



**Sunday, Feb 8, 2009: The Family and the Kingdom
Part V (Ethical Decisions)**

Scripture: Hebrews 8:6-13

Sermon Notes:

1. The question of ethics -- whether an action is right or wrong -- can be approached in three different ways: 1) the consequences of the action, 2) the cultural values, or 3) an absolute moral law based on the character of God.
2. The Bible gives us a foundation for ethics and provides the content for our ethical principles. For example, the Bible not only tells us to love, but describes what this love looks like and what it involves.
3. Two extremes we as Christians need to avoid in our approach to God's law are anti-nominianism (a rejection of the relevance of God's law for us today) and legalism (a focus on a superficial externalism which ignores heart motivations and societal transformation).
4. The Christian is called to obey the law in order to grow in sanctification, even though justification is by faith alone.
5. Matthew 22:37-40. Love for God and our neighbor are the basis of all ethics, and the commands of God teach us specifically what love requires.
6. The question of ethics is inevitable; no one can escape it since we are communal creatures. By definition, ethics concerns how I live with others. All of us were created for and are born into a family and a society. Cultivating holiness in community is the real challenge, not becoming a monk or an ascetic.
7. All other forms of ethical philosophy assume that we are naturally capable of virtue. However, the Christian faith claims that people will never fully know and do what is good nor find truth and happiness without the grace of God.

Application Questions:

1. What is the basis of all ethics? See Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10.
2. In John 14:15, what does it mean to love God? What light does 1 John 4:20-21 cast on what it means to love God?
3. In light of what we learned from the verses in question 2 about what it means to love God, how should we respond to the trend among today's Christians to reject the biblical commandments and call them irrelevant? (See also Matthew 5:17-18). What are some examples of the commandments which some Christians call irrelevant in our day?
4. What did Augustine mean when he said, "Love and do as you will?" How can this principle help those who reject Christ because of all His ethical "restrictions"?
5. In my own personal life, do I claim to love God but hate my Christian brother or sister? Do I claim to love God but treat my spouse or children in an unloving way?