

TEACHING GOAL

To study the nature of biblical love as set forth in the summary of the Ten Commandments.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

S.C. 42, L.C. 102,122, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 76-79

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:17-42

Support Passages: I Corinthians 2:9 (Isaiah 64:4), Joshua 22:5, Psalm 97:10, 116:1-2, 119:97, 113, 127, 132, 167; Proverbs 10:12, 17:9; Ecclesiastes 3:8; Isaiah 56:6; Amos 5:15; John 8:42, 13:35, 15:13; Romans 12:9, 13:8-10; Revelation 12:11

BIBLE STORY

Luke 10:29-37; The good Samaritan.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27, ESV)

APPLICATION

We all need to improve the quality of our love for God and our neighbor as ourselves. Let us improve as well the quality of our compassion for others following the example of Christ.

SUMMARY

Love as we have studied it in previous lessons is in essence commandment keeping.¹ If we truly love God and mankind (including ourselves) we will keep the laws of God as they apply variously to God and mankind. Since we have already dealt with this matter we shall, in this lesson, consider a particular outworking of biblical love.

There are three Greek words which are translated as "love"; *agapao*, *phileo* and *erao*. *Erao*, which refers to sexual love, is never used in Scripture. It is not that this kind of love is avoided in the Bible. To the contrary, a great deal is written concerning such love but with other terms.² We may infer from this that love, at least in biblical terms, is not to be confused with sexual relationships. Furthermore, we should take note of the difficulty our modern society has in conceiving of love that far transcends that of the purely physical. *Phileo* refers to a liking for someone or something. Paul, for example, speaks of those who love (*phileo*) him in the faith.³ However, the commandment which is before us, concerns the highest form of love, namely, *agapao* love.

The highest, most sublime example of *agapao* love is the love God has for His elect people in giving His unique Son to die for their sins. Jesus' love for Lazarus similarly demonstrates this kind of love. Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus⁴ not merely with *phileo* love but with *agapao* love. That he was fond of Lazarus is seen in His weeping on the occasion of his death. As John writes, "He was deeply moved in Spirit, and was troubled."⁵ Surely love for God and our neighbor involves a fondness or compassion for them from which it follows that we must seek their good and shun doing evil to them.

At the human level, this fondness is seen in the friendship of David and Jonathan. The Scripture states that Jonathan loved David as he did himself⁶ and as the story of their friendship unfolds we see Jonathan doing good to David even at the risk of his own life. David places this form of love on the highest plane when he states of Jonathan, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women."⁷ This certainly was the *agapao* love that binds man to man in the ties of friendship, or that which knits one to another in simple human fondness. It is interesting that John never uses the Greek word for compassion in his Gospel, but expresses this concept only with the word *agapao*.

¹ John 14:15, I John 5:3

² Genesis 4:1, Romans 1:24ff

³ Titus 3:15

⁴ John 11:5

⁵ John 11:33

⁶ I Samuel 18:1-4

⁷ II Samuel 1:26

This leads us to a consideration of the parable of the Good Samaritan.⁸ After the lawyer had correctly stated the summary of the Ten Commandments, he raised the question "Who is my neighbor?" Who is this one to whom we are to show *agapao* love? According to the parable it could be anyone and not just our friends or relatives. The Samaritan had compassion for someone he had never seen before but someone who had need. This man was of unknown nationality and had been the victim of robbers, therefore the parable deals exclusively with the innocent victim. It does not deal with our relationship to criminals or national enemies.

Another example is seen in Ephesians 5:22-33 where Paul uses the love of Christ for the church as a model for the marriage relationship. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies according to this same text. Fathers are likewise to love their children by admonishing and teaching them the things of the Lord. In addition fathers chasten their children for the same reason; they love their children.⁹

Perhaps the highest form of human love is taught by Jesus, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends."¹⁰ The scriptures teach particular atonement very clearly in this text. God loves all mankind in a certain restricted manner¹¹ but oh how he loves his friends! He died for them! Can we do less for Christ? "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."¹²

The LORD preserves all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.¹³

⁸ Luke 10:29-37

⁹ Hebrews 12:5-13

¹⁰ John 15:13

¹¹ Matthew 5:45

¹² Revelation 12:11

¹³ Psalm 145:20