

The Three-Legged Stool

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God the Father and Jesus Christ have given us a great honor and privilege to be called and to be chosen by the Father; to know and understand the precious truths about the Sabbath, the Holy Days and the wonderful plan of salvation; of our incredible future, and the incredible potential and future of all mankind; of the identity of God the Father and of Jesus Christ in the record of scripture; and of our responsibilities in pursuing God the Father's will. During the past many years, and recently during the past few months, many people have asked me if brethren who don't believe this or that specific doctrine would have salvation and be in the Kingdom. Stated another way, how does true knowledge of God's truth, or the lack of true knowledge of God's truth, determine one's salvation? Furthermore, how does one's motivation and heart determine one's salvation? How does one's love for one's neighbor, one's love for God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, determine one's salvation?

To begin, please turn with me to Deuteronomy 10, where Yehovah lists His requirements for Israel to follow. The book of Deuteronomy was written right before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, but these Israelites were mostly the second generation, who were born after the exodus. All the people—40-years-old and younger, in this vast multitude—were second-generation Israelites who weren't at Mount Sinai when their parents received the Ten Commandments and the rest of God's laws, hence the reason for the second giving of the law. That's the meaning of the word Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 10 and verse 12, we read:

Deuteronomy 10:12 *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*
13) *To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (KJV)*

Please turn with me to Micah 6, to answer the question of what our Eternal Father required of Israel. He listed these requirements in Micah 6, verses 6 through 8.

Micah 6:6 *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?*
7) *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*
8) *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (KJV)*

In my sermon this afternoon, titled “The Three-Legged Stool”, I would like to explore God’s judgment on the firstfruits and on mankind, by exploring three important, measured requirements in our spiritual development that Jesus will use in judging us and in judging the rest of humanity. These three measured requirements tie back to Deuteronomy 10 and Micah 6. I call these three pillars “the three-legged stool”. The first important, measured requirement for salvation in this three-legged stool is:

1. The knowledge of God the Father, of His Son, and of His way.

Brethren, we have been so honored and blessed that the Father has called each and every one of us, and has opened our minds to understand, the knowledge of His truth and of His plan of salvation; the knowledge of the part we will play in the Kingdom of God; the knowledge of His laws; and the knowledge and the better understanding of who He is. This is truly an exciting time in our lives. You can feel it here—everyone is just buzzing and is so excited to be here and to talk. I’ve never been at a Feast where the subject of the conversation is always God. God the Father is now opening more and more knowledge to his people about Himself and His relationship with us.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 1, where we will read a very well-known verse. This verse is repeated by many church organizations but so few truly understand its true meaning and implication in their lives.

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (NKJV)*

The word for “fear” in this verse is the Hebrew word *yirah*, which can mean fear but it can also mean reverence. So this verse tells us that our reverence for and our humility before our heavenly Father is the beginning of knowledge; it’s the foundation upon which all of the knowledge that God can instill in us is based. Knowledge and wisdom are given by the Father when we humbly ask for His help. Please turn with me to 2 Chronicles 1, where we will again read a well-known account in which Solomon asked for and received knowledge from God.

2 Chronicles 1:7 *In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.*

8) *And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.*

9) *Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.*

10) *Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?*

11) *And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:*

12) *Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like. (KJV)*

So our heavenly Father granted wisdom and knowledge to Solomon because he asked for it. That was what he asked for. He gave so much wisdom and so much knowledge to Solomon that there has never been anyone since that has had the wisdom and knowledge of Solomon. Please turn with me to Psalm 119; King David desired to have knowledge from Yehovah and he prayed that the LORD would teach him knowledge. We read this in Psalm 119, verse 64.

Psalm 119:64 *The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes. 65) Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. 66) Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. (KJV)*

He earnestly asked God for knowledge—knowledge about Him. Do we pray each day that God would give us more knowledge about Him? About His nature and about His character? About His laws, His majesty and His greatness? The book of Proverbs has much to say about knowledge. In fact, the Hebrew word *daath* appears thirty-nine times in the book of Proverbs. We'll read just a few examples from this book. If you would, turn with me to Proverbs 2. Again, the book of Proverbs has a lot to say about the knowledge that God can impart.

Proverbs 2:1 *My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*
2) *So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;*
3) *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;;*
4) *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;*
5) *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*
6) *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*
7) *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.*
8) *He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.*
9) *Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.*
10) *When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;*
11) *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: (KJV)*

Verse 3 states that we should yearn and cry out for knowledge, that we should seek knowledge as we would silver or gold, or precious things or riches. Verse 5 states that we will find knowledge if we ask. Do we yearn for learning more and more of God's

truth, and more and more of the knowledge that God can impart? Are we excited to learn more about our heavenly Father? Please turn with me to Proverbs 15 and we will read a few important verses concerning knowledge.

Proverbs 15:14 *The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. (KJV)*

A few pages over in Proverbs 18 and verse 15,

Proverbs 18:15 *The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge. (KJV)*

Please turn with me over to Proverbs 8, where we'll read about the phenomenon of which we know all too well.

Proverbs 8:8 *All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.*

9) *They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. (KJV)*

Certain knowledge that we have had imparted to us makes sense, but it doesn't to many others. We read this in Proverbs 14, verse 6.

Proverbs 14:6 *A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. (KJV)*

When we discuss God's truth with friends or family members in the world, the truth is often a mystery and is often very confusing to them when it is so plain to us. Why is that? Please turn with me to Matthew 13. Rick Railston used this section of scripture in his sermon a few weeks ago, and I would like to read it out of the New Living Translation, as he did also.

Matthew 13:10 *His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"*

11) *He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not.*

12) *To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.*

13) *That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand. (NLT)*

I gave a sermon a couple of years ago in which I equated the knowledge and understanding of God's truth with being cured from color blindness. A very common color blindness is deuteranopia, which confuses the colors green and red—that's a very common color blindness and someone with deuteranopia cannot distinguish red from

green. How many are familiar with colorblind tests? I think most of us have seen those. One test I remember is a circle filled with green dots—just a whole bunch of green dots, and in the middle of this circle was a number 7, made out of red dots. Someone without color blindness will look at that and immediately see the number 7. But someone with color blindness will look at that and never see anything. All they see is a bunch of dots, all of them the same color. That person could look at that chart for a day, for a month, for a year, all of their life—they could look at it upside down, they could look at it any way they could and they would never see that 7.

So here we are with that person and we can't believe they don't see the 7, and they can't believe there's something there. The same is true with God's truth. Until God opens our mind and corrects our vision—corrects our spiritual color blindness—we cannot see the truth. No matter how long we try, no matter how hard we try, we simply will never see that 7. As we read in Matthew, chapter 13, if we turn our back on God's truth, then the Father will allow us to return to our spiritual color blindness. That is truly sad. Please turn with me to Habakuk 2, where we will read a very important prophecy for all of humanity.

Habakuk 2:14 *For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (KJV)*

The time that Habakuk is talking about, here in verse 14, is represented by the Feast of Tabernacles that we are celebrating right now, where God's truth and God's knowledge, and the knowledge of His way, will cover the entire earth, and we will have the opportunity, along with Jesus Christ, to teach the nations God's way—to teach them the way of life that God the Father intended, from the very beginning, that mankind should live. Are we thankful for the precious knowledge that we understand? Do we thank our heavenly Father every day for the knowledge that we have, the knowledge that He has specifically and individually allowed us to understand? What a wonderful and deep privilege and honor it is that our Father has done so. With that privilege, with that honor, comes responsibility. Turn with me to James 4, verse 17. God holds us accountable for what we know.

James 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (KJV)*

Knowledge brings responsibility and in the end knowledge can bring condemnation. In the New Living translation, James 4:17 is translated:

James 4:17 *Remember it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not to do it. (NLT)*

Jesus had something to say about this, if you turn with me to Luke 12 and verse 45.

Luke 12:45 [Jesus was saying] *But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,*

46) the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47) And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48) But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

(NKJV)

With knowledge comes responsibility and accountability. Knowledge of God's truth is crucial for our salvation. Knowledge, though, requires action. Knowledge to know things, just to know them, is of no use. Knowledge is only one of the three legs of the three-legged stool. It is definitely not the only yardstick that God uses for salvation.

The second important, measured requirement for salvation in this three-legged stool is:

2. An obedient, contrite heart.

The world and its society today continue to turn further and further away from God. Two characteristics that are not shown much at all in today's society, in today's world, are obedience and humility. Being good and honest and being humble are ridiculed by the world and they're viewed now as weaknesses. Please turn with me to 2 Timothy 3; the Apostle Paul warned us about the evil characteristics of the world in the end time.

2 Timothy 3:1 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3) Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4) Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (KJV)

Our heavenly Father refuses to work with people who are headstrong, boastful, egotistical, proud, disobedient to His laws and principles—He simply does not work with those people. Sadly, this was the centuries-long history of the relationship between Yehovah and the Israelites. Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 5; Yehovah so much desired that the Israelites would obey Him and humbly subject themselves to His rule, but they really never, ever did. He says something about this that is very sad, in Deuteronomy 5, verse 29.

Deuteronomy 5:29 *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (KJV)*

That was His desire. Please turn with me to Isaiah 29 where we read that Israel's relationship with Yehovah was very superficial and very temporary. This is where the world is right now in their relationship with God.

Isaiah 29:13 *Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: (KJV)*

We can pay lip service to God all day long, we can pay lip service to our Father, day in and day out, but where is our heart? Where is our heart with Him? The history of mankind is that ever since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, mankind has always paid lip service to God. People do not want God's involvement in their lives unless there's a crisis, then they call all the time on God. They want God during their crisis but as soon as the crisis is over, what do they do? They immediately forget Him; they don't need Him anymore.

Human beings have always wanted to do what they have wanted to do, not what God has wanted them to do. God stands in the way of them doing what they want to do; that's the history of mankind. God the Father refuses to work with an attitude like that. However, Yehovah has chosen a few select, faithful servants who have shown the characteristics of those who have an obedient and contrite heart, and one of them was King David. Please turn over with me to Acts 7. After Saul's continual disobedience to the Eternal's instructions, Yehovah decided to choose another king for Israel, someone who would have a completely different heart than Saul had. In Acts 13, Paul referenced this particular history from 1 Samuel 13. We read this in Acts 13 and verse 21.

Acts 13:21 *And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.*

22) And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

23) Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: (KJV)

So God was looking for a man after His own heart. Please turn with me to Psalm 34; we'll read that Yehovah draws near to those who have an obedient and contrite heart.

Psalm 34:18 *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (KJV)*

God works with those with whom He can work, and what determines that is what is in our heart. Are we truly seeking Him? Are we wanting Him always? Is He the most

important part of our lives? Please turn with me to Isaiah 66, where Isaiah further identifies the type of men and women with whom Yehovah is seeking to have a relationship, and with whom He can fulfill His will.

Isaiah 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (KJV)

Do we tremble at His word? In Psalm 119 we read of David's love for God's law. Here's a man after God's own heart, acknowledging his deep love for the law of Yehovah. We sing these words in hymn 77 in our hymnal. In Psalm 119, starting in verse 97,

Isaiah 119:97 *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

98) *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

99) *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

100) *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

101) *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*

102) *I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.*

103) *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

104) *Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

105) *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

106) *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

(KJV)

Even into his old age, King David had a deep desire to obey God. He made so many mistakes; he did everything with his whole heart, and when he sinned, he did it with his whole heart, but he's going to be in the Kingdom. Please turn with me to 1 Chronicles, chapter 29. King David knew that he would not live much longer, that his death was approaching, and he turned the Kingdom of Israel over to his son, Solomon, and at the investiture ceremony, where Solomon was crowned king, King David prayed a very insightful prayer that gives us a glimpse into his heart and his unwavering desire to please God and to obey Him. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

1 Chronicles 29:18 *“O LORD, the God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make your people always want to obey you. See to it that their love for you never changes.*

19) *Give my son Solomon the wholehearted desire to obey all your commands, laws, and decrees, and to do everything necessary to build this Temple, for which I have made these preparations.”* (NLT)

His prayer is that Solomon would continue to obey and to be humble before His God. Please turn with me to Genesis 22; we read that Abraham was tested by God and that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, whom he viewed as his son of promise, in

order to obey God. We read of God's answer to Abraham's willingness to obey Him, no matter the cost, no matter the pain and no matter the hardship. We read this in Genesis, chapter 22 and verse 16,

Genesis 22:16 ... *By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:*

17) *That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;*

18) *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (KJV)*

What did Abraham do? He obeyed God, no matter the cost, no matter the sacrifice and no matter the hurt. Abraham obeyed and showed God his deep conviction and willingness to do whatever God asked him to do, and as a result, God richly blessed Abraham in his life—not only Abraham, but all of his descendants.

The greatest example of a contrite, obedient heart was the life of Jesus Christ. Turn with me to Luke 22; when Jesus was in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what awaited Him in just a few hours from then—that He would be mocked cruelly, that He would have to endure the unbearable pain of being whipped and scourged, just short of death, and that He would have to die the slow, agonizing death of crucifixion—He still prayed that His Father's will would be done. We read in Luke 22 and verse 41,

Luke 22:41 *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,*

42) *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. (KJV)*

Jesus was human, He didn't want to die. He knew what awaited Him, but it wasn't His will that He asked for, it was the will of His Father. Please turn with me to Luke, chapter 6. Glen Springfield talked about this and we read it in Matthew; we'll read this in Luke 6. Knowledge without obedience is not profitable. What good is knowledge without obedience? Jesus was teaching His disciples and the multitude about the importance of doing, through obedience, the things that a man learns and knows to be true and right. We read this in Luke 6, verse 45.

Luke 6:45 *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

46) *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

47) *Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: (KJV)*

Here's a person who has knowledge, who does what God says:

48) *He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*

49) *But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. (KJV)*

Again, knowledge requires action, and action requires obedience and humility. Knowledge without action becomes useless, in helping yourself or in helping others. Brethren, if we have knowledge but we don't have a contrite, obedient heart, our heavenly Father will not be pleased with us. Please turn with me to Zechariah, chapter 14, where we read another example of this very scenario of having knowledge but not a contrite heart.

Zechariah 14:16 *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

17) *And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. (KJV)*

So here, people know to keep the Feast of Tabernacles; they're given that knowledge but they don't have a contrite, obedient heart—I know it, but I'm not going to do it.

18) *And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

That's stubborn—that's just plain stubborn. You have the knowledge but your heart will not let you obey God.

19) *This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. (KJV)*

These disobedient nations, in the Millennium, will know God's truth. It will be available to them, they will know it, but they won't do anything with that knowledge. Because of stubbornness and pride, they will continue to refuse to obey Yehovah, our Father, and will not go to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

So brethren, do we have an obedient and contrite heart? Are we pleasing our heavenly Father? Is that a goal every day, to please our heavenly Father? Are our words, our actions and attitudes, pleasing to Him? Are we constantly seeking our own will—what we want—or are we surrendering more and more of our will, each day, to our Father? Having an obedient, contrite heart is crucial to our salvation. But obedience and humility comprise only one of the three legs of that stool. An obedient and contrite heart is not the only yardstick for salvation.

The third, important, measured requirement for salvation in that three-legged stool is:

3. Love.

The world today has cheapened the meaning of love. Satan's influence in music and the culture today has demeaned the word down to where it basically means sex. Being selfless today is not celebrated or applauded in any way by the word. Selfless love is denigrated and actually ridiculed by society. The greatest example of selfless love is found in one of the most powerful and probably well-known verses in the Bible, in John 3:16. We don't even need to turn there. It reads, *For God so loved the world [our Father so loved the world] that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.* God the Father has loved all of mankind so much and so deeply that He was willing to let His only Son—Jesus, the Messiah—come to this earth as a mortal man and die for all of our sins. Jesus loved mankind so much that He was willing to come and die for us while we were yet sinning. That is selfless love.

Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 6; in the second giving of the law, before the Israelites entered into the Promised Land, our heavenly Father gave a very important requirement and commandment to them—it's called the *shema*, which, translated from the Hebrew, means this:

Deuteronomy 6:4 *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD [Yehovah]:*
5) *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* (KJV)

The Hebrew word for "love" is *ahab* (אהב), and it's defined this way: To love that in which a man delights or which he earnestly desires. It implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind, and, at the same time, tenderness and fullness of affection, and is used of the indescribable love and tender mercies of God in covenant with His people. Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 11, where Yehovah tells the Israelites that if they love Him, then He will bless them.

Deuteronomy 11:13 *And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,*
14) *That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.* (KJV)

Besides a love for God there is also a need to show love for one another. Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 10, where Yehovah commands that the Israelites love one another and the less fortunate.

Deuteronomy 10:17 *For the LORD your God is God of gods and LORD of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.*

18) *That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.*
(KJV)

Then there's a commandment here.

19) *Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*
(KJV)

God is telling people to love one another—love the less fortunate, show mercy and compassion on them. This is the exact same concept as the golden rule we read about in Matthew 7, where Jesus Christ taught, in verse 12: *Therefore all things whatsoever you would do that man should do to you, do you even so to them for this is the law and the prophets.* It's the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The entirety of Exodus 20 through 23 contains the laws showing how Israel was to show love to God and to each other. Please turn with me to Mark 12, where we will read that Jesus reiterated these two principles of love—love for our heavenly Father and love for one another—when answering questions asked by the scribes. Jesus quotes directly from Deuteronomy 6.

Mark 12:28 *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?*

29) *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD:*

30) *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

31) *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.* (KJV)

However, Jesus also magnifies and deepens the meaning of loving one another in a way totally foreign to human nature and the natural mind. Please turn with me to Luke 6. Jesus commanded us to do something that is impossible to do without God's guidance and Holy Spirit. It is totally contrary to human nature and the world. The world does not understand this, they laugh at this. Glen Springfield talked about this.

Luke 6:27 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,*

28) *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

29) *And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also.*

30) *Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.*

31) *And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*

32) *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.*

- 33) *And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.*
- 34) *And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*
- 35) *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*
- 36) *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (KJV)*

Do we show this type of love for others in our actions, in our words, in our attitudes and in our motivations? Are we allowing the Father and His Son to fill our hearts and our minds with Their love, in order to truly achieve this level of love for others? In the New Testament the word “love” is translated from two of three main Greek words for love. The first is *eros*, which is sexual or erotic love, and this word actually doesn’t appear in the New Testament. But the other two we are very familiar with; one is *philadelphia*, which means “brotherly love”, and the other is *agape*, which is godly love or unselfish love. The Greek word *agape* is the equivalent to the Hebrew word *ahab*. The Greek word is utilized significantly throughout the New Testament. The verb form of this Greek word *agape* is used for God’s love for mankind in John 3:16.

Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13, where the Apostle Paul wrote about the extreme importance of this type of *agape* love. The King James version of the Bible often translates *agape* as “charity”. In 1 Corinthians 13, we see the priority love is given, hence its importance in this three-legged stool.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1** *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*
- 2) *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*
- 3) *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*
- 4) *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*
- 5) *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*
- 6) *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*
- 7) *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*
- 8) *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*
- 9) *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*
- 10) *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

11) *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

12) *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

13) *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (KJV)*

We can have all knowledge, we can know all mysteries God has opened our minds to, but if we don't have love, it serves no purpose and it becomes useless. It would actually become prideful. Please turn with me to John 13. This type of agape love is so important that Jesus gave us a new commandment concerning its use in our lives.

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

35) *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (KJV)*

This command from Jesus was repeated in this discourse to His disciples, during the Passover service in John 15, verses 12 and 17. We read this every year at Passover. This command is so important in the life of a Christian. Love, in both Hebrew and Greek, is a verb of action. To love someone, to show godly love, you have to do something. It's not an idle word. Love requires action. Are we showing and reflecting God's love in our relationship with Him and with one another? Are we growing in love each and every day? Day by day, are we growing in that special type of love? Love comprises a crucial leg of the three-legged stool. But again, love is only one part of those three requirements for salvation.

Turn with me to John 5. We are being judged right now in our lifetime. We are the firstfruits and judgment is upon us now. Jesus Christ will be our judge and He will be the world's judge in the future. We read about this in John 5, verse 21.

John 5:21 *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*

22) *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

23) *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. (KJV)*

So all judgment is given by the Father to Jesus Christ. Why? Why would the Father give all judgment to Jesus? Please turn with me to Hebrews 4, where we'll read the answer. God the Father will commit all judgment of mankind to Jesus Christ for a specific reason.

Hebrews 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

15) *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* (KJV)

Jesus Christ will judge all of mankind because He Himself was tempted in all points during His physical life, and He understands everything—everything—that we are going through. Brethren, it is not for us to judge any other person's salvation. Even God the Father refrains from judging the spiritual and eternal salvation of each person in the history of humanity. He has committed that judgment to His Son. We don't need to wonder if someone is saved or not saved. It is Jesus Christ who will determine that.

There are three basic pillars of judgment in the three-legged stool: knowledge, an obedient and contrite heart, and love. Only Jesus know what is the minimum threshold of each of those pillars that we'll need to have in order to enter His Kingdom—only He knows. It takes a combination of all three, and all three require action. Like we read in 1 Corinthians 13, we can have all the understanding and all the knowledge that God could give us, but if we don't have love for God the Father and for Jesus Christ, if we don't have love for one another and our fellow human beings, we are nothing and we will not enter God's Kingdom.

Likewise, if we are very loving people, if we show hospitality, generosity, warmth, friendliness and compassion to everyone we meet, but we don't know the truth at all, we will not enter the Kingdom of God. That is why the most loving and wonderful Buddhist or Hindu or Muslim, or even some Christians—many Christians—who don't know God's way will not enter the Kingdom of God until the Father and Christ work with them.

If we have knowledge but we don't have a contrite, obedient heart, we will not be in the Kingdom. In fact, as we read earlier in James 4 and in Luke 12, if we have knowledge and we refuse to obey, we will reap even more condemnation because we did know, we did have the that knowledge, and we did not do God's will with what we knew.

We all need these three pillars of judgment in our physical and our spiritual lives. God the Father has entrusted us with His precious truth, but knowing His truth requires action on our part. We must be growing in love for Him and for one another; we must become more and more obedient and humble before our Father so that He and His Son can mold and shape us to reflect Their righteousness and Their spiritual qualities, more and more in our lives, until that day in the future, when we will hear those precious words, "Well done, you good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you a ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."