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Great Words of the Faith Love the Lord...Do Not Love the World... Matthew 22:35-40; 1 John 2:15

As bills move through the legislature, each one will be summarized to help lawmakers, lobbyists, and citizens understand the contents and implications of the legislation. As a bill comes to the floor a brief summary is shown on the boards in the chamber. Leadership and sponsors of the bill will summarize it for members and attendees in the galleries. Lobbyists may summarize the bill for both legislators and constituents. Summaries might be given to the press to help gain either support or opposition from the public.

Once a man asked Jesus for a summary of true religion. Jesus replied to him with some the greatest words of the Christian faith, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind", and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". We certainly want to consider what it means to love God and love our neighbor. More importantly we want to know how we can grow to love God as we

One day a man asked Jesus for a summary of true religion:

"...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." Matthew 22:35-40

Jesus is actually quoting from the Old Testament:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Many take Jesus' words here to be the summary of the entire Christian faith. They say THIS is the central message and tenant of Christianity – Striving to love God and love others is what Christianity is all about. We should take note though that this is Jesus' summary of ***the law***. When we consider all Jesus' teaching as well as the rest of the teaching of the Bible, we come to understand that none of us love God or love our neighbor as we should. The summary of the Christian faith is that every one of us sin by not loving God or loving others as God's law demands. As a result, we are guilty before our Holy God and deserve His just punishment. Jesus came and ***did*** love God and love others perfectly. He suffered and died, taking the punishment for our sin. He rose again, and, when we repent and put our faith in Him, our sins are forgiven and His perfect love for God and for others is credited to us.

In a previous study we considered what it means to love God with all our heart and how we demonstrate it in our lives.¹ We look to a Scottish pastor to help us understand how we can grow in our love for God.

Thomas Chalmers was a teacher, scholar, mathematician, pastor, and church leader in Scotland who lived from 1780-1847. While he accomplished many things in his life and ministry, he is most remembered for his sermon, "*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*".² There he focused on another well-known passage regarding our love for God:

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15

In his message, Chalmers considered how we rid ourselves from, or "expel", our love for the world. His main idea is that we cannot get rid of a love for the world and worldly things simply by pointing out their worthlessness, harmful effects, or even the eternal consequences. Love for the world will only be expelled by a new affection – a new love for Christ and the gospel. Our hearts will always hold a love and affection for something. It is the way we are made. We cannot simply get rid of our love for worldly things without replacing it with a love for something else. This explains why it can be so difficult to get rid of sinful actions and habits. We may resolve to never do those things again, but not deal with the affections of our heart. Chalmers' message is important as we consider how to rid ourselves of our love for the world and grow in our love for the Father. It is also important as we consider how we might share the gospel with those who do not know Christ and are wholly given to their love for the world. Here are some

of the truths we learn from this passage and from Chalmers' message:

We will be unsuccessful in getting rid of love for the world simply by reviewing the ills of the world. Misplaced affections must be replaced by the far greater power of love for the gospel –

There are two ways we might seek to expel a love for the world both from ourselves and from others. We can try to demonstrate the world's emptiness, vileness, and foolishness, prevailing upon ourselves and others to turn our hearts from such worthless things. Or, we can set a new object of affection before the heart – Christ and the gospel – and so trade the old affection for a new one. The second option is the only one that will truly work.

A new affection is more successful in replacing an old affection than simply trying to get rid of it without replacing it with something better –

A love for the Father, Christ, and the gospel will do what no explanation of the worthlessness or foolishness of the world will ever accomplish. We should seek to engage our own hearts, and the hearts of others, with an object or desire powerful enough to replace worldly things. It is when we remember our own sinfulness and our lost and hopeless condition without Christ that we become overwhelmed by the wonderful story of all that the Father has done for us through Christ on the cross.

It is not enough to understand the worthlessness of the world; we must value the worth of the things of God –

The way to disengage the heart from the things of the world is not simply to expose its worthlessness, but to share the beauty, worth, and excellence of the new affection – of Christ and all He has done. If we are not careful, we may be tempted to replace a true love and affection for the Father with other things. Church attendance, Christian service, and other activities are no substitute for love for the Father. The keeping of rules and standards cannot replace affection for Christ. Even the study of the Bible and theology cannot be exchanged for our adoration of the gospel.

Love for the world and love for the Father are Irreconcilable –

The love of the world and the love of the Father cannot dwell together in the same heart. The love of the world can be driven out only by the love of the Father.

It is Far Easier to Point out the Faults of the World, than it is to Offer the Gospel –

This is a vital truth to remember as we seek to deal with the sinful, worldly culture in which we live. It is easy for us to rant and rave about all the evils we see around us, but are we offering the glorious, beautiful message of hope found in the gospel? What is the message the world is hearing from believers? Is it simply a moralistic message of how evil and wicked the world is? Or is it the message of salvation in Christ.

What This Means for Us

This passage and Chalmers' message have two important implications for us. First is for our own sanctification – our growth in our love for the Father. We cannot simply grit our teeth and strive to get rid of our love for the world and the worldly thoughts and actions that beset us. We must replace those things first with love for the Father and then with godly thoughts and actions. This is the principle of “put off / put on” Paul shares in several places and we see clearly in Ephesians:

20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Ephesians 4:20-24

We ask ourselves how we might grow in our love for the Father. The writer of Hebrew exhorts us to “**lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us**”. We do so by “**fixing our eyes on Jesus**” and “**considering Him**” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The second application is how we go about interacting and sharing the gospel message with a lost world. We cannot merely speak and argue against all the wickedness and evil we see. We must make sure we are presenting the message of hope and forgiveness found in the gospel as well.

The chorus of one of our best-known hymns expresses the truth of this passage and Chalmers' message well:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace*

When we turn our eye on Jesus, our love for Him grows stronger. Then our love for the world grows dim. This is indeed the expulsive power of our growing love for Christ!

¹You can find this study from September 27, 2018 at <https://www.capitolcom.org/west-virginia/studies/>

²You can find a transcript of Chalmers' sermon at <https://www.monergism.com/expulsive-power-new-affection>

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

12:00 PM McManus Conference Room (M252 by House Min Ofc)