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“Elementary My Dear Christian”

Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:32-40

One of the best-known fictional characters of all time is Sherlock Holmes. The detective in 1890’s London solved difficult cases through his intelligence and powers of observation. His most famous line – “Elementary my dear Watson” – was uttered as Holmes would make an observation or conclusion that was important to their case. (Though this line was never actually spoken in the Arthur Conon Doyle stories).

There is a real-life Watson from history who was a wonderful pastor and pointed believers to what was “elementary” – to what was truly important and foundational to the Christian life. His name was Thomas Watson. As he taught about what it means to genuinely love God, we can almost hear him say that a believer’s love for God is “Elementary, my dear Christian”.

Thomas Watson was an Anglican (Church of England) pastor who lived in Great Britain from 1620 – 1686. He was among a group of pastors and preachers who came to be known as “puritans”. They were pastors in the Anglican Church who wanted to “purify” the church from beliefs and practices they believed to be unbiblical. Many of them came to be known as “nonconformists”, failing to conform to the official standards and guidelines of the Anglican Church. Watson, along with many others was eventually removed from his church. Watson continued to minister and preach privately at every opportunity.

Thomas Watson wrote many helpful books and we have chronicled many of his sermons. Even though written in the 1600s they are very helpful and encouraging for us today. One of Watson’s best-known works was *The Ten Commandments*. He went through each of the commandments one by one but before he did, he taught about the necessity and importance of a believer’s obedience and their love for God. He shared that well known Old Testament passage:

4 “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Then he wrote:

“The summary of the Ten Commandments is love. The duty called for is love, yes, the strength of love, “with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.” God will lose none of our love. Love is the soul of religion, and that which constitutes a real Christian. Love is the queen of graces; it shines and sparkles in God’s eye, as the precious stones on the breastplate of Aaron.”

Of course, we know Jesus focused on this important truth:

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matt. 22:32-40

As we would study the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:4-21) we see they are focused on our love for God and for others. The first four regard our love for God, while the last six emphasize our love for others.

Many present Jesus’ teaching here while ignoring the rest of Jesus’ teaching as well as the rest of the Bible. They say THIS is the central message and tenant of Christianity – THIS is what Christianity is all about. They teach being a Christian means you strive to do your best to love God and love others. Thomas Watson clearly showed us this is not the case. He wrote of our inability to keep the law. We have never fully loved God with all our heart, soul, and might. We have never completely loved others as we love ourselves.

Watson goes on to warn us of the righteous wrath of God under which we fall because we have broken God’s law. He then clearly lays out the truth of the gospel – that Jesus took that wrath upon Himself as He suffered and died in our place. He rose again and now when we respond in repentance and faith our sins are forgiven, we are made right with our Holy God! Our only response to such amazing grace is love for Him. It is certainly

fitting that Watson focused on the love of God before he delved into the details of each of the commandments.

Thomas Watson describes for us some of the visible signs of our genuine love for God.

Visible Signs of Our True Love for God

Our Desire Will Be after Him.

People who are in love desire to spend time with each other. If we truly love God, we will desire to spend time with Him. The Psalmist wrote ***“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”*** (Ps. 42:1-2). Watson wrote that it is in the “ordinances” – the Lord’s Supper or communion – that we most closely experience the presence of God in this life. It is certainly true that it is in hearing the Word of God and fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in our local church that we have *“God’s smiles, whispers, and some foretastes of Heaven”*. If we love God, we will love His church!

We Will not Find Contentment in Anything without Him.

We might gain material possessions and find success in our jobs but if we truly love God we will not be content without Him. Conversely, we may suffer trials and loss but if we love Him we will be content even in the midst of difficult times.

We Hate What Will Separate between Us and God – SIN!

Sin separates us from God and damages our fellowship with Him, so we will hate it if we genuinely love Him. ***“I hate every false way”*** (Psalm 119:128). Watson writes, *“One cannot love health – but he must hate poison; so we cannot love God – but we must hate sin, which would harm our fellowship with Him”*.

We Will Be Grieved by That Which Grieves God.

If we truly love God, we will be grieved by the things which grieve God. We are distressed when we see God’s name blasphemed and dishonored. We lament when we see God’s law ignored and broken. We mourn when we hear of fellow believers around the world suffering or dying for their faith. One who greatly loved God and His word wrote ***“My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law”*** (Ps. 119:136).

We Labor to Show Him Lovely to Others.

We get excited and talk a lot about the people, things, or activities we love. When we truly love God, we will want to share Him with others. *“...We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* (Acts 4:20). *“If we love God, we speak His praises that we may allure and draw others to be in love with Him”*.

We Weep for His Absence.

When we genuinely love God, we will miss His presence when we begin to neglect our time with Him or sin and interrupt our fellowship with Him. We long for coming

day when we will be in His presence and see our Savior face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

We Are Willing to Do and Suffer for Him.

Perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations of our genuine love for Christ is when we are willing to suffer for Him. Love ***“endures all things”*** (1 Cor. 13:7). *“Love made Christ suffer for us – and love will make us suffer for Him. Every Christian is not a martyr but has a frame of mind to suffer if God should call us to it.”*

How Do We Grow in Love for God?

After describing the outward signs of our love for God, Watson shares how we might grow in our love for Him. What encouraged me most out of Watson’s writings here is the thought,

“The antecedent of love is knowledge. The Spirit shines upon the understanding, and reveals the beauties of wisdom, holiness, and mercy in God; and these are the loadstone to entice and draw out love to God. Those who do not know God, cannot love him”.

So, our focus must be on knowing God better!

Wait on the preaching of the Word – It is through the Word of God that we know more about God and all He has done for us through Christ.

Beg God for a heart to love Him more – We pray that God will increase our love for Him. We pray for the Holy Spirit to help us better understand and grasp who God is and all He has done for us. God’s holiness. Our sinfulness. All Christ did in becoming a man so that He could suffer, die, and rise again for us. All that we are and have in Christ when we repent and trust in Him. As we grow in our understanding of these things we will certainly grow in our love for God!

Keep our love of God flaming on the altar of our hearts – We do all we can to keep our love for God burning brightly. *“As we would be careful to preserve the natural heat in our body, let us be careful to preserve the heat of love for God in our hearts”*.

Let us take to heart Jesus’ reproach of the church at Ephesus – ***“...You have left your first love”*** (Rev. 2:4) – as we carefully consider Thomas Watson’s exhortations of that which is *“Elementary, my dear Christian”* and commit ourselves fully to growing in our love for Christ.

Resource:

http://gracegems.org/Watson/ten_commandments.htm

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, September 27

12:00 McManus Conference Room

(M252 Located near House Minority Offices)