstly, knowing what love He has demonstrated towards us, secondly, believing His love. There is a mighty struggle that occurs between these two steps, and until this struggle is complete, we cannot be complete!

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would give you, according to the riches of His glory, power to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ~ **Ephesians 3:14,16-19**

First comes comprehending the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ, and then through faith comes the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and fills the soul with all the glorious fullness of God!

## 1 John 4:17-19

God is love. **Whoever** lives in love lives in God, and God in him. **In this way** God's love is perfected in us, **so that** we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears is not perfect in love. We love Him because **He first** loved us.

The Bible has said, "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7), but the love of God is the perfecting of knowledge. Every Christian will learn the lessons of the fear of God, but we must all be perfected by the love of God!

Live in love and you will abide in God, and He in you; then you will be perfected by the love of God.

## 1 John 4:20-21

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? We have this commandment from Him: Whoever loves God **must also** love his brother."

Love has two dimensions: a vertical dimension, and a horizontal dimension. Vertically, we love God with all that we are; horizontally, we demonstrate our love for God by loving those around us, and especially our brethren.

If anyone claims to have one of the dimensions of love - either the vertical or the horizontal dimension - but does not have the other dimension, then they are deceiving themselves and do not have God. This means that if we do not love those around us, then our love for God is invalidated.

This begs an important question: "what is the difference between a liar who says he loves God but is proven false because he doesn't love others, and a Christian who genuinely loves God but unlovingly stumbles over the horizontal dimension of love?" The *difference* is in one word: "**humility**". The liar continues behaving without love towards others around him, while the Christian humbles himself or herself and begs God to supply him or her with greater love through the Holy Spirit that lives within us (Romans 5:5).

## 1 John 5:1-15

**Whoever** believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and **everyone** who loves the Father **loves** the one born of the Father. **By this we know** that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and the victory that overcomes the world is **our faith**. Who is it that overcomes the world, but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

In the same manner that our love for others around us validates our love for God, so also our love for God validates our love for others.

Today, many people of all kinds of religions claim to have great social love: they give to the poor, and feed the hungry. But God says this love is not valid because it has no vertical dimension: it is one dimensional.

If someone is drowning in a swimming pool, and I know the person is poor so I bring them a nice dinner, but do not save them from drowning, my "love" for that person is not valid; so also the love we show towards the world must elevate those around us and beckon them heavenward towards the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus".

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part Five: "Perfect Love"

### INTRODUCTION: A Still More Excellent Way

**1 Corinthians 12:31**(NASB) "Earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

The Holy Spirit calls us upward to God, to rise above the human condition by the grace of God and walk in the excellent way of Christ. This is our highest calling: "to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength" and "to love our neighbor as ourselves" (**Matthew 22:36-40**). And just as last week we learned that we must "not love in word or in tongue only, but in deed and in truth" (**1 John 3:18**), so this week we are going to learn what it means to love *in truth*.

As it is written, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, then I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal". Even if I possess the gifts in the fullest possible measure, but am not walking in the more excellent way of supernatural love, then it is meaningless! Even if "I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge... and have not love, then I am nothing"! Check out **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**.

- Do you speak in tongues?
- Do you have mighty faith
- Do you have the gift of healing?
- Do you prophecy?
- to move mountains?

All of this is for naught if you do not have supernatural love.

**Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

There are a lot of brothers and sisters who are chasing mighty demonstrations of the Spirit because they do not yet know the more excellent way of Christ. They are not yet satisfied by Christ Himself.

To walk in this *more excellent way* is our high aim today!

## LESSON: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Any serious reading of the first three verses of this chapter would lead to one question: "*what is love?*" If it is possible to "give all my material possessions to feed the poor", and to "surrender my body to the fire's" of martyrdom, and still not have love (v. 3) then I must find out what is love!

### NASB

1. Love is patient,
2. Love is kind
3. And is not jealous;
4. Love does not brag
5. And is not arrogant,
6. Doesn't act unbecomingly
7. It does not seek its own,
8. Is not provoked,
9. Does not take into account a wrong suffered,
10. Does not rejoice in unrighteousness,
11. But rejoices with the truth;
12. Bears all things,
13. Believes all things,
14. Hopes all things,
15. Endures all things.

### MEV

1. Love suffers long
2. And is kind;
3. Love envies not;
4. Love flaunts not itself
5. And is not puffed up,
6. Does not behave itself improperly,
7. Seeks not its own,
8. Is not easily provoked,
9. Thinks no evil;
10. Rejoices not in inequity,
11. But rejoices in the truth;
12. Bears all things,
13. Believes all things,
14. Hopes all things,
15. Endures all things.

### NKJV

1. Love suffers long
2. And is kind;
3. Love does not envy;
4. Love does not parade itself,
5. Is not puffed up;
6. Does not behave rudely,
7. Does not seek its own,
8. Is not provoked,
9. Thinks no evil;
10. Does not rejoice in iniquity,
11. But rejoices in the truth;
12. Bears all things,
13. Believes all things,
14. Hopes all things,
15. Endures all things.

In my studies this week the Holy Spirit has shown me that there is so much more to love than we know; there is a wonderful, joyous infinitude to love that both delights and dismays the human soul; it "**delights**" the human soul because we were made for love, and in the splendid communion of the Holy Spirit we taste of the good heavenly gift and desire more - not because what we have already received was insufficient or lacking, but because we discover that this is what we were made for! We were made to drink deeply of the fountain of living waters! But it also "**dismays**" the human soul because nothing proves our human frailty faster than the light of God's love! O how quickly we discover our inadequacy when we are brought to the end of ourselves by God's wonderful love!

To continue in the delightful, dismaying love of God we must learn to mount up on the wings of grace, or we will never be able to soar.

## LOVE REVEALED

Love is revealed in **seven positive traits**: patience, kindness, rejoicing in truth, bears all, believes all, hopes all, and endures all; and love is revealed in **eight negative traits**: not jealous, does not brag, not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, not self-seeking, not easily provoked, does not keep a record of wrongs, does not rejoice in iniquity.

These seven divine attributes of Godly love are juxtaposed with eight carnal attributes of human nature as we are called upward to God by the "high heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus" to transcend our human nature by the grace of God and renewal of the Holy Spirit

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

**(NASB)** Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

**(MEV)** Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love flaunts not itself and is not puffed up,

**(NKJV)** Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

## LOVE IS PATIENT

**James 5:7** "Therefore be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord..."

Love is patient... in the Lord. We are to be patient towards others, as 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says, in the Lord - that is to say that we are patient towards others in the same manner as Christ was patient towards them.

**Galatians 5:22** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit that is produced through love; if you've ever wondered how to become more patient, the answer is Holy Spirit produced "love".

**Matthew 18:21-35** *The Unforgiving Servant Parable* -

"The servant fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt", (v. 26-27)

The master's patience was expressed through love: he was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him his debt. This is extraordinary love - the master's patience was not merely putting up with something that he did not like, it was a disposition of goodwill and determined intent to do good in return.

In the same way that God is ONE - His love is not independent of His justice, nor is His justice and love independent from His holiness - so also the divine attributes that we receive from Christ in the Holy Spirit through the promises of God are also all ONE. "Patience" does not stand alone, but is commingled with "hope", "kindness", "endurance", and all the other divine attributes of God that He shares with us; for this reason, "patience" for the Christian does not simply mean waiting on something or someone, it means "a joyful waiting in hope, goodwill, and kindness upon all things in Christ".

It must also be noted that Christian patience does not wait on things that Christ has no patience towards; consider the money-changers in the temple, or the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees and remember that Christ did not deal with them in patience, but gave them stern warnings of wrath to come. But upon the poor, the broken, the outcast, the suffering, the seeking and searching, Jesus was abundantly patient.

## LOVE IS KIND

As is the case with translation, many times there is no exact match; this is the case with the Greek word translated here as "kind".

## WORD STUDY

5541. χρηστεύομαι chrēsteuomai; from 5543; to be kind:—kind(1).

5543. χρηστός chrēstos; adj. from 5530; serviceable, good:—**easy**(1), **good**(2), **kind**(2), **kindness**(2).

The Greek word χρηστός (chrēstos) has the quality of a soft or easy and kind goodness. It is sometimes translated as "easy", "good", "kindness", and "kind"; and in 1 Corinthians 13:4, the English word "kind" was the best word we had to offer.

**Note From Zachary McIntire:** an interesting thing about this Greek word is that unbelievers used to refer to Christ as "Chrestos" instead of "Christos", and to "Christians" as "Chrestians", derisively meaning "followers of that good one"- similar to our "goody-two-shoes". The quality of this chrestos kindness was mocked by many in the unbelieving world, but to those who are hurting, poor, outcast, abandoned, and desperate, it was a shining light of goodness and joy.

The same word is used again here:

**1 Corinthians 15:33** "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"

But perhaps most importantly is how Jesus used the word:

**Matthew 11:30** "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

We must return to the reality that "love is kind in Christ".

## LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS

Love is not jealous... in Christ. You could understand this to mean that "love is not jealous of the world in Christ", nor is love "jealous of what others receive in Christ". Consider:

**Acts 7:9** "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him..."

**Galatians 4:17** "They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them."

Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph because Jacob loved him and blessed him with many great blessings; they did not desire Joseph, nor any good for him, but they only desired what he had. Likewise, Paul warns the Galatians Church about false teachers and uses the same Greek word (Zeloo) for "jealous" to say "they eagerly seek you" - these false teachers want dominion over the Christians to cause the Christians to zealously seek them instead of Christ. They want what is due Christ!

But there is a godly jealousy;

**2 Corinthians 11:2** "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

There is a godly jealousy that comes from deep love in Christ; the kind of jealousy that wants to deliver others to Christ! It wants to see others with Christ, and not taken captive to the world.

## LOVE DOES NOT BRAG AND IS NOT ARROGANT

Love does not brag or behave arrogantly... in Christ.

**Colossians 2:18** "Do not let anyone cheat you of your reward by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels, dwelling on those things which he has not seen, vainly arrogant due to his unspiritual mind,"

False revelation, dreams, and visions come from arrogance. This tells you something that is very important: love is a prerequisite for fruitful spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift received apart from love has no benefit.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-2** "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife. But you are arrogant. Instead you should have mourned, so that he who has done this deed might be removed from among you."

Arrogance is also demonstrated in how we respond to sin; when we observe sin in the Church, it should cause us to mourn because the Church does not belong to us, but to Christ, who is worthy to receive a holy Bride - but when we are un-phased by sin in the Church, it means that we are acting as though the Church belonged to us. Sin in the Church is a terrible thing.

**1 Corinthians 8:1** "Now as concerning food offered to idols: We know that 'we all have knowledge.' Knowledge produces arrogance, but love edifies."

**Colossians 3:10** "Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

Likewise, knowledge, when detached from love produces arrogance. Yet, when knowledge founded on love in Christ, it is renewing!

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:5

**(NASB)** Doesn't act unbecomingly, it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered

**(MEV)** Does not behave itself improperly, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil

**(NKJV)** Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil

### LOVE DOES NOT ACT UNBECOMINGLY

Love understands proper boundaries and abides within them.

**1 Corinthians 7:36** "If any man thinks that he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, and if she is past the flower of her youth, and passions so require, let him do what he will. He does not sin. Let them marry."

### LOVE DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN

**John 1:38** "Then Jesus turned, saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are You staying?'"

Jesus always asks the questions that pierce to the deepest depths of our hearts; "what do you seek?" Do you come after Jesus because you seek your own, or because you seek Him?

Consider:

**Luke 12:29-31** "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

**Philippians 2:21** "For all seek their own, not the things of Christ Jesus."

## LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED

Love is not easily provoked... in Christ.

Consider:

**Acts 17:16** "While Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols."

## LOVE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WRONGS SUFFERED

Love takes no account of wrongdoing... in Christ.

Consider:

**Romans 4:8** "blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:6

(NASB) Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

(MEV) Rejoices not in inequity, but rejoices in the truth;

(NKJV) Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

## LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN INIQUITY, BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH

Love rejoices... in Christ, but not in iniquity.

**Matthew 5:12** "Rejoice and be very glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

**Revelation 11:10** "Those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."

**Philippians 4:4** "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

## 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7

(NASB; MEV; NKJV) Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

### LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

Love bears all things... in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 9:12** "If others partake of this right over you, should not we instead? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but suffer all things (bear all things), lest we might hinder the gospel of Christ."

### LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS

Love believes all things... in Christ.

Consider:

**Matthew 24:23** "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe it."

Love is not gullible towards the truth, it *believes* the truth. Love does not, however, believe lies.

**1 Peter 1:8** "whom, having not seen, you love; and in whom, though you do not see Him now, you believe and you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,"

**John 7:38** "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."

**Matthew 9:28** "When He entered the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.'"

But consider:

**Matthew 27:42** “He saved others. He cannot save Himself. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.”

**2 Thessalonians 2:10-12** “and with all deception of unrighteousness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love for the truth that they might be saved. Therefore God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie: that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

**James 2:19-20** “You believe that there is one God; you do well. The demons also believe and tremble. But do you want to be shown, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

Note: **Galatians 5:6** "In Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but faith working through love."

## LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

Consider:

**Matthew 12:21** “and in His name will the Gentiles trust.”

**1 Peter 1:13** “Therefore guard your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

**1 Corinthians 15:19** “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

But consider:

**John 5:45** “Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust.”

**1 Timothy 6:17** “Command those who are rich in this world that they not be conceited, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who richly gives us all things to enjoy.”

## LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS

Consider:

**Matthew 24:13** “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

**Hebrews 12:1-2, 7** “Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (V7) Endure discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom a father does not discipline?”

**2 Timothy 2:10** “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

## CONCLUSIONS

I cannot escape the conclusion that love is possible only in Christ.

# LOVE & HOLINESS

## Part Six: "The Law of Love"

### INTRODUCTION

My hope is that you see the full force Scripture places behind "love" - call it "supernatural love", "ἀγάπη love", or "Christ-like love" - apart from love there can be no holiness in God's sight (Eph. 1:4; 1 Cor. 13:2). Thus it is written,

**Galatians 5:6** "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love"

Faith - being a heart-convicted trust in Jesus Christ and His word - expressing itself through supernatural, Holy Spirit produced love, is *everything*. If you have any doubt that whoever says they know God, but does not love, has deceived themselves and is still in the darkness, please review lesson #4 (especially 1 John 4:7-8).

I also hope that God has lifted your view of love above mere "emotions" and placed it on the high plateau of heart-connected action and truth (1 Jn 3:18); likewise, that you have seen that love is two-dimensional (1 Jn 4:21); there is both a vertical and horizontal aspect to love (Mt. 22:37-40). If your love does not run vertically towards God, any horizontal demonstration of love towards mankind is in vain (John 14:23; 15:10); but without the horizontal demonstration of love towards mankind, any vertical demonstration of love towards God is invalidated (Mt. 25:41-46; 1 Jn 4:20).

This week our focus as we close this series will be on *the law of love*;

**Galatians 6:2** "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The Church is entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation - not condemnation - by which the brokenhearted, the wounded, and the despairing can be made whole, healed, and given joy in Christ Jesus to the glory of God!

This ministry of reconciliation is carried out by brothers and sisters who walk alongside each other in the Spirit - not by church "programs" and "self-help" psychology; by brethren who know how to "weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice" with sincere hearts full of the affection of Jesus Christ.

## SONS OF THE MOST HIGH

**Luke 6:35-36** "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, **and you will be the sons of the Most High.** For He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. **Be therefore merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**"

Let's take a look at some definitions real quick:

**MERCIFUL:** Greek Cognate: #3629 οἰκτίρων (oiktírmōn - an adjective, derived from #3627 /oikteírō, "express visceral-compassions") – compassionate, experiencing deep pity (lamentation) as God has for people who look to Him for help in their difficult situations.

> **VISCERAL:** vis·cer·al\ 'vi-sə-rəl, 'vis-rəl\ adjective: coming from strong emotions and not from logic or reason

Nothing except the call to the cross demands greater faith and necessitates greater love for God than Jesus' call to this unfailing, unmerited, and merciful love. Certainly no other commandment confronts us with our own human inability more than Jesus' commandment to *supernatural-love*.

HOW CAN I express visceral compassions towards even my enemies when I find in my heart only apathy, distrust, ill-will, or even hate? God's word tells you that you can't; **only the Holy Spirit working in you can take your cold heart and make it burn with compassion for even your enemies** (Galatians 5:22)! Whoever tries to produce this kind of love in their heart by the strength and will of their own flesh will meet failure time and time again (Romans 8:4-9; cf. 13:8, 10).

I cannot make my heart express visceral compassions for others when all my heart possesses is selfishness, apathy, and enmity! If you despair of your inability to love due to the coldness of your heart, then you need the renewal of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit!

CONSIDER THIS QUESTION as we continue on with this lesson: *does your compassion ever express heart-felt pity and mercy for sinners, even as God has shown great pity and compassion towards sinners?*

## LESSON: Romans 12:9-21

While our last lesson focused on the quality and virtues of love, this lesson focuses specifically on "how" we are called to love.

The law of love is composed of **23 exhortations:** (PREACH)

1. **Let love be without hypocrisy**
2. Hate what is evil and cleave to what is good.
3. **Be devoted to one another with brotherly love.**
4. Prefer one another in honor.
5. Do not be lazy in diligence.
6. Be fervent in spirit.
7. Serve the Lord
8. Rejoice in hope
9. Be patient in suffering
10. **Persevere in prayer**
11. Contribute to the needs of the saints (brotherhood)
12. Practice hospitality
13. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
14. Rejoice with those who rejoice
15. Weep with those who weep
16. Be of one mind
17. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.
18. Do not pretend to be wiser than you are.
19. Repay no one evil for evil.
20. Commend what is honest
21. Live peaceably with all men.
22. Do not take revenge; but give place to God's wrath.
23. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### LET LOVE BE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY

Literally, "let love be free from hidden agendas and falsehood."

**Original Word:** ἀνυπόκριτος, (adjective) anupokritos – properly, not a phony ("put on"), describing sincere behavior free from hidden agendas (selfish motives) – literally, "without hypocrisy" or unfeigned.

This first exhortation speaks to the purity of the love we show towards one another.

**1 Timothy 1:5-6** "Now the goal of this command is love from a pure heart, and from a good conscience, and from sincere faith. [Straying from these], some have lost their way..."

Each of these aspects of love, "a pure heart", "a good conscience", and "a sincere faith", are specifically attributed in Scripture to the regenerating work of God upon believers: Psalm 51:10; Hebrews 9:14; Romans 10:17.

**James 3:17** "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

The mind of love is heavenly wisdom: Ephesians 1:17-18.

**1 Peter 1:22-23** "Since you have been purified by obedience to the truth through the Spirit unto a genuine brotherly love, love one another deeply with a pure heart, for you have been born again, not from perishable seed, but imperishable, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

What is the end result of Christian obedience to the truth through the Holy Spirit? Is it not *brotherly love*? If this is the eternal result of our Christian obedience in the Spirit, then it is fitting that we love one another deeply with pure hearts that have been born again from the imperishable Seed through the everlasting Word of God.

## **BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE**

Literally a double-love commandment to "*show the special love of devoted family affection towards one another*".

**DEVOTED:** Original Word: **φιλόστοργος**, (adjective) #5387 /philóstorgos ("devoted love, shown by family-members") is that special affection shared between members of God's family – people born-again (divinely adopted) and serving the same (heavenly) Father!

**BROTHERLY LOVE:** Original Word: **φιλαδελφία** (noun; feminine) #5361 /philadelphia (from 5384 /phílos, "loving friend" and 80 /adelphós, "a brother") – properly, affection for the brethren (fellow-believers).

## PREFER ONE ANOTHER IN HONOR

Literally, "lead one another in the way of honor".

**Original Word:** προηγέομαι (verb); proēgēomai short definition - lead onward by example; #4285 (from 4253 /pró, "before" and 2233 /hēgēomai, "leading to an important conclusion") – properly, to lead the way, passing on the right example (modeling, exhibiting) the proper behavior, i.e. so others can follow the one "going first."

Love does not lead others into shame or dishonor, but rather, love leads others in the way of honor. Does the world sometimes call the honorable things of God "dishonorable"? Yes! But love possesses the mind of heavenly wisdom and knows what is honorable in God's sight and leads others towards honor.

Therefore it is written,

**Romans 2:6-7** "God 'will render to every person according to his deeds'. To those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality will be eternal life."

## PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

Literally, "resolutely continue praying with intense effort, even in the face of difficulty".

**Original Word:** προσκαρτερέω (verb) proskartereō; from 4314 and 2594; to attend constantly – to resolutely continue doing something with intense effort even in the face of difficulty.

Love does not give up on prayer; even when the subject of our prayer seems hopeless, and the difficulties seem insurmountable, love exerts intense effort in prayer!

## CONCLUSIONS

**John 15:12** "This is my commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you."

It is my firm conviction that the single greatest tragedy to befall the Church today is that this commandment is not being taught front-and-center. Instead, "love" has been left to those who would pervert its meaning in order to justify their sin. But Jesus said His commandment was to love each other, as He loved us!

Consider the commandment of love for yourselves:

**Romans 13:8** "Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

**Romans 14:1, 13**, "Welcome him who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of arguing over opinions", "therefore let us no longer pass judgment on one another, but rather determine not to put a stumbling block or an obstacle in a brother's way".

**Romans 15:1-2** "We who are strong out to bear the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification."

Everything that we will be preaching on in the coming year - joy, righteousness, and growing in the Lord - rests on this foundation of being filled by the Holy Spirit with *supernatural love*.

But in closing this series I want to offer one sober warning:

**Matthew 24:12** "Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold"

Each and every one of us today is at a crossroads between "love" and "sin"; you cannot have both *supernatural love* and your lust, your covetousness, or your pride. Either you will pick up the cross and deny yourself sin so that Christ's supernatural love can burn within your heart, or, you will depart from God in sin and the love of Christ will grow strangely cold...