



FEED MY SHEEP

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All We Need Is Love, *Part 3; Love in Action*

Since, as we learned last time, love is the fulfillment of the law, let us go back to a passage in the law, Leviticus 19, and expound it from that perspective. The law consists of the commandments, statutes, judgments along with the ritual and ceremonial ordinances.

The commandments are the Big Ten, if you will. The statutes are various subsidiary laws which fall under one or more of the big ten. Then there are the judgments which are the penalties to be meted out for disobedience.

Finally, there were the blood ordinances, rituals and ceremonial practices which were done away with in Christ. We no longer sacrifice lambs because the Lamb of God has shed His holy blood once and for all. But, for heaven's sake, or should we say, for earth's sake, Jesus' death on the cross did not make obsolete the judgment of capital punishment for murder.

What good are the commandments and statutes if there are no penalties for violating them? Commandments without judgments would be as if we have speed limit signs and other traffic control laws, but no highway patrol, no tickets, no fines, no jail time for breaking the laws. Commandments without judgments are useless.

Jesus died on the cross to save mankind from eternal death, not to save murderers from the death penalty. God's laws and judgments are needed for the overall happiness and well-being of the citizens of any society. This passage in Leviticus 19 is an amplification of the law given in Exodus 20. We won't take the time to dis-

cuss every feature of the law in this chapter so we are going to focus on verses 11 through 18.

Leviticus 19: 11 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob *him*: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Do you see how all the preceding verses are summed up in verse 18: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself? Now let me paraphrase these same commands in terms of fulfilling the law of love.

If you love God, you will prove it by not stealing. Love doesn't lie. Love doesn't deceive. Love doesn't swear falsely or profane the name of God.

If I love my neighbor, I won't cheat him or rob him. If I am an employer, I won't hold back his paycheck on payday. I know it says "overnight" here, but I think we are overly scrupulous here if we think we actually have to pay our employees daily.

Daily pay was the norm when this was written, but the principle being taught here is that we pay the worker when we agreed to pay; whether it's weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, whatever—the principle is that we pay him when it's due. Continuing...

Love doesn't get angry at the deaf or put an obstacle in front of the blind. The literal meaning of that is very clear, but did you consider that this has spiritual application as well?

How so, you ask? Well, most of my readers are "come-outers." We have come out of other churches because we felt we had grown beyond where they could take us. We felt spiritually boxed in by their denominational creeds. And so we came out, we left them and sought more spiritual truth elsewhere.

It is a temptation to many of us, when we try to show new Bible truths to those we left behind—truths like the birthright message (i.e., the Israel truth), or the message of God's sovereignty and universal reconciliation—and they can't hear it or they just can't seem to *see* what is so obvious to us—we often times get frustrated.

But woe to us if we, in effect, curse them for not hearing, or if we show our disgust or frustration with them. Do you see how our displaying that kind of attitude places an obstacle in front of the spiritually blind? If we love them, we will seek God's grace to deal with them with the utmost *patience*.

Going on to verse 15, if we are ever serving on a jury or perhaps even something as mundane as judging animals or pies and cakes at the county fair, we love our neighbor when we show no partiality to the poor because they're poor, nor favoritism to the rich and powerful, but we always judge honestly and fairly.

Of course, if it is a criminal or civil court case, the

stakes are higher, but love means the same thing; we show no partiality for any reason. Otherwise, we would be perverting justice into unrighteousness.

Love means we do not go about spreading gossip and slander. Love means that we will not do anything that endangers our neighbor's life. Can we think of some examples of how seemingly innocent things can endanger our neighbor's life? If you like to shoot guns, I hope you will do it out in the country and not in a suburban or city neighborhood. Stray bullets kill just as surely as those aimed to kill.

And here's one that we should all take to heart: texting while driving. I have just returned from a long highway trip. I cannot tell you how many times I have seen a car—as well as semi trucks crossing the lane divider lines and then going off the right side onto the berm, and as I pass them—sure enough—they appear to be doing something with a mobile phone, whether texting, dialing a number, on the web, who knows, but their driving is certainly a hazard to themselves and their "neighbors."

Just as we have seen the government publicize statistics for decades about the number of highway deaths due to people driving while intoxicated, it will not be long before we find national awareness being raised concerning how many traffic deaths are due to cell phone use while driving.

Love does not hate your brother in your heart. Love means that when it is appropriate and necessary, that you will rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Let's stop there a minute. What do you think that means? It's verse 17. Here is the KJV again: "thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

Let me read it from a couple other versions which will help clarify it.

NAS Leviticus 19:17 you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.

BBE Leviticus 19:17 but you may make a protest to your neighbour, so that he may be stopped from doing evil.

Going on, if we really love God, then another evidence will be that we do not seek revenge or bear a

grudge against one of our people, but we will love our neighbor as ourselves.

Friends, this is OT law but it is also totally applicable in the NT under the law of love. Let us now go to that most famous of NT passages on love, 1 Corinthians 13. In verses 1-3 Paul teaches us about the absolute *necessity* for love; in verses 4-7 about its characteristics. Verses 8-12 deal with love's eternal permanence, and verse 13 caps it off with the statement of love's complete preeminence. After all, love is all...we need.

However, let us back up a few verses and start in 1 Corinthians 12 to get the context of what led Paul up to this great treatise on love. In much of chapter 12, Paul has been teaching using the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. Then in verse 27, he says...

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

In other words, Paul is affirming that none of the above comprise the ultimate manifestation of a Christian, but I (Paul speaking) am going to show you right now what I'm talking about. (And, as I explained in a previous FMS, I will substitute the word *love* for *charity* as I read from the King James Version.)

I find it fascinating to note that apparently, according to Paul's mild rebuke of them, there were apparently a lot of Christians in the early church who majored in speaking in tongues. And now here we are at what many of us believe is the end of the Pentecost church age, and for approximately the past century, there has been another upsurge of emphasis on speaking in tongues.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not questioning the validity of tongues; only its importance rela-

tive to other gifts and fruits. Paul was not questioning its validity either, but he was clearly advising some Corinthians that it was not at the top of the list. What is at the top? Love.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

More literally it means, *I have become booming brass, or a clanging cymbal*. The idea is that it is not a pleasant brass quintet with some nice percussion accents that we are hearing. Rather, Paul is conveying the idea that those who speak in "tongues" for show, that is, for self-puffing, and therefore without "love," it becomes a mere discordant, obnoxious, unintelligible dissonance.

By the way, the Greek word for "clanging" (*alalazon*) is a figure of speech called onomatopoeia. (Like the buzzing of a bee. The word sounds like what it describes. Another example: the bark of a dog.) Similarly, the Hebrew name for cymbals, *tseltselim* (Psalm 150:5) is onomatopoeia.

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 love, I am nothing.

There was a prophet by the name of Balaam in the OT. King Saul was considered to be also among the prophets. And in the NT, near the time of the crucifixion, there was a man named Caiaphas who had, at least for the moment, the power of prophetic utterance. Yet, in all three cases, it availed them nothing because it was devoid of love.

Jesus himself tells us that at the judgment of the nations, there will be those who exclaim: "Lord, Lord, have we not *prophesied* in thy name?" Yet He answers them, "I never knew you." Could it be that they prophesy with the wrong motive? For fame, for money, for control over people? The only proper motive is love for God and for the brethren.

And although I might understand all the mysteries, all the hidden things of God, and have all knowledge; that is, to possess insight into the deeper meanings of Scripture. Or I can have all "faith." This does not mean "justifying faith," or "saving faith," which

can no more exist without showing itself in works than moonlight can exist without the sun; but this faith is likely a reference to what we would call “faith healers.” Remember when Jesus sent the disciples out in teams of two-by-two, they were able to work all kinds of miracles, weren’t they? Did it ever occur to you that Judas must have possessed this kind of faith, too? This faith has been possessed by “many” who will yet be rejected because they also work iniquity. (Matthew 7:23)

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

So Paul is going to great lengths here to emphasize the overarching importance and the necessity of love. We can do all the good works in the world, we can be as rich as Bill Gates and set up a foundation to help cure cancer and heart disease, but if we have not love, we are nothing.

Paul now goes on in the next four verses, not giving us a dictionary definition of love, but he describes some of the characteristics of love. This is how we would recognize love.

4 LOVE suffereth long, and is kind; LOVE envieth not; LOVE vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; [I have pointed out in a lecture some time ago, probably in my lectures on forgiveness, that this phrase “thinketh no evil” is more accurately translated as “keeps no record of wrongs.”]

6 [LOVE] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

As I did with the passage in Leviticus, allow me to paraphrase these four verses. We hear a lot about “motivational speakers” these last several decades, and many of them have good things to offer.

I want to play off of that idea, though, in that I mentioned in the previous issue that love of God as expressed through love of our neighbor is the only motivation for obedience which pleases our heavenly Father. Love should be our motive in all that we do.

So here’s a paraphrase of verses 4 through 7.

I am patient with you because I love you and I want to forgive you.

I am kind to you because I love you and want to help you in whatever way I am able.

I do not envy your talents or your possessions or your spiritual gifts—because I love you and therefore I desire the best for you in all things.

I do not boast about my own achievements—because I love you and I want to hear about yours.

I am not proud—because I love you and I want to esteem you ahead of myself.

We’re starting my paraphrase of verse 5 now:

I am not boisterous and rude—because I love you and I do not want to hurt your feelings.

I am not self-seeking—because I love you and therefore I want to do my best to help meet your needs.

I don’t lose my temper—because I love you and because, if I am out of control, it is hurtful to you and everyone else in the vicinity of my anger. And whatever actions on your part tend to provoke me to anger, I want to overlook your offences because I love you.

(There are limits to this, of course, and we discussed that in our forgiveness lectures so we will pass over that discussion here. Just note that this does not mean we become doormats for everybody and anybody.) Closely related to this then is...

I do not keep a record of your wrongs—because I love you and want to practice jubilee forgiveness.

(To be continued.)

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