

## 10. A Love Response (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** 1 John 4:18, 19; Rom. 3:19, 20; John 15:13; Rom. 5:6-8; John 6:28, 29, John 14:15.

### Quotes

- Sinners are not pelted into Christ with stones of hard provoking language, but wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations. *William Gurnall*
- When our hearts are filled with Christ's presence, evangelism is as inevitable as it is contagious. *Robert E. Coleman*
- We are all missionaries...Wherever we go, we either bring people nearer to Christ, or we repel them from Christ. *Eric Liddell*
- A Christian's life should be nothing but a visible representation of Christ. *Thomas Brooks*
- The real test of a saint is not one's willingness to preach the gospel, but one's willingness to do something like washing the disciples' feet - that is, being willing to do those things that seem unimportant in human estimation but count as everything to God. *Oswald Chambers*
- What is necessary is to continue to love. How does a lamp burn, if it is not by the continuous feeding of little drops of oil? When there is no oil, there is no light and the bridegroom will say: "I do not know you". Dear friends, what are our drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things from every day life: the joy, the generosity, the little good things, the humility and the patience. A simple thought for someone else. Our way to be silent, to listen, to forgive, to speak and to act. That are the real drops of oil that make our lamps burn vividly our whole life. *Mother Teresa*

### Questions

How do we put "if you love me, keep my commandments" into practice? What is our true motivation for evangelism? How do we avoid falling into the trap of counting evangelistic numbers? What lessons can we learn from the way Jesus operated? What dangers come from working with wrong motivations?

### Bible summary

How often we miss this vital point: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18, 19 NIV). We often try to substitute other motivators for evangelism: fear, guilt, obligation, compulsion, peer pressure and all the rest. But there can be only one true motivation: because we truly love and care for others. It's not because we are required to, but because we want to. In fact no sense of demand and requirement can help us anyway (see Rom. 3:19, 20). Jesus told us "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13 NIV). And Jesus did just that! (Rom. 5:6-8).

So what *are* we supposed to do? Jesus answered that question by telling his hearers, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:29 NIV). So we will do what Jesus says (John 14:15). This is the love response.

## **Comment**

The Ten Commandments are important and relevant, and are universally applicable. They have not been eliminated; they still form the basis for human laws. However their application alone cannot produce the desired spiritual relationship with God. The Pharisees of Jesus' time demonstrated the undeniable fact that keeping the law does not of itself produce any virtue. Jesus reserved his strongest condemnation for these law-followers.

Why? Because they chose to ignore the fundamental law of love which precedes and gives meaning to all other laws. This is not situational ethics; rather it illustrates the truth that a higher principle applies to all behavior.

Jesus pointed this out to the legalists again after he healed a man on the Sabbath, saying it was legal to do good on the Sabbath. He referred them to their own laws which allowed them to "work" on the Sabbath in an emergency, such as pulling an ox out of a ditch. In essence he was saying, "If you recognize the higher principle that supersedes the strict letter of the law in the case of cattle, why don't you recognize it in the case of human beings?"

Paul speaks of the Law of Liberty. It is an expression of the most elemental Christian motivation. Laws are observed as they comply with this Law of Liberty, which is based on a relationship with and an understanding of God Himself. In its simplest form, it can be summed up in "If you love me, keep my commandments." Love is the motivational factor for "law-keeping," which is more than legal observance, but an acceptance and agreement of right for right's sake. The observer of the law does not understand the law as compulsion, but as an expression of what he or she acknowledges as the only way to operate. Doing right because it is internally agreed to be right is a far cry from obedience based on obligation, compulsion and fear.

For "whoever obeys God's commands lives in union with God and God lives in union with him," (1 John 3:24 TEV). Why? Because "what he commands is that we believe in his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as Christ commanded us." (1 John 3:23 TEV).

Yet love cannot be commanded anyway! What God most wants cannot be commanded; it is a truth that is accepted and endorsed. This command to love brings law full circle back to the graciousness of God. For all the laws have this at their heart, every act of obedience is a demonstration of this principle of love in action. And "our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action." (1 John 3:18 TEV).

## **Ellen White Comments**

The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. {CT 32}

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76}

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