**June 9, 2019**

**Session 7: Godly Love Fulfils the Righteousness of the Law**

Last week we looked at the various components of godly love.

* Godly selflessness: Romans 12:2-8
* Godly kindness: Romans 12:9-10
* Godly tenderness: Romans 12:13-15
* Godly meekness: Romans 12:17-21
* Godly benevolence: Romans 13:1-7

Looking at the components of godly love, I want us to take a moment and notice the natural progression of the doctrine as it is presented to us. This is a characteristic of an educational curriculum.

Just to show you how there is a natural flow to the doctrine, I want to show you how it begins with you as part of a local assembly and moves you out, in progressive steps, into the world at large. This is not meant to be a full and detailed account, but enough to illustrate the flow of the doctrine.

The “flow” of the doctrine:

* In Romans 12:3-8, generates the first feature of godly love within us; selflessness. This is learned and put into practice within the local assembly, especially by the outworking of the various offices.
* Romans 12:9-10 expands that love within the local assembly by the feature of lovingkindness.

Let me pause here to point out that this is the beginning of a process which is described later in 1 Thessalonians whereby we are taught of God to love one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

How is it that God teaches us to love one another? He teaches us by means of His word. These first two components of godly love in Romans 12 constitute the beginning of that love being generated in us.

The generation of godly love within us is part of our edification as sons and daughters.

Now, let us continue the quick overview of the flow of the doctrine:

* Romans 12:11 moves from the church to the outside world, firstly in one’s work (business).
* Romans 12:12 moves our love outside of the workplace into the world at large where we encounter others in the circumstances of life.
* Romans 12:13-15 expands our love into tenderheartedness as we encounter both the saints and the lost in our everyday lives.

There is something else I want us to look at here. We need to see the “big picture” of what is being accomplished in us spiritually by our education. I think we all understand that we are not under the law, but under grace. We are free from the law, not because God does not care about righteousness; about the way we live. God does care how we live. He cares enough that He expects us to fulfill the righteousness of His law. The “trick” is to do so without putting yourself under the law.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,** who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

As you can see, what God accomplished through His Son was so the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. That is what God expects of us.

You may recall that Jesus talked about the law and He boiled it down to two great commandments.

Matthew 22:36 Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Think about that. The entire law and the prophets all hang on those two commandments. If we are to fulfill the righteousness of the Law, then must be able to fulfill the righteousness of the Law. So what does this have to do with godly love being generated in us?

**Session 8: Making Godly Love the Priority**

In our instruction in godly love, we are being equipped to fulfill the second great commandment love thy neighbor as thyself. And we are expected to do so without putting ourselves under the Law! There is much more to this but we will wait until later to go into further detail. For now, I just want us to see that without the features of godly love being installed in us, we have no chance of fulfilling the righteousness of the law.

So far, we have taken a brief look at the issue of godly love. But that love is connected to something else; charity. If we are going to love the way our Father loves, it will be with charity. What we will see is that love and charity are connected, but they are not the same thing. In a nutshell, charity becomes the reason for doing what we do. So, what is charity?

Today, by means of His more excellent way, God is producing charity in the lives of His sons and daughters. Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 13 that a guy could have any of the gifts operating in him, but without godly charity, those things are worthless.

Charity is a mental attitude of our valuing and esteeming of others being manifested in Christ-like actions toward them. Or, to say it another way, godly charity is when we think, say or do anything toward another because we have learned to value and esteem them the way our Father does.

For example, we value and esteem other members of the body because they are necessary to our training for eternity. Our Father has designed for us to work together in more than just a positional sense, but in a practical sense. Our function together as a local assembly is designed to be a working model for the entire body of Christ in the heavenly places.

We value and esteem other members of the body because we need them just as they need us. We realize each member of the body has a real role to fulfill; a role which is necessary and vital to the rest of the body.

We value and esteem the other members of the body because our godly labor depends on it. Our godly labor in connection with our Father’s operations in the world, as well as the achievement of His objectives for the body of Christ, are only possible as we possess the components of His love and discharge them with godly charity.

Our own work is useless unless we properly value and esteem one another. The only way we can function to the benefit of the body is if we genuinely value every member and the functional life of their office.

The realization of these things work so that we cherish one another all the more and treat each other accordingly (such as: serving one another, etc.). As we cherish one another, we are motivated to behave “selflessly” toward one another. Love tells us what to be: selfless. Charity tells us why we act selflessly; we value and esteem them for who they are in connection with God’s plan and purpose.

Could I say it this way? Godly love tells us what to think and how to act. Godly charity tells us why to think or act that way. The verses in 1 Cor. 13 show us that doing the right thing is not enough, but we must do it for the godly reasons; that is charity. Therefore, Paul writes…

1 Corinthians 16:14 Let all your things be done with charity.

Believe me when I say that every part of our education is in view of preparing us for our future vocation in the creature and the development of godly love and charity is no exception.

As we read this, think about how things were meant to happen. We see it in the book of Acts and we observe the progression of it in advanced epistles such as Ephesians, but in I Corinthians, we can see the display of gifts, in their order and order of importance, accomplishes the operations of God which He wants accomplished.

Take a look.

In I Corinthians 11:1-16:24 we have the third major component to the book; the reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness concerning their ungodly labor. In 12:1-14:40, Paul addresses their ungodly labor with regard to the spiritual gifts and the operations of God.

12:1-3 = reproof

12:4 - 13:13 = correction

14:1-40 = instruction in righteousness

Seeing that the correction section begins in 12:4, if we are going to get the full gist of 13:1-7, then we need to see it in the context of the whole.

Just to give us the bare minimum, let us look at the last section in chapter 12. It begins with verse 28.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

These gifts are listed in order of importance and in order of their appearance. The most important of the gifts which were in operation back then was the gift of an apostle. What did he do? An apostle was a “sent forth” one. As we see in the book of Acts, an apostle would come into an area and preach the gospel. As people came to faith in Jesus Christ, the apostle would begin to organize them into a local assembly. The apostle would begin to instruct them in the foundational doctrines.

If they responded positively and properly to that initial doctrine, then the gift of a prophet would show up in the assembly. Don’t think of a prophet as one who foretells the future, but think of him as one who speaks for God. Since there was no written word back them by which to instruct, it was the job of the prophet to reveal additional truths from God. The next stage of doctrine would begin to be revealed to the assembly by the prophet. The prophets in the assembly were the ones who were able to recognize inspired scripture as various written documents were copied and send to other assemblies.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, **ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

The next most important gift was the gift of the teacher and it was the third gift to show up in the assembly. As the newly organized church responded to the initial doctrine of the apostle, and began to be exposed to additional doctrine from the prophet, now there was a need for someone who could not just reveal the word of God, but teach it so that it was understood and could be acted upon.

So, do you see the progression? God would send an apostle (a preacher). He would preach the gospel. Of those who heard the gospel, some would respond. The prophet would organize them into a church and begin foundational doctrine with them. As they responded, the prophet would reveal more doctrinal truth and then a teacher would guide them into an understanding of the words of the Lord so they would understand what they were supposed to do with it; what those words were designed to accomplish in them.

These first three gifts are all centered in God’s word. But the next gift is not grouped with these.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, **after that miracles**, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.