

Sermon- Check the Engraving On Your Heart

Scripture- Jeremiah 31:27-34, CTW PS 51:1-12

Hymns- 474, 277, 332

Theme- In this passage we see where God promised to write His law on the hearts of His people. In previous verses we see where their **sin** was engraved on their hearts making them more likely to disobey. This passage seems to refer to new birth, causing us to respond to the new engraving, turn our lives over to God and respond by obeying Him. Have you checked your engraving lately to make sure it is still clear?

**I. We know from reading the book of Exodus that God had given His people His law originally in the Ten Commandments which were inscribed in stone.**

**A. But because of sin, man continually failed to live according to God's rules.** Along with this failure came guilt and shame. God could rightly judge us all as guilty and we were powerless to change the outcome under His vengeful hand.

Jeremiah prophesies the good news that God is making a new covenant with His people that will save them from their natural inclination to sin and disobey.

Look again at **Jeremiah 31:33-34**: "But this is the covenant I will make with them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

**B. Right here in the Old Testament is the prophecy that the human side of the covenant will be fulfilled by Jesus.**

It is better than the other covenant, the covenant of works, which was made with Adam and the nation of Israel. That was based upon the principle of merit: "Serve God and you will be rewarded

for it." But because of sin it was impossible for man to keep his part of that bargain.

So, Jesus Christ goes to the cross and dies. He breaks His own body and sheds His own blood, and the penalty which should have been ours, **He pays.**

Once we accept Christ by faith and have His Spirit inside us as the Living Word, we obey and serve Him out of a love relationship which is what God had in mind for us from the beginning.

Now when we see what our sin costs God, we don't want any part of it any more. We come to hate that sin which once was so attractive. And for us there is no longer any interest in seeing whether we can get away with something.

**II. To know Him is to love Him and to desire to obey Him. We have a new inward motivation and power to live by God's laws.**

God, working on us from the inside, is what changes our heart from being cold and calculating to being compassionate and compliant in our response to both God and others.

But God didn't leave us here with just an inward knowing of what is right and wrong in His sight. He knew we would need "the witness of two."

**A. Besides what our hearts tell us, how do we know what God wants us to do and how he wants us to live today?**

Without absolute moral truth, there can be no right and wrong. Without right and wrong, there is no such thing as sin. Without sin, there can be no such thing as judgment and no such thing as condemnation. If there is no condemnation, there is no need for a Savior.

The Bible is God's gift to us to show absolute truth and it is all that we need for faith and practice.

The scripture in Paul's second letter to Timothy is quite clear. God's written word to us, the Bible, was actually "God breathed," or inspired.

What Paul is saying here is that the fundamental characteristic of scripture (what makes these sacred writings) is the fact that God breathed them out, that they have their ultimate origin with God himself.

**B. Now at this point many people are skeptical, and they protest, "But everyone has their own interpretation of the Bible."**

This is where **2 Peter 1:20-21** comes in: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (NIV).

The word "carried along" in v. 21 is a sailing term that was used in Greek to describe the wind blowing into a sail, which "carries along" the sailboat. The human authors were consciously involved in the writing process, they weren't robots, we can even detect their own unique writing style, but behind the process God "carried them along" to ensure that the end result would be what God wanted to say.

The New Testament is in perfect agreement with the Old Testament. In other words, God hasn't changed His mind about right or wrong, sin or righteousness. But because of Jesus, we live under grace rather than under fear of punishment by God's law.

The scriptures are the way we learn to live God's way in the world so that what we know to be right inside in our heart is in agreement with what He inspired in His Holy Word.

Timothy says the scriptures are able to make you "wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" and the Bible is "profitable for teaching, for reproof (or rebuke), for correction, and for training in righteousness."

**III. So the Bible is used as the tool to teach us our condition and our position as God's children.**

**A. First, it is to be used to instruct and teach what the beliefs of the Christian faith are.** It instructs us in God's truth.

It is God's manual as to how we are to conduct our affairs in the workplace, church, home, and society in general. It deals with personal discipline and behavior.

I have found that children will usually obey the rules if they know what they are in advance, but don't go expecting them to act a certain way if they have not been taught or forewarned of the consequences of behaving otherwise!

We used to say, "Those children weren't raised, they were just snatched up by the hair of their heads." And many of us think God will just "getcha" and punish you without any warning.

**B. Second, the Bible is to be used to reprove or rebuke those who are in sin.** It is to refute error and challenge our deviant behavior. This is a delicate task for us to take on for the sin of others.

We must remember that conviction of sin is ultimately up to the Holy Spirit and if we point out the error of others we must be careful to do it in love and consider ourselves as also susceptible to error and sin. We share a common tendency to sin and excuse ourselves.

Arguments about the "Christian viewpoint" on an issue often divide us as much as political views and become associated with certain parties and lifestyles. God's moral law stands apart from such leanings.

What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong and we can ask "What would Jesus do or what would love do?" and come closer to the right interpretation of scripture.

Remember the Pharisees knew the scriptures well but interpreted them in such a harsh manner that they insisted people should not even be healed on the Sabbath!

**C. Third, the Bible is to be used to correct one who is on the wrong path (leading to destruction).** It is to be used to restore people and improve their life and character.

It teaches us to make the right decisions and choices. It reforms us as it rehabilitates us.

The Bible has been given to show us Jesus who is the way the truth and the life, leading us to the path of everlasting life.

**D. Fourth, the Bible is God's manual to instruct and train us in righteousness.** Many unredeemed people live a life that is lawful and upstanding. But the Bible teaches us not just to live unto ourselves but to be kind and compassionate and serve our fellowman.

Hospitals, colleges, museums, health organizations and many other things which we consider as just a normal part of our lives were originally established by people with an honest Christian ethic to fulfill these needs and allow God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We are being raised and trained by God's revealed truth in His word to live as Christians rightly related to God and man.

Why? So that we can know when we are really in trouble?

No, so that "the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

God is not so much telling us what NOT to do, as what TO do!

In **chapter 4 of 2 Timothy** Paul says that since we know God is going to be the final judge of everyone, living and dead, when he appears and sets up His kingdom, then we should all "preach the word...being ready in season and out of season to reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching."

**IV. You see, once you know the word, you are responsible to share it.** What is on the inside must come outside to help show others the way to be forgiven and released from their guilt and shame.

**A. We rebuke sinful acts and hold up God's standards while patiently teaching others God's offer to forgive them and restore them.**

I think it is interesting that Paul tells Timothy that people will not endure sound teaching but will want to surround themselves with teachers who will suit their own passions.

In other words, the unrepentant want someone who will just tell them God understands and they won't get into any trouble by continuing to sin.

An unrepentant person is someone who totally misunderstands that God's inscribed laws are now inside us and we have trouble feeling not guilty because we KNOW we really are!

Only knowing the inspired word of God which tells us about Jesus's substitutionary death to pay our sin guilt will ever make us free from worry about our relationship to God and our final judgment.

If the Son shall make you free, you are free indeed!

This brings us to Luke 18:6-8 <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Luke goes on to say that God is NOT LIKE the unrighteous judge, so when you are asking Him for mercy (forgiveness) he answers speedily.

You may have to continually pray for many things, but not for your salvation! God answers that prayer immediately and you are saved immediately just as that thief on the cross was saved when he asked to be.

But the passage ends sadly with a never-the-less sigh. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? " **(Luke 18:8b)**

**B. The Bible is the story of God pursuing people who have been running from Him because they think he wants to kill them instead of save them from ruining their lives doing it their own way.**

He made us, He knows us and He loves us.

We can go to Him by faith and know that we are forgiven completely.

That deal was sealed in blood on a cross over 2,000 years ago. It is an offer that never expires!

Remember as your approach comes closer to the cross this Lenten season:

The just shall live by faith...in the inscribed already on your heart, inspired Word of God. Amen? Let us pray...