

# BEYOND THE BASICS

## CHAPTER 2 - REVISITING GOD'S STANDARDS

### **Damage Control**

God gave us free will so we could choose to love or to not love. If we did not have a choice we would be executing programmed behavior. Love is a decision, not an emotion (romance) or a feeling (affection). Love is a benevolent concern, caring about another and wanting only the best for them. Love is not the same as like; love is not the same as lust. Love is choosing to care about another the same as we care about ourselves, and honestly desiring what is for their greatest good. Our Creator wanted children capable of returning genuine love to Him. Having that capability meant we were also capable of rebelling and rejecting God. God is omniscient (all knowing) (1 Samuel 2:3, Job 28:24). God not only has all understanding and knowledge about everything, but also about all time, past, present and future. Since God is everywhere and is eternal, He sees and He knows all things that ever did happen, all things that are happening, and all things that ever will happen. Before He created the earth, He knew we would rebel, and He had already prepared a recovery plan (Ephesians 1:4&5). Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice to save us (John 3:16&17). God paid dearly for our sin with the life of His Son. We were all still in rebellion when Jesus took responsibility for our failures, accepted our punishment upon Himself, and offered us a second chance to get it right.

### **Restoring the Relationship**

Remember that God originally created us in His own image and likeness, and intended that we live for all eternity in fellowship with Him as His family. God does not change (Malachi 3:6, James 1:17), and that remains His intent for humanity. He selected one faithful man to father a chosen nation (Genesis 12:1&2, Genesis 17:1-6), with the intent that, when the time was right, they would bring His message of redemption to the entire world (Genesis 12:3). He placed His chosen people in a safe place (Genesis 46:1-4, Genesis 47:5&6) and developed them into a mighty nation (Exodus 1:7). When the time was fulfilled and they were large enough and strong enough to be independent of their host nation, He made their nest sufficiently uncomfortable that they were willing to leave for the Promised Land that would be theirs (Exodus 1:13&14). While in route to their new land He gave them rules of relationship with each other and with Himself (Exodus 20:1-17), and rules of conduct when in His presence (Exodus 28, Exodus 29, Exodus 30, Leviticus).

- Exodus 28 - Priestly garments, the Ephod, the Breastplate, other garments.
- Exodus 29 - Consecration of priests, daily offerings.
- Exodus 30 - Altar of Incense, ransom money, Bronze laver, Anointing oil, Incense.
- Leviticus - System of sacrifices, Ordination of priests, Laws concerning what is clean and unclean, Day of Atonement, Holiness code.

They needed to learn how to live as children of a loving God and how to live in the presence of a Holy God. Those chosen people were not much better than Adam and Eve at following directions so it took many years learning the hard way. Because of their complaining and rebellion it took forty years to complete what should have been a few week journey (Joshua). Having arrived and flourished for a time, they still went astray, and were placed in captivity many times (2 Chronicles 36).

- Captivity of Jehoahaz
- Captivity of Jehoakim
- Captivity of Jehoachin
- Fall of Jerusalem

He gave them many indications of things to come that finally made sense after the time of redemption was fulfilled. For example:

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- Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-11) was a sign for the descendents of Abraham as baptism was a sign for the disciples of Jesus.
- The Passover supper was replaced by the Lord's Supper for Christians (1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

The obstacle that separated us from God was sin, and sin was nailed to the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus came both to forgive and to heal (Luke 5:24). Jesus took our offenses on Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus traded us His righteousness for our sins. When Jesus lived on earth as a human He identified Himself with humanity to such a degree that He took responsibility for all human sin (Romans 5:18). Our responsibility is to admit our failure (1 John 1:9) and change our ways (Acts 3:19). Our efforts to save ourselves are not needed (Romans 3:24-26). There is no way we can ever earn what God offers as a free gift, we can only choose to accept it or reject it.

### **Show and Tell**

All people have a common problem when it comes to their relationship with God. We all suffer from some level of attention deficit disorder. We all, like sheep, have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6). Most people today are not familiar with shepherds and flocks. The sheep are not the brightest objects in a pasture, and if left unattended they will scatter, get lost, and fall prey to whatever predators are around. That is why the shepherd has to live with the flock twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. God in His wisdom knew what He was talking about when He compared people to a flock of sheep. Remember that God wanted a family of beings like himself, not a flock of errant sheep. We have much to learn about being children of our Heavenly Father. Jesus came, not only to save us, but also to demonstrate to us how we were to live and act. The Son is the same as the Father (Hebrews 1:1-3). The Father and the Son are of one substance as is the Holy Spirit. Jesus sought only the Father's will. In all things, He was the same as the Father (John 14:8&9). Jesus came to be our example (John 13:15). His intent and desire was that His followers should act and be motivated as He was. His life was a living demonstration of how God originally intended His children to live. Since humanity did not seem to get it through the prophets, or get it through the law, Jesus came to show us how. His work of redemption is complete, but His work of sanctification is still ongoing, and He is the example of how to live holy, godly lives. When He said that He was our example, He had just finished washing His disciples feet. Jesus lived life as originally intended for us (Hebrews 4:15). The constant theme throughout the scripture is one of obedience to God. Adam and Eve failed, and so has every son of Adam and daughter of Eve ever since. Jesus chose to live a human life of obedience and made the Father's will His own will. His obedience demonstrated His perfection to us, that we might imitate Him. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22&23) describes the character of Jesus, and love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) defines His essence. Know that God is love (1 John 4:7&8). This scripture does not say that love is something God does or that love is something God has, but love is what God is. If His example alone was not enough, Jesus also went about teaching Godly ways of living daily life during His three years of public ministry.

### **Identifying the Standards Again**

While we reside in this world we are exposed to the ways of the world, not only in the life that goes on around us, but also in our education system, and in our work and social environment. The world teaches us survival techniques for our present situation. The world tells us to look out for number one, be more clever than others, and make sure we get our fair share. The world tells us that outside of our group, whether it is family, place of employment, or social organization, we are really in

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competition with everyone else, and they are the enemy. God tells us that the world is wrong. We are family, all related through Adam and Eve, and we are to treat each other as family. It is true that there are prodigals, but we are to forgive and gently lead them back. We are supposed to cooperate with each other, support each other, work together and not be in competition. If we want eternal life with our Creator we need the Word of God (John 20:31). God's Word is not just another book to read and think about, but is a compilation of critical information from our Creator. The Bible sets the standard for our faith (Proverbs 29:18). Your peers and associates, society, and the world are all forever trying to tell you what your values should be and what you should believe and be willing to accept. God's Word lights the way for us (Psalm 119:105). There are many stumbling blocks, pitfalls, and divergent paths to follow in this life, and the world's wisdom is a very dim light indeed. God's law points out danger and warns us, and points at success and guides us. If we are to walk safely in a dark place we need a light. The Bible shows us the way ahead, and reveals false values and philosophies (Psalm 19:8, Psalm 119:130). Contrast the world's values with those of God:

- The world says to think yourself supreme, but God said to have a broken spirit (Matthew 5:3).
- The world says to be proud of your actions, but God said to have a penitential spirit (Matthew 5:4).
- The world says to push and take what you want, but God said be mild mannered with a gentle spirit (Matthew 5:5).
- The world says to rejoice when bad people are wronged, but God said to desire righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
- The world says to get even with those who wrong you, but God said to be merciful and compassionate (Matthew 5:7).
- The world says to enjoy immoral thoughts and sights, but God said to be pure (Matthew 5:8).
- The world says to destroy those who oppose you, but God said to be a mediator of peace (Matthew 5:9).
- The world says to fight those who try to restrict your freedoms, but God said to be longsuffering (Matthew 5:10-12).

When Jesus was teaching the world had already defined appropriate reactions to human activities that were not consistent with the ways of God, or of His children. These had to do with murder (Matthew 5:21-22), adultery (Matthew 5:27-28), divorce (Matthew 5:31-32), making oaths (Matthew 5:33-35), taking vengeance (Matthew 5:38-42), and treatment of enemies (Matthew 5:43-45).

### **Creating a Support System**

Our Heavenly Father provided a structure in which we could live, grow spiritually, and develop into the type of beings He originally created us to be. That structure is the church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22&23). As members of His body we have an obligation to cooperate with each other. As members of the body of Christ we are in fact all members one of another (Romans 12:5). Just as the human body has many parts with diverse functions, so has the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Each part has a specific function that is required by the entire body to be healthy. Though we are individually different we must work together to accomplish our assignment. If any parts are sick, the body is weakened. If any parts are missing the body is handicapped. If any parts are rebellious the body is confused and ineffective. God did not intend for Christians to live in isolation, but in close fellowship with Himself and with one another. The Body of Christ is the family of God and we need each other. We are here to support each other, and bear each other's burdens (Romans 15:1, Galatians

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6:1&2). When we are working together with our brothers and sisters in Christ in accordance with God's will, we can accomplish so much more than when we act alone (Leviticus 26:8, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). We need to be participants of life within the structure God provided (Hebrews 10:25). That is how we develop into what God desires us to be. Do you consider the church to be an organization you can join or a living spiritual entity you are a part of? Are you aware that trying to live out your Christianity apart from the Body of Christ is disobedience to the will of God?

### **Providing the Tools**

Our Creator is serious about returning us to the fellowship He desires and to the image in which He created us. He gave us the tools we need to support the transformation from our fallen state back into our redeemed eternal state. Scripture identifies the tools as Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). The gifts that are given to individuals within the Body of Christ are:

- The Word of Wisdom - supernatural revelation or insight into the will of God showing how to solve problems.
- The Word of Knowledge - supernatural revelation of divine knowledge that man could not know of himself.
- Faith - supernatural ability to believe God without human doubt, unbelief, and reasoning.
- Healing - supernatural ability to heal all manner of sickness without human aid or medicine.
- Working of miracles - supernatural ability to intervene in the ordinary course of nature and to counteract natural laws if necessary.
- Prophecy - supernatural divine utterance not conceived by human thought or reasoning.
- Discerning of spirits - supernatural revelation of the realm of spirits distinguishing if something is of God or the enemy.
- Diverse Tongues - supernatural utterance in other languages not known to the speaker.
- Interpretation of Tongues - supernatural ability to interpret in the native language what is uttered in other tongues not known by the one who interprets.

Our Creator also provides tools of war to empower and protect us from our spiritual enemies. Scripture identifies the tools as the Full Armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). The armor provided for individuals within the Body of Christ are:

- The Belt of Truth - protects and holds weapons
- The Breast Plate of Righteousness - covers the breast and protects vital organs, particularly the heart.
- The Boots of the Gospel of Peace - protects the front of the legs and feet from harm so you can continue to stand.
- The Shield of Faith - fends off the fiery darts of the enemy.
- The Helmet of Salvation - to protect the head (mind)
- The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God - an offensive weapon used to destroy the enemy and bring his surrender.

Prayer is another tool our Creator gave to us. God is self-sufficient and does not require the prayers of men. He does desire prayer, though, because we need to be in contact with Him for our own spiritual health (Psalm 145:18). Prayer is also a mighty weapon and can ward off temptations to sin (Matthew 26:41). The Lord is God (Psalm 95:3) and we should hold Him in awe with respect. At the same time He is our loving Father, and He desires that we come to Him knowing that He does love us (Hebrews 4:16). When we pray we should have trust and anticipation (Psalm 37:4&5). When we pray if we

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doubt we might as well not bother. We must pray believing (Matthew 21:22). At all times and under all conditions we should keep in touch with our Heavenly Father, seek His guidance and His help, and go wherever He leads us. We have available so great a divine support, but it is all of no effect if we neglect it.