

## *Some Very Important Lists*

Without Jesus' help humans can't distinguish between right and wrong. Each of us defines right according to what seems best to us. Self-interest determines what we consider good and what we consider evil.

People who love Jesus seek his interests, his joy and his pleasure. True Christians love Jesus and enjoy following his directions for living. Love for Jesus motivates us to obey him. Obedience becomes joy, not drudgery.

In the Gospel of John chapter 14, our Savior connected obedience to his Word with love for his person. "If you love me, you will obey what I command." "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching."<sup>(1)</sup> So we need to pay attention to some very important lists the Bible provides for us. In these lists, God records sins that people who love Jesus purposefully avoid.

The word "sin" designates human thoughts and human behavior that springs out of hostility against God. Sin is rebellion against the Jesus who loves us with unbounded affection.

### **First Important List**

The religious leaders of Jesus' day placed great emphasis on ceremony. They felt ceremony and proper outward appearance displayed godliness. Jesus emphatically disagreed with this idea.

"What comes out of a man...makes him unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts..." "All these evils come from the inside and make a man unclean."<sup>(2)</sup> Let's look at the list of evils that spring out of human hostility against God and express human rebellion against Jesus.

Evil thoughts	Deceit
Sexual Immorality	Lewdness
Theft	Envy
Murder	Slander
Adultery	Arrogance
Greed	Folly
Malice	

## **Second Important List**

Jesus not only identified sins we avoid but also provided commands that show us how to obey him. We obey these commands, not out of religious duty, but out of heartfelt love for him.

“A man came up to Jesus and asked, ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?’”

“If you want to enter life, obey the commandments,” Jesus replied.

“Which ones?” the man inquired.

“Jesus replied...”

Do not murder  
Do not commit adultery  
Do not steal  
Do not give false testimony  
Honor your father and mother  
Love your neighbor as yourself

“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

Jesus answered...“Come, follow me.”<sup>(3)</sup>

This fine young man did his best to follow God’s commands and subsequently led a very moral life. However, he did not love Jesus and was unwilling to become a disciple of the Savior. You see, Jesus appeals for our love. Loving Jesus fills us with willingness to avoid the sins he identified and heed the commands he issued.

We must know Jesus’ commands listed in the Bible in order to respect them. Additionally, we need the Spirit of Jesus living in us so his energy can keep us willing to obey his commands. We must fill our heads with his Word and our hearts with his presence. This combination of head knowledge and heart love guards us against enticement to sin and preserves our love for the God who first loved us.

## **Third Important List**

Jesus is indispensable. We cannot obey God’s commands and shun evil without surrendering our lives to Jesus’ governorship.

We inherit from our ancestors a human spirit devoid of God's presence. It wasn't meant to be this way. In the beginning God united his spirit with the first humans. But God withdrew from us because we didn't want him. Through the centuries parents have passed to their children human spirits powerless to love God.

Jesus changed all of this. His body descended from Adam, from Abraham, from David, but his spirit came from God. His human spirit was like Adam's before Adam sinned—filled with God's Spirit and submissive to God's will.

Jesus loved his heavenly Father with an affection that made sin absolutely disgusting to him. Jesus faced true enticement and temptation to sin, but love for God made sin utterly detestable, repugnant and hateful to him. Therefore, he died on the cross without ever disobeying God's commandments.

Now, we come to a third important list that describes what we can be and how we can act when Jesus' spirit lives in us.

Love	Patience	Faithfulness
Joy	Kindness	Gentleness
Peace	Goodness	Self-control <sup>(4)</sup>

Heavenly Father enthroned the resurrected man Christ Jesus who sits at his right hand. From this throne the infinite Jesus makes his Spirit available to every human who asks him to forgive their sins and lead their lives. The Spirit of the resurrected Jesus unites himself with his follower's human spirit. "God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts."<sup>(5)</sup> Energized by the presence of Jesus' spirit we can be:

Loving	Patient	Faithful
Joyful	Kind	Gentle
Peaceful	Good	Self-controlled

Obedying God's commands isn't daunting for Jesus-filled humans. Hating sin isn't impossible when the victorious Spirit of Jesus dwells in us. In these last days, these days of ever increasing sinfulness, let's remember the very important lists that give us direction and hope.

Footnotes:

1. John 14:15, 21, 24
2. Mark 7:20-21, 23
3. Matthew 19:16-21
4. Galatians 5:22-23
5. Galatians 4:6

