

## Three Primary Principles

“Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.’ So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ But after that no one dared question Him” (Mark 12:28-34).

All good laws are the result of one statement and two commands. All good laws follow after these three primary principles:

“The Lord our God, the Lord is One.” God is the Author of all good, the Progenitor of all truth. He is totally good and holy and there is no evil at all in Him. He is our Creator and our Sustainer. The recognition of this fact will keep us looking in the right direction for our instructions in life.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” The beginning of all righteous conduct is to give God the prominent place in your heart. You cannot have true happiness nor entertain true hope without first loving God. He deserves the highest place in your thinking and the prominent place in your decisions, for He is God.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” A difficult, but necessary command. Can you just imagine what a different world it would be if everyone loved everyone else in the same way he loves himself? What would happen to thievery, to fornication, to slander, to anger and malice? Surely we can see the sense of that command.

If we are to serve God as we ought, we must adopt these three principles: Know who God is, give Him due respect and reverence, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. (Dee Bowman)

### Truth or Comfort?

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:23). “They did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Thes. 2:10-12).

“Truth is often avoided when it is painful. We revise our maps only when we have the discipline to overcome that pain. To have such discipline, we must be totally dedicated to truth. That is to say, we must always hold truth to be more important, more vital to our self-interest, than our personal comfort. Conversely, we must always consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant and, indeed, even welcome it in the service of the search for truth (From *The Road Less Traveled* By M. Scott Peck, p. 50). Let us have a genuine love for truth that we might be saved.

### He Loves Righteous Deeds

“For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face” (Psalm 11:7). Remember when you were small and you did something for your mom because you wanted to see her smile when she discovered it? It might be a little thing. She comes in the room unaware but then sees the flowers you picked for her and she glances over smiling. What a wonderful feeling. It may be that you do something for your dad but he can't make a big fuss you know because men have to be men but a little smile creases the edge of his mouth and you know you hit a homerun. Grand feelings!

The Lord God Jehovah, Creator of the world, I AM loves to see His children do righteous things. He smiles with the joy of seeing His people loving one another, caring for one another and forgiving one another. Sometimes it may be a small thing or it could be huge. Regardless, He loves to see righteous living, godly attitudes expressed by those who He calls His own. Adam Clarke said of this Psalm, “He loves that which resembles himself.” We look like Him when we live righteous lives. Make God smile at you today. Help Him smile all day long. (Kent Heaton)

### **The Humble Pebble**

“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?” (Gal. 2:11-14)

Peter is my favorite character in scripture because I find a lot of Peter's character flaws in my life. I can relate to him as he puts his foot in his mouth repeatedly and frustrates the Lord with his impetuous zeal gone wrong. Poor Peter. He is a fun study. His early life is on the water learning the trade of fishing. A teacher comes to town that changes his life as nothing he could have imagined. The next thing you know he has left his nets behind and follows Jesus from town to town until that awful day in Jerusalem. He fails his Lord at the most crucial time because he was ashamed to admit he knew Him. Three days later his spirits revive as he sees his risen savior. Life is now filled with preaching the good news of salvation in Christ.

Being an apostle was a wonderful experience. Filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and witnessing the new birth of three thousand souls would have been beyond description. Later suffering for preaching had its own reward. A Hollywood story would have us believe that Peter was on target and all would go well as he ‘rode off into the sunset a hero of the grand story.’ Not so. Then comes Galatians 2.

Paul is the late arrival. He is not one of the original twelve, did not see the miracles Jesus performed nor walk on the water like Peter. Simon has tenure and it would be easy to use that to his advantage. It happened in Antioch. The apostle Paul openly chastised the apostle Peter. Rebuked him right there in front of everyone.

Here is what I love about Peter. He did not react as many today would. He was wrong and he knew it. His position as a ‘first apostle’ did not make him right in what he did. Paul uses the story without telling the end of the story but it is inferred Peter accepted the rebuke of his brother Paul in the spirit it was given. Peter had learned humility. His anger did not charge back at Paul. He accepted criticism and I believe asked for forgiveness for the sinful attitude he manifested toward the Gentiles.

Big men in the church are small. Those who become small are great men. Paul's challenge to Peter openly displayed before the church must have hurt. But Peter loved his Lord so much he did not let it create hard feelings. I love this story. Isn't this a great story for all of us? (Kent Heaton)