

If Ye Fulfil the Royal Law
James 2:8

James 2:8 reads, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.”

In **James 2:8** we find the commendation of the Lord our God Himself in His Holy Word unto all who fulfill His royal law. Herein the law of the Lord our God is described as His royal law because He is the divine Lord and King of our lives. Indeed, this reveals that we believers in this time of the New Testament do have the responsibility to serve under our Lord’s authority and to submit ourselves in obedience under the authority of law for our lives. Furthermore, we have the responsibility to fulfill our Lord’s royal law, that is – to obey it completely and consistently. Finally, we are brought to understand that we must fulfill our Lord’s royal law over our lives in accord with the Old Testament Scripture from **Leviticus 19:18**, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” If we do this, then the Lord our God through His Holy Word by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit commends us with the declaration, “Ye do well.” If we do this, then in our Lord’s sight we are walking in the way of righteousness.

So then, what does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves? In **Leviticus 19:17-18** this instruction was first given, wherein God’s word declares, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.” Then throughout the New Testament, this instruction of our God’s law was quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ on two occasion in **Matthew 19:19 & 22:39** (with **Mark 12:31** being a parallel passage to Matthew 22:39), by the apostle Paul on two further occasions in **Romans 13:9 & Galatians 5:14**, and by James in **James 2:8**. Even so, through a study of these and of some supporting passages, we may develop a greater understanding concerning what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves.

- I. To love our neighbor as ourselves is the foundational principle of God’s law in relation to others. In **Matthew 22:34-40** God’s Word declares, “But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” In answering this lawyer Pharisee, our Lord Jesus Christ revealed the two greatest and most foundational commands in all of God’s law for our lives. The first of these two greatest and most foundation commands is that we must love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our mind. Upon the hook of this first great and foundational command hang all of the other Godward commands in God’s Holy Word. The second of these two greatest and most foundational commands is that we must love our neighbor in the manner that we naturally love ourselves. Upon the hook of this second great and foundational command hang all of the other manward commands in God’s Holy Word. This command to love our neighbor is

the very ground in which every other manward command is rooted and from which every other manward command grows. Indeed, the Lord our God does intend that we would walk in love toward all those who are around us. His law of love is the basic reason that He has delivered all of His other commands concerning our relationship with others. Yea, His law of love is the basic principle that ties together all of His other commands concerning our relationship with others.

Even so, there is no other command in all of God's law concerning our relationship with others that stands greater and is more important than the command to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the parallel passage of **Mark 12:28-30**, God's Word declares, "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." There is not a single other command of God's Holy Word that stands greater than these two commands of love. Concerning our relationship with the Lord our God, there is not a single other command that is greater or more important than the command to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind. In addition, concerning our relationship with those around us, there is not a single other command that is greater or more important than the command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Therefore, walking in godly love toward another individual is the foundational principle and motivation for us to fulfill God's law in relation to that individual. In **Romans 13:8-10** God's Word proclaims, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 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 neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." In like manner, in **Galatians 5:14** God's Word proclaims, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." All of the manward commands in God's law can be briefly summarized and comprehended in this singular principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Whenever we truly walk in godly love toward another individual, we will inevitably obey and fulfill our Lord God's whole law in relation to that individual. On the other hand, whenever we disobey any one of our Lord God's commands in relation to another individual, that disobedience is certain evidence that we are not walking in godly love toward that individual at that particular moment. Furthermore, whenever we engage in the "activity" of obedience in relation to another individual, but do so without the motivation of godly love toward that individual, our "activity" of obedience is of no spiritual profit. Indeed, this is the very reason that **James 2:8** indicates that we are to obey and fulfill the royal law of our Lord and King in accord with the Old Testament principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Godly love toward another is the governing principle of all such obedience. Godly love toward another is the driving motivation for all such obedience. Godly love toward another is the essential ingredient in all such obedience.

- II. To love our neighbor as ourselves is a debt that we constantly owe unto those around us. In **Romans 13:8** God's Word gives the instruction, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." First, we are instructed herein to pay off our debts so that we do not owe anything to anyone in the matter of material things. Yet then we are informed that "to love one another" is a debt that is excluded from this instruction. In fact, this Biblical exclusion reveals that we do indeed owe everyone the debt of love constantly and continually. Now, in this context we are to understand that the phrase "one another," no only encompasses all of our fellow believers, but actually encompasses all of our fellow man. We come to this understanding through the closing phrase of **Romans 13:8**, wherein the responsibility to love another is connected to the fulfillment of our Lord's law – "For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." This understanding is then expanded as the word "another" is further defined in **verses 9-10** by the word "neighbour" – "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 neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Thus the Lord our God through His Holy Word lays upon us the responsibility of a love-debt that we owe unto everyone and anyone around us. Indeed, this is a responsibility of love-debt that is continually renewed, so that we are constantly required to bestow more and more love unto those around us no matter how much love we have previously bestowed unto them in the past. Therefore, whenever we encounter any individual, wherever we might encounter that individual, whether he or she may be a family member, a fellow believer, a personal friend, a co-worker, or an individual in the general public, we should recognize that we owe that individual a debt. Yea, we should immediately recognize that we owe that individual a debt of love; and we should immediately seek to pay on that debt.

Yet the question might be asked – Why do we owe a love-debt unto everyone that is around us? A debt is commonly understood to be an obligation that we owe unto another because of something that we have received. So then, what have we ourselves received so that we in turn have become debtors to love all others who are around us? The answer is to be found in **1 John 4:9-11** – "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." We believers have received the eternal love of God our heavenly Father through the sacrifice of God the Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to save us from our sinfulness. Even so, because the Lord our God and heavenly Father has first bestowed this love unto us, we in turn have now become debtors to bestow love unto all who are around us. Furthermore, because the love that the Lord our God and heavenly Father has bestowed upon us is an eternal love, the obligation and responsibility of love-debt that we owe unto those around us is also a constant and continual debt that is ever renewed and never completed.

- III. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we work no ill against those around us. In **Romans 13:9-10** God's Word declares, "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 neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Indeed, both sides of this matter are true. Not only is it true that genuine, godly love will work no ill toward one’s neighbor; but also it is true that genuine, godly love will work much good toward one’s neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not work things that will be damaging against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not commit adultery, or even sexual lust, against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not commit murder, or even anger, vengeance, or hatred, against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not steal from our neighbor, cheat our neighbor, deceive our neighbor, selfishly manipulate our neighbor, or disrespect our neighbor’s possessions, position, or person. Loving our neighbor means that we do bear false witness against our neighbor, speak lies about our neighbor, gossip against our neighbor, mock our neighbor, or slander our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not have a covetous and envious spirit against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not puff ourselves up with pride and boast ourselves against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do not behave inappropriately, inconsiderately, obnoxiously, or selfishly against our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we do influence our neighbor toward sinfulness and ungodliness. On the other hand, loving our neighbor means that we will behave with humility, meekness, kindness, gentleness, and compassion toward our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we will be longsuffering, forbearing, forgiving, tenderhearted, and peaceable toward our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means that we will esteem others as better than ourselves and that we prefer others in honor above ourselves. Loving our neighbor means that we bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. Yea, loving our neighbor means even that we bless those who curse us, that we do good unto those who hate us, and that we pray for the benefit of those who despitefully use us. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.” Rather, love works good and benefit for his neighbor.

- IV. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we do not use our Christian liberty for an occasion to our selfish flesh. In **Galatians 5:13** God’s Word gives the instruction and provides the contrast, saying, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Furthermore, in **verse 14** God’s Word delivers the explanation, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” So then, we may understand that this passage reveals some truth concerning what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves. Indeed, in **verse 13** we find a two-fold instruction. Therein we find an instruction concerning that which we are not to do and an instruction concerning that which we are to do. On the positive side, the instruction concerning that which we are to do indicates that we are to pursue godly love and the behavior of godly love in relation to others. Even so, the contrasting instruction concerning that which we are not to do reveals behavior that is directly contrary to godly love and the behavior of godly love in relation to others. What is this contrasting instruction? We are not to use our Christian liberty for any occasion to our selfish flesh. According to the teaching of God’s Word in the New Testament Scriptures, our selfish flesh is the principle of selfishness and sinfulness that motivates us to walk in disobedience against the Word, will, and ways of the Lord our God. By definition, it is essentially and motivationally selfish in all that it desires and pursues. Furthermore, according to the

teaching of God's Word in the New Testament Scriptures, selfishness is the opposite of godly love. Indeed, **1 Corinthians 13:5** reveals that Biblical charity (that is, godly love in our behavior toward others) "seeketh not her own." So then, giving an occasion to our selfish flesh not only is contrary to a walk after God's will, but also is contrary to a walk after godly love toward others. Therefore, to love our neighbor as ourselves we must not give our selfish flesh any base of operation in our lives. We must not give our selfish flesh any opportunity to influence our behavior, for it will move us contrary to godly love for those around us. Our spiritual liberty in Christ from the condemnation of the law certainly does not grant us the freedom to do whatever we ourselves want, especially not at the expense of those around us. Indeed, our spiritual liberty has not been granted unto us so that we might pursue selfish interest and selfish exaltation at the expense of and in damage to those around us. Such a pursuit is not spiritual liberty at all. Rather, it is selfish license; and it is contrary to God's law of love in our lives.

- V. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we pursue a behavior of service unto those around us. Again in **Galatians 5:13-14** God's Word gives both the negative and the positive instruction, saying, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." We believers are responsible at all times to love our neighbor as ourselves, and by that love we are to serve others. Literally, we are to serve as the slaves of those who are around us, helping them in whatever way that we are able. This is the love-debt that we owe at all times unto all who are around us – to serve them. We are not to be motivated by the desire that others should serve us. Indeed, this is the motivation of selfishness and of our selfish, sinful flesh. Rather, we are to be motivated by the direction that we should love and serve others. This is godly love. This is loving our neighbor as ourselves in a truly godly manner. We are to love others by laying down ourselves and giving of ourselves in service to them. This was the mindset of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make Himself of no reputation and to take upon Himself the form of a servant. (See **Philippians 2:6-7**) Even so, this is the same mindset that we are to have, to make ourselves of no reputation and to take upon ourselves the form of a servant unto those who are around us. (See **Philippians 2:5**)
- VI. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not verbally "bite and devour" those around us. In **Galatians 5:14** God's Word quotes the command from the Old Testament Scriptures, saying, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then in direct contrast **Galatians 5:15** presents the admonition, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Clearly to bite, devour, and thereby consume those around us is the opposite of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Yet what does it mean for us to bite, devour, and thereby consume those around us? The picture that this series of actions presents is that of wild, ravenous animals tearing at the prey with their teeth, devouring the flesh of the prey, and thereby destroying the very life of the prey. This picture is used as a vivid illustration concerning the manner in which we might verbally communicate with and about those around us. Indeed, according to the opening portion of **Proverbs 18:21**, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Even so, **Proverbs 18:8** describes the words of a talebearer, of an individual who speaks harsh and biting words against another, saying, "The words of a talebearer are as

wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” Again the opening half of **Proverbs 12:18** declares, “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword.” Yet again **Psalms 64:3** describes those who speak biting, bitter words, saying, “Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words.” Indeed, **Psalms 52:4** speaks of “all devouring words;” and the closing half of **Proverbs 10:11** reveals that “violence (that is – the blood of violence) covereth the mouth of the wicked.” Such biting, bitter, devouring, destructive communication is not a characteristic of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Rather, it is the very opposite of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Thus we are not to allow any such communication to proceed out of our mouths, either against or about others. Rather, we are to speak only “that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” (**Ephesians 4:29**) Even so, the opening half of **Proverbs 15:4** declares, “A wholesome tongue (that is – a tongue that is motivated by godly love) is a tree of life.” Again the opening half of **Proverbs 10:11** states, “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life.” Yet again **Proverbs 16:24** proclaims, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

- VII. To love our neighbor as ourselves requires that we walk under the directing influence of God the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the instructions, exhortations, and admonitions of **Galatians 5:13-15** concerning the matter of loving others, **Galatians 5:16** then declares, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Now, **verse 13** had previously revealed that walking after our selfish flesh and serving others by godly love are the opposites of each other. Therein in the contrasting instructions were given, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” So then, if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves in a godly manner, we must not fulfill the lusts and works of our selfish, sinful flesh. Indeed, if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves in a godly manner, we must deny and overcome the selfishness of our selfish, sinful flesh. How then can we successfully deny and overcome the selfishness of our selfish, sinful flesh. **Galatians 5:16** gives answer, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” We must walk in, under, and after the directing influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must daily submit ourselves to be filled with and motivated by the holy influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must daily submit ourselves to be guided by and empowered through the holy direction and influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must daily submit ourselves to walk after and obey completely the holy direction of the indwelling Holy Spirit. By this means we shall be able to deny and overcome the selfishness of our selfish, sinful flesh, with its selfish lusts and selfish works. In addition, not only shall we deny and overcome our selfish flesh by walking under the directing influence of God the Holy Spirit, but also we shall produce the fruit of godly love as we walk under the directing influence of God the Holy Spirit. Even so, in **Galatians 5:22-23** God’s Word gives the report, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Herein we take note that the first godly characteristic of this list is godly love. Indeed, as we submit ourselves to walk under the directing influence of God the Holy Spirit, we shall be characterized by godly love toward others. So then, to love our neighbor as ourselves requires that we walk under the directing influence of God the Holy Spirit.

VIII. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we be moved with compassion to help those around us who are in need. In **Luke 10:25-29** God's Word gives report concerning a certain lawyer (that is – a scholar of the Mosaic Law) tested the Lord Jesus Christ. Therein we read, "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" In this account we notice that the lawyer recognized the two greatest and most foundational commands of God, that we must love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and that we must love our neighbor as ourselves. Yet we also notice that this lawyer asked a question concerning the command to love our neighbor as ourselves. In fact, he asked this question in order to find a ground for self-justification. He certainly recognized the need to love his neighbor. Yet he desired to limit the application of this command to love others. Indeed, he desired to limit the definition of the word "neighbor," and thereby to limit the application of the command to love those around him. If he was required to love his neighbor, and if the word "neighbor" could be limited to a choice few, then he was only required to love a choice few. Especially this lawyer desired to exclude from the definition of the word "neighbor" anyone whom he might classify as an enemy. This was just what was taught by the scholars of the Mosaic Law, even as our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in **Matthew 5:43**, saying, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

Yet our Lord Jesus Christ did not answer this self-justifying lawyer with the limiting definition and application that he desired. Rather, our Lord Jesus Christ answered this lawyer with a parable and a concluding question of His own. Even so, **Luke 10:30-36** states, "And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" Finally, **Luke 10:37** reports the lawyers answer to our Lord's question and our Lord's final instruction to the lawyer, saying, "And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Now, through this parable and the concluding question, our Lord Jesus Christ revealed that this lawyer had asked the wrong question. We are not to ask the question, "Who is my neighbor," with a motivation to limit our responsibility to love others. Rather, we are to ask the question, "To whom can I be a neighbor," with a motivation to be moved with compassion for others in their need and to be merciful and loving in helping those in need.

In our Lord's parable, the wounded man had a certain need. He had been attacked by thieves. All of his money and even his clothing had been stolen. He had been wounded in the attack and had been left half-dead. Second, the wounded man had an observable need. He was left wounded on the open roadway where any traveler could see him and his need. Third, the wounded man had a desperate need. He was in such a case that he could not help himself in any way. Finally, the wounded man had a meetable need. His need was such that those traveling past would have had some ability to meet his need. Yet the first two individuals that traveled past, both men of religious position, did nothing whatsoever to help this wounded man in his need. They both saw him and his need. They could not have indicated that they did not know that this man had a need. In addition, they both would have had some means to help meet this wounded man's need. Yet in both cases these first two travelers, the priest and the Levite, moved to the other side of the roadway in order to ignore and avoid the wounded man's need. They were not moved with compassion to help. Rather, they were moved with selfishness to avoid. As such, neither of these travelers conducted themselves as a loving, merciful neighbor toward the wounded man. On the other hand, when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he was moved with loving compassion upon him even though the wounded man was a total stranger. Being moved with loving compassion, the Samaritan went to the wounded man in order to help in his need. He physically treated the wounded man's wounds. He put the wounded man upon his own traveling beast, sacrificing his own convenience for the wounded man. He then took the wounded man to the closest inn and cared for him through the night, sacrificing his own time for the wounded man. Finally, the Samaritan made arrangements for the wounded man's continuing care, sacrificing his own money for the sake of the wounded man. So then, who was a loving and merciful neighbor to the wounded man? Clearly the Samaritan was. The Samaritan was the one who loved his neighbor as himself, just as we are commanded by the Lord our God. Even so, if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must go and do likewise.

- IX. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not defraud or deal deceitfully with those around us. In the closing portion of **Leviticus 19:18** we find the command first given in God's Holy Word, "But thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD." Since this command begins with the contrasting conjunction "but," we are brought to understand that that this instruction concerning what we ought to do is delivered in direct contrast to behavior revealed in the preceding concerning what we ought not to do. In fact, that preceding context extends at least from **verse 13** to **verse 18**, with **verse 18** serving as the concluding and foundational instruction for the entire passage. Indeed, these verses present a series of prohibitive instructions concerning our interpersonal relations with others; and throughout these verses the word "neighbour" is used five different times. So then, the first of these prohibitive instructions is given in **Leviticus 19:13**, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." In addition, just two verses previous in **verse 11** the prohibitive instruction was given, "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another." Even so, by these prohibitive instructions we are brought to understand that loving our neighbor means that we do not deal in a defrauding or deceitful manner against others. First, this means that we do not deal in a defrauding manner against others – that we do not

steal from others, that we do not hold back from others that which is their due, and that we do not manipulate others out of that which is their due. Second, this means that we do not deal in a deceitful manner against others – that we do not lie to others, that we do not behave in a false, deceitful fashion with others, and that we do not speak falsely about others. Such behavior is the very opposite of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

- X. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not be impatient or abusive against those with a physical disability. In **Leviticus 19:14** the prohibitive instruction is given, “Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.” Herein we note that this instruction concerns our behavior toward the deaf and the blind, that is – toward those who have a physical disability. Such individuals are also within the category of our neighbor, and we are to love them as ourselves. So then, what are we prohibited from doing as we demonstrate godly love unto such physically disabled individuals? First, we are instructed not to curse the deaf. Indeed, we are not to speak harsh and biting words against them. Certainly, this prohibition is somewhat clear in its declaration and meaning. However, it also implies something more. In the majority of cases, when an individual speaks curses against the deaf, it is because that individual has become impatient and frustrated at the deaf individual’s inability to comprehend some communication. As such, this first part of the prohibitive instruction implies that we must not allow ourselves to become impatiently frustrated with those who possess a physical disability, so that we are not moved and motivated to express harsh words against them. Second, we are instructed not to put a stumbling block in the way of the blind. Such behavior is simply that of a mean, malicious spirit. Certainly, a blind individual would not be able to see the stumbling block in the way. Thus the stumbling block will cause the blind individual to stumble and fall, possibly even unto his or her physical damage. As such, placing a stumbling block in the way of a blind individual is simply to be defined as mean-spirited abuse of another, especially of an individual who possesses a physical disability. Even so, both an impatient spirit and an abusive spirit are the opposite of godly love toward our physically disabled neighbor.
- XI. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not practice respect of persons in the judgment of those around us. In **Leviticus 19:14** the prohibitive instruction is given, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.” Herein we are instructed concerning matters of judgment neither to give special respect “to the person of the poor” simply because we feel for his poor condition, nor “to the person of the mighty” because we desire the benefit of his favor. Rather, we are instructed concerning matters of judgment to pursue after a just and righteous judgment, basing our judgment strictly upon the actual character and conduct of those involved. In matters of judgment, it is not the external condition of the individual’s involved, whether poor or mighty, that should matter. Rather, it is the actual character and conduct of those involved that matter for making just and righteous judgments. Now, to love our neighbor as ourselves requires that we pursue justice and righteousness in matters of judgment. Therefore, to love our neighbor as ourselves means that we must not allow any respect of an individual’s external condition or person to sway us in such matters of judgment. So then, what is included in these matters of judgment? First, such would include official cases concerning criminal

activity or civil disputes. Furthermore, such would include general cases wherein we may be involved as a mediator between disputing parties. Finally, such would include the judgment calls that we make concerning those around us whereby we govern our behavior toward them.

- XII. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not behave as a talebearer against those around us. In the opening portion of **Leviticus 19:16**, the prohibitive instruction is given, “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.” Concerning the ways and words of the talebearer, **Proverbs 26:20-22** declares, “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” Herein we find that the gossiping ways and words of the talebearer stirs up strife and wounds others’ hearts. Even so, we must recognize that gossiping and talebearing is a hurtful and malicious practice. As such, we must also recognize that the practice of gossiping and talebearing is certainly not a practice of godly love toward others.
- XIII. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not do anything that might put those around us in jeopardy. In the closing portion of **Leviticus 19:16**, the prohibitive instruction is given, “Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.” To “stand against the blood” of an individual means to behave in a manner that puts them in physical jeopardy, unto possible injury, bloodshed, or even death. Such would indicate that we must not serve as a false witness against an individual in criminal case. Furthermore, such would indicate that we must engage in physically abusive or criminal activity against others. Indeed, **Proverbs 1:10-16** warns against involving ourselves in such activities, saying, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.” Finally, such would indicate that we must not ignore the physical peril of another individual when we are able to prevent it. In this regard **Proverbs 24:11-12** gives the warning, “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?” Certainly such behavior would not be in accord with the principle of godly love toward others.
- XIV. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not have a spirit of hatred toward those around us. In the opening portion of **Leviticus 19:17**, the prohibitive instruction is given, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.” Certainly, we all recognize that a spirit of hatred is the opposite of godly love toward others. Indeed, God’s Word makes this clear in the contrast of **Proverbs 15:17**, saying, “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.” Again God’s Word reveals the contrasting behavior of hatred and love in **Proverbs 10:12**, saying, “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.” Furthermore, God’s Word teaches that the Lord our God classifies a spirit of hatred

toward another as being equivalent to a spirit of murder toward that individual. In the opening portion of **1 John 3:15**, God's Word declares, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Yet this matter does not simply concern actions of hatred toward another, but also encompasses an attitude of hatred toward another. Again we consider the prohibitive instruction from **Leviticus 19:17** – "Thou shalt not hate thy brother *in thine heart*." This is very definitely a matter of the heart. In fact, it is possible to employ an external manner of sweetness toward another as a deceptive covering over a inner spirit of hatred toward that individual. God's Word warns concerning this in **Proverbs 26:24-26**, saying, "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; when he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation." Indeed, we are even prohibited from harboring a spirit of hatred toward our antagonists and our enemies; for in **Matthew 5:43-45** our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

XV. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we do rebuke our neighbor for sinful conduct in his or her life. In the closing portion of **Leviticus 19:17**, the positive instruction is given, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Some may argue that godly love would not express reproofs and correctives of another, because might hurt the feelings of that other. Yet God's Holy Word declares otherwise. Indeed, God's Holy Word directly instructs us to express a reproof unto our neighbor against his or her sinful conduct. Such reproof is within the realm of godly love because it does not simply and silently allow sin to take hold upon the life of our neighbor, and thereby bring him or her to destruction. This reproof is a loving warning against danger. Knowing the danger of sin, godly love expresses this reproof in order to warn our neighbor away from danger and destruction. Yea, this expression of godly love toward another must not be neglected, but must be expressed "in any wise," in whatever opportunity the Lord our God will provide. Even so, **Proverbs 27:5** presents the truth with great force, saying, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." Indeed, "open rebuke" is a very characteristic of godly love toward another. Yet that "open rebuke" must be delivered from a Spirit-filled heart and in a spirit of meekness. In **Galatians 6:1** God's Word gives the instruction, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." In like manner, the opening portion of **Proverbs 27:6** declares, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." The wounds of loving reproof are faithful wounds, motivated for the purpose of spiritual correction and edification. Such wounds are not the abusive wounds of a biting spirit that are intended to pierce with harshness. Rather, such wounds are the faithful wounds of a loving heart that are intended to cut away unhealthiness.

XVI. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we do not hold a spirit of vengeance against those around us. In the opening portion of **Leviticus 19:18**, the prohibitive instruction is given, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." In-

deed, our natural inclination is to return evil for evil and railing for railing. Yet this is not the way of godly love toward those around us. In fact, God's Holy Word commands us, not simply to refrain from returning evil for evil or railing for railing, but actually to return kindness and blessing for evil and railing. In **1 Peter 3:8-9** God's Word declares, "Finally, be ye all 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 ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." Again in **1 Thessalonians 5:15** God's Word proclaims, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." Yet again in **Exodus 23:4-5** God's Word instructed in the Old Testament Law, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Even so, in **Romans 12:14** God's Word proclaims, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." Again in the opening portion of **verse 17**, God's Word declares, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." Finally, in **verses 19-21** God's Word instructs, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

XVII. To love our neighbor as ourselves means that we not carry a grudge in our hearts against those around us. Again in the opening portion of **Leviticus 19:18**, the prohibitive instruction is given, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." Now, to hold a grudge means "to store up a strong, continuing attitude of anger, bitterness, and ill-will against another over some perceived grievance (whether real or imagined)." Such a practice is not the way of godly love toward those around us. Even so, in **James 5:9** God's Word delivers the warning, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door."