



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY DR. JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. BOX 5695
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813 U.S.A.

See my blog at www.stonekingdom.org

Issue #199

September 2015

All We Need Is Love, *Part 2*

In our investigation and study of the spiritual fruit of love, we had arrived at the apostle John's remembering the words of Jesus, words which give us (at least in part) the Creator's definition of love. Jesus said:

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

This is so important that Jesus repeats it twice more in this passage.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

That's three times in a minute that Jesus said the same thing. Now he turns right around and says the same thing from the negative:

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Pop quiz: How are we to love God? Answer: keep His commandments. Good, I think we understand that. The next question is rhetorical. *What* commandments was Jesus talking about?

Considering that there was no New Testament (NT) yet written when Jesus walked the earth, the only commandments that He could have been referring to were those given in what we call the Old Testament (OT).

Sadly, there are vast numbers of Christians—whom we call “antinomians” (which simply means anti-law) — Christians who are mistaught to think that the law of the OT has somehow been “put away and nailed to the cross.” They incorrectly assert that the commandments Jesus was referring to were those, for example, that He gave in the sermon on the mount.

However, if you analyze the sermon on the mount, you will discover that every bit of it is based upon God's commandments, statutes and judgments as found in the OT. Sad to say, most Christians are incapable of correctly analyzing the sermon on the mount for the simple reason that they are generally ignorant of OT law beyond the ten commandments.

Grossly ignorant, if I may say so. I also assert that *Jesus brought no new commandments*. He did teach that there was much greater depth to them than most had ever seen before. I say that He brought no new commandments even though He said this.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, **That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**

There is nothing new in that commandment in the sense that it had never been uttered before. Of course, it had—way back in the giving of the law, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. We will come to that in due course.

It was only new in the sense that during these 3½ years with Jesus, the apostles had experienced the love of Jesus first-hand, and at this point Jesus could turn to them and charge them to go and do likewise.

In that sense, it was new. It was new to them by personal experience, by having seen the all-encompassing law of love manifested perfectly before them in the person of Jesus Christ.

It was the beloved apostle, John, who had written those words of Jesus in his gospel when he referred to it as a “new” commandment, yet 30 years or so later, John writes this in his epistle:

2 John 1:5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

I am stressing this point to some extent because there is great danger in antinomianism. When Christians are taught that God’s law has been nailed to the cross and that now we are “living under grace,” some interpret that in such a way that all kinds of ungodly behavior becomes justified in their minds under the name of “love.”

For example, illicit sexual intimacy occurs in the congregation because someone thinks that they are “helping” a brother or sister in Christ who is “hurting” or “lonely.” It *feels* like the right thing to do. It’s their version of love in action.

Or to take another very common example, murderers and kidnappers are sentenced to jail instead of being executed because Christian society as a whole now believes that God’s judgments for capital crimes are no longer in effect under the NT. And I could go on for pages citing more examples, but I’m sure you understand what I mean.

No doubt, there are some men (and women) teaching in the seminaries and preaching in the pulpits who are indeed wolves in sheep’s clothing, who are there for the specific purpose of leading the flock of God astray. One of the best ways to do that is to preach a mushy-gushy, touchy-feely type of “love” which is totally devoid of the constraints of God’s law.

They place grace and love *in opposition to God’s*

law. In doing so they equate liberty with licentiousness—licentiousness meaning the excessive indulgence of liberty. Licentiousness is actually contempt for the just restraints of law and morality and decency.

I am not saying that all who teach this false definition of love are out-and-out wolves—I’m sure many teach it out of ignorance, but I repeat, there are definitely some who have infiltrated Christianity for this express purpose. Therefore, Jude—who was the half-brother of our Lord—warned the early church of just this type of infiltration when he wrote this in his epistle.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [*licentiousness*], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Incidentally, this is not meant to be a treatise on why God’s law is still in effect, but it is related to our subject of love, so it is necessary that we expound it at least briefly. For a more extensive treatment (biblical proof) on the fact that God’s law is still in effect, obtain my two lectures, entitled: *God’s Law: Abolished? —Or To Be Obeyed?* See page 4.

For those who might wonder about that phrase we so often hear bandied about concerning the law being “nailed to the cross,” if you look at it in Colossians 2:14, we find that it is *not* referring to the commandments, statutes and judgments at all, but to the ceremonial and ritual *ordinances*—such as the animal sacrifices—those are what have been nailed to the cross.

Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Antinomians are quick to insist that we are not saved by the works of the law but solely by grace through faith. I agree completely with them. That is wholly Scriptural. God does not love us and save us based upon our obedience to His law, but solely through the merits and obedience of His Son.

New Testament love is not some kind of new and “higher principle” that supersedes and makes obsolete God’s OT moral laws—the commandments, statutes and judgments. Instead, God’s OT law provides the

direction and our motivation for obedience.

Furthermore, living by God's grace does not negate the law. This is an issue which confuses vast multitudes of Christians—and ministers as well. They believe that grace and NT love on the one hand, and obedience to the law on the other are opposites, that they are mutually exclusive.

In fact, they are mutually supportive and balancing. Our love for God is expressed *through* our obedience to His law. Our obedience is a *response* to His love for us, not a means to try to *earn* His love. John the beloved said in...

1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

The Scripture also states that ...

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Does it follow then that God loves you and me, even though we are still sinners? Yes it does. Did God love you when you were still a sinner and before you were converted? Yes, of course. If you have any doubt about that, think about the case of Saul who became Paul. Did God love Paul before he was blinded on the road to Damascus? Absolutely!

So He loved Paul while Saul was yet an unconverted sinner, correct? Then it likewise applies to you and me. Therefore, we can say that "God loves you just the way you are." That's a phrase heard often in "touchy-feely" Christianity, it is easily misunderstood as implying we are okay the way we are. While it is true that God loves you now (as you are, an unconverted sinner), He has a plan for you (and everybody), to clean you up. The key point is that there is nothing that you or I can *ever* do to merit His love or to merit His saving us into eternal life. That is what *grace* and mercy is all about! He loves you and accepts you *solely* by the merits earned by His Son.

However, if that last statement is left to stand on its own and we do not qualify it with other Scriptural principles, it leaves us open to some very serious accusations due to misunderstanding.

For example, we can see how this can lead some

people to think that God doesn't really care then whether we sin or not. False. And then think about the alternative: that God loves us only if we are obedient, and since you and I are never completely obedient, then God never loves us completely. It's always conditional love on God's part. Also false.

When we understand those two false alternatives, it clarifies the issue of grace versus works. Here is the proper way to frame the choices. We are either accepted and loved by God based upon His grace and mercy. True. Or we are loved and saved based upon *our own* merits and works—false.

The person whose spiritual vision is shortsighted, however, might reason to himself: Well, since God's love is not conditional upon my obedience, then I am free to do whatever I please and to live however I wish.

But anyone who thinks that way really does not understand grace at all. To repeat, grace and law are mutually supportive, not mutually exclusive. Grace does not mean that we have the liberty to live as we please, to live our lives disregarding God's laws. Such disregard is not true liberty anyway. It is licentiousness—taking license to live immorally.

On the contrary, our loving obedience to God's law is the best *evidence* that we truly understand His grace. Obedience is not to earn salvation or earn God's love; it is the evidence, it is the *proof* that we *do* love Him.

Here is another thought that may help further our understanding on the relationship between law and grace. Our Father-God is the Creator. He is the King. And He actively governs all His creation. The universe (and all that is) is His realm. All creation is subject to the laws He established for His realm.

We Christians are children of the King by grace through faith. But just because we are the sons and daughters of the King, it does not mean that we are exempt from obedience to the laws that our Father has established for His realm.

In fact, the King's sons and daughters, who greatly love their Father, should be the ones setting the *best* examples, of being foremost in demonstrating obedience to the laws of the realm, in order to show our love, honor and respect for our Father, the King.

Our obedience is motivated by love in the true spirit of the law. We will elaborate that idea later. Legalism, on the other hand, is when we view obedience as the means to earn or merit salvation. Legalism is when we see our works as the reason for God's love and blessings upon us.

So just as one little example for now, here's a tough one for some of us: do we tithe or donate to the ministry because either (a) we will be blest if we do, or (b) we will suffer if we don't. If *either* of those is our motivation for giving, then we are falling short. Our highest motivation in giving should be out of love for God.

I am not trying to lay guilt upon anyone, because if we know the Scriptures concerning giving, we are aware that God said He would open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings (Malachi 3:10). We can't ignore what we are aware of, but we can seek to let God polish our motivation for giving, to bring it fully in accord with His desire that *we give out of love*.

In Deuteronomy, chapter 8, God warned the children of Israel that when they got wealthy, that they should not become proud and arrogant or else they would begin to think that they had obtained blessings and wealth all by their own strength and know-how.

It reminds me of how I used to hear so many patriotic Americans credit our great Constitution and our great free enterprise system as the reasons why America was so greatly blest. Not so. We have been so greatly blest because He is a covenant-keeping God, and He covenanted with our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bless us in the latter days.

In commenting on this passage in Deuteronomy 8, Martin Luther made a very astute observation when he spoke about the "blessings that at times come to us through our labors, and at times without our labors, but *never because of our labors*; for God always gives them because of His undeserved mercy" towards us.

When Jesus was queried what was the greatest commandment, He answered that the greatest commandment was two-fold: to love God with everything you've got, and to love your neighbor as yourself. We had read that from Mark's gospel. In the account of this incident in Matthew's gospel, Jesus added this:

Matthew 22:40 On these two commandments

hang all the law and the prophets.

That phrase "the law and the prophets" was a shorthand method of referring to all the OT. Going one step further, it is apparent that the entire OT can be summarized in the commandment to love God, because we saw that loving our neighbor is the means by which we show our love for God. All the writers of the NT repeated this idea in one way or another. In Paul's great treatise on love in 1 Corinthians 13 he concludes by saying that the greatest of all the virtues and gifts is love. The apostle James said it this way.

James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

The Lord told Peter in the breakfast on the beach (John 21) to feed His lambs and sheep as a means of showing his love for his Lord. Therefore, Peter writes the believers in—

1 Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Notice how Peter connects obedience with love. With all these concepts taken together, we can summarize it all by saying that "**love is all** we need." But contrary to the Beatles song, it's not easy! It will be easy in the Age of Tabernacles, when we have immortality, but while we yet inhabit these earthly tabernacles of flesh and blood, attaining *agape* love at all times and with all people is a continual struggle...as it is meant to be! In the next issue we will expound OT law from the perspective that love is the fulfillment of the law. (To be continued.)

Order Dr. Bruggeman's two-part lecture on God's Law

God's Law: Abolished?—Or To Be Obeyed?, parts 1 & 2. CD #s 568 & 569. \$15 postpaid.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of Dr. James W. Bruggeman and it is sent out freely. However, we reserve the right to discontinue sending it at any time to any one. The donations and tithes of those who are blest, taught and fed by this publication make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts can be sent to PO Box 5695, Asheville, NC 28813. Thank you.