

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz Production
Week 40
Galatians

Have you ever had those moments when you're reading the scriptures and one verse just jumps off the page, almost like heaven highlighted that verse for you to see. That happened to me this week. It seemed like I couldn't focus on anything else in Galatians and it caused me to ponder this small yet powerful verse all week. It is in Galatians 5 verse 14:

“14 For all the **law** is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself.” (Galatians 5:14)

Yes, it is short, but wow. What a message. What is also interesting is that it kinda seems out of place in Paul's writings. What I mean by that is that it doesn't really fit the narrative of his writings in that chapter. But, the message is clear as day. “All the law is fulfilled in one word; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

So what does it mean? Well, to answer this question perhaps we could turn to the Master himself to see what He taught about this very principle.

In Luke 10 we are getting close to the final week of the Saviors earthly ministry. He will begin His journey to Jerusalem where He will atone for the sins of the entire world. In verse 25 it says: “25 ¶ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit **eternal life**?” (Luke 10:25)

Now, this is not a Lawyer like we would think of a lawyer today. He wasn't a prosecutor or an attorney. He was an expert in the Mosaic law. Some believe that he was a priest in the temple. The narrative hints to this fact with how Jesus responds to him.

And, he tempts the Master with this question: What shall I do that I may have eternal life? It's a great question, I'm sure maybe that you and I have considered it a time or two. But, here is the flaw in the question: There is nothing we can DO to INHERIT eternal life. Eternal life is not inherited, yes the Jewish people were God's chosen people but just because they were Jewish didn't mean that they were automatically admitted into God's Kingdom simply because of their inheritance. And, the second problem is that eternal life is not granted based on what we “do”. It is because of what Jesus did that we are able to have eternal life. Not because of anything we do.

So, Jesus answers this man with a question: “What is written in the law?” He asks.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy **heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” (Luke 10:27)

And Jesus says: “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt **live**.” (Luke 10:28)

Now, wait one second. Why did Jesus answer this way? His question was about eternal life, and Jesus accepts his answer of action stating life is the reward, not necessarily. We will come back to this point in a bit.

The man then trying to justify himself asks: "Who is my neighbor?" Notice that he totally ignores the first part of that answer. What about loving God? Remember he was trying to justify himself. Jews, in that day believed that their neighbor was anyone that was Jewish. That's it. No one outside of their faith was even considered to be a child of God. They thought that God had created the gentile for "kindling for the fires of hell". They hated anyone that was a non-jew.

So in response Jesus gives this story. I use the word story deliberately. Because, seventeen times in the book of Luke he tells us something Jesus says and calls it a Parable. We sometimes call this the "parable" of the good Samaritan, but Luke doesn't. Luke nor Jesus never refers to this story as a parable. It is possible that this was an actual event that took place and not just a made up parable.

Now. I'm sure you are very familiar with this story of the Good Samaritan. So we won't read it word for word but I would like to highlight a few points.

Jesus begins: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho". This certain man was most likely a Jew. We know this because he was coming from Jerusalem to Jericho which was also a Jewish city at the time. And this man fell among thieves. They robbed him, beat him, took all of his clothes and left him for dead. And "by chance" (I love that phrase). By chance a certain priest was passing by and saw the man laying there beaten, naked, and bloody and he crossed over to the other side of the street and did not stop to help. Now, if we look a little closer, priests in that day had to remain ceremonially clean. Meaning that they were not allowed to touch anyone that was dead. It is possible that this priest thought that this man was dead and therefore would not be permitted to touch him at all. I'm not justifying his actions, but I am saying that there could have been a reason for his refusal to help. And it is not so different in our day. To make things simple, let's use the same example as a priest in our time. What if a 16 year old boy came across an injured, possibly dead person. We could justify the same thing. Well, this priest is the one that blesses the sacrament on Sundays. We wouldn't want him to touch that body because he is going to be also touching the sacred emblems of the sacrament this Sunday. See, it just goes to prove that we can justify anything that we want, but justification does not make it right.

As you know a Levite also passes by and refuses to help. A Levite was also a priestly type character. They would assist in the temple ceremonies. Jesus uses the two most spiritual examples that existed at that time to illustrate this point.

Then, He says: a Samaritan came by. You can just picture this lawyer shuttering inside. They hated the Samaritans. They considered them half breeds. Neither Jew nor Gentile. We don't have time to go into why at this point. But it is safe to say that the Jews loathed the Samaritans.

But, the Samaritan had compassion on this man and helped him, took care of him and took him someplace safe. Then Jesus asked this all important question:

“³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36)

And the lawyer answered: “Him that showed mercy”. Then Jesus said: “Go, and do likewise”.

Now what is interesting about this story is that most of us think that this is an illustration about random acts of kindness. When we see someone in need we need to be willing to jump in and help no matter who they are. And you would be correct. That is an important attribute to a Christian. However, If that is all that we focus on we are missing the most important point that Jesus is trying to make. Remember, the question was about eternal life. How do we obtain eternal life? And, the answer is not to help random strangers in need. This story was used to show this man that everyone is our neighbor, even those that we hate. The Lawyer is asking how to obtain eternal life and Jesus gives an example of someone who is being neighborly. Someone who looks past race, religion, gender, opinion and loves as Jesus would love. There was nothing in it for the Samaritan to help this guy. No recognition or fame, no wealth or prestige. He still, to this day remains nameless in the scriptures. Yet, he is who the Savior uses to symbolize the one that has or is the character of one who has eternal life.

From Exodus to Jesus we were told that the highest level of love that one could experience was love of one’s self. “Love your neighbor as yourself” was the law. It is what all the prophets preached up until that time. Because to love one’s self was to love deeply. Think about how merciful we are to ourselves. We are very quick to forgive or might I suggest, to justify our actions when we make a mistake. But Jesus gave us more than just love others as yourself. Jesus said:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; as I have loved you,”(John 13:34)

Now, that takes it to a whole other level. That is so much more than the love of others as ourselves. This is multiplying what was already very hard to begin with law, to a level most can not even comprehend. What does this even look like?

Well, I'm glad you asked. There is an example of this in the scriptures. Also, from none-other than the Master teacher, our Lord and Savior.

Just before Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, betrayal, trial and crucifixion, He is in the upper room with His disciples. He instituted the sacrament with his disciples, gave them His last mortal instructions, and a lot of other things. This was Jesus’s last moments with these twelve that he had spent the last three years with. He was about to leave, to die and He knew it. They should have known it as well, because He told them a few times that this was going to happen. He also knew that Judas was going to betray Him that night. He even told everyone in that room

that one of them would betray Him before the night was over. So what does He do? The last supper in concluded and the record says:

“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.” (John 13:4-9)

I love Peter's reaction. Lord, I won't let you wash my feet. Then Jesus says if you don't let me do this then you will have no part with me. Then Peter changes his tune. In that case wash my feet and my hands and my head. But the interesting part of this story is that Jesus washed ALL the disciples' feet. Including Judas Iscariot's feet. The very man that He knew was going to sell him out for a few coins, give Him up and ultimately lead Him to His death. The guy that all of us love to hate. He washed his feet. A sign of selfless, unadulterated, pure love. That is one hundred times the value of loving someone as yourself. This is loving someone that you know is going to do something awful to you and still showing greater love for that person then you are able to love yourself.

Now, can you see why Paul told the Galatians “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Galatians 5:14)

Or as Jesus puts it: “That ye love one another; as I have loved you,”(John 13:34)

The big question is: Can we? Can we actually love someone as deeply as purely as Jesus loved? And the answer is “no”... At least not by ourselves. We are able to love as Jesus did only with the divine help of Jesus. But, before we can love as He did, we must first love Him, Jesus as He first loved us. Then, through His mercy and grace we are able to love others as He loves them. The story of the Samaritan teaches us that good works do not get us to heaven but that helping others/ loving others, are the marks of them that are learning to be heavenly, learning to love as Jesus did.

So to start, if we are to do as Jesus asked and love one another, let us start by first loving Jesus with all our hearts, might, and soul. For that is the first and greatest commandment. Then after we have begun to love Jesus as he wants us to love Him, then we in turn will help others

because Jesus loves them. And as we help we will feel His love not only for them but for us as well. I pray that we may be able to feel that love.

In the sacred name of Him who is love. Even Jesus Christ, Amen.