

THE CREATOR-CREATURE CONFLICT

Lesson 454 – April 21, 2013

/WELCOME TO BARAH MINISTRIES

Good Morning!

Let's Make a Mental Shift

Good Morning!

The bible says in...

/Psalms 103:12

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”\

We come here to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to rejoice in the forgiveness that we have as believers. This is a time to do your best to concentrate on Him, to concentrate on His grace and truth and love, and not the clutter that is taking up room on your mental desktop... This is a time to fix your eyes on God... Ask yourself...

<WHERE IS YOUR SOUL TUNED?>

At any moment in time, you can choose to tune your soul to the influence of KCOS, operating with the world system of thought, or you can choose to tune your soul to the influence of WGod, operating with the divine system of thought. Bible study is a time to lay aside the spiritual battle of daily life... the internal fight between two kingdoms for control of your soul. It's a time to allow the infiltration of your soul and spirit with the mind of Christ, the Word of God, so you can have a chance, when you return to the world, to operate with the same attitude that was also in Christ Jesus. The Word of God refers to bible study as a time of RENEWING, as you let God the Holy Spirit fill up your deficiency of thought, leading you into the truths of the Word of God, as He unveils the plan of God the Father for your life. Romans, Chapter 12, Verse 2 says...

/ROM 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.\

Now is the time to let your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through the power of God the Holy Spirit, prepare you “in humility to receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”

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/MUSIC AND REFLECTION

Be Occupied with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ

Enjoy the Singing of His Praises

/Opening Song

The Struggle - Tenth Avenue North

As God prepares you for the RENEWING of your mind, let's hear Tenth Avenue North worship our Lord in song, while you concentrate on your Lord and Savior. The opening song is... The Struggle.

/OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray...\

We're grateful Heavenly Father for the privilege of studying the absolute truth... the Word of God...

We pray that you keep making us more and more familiar with Your love, so that we may know how to show it towards everyone You bring into our midst. Please let the message about to be spoken impact the lives of those who are listening.

We ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit... in Christ's name... Amen.

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Elliott Clark - Deacon\

Welcome to Barah Ministries. My name is Elliott Clark, and I'm a deacon here at Barah Ministries. You're listening to lesson four hundred and fifty four of the CREATOR versus CREATURE Conflict series.

Before I go on, I want to thank Pastor Rory for giving me the opportunity to share the Word of God from his pulpit.

To those of you who consider yourself a part of this ministry, thank you for your continued support.

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To those of you who are new to this ministry, perhaps you're listening for the first time, welcome. We have one goal here at Barah Ministries and that's to help direct your focus towards the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

/TODAY'S STUDY

The CREATOR'S Will is That You Know What Unconditional Love is NOT

This might seem like an interesting title, but I'll tell you what inspired it. This past week I was speaking to a friend about coming to check out the teaching here at Barah Ministries. The person I was speaking to about it mentioned that he had checked out some Christian churches a while back, but wasn't a fan of how the message was usually so ethereal, or too lovey dovey...teaching a message that seemed too perfect for this world or for the reality we face in our day to day lives.

This conversation stuck with me, and it actually made it difficult for me to write this message. Here I am trying to write a message about love, and all that I can think about is what that guy had said about how the messages are too lovey dovey. Every time I sat down to write the lesson, I just stared at the cursor for hours. I prayed for inspiration, and all I heard were crickets. And then I got mad.

I got mad because a part of me agreed with him about how many Christian churches make life seem so lovey dovey.

I mean, we tell you that all you need is love, and you're probably thinking, "yeah right! What I need is a get out of jail free card so I can start punchin' some people out!".

<INSERT GET OUT JAIL FREE CARD PICTURE>

I thought, maybe love isn't enough...maybe some people just need to be knocked out. But then an incident happened to me this week where I was in the wrong...at the complete mercy of the other person... I was the one that needed to be knocked out! And it hit me that love takes on a whole new meaning when you're at the receiving end of it.

There is nothing lovey dovey about unconditional love. Hence my focus on what love is NOT.

/Unconditional love is NOT Lovey-Dovey

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I've taught a lesson before on the fact that love is rather ugly on the surface. We need not look any further than the act of the cross. There is nothing fragile about the Lord Jesus Christ being nailed to the cross.

/Acts 2:23

...This Man (Jesus Christ), delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.\

Lovey-dovey indicates that unconditional love is not tangible...that you can't reach out and touch it...that it's airy-fairy...but it's not...and you realize this when you find yourself on the receiving end of it...when you're the person in the wrong...when you're the person who begs forgiveness. You see...

/Unconditional love is NOT just for others, but for you

We must see ourselves as the recipient of unconditional love, not just others.

Again, unconditional love takes on a whole new meaning when you are the on the receiving end of it.

Let's take a look at this as it applied to the apostle Peter. Turn in your bibles to Mark 14:29

We're going to see that the Apostle Peter has a serious case of "I will never" syndrome, which is something that plagues us all! Here's what Mark 14:29 says...

/MAR 14:29

But Peter said to Jesus, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."\

Let's take a look at...

/JOH 13:37

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."\

Basically, Peter is saying "I Will Never" let you down, Lord. And how did the Lord Jesus Christ address Peter's "I will never" syndrome? Take a look at...

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/MAR 14:30

And Jesus said to him (Peter), “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.”\

The Lord wasn't telling Peter this so that he'd feel bad about himself. He was telling him the truth. He was telling him, “Peter, I know you love me, but let's not kid ourselves.” But Peter was emphatic in his “I will never” syndrome!

/MAR 14:31

But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they (the apostles) all were saying the same thing also.\

You can kind of get a feel for how the Lord was at this moment, maybe chuckling a little bit on the inside because knowing what was to happen. Jesus wasn't occupied with the denial though; Jesus was occupied with His own ability to forgive, His own ability to love unconditionally.

Of course, the apostle Peter went on to deny having any association with the Lord, just as Jesus said he would...and he fell on the ground and wept like a baby.

<INSERT PICTURE OF PETER WEEPING>

How powerful do you think the Lord's unconditional love was in Peter's life at this moment?

That's because unconditional love takes on a whole new meaning when you are at the receiving end of it. We often learn of love, and immediately begin to cycle through a list of people mentally that we feel are deserving of our love and our forgiveness. We focus on who has hurt us, or who has betrayed us, or we think about the person that is the culprit or source of most of the conflict in our life. Rarely do we see ourselves as the culprit. Rarely do we truly think of ourselves as the person in need of unconditional love.

And how ironic is it that it was also the apostle Peter that inquired to Jesus about forgiveness in Matthew 18:21. It says...

/MAT 18:21

...“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”\

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/MAT 18:22

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven\

It's obvious that Peter's question didn't come from a standpoint of seeing people through God's eyes, but human eyes. You can tell here that Peter didn't consider himself to be on the receiving end of forgiveness or unconditional love because "To death he was willing to go for the Lord!"

But in that moment when Peter fell on the ground weeping, how loud did that seventy times seven ring true? How loud was God's love and forgiveness then? How ready was Peter then to lead others to God's love and forgiveness?

Unconditional love takes on a whole new meaning when you are on the receiving end of it. Remember that it's NOT just for others, but for YOU! Do your best not to lose sight of the times when you've been the recipient of unconditional love, because it humbles you. It allows you to treat others with the same attitude.

I want to take a look at a portion of the parable of the prodigal son, but before we do let's take a 5-minute break first.

/BREAK

*East to West – Casting Crowns
When I Think About Home*

/Welcome Back!\

So turn in your bibles to Luke 15:25

So we know the backstory of the prodigal son. A father had two sons, and the younger one took his share of the inheritance and squandered it on loose living. When the younger son came to his senses, he went back to his father, and the passage tells us that his father spotted him while he was still a long way off, and ran to him and embraced him and showed him unconditional love and compassion. The father instructed the servants to kill the fattened calf, and to throw a celebration for the younger son for his return home. For the younger son was dead and had come back to life! But not everyone in the parable was exercising this same type of love and compassion....let's look at verses 25-32.

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/LUK 15:25-26

“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. // “And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. //

/LUK 15:27-28

“And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ // “But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. //

/LUK 15:29-30

“But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; // but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ //

/LUK 15:31-32

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. // ‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”\

There are a lot of things to look at in this portion of the parable.

It’s clear the older brother doesn’t understand unconditional love and compassion. He sees it as conditional. See, the older brother believes love is earned...he thinks compassion is the result of work.

And it shows in his comment to the father when he said, “For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours, and yet you have never given me a young goat so that I may celebrate with my friends!”

The older son is waiting to be given the fattened calf BECAUSE of his work...because he’s been slaving for the father...but he never thought to stop working and ASK for it...to ASK for something that already belonged to him!

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/LUK 11:9

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”\

/MAT 21:22

“And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”\

God doesn't say, ask all things in prayer, and in WORKING, you will receive. He says BELIEVING.

In the older brother's mind, he has been working HARD for his father...never neglecting one of his commands, and from the sound of it, it's all been HAVE TO...not WANT to. But all the time he was working, he completely overlooked the fact that he is his father's son! That He doesn't need to work for the fattened calf.

He doesn't need to earn his father's love and compassion. The fattened calf was there waiting for him, and the father told him that. The father said, “Son, you have always been with me, you know that all that I have is yours!”

The older son failed to recognize the unconditional love and compassion of the father, because I bet you after spending his life serving his father, never neglecting a command, he thought he earned and deserved the celebration. He probably never thought that he needed any compassion or love. You know, save that for the people that squander their inheritance.

And as Christians, we were the older brother! We saw life through legalistic eyes, at least I did, not God's eyes. We'd study bible doctrine every day...take diligent notes, rebound... We'd come to church, set up, teach bible doctrine, then wake up Monday morning, and do it all over again. We were slaving! But we completely missed the love and compassion of our God...all that time slaving completely forgot to ask our father for the fattened calf! Forgot to celebrate! Forgot to rejoice! Forgot to LOVE.

Why? Because we fail many times as Christians to believe that WE are the recipients of unconditional love...that we actually need it.

This is just me speculating, but I feel as if God would rather see us go off and squander every opportunity, and completely hit rock bottom, and to come back into the presence of His love and compassion, then to be in His presence, going to

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church every Sunday, always learning bible doctrine, but NEVER recognizing what we have in Him.

The younger son recognized the unconditional love because he was the recipient of it. The older brother didn't perceive himself as needing that love. And again, this is my opinion, but the older brother was gone too, just mentally! He squandered his inheritance too! Because what's the difference between taking your inheritance and wasting it, and never using your inheritance! The older son never used it!

So the message to you is that unconditional love is not just for others, but for you! And when you understand this, hopefully you won't disassociate yourself from other people mentally.

/Unconditional love is NOT disassociation

Disassociation is the process of mentally or physically disconnecting yourself from other people during a situation of conflict.

So often during conflict, we disengage from people mentally and use "unconditional love" as an excuse to maintain artificial harmony with that person.

We think, "Well that person's just a butthead so I'm just going to love them anyway." And we think separating ourselves mentally will clear up the problem, but it doesn't. Sometimes we completely fail to examine what we're doing that may be contributing to the person acting that way. Or maybe we avoid the conflict so that it never gets sorted out.

/Unconditional Love is NOT avoidance of conflict

People have conflict in relationships. People fight. It's inevitable. Conflict is a very healthy part of relationships.

There's a book called "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" and one of the dysfunctions of a team is a fear of conflict, which leads to what the author calls artificial harmony.

<INSERT PICTURE OF BOOK>

Every relationship, parent/child, husband/wife, coach/players, boyfriend/girlfriend, and so on, all need a healthy dose of conflict. But conflict has received a bad

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reputation because we associate it with fighting against another person, as opposed to fighting WITH the other person AGAINST an issue.

I was working with a family not too long ago, and helping to facilitate a family meeting regarding a conflict the family was having. I was there to help open up the line of communication between everyone, and one of the questions I asked the members of the family was whether they perceived one another to be on each other's side.

They all said yes, and it was amazing to see the dynamic of the meeting change...it was like everyone sighed a huge sigh of relief because they all realized they weren't out to win a fight...but to resolve an issue.

Unconditional love is not avoiding conflict in order to maintain pseudo harmony.

When there was conflict between God and us, He didn't ignore it. I mean, there was a time when no one was righteous. There was a time when no one searched for God. There was a time when we were all spiritually dead, without the possibility of a relationship with God, and God's response was not to disassociate from the problem of sin...it was to avoid the conflict to maintain pseudo harmony. Rather, our God took the conflict head on.

The bible tells us in...

/COL 2:13-14

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He (God the Father) made you alive together with Him (Christ), having forgiven us all our transgressions // having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.\

Unconditional love takes on conflict with people we're in a relationship with. Now it's important for you to educate yourself on how to diffuse upset conditions. Read books on negotiating, read books on handling conflict. Two great books on conflict are "Getting to Yes" by William Ury, and another book called Crucial Conversations. Not all conflict is worth taking on. We all have those relationships where it's obvious the other person, or you, is only interested in winning at the other person's expense. But there's a way to handle conflict, and exercising unconditional love towards people doesn't mean using it as an excuse to disengage with them, and perpetuate fake harmony.

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The point is, we are all the recipients of God's unconditional love. There's nothing lovey dovey about it. It's hard. But when you see yourself as the person deserving of that love and compassion, as the Apostle Peter after he denied Christ, or the younger son in the parable of the prodigal son, then loving others in times of conflict instead of disassociating ourselves from them mentally becomes almost automatic.

The closing song will be...

/CLOSING SONG

We Won't Be Shaken – Building 429

CLOSING VERSES

/PRO 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.//In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

/DEU 31:8

The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed

/ISA 30:18

Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

/CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray...\

Dear heavenly father, we thank you for continuing to help us see unconditional love from your eyes. We thank you for also helping to illuminate what unconditional love is NOT. We pray that you help us to stay engaged with people, to work through conflict, to see ourselves at the receiving end of your love and forgiveness...

Present us with the opportunities to apply what we've learned, and to lead others to you.

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We ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit, and in Christ's name...
Amen.

/Thanks for coming!
Thanks for watching!
Thanks for listening!

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