

From the January 4, 2009, Issue

## God's Love is Practically Useless

Say What?! The author certainly had my interest, and I probably have yours!

In this article I want to touch on an inspiring subject brought up by Michael Jenkins in his book, *Invitation to Theology* pp. 32-39. His book is an attempt to do the same thing as this newsletter - to help others see who Jesus is and who everyone and everything else is in Him as the Light of the World. He is also trying to help us think about God the Father, Son and Spirit more as God really is, as revealed in the Person of Jesus. He does a great and systematic job of it, too!

I especially appreciated his comments on God's Love, and how impractical God's love is at its deepest and most fundamental level. This Truth, properly understood, actually magnifies the Love of God and His unchanging nature toward humanity and His entire creation.

Have you ever heard a message about how much God loves you, and then because of your current, distracting and painful circumstances, you in essence said, "So what? Who cares? What does that have to do with my life? Can't you see I have been laid off from work? I don't need to hear about God's love right now, I need a job! This message is NOT PRACTICAL!"

Have you ever heard a message about the relationship of God as Father, Son and Spirit, followed by how much you and everyone are included in that relationship in the Person of Christ? You then thought something like this: "That's all well and good, but what does that have to do with my marriage right now which is broken and/or breaking? If this message does not help me fix the immediate problem in my marriage, what good is it, even if inspired by God?"

I am sure some of you have thought things like that! I know I sure have! As a pastor I have most certainly heard others express it (in their words and those "evil" looks! :-) Ha-Ha!

Because we are so fallen in our nature, and because we in the world and in the church tend to overvalue measurability and utility, it is difficult at times to appreciate the fact that God is good whether we ever realize a "practical benefit" of it or not!

Don't get me wrong! God does practical things and shares His practicality with us; Jesus is Living, Practical Proof! But in the end, and at its deepest level, God's love is practically useless!

Here is how Michael Jenkins helps us understand this relevant subject:

Love calls utility [and measurability] into question at the deepest level. In order for love to be love it must be, much of the time, useless in any terms that can be practically defined. **The greatest love does not answer a craving need. It flows out without thought of being received. The love that is unconditional in its acceptance of us is by definition useless because it comes from the One [God] who has no need of us at all and yet who [out of an overflowing bounty of self-giving love] created us for life and for relationship.**

We may or may not become all we are meant to become in gratitude to God and in joyful response to God's grace. **But our use of the gift does not determine the value of the love that gives the gift or the love that characterizes the Giver.**

In specific cases, in rather limited kinds of situations, the test of utility [and measurability] is appropriate and may be very helpful. But when it comes to evaluating and understanding many things, including some of the most important things in life, like love and beauty, the test is useless. ~ *Invitation to Theology* pp. 32-39 (*Bold emphasis and brackets mine*).

I love that, especially when I remember how I once took out my notebook and actually devised a graph to measure my love for God and God's love for me. Talk about a personally discouraging and untruthful analysis flowing out of a legalistic and fallen human reasoning! I had devised it, and because it was not an accurate view of Jesus or myself in him, it worked against me and killed my spirit of joy!

The Gospel Truth, as reinforced by Michael Jenkins in his book, is far more accurate and true to Who God really is! God IS love - in and apart from my ever fully grasping it or making use of it, or understanding its practicality as defined by sinful ol' me in my sinful human reasoning!

The truth is the Father is forever self-giving toward me! Jesus, the Son of God made Flesh, forever includes me regardless of how I act or respond! The Holy Spirit will never forsake me or leave me!

In the end, all of this speaks not only to how good and great God is, ETERNALLY, but also to how much hope we can always have for being able to repent [think differently about Who God really is] and participate in the practical expressions of God's love that DO flow from Who God is and what God does!

I think I'm in love with the Father, Son and Spirit all over again!! Thanks for being used of God to experience more of that, Michael Jenkins!

~ *Tim Brassell*