

Spirit Led Love

Indeed... where **is** the love?

The recent events surrounding the pulpit preacher, elders, and members at the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee, regarding their utilization of a female preaching intern from Lipscomb University sent waves of shock and dismay throughout much of our beloved brotherhood. But why? Perhaps because this came as such a sudden and abrupt “wake-up” call to so many who did not previously understand just how far this insidious infection of insubordination and rebellion against the God of all glory and His eternal and timeless word had already fully spread within His beloved Son’s once united, but now being divided by such, blood-bought body.

But such departures from the divine truth, faith, and commandments, which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself promised the Spirit of Truth would – and later did – finish delivering (John 16:7-12; II Timothy 3:12-4:4; 2 Peter 1:16-2:3; Jude 3), should come as no such surprise at all (I Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Peter 3:14-18). In fact, there is even a website which appears quite proudly devoted to divulging the identities of some “churches of Christ” which are, and in some cases have been for several decades, allowing themselves to be completely and complacently deceived into being led by a spirit other than that of the Lord God Almighty’s and what His Holy Spirit of Truth specifically dictated in His divinely-inspired word –

http://www.wherethespiritleads.org/gender_inclusive_churches.htm – (See 2 Corinthians 14:33-37 for example). “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). In the same spirit as that of the ancient congregation at Corinth (See 1 Corinthians 5:1-8), instead of mourning, they are proud, “puffed up,” and seem to be well-bent on proudly spreading and parading their spirit of soul-destroying disobedience to almighty God, both into and before the entire world. A truly “Spirit-led” congregation of God’s people is quite different from – and in fact, exactly the opposite of – the picture some are portraying. I serve a completely “Spirit-led” congregation. We read and study what the Spirit said – God’s word – (2 Peter 1:16-21), and then seek to humbly and obediently submit to, and put it into practice. This is what it truly means to be “Spirit-led.” Being led by a spirit other than that, or any spirit

which contradicts the divinely-inspired commandments dictated by God's Holy Spirit of Truth and which are written in God's holy word (such as we see in 1 Corinthians 14:33-37), is contrary to what God's Holy Spirit of Truth said and says, and therefore is, by definition, "...according to the working of Satan... and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Now of course when those of us who still place our faith in the fact that "**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, [and] for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work," and therefore follow the Apostle Paul's divinely-inspired instructions to "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables," (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2-4) as I just did above, we are instantly and automatically judged and labeled as "harsh," "unloving," "hateful," and "judgmental," by those who want to continue in their disobedience uncorrected, and who also loudly and proudly want to continue to consider and proclaim themselves to be far more loving and far less judgmental than they judge us – in their abhorrence of our adherence to Scripture – to be. How is that even possible? Because they apparently do not understand the entirety of the biblical term "love," anymore than they fully understand the epitome of what it means to be truly "Spirit-led."

In the Apostle Paul's infinitely beautiful and divinely-inspired and dictated description of what godly love looks like in 1 Corinthians 13, he includes an essential but oft-overlooked element of true love, without which, whatever other elements of love you may possess, leaves you with something far less. Besides not parading itself and not being puffed up (vs. 4), one of true biblical love's essential elements which simply cannot be overlooked, neutralized, or minimized, is found in verse 6, wherein it says love "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth."

Biblical love is not, and cannot be, happy about iniquity; it is not pleased, and cannot remain quiet and complacent with willful, ongoing, pride-justified disobedience and any

of the sinful practices which defy the Spirit-Inspired, eternal word of our holy God (Psalm 19:7-11; 119:89) and therefore separate the people He loves from Him (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-3; Hebrews 10:26-31). True love simply can't stand by and do that! Instead, it "rejoices with the truth." "The truth," according to the Jesus of the bible whom those who are defying Him claim to be worshipping, is God's word (John 17:17).

And so we see that according to God's definition of love – not man's – that those who truly love will not, and cannot, in any way, shape, or form, rejoice and be happy when the sin of direct and willful disobedience is taking place (such as when those congregations who insist on defying and disobeying God's commandments as found in such places as 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 proudly persist in so doing). Instead, when faced with such iniquity, those who truly love – according to God – can only rejoice when: the Spirit-inspired truth of the word of God is preached, the hearts of those in error are pricked, and the sincerest of repentance is practiced (Acts 2:36-42; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 2 Peter 3:9). Indeed... where ***is*** the love?

True, biblically-defined love, does not and cannot allow sin and iniquity to simply go unchastened, unchallenged, and uncorrected. In this vein, consider God. Is God love? Yes (I John 4:8)! Does He chasten, discipline, and correct? Of course! That's also what Jesus did (Matthew 22:29)! But why? Because that's what real love does when someone is wrong! Consider, "...you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed" (Heb 12:5-13).

Where is the love? It is found in those earthly fathers, the Heavenly Father, and those of the heavenly Father's children who see willful sin, iniquity, and disobedience to the

truth and word of God, and seek to challenge, rebuke, chasten and correct that sin and disobedience, bringing it into complete compliance with God's word. Where is the love? Within those who so righteously (not "self-righteously," but "Scripturally-righteously" judge – see John 7:24) correct and discipline.

Another vital aspect of biblical love which we must take into account when considering some congregations' outright and wholesale rejection of the commandments of God (for example, as given in 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15), is Jesus' direct "red-letter" definition of what true love for Him truly looks like: "If you love Me, you will obey My commandments" (John 14:6). As one of those preachers recently said, "We must listen to Jesus." Indeed! We must! And so, once again, we would ask our beloved brethren in those congregations which are elevating and enshrining their "women of gifts" above the eternal word of God... "Indeed... where is the love... for their Lord;" the Lord Who said: "If you love Me, you will obey My commandments" (John 14:6)? We know where the love is – according to Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit, all three of which are in complete agreement, being One. The love is in those who preach and teach the commandments of God as written, and are ready in season and out, to biblically challenge, convince, rebuke, and correct, the course of those who have strayed from those commandments. And to condemn and dismiss such biblically-accurate articles and sentiments as these (and so many which came out in the aftermath of the Fourth Avenue video), or the faithful-to-the-scriptures brethren who made them, as either "unloving," "hateful," and/or "judgmental," is to put on display, for all the world to see, a powerful biblical ignorance of what true and godly love really is and does; a biblical ignorance born of self-deception and a desire to do what one wants instead of what God commands – and to unequivocally prove the very points such a one undeniably seeks to deny! Indeed... *where is the love?*