

1019 Vertical and horizontal love and union

(Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

First, we talk about the fact that the whole Law and the Prophets depends upon a vertical commandment and a horizontal one. Then, we talk about how the Agape love from above is manifested, which is in vertical direction. Next, we talked about the love to one another in horizontal direction. We need to unite with God in vertical direction, and in churches along the horizontal direction to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Let us take a look at these verses in Matthew 22:34-36, "But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"'" It is the background why the lawyer asked the question. Jesus answered in Matthew 22:37-39, "And He said to him, " 'You shall love (G25) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love (G25) your neighbor as yourself.'"

The great and foremost commandment is vertical, towards above to God, from the heart, not to obey the law only in surface or in words. Like what says in Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence. For from it flow the springs of life." Loving your neighbor as yourself is horizontal, towards our fellow human, from the heart too. "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:40)

We see that the love from the above is in the vertical direction. "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9) And "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) He was willingly to die for us as we can see from these verses, "When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.'" (Matthew 26:1-2) He knew ahead that He not only would die but also how He would die. As said in Hebrews 12:2, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." We need to fix our eyes on Jesus, and only on Him. He is the author of the faith described in Romans 1:17, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; ..." Such a faith will grow from faith to faith. Using Apostle Peter as one example, Jesus said at one point in Matthew 14:31 that Peter had little faith, "Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"'" He denied Jesus three time before. (Refer to Matthew 26:69-75) From both the first and the second books of Peter, we can see that his faith at that time is great. Although he knew ahead that he would die to glorify God, he still kept his faith and followed Jesus. Indeed, the faith will grow in the faith from faith to faith.

We know that Jesus substitutes us to die as said in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just (Jesus) for the unjust (us), so that He might bring us to God,

having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." We everyone should behave like Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Talking about the horizontal love to love one another in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love (G25, verb) one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love (G26, noun) for one another." Why is a new command? Didn't we have the same commandment in the Old Testament? This is because Jesus loves us by Agape love, who died for us and on the cross. And the New Testament said in John 16:7, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." After Jesus died, we then have the abiding Holy Spirit. Without the abiding Holy Spirit, how can we have the Agape love to love one another? "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) In the Old Testament, we had at most the human love, just like the event Jesus after resurrection asked Peter three times if you loved me in two different loves in Greek words, Agape love and human love (G5368), and Peter responded with only human love three times.

Like what Romans 12:9-10 says, "Let love (G26) be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (G5360); give preference to one another in honor." Being able to have brotherly love (G5360), it is really due to God since "Now as to the love of the brethren (G5360), you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love (G25) one another." (1 Thessalonians 4:9) And as said in Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." If we want to be on the way to sanctification, to be conformed to be the image of Jesus, how can we not like this?

In the past, we emphasized to be united with the God the Holy Trinity, the vertical union. We are to be conformed to the image of Jesus. There is only one Jesus. If we can all do so, we are naturally become one. Of course, it takes time to be conformed to the image of Jesus. This is a slow process. As said in Ephesians 4:2-3, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The unity of the Spirit has given, we just need to preserve it. This is the union in the horizontal direction.

Talking about this, we all know in Ephesians 5:23 which says, "...Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." And "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6) In churches, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) It says clearly in 1 John 4:20-21, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."