

GODLINESS



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The first five steps: Faith, Goodness, Knowledge, Self-control and Perseverance, have to do with cleaning up our personal life. Preparing our body temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Once we let the Holy Spirit take up residence in the body-temple, we are ready to let the Light of Jesus shine to those around us. The last three steps have to do with our obligations to our families, communities and neighbors.

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus, ‘Teacher’, he asked, ‘What must I **do** to inherit eternal life?’ ‘What is written in the law?’ He replied, ‘How do you read it?’”
Luke 10:25, 26.

Here again, Jesus referred the expert back to the law – Old Testament – for his salvation. Jesus never came to do away with the Old Testament, only to teach it in truth and to clear away the rubble the Jewish “experts” of the law had dumped on it. Also, understand - never did Jesus teach “grace” for eternal life; always the keeping of the law. In fact, you will never find the phrase, “Saved by Grace” anywhere in the Bible.

The expert wanted to sound like an “expert”. To show how knowledgeable he was, he quoted two very small, obscure passages hoping to throw Jesus off. He chose Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” But Jesus threw it right back at him, “You have answered correctly.” “**Do this** and you will live.”

This put the “expert” in a very awkward position. He had hoped to make Jesus look like a fool. But in return, he made himself look like a fool and a sinner. You see, the Jews taught that their neighbor was only another Jew. Samaritans and Gentiles were

not considered worthy of God's notice, nor of the notice, respect and love of a Jew. (I have had church people tell me the same thing about inmates. They are not worthy of their notice. How sad. Jesus notices inmates and loves them.)

Not wanting to give up the fight, he thought he would justify himself by asking Jesus who his neighbor was. He knew the answer already, according to Jewish law, and felt very smug and proud with himself.

In answer to this, Jesus simply told a story. In Luke 10:30-36 we read where a Jew fell among thieves and was stripped, wounded and left for dead. A priest came and didn't even want to see his duty. He was too busy "working for the church". So he passed by on the other side. Next, a Levite came by. He at least had enough curiosity to look. But he was on "church business also" and did not want to keep church work waiting either, so he kept on going.

Finally a Samaritan came by on one of his business trips. He was in a hurry to get to a business meeting but noticed a man in need. He stopped and helped the man. Dressing his wounds and putting him on his donkey he took him to an inn. There he watched over him through the night, and in the morning paid the innkeeper to continue the care. Then he added, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."



Jesus looked directly at the "expert" and asked, "Which of these three **do you** think was a neighbor to the one who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law could not even bring upon his lips the word "Samaritan". Therefore he answered, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus said, "Go and **do** likewise."

Christianity is pure and simple, just helping all who are around us. Recognizing that all: black, white, brown, red or yellow; all denominations and religions or beliefs; all sizes or sexual orientations are our neighbors. We are under the command of Jesus to **do** good to all.

I know of men in prison who have never had a visit from a family member. Brothers or sisters would not even send a few dollars to help them in their time of need. They never had the time to visit to bring words of comfort or cheer.

Looking at the “Christian” church today, one wonders what Jesus would say if He were here, in person, as He was two thousand years ago. I suppose He would say much the same things. “Everything they do is done for men to see:... They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues (churches); they love to be greeted in the market places and to have men call them ‘Rabbi’ (priest, minister, pastor, teacher, pope, etc.)”. Matthew 23:5-7.

Look at the multitude of TV ministries. How they love the praise of men. Look at the money spent on lavish display. Look at the expensive churches such as the Crystal Cathedral. Does that represent the meek and lowly Jesus? The humble and poor Jesus who went around doing good but never had a home of His own or a donkey (car) to call His own. “In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” Matthew 23:28.

“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to My people their rebellion... For day after day they seek Me out; they **seem eager** to know My ways, as if they were a nation (church) that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask Me for just decisions and **seem eager** for God to come near them... Yet on the day of your fasting (Church going), you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:... Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and

blood?... If you do away with the ... pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” Isaiah 58:1-10.

That is godliness. **Doing** as God does. Reaching out to your neighbor and helping those who are in need. What have you done in the last seven days to help your neighbor or a stranger in need?

Related Texts

Genesis 14:11-24

Genesis 18:23-32

Exodus 35:20-29

Joshua 2:1-24

Ruth 1:16-18; 2:11,12

1 Samuel 25:18-44

2 Samuel 17:27-29

1 Kings 17:7-24

2 Kings 4:8-17

2 Kings 11:1-3

Esther 2:5-7

Esther 2:19-23

Jeremiah 38:7-13

Matthew 2:10-12

Matthew 10:42

John 19:26, 27

Acts 28:1-10

3 John 1:11