

~ LOVE ~

IT'S IN THE DETAILS

“I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...” ~ God

Without love – no other quality matters. This is one of our most core beliefs. Without love, even the greatest of men and women are reduced to absolutely nothing. Understanding all prophecy would be a gift of indescribable worth. It would certainly bring one the respect and admiration of their peers. But in the absence of love – without the motivation and guiding purpose of love – even with the gift of prophecy, a person pales into insignificance and becomes nothing (1 Cor 13: 1-3). Paul portrayed the gift of tongues (languages), the gift of prophecy, and the gift of understanding, great personal sacrifice and even faith as being comparably nothing in the absence of godly love. Love is truly the greatest gift of God as well as His greatest attribute. But how many know what love is, as God defines love?

Yeshua (Jesus) the Christ (Messiah) was asked about the greatest of all God’s commandments. Have you understood the depth and ramification of His answer?

Matt 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

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."

The greatest command in all of Torah is to love God with all our heart (*passion*), with all our soul (*our inner-most being*) and with all our mind (*our thinking and intellect*).

Messiah said the second greatest command is like unto the first – to love our neighbor as our self. This command is like the first because when we love the children of God, who are made in God’s image, we thereby also show our love and respect to their Father – the Father of all. Yeshua did not refer to the commandments contained in the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) as being the greatest of all commandments. He instead referred to the two great statutes from Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18. The command to love to neighbor was not a newly introduced New Testament law. It was part of the foundation of Torah through Moses that Messiah affirmed and magnified in the New Testament dispensation.

These two statutes are so important – so foundational – that Messiah said ALL the teachings of the law (Torah), and all the writings of the prophets **depend** from these two great statutes. One might think of it in this way:

- All the laws, statutes, ordinances and testimonies that teach us how to worship and interact with Yahweh our God originate from the principle law of Deut 6:4-5 with the motive of assisting us in developing a strong, unbreakable bond of trusting love for our Father and God. God’s laws teach us the details of *HOW* to love and worship Him as He wants to be loved and worshiped and as *He defines* true love and true worship.

- All the laws, statutes, ordinances and testimonies that guide us and regulate the conduct between people for a healthy family-based society, are each rooted in teaching us the details of how to love others – as God describes love. These statutes teach us the details of how to conduct ourselves toward our fellow man – how to love our fellow man – God’s way.

Some people have certain ideas of what “love” is while other people have different standards of “love.” To some, their form of “love” might be expressed in what God calls fornication or adultery. God teaches us what real love is, in all its aspects, through His royal law. Others have wanted to show their love toward God in ways similar to the ways ancient peoples have worshiped their pagan gods – but God’s laws forbid us from worshipping Him other than as He instructs us (Deut 12:4, 31). God defines the conduct that displays real love toward Him and toward our neighbor through His statutes and commandments.

Faith is important – but the apostle Paul taught us that even faith pales into insignificance without love (1 Cor 13:2). God’s law contains the details of the way godly love is expressed as God defines love. If a person examines each law in this light, they will find the elements of how we are to love, respect and worship God or how we are to show love and respect toward others. Try it and you will see. Let’s just consider a few statutes that demonstrate that they are all rooted in love:

Lev 19:32 'You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD .

To show respect to our experienced seniors, is a type of showing respect to the Ancient of Days who has the greatest of experience and whose hair is whitened with glory like pure wool (Dan 7:9). Such respect is clearly showing love and honor to both our elders and to our Great God who teaches us such a chivalrous culture. Now let’s see the love for others – even love for our enemies – in the following statute:

Ex 23:5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

This law confirms and is the root of the principle that Messiah taught about loving even our enemies (Matt 5:44). Here then is another law that is clearly rooted in love, but which is not always followed by otherwise loving people:

Deut 22:1 "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother." "...3 You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself." (emphasis mine)

Instead of, *Finder’s keeper’s, loser’s weeper’s*, God teaches us to show genuine love for the stranger; people we do not even know. There are many fine people of society that are considered “loving” that would not think twice about keeping a lost item that they have found – *after all* – people often justify – *the rightful owner could never be found*. People who would never steal a nice piece of jewelry, or a nice coat or hat that was just the “right size and style,” or that cute little “stray” pet that wandered into their presence, but they may keep one or more of these items if they found them – with little or no effort to find their true owners. Ironically, it’s like a man who thinks he is honest – stealing. Those who go out of their way to return such lost items are considered rare and special people. This is because they have risen to God’s higher spiritual law of love. There are real details of how to show genuine love and concern for our fellow man – even for strangers – that are contained in God’s law of love. You can see the love for

neighbor in this “lost and found” law, can’t you? God’s laws even teach us how to lovingly care for the animals in God’s creation:

Deut 22:6 "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young;

This law protects nature from the indiscriminate over-harvesting of any particular species so as to protect it from being wiped out. The wisdom of this law is obvious to some, but not to others – so we must be told by an authority. God is the authority – our supreme Father is the true teacher! Keeping this law shows love, respect and appreciation for God our Creator Father and it shows love and respect to future generations so that they too can enjoy and experience all that God has created. This law even shows appreciation and respect toward nature itself.

Paul used the statute of not muzzling the ox that treads out the grain (Deut 25:4) to teach the principle of not withholding pay from those who earn it (1 Cor 9:9, 1 Tim 5:18). The love contained in this law provides instruction to protect against cruelty to animals as well as giving us detailed instruction of how to show love by sharing our goods and resources with those who work for us. It’s also worth noting that we again see the apostle Paul teaching God’s statutes to the Gentile congregations that he raised up. I could go on and on and on with hundreds of examples, and would be happy to do so, but space prevents me from doing so here. But if you would like to see more about the love and wisdom contained in God’s statutes visit www.godslawislove.org and go to the section on God’s statutes – there’s much more there to glean from.

John, the apostle, also understood the parallel between true love and God’s laws, and expressed it perhaps better than anyone. This is evident in both his written words and in the many Messianic quotes found in his writings, both of which show obedience to God’s laws as synonymous with godly love. For example:

John 14:15 “If you love Me, keep my commandments.”

John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

John 15:10 “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

1 John 2:5 “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

After a lifetime of repeatedly teaching God’s commandments as the true expression of godly love, John condenses this teaching and frames it as a litmus test of the true love and true faith. Notice these powerful words:

1 John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

*5 But **whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.** By this we know that we are in Him.*

Just as none of us have perfected love, none of us keeps God's law perfectly. But what we practice we develop character and strength in. Like John put it, "*He who practices righteousness is righteous* – (1 John 3:7)." Let's practice!

Paul understood the value of the grace of God and shared that beautiful knowledge with us. Praise Yah for that! But even Paul defined godly love to the Roman Christian's as being the application of God's laws. Paul then summed up love by quoting the great statute from Lev 19:18:

Rom 13:9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This is why Paul magnified love over personal sacrifice, over speaking in tongues, over understanding, over the gift of prophecy and even over faith. Paul did not magnify love over God's laws, because God's laws are the details of love in action! What Paul taught in 1 Cor 13, was to express a number of qualities of love that are contained in specific statutes and laws of God. For example:

- Paul said, "Love does not envy (1Cor 13:4)." This is based upon the Tenth Commandment which teaches us not to covet (Ex 20:17).
- Paul said, "Love does not parade itself and is not puffed up (1 Cor 13:4)." This teaching is rooted in the teachings surrounding God's Holy Festival of Matzah (unleavened bread) wherein humble repentance is also taught.
- Paul said, "Love does not behave rudely (1 Cor 13:5)." There are many statutes that teach against being rude, crude or unbecoming, disrespectful or mean in any way (Lev 18, 19 and 20).

Notice what Paul taught young Timothy about the purpose of God's commandments:

*1 Tim 1:5 "Now **the purpose of the commandment is love** from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,"*

GOD'S LAW DOES NOT SAVE PEOPLE OR REPLACE HIS GRACE

It would be impossible to overestimate the value and importance of God's merciful grace toward us all, for without grace, no one would be saved. We can never earn our salvation. People cannot earn their salvation through love anymore than they can earn their salvation through obedience. Salvation is God's gift. Earning salvation has never been the aim of God's laws. Paul said the purpose of God's commandments is to teach love. It is worth noting however, that the law also teaches mercy, for mercy triumphs over judgment (Ps 85:10, Mic 7:18, James 2:13).

Since none of us can earn our salvation, we rejoice to know that it is a free gift of God (Eph 2:8). We rejoice to know that when we sin, we have a faithful Advocate who paid the price for our sins long ago. We rejoice to know that we are justified by Messiah's blood and saved by His life (Rom 5:9-10). As we become a new creation, Messiah begins to live a new life in us through His spirit (Gal 2:20-21). We then put away our former conduct and become a new creation in Christ (Eph 4:24, Col 3:9, Rom 6:1-12). As Paul said, after baptism and acceptance of Christ as our Savior, we should not let sin continue to reign in

our mortal bodies (Rom 6:12) – we should not continue in sin (Rom 6:1). God will not allow His mercy and patience to be mocked through continually sowing a life of sin to the flesh (Gal 6:7).

We do not set aside the grace of God, but neither do we mock God's grace or teachings through disregard for His loving laws, for our Father God's laws are a window into His mind and a reflection of His wise and merciful character.

THE NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION OF GOD'S STATUTES

Yeshua and His apostles set us the example of keeping and teaching the statutes (Matt 5:31-32, Matt 23:23, James 2:1-9), including the apostle Paul (1 Tim 5:18, Rom 13:8-9, 2 Cor 6:14). In the Millennium and as part of the New Covenant, God promised to write His statutes on our hearts with His Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:27). The New Covenant is applicable NOW for true committed believers today (Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25).

Many people who consider themselves to be "Christians" have, in essence, been taught the mistaken idea that Yeshua (Jesus) came to do away with His Father's laws. This article is not to pass judgment on anyone. It is to reveal the many enlightening blessings that we all have available when we practice God's laws of love. Don't let anyone steal God's words from you.

Some who understand that God's Ten Commandments are still in effect miss the value of God's statutes and testimonies. Others have been robbed of the full benefit of God's instructions by, picking and choosing which of God's commandments they will submit to. Most have been taught to ignore the 4th commandment, "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy* (Ex 20:8)." Many are taught to disregard God's seventh day and "replace" the Sabbath as God's day of rest and worship with the first day of the week which the pagans honored – Sunday. This is done even though most know Sunday to be the day of Baal and the day of Sun worship.

(Some even belittle the importance of God's teachings by saying "works are not necessary". Just because we cannot save ourselves by our works, does not mean that God doesn't require certain things of us. While salvation cannot be earned, it can be discarded; through the *disbelief* that is evidenced by our fruits (Matt 25:41-45, Luke 3:8, Matt 7:16, Gal 6:7). Even the act of belief or accepting Messiah is in essence a "work" that is required, but this simple truth has not prevented Paul's words from being twisted (2 Pet 3:16) to support such bizarre beliefs as, "works are not necessary." To insist that because we cannot earn our salvation God requires no works of us, no action and no real change – is not being wholly truthful with the Scriptures. Even the Lord's brother James said, Abraham's "faith was working together with his works" and "Faith without works is dead (James 2:18-26)." Paul also referred to various actions that Abraham took as a result of his faith in God (Rom 4, Heb 11). By being honest with the scriptures and acting accordingly, we too can have a living faith like Abraham, Paul and James. I want a living faith, and I'm sure you do too.)

Some who do seek to obey the Decalogue have been taught that God's Statutes are no longer binding for people since the New Testament era began. These observations are not listed to imply in any way that such people are bad or condemned. Rather, these observations are listed to expose how Satan can rob us of many of God's blessings and truths through deception. Remember, Satan has kept the whole world hostage through his deceptions (Rev 12:9, 2 Tim 2:26), for he does not want us to learn the law that, when coupled with God's Spirit, will develop in us the very character of God. David referred to God's law as a

light to our path (Ps 119:104-105). Paul referred to the law as the teaching that brings us to Christ like a tutor or personal nanny (Gal 3:24). I love God's law, but I love God more and I am thankful for that which helps bring me to Yeshua Messiah.

Interestingly, even though many church parishioners do not realize it, many churches do keep and teach some of God's Statutes in principle. Consider these popular church doctrines which are rooted in God's statutes; and notice also their parallel Old Testament *and* New Testament usage: **Most teachings about loving God (Deut 6:5 and Matt 22:37), tithing (Lev 27:30, Mal 3:7-12 and Matt 23:23), fornication (Num 25:1 and Acts 15:20), marriage and divorce (Gen 2:24, Mal 2:14-16 and Matt 19:9), witchcraft or divination (Deut 18:10 and Gal 5:19-21), showing respect for the elderly (Lev 19:32 and 1 Tim 5:1), not being a respecter of persons (Lev 19:15 and James 2:1, 9), avoiding racism (Ex 22:21 and Matt 25:44), being humble (Deut 17:20 and Matt 23:12), forgiveness (Lev 19:17-18 and Matt 18:21-35), and love toward your neighbor (Lev 19:18 and 1 John 3:11), are all teachings that are both rooted and founded in God's statutes and continued to be taught by both Messiah and His apostles!**

For example, many churches still teach God's Statute of tithing (Mal 3:7-12), but have lost the value of God's statutes that teach us how to properly love and worship God (Deut 6:4-7 & Mark 12:29-30). Many people are coming to recognize the health value in keeping God's statutes of eating only clean healthful meats and avoiding unclean unhealthful meats (Lev 11), but they have lost the important practice of teaching their children and grandchildren God's statutes (Deut 6:1-7) which will turn their hearts to God (Mal 4). Some keep the statute of God's weekly Holy Sabbath day mentioned in Lev 23:3, but they have been robbed of the gift of God's annual Holy Sabbaths and Feasts which are mentioned in the same passages of scripture as the weekly Sabbath! This is even more amazing, since Jesus and the apostles both kept, and taught the church to keep, God's annual Holy Days (John 7:8-14 & 1 Cor 5:6-8). God reveals His annual Sabbath Feasts as being likened to a guiding beacon and a sign or picture, because they teach us about the wonderful world tomorrow (Ex 31:13, Ex 37:7-10, Col 2:16-17)! God's statutes make us smarter! As they teach us, they make us wiser than our enemies (Ps 119:97-112). They teach us how to properly and respectfully love and worship God and how to live as God's children with each other. They teach us *how* to show love to our neighbor (Lev 19:18 & Mark 12:31).

But when we pick and choose which of God's laws we will obey, it's as if we again take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil by deciding for ourselves what *we* consider good and what *we* consider evil, when *we* will obey God and when *we* will follow *our own will*. Only God has the wisdom and authority to direct us in what is good and leads to life, and what is evil and leads to death. Let's not pick and choose *which* of God's statutes we will teach and obey. Let's live by every word of God (Deut 8:3 & Luke 4:4).

Why would anyone have disdain for seeking to live within such a loving royal law (James 2:8 & 1 John 2:4)?

Why all the confusion about Christ supposedly doing away with God's statutes, when both He and His disciples taught and kept them?

Why do many in God's Churches show respect for and keep Deut. 5 (where God's 10 commands are listed), but mostly ignore the instructions in Deut 4 and Duet 6,7,8,9,10,11,12, etc., (where God's statutes are listed)?

Why have the Ten Commandments been described as the foundation of God's law while the statutes are often characterized as merely fleshing out the details of the Decalogue – when Jesus said ALL THE LAW AND PROPHETS HANG ON THE TWO GREAT STATUTES of love toward God and love toward

neighbor (Mark 12:28-31) – not the other way around?

Why have people been taught to neglect most of God’s awesome, royal statutes – even though God said they were binding forever (Deut 4:40, 5:29, 12:28 & Matt 5:17-19) and even though God said He gave them to us out of love, and for our good (Deut 6:24)? Why?

Has God given men the authority to “pick and choose” which statutes they will obey? If God’s statutes are not in effect today, why are they so prevalent throughout the New Testament – even right up to the end in the book of Revelation? Notice Yeshua’s words:

Matt 5:17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law of the Prophets. I did NOT come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever DOES and TEACHES them shall be called GREAT in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (emphasis mine throughout)

In light of verse 19 above, which one of the laws would any heedful person want to disobey and teach others they did not need to obey? Christ, in essence, pronounced a curse upon those who disobey and teach others to disobey even the least of God’s laws. Conversely, Jesus pronounced a BLESSING upon those who both keep and teach even the least of God’s commandments. I want to be blessed and called “great” in God’s wonderful Kingdom, don’t you?

THE SUM OF THE MATTER

Paul taught love as the greatest attribute for a disciple of Christ to have and he gave concrete examples of its application. God’s laws teach us the details of love, mercy, patience forgiveness and true faith – in application. Let’s review the wisdom in Paul’s teaching on love:

1 Cor 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails...

The gift of languages would be great, but love is greater. Prophecy is important, but love is more important. Knowledge is an important gift, but without love it loses its value. Faith without love is like faith without works, for without love ones faith becomes useless. When our love is strong, God’s presence is strong in our life. When our love is weak, so is the presence or amount of God’s spirit within us. We

express a greater patience, a more gentle kindness and a more willing humility and sacrifice toward those we love the most. This truth is borne out most clearly in the way we treat our children. Our stronger love for them cause us to be more patient, more tolerant, more forgiving, more believing, more gentle and more loving toward them than we are toward others whom we do not love as much. This is a simple but solid proof of the power of love when it is strong, and of its diminishing power as love wanes. **The more love we have, the more godly we are and our conduct reflects it. When we don't treat others the way we should, it is our godly love that is waning.**

When we show impatience toward others, perhaps we should ask ourselves if our impatience is justified or if, perhaps, our love reserve is running low. Perhaps we are not following God's spirit as we should. When we are not forgiving toward others, perhaps we are running low on God's spirit and need a refill. Or, perhaps we have the spirit, but we are quenching it by following our emotions or our own will? (1 Thess 5:19). Pray for God's spirit, and then follow it! The fruits of our lives will demonstrate if we are following God's spirit (Matt 7:20, Rom 8:14)!

Messiah said that many lawless people would claim to know Him, but because of their persistent lawlessness, He would have to declare to them, ***"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*** (Matt 7:23)."

Examine yourself, weather you are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

Paul said love does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Cor 13:6). Iniquity is lawlessness, and is translated "lawlessness" in many Bible translations. Godly love is not lawless, for there is no love absent God's laws (Rom 13:9, James 2:8). The more love for God we have the more we are willing and able to obey and submit to Him in every way. The more love we have the more forgiving, patient, merciful, humble and obedient we will be. The more love for fellow man we have the more we show love toward God, for our fellowman is each made in God's image. As the apostle of love said, ***"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me..."*** (John 14:21)."

With love as our guide and humility to learn from the instructions of our loving Father God, we will find great wisdom in how to show love toward God, family and neighbor through the statutes and testimonies. This is true with the keeping of the Holy Feasts the LORD gave us. They too are statutes and they reveal God's plan of salvation for all mankind like a series of beautifully choreographed portrayals. As we keep them, we learn the details of how God will save all mankind. They are filled with hope, meaning and joy and they are clearly given to us out of God's love for us. We'll discuss these statutes more, for as the apostle Paul said, God's Festivals, Sabbaths and New Moons are a fitting reflection of our Lord's body (Col 2:16-17).

If you want to know more about specifics of God's loving statutes and His Holy Festivals and their application in today's post New Testament times, check out our website at: <http://www.godslawislove.org>. There you will learn to distinguish between the statutes and the testimonies and about the specifics of how they were taught and applied by the apostles. You will also learn how YOU can benefit from learning to practice them today. We have found that God's law is love, and it is our pleasure to share that wonderful truth with you. May the grace of God save you and guide you into the depth and riches of His truth.