

## ***Session 5: The Relationship of the First Commandment to the Second***

### **I. THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENTS**

<sup>36</sup> *Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?* <sup>37</sup> *Jesus said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* <sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* <sup>40</sup> *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt. 22:36-40)*

- A. The foundational premise of this course: people who love Jesus will love others much more. It is impossible to love Jesus and not love people more. The greatest anointing of the Spirit is to walk in the two great commandments by loving Jesus with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. To put the second commandment first is to make our ministry an idol in our heart.
- B. Jesus answered the question about which was the great commandment by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” He added three new ideas. First, that loving God is the first and greatest thing. Second, that loving people is like loving God. Third, the purpose of God as seen in Scripture hangs on, or originates from, these commandments.

### **II. REVIEW: THE FOUR STAGES OF LOVE**

- A. Stage #1: receiving revelation of God’s love for us (Eph. 3:18-19). Knowing how God feels about us as our Father and Bridegroom as the foundational truth that equips us to love God.  
<sup>19</sup> *We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*
- B. Stage #2: receiving God’s love for Jesus. It takes God’s power to love God.  
<sup>26</sup> *I [Jesus] have declared to them Your [the Father] name ... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them. (Jn. 17:26)*  
<sup>5</sup> *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5:5)*
- C. Stage #3: loving ourselves in the grace of God. We love our neighbor as we love ourselves in the grace of God by knowing who we are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), along with rejoicing in who God made us (personality, gifting, calling, physical features, etc; Ps. 139:13-17). Agreeing with God about our value is different from loving ourselves in a selfish way. As we get our eyes off of others (envy) and off our failures (condemnation), we value and even love who God made us.
- D. Stage #4: loving others is the greatest work of the Spirit and is the ultimate proof of His work in the human heart. As we love God and ourselves, we overflow in love for others. It is the visible measurement of our invisible love for God.  
<sup>34</sup> *That you love one another ...* <sup>35</sup> *By this all will know that you are My disciples. (Jn. 13:34-35)*  
<sup>18</sup> *Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* <sup>19</sup> *And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (1 Jn. 3:18-19)*

### III. TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR IS “LIKE” LOVING GOD: THREE WAYS

<sup>39</sup> *The second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mt. 22:39)*

- A. First, love for others, like loving God, flows from regularly encountering God’s love for us.

<sup>19</sup> *We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*

- B. Second, to walk in genuine love as defined by God is much more than sentimentalism. It takes seeking to love Jesus with “all” our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

- C. Third, to walk in love requires the Spirit’s power to energize us; we regularly need our emotions stirred and strengthened by the subtle impressions of the Spirit. Christianity is an ongoing encounter of love with a Person.

<sup>5</sup> *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5:5)*

- D. Only by loving Jesus and ourselves are we able to consistently overflow in love for others. We are energized to sustain compassion by the gratitude and joy of being loved by God.

- E. We must love God first and ourselves to properly love our neighbor. We must love ourselves first to have power and energy to love others. We can only love our neighbor in the overflow of loving God, for only in being loved by God and in loving God can we properly love others.

- F. This demanding commandment requires a comprehensive re-ordering of how we think and process life. We by nature are self-consumed, so it takes the power of the Spirit to walk this out.

- G. Loving God and loving ourselves are bound up as one. We value others in the overflow of seeing how valuable God is and how valuable we are to God. The second commandment seems to stand by itself in some passages because its connection to the first commandment is assumed.

- H. We are not called to love others “instead of” ourselves but “as” ourselves by using the same standard in measuring love for others as we use for ourselves. We are to seek our neighbors’ benefit “as,” or “with the same focus and energy,” as that we seek for ourselves. For example, we are to seek for more money and blessing so we can give more. In this God’s generosity is manifest to us and through us.

- I. To love others as ourselves is to value their longing for significance, acceptance, and success as being as important as our own. Because all people are created in God’s image, they deserve to receive love from us (the love that we receive from God).

- J. We are not to dismiss loving ourselves, but we enhance it by loving others with new depth. We will experience God’s tender compassion as we show it to others. This radical command touches the core of our being. This command exposes a deep root system of sin in us. To seek to love people as ourselves shows us our sin and spiritual lack.

#### IV. LOVE IS THE SOURCE AND GOAL OF THE LAW AND PROPHETS

- A. By saying, “On these two commandments hang the Law and Prophets” (Mt. 22:40), Jesus emphasizes their importance and how connected they are to each other and God’s eternal purposes. God’s purposes as declared in the Law and Prophets depend, or hang (like a bucket on a rope), on love. Love is the source behind all of God’s eternal purposes.
- <sup>40</sup> *On these two commandments hang [depend] all the Law and the Prophets. (Mt. 22:40)*
- B. Our love for God and the goal of the Scripture are fulfilled when we love others. Love is the practical expression of what the teachings in the Law and the Prophets really mean.
- <sup>8</sup> *He who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” ... are summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> ... Love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)*
- C. Paul gives us more insight into love by exhorting us to offer it as from a pure heart (our motive to enrich others without seeking for personal benefit), from a good conscience that is free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1), and from sincere faith that stands steady in difficult circumstances.
- <sup>5</sup> *The purpose [“goal,” NIV] of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith. (1 Tim. 1:5)*
- D. Summary: love is both the goal (Mt. 7:12; Rom. 13:8-10) and source of the Law and Prophets. In other words, all of God’s purposes in the Scripture hang on these two great commandments.
- E. We must understand the Golden Rule in its context in the Sermon on the Mount, which calls us to an all-consuming relationship with God. In this passage, Jesus taught us the Father gives good things to those who ask in prayer. Next, He said “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.” In other words, this commandment is given in context to the call to prayer.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find ... <sup>8</sup> Everyone who asks receives ... <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ... <sup>11</sup> How much more will your Father ... give good things to those who ask! <sup>12</sup> Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Mt 7:7-12)*
- F. The call to walk in love is given in context of God releasing His supernatural provision to us by prayer. The foundation of this commandment is a revelation of the Father’s love and a prayer life based on trusting His leadership. An important aspect in loving people is seen in embracing a lifestyle of fasting and prayer so that we are prepared to release more of the power of the Spirit to them. The lives of John the Baptist, Elijah, Paul, and the apostles testify to this.
- G. Love is rightly focused on meeting people’s physical needs with food and clothing. However, since people are eternal spiritual beings, they need more than having their physical needs meet.

- H. Love requires more than sentimental humanism, which lacks a relationship to Jesus on God's terms. Allegiance to Jesus provides us the standard and source to be properly motivated and energized in love. One core issue at the end of the age will be in how love is defined. We must define love on God's terms, not by the humanistic culture that seeks love without reference to obedience to Jesus. The true definition of love and good works is found in allegiance to Jesus.
- I. God uses love to awaken the human heart to truth about Jesus, which meets their greater eternal need. Its ideal is to produce gratitude to God and love for truth in them. Love draws people to truth (not to us), providing opportunity for their greater eternal need to be met in Jesus. Secular humanism is content to help people without meeting their deeper spiritual need. We love God as we seek to enrich others on Jesus' terms.

## V. THE SUPREME VALUE OF LOVE: IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT LASTS

- A. The supreme value of love can only be understood when it is set in context to the eternal realm of the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Paul earlier emphasized that all believers will give an account of their life and ministry to God (1 Cor. 3:10-15).  
<sup>1</sup> *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.<sup>2</sup> Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries ... but have not love, I am nothing.<sup>3</sup> Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and ... give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)*
- B. The character of love (13:4-7): the eternal nature of God (holiness). Paul gives us the essence of love as suffering long (by not judging harshly) and in being kind (v. 4a). Paul defines how love does not act by using 8 negatives (vv. 4b-6b) and how it does act in using 5 positives (vv. 6-7).  
<sup>4</sup> *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;<sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;<sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;<sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)*
- C. The superiority of love is seen in its permanence in eternity.  
<sup>8</sup> *Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail [pass away]. (1 Cor. 13:8)*
- D. Love never fails because every movement of our heart in love is remembered and rewarded by God forever at the Judgment Seat of Christ, whether it is received by people or not. No investment of love is forgotten, wasted or lost in God's sight.  
<sup>10</sup> *God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)*
- E. Love is the greatest. Faith (agreement with God's Word) is the way to release the gifts of the Spirit. Love is the purpose for them. Faith is how the gifts function. Love is why they function. Hope stabilizes us. We must be strong in faith and anchored in hope to walk in love.  
<sup>13</sup> *Now abide faith, hope, love ... the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13:13)*