

THE BOTTOM LINE

I shall never forget the story I once heard of a man who had a near death, or more accurate, after death experience. During his life, he had been a very religious man and held firmly to a long list of requirements that he supposed one must be faithful to if he were to be accepted into Heaven. He recounted how that after his spirit left his body, he passed through a tunnel of light. At the end of the tunnel he was greeted by a divine being that he presumed to be Jesus, though he didn't see his face, the overwhelming love that emanated from this being could have been, in his understanding, none other than Jesus Himself. He met his loved ones that had gone on before him. He told about the peace and love of that celestial realm. When asked what surprised him the most he replied, "I was the most amazed at how simple the Gospel was, and how complicated I had made it. When all is said and done, it all comes down to this," he reflected, "Did I love the Lord my God with all my heart and soul, mind and strength and my neighbor as myself?" Needless to say, the man returned to this realm of life a changed person.

I believe that to one degree or another we all have been spoiled through much teaching,

away from the simplicity of Christ. We, like the man in the story above, have had our long list of doctrines that we subscribe to, and feel that we must keep every line of them, and we seem compelled to see that others around us are held to that same list of decrees, if they are to walk on in God.

In our 30 years of walking with the Lord we have encountered all sorts of strange doctrines and nearly every kind of slant on the scriptures. We have come through Pentecost, and it's many variations, and the various camps of 'Sonship.' We know some who emphasize the importance of using the Hebrew names of God and Jesus, British Israel, New Age concepts of 'We are God', doctrine of Bishops and Coverings, previous lives (which sounds very close to reincarnation) and many more too numerous to mention. Some are tossed back and forth between different views of, "Am I in the Bride or am I part of the Son or both?" and "If this is the Day of the Lord, shouldn't **He manifest Himself?** Or since the work is all done and God rested, shouldn't we just 'roll up our sleeves, get out there and start setting creation free?" I'm not saying that there are not elements of truth found in some, or even all of the above. But I am convinced that all true doctrine, no matter

how deep and profound, will bring us ultimately again to the simplicity of Christ. I have said it before and I believe it bears repeating, "the deep things of God are profound, but they are profoundly simple." I am sure that we have all known those who could share the mysteries of the Kingdom with great eloquence and depth and yet, when it came down to walking in the simplicity of that word they seemed not to have a clue.

I am so grateful for the glorious light of this new day and the God given hunger that caused a craving to know Him in a greater and greater way. Our hunger and thirst has been greatly rewarded over the years as great and mighty things were revealed to us that we knew not. Those 'exceeding great and precious promises' have been, as it were, a hook in our jaw that God used to draw us through many hardships and suffering. But whatever visions of grandeur these promises held for us in the past, we have come to understand that the place to which the truth is leading us is; to love the Lord our God with all that we are and to love all men with God's love. In the words of J. Preston Eby, "The glory of God is nothing more or less than the expression of God's nature through a human vessel."

As for me, there is a principle by which I weigh all teachings that come my way. Does this new 'light' cause me to love the Lord my God in a greater way? And does it cause me to love my neighbor as myself? If not, then what does it really matter? What good is it if I have all faith that I can move mountains? So what, if I speak with tongues of men and angels and have all the gifts and understand all mysteries? Does it really matter if I **am** from the lost tribe of natural Israel? If I do not love—without partiality—it profits me, not little, but **nothing**. (I Cor. 13:2)

In the whole of the four Gospels, Jesus gives two commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself." (Luke 10:27) This truly is the sum total of all the law and prophets, and is exactly what Jesus came to this earth to reveal; God's love and life veiled in flesh.

Some will say that I am over simplifying the message of the Kingdom. "What about all the great revelations that God has given to His people, through the years?" You may ask. "What about the cross message, Sons of God,

and the Melchisedec Priesthood?" I am convinced that every truth, in one way or another, will bring us to the essence of these two commandments.

The word '*mystery*' seems to hold such curiosity because of its' obscure nature, that somewhere in the recesses of our mind we imagine that the mysteries of God are something tangible that will be revealed outside of us and separate from us. These glorious things that are revealed to us in the Spirit (our heavens, the invisible realm) may seem complex to our understanding. However, when the same truths are manifested in the earth, or visible realm they are so simple we fail to perceive that they **are** the same. That's why the Jews had such a difficult time with Jesus. As long as He remained a prophecy out of the book of Isaiah or the Psalms, they could still imagine some utopia over which **they** would reign, no matter the condition of their heart, but Jesus came as the visible expression of the kingdom with such simplicity that they despised Him. O no, this could not be the Messiah, this man with such a simple message and life style. The simplicity stumbled them.

I am not saying that we don't need to have a deeper understanding of God's great plan for the ages to come. However, I do believe we get so weighted down with side issues and we make this thing so complicated that it causes some to think they could never attain because it's too difficult to understand. Isaiah 35:8 tells us that this highway should be so simple that a wayfaring man, though he be a very simple man, cannot miss the way. The only possible way that this path could be so plain that it cannot be missed, is because it's the way of **love**.

If Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself," then we need to make that our focus and all other truths will find their place.

We use the word **love** loosely in our day and in our culture. We 'love' the nice weather, our favorite food, our favorite past times etc. We claim to love our friends and neighbors, but at the first dispute we lose our love. Make no mistake about it, this is not the kind of love with which we are commanded to love the Lord our God. God is love and our God is also a consuming fire. As I heard someone say, " God

does not have love—He **is** Love. If you **have** something, then it is not a part of you.” That has been our problem in the past; we tried to have love for the Lord and our neighbor. The only way we will truly fulfill this commandment is for us to allow the God of love, who is also a consuming fire, to arise within us and little by little the fire of His love will burn away all other things that we have loved. Then as we become one with that fire, His heart becomes our heart, His mind becomes our mind, and His strength becomes our strength. Only then can we truly love our neighbor.

These two commandments deal with the very core of who we are. When we love the Lord with **all** our heart there will be no impurities to flow out of it. Our heart is the seat of our motives and intentions from which all actions proceed. Blessed are the **pure** in heart for out of that heart will flow a pure stream with no mixture.

When we love the Lord with all our soul, we will surrender our will and desires to Him in all things. We will finally come to the place where we say, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” In theory this is easy to accept, but our natural man will surely oppose it in practice. It’s not the

great and noble things that we are called to do that is the problem. It's in those little things that we face every day in which we must give up our 'rights.'

When we love Him with all our strength, we will finally come into His rest and cease from our own strivings. We will understand the reality of, "It's not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord. We will fully trust in, adhere to and rely on the Lord for **all** things. We will not give our energy and resources to that which builds up and strengthens the natural man.

When we love the Lord with all our mind, we will allow all other springs, from which we draw our natural life, to dry up. We will cast down every imagination and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought into captivity and obedience. We can and will make our very thoughts obey the Lord.

If we love our neighbor as our self, then that means we must be able to love ourselves first. If you hate yourself you will not be able to love others. This does not mean we are to love our self-life, but we must see ourselves as God

sees us. If He loves us, what right do we have to hate ourselves? If we love our self-life, we put our needs and desire above all others. But, if we love ourselves as God loves us, we understand that His love is holy and not self-serving. If we love ourselves with God's love, we will not knowingly harm our body, which is His temple.

If we truly love others we must begin with those closest to us. Let's take our spouse, for instance. What should be difficult about loving our husband or wife? And yet, how often do we show more kindness and consideration to strangers than to our own spouse? This should not be and is one of the contributions to the high divorce rate. When we love them as God loves them things will surely change. We will love our children as God loves them, not the weak cowardly affection that is called love today. I am sure that we all know the term, 'our neighbor' doesn't just mean the guy next door, nor does it only mean our friends and acquaintances. However, it is plain to see that we, as the church, still have love with partiality and are, therefore, prejudiced. It is easier to volunteer our help to the pastor, or some other 'important' member than it is to the 'least.' There is still prejudice of gender, prejudice of

color, prejudice of race and nationality. There is prejudice against the poor, against those who are overweight, against those who would dare to have more than two or three children, and God help your 'lack of wisdom' if you have eight children, as we did. The church has difficulty loving her own, let alone the lost and unlovely. The list goes on, but I desire for us to see that love, God's holy refining love is the answer.

Yes, when all is said and done, and after God's holy love has completed all its work within us, and after all the mysteries of the universe have been revealed, the bottom line is that we shall become one with that refining love and all of creation shall be changed as a result. Whether it be subduing nations and setting in order this groaning creation, or creating new worlds to the glory of God, for what greater purpose could it possibly be done, but to gather **all things** that are in heaven, and **all things** that are in the earth, and **all things** under the earth into His Holy refining love!

Have you ever become confused and overwhelmed after you encountered a teaching that was new to you? I certainly have and the Holy Spirit always reminds me to, 'put on the shelf,' that which I do not understand. If it is

truth, the Lord will open my understanding in His time. I have learned to weigh all things by the only standard of measure, He who is truth, Jesus our pattern. That narrows down all great and high-minded teachings to the simplicity of the life of Jesus our Lord. That's it folks. That's what we are called to. Since He is the truth, He is the center from which all truth springs. If He is not the center of any teaching, the result of that teaching will not bring life, but death. When you come into contact with any new teaching ask yourself this question. "Does this teaching complicate the simple gospel of, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself?" Will I be sidetracked from my pursuit of loving the Lord with all my being and loving **all** men as God loves them? If so, what real value does it have? I should say that not only the new things we hear, but all of the old teachings we hold on to should also be examined in this same light. (I Cor. 13:13) There are three things that remain—faith, hope, and love—and the GREATEST of these is **love**. May we yield to His love that it does all His pleasure. Amen.

Betty Houk

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