

BIBLICALLY THINKING

— about —

LOVING GOD

The First and Greatest Commandment



“
**Berean
Bites**
”

TOPICAL SELECTIONS TO SAVOR & SHARE

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them” —Jer 15:16a

THE BEREAN CALL



THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT LOVING GOD
The First and Greatest Commandment

Published by The Berean Call
Copyright © 2018

ISBN-13: 978-1-68138-016-2

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from
The Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV)

This booklet is part of a set of materials that includes a study guide
and audio CD. You may order more copies by calling 800-937-6638
or go to: www.thebereancall.com

To access our free online archives of newsletters, radio programs,
and online audio and video materials about a variety of biblical
issues go to: www.thebereancall.org.

Our newsletter *The Berean Call* is also available by mail for free in
the USA. Please call or write to subscribe, or subscribe online at
www.thebereancall.org/subscribe.

Our online store is located at: www.thebereancall.com.

The Berean Call
PO Box 7019
Bend, OR 97708



CONTENTS

Knowing and Loving God	5
God Is Love	12
God So Loved	19
Love Is Commanded.....	25
The Love of God in Christ	32
Loving God	38
The Gospel: Pure, Simple, and Utterly Profound.....	45

Dear Reader,

We're glad you are reading this Berean Bites booklet!

The Berean Call was founded in 1992. Over the years we have accumulated a massive archive of information on a variety of topics. We have a weekly radio program, monthly newsletter, and yearly conference, as well as books, CDs, and DVDs by Dave Hunt, T. A. McMahon, and others.

The content of this booklet has been gleaned from our archives. We believe that what is presented here is consistent with what the Bible teaches, but don't take our word for it!

The name of our ministry comes from the Bereans in Acts 17:11, who "searched the scriptures daily," to "know if these things are true. We encourage you to do the same.

We hope that what we present will encourage you to search the Scriptures daily and let God confirm in your heart what is true.

For much more information on this subject see:

- + Related newsletter articles*
- + Related radio programs, and other audio*
- + More questions and answers*
- + A free digital version of this booklet*
- + A free digital version of the study guide that accompanies this booklet*

Please also visit our website, www.thebereancall.org to access our complete research archives.

Our online store is located at www.thebereancall.com.

Or call us at 800-937-6638 if you are interested in receiving our newsletter and other materials by regular mail.



INTRODUCTION

Knowing and Loving God

Hear, O Israel [1]: . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

Jesus said . . . This is the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:37,38).

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 (John 14:23).

BOTH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS given to Israel and the moral law God has written in every conscience (Romans 2:14-15) require each of us to love God with our entire being. Such a demand is laid upon us not because God needs our love, for He is infinite and lacks nothing. Nor is it because God is self-centered or proud and thus demands that we love Him above all else. He commands us to love Him with our whole heart because nothing else could save us from our incorrigible enemy, Self.

This first and greatest commandment is given for our own good. God loves each of us so much that He wants to give us the greatest possible blessing: Himself. He does not, however, force Himself upon anyone, for that would not be love. We must genuinely and earnestly desire Him. “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13) is the promise of God, who otherwise hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). And again, “He is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

This fervent seeking after God with the whole heart, without which no one can know Him, has always been the mark of His true followers. One of the psalmists likened his passion for God to the thirst of a deer panting for water (Psalm 42:1,2). David expressed it the same way: “O God . . . I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee . . .” (Psalm 63:1). What greater desire could one have than knowing God? Yet this most worthy pursuit is neglected even by Christians.

How astonishing that the infinite Creator of the universe offers Himself to such degraded creatures as ourselves! Nor is His love an impersonal cosmic force; it is intimately personal. Think of that! Such love should awaken a fervent response within us. Yet how many of us express our love to God even once a day, let alone love Him with our entire being? Sadly, even Christians are caught up instead in the forbidden love of the world (1 John 2:15) and the pursuit of its deceitful rewards.

Loving God is the first commandment because our obedience to all His other commandments must be motivated by love for Him. Moreover, since God commands us to love Him with our whole being, then our entire life—yes, everything we think and say and do—must flow from that love. Paul reminds us that even giving everything one possesses to the poor and being martyred in the flames is in vain unless motivated by love for Him.

If loving God with one’s whole being is the greatest commandment, then not to do so must be the greatest sin—indeed, the root of all sin. How is it, then, that loving God, without which all else is but “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1), is not even found in the course lists of our theological seminaries? How can it be that this “first and great[est] commandment” is so neglected in the church? The sad truth is that among today’s evangelicals it is not loving and esteeming *God* but *self-love* and *self-esteem* that are presented as the pressing need!

I speak to my own heart. At times I weep that, like Martha (Luke 10:38-42), in the busyness of *servicing* Christ, I give so little thought or time to *loving* Him. Oh, to be more like Mary! How does one learn to love God without

ever having seen Him (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12,20)? Obviously, there must be a *reason* for loving God—or anyone. Yes, *reason* and *love* do go together. Love must result from more than a physical attraction, which, in itself, can only arouse a fleshly response. In addition to the outward appeal there are the inner beauties of personality, character, integrity and, of course, the other's love response. God loves without such reasons. Our love, even for Him, requires them. "We love Him, *because* He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Our heavenly Father loves even those who make themselves His enemies, those who defy Him, reject His laws, deny His existence, and would tear Him from His throne. Christ proved that love in going to the cross to pay the penalty for all, even asking the Father to forgive those who nailed Him there (Luke 23:34). Such is the love that the Christian, having experienced it for himself, is to manifest through Christ living in him: "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" (Matthew 5:44).

To love God with our whole heart and our neighbors as ourselves is not something we can produce by self-effort. Love for our fellows must be the expression of God's love in our hearts; nor can we love God except by coming to *know* Him as He is. A false god won't do. Yet at the 1993 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC, Vice President Al Gore said, "Faith in God, reliance upon a Higher Power, *by whatever name*, is in my view essential." No one can love the "12-Step God-as-you-conceive-Him-to-be." That would be like loving some imaginary person. To know the true God is to love Him; and to know Him better is to love Him all the more.

Most of us have an all-too-shallow knowledge of God. Nor can our love for God grow except from a deepening appreciation of His love for us—an appreciation that must include two extremes: 1) God's infinite greatness; and 2) our sinful, wretched unworthiness. That He, who is so high and holy, would stoop so low to redeem unworthy sinners supremely reveals and demonstrates His love. Such an understanding is the basis of our love

and gratitude in return and will be the unchanging theme of our praise throughout all eternity in His glorious presence (Revelation 5:8-14).

There can be no doubt that the clearer one's vision of God becomes, the more unworthy one feels and thus the more grateful for His grace and love. Such has always been the testimony of men and women of God. Job cried out to God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor [hate] myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Isaiah likewise lamented, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Such recognition of their sin and unworthiness did not decrease but enhanced the saints' love for God and appreciation of His grace. The more clearly we see the infinite chasm between God's glory and our sinful falling short thereof (Romans 3:23), the greater will be our appreciation of His grace and love in bridging that gulf to redeem us. And the greater our appreciation of His love for us, the greater will be our love for Him!

There is no joy that can compare to that of love exchanged. Nor is there any sorrow so deep as that of love spurned or ignored. How it must grieve our Lord that His redeemed ones love Him so little in return! That grief comes through in scripture passages such as these: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1:2). "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32).

Even more reprehensible than forgetfulness and neglect is the teaching of Christian psychology that God loves us because we are lovable and worth it. Richard Dobbins, best-known Assemblies of God psychologist, suggests that one repeat, "I am a lovable, forgivable person." Bruce Narramore boasts, "The Son of God considers us of such value that He gave His life for us." If that were true, it would not increase but decrease our love for Him and our appreciation of His grace. The Bible teaches that our love for

God and our appreciation of His love and forgiveness will be in proportion to the recognition of our sin and unworthiness!

Such was the lesson Christ taught Simon the Pharisee when He was a guest in his house. Jesus told of a creditor who forgave two debtors, one who owed a vast sum and another who owed almost nothing. Then He asked Simon, “Which of them will love him [the creditor] most?” Said Simon, “I suppose . . . he, to whom he forgave most.” “Thou hast rightly judged,” replied Jesus. Then, rebuking Simon for failing even to give Him water and a towel, and commending the woman who had been washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, Christ declared pointedly, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:36-47).

It is both logical and biblical that the more sinful and worthless we realize we are in God’s eyes, the greater our gratitude and love that Christ would die for us. By whatever extent we imagine that we are lovable or worth His sacrifice we lessen our appreciation of His love. The Bible teaches that God loves us not because of who we are but because of who *He* is. “God is love” (1John 4:16). If God loved us because something attractive or worthwhile within us elicited that love, then, changeable creatures that we are, we could lose that appeal and with it God’s love. But if He loves us because *God is love*, then that love can never be lost, for God never changes! Therein lies our security for eternity (Jeremiah 33:3)—and all the glory is His!

We often find it difficult, especially in trying circumstances, to rest in God’s great love for us—no doubt because deep within our hearts we know how unworthy we are. Christian psychology tries mistakenly to cure this sense of unworthiness by persuading us that we are worth it after all. Robert Schuller declares, “The death of Christ on the cross is God’s price tag on a human soul. . . . [It means] we really are *Somebodies!*” Not so. Christ didn’t die for *Somebodies* but for *sinners*. Dobbins says, “If we hadn’t been worth it, He wouldn’t have paid the price.” On the contrary, the greater the price, the costlier our sin, not our *worth*. That the sinless Son of God

must die upon the cross to redeem us shouldn't make us feel good about ourselves but ashamed, for it was our sins that nailed Him there. Yet Bruce Narramore calls the Cross "a foundation for self-esteem!"

This humanistic, self-inflating false gospel is being increasingly embraced by evangelicals. Establishing the counselee's self-worth is a key concept utilized at Rapha counseling centers founded by Robert S. McGee. Anthony A. Hoekema writes, "Surely God would not give His Son for creatures He considered to be of little worth!" Thus the love and gratitude toward God that the Cross ought to arouse in us is stifled by the perverted new belief that He did it because we are worth it. Jay Adams points out the horrible error of teaching that what God does for us is "a response on His part to our significance rather than an act of His love, free mercy, goodness and grace."

Our song for eternity will be, "Worthy is the *Lamb*" (Revelation 5:12). Heaven has no place for the erroneous belief that Christ died because we are worth it. Christ's death in our place had nothing to do with our worth but with the depths of our sin, the demands made by God's justice, and His eternal glory.

Of course, those who brought humanistic psychology's selfism into the church attempt to support it from Scripture. Bruce Narramore quotes Psalm 139 and suggests that the "wonderful pattern for growth, fulfillment and development" that "God built into our genes . . . is the ultimate basis for self-esteem." Surely the genius of the genetic code should cause me to bow in wonder and worship at the wisdom and power of *God—but self-esteem?* Seeing the marvels of God's creative power in my genes is no more cause for *self-exaltation* than seeing God's creative power in another's genes or in any other part of the cosmos—I didn't create it.

Paul declared, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). No basis for self-esteem there! Dare we think that we will ever be able to erase from our memories the fact that we are unworthy sinners saved by grace? Yes, God in His grace will give us crowns and rewards and we will even hear from our Lord's lips, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:

. . . enter thou into the joy of thy [L]ord” (Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:5) But will that give us a positive self-image, a sense of self-worth and self-esteem? C. S. Lewis answers: “The child who is patted on the back for doing a lesson well, . . . the saved soul to whom Christ says, ‘Well done,’ are pleased and ought to be. For here the pleasure lies not in what you are but in the fact that you have pleased someone you rightly wanted to please. The trouble begins when you pass from thinking, ‘I have pleased him,’ to thinking, ‘What a fine person I must be to have done it.’”

Our love for God even influences whether we yield to temptation. Lust is called both “deceitful” (Ephesians 4:22) and “hurtful” (1 Timothy 6:9) because it entices us with pleasure that is brief and involves disobedience to God and thus leads to pain and ruin in the end. Those whose focus is upon themselves think of God’s commandments in terms of pleasures denied. But those who are enraptured by God’s love have been delivered from self and find true and lasting pleasure and joy in obeying and thus pleasing Him. There is a joy that comes from pleasing God that is so far beyond any pleasure of this world that temptation loses its power in comparison.

The new theology denies us this path of victory. Its joy is selfish. But to obey the first and great commandment is necessarily to *deny* self as Christ commanded (Matthew 16:24). Nor can one deny self and at the same time love, esteem, and value self. Seeing God’s love as a response to my significance and worth salvages just enough value for self to deny God’s truth. Let us forget ourselves, our needs and hurts, and seek to know and love God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) because of who He is and His love and grace to us. His love will then flow through us to others, whom we will then esteem better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Such is the path to true joy (Hebrews 12:2). —*Dave Hunt, TBC*



GOD IS LOVE

TODAY, exactly as the Bible prophesied, man grows ever bolder in his defiance of God.

One basic element common to the rejection of Christ in the world and contempt for sound doctrine in the church is the lack of *musings*, i.e., thinking and reasoning carefully, especially about God, His Word, and His will. Instead, the chief pursuit of the world—and, sadly, of many Christians—is amusement. We are too busy entertaining ourselves to think of God. As atheism rejects theism, so amusement stifles musing.

Let's swim against the tide and muse together. God called to Israel: "Come now, and let us reason together . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword . . ." (Isaiah 1:18-20).

That cry comes repeatedly from God's heart, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth . . . I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel . . . doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:2-3).

God's reiterated pleadings for Israel to repent surely indicate that He was not the cause behind their sin. He had not foreordained their rebellion and judgment. They were not doing His will. The God of Israel reasons in vain with His chosen people: "I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not. . . . Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth . . ." (Jeremiah 44:4-6). Obviously, God had not

predestined their wicked behavior and doom, or He could not have called their idolatry “this abominable thing that I hate.”

Nor is the selfishness, jealousy, and hatred; the fornication, adultery, and divorce; the homosexuality, lesbianism and rejection of marriage as God ordained it; abortion and other murders; ethnic and religious wars and other violence so rampant in today’s self-centered world any more God’s will than was the wickedness in Noah’s time. That world was destroyed in the flood. Today’s world is ripening for an even worse outpouring of God’s wrath against sin.

Man was made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27)—not physically but spiritually. “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24) with no physical form. Man was to reflect the moral and spiritual character of God in all that he thought, said, and did. Eden’s Garden was not only a paradise of physical beauty and abundance beyond our imagination, but also a spiritual paradise as well—a bit of heaven on earth.

What a glorious relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed! The Garden was a symphony of God’s glory expressed in the exhilarating oneness of a man and a woman joined in that first marriage by God Himself: the ecstatic, untainted happiness of selfless love displayed in words and deeds of continual kindness, thoughtfulness, grace, mercy, pure goodness, and compassion, each seeking only the other’s joy in the wonder of intimate companionship!

When His creation of the universe, the animals, and man was finished, God pronounced it all to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Then what went so horribly wrong? How could man, made in the image of God, have such deep hatred against his Creator and such determination to take his own way and flaunt his rebellion before the compassionate and holy God to whom he owes his very existence?

The Bible calls this enigma “the mystery of iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) and declares that its secret source is in the depths of man’s heart: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,

fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within . . .” (Mark 7:21-23).

The heart is not only the seat of the emotions but of the will—like a fortified castle to which each person holds the only key: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

I will never forget the interview on TV of a Canadian who had been arrested in Saudi Arabia and falsely accused of terrorism. Under continuous torture, he “confessed his guilt” before he was released. That terrifying experience taught him two things: 1) Torture can be so excruciating that the strongest person can be made to “confess” to *anything*, even that he murdered his mother, or God; and 2) Yet no torture, no matter how unbearable, can make the victim *believe* what he is forced to confess.

There is a place deep inside where the real person guards his secret thoughts and true intentions. Solomon warns his son that what a man says is often a deceit to hide what he really is inside (Proverbs 23:6-8).

The Bible repeatedly calls this inner stronghold “the heart” or “the will.” Without it, one has no individuality—nor could one love another or receive love. God has so made us that even He cannot force us to believe anything. He reasons with us in the gospel to persuade us of the truth; but, sadly, most people do not listen to reason and insist upon pursuing the broad road to destruction though they know where it leads.

The world is filled with stubborn, disobedient youths who’ve grown up in rebellion not only against their parents but against all authority, especially God. The carrot of amusement that is offered even in the church has only led them further from in-depth thinking, i.e., musing. The result is “unreasonable and wicked men [who] have not faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:2).

The hidden bastion deep within can be either the throne of a selfish tyrant ruling others, or the seat of selflessness poured out for others in genuine love and compassion: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25);

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit . . .” (John 12:24).

God did not make us robots. In spite of the denial by Luther, Calvin, and many evangelical leaders today, God gave man a will to freely choose to love or to hate Him, to receive Christ as Savior and Lord or to reject Him. God wants man to trust Him so fully and to love Him so deeply as to give Him the keys to this inner fortress of the heart, holding nothing back: My son, give me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26).

God doesn’t want to trick us or to superficially persuade us by our emotions. He wants to win our hearts with His truth and love. “Know therefore . . . in thine heart . . . the Lord he is God” (Deuteronomy 4:39); “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5); “The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 13:3). God’s command for all to love Him with the whole heart proves His love and desire for all mankind to be saved. It would be unreasonable for God to command any to love Him whom He does not love enough to do all He could to save them, but has instead predestined to hell.

“Only fear the Lord, and serve him . . . with all your heart . . . consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed” (1 Samuel 12:24- 25); “turn ye even to me with all your heart . . . rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:12-13); “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]” (Acts 8:37); “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and . . . believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Creation’s most powerful witness to its Creator is found in DNA. Digitally organized instructions for building and operating trillions of cells as one body are inscribed upon DNA in encoded language that only certain protein molecules can decode. Everything written has an author! And the author of this amazing pool of intricate information could only be an

infinite Intelligence, the One who created and sustains all by “the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3).

The rebellion of Satan and man brought destruction to the entire order in the universe. The ongoing result has been natural disasters and a growing pool of disease and deformities among men and animals: “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together . . .” (Romans 8:21-22). Even some cells no longer follow the instructions encoded in the DNA, resulting in cancer.

In spite of overwhelming and indisputable evidence bombarding him daily, man refuses to obey his Creator. He is thus a spiritual cancer on the earth, doing “that which [is] right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

God would be justified in wiping man from the earth—which He almost did with the flood. We would not be alive today had Noah not “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8). And why is God gracious and merciful to rebels? Only because of His boundless love revealed in Christ Jesus!

Christ’s sacrifice for sin is the great proof of God’s love for all mankind: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The unspeakable horror of sin is revealed in the creatures’ mocking, scourging, and nailing their Creator to the Cross. And as sinful, rebellious man does his worst, God’s love shines all the brighter: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)—and to answer that prayer, the Father punishes Christ in full for the sins of the world, past, present, and future.

In loving response to rebellious man, who desires to tear Him from His throne, God sent His Son to become a man through the virgin birth and to pay the full penalty His own infinite justice required for sin. Indeed, He could do no other. What? *Could do no other?* Yes, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16).

There is a vast difference between saying that God is loving, and that God is love. The words, “God is,” are coupled with many glorious promises—and

warnings: God is, “thy refuge” (Deuteronomy 33:27); “my strength and power” (2 Samuel 22:33); “gracious and merciful” (2 Chronicles 30:9); “a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1); “my defense” (Psalm 59:17); “good to Israel” (Psalm 73:1); “faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13); “true” (John 3:33)—“a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29), etc. But these expressions describe how God *acts*, not what God *is*.

Love is the very essence of God’s being. He cannot but love. Though love that is truly selfless is rarely seen on earth, every person *knows* that such love is of God. That recognition is like a haunting memory deep in man’s heart of a paradise long lost.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they suddenly realized that “they were naked” (Genesis 3:7). Not that they were without clothes, for that had been true since their creation. Made in the image of God, they must have been clothed in the very light of God: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). It has been well said that “we are like mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright at all, depends entirely upon the sun [Son] that shines upon us.”

Sin stripped the first man and woman of all that God had intended for them as creatures made in His glorious image. The reflection of His glory no longer shone out through them. They were spiritually and morally naked. What a tragedy! And today man is still naked before his Creator, missing the glory that once clothed his first parents: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The love, which is God’s very essence, is missing because we have been separated from Him by sin. There is a bitter aching in the heart that nothing but God himself can satisfy. God is calling us to be reconciled to Him: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Most members of our tragic race turn to everything but God in an attempt to satisfy the longing that only He can fill: “Be astonished, O ye heavens . . . and be horribly afraid . . . saith the LORD. For my people have . . . forsaken

me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns . . . that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:12-13).

Some, however, will not be satisfied with anything less than God himself. With the psalmist, they cry, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God. . .” (Psalm 42:1-2). This is not a thirst to have one’s “needs” met or to see miracles that excite the flesh. This is a deep thirst to know *God himself* in such a close relationship as to become all that He desires one to be. Is this the passion of your heart—of mine?

In Christ’s prayer to His Father, He expresses the earnest desire that God’s perfect love would indwell and be manifest through those who know and love Him: “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). What a prayer from the heart of the One who longs to “bring many sons unto glory” (Hebrews 2:10) in His likeness (1 John 3:2)! Hear David’s earnest expectation: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

This is more than a restoration of the love that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden. That intimate relationship they had known with their Creator could be, and was, lost. What the new creature in Christ is brought into is infinitely better and can never be lost. Christ told a troubled Martha: “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would come to a full understanding of “the hope of his calling” (Ephesians 1:18). Wonder of wonders, God will eternally restore naked sinners “unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10)!

The new birth through faith in Christ begins a new and eternal life. Christ lives in us, but we must diligently partner with Him: “work out [not work for] your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians

2:12-13); “whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:29).

May we each have that same steadfast purpose in our hearts as we eagerly await His return. —*Dave Hunt, TBC*



GOD SO LOVED

HOW WONDERFUL to think that I am tenderly loved by God, the infinite Creator of the universe! That fact, if true, is so awesome that our finite minds are overwhelmed by the thought. But isn't this too good to be true? How can I be sure that God loves *me*? And what does that really mean?

When I was a boy in Sunday school, we used to sing in simple faith:

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world,
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

Is this favorite song of children biblical? Indeed it is!

Mothers brought young children to Jesus and the disciples drove them away. Did the stern disciples think these children were not among the “elect”? No, the disciples had never been taught such a concept by Jesus. Their problem was the same pride and lack of love with which Christ indicted the Pharisees: “Ye have not the love of God in you” (John 5:42).

Jesus took the children and blessed them, saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

Christ said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Therefore, we know that the tender love and compassion toward these children displayed by Christ was the revelation of the Father’s own heart of love toward all.

Is it possible that these particular children were a peculiar group in special favor with God? There is no indication of that at all. What Christ did and said for them could only have reflected His love for “all the children of the world,” as the song says.

But when we are no longer innocent children—when we know we have sinned and are accountable for every thought, word, and deed—what then? Does God love us still, though we are hopelessly unworthy of His love? Could that be true? If not, there is no hope of salvation for anyone.

It is utterly impossible that finite, imperfect sinners could ever be worthy of God’s infinite, perfect, and holy love. If God is to love us at all, it cannot be because of who we are, but *in spite* of who we are and only because of *who He* is.

“God is love” (1 John 4:8,16). Love is the very essence of His being. Therefore, He cannot but love all. And He has proved that fact by giving the Son of His love to die for the sins of the world.

The Scripture declares that the great manifestation of God’s love is the gift of His Son: “For God so *loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . In this was manifested the love of God toward us . . . God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him . . . hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us . . .” (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:9,10, etc.).

This truth of God’s gift of a Savior to the world was announced at Christ’s birth as “good tidings of great joy [for] all people” (Luke 2:10). Yet many claim that Christ died only for the sins of a select group called “the elect.” They are thus the only ones to whom the birth of Christ could possibly be the source of “good tidings of great joy.”

This teaching, which is growing in popularity and influence in the church, declares that “so loved the world” really means, “so loved part of the world.” Clearly, if Christ did not die for all, then God couldn’t have loved all, because the manifestation of His love is the death of His Son. There would be no biblical basis for saying that God loves or ever loved those for whom Christ didn’t die.

Some who hold this doctrine, however, attempt to say that God really loved everyone but not with the special love He reserved for those for whom Christ sacrificed Himself upon the Cross. But a professed “love” that does not do all it can to rescue the one loved is not truly love. It is like hypocritically saying to the “naked and destitute . . . depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled” but not giving them what they need (James 2:16).

Worse yet, many who hold this doctrine unashamedly declare that God predestined multitudes to eternal torment before they were even born—multitudes He *could* have saved had He so desired. They say that God’s love is displayed in His patience and temporal kindness toward all. No matter how much sunshine and rain, however, or other earthly blessings He might have given these non-elect, it would be irrational to say that God loved them in any way whatsoever.

Christ declared, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). There is no question that we are to be merciful to all, even to those who hate and mistreat us. This can only be because God is merciful to all. If not, then in emulating our Father in heaven we need not be merciful to all either. Nor can it be said that it is merciful for God to fail to provide salvation for all who need it. Therefore, we can be certain that God loves all and has provided salvation for the entire world.

Another children’s song says,

*O if there is only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be,
“O what a wonder that Jesus loves me!”*

What a wonder indeed!

Paul exulted, “The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)! How could Paul be certain that God’s love was for him? Did He have a special revelation that he was among “the elect”? Or had he simply embraced a love that the Bible declares is for all? It is of little value to exult in God’s love unless one can be certain that this love is indeed for him.

Always a mixed multitude gathered to hear Christ. They were not confined to a select group called the elect. Many never would believe the gospel and are in hell today. Yet to all of them Christ said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you . . .” (Matthew 5:44). This command was based upon the glorious truth that such is God’s attitude toward all.

Christ declared that even sinners love and are kind to those who love and are kind to them. Surely God, who is infinite in love, would be no less benevolent to sinners and to those who make themselves His enemies than He commands us to be. We see this love in Christ, who prayed to the Father to forgive those who crucified and mocked Him (Luke 23:34). For that prayer to be answered, the Father had to make Christ’s payment for sin available to all who would accept it.

Numerous scriptures declare that God loves all and desires the salvation of all. Such scriptures are adroitly sidestepped by those who deny that Christ died for all. Even such crystal clear scriptures as the following are explained away: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:4,6).

Regarding that verse, Spurgeon complained, “I was reading just now the exposition of [one] who explains the text so as to explain it away [as] if it read, ‘Who *will not* have all men to be saved. . . .’ [In fact], the passage should run thus—‘whose wish it is that all men should be saved. . . .’ As it is *my* wish . . . so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved; for, assuredly,

he is not less benevolent than we are” (Charles H. Spurgeon, “Salvation by Knowing the Truth,” <http://www.apibs.org/chs/1516.htm>, 16 January 1880).

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the only reason all are not saved is *not* because there are some whom God did not desire to save but because they refused the salvation He provided in Christ. As the Law was for all, so salvation is provided for all those who break the Law and who thereby come under God’s judgment.

Surely the Ten Commandments are not for a select group but for all mankind. Indeed, Paul declares that “the Gentiles, which have not the law . . . show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. . . .” (Romans 2:14,15).

The very first commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37-38). It is unreasonable as well as unbiblical that God should command those to love Him with all their heart for whom Christ did not die and to whom, therefore, God did not manifest His love. How can they (whom God does not love) be commanded to love Him?

The Bible declares, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The only way anyone can love God is in response to His love. Thus, if there are those for whom Christ did not die (and to whom, therefore, God’s love was not manifested), they are under no obligation to love God. Yet all are so commanded. Therefore, *Christ must have died for all*.

Scripture assures us repeatedly that Christ “is the Saviour of all . . . specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10); that Christ “by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). The reference is not merely to physical death but to “the second death . . . [eternity in] the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8). Only God could take that punishment for the world. Only He could “[bear] our sins in his own body on the tree [Cross]” (1 Peter 2:24) and thereby “take away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

This is why the Savior had to be “The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). To pay the penalty that His own infinite justice demanded for every sin from Adam to the end of the world, He had to endure the second death of eternal punishment in separation from God for all mankind who would ever exist. This He did on the Cross in those hours of darkness when He was heard to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46)!

The Old Testament sacrifices in Israel were a picture of the sacrifice that “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36) would make of Himself to satisfy God’s judgment upon sin. He alone could “through the eternal Spirit [offer] himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14, 25), He “the just for the unjust [us], that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

God’s relationship to Israel presents a picture of the relationship God desired for all mankind. Espoused to God, Israel committed adultery with many lovers—yet He begged her to come back, and He would forgive and restore her (Jeremiah 3:1-3; 4; etc.). That He loved her and desired to bless her but could not because of her rebellion is repeatedly made clear: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways” (Psalm 81:8-16); “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isaiah 1:2)!

God calls Israel His vineyard and indicts her for producing wild grapes in spite of the tender care He has showered upon her. Hear the cry of His heart: “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isaiah 5:4). Such a question would be a mockery if Israel had not acted in willful disobedience but was actually doing what God had decreed!

Christ uses the same illustration: “Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down. . . . And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit,

well: and if not . . . cut it down” (Luke 13:7-9). The rabbis knew that He was indicting them. At the same time, He was reaffirming God’s willingness to forgive if they would repent and turn to Him.

What a statement by Christ: “For God so *loved the world* . . .” (John 3:16)! That phrase, “*so loved*,” indicates a love so fervent that it is beyond expression. Christ said, “The Father loveth the Son” (John 3:35; 5:20), and He refers fondly to “the love wherewith thou hast loved me” (John 17:26). This must be an infinite love.

The love of God to all mankind also had to be infinite to cause Him to give His only begotten Son to die for us “that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). Paul exults in “. . . the great love wherewith he [God] loved us” (Ephesians 2:4). As great as His love for His Son is, so great must be God’s love for all mankind to sacrifice His Son for our salvation.

John exclaims, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). How important that we revel in and understand and experience the love of God and, in the power and assurance of that love, declare it to the world.

Isaiah declares, “It pleased the Lord to bruise him” (Isaiah 53:10). The Father was pleased to bruise Christ with the judgment we deserved for our sins, because He so loved us. May we stand firmly upon God’s Word and declare this infinite love without compromise to all mankind through the gospel! —*Dave Hunt, TBC*



LOVE IS COMMANDED

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5) defines the relationship that God intended between Himself and Israel and all mankind. Though this requirement is not explicitly stated in the Ten Commandments (Exodus

20; Deuteronomy 5), it is, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, the essence thereof, and the first and greatest commandment given by God to man (Matthew 22; Mark 12; Luke 10).

If this is the greatest commandment, then failure to love God with one's entire heart, soul, and might must be the greatest sin of which one could be guilty. Indeed, not loving God is the root of all sin. Nor is our Lord's explanation of the Ten Commandments a condemnation only of atheists and pagans. It is also a terrible indictment of most Christians. How shamefully little love we give to God! "With all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might!" said Jesus. My own conscience has been deeply convicted.

The second commandment, according to our Lord, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Obedience to this command is the essential evidence of truly loving God. John reminds us, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Love of neighbor is the inevitable result of loving God. These two commandments (to love God, then neighbor), like blossom and fruit, are inseparable. There cannot be one without the other. Moreover, "On these two commandments," said Jesus, "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40, etc.). Here is the essence of all Scripture and of God's requirements for mankind.

Were it not for God's grace and the redemptive work of Christ, this clear teaching from Scripture would hang over us like a death sentence. We have disobeyed the first and greatest commandment, and as a result could not keep the second. The penalty for sin is death—eternal separation from God and from the life and love that is in Him alone. How desperately we need a Savior! And, oh, how God's gracious and complete provision in Christ should create in our hearts the very love for Him that He longs for from us!

The church is busy with conferences, conventions, seminars and workshops where numerous subjects from healing to holiness, from prosperity to prophecy, from miracles to marriage counseling, are taught and discussed. Yet the subject of loving God is conspicuous by its absence.

Instead, there is much emphasis upon loving self—a teaching unknown in the church until recently.

Jesus said, “Upon these two commandments [*first*, loving God; *second*, loving neighbor] hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40). Since these two commandments are the essence of Scripture, nothing further need be nor can be added. Yet to these *two* has been added lately a *third*: the love of self. Moreover, this newly introduced “law” is declared to be the *first* commandment and key to all else. It is now widely taught that self-love is the great need; that we cannot fully love either God or neighbor until we first of all learn to love ourselves!

This modern perversion of Scripture is due to the influence of humanistic psychology in the church—a fact that is freely, even proudly, admitted by Christian psychologists. For example, Bruce Narramore’s oft-quoted admission: “Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. This is a good and necessary focus.” The source of this lie is significant.

In 1,900 years no one had found the necessity for self-love and self-esteem in the Bible. It was the humanists who discovered this new “truth”—and now even Christian leaders find the lie appealing and pass it on to their flocks in books and sermons.

Far from teaching self-love, Christ was rebuking it. He was saying, “that you feed and clothe and care for yourselves day and night. Now give to your neighbors some of that attention that you lavish upon yourselves. Love your neighbor as you excessively love yourselves.” Christ would hardly tell us to love our neighbors as *we love ourselves* if we did not already love ourselves enough.

Tragically, love for God is not only neglected, it is given a secondary position, and self-love is made preeminent. Instead of being convicted of our failure to love God with our whole heart, soul, and might, as the gravest of sins and the root of all personal problems, we are being urged to focus

upon loving and esteeming and valuing ourselves! What a perversion of Scripture.

There is a growing emphasis today upon world evangelism, and surely that is needful and commendable. We ought to obey the Great Commission given to us by Christ. There is also an awakening social conscience, a concern to demonstrate practical Christianity in caring for those around us, from the unborn threatened with abortion to the homeless and deprived. Yet that which must come first—deep love of God—is largely forgotten.

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned” (1 Corinthians 13:3), may be commendable deeds, but if they are not motivated and sanctified by an all-consuming love for God, they are of no value at all in His eyes. Have we really faced the teaching of this great love chapter? How amazing and sad that love of God is buried in the flurry of activity to serve Him! Indeed, the average Christian, while he may love much else, including even the world, which he is forbidden to love, gives little serious thought to loving God.

Heaven will be the ecstatic joy of eternal and infinite love. What a taste of heaven we could have now—and at the same time bring satisfaction to our Lord!

Many issues of great concern legitimately occupy the attention of church leaders and their flocks. Yet the greatest commandment, and that which God desires from us above all, is scarcely mentioned, much less given the prominence it ought to have in church fellowship and individual lives. How tragic! And what an indictment of Christianity today! None of us is innocent of this great sin. My heart has been broken as I’ve been convicted anew of how far I fall short of keeping the essence of God’s commandments. I have cried out to Him with new sorrow and longing that He would help me to love Him with my whole heart and to love my neighbor as myself.

The Bible is filled with injunctions to love God, with explanations of why we ought to and of the benefits to be derived thereby. Here are a few examples. Look up others for yourselves and meditate upon them. “And

now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12) “. . . that thou mayest live” (30:6) “. . . for he is thy life, and the length of thy days” (30:20).

“O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for *them that love him* and observe his commandments” (Nehemiah 1:5) “. . . all things work together for good to *them that love God*” (Romans 8:28) “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for *them that love him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). God even tells us in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 that He allows false prophets to work signs and wonders as a test to see “whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” We live in a time of such testing. Loving God fervently will keep us from apostasy.

Yes, love is *commanded*. True love begins in the will, not in the emotions. The fact that love is commanded seems incomprehensible even to many Christians. The world has conditioned us to believe that one “falls in love” and that love is a romantic attraction between the sexes. “Boy meets girl and falls in love” is the most popular theme of novels and movies. Yet “love” without God brings sorrow.

“Falling in love” is perceived as being helplessly swept up in a mysterious, euphoric, overpowering feeling over which one has no control and which, inevitably, loses its magic. One is thus equally helpless in “falling out of love,” and thereafter “falling in love” with someone else. A *commitment of the will* is missing. We are *commanded* to love with purity—God first of all, with our whole being, and then our neighbor as we, by nature, excessively love ourselves. Love is a *commitment to God* that demonstrates itself in human relationships.

Yes, falling in love transforms for a time those who experience it. They suddenly become different persons. Someone else becomes more important than oneself, bringing deliverance from the slavery to self that

ordinarily imprisons us all. Self no longer receives priority, but another has become the primary focus. The love and attention that once was lavished upon oneself now is given to the one who has become the object of one's love—and that brings tremendous freedom and joy. This temporary release from self-centeredness explains more than anything else the ecstasy of love—a fact that those “in love” generally fail to realize.

If loving others is so transforming, how much more so to genuinely and deeply love God. How can this come about? God is so great, so far beyond our finite ability to comprehend, that it seems impossible to know Him. And it is impossible to love a person (except with God's love) whom one doesn't know. Love is above all personal.

It is being taught in the church that the best way to get to know God is to visualize Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. Visualization is the most powerful occult technique. Visualizing an entity, even “God” or “Christ,” puts one in touch with a masquerading demon. (See *Beyond Seduction*, pp. 190-240.) Yet visualization is becoming more popular than ever in the church.

Denying any occult involvement, teachers of this technique declare, “Visualize Christ as your favorite artist paints Him—then talk to Him and He will respond.” What a delusion to enter into a relationship with an imaginary “Christ”! Even if the picture created in the mind were absolutely accurate, which it is not, it would be like “falling in love” with a picture and imagining that it was talking back. Such behavior borders on insanity, yet it is seriously promoted by leading Christians.

It is also suggested that visualizing Bible scenes helps us to understand them. Such a practice, commended in a *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal* [SCP], is not only occult but also illogical and misleading. Obviously, visualizing oneself seated among the listening multitude will not help one to understand the Sermon on the Mount. Most of those in His day who saw and heard Jesus with their physical eyes and ears neither understood nor obeyed what He said. Knowing God and His Word is not aided by images, even if accurate—much less by imagining scenes

for which the Bible gives insufficient data to recreate them. “Eye hath not seen nor ear heard,” but God reveals Himself and His truth to our hearts “by his Spirit . . . because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Images appeal to the flesh. Beauty is only skin deep. Solomon calls charm and beauty “deceitful” (Proverbs 31:30) and Peter warns against outward attractiveness and commends “the hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4). What folly to think that an image of Christ created by one’s imagination helps one to know and love Him!

Love is not primarily a feeling. It is a commitment. This is the missing ingredient in much that is called love today. A genuine and lasting commitment to one another is often lacking even in Christian marriages due to worldly influence and the promotion by church leaders of loving, esteeming, accepting, and valuing *self*.

Commitment is also the missing ingredient in many a Christian’s relationship with God. Rather than working up a *feeling* that you love God, make a commitment to Him to love and obey Him. Jesus promised, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me . . . and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him . . . and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him” (John 14:21-23).

We need to know God and His love in our hearts. As we seek Him in His Word and in prayer He will reveal Himself by His Spirit. We are to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and might. May He grant us a fresh conviction of the sin of not loving Him as we ought, and may the desire to obey this first and greatest commandment become our passion. Only then will we begin to manifest the love for one another that Christ said would be the mark whereby the world would be able to recognize His true disciples—those to whom He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

—Dave Hunt, TBC



THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST

WHEN TRULY expressed from the heart, “I love you” is undoubtedly the most wonderful declaration one can hear or speak. Many husbands and wives, parents and children, as well as brothers and sisters in Christ, however, fail to express their love often enough to one another—and not just in words but in deeds. That we can love others and receive their love is only possible because we were created in the moral and spiritual image of God, who “*is love*” (1 John 4:8).

Sadly, that image, with its innocent and pure capabilities, has been deformed by sin. Man still loves, but imperfectly, so that lust is often mistaken for love. Self-love, long concealed beneath sweet words, can leap suddenly from its hiding place when least expected to destroy what had seemed so beautiful until that unguarded moment. Love for others cannot coexist with love for self. Great effort may be made to support both, but the burden eventually becomes too great.

To all mankind God has repeatedly said, “I love you!” Does this include even rebels who hate Him and reject the salvation He offers to all in Christ? Yes! True love is not just toward the lovely or lovable or those who love in return. Love does not find its source or reason in the loved one but in the heart of the lover. God says to Israel, His chosen: “The Lord did not set his love upon you . . . because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest . . . but because the Lord loved you . . .” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). He turns Balaam’s curse into a blessing “because the Lord thy God loved thee” (Deuteronomy 23:5).

But Israel would prove herself to be singularly ungrateful and disobedient. Surely, the fact that “charity [agape love] suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4) was fully demonstrated in God’s dealings with Israel. For centuries God bore her idolatrous rebellion, sending His prophets to

plead with her to repent before finally destroying Jerusalem and casting her out of the promised land. Hear His lament: “I sent unto you my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not . . . to turn from their wickedness. . . . Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth . . .” (Jeremiah 44:4-6). Even in His anger for her sin, however, God pledged to bring Israel back into the promised land in the last days. The fulfillment of that promise has been witnessed by the whole world.

It cannot be denied that God’s love for Israel was not only for the few faithful among her but included those who would despise His love and perish (though He wanted to forgive and bless them had they been willing). That fact is often made clear: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies . . . [and] fed them also with the finest of wheat . . .” (Psalm 81:11-16).

God is infinite in all of His qualities. Therefore, His love must be infinite in its “breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” which He desires us to “comprehend with all saints” and “to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that [we] might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:18-19). That the infinite Creator loves each individual He has created with a personal passion is beyond our comprehension—yet it is true, for “God *is* love.”

Love is the very essence of God’s being. Liberals have long tried to portray the God of the Old Testament as angry and vengeful and to credit Jesus with introducing the idea of the loving Father God of the New Testament. In fact, God is “from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2) . . . I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

At Mt. Sinai where the law, just given, was broken by Israel’s grievous sin, Moses pleaded with God, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Exodus 33:18). God replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee . . . and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom

I will show mercy [i.e., mercy and grace cannot be demanded or earned, but come at God's initiative]" (v. 19).

"And the Lord passed by before him [Moses], and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty [i.e., the penalty *must* be paid] . . ." (Exodus 34:6-7).

God's kindness, which He extends to all, springing as it does from His infinite love, is called "lovingkindness." David writes, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings" (Psalm 36:7). Through Jeremiah, the prophet of judgment, God declares, "I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth . . ." (Jeremiah 9:24).

The love we are to express to one another and to the lost, our "neighbors," with whom God gives us fruitful contacts, is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the "love chapter." Clearly, Paul is portraying God's supernatural *agape* love, which He expressed in giving Christ for our redemption. The love Paul describes is beyond human capacity—but it rings true to our hearts and consciences.

God's perfect selfless love is formed within the human heart only by the new birth. Jesus told His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). Why did Christ call this a new commandment? The standard was no longer to be the Ten Commandments, but the life of Christ ("*as I have loved you*").

The Ten Commandments called upon man to obey in his own strength, thereby revealing the impossibility to do so and thus the necessity of salvation in Christ. Now Christ himself lives in believers to express His life through them. Such is the amazing transformation of the new birth, which Christ introduced to Nicodemus and which is for all who believe

in Him. Yes, the secret is simply to *believe*, for “the just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

That Christ was living in believers (“that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” – Ephesians 3:17) would be the great proof that He had truly risen from the dead. Could John have had anything else in mind when he wrote, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12)? When Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen ask God to forgive those who were stoning him—“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60)—it was an echo of Christ’s “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34) from the cross! Stephen’s cry of loving intercession must have thundered continually in Saul’s conscience.

Struck blind by that “light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun,” Saul heard a voice of infinite authority demanding, “Why persecutest thou me?” When he asked, trembling, “Who art thou, Lord?” the terrifying and convicting response came: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:3-6; 26:13-15). Yes, Jesus Christ was alive, not only in heaven at the Father’s right hand, as Stephen under that hail of stones had declared in Saul’s hearing (7:56), but He was most certainly living in those who proclaimed Him risen from the dead. That very declaration by former cowards who had fled to protect their own skin was itself the only explanation for Peter’s fearless indictment of his huge audience on the day of Pentecost: “Jesus of Nazareth . . . approved of God among you by miracles . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified . . .” (Acts 2:22-23).

Now, as a believer indwelt by the risen Christ, “. . . a new creature [with] old things . . . passed away . . . all things . . . new” (2 Corinthians 5:17), Paul had been born again of the Spirit of God and His Word. Thereafter he testified, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

From that moment, the passion that burned in the heart of the Apostle Paul was the very love of God in Christ for the lost: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; . . . we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did

beseech you by us: . . . be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 20). That love took him tirelessly throughout the Roman Empire, proclaiming the gospel to all who would hear. This he did at the cost of great suffering (and eventually his life); “. . . in every city . . . bonds and afflictions [await] me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:23-24).

With Christ living in him, and compelled by the very supernatural love which had caused Christ to die for all of our sins on the cross, Paul was willing to die, if need be, in bringing the gospel to others—further proof that Christ had risen and was living in him.

What has happened to the kind of passion Paul had for the lost? Where is it today?

It is so easy for us to be satisfied with attending our church fellowships, singing lustily, praying now and then for those in need and doing periodic good deeds. Yet the rush of today’s computerized, fast-paced world leaves little room in our hearts for Christ’s commission to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel . . .” (Mark 16:15). Do we view with Christ’s love and through His eyes those we meet daily?

Most important of all, however, is our love for and adoration of our Lord. The gospel is the message that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). How can we present the gospel of God’s love unless His love dwells in us?

“As I have loved you” is still the measure of Christian love today, the love He expressed when He said, “Father, forgive them.” Nor could we imagine that Christ was thereby declaring a love that He had only for those He knew would believe on Him. Surely few if any of those who mocked, scourged, and nailed Him to the cross, or among those making up the jeering and cursing throng of onlookers and passersby, ever came to faith

in Him. Nor is there reason to believe that any of those who hurled the stones at Stephen, or among the Pharisees who goaded them on, ever came to faith in Christ. Yet Stephen, like his Lord, lovingly asked the Father to forgive them all. Such is God's love for the lost, a love that is not of this world and that Christ will express through us if we will trust Him to do so.

When John writes, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God . . . for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8), he can be referring only to the indwelling supernatural love of Christ. It is like no other. It does not fall in and out of love according to the emotional whim of the moment. It is "everlasting" and experiences no change. Shakespeare said it well, "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."

Not only does God's love not change, but it is all inclusive. There is no basis in Scripture or in the conscience that all men possess to imagine that God does not love all mankind but that He loves only a select few. God's Word gives abundant and repeated testimony that God loves the entire world exactly as John 3:16-17 says: "For God so loved the world, that he . . . sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Love is not partial; it plays no favorites, but gives itself wholeheartedly to all and grieves over those who reject it. We are even to love our enemies, and our neighbors as ourselves. Surely God's love would not meet a lower standard than that which He has set for man. Indeed, Christ prays to the Father, "that the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). In other words, we are to love others with the very love which God the Father has for the Son and puts within us by faith. Thus we can be certain that God's love is at least as selfless, impartial and broad as our love is to be.

Let us therefore bring the message of God's infinite love and lovingkindness to the world about us and demonstrate that love to all. Whatever difficulties we may face, we can be confident that God loves us still. We are in the hand of Him who promises that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his

purpose” (Romans 8:28). May we, like Paul, give ourselves wholly to His purpose: “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before . . . press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). TBC

—Dave Hunt



LOVING GOD

JESUS WAS ASKED by a lawyer who was trying to trap Him (insincerely addressing Him as “Master”), “[W]hich is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus replied, “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 neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

Christ was quoting scriptures (Leviticus 19:18,34; Deuteronomy 6:5) that divide the Ten Commandments into two parts: 1-3, which He designated as “the first and great commandment,” and 5-10, as the “second” commandment. The first three (Exodus 20:2-7) involve reverence and worship of God; then comes the special treatment of the Sabbath (8-11), which Christ purposely ignored; and the last six (12-17) deal with human relationships.

The fourth commandment, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11), was conspicuously absent from Christ’s teaching and example. He and His disciples were often accused of breaking the Sabbath. Christ replied that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and that He was Lord of the Sabbath.

Resting on the seventh day was prescribed only for Israel (Exodus 31:17; Psalm 147:19-20; Malachi 4:4, etc.). The other nine commandments are written in every conscience: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the

law [the entire law given to Israel alone], do by nature the things contained in the law [they] show the work of the [moral] law written in their hearts . . .” (Romans 2:14,15). But God has not written in *anyone’s* conscience to keep the Sabbath holy.

Resting on the Sabbath reminded Israel that God created the universe in six literal 24-hour days and rested on the seventh. This commemoration of the old creation was given to Israel, to whom God promised a special place on this earth in Christ’s millennial kingdom. Those in the church (whether Jew or Gentile), who are “new creatures” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15) and look forward to the destruction of the old and the creation of the “new heavens and new earth” (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1), do not celebrate the old creation. Instead, following the example of the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), they meet together to worship on the first day of a new week, the day of our Lord’s resurrection as “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18), looking forward to their own resurrection to be forever with and like Him.

Christ’s declaration that “on these two commandments [which do not include keeping the Sabbath] hang all the law and the prophets” tells us a great deal. Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventists have so emphasized keeping the Sabbath (though they don’t keep it as commanded to Israel) as to make it not only their distinctive but the litmus test of who is following Scripture. They even declare that “Sunday worship” is the “mark of the Beast.” Then the early church, including Paul, took that mark!

Inasmuch as to love God with all one’s heart, mind, and soul is, according to Christ, the greatest commandment, surely not to do so would be the greatest sin—a fact that must concern us all! Yet this vital truth is rarely emphasized in pulpits, on Christian radio, television, or in Christian books. How can that be? Surely each one of us must share some of the blame and repent before the Lord for failing to love Him as we ought.

Part of the explanation for this glaring deficiency is that to love God one must know Him intimately—and that takes more time than most Christians are willing to devote to their Lord and Savior out of their busy

and worldly schedules. Not that love for Christ is entirely lacking—it just doesn't rate very high on the "to-do list" of most church-goers. Nor does attending church each Sunday change that outlook.

Today's great emphasis upon "growth" has all but crowded out fervently loving God in "seeker friendly" churches. Humbly worshiping "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23), with all honor given to God and none to man, doesn't attract so-called "seekers." The wisdom of the hour, influenced by the world's marketing and promotion techniques, dictates that creating large churches requires giving "worshippers" what they want. But isn't a large church to be preferred over a small one, and wouldn't the ends justify the means? That idea is not found in Scripture.

It should be obvious to any thinking observer that today's "worship music" is designed to please man, even the carnal and unsaved, and not God. In *The Purpose Driven Church* (p. 279), Rick Warren boldly declares, "We use the style of music the majority of people in our church listen to on the radio . . . contemporary pop/rock." This is the world's music, and it draws the worldly into the church.

In plain words, the music in purpose-driven churches is not chosen because it pleases God, but man. Purpose-driven worship is less about worshiping God than about entertaining the "worshippers." That is its deliberate design. Thus, the music and the entire "program" (like any secular performance) must appeal to the audience rather than to the One whom they are supposedly worshiping!

In *Born After Midnight*, A. W. Tozer declared, "Much singing . . . has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost. Words and music [don't reflect] the reverent intimacy of the adoring saint, but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover." Nor are those churches that are driven by the new "purpose," which has become the vision of tens of thousands of today's pastors, the only ones that have turned worship upside down and inside out. The same is true of thousands of other churches that have forgotten the fact that worship, far from being for our enjoyment, is supposed to be directed toward God! Rare is the awesome reverence that

befits those bowing in His presence to sing His praise. The attitude, dress, and sensuality of many “worship teams” and their “music” would not be tolerated for a moment by God before His throne!

Worship on earth should be the beginning of what we will continue for eternity in heaven. Any “worship” that would not be appropriate before God’s throne should not be allowed in any church. Our song throughout eternity will be “unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:13). Instead, the contemporary Christian music industry is almost all about money, popularity, and glorifying the “artists.” It is a performance. Is God as interested in performance as are the fans? Or does He desire our worship?

Seemingly forgotten, in church as well as in daily life, is the command to love God with all of one’s heart, mind, and soul. Undeniably, this *command* (God did not give us *suggestions*) is to all mankind, not just to an “elect” who have been pre-chosen for heaven. A command requires obedience and commitment; it does not wait for feelings. Loving God is not a Hollywood romance—“falling in love” only to fall out again. Obedience begins with a determination to obey.

There is a popular teaching that multitudes, whom God could have saved had He so desired, have been predestined to eternal torment before they were born. If that is true, it cannot be said that God loves those whom He has thus doomed. Nor is it reasonable that these whom God, according to this teaching, does not love should be commanded to love Him! Are ungodly sinners to be more loving than God?

John declares: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Thus, those whom God does not love have no basis for obeying this command. But the command is for all, proving that God indeed loves all and truly desires all to be saved. The command to love God is an invitation to rebellious sinners to repent and return to Him.

That all are commanded to love God makes it very clear that the Father did not send the Son to die in a limited atonement for only a select group

but for all. Yet there are those who insist that when the Scriptures say “who will have [desires] all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), what is really meant is “not all men but all *kinds* of men”—or that God “has two wills: a will of desire and a will of decree.” Because all are to love Him, we know that the God who is love indeed loves and desires the salvation of all.

Yes, God loves even a Hitler as well as an innocent child, because He *is* love (1 John 4:8,16) and cannot but love man whom He created, no matter how rebellious and hateful toward God. Surely the love of the infinite God must itself be infinite. That fact was proved at the Cross, where Christ paid sin’s penalty for all mankind, asking His Father to forgive even those who nailed Him there and who mocked Him in His agony. It is only in gratitude for such divine love that we can love God as we ought.

The command is to love God “with all thine heart.” We are to be devoted wholly to God! The hundreds of usages of this word in the Old and New Testaments make it clear that the “heart” was created in man so that he could willingly and lovingly yield it to God in response to His love. Man is not a puppet. He is a voluntary, knowing participant *with* God.

To be saved, one must believe the gospel with one’s whole heart (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9). In the gospel, which we must believe to be saved, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

There are those who deny that man has a will and who insist that God must *cause* him to do whatever he does. Neither Scripture nor human experience supports this belief. In fact, Scripture presents both sides: God moving upon the heart, and man willingly giving himself in obedience and love.

The Psalmist prays to God, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies” (Psalm 119:36); but he also says, “I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end” (Psalm 119:112). Deuteronomy 30 begins, “the Lord . . . will circumcise thine heart . . . to love the Lord thy God with

all thine heart, and . . . soul” (v. 6). But the rest of the chapter is all about man’s willing response: “If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments . . . if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul” (v. 10); “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee . . . to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways . . . that thou mayest live and multiply. . . . But if thine heart turn away . . . ye shall surely perish . . . therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God . . . and obey his voice, and . . . cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them” (15-20).

Sometimes both sides are given in the same verse: “. . . every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even everyone whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it” (Exodus 36:2).

Yes, there are some verses that sound as though God must do it all: To Israel in the wilderness of Sinai He says, “Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive . . . eyes to see . . . ears to hear” (Deuteronomy 29:4); “God gave him [Saul] another heart” (1 Samuel 10:9); of those who followed Saul in the early days, “whose hearts God had touched” (1 Samuel 10:26); David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10), etc.

But there are many more verses that place the responsibility fully upon man: “with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord” (1 Chronicles 29:9); “thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8); “My heart is inditing a good matter” (45:1); “The fool hath said in his heart” (53:1); “My heart is fixed, O God” (57:7); “pour out your heart before him” (62:8); “set not your heart upon . . .” (62:10); “even to such as are of a clean heart” (73:1); “I will praise thee, O Lord . . . with all my heart” (86:12); “Harden not your heart” (95:8); “Blessed are they that . . . seek him with the whole heart” (119:2), etc.

There are many similar scriptures that put the responsibility for loving and obeying God squarely on man without any hint of God causing or even helping the willing and loving heart. For example: Exodus 35:5, 21, 29; Leviticus 1:3; 19:5; 22:19, 29; Deuteronomy 10:12,13; 11:13; 13:3; Joshua 22:5; 1 Kings 11:2; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Ezekiel 33:31; Daniel 1:8; 1 Corinthians 7:37; 1 Peter 1:22, etc. But tragically, this God-given ability to choose has been perverted by some who are highly honored in the church.

In his book, *If It's Going to Be, It's up to Me* (pp. 142, 146), Robert Schuller has said: "Connect with this Higher Power. Listen to the call of your heart of hearts to become a believer in God. . . . Connect with me and come to love and listen to the God within you." Yet God says, "The heart is deceitful . . . and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), and Christ declared, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries . . ." (Matthew 15:19).

God's loving offer of salvation is not to a select elect but to all. In love, He calls the most ungodly sinners to repent and to turn to Him with the whole heart: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7); "ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Christ promises salvation to all who will come to Him in faith: "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37); "Come unto me, *all ye* that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Surely such love ought to awaken within each of us the passion to love God with our whole heart!

Hymns written by those who knew and loved the Lord intimately and expressed it eloquently and with sound doctrine have been cast aside. This rich heritage has been replaced by shallow, repetitive lyrics joined to the pop/rock that Rick Warren says the world loves. We need to recover this spiritual treasure and to sing again in loving gratitude and with reverent awe of "the love that drew salvation's plan . . . the grace that brought it down to man . . . the mighty gulf that God did span, at Calvary!" —*Dave Hunt, TBC*



THE GOSPEL: PURE, SIMPLE, AND UTTERLY PROFOUND

ASK ANYONE if they believe they're going to heaven when they die, and the vast majority will answer, "Well, yes, I believe so." When asked why they believe this to be the case, the answer usually goes something like this: "Well, God is a loving God, and I'm a pretty good person."

God is indeed a loving God. All of His attributes are perfect. Yet He is also a God of perfect justice. Therefore, the "not so good" part of "pretty good," as well as the supposed good, also involve sins against God. Everyone is included in the category of sinner, because "all have sinned," according to Romans 3:23. The Bible tells us that the penalty for sin is separation from God forever, and God's justice demands that the penalty for sin must be paid. Consequently, because the penalty is eternal, man, in his finite state, is incapable for atoning for his own sin.

But there is good news for mankind. In fact, "Good News" is what the word "gospel" means. God is perfect in love and mercy, and He has already paid the penalty for all humanity—for every single sin of every man and woman—past, present, and future! The Word of God declares: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but *that the world through Him might be saved*" (John 3:16-17; emphasis added).

This is what God the Father did through His Son Jesus Christ, whose death, burial, and resurrection satisfied divine justice, providing eternal reconciliation with God (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 5:10-11). What is man's part? It is simply this: we are to believe in Him for who He is and for what He, and only He could, and did, accomplish by dying upon the Cross for all humanity. Salvation is a free gift that has already been paid for in full by Christ our

Savior. As a gift, it must be received by faith in Him. That is the only necessity. Any attempt to add to that clear biblical requirement (Titus 3:5), such as good works, religious rituals, law keeping, etc., constitutes a rejection of Christ's finished and acceptable sacrifice.

Our prayer is that you will accept by faith the wonderfully profound and immeasurable gift provided by Jesus Christ, our Lord, God, and Savior. All you must do is to acknowledge that your sins have separated you from God and believe that only Jesus could—and did—pay the full penalty for your sins. And then thank Him for His precious gift of eternal life that you have received!

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.
—2 Corinthians 5:17*



*For much more information on this and other subjects,
please see our online archives for further articles,
Q&As, radio broadcasts and transcripts.*

www.thebereancall.org

ABOUT THE BEREAN CALL

SEVEN YEARS after publication of the controversial ground-breaking bestseller *The Seduction of Christianity* in 1985, its authors—Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon—joined forces on another front. The Berean Call was formed under the direction of Dave Hunt for the purpose of encouraging spiritual discernment among those who regarded themselves not just as “evangelicals” but as biblical Christians.

The ministry and newsletter name is taken from Acts 17:11—in which the writer of Acts commended those in the synagogue of the Greek city of Berea for being more fair minded than those in Thessalonica; because not only were they eager to receive the Word, but the Bereans also checked it against what the Apostle Paul taught them in order to see if his teaching was according to the Scriptures.

*The Berean Call (TBC) is a non-denominational,
tax-exempt organization which exists to:*

ALERT believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church

EXHORT believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church

SUPPLY believers with teaching, information, and materials which will encourage the love of God’s truth, and assist in the development of biblical discernment

MOBILIZE believers in Christ to action in obedience to the scriptural command to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3)

IMPACT the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity for trusting the Scriptures as the only rule for faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God

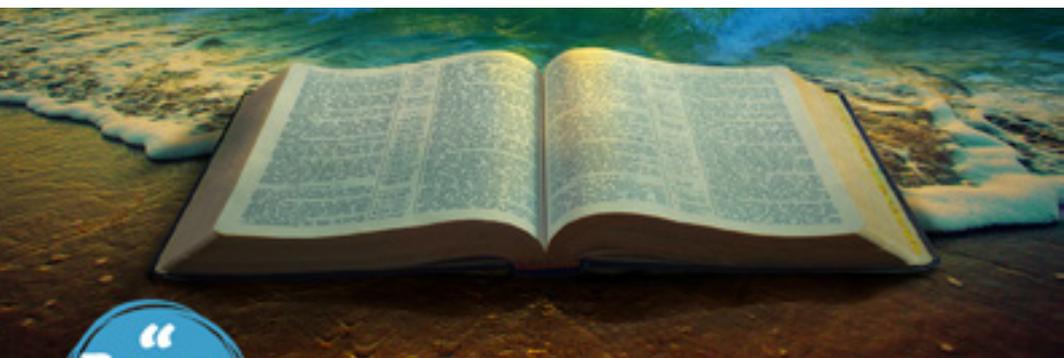


“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment.” —Mark 12:30

THE CHURCH is busy with conferences, conventions, seminars and workshops where numerous subjects from healing to holiness, from prosperity to prophecy, from miracles to marriage counseling, are taught and discussed. Yet the subject of loving God is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, there is much emphasis upon loving self—a teaching unknown in the church until recently.

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned” (1 Corinthians 13:3), may be commendable deeds, but if they are not motivated and sanctified by an all-consuming love for God, they are of no value at all in His eyes. Have we really faced the teaching of this great love chapter? How amazing and sad that love of God is buried in the flurry of activity to serve Him!

Discover what it means to love God—and when good works is not loving, but legalism. Be set free to worship and work out your faith in Christ!



TOPICAL SELECTIONS TO SAVOR & SHARE

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them” —Jer 15:16a



www.thebereancall.org
PO Box 7019
Bend, OR 97708-7020

