

Restless Love

Read Ephesians 4:1-3 ...

In the field of Christian Ethics, finding an overriding ethical force is not that difficult. Jesus, after being grilled by the Pharisees and Sadducees with questions they surely thought couldn't have been answered "safely," is finally asked by a scribe (a person intimately familiar with the law) what is now considered one of the most important questions of all, "What is the greatest command?"

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40, NKJV).

This was not a new command ... Jesus took His words (as He often did) directly from the Old Testament, and specifically the Law. The command to love God is from Deuteronomy 6:5 which is part of the Shema – something a devout Jew would recite with his prayers in the morning and the evening. The second command to love your neighbor as yourself echoes the words of God thru Moses as recorded in the latter half of Leviticus 19:18. Since a healthy individual will care deeply about their own wellbeing, Jesus is ensuring that care for others will run "at least as deep" by saying "as yourself."

What really makes these two commands stand out is some of the commands that also relate to love. John tells us in no uncertain terms that we can know that we are God's children when we keep His commandments; in fact, it is an expression of love when we do (1 John 5:2, 3). Regarding loving others, Jesus indicates that instead of hating one's enemies, there should be love (Matt. 5:43, 44). It's easy

to love someone that loves us back, but when we are called upon to love someone that is our opposition? That takes effort!

But even beyond these two commands, if beyond is the right word, is the grounding of the Christian ethic in what Jesus says is a "new command," that the disciples should love one another as Jesus has loved them (John 13:34). How did Jesus love His disciples? Jesus defines this love as being willing to give Himself for them (John 15:13). Paul reminds us that this expression of love is also what God did for everyone – while we were still in our sins God sent Jesus to die for us (Rom. 5:6-10).

Now the rubber is meeting the road, yes? Our English word "love" must live up to several different meanings: erotic, family, intimate, and charity. As many are aware, there are also Greek words found in the Scriptures that also carry these same meanings. Biblical love, the love we have been looking at, has to do with the will and the actions that accompany that will. A Christian ethic grounded simply in rules can look back at some point and say, "Well then, job well done." But when a Christian ethic is grounded in love ...

"... it never allows the practice of it to be comfortable. The very essence of Christian love is that it is forever restless and unappeased."

Because the heart of the Christian ethic is grounded in love and the love that is described for Christians to exhibit in the Scriptures is an active love, this means – for a Christian – our love will always be restless. Never satisfied. Always looking for the next occasion to express itself in the life of the other.

Stir Up the Gift

** God has not given us a spirit of _____.

This is not the _____ type of fear.

Luke 19:21 – “For I _____ you, because you are an austere man.”

** God has given us a spirit of _____.

There is certainly something special between Paul and Timothy – the miraculous aspect of the _____ power.

But we do have access to the power of the _____
(Rom. 1:16).

** God has given us a spirit of _____.

The spirit of love allows us to fulfill the words of _____.

Love is also the _____ from which we obey.

** God has given us a spirit of a _____ mind.

The sound mind is a _____ mind (Rom. 12:1).

Hebrews 5:14 – “But solid food belongs to those who are of _____ age ...”

** When Paul reminds Timothy to _____ up the gift,
that means the _____ of the gift can go out.