



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – July 25, 2010

Heart to Heart...

Who am I really? I'm confused! I have been called a "*literalist*" from the radio program. I had a fellow who I was speaking to about his soul call me a "*realist*". While holding a meeting out east, a fellow brother called me a "*liberal*" and the very next night another brother called me a "*legalist*."

I'm really not confused. It is just amazing how people put you in a category. What I have learned in all these name callings is I am right where I need to be...in the middle with Christ! To be a "*literalist*" means that you accept the word of God as the word of God. You accept it for what it says. The Thessalonian's did the same: "***For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.***" (I Thessalonians 2:13) Following the word of God, accepting it for what it teaches and explains brings blessings from the Lord.

To be a "*realist*" means that you believe in what the Lord says and approach your life in those terms. Paul told Timothy: "***Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as long as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.***" (I Timothy 4:16) Reality is to help people find the truth and in order for that to be accomplished one must pay attention to their own teachings and attitudes.

To be a "*liberal*", well that can be a wide open title. That causes me a little more discomfort. I am a firm believer in the grace of God! We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). "***But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.***" (Romans 11:6) One cannot work their way into a relationship with the Lord. One cannot work to save their soul. (I can hear someone quickly bring up James 2 about faith and works! That's not discussing how one is saved but the result of being saved.) Our salvation is completely dependent upon God's grace through the blood of Christ. When we are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, we call on God's grace asking Him not to give us what we deserve but His gracious act of love toward us. To one who is working their way to God, to them I would be a "*liberal*."

To be a "*legalist*" in the eyes of someone means they see an open end to God's grace. It's more of a '*once saved always saved*' attitude they have. Paul told the preacher: "***Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.***" (II Timothy 1:13) There is a standard in which the Lord expects us to follow. It's not just an open end, free for all, whatever you feel like doing do it attitude as long as you love the Lord! Our lives must pursue the teaching of Christ or we do not have God (II John 9). Our lives must pursue holiness in our behavior (I Peter 1:15-16) and His sanctification (Hebrews 12:14) if we are going to arrive at the goal. That's my heart desire and I pray it is yours but to those who have other ideas, to them I would be a "*legalist*."

Putting names on people is placing them in a category. We have learned to do that from the world. Whatever anyone calls me/you/us, wherever we have been '*pigeon holed*', remember to be found trustworthy and faithful to the Lord and the truth of His word and the Lord will take care of the rest. Think about it!!!

Brent