

## **God is Love:**

### **I. THE ULTIMATE REALITY**

- A. There are different words in the Bible for Love in the Greek language: (1) “Phileo” - To be fond of, To like, To feel friendship for another. (2) “Philadelphia” - Brotherly love. (3) “Eros” – Physical love (between a man and woman). (4) “Agapeo” - To love unconditionally, To unselfishly choose for the highest good of another.
- B. The Holy Spirit’s first agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church. Jesus referred to Deuteronomy 6:5 and then defined loving God as the first commandment, thus identifying it as the highest priority to God and the first calling in our life and for every ministry.  
*<sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)*
- C. The command to love God with all our heart does not begin with our response to God. It is an expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom that existed before the creation of the world—namely God’s heart that burned with perfect love within the fellowship of the Trinity. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart, mind, and strength. God the Father loved the Son. God the Son loved the Spirit. God the Spirit loved the Father and the Son, etc.
- D. **God is love**—wholehearted love (1 Jn. 4:16). The very being of God is wholehearted love. It is of first importance in God's personality and in the relationships of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- E. **Winkie Pratney writes:** “When God commands, “You shall love (unselfishly choose the highest good) of the Lord your God . . . and love your neighbor as yourself”, He is saying simply this; “I am valuable for My own sake. You do what I must always do; put first what belongs first.” (Matt. 22:34- 40; Mk. 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; John 14:21) He deserves first place. God is the most lovely Person in the universe. His Being is the Source of all life, the Power that upholds all of Creation. Since everyone’s happiness depends on it, God has a responsibility to honor it. God must choose His own highest good as the only wisest possible act. He is obliged to rule Himself and His creation by informing them of this for everyone’s highest good. Just as we are responsible to love and take care of our own beings, and because we do this, are able to love and care for our neighbors, God Himself loves and takes care of His Being, and is responsible for His own highest good, as well as ours.”
- F. **Winkie continues...** “Why, then should we love God? Because He is the Altogether Lovely. Why should all men and women choose to put God first? Because He is the most valuable One in the universe. And He is not selfish; He chooses only what He sees and knows, in infinite wisdom to be the most valuable object in the universe; the incomparable value of His own uncreated Being, the foundation of all reality. He is not just important because He says so. He actually is the most important One there is! When the Bible calls Him good it means something. God is good because He has always done what is best, and always will. His law is founded in His Being, not His will; it is not therefore arbitrary. His Being is distinct from His will, and its infinite value obligates His will; therefore God Himself has a law to keep.”

- G. Love is not just something He made up, invented. It is the way of supreme intelligence, the way God chooses to live, and the way He asks us all to choose likewise. There is nothing more important than God's desires. His infinite power and great wisdom are employed to carry out His desires—they are used to establish His plan to fill the earth with love. The living creatures declare that God is holy (Rev. 4:8). Holiness, as it relates to God's person, speaks of His transcendence (infinite greatness), absolute purity, and affectionate love shining forth together as one reality. His love and transcendence (holiness) speak of the same reality.
- H. We best understand the first commandment in its eternal context of the fellowship in the Godhead, instead of it seeing it as merely one aspect of kingdom ethics. He wants us to respond in wholehearted love because it is *who He is* and *who He created us to be* in His image.
- I. Jesus revealed that the essence of salvation is to know God—with experiential knowledge. Salvation (eternal life) is an invitation to participate in deep fellowship with the Godhead. It is the *why* behind the *what* of creation and redemption. Salvation is much more than escaping hell. The very fact that Almighty God is deeply “moved” by our weak love is a most amazing reality.  
<sup>3</sup>***“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ.” (Jn. 17:3)***
- J. The love burning in God's heart has at least five distinct expressions that are deeply interrelated.  
1. ***God's love for God***: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.  
2. ***God's love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.  
3. ***Our love for God***: God's very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).  
4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God's love and for God's sake.  
5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 Jn. 4:19).
- K. These five expressions of love constitute what I refer to as the ***fellowship of the burning heart***. Our greatest destiny is to participate in the burning love within the fellowship of the Trinity.
- L. ***Abide in love***: One foundational premise in this teaching is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God and that we must stay focused on this (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). To abide in love means to continually live in it. This requires that we *stay focused* on living in God's love in its various expressions. We are to set our heart to go deep in our understanding of this.  
<sup>9</sup>***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***
- M. The first commandment will forever be the first priority in the kingdom. Wholehearted love is of first importance in God's relationship to God, to us, and in our relationship to Him and to others.
- N. We are to behold the manner or the ***quality*** of the love that the Father has for us. We are to make this the preoccupation of our life before, during, and after revival.

<sup>1</sup>***Behold [focus on] what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)***