

It's Back to the Basics

- I. We must go to God's Word for our answers.
- II. The law can only condemn us.
- III. The gospel alone reveals Jesus is our Savior.

Dear Christian friends,

As we now turn to **this part** of God's Word we have the **familiar story** of the Good Samaritan. A person doesn't have to be a Christian or **go to** church to be familiar with the BASICS of the story. We even say a person was a **"Good Samaritan."**

This may be a **familiar story** but many people miss Jesus' WHOLE POINT. With this story Jesus takes us BACK TO THE BASICS of our Christian faith. **Those basics** are 1)we must go to God's Word for our answers, 2)the law can only condemn us and 3)the gospel alone reveals Jesus is our Savior.

**I. We must go to God's Word for our answers.**

The first basic of our faith is that we MUST GO to God's Word **for the answers** to our questions. Now we're not talking about the Bible deciding what color to paint the house or what kind of a **car** to buy. But God did give us His Word TO USE. Paul reminded Timothy, ***"From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is USEFUL for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."***

We read here, ***"An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to be saved?'"*** God wants us to come to Him with our questions. **Asking** questions is ADMITTING that we don't know everything – we don't have all the answers. **Asking** questions is admitting that GOD IS SMARTER than we are. We need to go to God's Word for our answers because SOMETIMES what we believe or are doing is **totally wrong**.

But we DARE NOT GO to God **like this man** did. He didn't come to learn from Jesus but to CRITICIZE Him. He's a good reminder for us to CHECK OUR ATTITUDE toward God's Word. Do we approach the Bible with a CHIP on our shoulders – **as if we'll be** the FINAL JUDGE and **not God? If God agrees** with me that's GREAT – but if **God says** something I don't like – well TOO BAD, God. God will have to change what He says – because I'M NOT **going to change** my ways. That was this guy's attitude toward Jesus. Every time we hear God's Word we should pray like young Samuel, ***"Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening."***

We must go to GOD'S Word for our answers. Jesus didn't ask this man – "What DO YOU THINK? – How do YOU FEEL about it? – What is EVERYBODY ELSE doing?" **No**, Jesus asked him, ***"What is written in the Law?"*** What does GOD'S Word say?

Jesus is also making clear that the Bible is NOT A HARD BOOK to **read and understand**. God didn't give us His Word to CONFUSE us but to guide us. Sure, some parts of the Bible are EASIER to read and understand than others. But we shouldn't be afraid of our Bibles – we shouldn't think ONLY PASTORS can understand it. Paul told the Roman Christians, ***"Everything that was written***

*in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*

We must go to GOD’S Word for our answers. There we learn – as Jesus so clearly teaches here – that...

## II. The law can only condemn us.

**“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** This man wanted to be sure he was GOING TO HEAVEN when he died. He was concerned that everything was OK between God and him. **Unfortunately** he thought it was UP TO HIM to **make things right** with God. He believed that going to heaven or ending up in hell ALL DEPENDED on how he lived his life. That’s common. It’s behind every religion in the world EXCEPT for biblical Christianity. We must “DO OUR DUTY” to go to heaven. What this man didn’t realize is that we HAVEN’T DONE our duty. We can’t do ENOUGH – BE GOOD ENOUGH in God’s eyes – to get into heaven on our own. God gave us His law – the 10 Commandments – to DRIVE HOME just that point.

The man correctly quotes God’s law. **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength and all your mind.”** God won’t settle for HALF-HEARTED worship. God is not to be a CONVENIENCE in our life – but a **nothing-held-back COMMITMENT**. God demands first place in our hearts – not just SOME PLACE down the line. God demands FRONT AND CENTER in our lives – not being pushed off to the side. Anything less is **sin** and unacceptable to God. God also demands that we **“love your neighbor as yourself.”**

**“Do this,”** Jesus explained, **“and you will live.”** **“DO this and you will live.”** That’s EXACTLY WHY the law can only condemn us. We haven’t done what **God’s law** demands. We haven’t lived our lives with God ALWAYS COMING FIRST in everything. **Too often** we’ve been more in love with ourselves than with God OR our neighbor.

The man was beginning to feel the HEAT. His conscience was ACTING UP. **“He wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”** There might be some problems with that **“loving your neighbor”** bit. He’s looking for LOOPHOLES – a way to WEASEL OUT of **being helpful** to everyone. He wants some EXCUSES for the way he’s treated some people. But God’s law doesn’t CUT US ANY SLACK. God law demands PERFECT **obedience**. God’s law doesn’t accept ANY **excuses**.

Jesus told this story of the Good Samaritan to make clear to this guy that he HADN’T **“loved his neighbor as himself.”** Our sinful natures say, **“Love your neighbors and hate your enemies.”** “BE NICE to those who are nice to you.” But if someone treats you like a jerk – THEN you can treat them like jerks. If someone won’t say hi to you – then you can ignore them. After all, FAIR IS FAIR.

This story of the Good Samaritan teaches us HOW TO BE a **neighbor** to other people. We are to help and be a friend to them in every bodily need.” HOW WE TREAT other people has nothing to do with **how they treat** us – or if we know them or not – if we LIKE THEM or not. The priest and Levite probably HAD THEIR EXCUSES for why they **couldn’t help** this poor man. It was TOO DANGEROUS, etc. Their excuses don’t excuse their sin. **“The man who had mercy on him”** – the GOOD SAMARITAN – was the real neighbor. **“Go and do likewise,”** Jesus told this man.

There’s that word **“DO”** again - that word that condemns us. God isn’t looking for us to **“do”** this ONCE AND A WHILE but **all the time**. Failing just once means we HAVEN’T DONE what God’s **law**

**demands.** And if we haven't always done what God wants then we really haven't LOVED GOD ***"with ALL our heart, soul, mind and strength."*** Then we STAND CONDEMNED by God's law.

Are you beginning to feel the HEAT this guy did? Is your conscience acting up? Paul told the Galatian Christians, ***"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to DO EVERYTHING written in the Book of the Law."***

Is there any hope for us then? Is there any way we CAN GO to heaven? Go to GOD'S WORD for your answer! God's Word teaches that while the LAW can only condemn us...

### III. The gospel reveals Jesus is our Savior.

***"When the Samaritan saw him, he took pity on him. (He) had mercy on him."*** Aren't those words BEAUTIFUL SUMMARIES of the gospel? The gospel is that good news that God saw us in our sins AND He ***"took pity on us – had mercy on us."***

This ***"expert in the law"*** saw Jesus AS ONLY a ***"Teacher"*** – and a questionable one at that. But LET GOD'S WORD tell us who Jesus really is – none other than the **eternal Son** of God Himself born a true man. Jesus is our God born our **Brother**.

Many people see Jesus as NOTHING MORE than a **great teacher** and **example** of love. But Jesus is above all else our Savior. We owed God a life of perfect obedience. **Because of our sins** God HAD EVERY RIGHT to make our lives a living hell and then send us to hell when we die.

BUT God ***"took pity on us – had mercy on us."*** WE could do nothing to save ourselves but Jesus came and took care of **everything** for us. IN OUR PLACE Jesus lived that perfect life we owed God. Jesus really did love His heavenly Father ***"with all His heart, soul, mind and strength"*** – and ALL THE TIME! Jesus really did ***"love His neighbor as Himself."*** In love Jesus gives us all the credit for His perfect life.

But Jesus' love didn't stop there. Jesus also TOOK THE BLAME for the sins of the whole world and on the cross Jesus PERSONALLY paid for every single one of those sins with His own innocent sufferings and death. All those times we PUSHED GOD off to the side in our life – **all those times** – we JUST WOULDN'T LOVE God ***"with ALL our heart"*** – all those times we were mean to our neighbors – our spouse – our brothers/sisters – all those times we didn't help because we DIDN'T FEEL like it – because we had DONE ENOUGH already – all our sins – they've all been washed away in Jesus' shed blood. **For Jesus' sake** God has forgiven all our sins. Trusting in Jesus God promises us eternal life in heaven the moment we die. ***"What must I do to be saved?"*** We don't do ANYTHING – Jesus has already done it ALL for us. We are saved BY RELYING on what Jesus all did. Trusting in Jesus we CAN BE SURE God loves and forgives us – we can be ABSOLUTELY SURE we are going to heaven when we die.

That gospel message MOVES US to ask, "How can I **thank** You, Lord?" Jesus answers, ***"What is written? Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart ...love your neighbor as yourself."*** The gospel motivates us to WANT TO OBEY **God's law** not so that we CAN GO to heaven – but to thank God that He has forgiven us and that we ARE GOING to heaven.

Those are the basics of our Christian faith. Amen.