

## The Heart of Jesus' Message

Welcome, friends, and may the Peace of God be with you. I'm hoping you are here because you Love God, and are interested in keeping yourselves and your lives nourished with the Word. Because God Loves us so much as our Father, it was by His parental Love that He sent us His Son, Jesus Christ, to bring us the Truth, so that It may guide us, protect us, and care for us, in order to bring us God's Best in this life and Eternally for those who embrace Him.

It is therefore by knowing what Jesus taught that we can have God's Word – His Love and Truth. There can be no replacement for the continual nourishing of oneself by reading Jesus' teachings in the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament of the Bible. This document is meant simply to serve as a light that shines on that path to one's Salvation with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

From the Four Gospels mentioned, Jesus' main message, boiled down to its essence, is for a person to:

- (1) Repent - to God and those they've sinned against. A person can never have their peace with God unless they repent for their sins.
- (2) Forgive others - through God to those who have sinned against them. A person can never be unburdened inside unless they forgive others their sins. A person will also not be forgiven by God for their own sins unless they forgive others their sins.
- (3) Obey the Commandments – the Two Most Important Commandments, by which we should also be keeping both the Letter and Heart of God's Ten Commandments. The Commandments serve not only as a measure of our sincerity to God, but as Loving Protections for our life !

With Jesus' Sacrifice by Love complete, it is now only *our* willingness to do what Jesus teaches that determines our fate, for it is only by so doing that we are able to receive the Eternal Salvation put in place for us. But more than willingness, it must be a sincere *desire* to do these things with a True heart on a continually-abiding basis because we Love God, and have Faith that He wants only His Best for us.

We might often hear the word “Faith”, but what *exactly* does it mean ? Faith in God means a person believes with all of their heart that *if they give up their pride and sin, and do the things Jesus tells them*, God won't let them down, but will do as He says in His Word, and Bless them with the Greatest Life as Jesus defines it, both in this age (of earthly life) and Eternally.

It's a sad thing so many people fear letting go for God, and so lack the True Faith that would save them. Many don't trust in the Good News of repentance, forgiveness, and obeying God's Commandments by Love, but they still like the idea of Heaven, so they summon a “wishful” faith that does nothing for them or God. For example, they cling to the words “...whoever believes in Him should not perish...”, hoping to twist the word “believes” to mean that a token acknowledgement of Jesus will get a person a one-way ticket to Eternal Life. But that would be to ignore everything else Jesus teaches. No, the word “believes” when used as such means the same thing as “has Faith”, the very Faith just defined above... Faith by application. As we all have thoughts, words, and behavior, Faith means Faith by all three !

So in summary, Faith, simply put, is trusting God... enough to live out in our life what Jesus teaches.

Without Faith in God, we try to rely on our “own way” which makes doing the things Jesus teaches impossible, because a person's human side is so variable in its reactions of emotions and pride. But with Faith in God, we have reliance on the solid Foundation of His Love and Truth, which helps us do things His Way, as Jesus shows us, bringing us the Best Blessings from Him, including Eternal Life.

Please pay careful attention that in addition to repentance and the forgiveness of others, obeying the Two Most Important Commandments and the Ten Commandments is critical for Valuing life as God does. Wanting only the Best for us, His Commandments provide Peace and Protection for our lives.

And note that all three – repentance, forgiveness, obedience – are meant to eradicate sin from a person's life. Sin is a life-destroyer, and is the *last* thing our Creator wishes for us, no different than any loving parent wishes for their child. It is for *good*, by God's Love for us, that He wants us to keep the Truth.

As Jesus says, this message is *good* news, meant to *save* a person's life, not destroy it ! It's meant to build a person into a Living being, and keep them from a dead life in this age and permanent death beyond. But, a relationship requires two individuals actively contributing... God cannot have a relationship with us by His own actions alone, so each person must do their part with Him as well.

With that in mind, let's discuss the Heart of Jesus' message.

### **Repentance**

If a person is *truly* repentant, they know and confess the Truth of their sin in front of God as *He* knows it, and are sorry to Him by sincere apology from their heart. They realize how much they have hurt themselves with their sin, and are very realistic with how much their sin has hurt others. They also understand clearly how much their sin has hurt God, because He Loves them, and the others, and is extremely saddened by the harm that comes to any of His children by it.

This is very much different than a person who attempts to see a rationalized view of their sin, such as “how they really didn't mean it” or “that they only did it because someone else did something to them”. Other peoples' sin cannot force *us* to sin. We might use their actions as a cheap excuse for our own sin, but our sin is still all our own, and we are responsible for it to God.

That said, a truly repentant person will also apologize, if possible, to those who they've sinned against. And in their humility in front of God, they will recognize that to continue willfully sinning in a way they've told Him they regret would be wrong, and would make them a hypocrite. They would no longer want to be an on-going hypocrite, but by Love would want to change to grow and achieve self-control and perseverance against sin by looking to God instead. They would not want to keep sin in their life by breaking the Commandments, knowing it is by them that God's Loving Protections are in place.

### **Forgiveness**

If a person is *truly* forgiving, they are no doubt aware, in front of God, that to be forgiven for their own sins, they must forgive others' sins against them. This does not offend them, because they know Jesus made that point redundantly clear out of Love for us, not to harm us. After all, it is only right that we give the same Mercy to others that we also receive from God.

Yes, a truly forgiving person will initially feel the hurt of another's sin against them, and possibly some toxic angst and tempting reaction within themselves because of it. For a few moments, they might feel the burden of holding a grudge with the grip of pride and fear, a burden of inner-stress and energy-depletion from a persistent underlying tug to be judge and jury in condemnation of the other sinner.

But in the light of their own sin, they do not want to use that as a cheap excuse for more sin-in-kind, knowing that would only make them a hypocrite. They understand that God will not accept the excuse that their sin is someone else's fault.

Thankfully, through God, once a person recognizes this dynamic within themselves regarding others' sins, they will just as importantly recognize that God Loves them and doesn't want them to destroy themselves by continuing to insist on handling or controlling the outcome, because they cannot, and it can only lead to harmful reactionary sin on their part. God simply wants them to hand the matter over to Him, because He is in charge and will handle it properly. Does He handle our own sin justly ?

Therefore, none of us need worry. No one gets away with anything in front of God.

### Forgiveness and Trust

We should be aware that forgiveness and trust are not the same thing. Forgiveness means we are no longer personally holding hatred toward that other individual... we have let the matter leave our hands and go to God's Hands instead, knowing He will handle it, just as He handles our sin.

Essentially, forgiveness helps the forgiver, by removing ill will from the heart. Removing the negativity from our heart in front of God allows us to heal and move forward in freedom. It also serves as a Light to others, and, of course, is necessary if we want to be forgiven ourselves.

Broken trust, on the other hand, is an earthly consequence of sin, and so even though we might forgive and not hate, we might choose not to trust the other person. Or, if we believe their repentance is True, and are seeing their repentance manifested in newly humble and abiding behavior, we might decide to trust them.

Trust is an individual thing. We should give as much trust to the other person as we would want for ourselves in the same situation.

### Forgiveness and Apology

Now, regarding the other person... perhaps they apologize to us for their sin, or maybe they don't. And whether a person apologizes to us or not, we still might not know the state of their repentance instantly, for True repentance is shown by a sincere *change of behavior* in a person over time, not just words. But the words of apology do show a good start, and are extremely helpful to the one who was wronged.

Regardless of apology, though, we are still to forgive someone who has sinned against us, for the very reasons above.

If a person does apologize for their sin, excellent.... we have the pleasure of forgiving them face-to-face.

If a person does not apologize, we still don't want to keep their sin inside us, and we still have the pleasure of forgiving, knowing that it brings us forgiveness, and freedom, as well.

God knows another person's heart as easily as He knows our own. God knows their sin as easily as He knows our own. It is actually a good feeling to drop any stone we might have thought about throwing... to not be a hypocrite... to do what is right as we would want done for us. In this realm, there is only one way to stay clean and free inside, and that is by handing others' sin over to God and letting Him handle the consequences. God is the measure of us, not anyone else.

### **Obeying The Commandments**

Now, if a person understands what True repentance and True forgiveness are, they should understand at this point why both are critical – and relieving, and beneficial - to one's own life, both in this age *and* for Eternal Life. It should be very clear to them why God and Jesus cherish such Righteousness.

If that person is True toward God, they would know the damage of sin, not only in their own life, but also in the lives of those they have sinned against. In that Light, they would have humility and sincerity with God, and never *want* to sin again, knowing how all sin destroys life and very much hurts God. By this, they would commit to taking personal responsibility to cease *their* part of the destruction of life, for His sake, as well as their own, and also for the sake of others. They would know the way to do that is by listening to God and Jesus, and adhering to the Father's Loving Protections – the Commandments.

Therefore, it is actually obedience to the Commandments that shows if a person's repentance and forgiveness of others is True ! We are first Blessed to have such Loving Protections for our life, and doubly-so in that they provide a measure of ourselves to God. It is by Them that we can see our heart's humility, sincerity, Faith, Love, and desire in knowing and doing what is right and good by the Father.

That said, obedience to the Commandments is not a measure to be used to exalt ourselves, nor is it a measure to be used against others in bad-heartedness or self-righteousness. Only when done with a right heart does the willful keeping of God's Commandments reveal proof of a Reborn character, a character of personal accountability, gratitude, and Love for God, Jesus, and others.

As for the Ten Commandments themselves, the first Four are related to our relationship with God and the last Six are related to our relationship with others. To obey the Most Important Commandment, as defined by Jesus, also encompasses obedience to the first Four, and to obey the Other Most Important Commandment, as defined by Jesus, also encompasses obedience to the last Six. I will leave it up to the reader (or listener) to show their heart to God by looking up these Commandments – the Two Most Important Commandments and the Ten Commandments - for themselves.

The Two Most Important Commandments can be found in Matthew 22:34-40 or Mark 12:28-31 or Luke 10:25-28, and many Bibles will have footnotes to their origin in the Old Testament as well.

The Ten Commandments can be found in Exodus 20:2-17 or Deuteronomy 5:6-21, besides the other places of mention throughout the Bible. In addition, if we read the Gospels carefully while keeping God's Commandments in mind, we see how very frequently Jesus' teachings incorporate them.

With the Commandments known, we must understand that it's not enough to do these things out of a feeling of obligation toward God. We must sincerely *want to* from our heart, with Love as the driver.

How do we know this is true ?

From Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18, there is the story of a rich man who asks Jesus what he must do to inherit Eternal Life. Jesus tells him to follow the Commandments, upon which the rich man tells Jesus he has done so since he was a little boy. Jesus then tells him that to continue forward with God, he should sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor, so he will have treasure in Heaven.

When the rich man hears this, he goes away sad and disheartened, knowing he would have to give up what he still values more than God. Jesus then turns to the crowd and tells them how hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God; that there is a better chance for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter God's Kingdom.

So, just because the fellow might have kept the *Letter* of the Ten Commandments *technically*, he wasn't truly following the *Heart* of God's Law from *his* heart. Instead, he continued to allow something to rule his life instead of God, and so Love for God and others was not the true driver of his behavior, not even for his obligation-driven obedience. If it was, he would have known that covetousness is more than just desiring the house, wife, servant, or possessions of a neighbor; it involves *all* selfishness and greed.

So, the lesson is, we are to have a True heart in keeping God's Commandments. We are not to follow the *Letter* of God's Law for "legalistic" reasons, and yet throw out the *Heart* of God's Law, for it's the *Heart* that expands the *Letter* to its full meaning in Righteousness ! Thus, a True heart keeps Both !

To paraphrase a metaphor given by Jesus, only a person who is clean on the inside will truly be clean on the outside, and will do what is required by God. Sometimes God and Jesus might *seem* tough, but which one of *us* trusts a person whose heart inside we question ? Are we tough, or are we fair ?

And because we love our own children, and want them to grow and mature for their own well-being, what would any of us want for them... to do what we ask because they truly see the good, or because they begrudgingly feel like they have to, and so look to get by on technicalities that miss the mark ?

It's important to always keep in mind why God and Jesus insist upon such good things... because of the Loving Protections and Value they provide for life ! It's only if we see the good the Commandments bring to us, and that our Father wants them for us through His Love as our Parent, that we will keep Them written on our heart and mind to follow.

Trust that God wants *such* good for us, give Him that Faith by Walking in His Ways, keep His Truth because of Love, and He will show you His Best.

## **Conclusion**

Once more in summary, Jesus tells us to repent for our sins, forgive others for their sins, and obey the Commandments, all by having Faith in God to do right by us in so doing. God wants the Best for His children, and provides the Way for His children to receive it, all because He Loves us !

It's also because God Loves us that He wants us to develop knowledge, patience, self-control, and perseverance in His Love and Truth, beginning with the Word. He knows these essential building blocks help us do what Jesus teaches, so we can receive all of His Blessings, including Eternal Life.

If we do these things, we will Live. If we do not, we won't, and will continue to suffer the hurt, anger, and tragedies of our own defiance. Life does not have to be as painful as it often is. We can choose to ignore God and cling to pride, sin, and lack of forgiveness of others; or to have Faith in God and Jesus. That is a choice we have every day of our lives, a choice for which we are responsible and accountable.

Yes, Jesus does talk about other things in shaping the Truth with Love for us, so that we know *how* to put what He teaches into practice, and therefore how to avoid the traps of sin, hatred, and hypocrisy in our lives. He consistently puts forth the critical need for us to put God first, before all else, in order to bring us Peace and Joy in the only way by which these things can truly come to us - His Way.

Jesus also tells us that help will be freely given. How much our Father wants to give us the Holy Spirit so that we may be guided into all Truth, if only we humble ourselves with a sincere heart to... ask.

Jesus also shows, even for Himself as God's Son, the importance of prayer in a relationship with God.

In addition, Jesus gives us many parables and metaphors to describe what the Kingdom of God is like when we have It in our lives. He also gives us many helpful examples of the kind of people who have True hearts to God in contrast to those who do not.

Not only that, Jesus gives us the very *Living* example of how to be if we aren't quite sure. The Living example He provides shows us *how* to be a guiding Light of Love and Truth in maturity, with a servant's heart of humility, through which all True exaltation flows. We need look no further than Jesus to see what it is to give away one's life for God in order to find it – the Best Life, a Kingdom Life, our Real Life through Him.

And the Best thing of all... God and Jesus do this for us because They Love us ! Their intent toward us as God's children is to prosper us, never to harm us. Can we say that about the culture of the world ? Then at least we know there's a difference, and that we have a choice.

A final note of warning and encouragement: If any person around you, at any point in their Walk with God (including those who seem very religious), tries to discern Biblical Scripture in a way that does not include all of these basic teachings of Jesus, then that discernment of Scripture rejects Jesus Himself.

A person cannot come to Life by disagreeing with Jesus. We must avoid accepting any false doctrine that thinks to add to, subtract from, or modify the words of Christ. For Life, simply build on the Rock. As the Books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke together form a solid foundation for the Book of John, so those Four Gospels together provide the Best Way to see, understand, and discern the rest of the Bible.

With Jesus as the Light, may God's Will be done.