

Heaven on Earth

Romans 12:9, 10

Introduction

When C.S. Lewis began his radio broadcast talks on BBC Radio [August 1941] - - - that later became his book – ‘Mere Christianity’ - - - he pointed to something he felt every citizen of Great Britain could relate to *and* agree upon -whether they were religious or not

That something was the presence of the moral Law - - - that we recognize some things are right and others are wrong

'Everyone has heard people quarreling . . . They say things like this, 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you? - 'That's my seat, I was there first' - 'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm' - 'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine.' People say things like that every day . . .'

'It looks in fact, very much as if both parties had in mind some kind of law or rule of fair play or decent behavior.'

We know this – we get this

At the time – England had gotten involved in a war with Germany – because they would not leave other nations alone – invading Poland / Czechoslovakia – and had recently bombed London 57 nights in a row

Every Englishman knew – ‘this is not right’ / this is wrong behavior

The rule of fair play or Decent Behavior is what we Christians would refer to as the Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12 - 'Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the prophets.'

We sometimes see the moral law brought to bear at sporting events – with the cameras on

This year – a man at a Cleveland Guardians game snatched a ball away from a kid – [April 27th]

Video footage that went viral, showed a man snatching the ball away as 11-year old Evelyn was trying to pick it up near the rail in the left-center-field

He eventually gave it to her, however, and now the girl's mother wants folks on social media to leave him alone.

“This man's life shouldn't be ruined over this,” Nikki Moore told The Times in a phone interview Monday. “Jokes and memes are one thing, but it's getting excessive. It's too much.”

The man was later identified as Lakewood, Ohio, business owner Max Quinn.

“I made a lot of mistakes that night,” Quinn said -“I am very sorry for what I did and how it happened.”

Video of Schneemann’s home run shows the ball flying over the left-center-field wall, where Quinn tried to catch it in the air. Instead, it bounced off his hands toward the rail to his left.

Evelyn ran down from her seat two rows up, dropped to the ground and attempted to secure the ball in front of her. Quinn ran over and also dropped to the ground next to her, starting a brief struggle for control of the ball.

He eventually emerged triumphantly.

“When she got up empty-handed, - people started booing.’

Later in the game, Rays sideline reporter Ryan Bass visited the family at their seats and presented the two siblings with baseballs.

Bass posted about the moment on X.

“We had to make it right,” Bass wrote, “We got the chance to make a sweet little girl’s night. There’s nothing better. Kindness is free. Always remember that.”

Later in the game – the man gave the home run ball back to the girl as well!

The moral law – a grown man should not wrestle a ball away from an eleven-year-old girl!

As I was wrestling with our passage of Scripture before us this morning -basically a call to walk in love -- - I wanted to press the question: ‘What does it matter?’

What does it matter if you and I walk in love?
What’s love got to do with the Christian life?

The Bible says a lot about love

Jesus: Love is the identifying mark of God’s children in this world

John 13:34-35 - 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Matthew Henry: 'All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word: love'

Love proclaims to others that we have been redeemed / set from our chains of slavery

I John 3:14 - 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.'

Love is the language of redemption

Love is a taste of Eden – taking us back to a world we lost – but is being restored in Christ Jesus

Love is a piece of heaven where men and women do unto others as they would be done by – in contrast to a wicked world in rebellion against God where it is every man for himself – w/ little or no regard for others

I. *Genuine Love - v. 9*

Paul has just finished telling us that God has given us gifts to exercise in the service of Christ

Paul now turns to how we should treat one another

Love shows up throughout the NT

I John 4:7, 8 - 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.'

Love is to be genuine – [without hypocrisy] not fake / not phony

Be sincere!

I Timothy 1:5 - 'The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.'

This is the goal of our redemption

If you've ever played darts - - - you have several rings around the target and in the very middle is the bull's eye

When we do loving acts - - - bull's eye! - - - the goal

Paul gives a masterful description of love in action in I Corinthians 13

I Corinthians 13:4-6 - 'Love is patient, love is kind . . .'

Just consider the first two

Are those words someone might use to describe you?

When you are patient with another – you are displaying a fruit of redemption / a trait of heavenly citizenship / a brand mark of discipleship to Jesus

When Corrie and Betsie Ten Boom found themselves placed in a German concentration camp

They made it a point to love others in the name of Jesus

Corrie Ten Boom: 'God had called us to this place, and here was now our task.'

They shared a vitamin dropper with other camp inmates [that just kept flowing]

They conducted Bible studies

They shared from their food

But the camp conditions hardened many / caused many people's love to grow cold

When Betsie became sick – she was transferred to the infirmary – where she was placed on a cot shared with a French girl

She told Corrie the next day that the French girl had kicked her repeatedly until she fell out of bed

Betsie: 'There is such darkness in the heart of that poor French child . . . but I told her of the love of the Savior . . . it is not an accident that I have to sleep with this girl.'

Corrie shares that when she was released by a clerical error in January, 1945 – she was travelling by train back to Holland

She had to wait a couple hours at a station in Germany - - - and she fell asleep – with her head resting on a small table in front of her. A blow on her ear sent her sprawling almost to the floor

“This is not a bedroom!” – the furious station agent shrieked. ‘You can’t use our tables to sleep on!’

Corrie Ten Boom: 'How hard and unfriendly these people were . . . in our good Holland even the smallest child is taught to respect older people; but that was unheard of in the Germany of 1945.'

All human decency was thrown out the window – people created hell on earth

When we don't love – we create a slice of hell on earth

Mark Twain: 'Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.'

We should show love wherever we are / *wherever* God puts us

Oswald Chambers: 'God puts His people where they can glorify Him most, and we are not capable of judging where that is.'

Love people where you are at

When a new couple has a baby – sometimes people will notice - - - oh – he has his father's hair – or she has her mom's nose / etc. - - - there is a likeness [genetics]

Ephesians 5:1 - 'Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love.'

i.e. – show the family resemblance

Hatred is Satan's family likeness – he came to steal, kill, and destroy / to abuse / misuse / violate

There is a wicked being who opposes all that is good and right

Ted Koppel took his tv news show *Nightline* to Israel to do a broadcast on Arab / Israeli relations. The show was to be a town hall meeting of sorts between the two factions. Jews and Palestinians appearing together – discussing their differences and possible solutions. However – just before broadcast time – the Palestinians refused to appear onstage with the Israelis. They said, 'put us in a booth' – so they didn't appear to be talking face to face to the Israelis. The *Nightline* producers said, 'No'.

So – the Palestinians then asked that they put razor wire down the center of the stage – again the producers said – 'no'. Finally – they asked that a stone wall be put between them and the Israelis - not a high wall – just 3 feet – to represent how divided the two groups were. They said they would not appear on the show if they were not accommodated. So – *Nightline* accommodated – and Israelis and Palestinians both appeared on stage with a 3-foot-high wall separating the two groups. [Epicenter, p. 73]

That is our world! Hatred / hostility – the character of Satan

Love is not easy in a fallen world - - - where people are under the sway of Satan

I John 5:19 - 'We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.'

Paul will later deal with – how to respond to those who are hostile to Christians – ‘never pay back evil for evil – overcome evil with good / leave room for the wrath of God

i.e. – there will be a Day of Judgment / God will recompense the evildoers for their evil

But for you and I – we are called to love one another and bring a slice of heaven to earth

Randy Alcorn: 'How many times have we done small acts of kindness on Earth without realizing the effects? How many times have we shared Christ with people we thought didn't take it to heart but who years later came to Jesus partly because of the seeds we planted? How many times have we spoken up for unborn children and seen no result, but as a result someone chose not to have an abortion and saved a child's life?'

'How many dishes have been washed and diapers changed and crying children sung to in the middle of the night, when we couldn't see the impact of the love we showed . . . God is watching. He is keeping track. In heaven he'll reward us for our acts of faithfulness to him, right down to every cup of cold water we've given to the needy in His name. And He's making a permanent record in heaven's books.' [Heaven, p. 313]

II. Hatred of Evil - v. 9

When we share God's opinion of our sin – then we will be those who forsake it

This is a key to sanctification that we come to abhor evil

Proverbs 6:16-19 - 'There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.'

If you find something in the frig – that is covered with mold – and you open the lid – and it smells – that doesn't exactly make you hungry!

You don't grab a fork and dig in!

Sin is to be just as distasteful – it's rotten behavior - look at how it offends God – or how harmful it is to self and others – throw it out! [I don't want to lie or steal or look at that . . .]

In the book of Genesis – Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter – named Dinah

Shechem – from a neighboring tribe was very attracted to her – and took her and lay with her by force

Genesis 34:7 - 'Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.'

The moral law has been broken – a rape has occurred – you don't do treat people that way!

We live in a broken world – people do things they ought not do

Of course – they over-responded by killing every male of the tribe - - - in retribution

Such are the complexities of living in an evil world

We are to hate evil and to love what is good

Does God care about how human beings treat one another? / treat the vulnerable / the elderly / the unborn / even your neighbor / etc.???

Ronald Reagan once invoked the moral law in his response to the abortion issue

Ronald Reagan: 'I've noticed everyone for abortion has already been born.'

Ultimately – it will be man's constant breach of the moral law – that will be the basis of his condemnation

He failed to love God
He failed to love his fellow man
It was that important

III. Brotherly Love - v. 10

Here Paul calls us to brotherly love

Jordan Peterson writes on how individuals look for meaning in life

Jordan Peterson: "A brick layer may question the utility of laying bricks, monotonously, one after another. But perhaps he is not merely laying bricks. Maybe he is building a wall. And the wall is part of a building. And the building is a cathedral. And the purpose of the cathedral is the glorification of the Highest Good. And under such circumstances, every brick laid is an act that partakes of the divine. And if what you are doing in your day-to-day activity is

not enough, then you are not aiming at the construction of a proper cathedral . . .
. if you have something meaningful to pursue, then you are engrossed in life.'

Peterson calls this one of his 'rules for living' – being a part of something bigger than self

For Christians – we are part of something larger than ourselves – we are part of the church – the family of God / the kingdom of God

We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ - - - and we now are living out the redemption He purchased for us in this world

Every act of love displays that redemption / and the fact that we belong to Christ

We are to have brotherly love towards one another

Honor = to esteem or value one another / show respect

John Calvin: 'We cannot love Christ without loving Him in the brethren.'

Sometimes brothers can be a bit rough with one another

I remember getting a pounding or two from my older brother Dave – but for the most part I knew that he would stand up for me if I needed him

What is it about family that Paul is getting at here?

A brother is always a brother – even though you might have some disagreements / arguments
He's still your brother

Paul told Timothy – treat the old men as fathers . . .

I Timothy 5:1, 2 - 'Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.'

There is the family

Max Lucado: 'When I hear someone calling God "Father" and Jesus "Savior" I meet a brother or sister - regardless of the name of their church or denomination.'

Max Lucado: 'I grew up with two sisters and a brother. We came from the same family. We had the same father and mother. I'm sure there were times when they didn't want to call me their brother, but they didn't have that choice. By

the way, the church names we banter about? They do not exist in heaven. The Book of Life does not list your denomination next to your name.'

The church is a fam

Conclusion

Eugene Peterson writes on the church as a family:

Eugene Peterson: 'Some run away from it and pretend the family doesn't exist. Some move out and get an apartment on their own from which they return to make occasional visits, nearly always showing up for the parties and bringing a gift to show that they really do hold the others in fond regard.'

'And some would never dream of leaving but cause others to dream it for them, for they are always criticizing what is served at the meals . . . complaining that others in the family are either ignoring them or taking advantage of them. And some determine to find out what God has in mind by placing them in this community called a church, learn how to function in it harmoniously and joyously, and develop the maturity that is able to share and exchange God's grace with those who might otherwise be viewed as nuisances.'

That is the church

Jesus loved the church and gave Himself up for her

J. C. Ryle: "Our Lord has many weak children in his family, many dull pupils in his school, many raw soldiers in his army, many lame sheep in his flock. Yet he bears with them all, and casts none away. Happy is that Christian who has learned to do likewise with his brethren."

He died not for the righteous but sinners – offering redemption to all who put their faith in Him

Love is now the brand mark of our redemption

I John 4:10-11 - 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'