

INSIGHT

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest command in the Law He replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Before Jesus left us He said:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus made it clear that His commands are centered on the action of **LOVING**. When we love God we will love our neighbor. When we love our neighbor we are keeping the sacred laws of God which promote peace, unity, edification and spiritual growth. Even though you may encounter serious trials throughout this life, when you focus on loving, you will overcome the difficulties and grow through these very trials.

If you read the *Sermon on the Mount* (Mt. 5, 6 & 7), you will notice that the core of Jesus teachings is LOVE. In chapter five he speaks about the mindset and practice of those who uphold His spiritual law. He ends this chapter by saying: "*Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" The only time we actually uphold the law of God is when we are loving from the core of our very being. Chapter six is about the attitude the citizens of the Kingdom have. In chapter seven He speaks about how to persevere in these, so that growth ends up being the result, and not stagnation.

The *Beatitudes*, in the beginning of chapter five, come as a result of recognizing how we have been blessed as sons and daughters of God's Kingdom. To be blessed is to be in bliss; to be extremely satisfied; fulfilled; happy. (From the Greek: *makarios*) Out of these realizations come obedience to the spiritual laws of Christ and growth from putting these laws into practice. This is what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself.

The Heart of Jesus: The Greatest Commandment The Most Excellent Way!

Key Text: *Matthew 22:37-40*

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." {38} This is the first and greatest commandment. {39} And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' {40} All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Theme:

These two commandments which Jesus used to summarize the whole Law are actually taken from Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Leviticus 19:18. The first of the greatest commandments was known to the Jews as the *Shema*, Judaism's basic confession of faith. According to rabbinical law, it was to be recited morning and night. In Galatians 5:14 the Apostle Paul quotes the second greatest command as being the fulfillment of the whole law. In other words, if you are loving your neighbor, you are a disciple in word and truth.

Application:

Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. *Love the LORD with all your heart!* Make it your goal to serve the Lord with a willing spirit! God delights in a heart that is willing to serve as oppose to a heart that is bitter and critical! *Eph 6:7*
2. *Love the LORD with all your soul!* Have a deep appreciation for God and His divine love for you! Consider the man of the cross! This is the depth of God's love for you. Love Him deeply too! *John 3:16*
3. *Love the LORD with all your mind!* Get to know the Lord your God! Read His Word and be fascinated by the great things He has done (and continues to do) in the lives of His servants! For our God deserves our full attention and focus! *Colossians 3:2*
4. *Love the LORD with all your strength!* Never give up serving the Lord! Do everything to the glory of Christ,

your Lord! *Col. 3:17*

3. Christ's Words are Spirit and Life (*John 6:63*)

May the Lord richly bless you!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

OUTLINE

"The Most Excellent Way"

Introduction: Last Week

1. The tenth commandment dealt with moral thought!
2. Root of the problem stems from the coveting heart!
(*Matt. 15:17-20a*)
3. Kinds of coveting:
 - a. Material (*King Ahab: 1 Kings 21:1-16*)
 - b. Person (*King David: 2 Sam. 11*)
 - c. Business
 - d. Lazy spirit (*Prov. 21:25-26*)
4. Only through Christ can we make it to heaven!
(*Rom. 7:24-8:2*)

I. The Law Written In The Heart (*Rom 2:11ff*)

Romans 2:13

"For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

- A. God does not show favoritism (*vs 11*)
 1. Salvation is not based on externals
 2. But according to the person's spiritual state
- B. Three degrees of enlightenment revealed to men (*vs. 12-16*)
 1. The light of nature: The Gentiles (non-Jews)
 - their conscience is their witness (Natural awareness)
 - they are judged by natural law
 2. The light of the law: The Jews
 - The Law is their witness (Spiritual awareness)
 - Judged by the Mosaic law
 3. The light of the gospel: The Christian
 - The Law of Love: *Mt. 22:37-40*
 - The Spirit of Christ is revealed in their lives
 - a. Love your God (First love)
 - b. Love your neighbor (Second love)
 - We have the privilege of having the Bible
 - We are called to be doers (*James 1:22*)
 - We will be judged by the Word (*John 12:48*)

II. Conclusion: The inner Christian: *Rom. 2:29*

- A true Christian is within:
 1. A Spirit-led person (desires to walk the walk)
 2. A Spirit-minded person (desires to please God)

Warm-up:

Here is the scenario: You need a major operation. Would you entrust your life into the hands of any physician if given a choice? Why or why not? What helps you determine his or her trustworthiness?

See To It

Romans 2:17-29

1. What were the Jews professing to be? List the items they bragged about?
2. Why did they brag about their being a Jew? What did that signify?
3. Even though they professed God, what were they doing?
4. Why were they in grave danger? What did their salvation consist of?
5. How were they affecting the Gentiles?

Seeing It Closer

1. How can the Christian fall under the same condemnation as the Jew? Use question #1 as a guide.
2. Is a Christian a Christian, simply because he or she has been baptized, has the knowledge of the Word and has good attendance? What makes a true Christian?
3. What does God look at? What must be cleansed? How is it cleansed?
4. What are the characteristics of one who truly knows the Lord? Will you be able to tell?

Getting It Together

If we were to substitute the word "Jew" for "Christian", Romans 2:28-29 would read something like this: "a man is not a Christian if he is only one outwardly, nor is baptism merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Christian if he is one inwardly..." Are you allowing the Spirit of God to

lead you? Is God pleased with you? Do people see the light of Christ in your life? When they see you, do they see Jesus? Is your life a life that is filled with grace, love, peace and humility? You be the judge!