

**Introduction – “The Good Samaritan”**

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said:

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

<sup>36</sup>“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup>The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

**Questions to Consider...**

Most would agree that it is important to strive for godly living – to be the “Good Samaritan” and follow the golden rule. But after that there is a lot of disagreement on the following questions. Let’s try to answer them...

- 1) What’s Jesus’ point with this story? (Hint: Look very carefully at the context...)
- 2) Why should people strive to live good lives – be like the Good Samaritan and follow the golden rule?
- 3) How can we live godly lives and what’s the standard of godly living? (Absolute or Relative Morality)

**Christianity...**

True Christianity is different than all other religions in what it teaches about good works / absolute morality.

**A. Why we strive to live good lives.**

1. The **wrong motivation** (opinio legis) to live a godly life, which all world religions and our own natures generally teach, is in order to be saved.

- a. Being a good person or doing good works/deeds to be saved is what we naturally think...

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*

- b. This thinking leads to eternal death because:

- 1) God demands perfection, not just trying to be a good person or trying to do good works.

James 2:10 *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (Also “Be perfect as your heavenly Father...” Mt 5:48)*

- 2) No one is perfect

Romans 3:12 <sup>12</sup> *All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Romans 3:23 & 6:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. The **right motivation** for living a God-pleasing life is simply out of thankfulness for being saved. Any other reason is damning. Why?

a. Jesus has already done everything to save us. (He alone is and could ever be the Good Samaritan).

Isaiah 53:4-6 <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

2 Corinthians 5:21 <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

A/D If we try to save ourselves in part or entirely, we are saying Jesus' death was basically insufficient or entirely unnecessary.

b. Thinking we still have to do some good work to be saved actually alienates us from Christ.

Galatians 5:3-4 <sup>3</sup> Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. <sup>4</sup> You who are trying to be justified by law (to be saved by keeping the law) have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Illustration: Our Strokes on His Masterpiece

c. Godly living is very simply defined as living in a thankful way to God's grace (The only Good Samaritan's Grace).

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices (dedicate your entire selves), holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.

d. Godly living naturally, will always, and only can follow faith in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-10 <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

James 2:26 <sup>26</sup> As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

## B. The power and standard for godly living...

1. The gospel (the message of salvation in Jesus – his ultimate sacrifice for us as the Good Samaritan) motivates and empowers us to lead this new life.
  - a. It enables us to flee temptation.

*Titus 2:11-12 <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,*
  - b. It enables us to pursue righteousness.

*Psalm 119:32 I run in the path of your commands, FOR you have set my heart free.*

### 2. How do we know what God wants? The law (God’s commands) serves as the guide for godly living.

- a. Sin has warped our consciences with the result that they aren't the best guides.
  1. Sometimes sin makes consciences callous.

*1 Timothy 4:2 Such teachings (false teachings) come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*
  2. Sometimes sin makes consciences over-sensitive.

*1 Corinthians 8:7 But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. (In other words, although it is okay to buy and eat meat which has been used in a ceremony for a false god, some consciences are disturbed by that and for such people it would be a sin to eat it.)*

A/D To act against conscience is a sin, even if the act is entirely permissible by God.

- b. Though we have a natural knowledge there is a God (Romans 1:20), his law sketched onto our hearts (Romans 2:15), and a conscience acting as judge confirming right or wrong in us, due to our sinful state, the only reliable guide we have for godly living is God's revelation/law as it is revealed in his Word. As to that, if God does not condemn something as sinful (**adiaphora** – neither commanded nor forbidden), we dare not to condemn it as such. If God does condemn something as sinful, we dare not condone it.

NOTE: There are three uses of **God’s Law** in the Scriptures to keep in mind. 1) **The Mirror** – Points out our sin and need for Jesus our Savior (Romans 3:20). 2) **The Curb** – Points out that if you do break the law God’s wrath - temporal government as well - will punish the wrongdoer (Romans 1:18,27; 13:4). 3) **The Guide** – Points out to the Christian how to live a life of thanks to God (Psalm 119:105). This holy living is what we call “**Sanctification.**” Remember its definition in two ways: “Saintification” a. When, in Christ, we are set apart as Saints able to reflect the life of a Saint (Holy Person); and then there’s “Thankstification” b. When, because of Christ, we desire to live godly lives *out of thanks*.

\*There was an Old Testament use of the law which is not intended for New Testament believers any more and that was the law as “The Hedge.” Under Moses (1500BC-Christ) God gave many laws to make the Jewish people unique and preserve them as a people. Those laws involved ceremonial/religious laws (See Leviticus); Civil or Government Laws / “Eye for Eye” (See Deuteronomy); and Moral Laws (See Exodus 20). The Moral Law or the 10 Commandments are what still remain and are repeated in the New Testament. Keep this in mind when reading the Old Testament. In regard to the many Old Testament laws, the basic rule of thumb is: if it is not repeated in the New Testament, it is not binding on believers.

### C. The Battle there is in Leading a Godly Life...

1. Through faith in Jesus, believers have a new status before God.

Romans 8:15-16 <sup>15</sup> *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear (you are freed from the idea that you have to do good works to be saved), but you received the Spirit of sonship (by Jesus good works you meet God's requirement of you so that you are perfect in his sight, his son or daughter) And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* <sup>16</sup> *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

2. Although believers have only one status before God, they have a strong old condition to battle against. It is important not to confuse our status before God (New Self – who we really are) with our old sinful condition (Old Self – who we used to be). The Bible refers to these two natures as flesh (Sinful Nature or Old Adam) and spirit (New Self or New Man). Because we still have our sinful nature we will still sin until we die or Jesus returns.

Galatians 5:17 *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

Romans 7:18-19 <sup>18</sup> *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* <sup>19</sup> *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*

#### **Illustration: Rebel force in an Established Government**

3. The two natures are not equal. As the saying goes, "The spirit reigns, the flesh remains."

Romans 8:9 <sup>9</sup> *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

4. Therefore we can win many battles.

John 15:5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

5. We dare never forget that Christ has already won the war!

Romans 7:24-25a <sup>24</sup> *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?* <sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

A/D Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites.

**Conclusion:** This life dedicated to God is often called a life of "sanctification" (See Above). Leading a life of sanctification is not equal to being moral. In other words, it is impossible for those who are not in Christ (not sanctified or literally "set apart" by his Spirit as holy) to live a life of sanctification – no matter how moral they appear to be. It all boils down to their not having the proper motivation – simply out of love for God's mercy.

A/D Sanctification includes being moral, but not all moral people live a life of sanctification.  
A/D A life of sanctification includes much more than being moral.

## Extra Study: The 10 Commandments

Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5...

- 1) You shall not have any other gods.
- 2) You shall not use the name of the Lord in vain.
- 3) You shall remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. (A mixture of ceremonial and moral law).
- 4) You shall honor your mother and father that it may go well with you that you might live a long life on the earth.
- 5) You shall not murder.
- 6) You shall not commit adultery.
- 7) You shall not steal.
- 8) You shall not bear false testimony (gossip) against your neighbor.
- 9-10) You shall not covet.

- Churches have different ways of ordering the 10 Commandments. Many churches divide the first into two commandments: You shall not have any other gods. You shall not make any graven images (idolatry – making images of false gods and worshipping them is the thought.) We, among many churches, divide commandments 9-10 into two since there are many things one can covet. Both camps within the church do this to keep with the tradition that there are 10 commands God gave which describe the law of love we are to keep for God and for our neighbor. The first table of the law (commandments 1-3) deal with our relationship to God. The second table of the law (commandments 4-10) deal with our relationship to our neighbor.
- In the actual Hebrew, the section is referred to as the 10 Words of God, not the 10 commands. Interestingly enough, which fits well with the point of the discussion, the first Word is actually a Gospel message. Since God is a saving God who delivered the people from slavery in Egypt, live a life of thanks, is the thought. This same theme is found throughout the Scriptures. Since God has so saved us, follow the 9 other Words to give thanks which are the commands of God.
- Go to [http://www.myfaithlutheran.com/site/audidownloads.asp?sec\\_id=180001587](http://www.myfaithlutheran.com/site/audidownloads.asp?sec_id=180001587) to hear 9 sermons on the 10 commandments for a deeper study of the extent of what each commandment means and how amazing Christ is that he could save us and, even more, that we could now begin to be empowered to keep them out of a response to grace.