

The Patio Pulpit for Wednesday, July 1, 2020

A Series **About** the Ten Commandments, aka, the law of Moses

How well would you say you know yourself? Very well? Not so well? Well enough for you? Who cares? Of course, that would involve several things like, how you're feeling about yourself right now after hearing my question. We tend to answer in the affirmative if we don't have time to really think about it. "Yeah, I think I know myself pretty well." And you just might be right.

Your opinion of how well you know yourself, if answered as objectively as possible, will involve rehashing your history, how you have lived in the past and responded to your life-situations, good and bad, say like, someone cutting you off in traffic, how did you handle that? Or, like mine and Beverly's situation right now with neighbors shooting off fireworks at midnight when there is no holiday. How are we handling that? Has anything I've thought about surprised me like "I can't believe I thought that?"

If you know yourself relatively well, you might run a few questions through your mind like, "how do you react to temptations to cheat on a test or your income tax forms? How about the desire to view pornography or gossip or lie to get ahead or impress people with your accomplishments? Are you a patient person or one who finds it difficult to put up with people who aren't moving as fast as you want them to? What would you do if someone slapped you in the face because you're a Christian? All that can tell you how well you know yourself, or not.⁹ *"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9 NAU).* God can...and only God. Freud and Jung and Rogers and other famous psychiatrists may have thought they had humanity figure out, but they didn't.

The ten commandments were given because human beings, God's most precious creation, were blind to their egregious sinfulness that stuck out like a sore thumb. They probably thought they knew themselves as well as anyone, but they didn't. The Jews were no different than the rest of fallen humanity except for the fact that God chose them beginning with Abraham to be His peculiar people, His

treasure. They were just as dead in their trespasses and sins as anyone and needed the law to expose their wickedness.

All of Earth's inhabitants were going about life doing whatever struck their fancy which was only evil without knowing they were evil. Someone needed to tell them and there was only One who could and that was the Holy One Himself.

As evil and wicked and violent as men had become in Noah's day, they never gave their behavior a second thought. Gen. 6:5, ⁵ *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Gen. 6:5 NAU)*

Man needed a wake-up call as soon as he rebelled against God in the garden and he got it beginning with his expulsion from paradise and then the flood and then slavery in Egypt and then the law. But since man was evil and wicked and dead in their trespasses and sins, they were clueless to their problem. And quite frankly, they didn't give a hoot about God's laws and what God wanted. They wanted what they wanted and they wanted it immediately. Witnessing God descend onto Mt. Sinai in dark clouds and lighting and earthquakes and a loud trumpet sound may have made them shake in their boots at the time but it only impacted them for a few days. Remember, they demanded that Aaron build them an idol to worship while God was giving Moses the ten commandments right over their heads. Go figure.

Nothing God had done had made any difference in man's nature. That's why God said what He said about man's heart 800 years later through the prophet Jeremiah. Man's nature hadn't changed after 800 years and it still hasn't changed after 6,000 plus years.

And that's the problem we still have today in the 21st century. Man must be changed on the inside, not the outside. That's why man's intentions are still set on doing evil and violence. And they're doing it, aren't they?

The riots and rage and violence we're witnessing even as we speak, and the stupidity, can be turned for making changes that our

nation should have made long, long ago. However, as long as the Lord Jesus is left out of the solution, nothing's going to change. Solutions without Christ are nothing but social temporal changes. Humanity needs eternal answers and they're only found by the grace of God drawing the ungodly to faith in Jesus. Simplistic? Certainly. But also the truth.

God's law didn't change anyone and neither do the laws of our country. Do Americans ever steal the property of others? Do they ever commit adultery and murder and fraud? Do they ever riot in our streets and destroy national treasures? Why? We have laws against all that stuff. Why do we still do those evil things since we have laws against them? Because laws are not and were not designed to change man's fallen nature.

It's hokey and I never liked the Baptist campaign from the early '80's when "Jesus is the answer" bumper stickers and billboards became so popular, **but Jesus is the answer.**

Human nature and behavior can be modified by mental health professionals and medications, remember back in the '80's when "behavior modification" was the latest fad among psychologists and psychiatrists? Behavior modification was applied to dogs and children alike. But that part of man that is fallen is never truly changed. And even when one is brought to saving faith and repentance by the Spirit and the gospel, the residuals of the lost life are still there. Paul called it the "old man" and the "flesh" and the "outward man" and "the body of this death."

"Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." Another bumper sticker from way back.

"Meanwhile, back at the ranch."

Before the Hebrews had witnessed the ten plagues, they had never personally seen God display His power. They had only heard of the great flood of Noah's day and they had heard of His destroying Sodom and Gomorrah but that was about it. And as a footnote, they weren't impressed enough by what they had heard to trust Him. And after Israel was pulled out of slavery in Egypt and while they were on their way to

the Red Sea, the demonstration of God's power was almost warm and fuzzy compared to the ten plagues. God created a pillar of cloud to go before them during the day and a pillar of fire for the night. And yet it wasn't enough to motivate them to trust God. The flood, rain of fire falling on the cities, ten plagues and two pillars. What's it goinna take to convince the Jews to trust God? Parting the Red Sea? Clearly not signs and wonders.

Do you remember what Jesus said about people who are continually running around looking for signs and wonders instead of trusting God? ³⁹ *But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves (or "seeks") for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (Matt. 12:39 NAU)*

The Greek verb translated "seeks" in most translations, is a compound verb with a preposition attached to its beginning making it mean that these people live to see signs and wonders. They aren't merely curious they are obsessed with sign and wonders seeking. They go from meeting to meeting wanting to see the preacher or evangelist do some kind of amazing, mind-blowing signs and wonders and miracles. These deceived dupes aren't content with the written word of God, they demand more. And that explains why the fake healers fill stadiums every time they roll into some town or city. Beloved, we're living in the midst of an evil generation. **Mark 8:38** *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."* (Mk. 8:38 NAU)

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Faith in Jesus is what saves and changes the inner man, not signs and wonders.

I'll close with this. **Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel, not by seeing and not by the law.**

Second, God has changed our inner man, not our outward man, and has left us like this intentionally, that He might rightfully receive the glory for our salvation.

Third, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.”