

The Great Commandment of Love

Mark 12: 28-34

Jesus was often questioned and challenged concerning His interpretation of Scripture. Who better to know the word than the Word Himself? In this chapter He was questioned of the Pharisees concerning paying taxes, of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection and life in heaven, and now He is questioned of a scribe about which of the commandments was greatest.

We need to understand, in the Pentateuch, the books of the Law ([Gen.-Deut.](#)) there are 613 laws given to men. Those laws formed the basis for the Jew's beliefs and religious practices. There were so many laws that they found it impossible to keep them all in daily life. They often discussed which were the most important, which must be absolutely obeyed, and which could be tolerated undone.

It is impossible to live good enough in ourselves. Jesus takes all the law and sums it up in these two great [truths](#). He taught that love was the greatest commandment of all. It is [The Great Commandment of Love](#) that I would like to consider this evening.

I. The Requirements in the Commandments (29) – [And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.](#) If we are to possess the ability to perform these commandments, we must understand what is required to do so. Keep in mind, this passage is referring to Agape love. For the most part our world knows very little about God's love. Love often revolves around circumstances and is subject to change. God's love isn't affected by circumstances and never changes. So, what are the requirements related to God's love?

A. A Proper Recognition of the Lord – [Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.](#) Jesus reveals that we must recognize the Lord for who He is. We must hear what God has to say. He is one Lord; there is none other besides Him. It is impossible to love as God would have us to without proper recognition of Him. He is our Sovereign. All that we are and ever hope to be is a result of God's goodness. He is worthy of our submission.

- We must learn to listen and obey the Lord. As a child I recognized the authority of my dad. I expressed my love to him by obeying his wishes. If we are to love the Lord, we must recognize His authority in our lives. We don't have the right or the privilege to live as we please. If Jesus isn't Lord of our lives, we'll never love Him as we should!

B. A Personal Relationship with the Lord – Notice the text says **our God, v.29**, and **thy God, v.30**. We all know that God is love. One cannot truly know and express love apart from God. In order to love as God commands, His love must dwell in our hearts. His love is first given to us, until then we really can't love. **1 John 4:19 – We love him, because he first loved us**. Real godly love isn't possible without a personal relationship with Christ.

- All men don't express a proper love because all men don't know Christ. When I think of the love Christ has for me, I am compelled to love Him. It also compels me to love others. Jesus loved me when I had nothing to offer. I was of no benefit to Him, yet He loved me. We must love others, without condition, as Jesus loved us!

II. The Responsibility to the Commandments (30-31) – Once we've met the requirements, we must accept the responsibility. If you have experienced a proper recognition and a personal relationship with the Lord, you are responsible for carrying out these commandments. They aren't open for debate; God expects us to love as He does. Let's consider our responsibility.

A. The Supreme Commandment (30) – **And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment**. First and foremost we are to love the Lord. Without a love for Him we will never love others. Our love for God must be the ultimate priority.

- Here Jesus quotes what is known as the "Shema" found in **Deut.6:4-5**. The Jews quoted this passage every day to remind them that Jehovah God alone is the Lord. We too must make sure that God is given His place of preeminence in our lives. Sadly, the Lord is often given a "back seat" in our day to day lives. If we are to love Him above all else there are some areas we must concentrate upon:

1. Love with All our Heart – The heart is the seat of man's affection and will. Our affection and devotion must be offered completely to the Lord. Our love must be genuine and real, not just an outward show. It must be expressed daily, not just at church services. We must love Him as if we believe He is real and in control of our lives. (Many don't live as if they believe that Christ is coming again!)

2. Love with All our Soul – The soul is the seat of man's breath, life, and conscious. It is the very essence of our being. We are to love God with all that is in us, with all we possess. Loving God with all our soul requires a constant awareness of Him. Love God with all your life. Love Him

as if you know that He has given the life you enjoy. Offer Him your love with every fiber of your being. Genuine love for God won't be just superficial; it will reach into the very depths of our soul.

3. Love with All our Mind – The mind is the seat of reasoning and understanding, the intellect. Real love will bring about a focus of our minds upon Jesus. He will be the center of our thoughts. We are to consider Him, constantly dwell upon Him, and make a conscious effort to love Him. We must love Him for who He is and what He has done for us. I fear we all fail in this area. How often do we really meditate on God's goodness? How many times throughout our busy day do we actually consider the Lord? Let's work on loving Him with all our minds!

4. Love with All our Strength – This reveals that we are to maintain a loving relationship with the Lord. This requires effort on our part. We can't love Him without all our strength. Any type of relationship requires work, but the benefits of that relationship far outweigh the effort that's required.

- We must determine to love Christ whatever the cost. Real love will endure when it is given with all our strength. Basically we are to love God in every area of life, inwardly, outwardly, and even physically working for Him.

B. The Second Commandment (31a) – *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Jesus gives us the 2nd commandment of love: loving our neighbor. This is in order since we must love God before we can love anyone else. Once we come to know God, we are expected to love Him as well as our neighbor. This isn't a simple command. We must not only love them, but love them as ourselves. Really these two go hand in hand; we can't do one without the other. I can't love my neighbor without loving God and I can't genuinely love God without loving my neighbor. **1 John 4:20 – If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?**

- Do we really love others as ourselves? It is difficult to do, but it isn't an option. The lost around us need to be shown the love of God. We certainly wouldn't want to experience the torments of hell. I pray we will learn to love others so we can reach them for Christ!

III. The Relevance of the Commandments (31b-34) – We all understand the need to love God and others, but do we really grasp the importance of that love? Following these commandments is the very essence of Christianity. **1 John 3:14 – We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.** Real love is an indicator of one's salvation. Notice:

A. Their Authority (31b) – *There is none other commandment greater than these.* I want to emphasize again this isn't an option; we are commanded to love. There is no greater commandment. *Mat.22:40 – On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* The nature of the Christian life is summed up in this. If we are to be what God expects, we are to love!

B. Their Abundance (33) – *And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.* The scribe realized that real love pleased God more than sacrifices and offerings. There is no better way to please God than to love Him and others. Simply put, without love we do not please God! We can be faithful to the church, give our tithes, and even support missions that share God's love, but if we don't love ourselves, we've missed God's will for our lives. Don't you want to please the Lord because of what He's done for you? He certainly deserves our best. The very best that we can give is a heart of love!

C. Their Ability (34) – *And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.* The scribe began to see that a life lived for Jesus was more than just religious traditions and ceremonies. It was much deeper than that. As he made this realization, he was very close to receiving salvation. Love must be understood before one can be saved. We must recognize the great love of Christ, such love that led Him to the cross to die for our sin.

- Most of the world has never read these verses. They know nothing of God's love. You and I may be the only avenue they have to be exposed to God's love. If we will let God's love flow through us and extend to a lost and dying world, we have a much better chance of reaching them for the Lord. We are never a better witness or closer to the Lord than when we love as God does. How many do we know that are not far away from the kingdom of God? They may not be far away, but they are still away! Let's learn to love them to God!

Conclusion: How do our lives measure up? Do we love the Lord with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves? I firmly believe that much of the turmoil and difficulty in our world today is a direct result of a lack of genuine love. Won't you come and seek the Lord to provide what you need to love as He does?

If you are yet unsaved, I must tell you that Christ loves you. He died in your place so that you too might be saved. Come to Him in salvation if He is leading you!