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Scripture: Psalm 112

Big Idea: Golden Rules are Powerless

Did you hear the news? Last Monday the Supreme Court ruled 7-to-2 in favor of the baker in Colorado who refused to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple due to his religious convictions. Regardless of your view on homosexual marriage, this is a victory for personal religious freedom.

Still, we know the floodgates are wide open related to attacks on traditional Christian values. The most recent is the attempt to confuse and blur the distinct genders of male and female. We'll just touch on that today since we covered it September 2016 in the third of this series on the Dispensation of Law. You may recall that was **when the** House Bill 2 (also called the bathroom bill) controversy was raging.

At that time, we looked in detail at the leap made by social engineers to blur gender boundaries. We learned that the Bible stands for clear gender boundaries that are written into the nucleus of each cell of our bodies. God created male and female in his own image to complement each other and with the ability to reproduce.

This news and our sub-topic of Jesus Christ brings me to an experience I had the beginning of this year. We'll use that experience to launch into today's topic.

The middle of January of this year, when I returned home from being out, I noticed a note taped to the front door. It was from a sweet young neighbor girl about eleven years old. I know her from walks we do together. Our dog Grace and I walk children to school with parents, and another dog a couple times a week.

She had come by the house to ask if we would like to order some Girl Scout Cookies. Who likes Girl Scout cookies? What's your favorite? Years ago, back when Burry's was the baker, I loved the peanut butter sandwich cookie. According to *Business Insider*, January 27, 2014 here's a list of the top five Girl Scout cookies:

5. Trefoils/Shortbread Cookies
4. Do-si-dos/Peanut Butter Sandwiches
3. Tagalongs/Peanut Butter Patties
2. Samoas/Caramel deLites
1. Thin Mints

Was your favorite on the list?

Anyway, I like to encourage young neighbors when they stop by. I found the note idea particularly enterprising. It contained a phone number and email address.

Unfortunately, this time was different. I had heard on the news that the *Girl Scouts* had changed their policy and were accepting **boys** as members. They made the change in response to the gender

confusion issues just mentioned. After checking on-line, I found that each box of Girl Scout Cookies sold includes a licensing fee that goes back to the parent organization. Since they are fostering gender confusion, I could not in good conscience buy the cookies.

I responded to the mom's email address that my religious convictions prevented me from supporting the parent organization. I told her that I had been a Cub Scout and my wife had been a Girl Scout. We both found scouting to be a positive, character-building part of our lives. I told her I would like to contribute to her daughter's troop if they did not foster or promote this new "inclusive" policy.

The mom replied saying **twice** that she respected my response. She said she followed Jesus and even included in her note a quote of the golden rules given in Mark 12:30-31. She said according to **her** interpretation, the Golden Rules meant we should be "inclusive" and not waste time **judging** others.

With that introduction, you may guess where we're headed with our "difficult sayings of Jesus" topic for today. We will start with the Golden Rule just cited and save the topic of judging others for another time. Hang on to your hat. There's never a dull moment with Jesus' teachings. Let's get started.

We'll begin by looking at that Mark 12 passage but back up to get some context.

Mark 12

[12] And they [the religious leaders] sought to lay hold on him [Jesus], but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable [of the vineyard] against them: and they left him, and went their way.

*[13] And they sen[t] []to him certain [] Pharisees and [] Herodians, to **catch him** in his words.*

They first asked Him about paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus nailed that one.

Then they asked Him about the wife of multiple husbands in the resurrection. He nailed that one too. Will the third one be the charm?

[28] And one of the scribes came, and ..., 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.

He quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

*[31] And the second is like, namely this, **Thou shalt love** thy neighbour as thyself.*

He took that from Leviticus 19:18.

There is no[] other commandment greater than these.

*[32] And the scribe said unto him,
Well, Master, thou hast said the truth:
for there is one God;
and there is none other but he:*

He then repeated the Golden Rules

*[33] ... [these commandments are] more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
[34] And when Jesus saw that he answered [wisely], he said unto him,
Thou art **not far** from the kingdom of God.
And **no** man after that [] ask[ed] him any question.*

Strike three. Jesus' opponents could not trap Him. Notice that Jesus answered this third question directly from the Torah – the Old Testament law. Notice too the phrase “not far.” One of our keys to understanding Jesus' teaching is to carefully consider His words. We'll return to that in a moment.

Staying on this topic of the Golden Rule which is really two rules:

1. Love God
2. Love your neighbor

Matthew 22 cites the same incident. We will just drop down to Jesus conclusion.
Matthew 22

*[40] On these **two** commandments **hang all the law and the prophets.***

Note Jesus said these rules encompass the **law**. In an earlier face-off with a lawyer, recorded in Luke 10:25-28, Jesus has the lawyer tell Him the answer. When he finished, Jesus said:

*[28]... Thou hast answered right: **this do**, and thou shalt live.*

Remember where He said in Mark “thou art **not far** from the kingdom of God”? Then in Luke He says “**this do**, and thou shalt live” Or we could paraphrase it this way “**if** you do this, you shall live.” There's that conditional statement again. When we see Jesus use it, an **alarm** should go off in our brains.

What we have here is the “law in a nutshell.” In effect, that's what Jesus called these two rules.

We've all seen the sign “Wet paint. Do not touch.”

What's the first thing you want to do when you read it? – touch it, of course. That's human nature. The **forbidden fruit** is what got man in trouble in the first place.

Does it sound a bit strange to be **commanded** to love?
Knowing human nature, how do you think that will work out?
Well, the Bible tells us:

Romans 3

*[19] Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world** may become **guilty** before God.*

*[20] Therefore **by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified** in his sight:*

*for by the law is **the knowledge of sin.***

Even the lady with the Girl Scout daughter, despite her good intentions to be a “follower of Jesus,” cannot measure up to the standard of the law. Neither can I, and neither can anyone else. While the Golden Rules provide a nice summary of the moral law, they also demonstrate that we cannot achieve that standard. Therefore, no one can be saved by the law. That’s what Jesus meant when He said:

*thou art **not far** from the kingdom of God
and
this do, and thou shalt live*

A miss is as good as a mile. As James said, if you offend in **one point**, you are **guilty** of breaking the law.

Secondly, those who trust in the only One who **did** live up to that standard **shall** receive eternal life. Christians can chose to try to follow these commands in an effort to please their heavenly father, but this too is futile.

So here we have **another point** where most Christian religions (and psuedo-Christian cults) miss the boat. They seek to inject the law into our daily living. Some sects are very legalistic. Others, including baptists and even so-called fundamentalists, are much more subtle, but because they do not take care to understand what Jesus teaches, they end up going down that **dark** dead-end road of **legalism** in a **futile** attempt to **try** to please God.

Okay then you say, if we’re **not** supposed to follow the law aren’t the Girl Scouts doing the right thing by ignoring its mandates regarding gender purity? Let’s look at that.

In

Matthew 5, Jesus said:

*[16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

So far, so good.

*[17] Think **not** that I am come to **destroy the law**, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but*

to fulfil.

*[18] For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, **one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law**, till all be fulfilled.*

*[19] Whosoever therefore shall break one of **these least commandments**, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the **least** in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall **do and teach** them, the same shall be called **great** in the kingdom of heaven.*

The Golden Rules represent the two **great** commandments of the law. Still, Jesus here told His disciples and others that gathered around Him that even the **least** of the commandments are still in force. The **whole moral law** is still in operation. It explains **right** and **wrong**. It defines **sin**. And it **condemns** unredeemed man. That has not changed and cannot change until *till heaven and earth pass away*. God is **Holy**. He expects Christians to walk in a manner worthy of our high calling.

The Bible says in Leviticus 11:44 “...*be holy, for I am holy.*” That’s quoted in:

I Peter 1

[15] But as he which hath called you is holy, so [you] be [] holy in all [that you do];

[16] Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

We are not to defile ourselves with the sinful philosophy and practices of our modern culture. So if we are **not** supposed to **try** to follow the law, but we **are** supposed to live righteous lives, how can we do it? We’ll wrap things up for today with a two-part answer to that critical question.

Application

Be aware that **in** our current dispensation, believers possess a power that was not available to believers in the Dispensation of Law. They were stuck with confession of sin and sacrifices for sin. For Christians today, life is (or at least should be) much different. Jesus Christ dealt with sin once and for all. Sin need no longer be our focus.

So how exactly do we accomplish living the Christian life? We have a two-part answer. The first is the *motivation*.

II Corinthians 5

[14] For the love of Christ constraineth us;

There’s the motivation. Christ loved us. Notice all of the life and death in this next passage:

*because we thus judge, that if one **died** for all, then were all **dead**:*

*[15] And that he **died** for all, that they which **live** should not henceforth **live** unto themselves, but unto **him** which **died** for them, and **rose** again.*

Do you see the difference? Rather than to love the Lord and others in response to a command:

Thou shalt love.

We are **motivated** to love Him because He first loved us (Romans 5:8). He **died** for us.

The **love** of **Christ constrains** us.

But where do we get the **power** to live lives pleasing to Him? That was the question the Apostle Paul asked. Here's his answer:

Romans 7

[22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

*[23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of **sin** which is in my members.*

[24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Romans 8

[1] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, ...

That's who. He is our Deliverer.

*[2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me **free** from the law of sin and death.*

*[4] That the **righteousness** of the law might be fulfilled in us, who **walk not after the flesh**, but after the Spirit.*

That's how we do it, and that's the source of power.

Galatians 5

*[18] ...if ye be **led of the Spirit**, ye are **not under the law**.*

Do you see what He's saying here? Imagine walking hand-in-hand with Jesus. Could He possibly lead you to sin? Of course not. We have no need the for law to be our guide.

*[22] But the fruit of the Spirit **is love**, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

*[23] Meekness, temperance: against such **there is no law**.*

This word *fruit* is singular. All of these attributes, with love leading the list, are given to us in one package. In I Corinthians 12:31, Paul calls this Spirit-enabled love (described in chapter 13 the love chapter) the "more excellent way." And taking this full circle, Paul says in Romans 13:8-10 that love **is** the fulfilling of the law as he quotes (you guessed it) the Golden Rule. Right living is an outflowing **not** of legalism but of a Spirit-directed life.

While Girl Scout cookies may be sweet to the taste, The fruit of the Spirit is far sweeter. May each of us each day be motivated by Christ's **love** and empowered by the Holy Spirit within us to live a **victorious** life that is **pleasing** to God.

Benediction

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

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