

The First and Great Commandment

Mat 22:35 Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, tempting Him, and saying, 36 Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

“According to the statement of Jewish writers, there had been an old and interminable (endless) dispute among the rabbis as to which was the greatest commandment. Some held that it was the law which commanded sacrifices; others, that which commanded the wearing of phylacteries (Gk.5440- wearing slips of scripture texts); others contended for those about purification; others, for those about the great feasts. But as they reckoned the commandments of Moses as numbering over six hundred, there was plenty of room for argument. On this memorable day the answers of Jesus had hitherto (up to that point) been of such a nature as to put (H)is questioners to silence. Therefore, in asking this question, they hoped to get an answer about which they could at least find room to wrangle, and thus discredit the wisdom of Jesus.”
 McGarvey

Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

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- Since the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead they posed a question to Jesus with the hopes of stumping Him into making themselves out to be the wiser. After asking Him which of the seven dead brothers would have a certain widow woman in the resurrection, who had been married to them all, Jesus responded in such a way that stunned all who were within earshot. They tested Jesus' teaching on the resurrection using the following passage.

Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. 6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. (Firstborn sons usually received the major portion of the inheritance.- Gen 27:34-38)

Mat 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven (See study on “Angels” in the “Bible Study Notes” section of the web site.). 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Ex 3:6)? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**

Mat 22:33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at His doctrine. 34 But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

- Of course the Pharisees **did** believe in the resurrection. Paul would later use this disagreement between them to get himself out of a pickle.

Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. **7** And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. **8** For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both (*Gk.297- [in plural] both*). **9** And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. **10** And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

Mat 22:35 Then one of them (*Pharisee*), *which was* a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, tempting (*Gk.3985- to test, that is, endeavor, scrutinize, entice*) Him, and saying, **36** Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** (*Mk.12:30 adds "all thy strength"*) **38** This is the first (*Gk.4413- foremost [in time, place, order or importance]*) and great commandment.

 Heart

- **Heart- Gk.2588-** the *heart*, that is, (figuratively) the *thoughts or feelings (mind)*.
- Thayer: *of things done from the heart i.e. cordially or sincerely, truly (without simulation or pretense)*.

Webster:

simulate- 1. to give a false appearance of; feign 2. to look or act like – simulation.
 pretense- 2. a false claim 3. a false show of something 4. a pretending, as at play.

- So when we love **God** with all our heart it isn't to be fake. **God sees our hearts and knows every thought even before we think it.**

Mar 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? **6** He answered and said unto them, **Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.**

1. He loves God with all his heart, who loves nothing in comparison of (H)im, and nothing but in reference to (H)im: - who is ready to give up, do, or suffer any thing in order to please and glorify (H)im: - who has in his heart neither love nor hatred, hope nor fear, inclination, nor aversion, desire, nor delight, but as they relate to God, and are regulated by (H)im. (Adam Clarke)
- To love **God** then is a sacrificial love. Nothing in this life is to be compared to/with our love for **God**. All of our thoughts, feelings, actions and possessions are to be in relation to what **God** expects from us and are to be controlled by **His** word. That is the mark of a mature and obedient **Christian**.

2Co 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body** (*People need to see Christ in us.*). **11** For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**

2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience** of Christ;

(Heart) Soul

- **Soul**- Gk.5590- *breath*, that is, (by implication) *spirit*, abstractly or concretely (the *animal* sentient principal only).
- Thayer: the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions (*Webster: intense dislikes*).

Webster: sentient- of or capable of feeling; conscious.

2. He loves God with all his soul, or rather, with all his life, who is ready to give up life for His sake - to endure all sorts of torments, and to be deprived of all kinds of comforts, rather than dishonor God: - who employs life with all its comforts, and conveniences, to glorify God in, by, and through all: - to whom life and death are nothing, but as they come from and lead to God (*A few years ago I had to have a brain tumor removed. After the surgery I was to undergo psychological testing and one of the questions asked "would death be the answer to all of life's struggles". My response was yes which brought up the red flags. When they understood my faith and how I was not suicidal I passed their scrutiny.**), From this Divine principle sprang the blood of the martyrs, which became the seed of the Church. (*Were it not for those who were martyred for the faith who knows where the church would be today.*) They overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and loved not their lives unto the death. (Adam Clarke)

**Psa 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.*

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him (*the dragon*) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

- Again, loving **God** and putting **Him** first requires sacrifice. The questions we are to have concerning those "creature comforts" that we all possess is to ask ourselves "*how can these things be used to glorify God, am I willing to give them up if they don't or would I be content with less?*" There are many who claim they would die for **Jesus**, which is expected of any saint who truly loves **Him**, but wouldn't think of giving up time out of their busy lives to even read their **Bibles** let alone study them on a daily basis.

(Heart, Soul) Mind

- **Mind**- Gk.1271- *deep thought*, properly the faculty (*mind* or its *disposition*), by implication its exercise: -*imagination, mind, understanding*.
- Thayer: the mind as the faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring.

4. He loves God with all his mind (intellect) who applies himself only to know God, and (H)is holy will: - who receives with submission, gratitude, and pleasure, the sacred truths which God has revealed to man: - who studies no art nor science but as far as it is necessary for the service of God, and uses it at all times to promote (H)is glory (*as Paul said in 1 Cor 2:2 where he “determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”. See also Phil 3:8*)- who forms no projects nor designs but in reference to God and the interests of mankind: - who banishes from his understanding and memory every useless, foolish, and dangerous thought, together with every idea which has any tendency to defile his soul, or turn it for a moment from the center of eternal repose (*does not think on anything that would keep him from entering Heaven*). In a word, he who sees God in all things - thinks of (H)im at all times - having his mind continually fixed upon God, acknowledging (H)im in all his ways - who begins, continues, and ends all his thoughts, words, and works, to the glory of (H)is name: - this is the person who loves God with all his heart, life, strength, and intellect. He is crucified to the world, and the world to him (*Gal 6:14*): he lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him (*Gal 2:20*). He beholds as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory (*2 Cor 3:18*). Simply and constantly looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of his faith (*Heb 12:2*), he receives continual supplies of enlightening and sanctifying grace, and is thus fitted for every good word and work (*2 Cor 9:8*). ... (Adam Clarke)

Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed (Heb.5564- to prop, to lean upon or take hold of: -lean, rest self) on Thee*: because he trusteth in Thee.

(Heart, Soul, Mind) Strength

- **Strength- Gk.2479- *forcefulness*: -ability, might.**
 - Thayer: of one's strength, to the extent of one's ability.
3. He loves God with all his strength (*Mar 12:30; Luk 10:27*) who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God: - who, for the glory of his Maker, spares neither labor nor cost - who sacrifices his time, body, health, ease, for the honor of God his Divine Master: - who employs in his service all his goods, his talents, his power, credit, authority, and influence. (Adam Clarke)

1Co 10:31 ... **whatsoever ye do, do all** to the glory of God.

- A reason is a good excuse and an excuse is a bad reason. There are reasons why many brethren are unable to do certain things; age, poor health, employment obligations, family struggles, etc. But how often are these things used as excuses for habitual absence from Bible studies and/or fellowshiping with the brethren? Excuses only show how immature a **Christian** is in their faith! True, new babes in **Christ** need to be coddled but only for a period in which they expected to grow. Don't we expect a baby to grow and mature in time? Shouldn't the **Lord** be allowed to expect the same from a **Christian**? High maintenance **Christians** only slow the growth of any congregation's evangelistic efforts to save the lost. The time spent trying to encourage those who know what they need to be doing but aren't could be time spent encouraging a lost soul to obey the truth. We have all been blessed with the knowledge of the truth. Shouldn't others also be given that same opportunity?... Then every ounce of our beings should be used to that end! Because there's another part of the great commandment...
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Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

- Even the ten commandments concerned God and neighbor. Without the “horizontal” (*love for mankind*) there can be no “vertical” (*love for God*). To love our neighbor we are to love them as though they were ourselves! Any Christian who understands the price that was paid for the grace that was shown to him wants the same for others and is thus willing to go out of his way to make sure that they have the same opportunity to experience the love of God through Jesus Christ.

1Jn 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? 21 And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1Jn 2:15 Love (*Gk.25*) not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love (*Gk.25*) the world, the love (*Gk.26*) of the Father is not in him.

- Love- *Gk.25*- Thayer: to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it. *Gk.26- love, that is, affection or benevolence.* Thayer: of the love of God towards men. In other words, that Godly affection or benevolence which caused Him to give His only Son for the salvation of sinners. If a person cannot give up worldly influences because they are so attached to them they can't love as God loves. They can't possibly want what's best for their fellow man.
- The “first and great commandment” then is to love God. To love God is to love His Son. To love His Son is to keep His commandments.

Joh 15:10 If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

- So where do we begin in keeping His commandments? The first, most important step is to obey the call of the gospel in the great commission!

Hear: Romans 10:14 ... "how shall they believe in Him Whom they have not heard?"

Believe: Heb 11:6 ... "for he that commeth to God must believe that He is"...

Repent: Act 3:19 ... "Repent ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Confess: Rom 10:9 ... "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

(Our lives must confess Christ.)

Be baptized: 1 Pet 3:21 "...baptism doth also now save us..."

Remain faithful: 1 Cor 6:20 ... "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

- A person who's been ransomed doesn't return to their abductor after their ransom was paid for their release. Neither should a Christian return to Satan and the world after Christ secured his release from Hell either. But there comes with that release a cost.

Luk 14:27 and whoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, is not able to be My disciple.

28 `For who of you, willing to build a tower, doth not first, having sat down, count the expense, whether he have the things for completing? (YLT)

- Being a **Christian** won't make all our troubles go away but this life isn't all there is either. If you've not been faithful or you've not yet been rescued from the torments of an eternal **Hell**, in love we implore you to make that decision today that will wash away your sin and begin a renewed life in **Christ Jesus**.

Gal 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

- If the truth hurts, you need to make things right between you and **God**.

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