

Ethics and the Christian Life(1)

The Biblical Context

Introduction

A. The central theme of this series: To consider the relationship of ethics and the Christian life in the light of four important facets which determine their Biblical content and provide insight for practical implementation and personal fulfillment.

B. The definition of ethics and its central issue:

1. Ethics is the science of the principles of moral behavior.
2. The central issue in ethics is the recognition of the authoritative basis for truth, love and holiness and what that means in practice.

C. The definition of the Christian life and its central issue.

1. The Christian life is that manner of living which, in recognizing the Lordship of Jesus Christ, has God and His glory as its daily goal, the revelation of God and His will as its blueprint, faith, love and hope as its methodology, and a person fulfillment and service as its by-product.
2. The central issue in the Christian life is the Biblical understanding of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and what that means in daily practice.

D. The hand-outs have been written from the perspective of personal fulfillment.

I. The Biblical Context for the Plan of God.

A. **The statement:** The Plan of God is to glorify Himself through making Jesus Christ preeminent in all things.

B. **The illustration:**

1. The Plan of the Father, Colossians 1:18. This is the sovereign purpose behind creation, history, the work of Jesus Christ, the church, etc.
2. The affirmation of the Son, Luke 11:52; John 14:6; 17:1. The Lord Jesus taught that He is preeminent in all things and is the "key" to life itself.
3. The goal of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13,14. The purpose in all the work of the Holy Spirit is that Jesus Christ would have the preeminence.
4. The object of angelic worship, Revelation 5:6,11-14. The angels were created to honor Jesus Christ and are constantly engaged in the adoring contemplation of His person and work.

C. **The application:**

1. The purpose of our creation and re-creation in Jesus Christ is to bring glory to God through making Jesus Christ preeminent in all things.
2. The character of our creation illustrates this purpose. We were created God-centered. He was our authority, motivation and goal for all of life.

II. The Biblical Context of the Person of God.

A. The statement: God is absolute in truth, love and holiness.

B. The illustration:

1. John 1:14; 14:6 - God is truth. He not only knows all truths, He is the truth that is known -- truth itself.
2. John 4:16 - God is love. He is not only the worthy object of all love, He is in Himself the perfection of all mercy and goodness.
3. I Peter 1:15,16 - God is holiness. He not only approves that which is right and judges all wrong. He is in Himself the source and standard of all righteousness.

C. The application:

1. Since God is absolute in truth, love and holiness, He is in Himself the only authoritative basis for ethics and the Christian life.
2. The very nature of God calls for a radical recognition and implementation of the priorities related to truth, love and holiness.
3. It is impossible to be committed to God and then to practice deceit, selfishness and sensuality.

III. The Biblical Context of the Goodness of God.

A. The statement: God is good and what He does is goodness.

B. The illustration:

1. Exodus 33:13-19; 34:6 - the confidence of Moses.
2. Psalm 27:13 - the strength of the Psalmist.
3. Psalm 107:8,15,21,31 - the interpretation of the Psalmist
4. Jeremiah 31:14 - the prediction of the Prophet.
5. Ephesians 5:9 - the explanation of the Apostle.
6. II Thessalonians 1:11 - the prayer of the Apostle.

C. The application:

1. One of the most serious barriers to personal fulfillment is the tendency to reject the goodness of God. Too often we allow our feelings or trials to lead us to believe that God has cheated us, that He has not been fair with us, and that He has not kept his Word.
2. It is vitally important that we thoroughly understand this vulnerability to bitterness and the holding of grudges against God.
3. We must reject all tendencies to criticize God and to doubt his goodness.
4. We must affirm the goodness of God and interpret life in this context.