

Loving God with All of Our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength (Mk. 12:30)

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

In Mark 12:30, Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Now, God created us to love Him in these four spheres of our life. These are distinct spheres of our life. They do overlap, but they are distinct.

The reason God created us to love Him in this way, is because this is the way He loves us. Can you imagine that God loves you with all His mind? You look up into the sky on a starry night, and see the vast universe and the vastness of God’s mind. God says, “I love you with all My mind and that is why I want you to love Me with all your mind.”

Now, love does not automatically develop in these four distinct spheres of life without our involvement. We have an involvement in each one of them and they are distinctly different.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT

Paragraph B. Matthew 22. Matthew added another sentence to Jesus’ statement which Mark omitted. It is in verse 38 (paraphrased). Jesus added, “This is the first commandment and this is the great commandment.”

Paragraph C. It is the first commandment, because it is God’s first priority. It is the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit in your life. If you are paying attention to the Spirit and you are actually receiving His direction, I assure you, the first thing He is emphasizing, is that you would love God in these four ways. That is always first on His agenda. It is the thing He is doing first in the church.

But it is not only the first commandment, it is the great one. It has the greatest impact on God’s heart. It is the one commandment that impacts God the most. It moves His heart and it impacts our heart. It impacts the hearts of the people we love in the overflow of loving God.

THE GREATEST CALLING

Paragraph D. It does not just have the greatest impact, but it is the greatest calling. I have talked to people through the years and they are anxious about discovering God’s will for their life. They are really stirred about this and it is a good thing to be stirred about it. When you ask them about the will of God for their life they are mostly focused on what are they supposed to do. But the will of God for your life—although it does involve this for sure—is first what you are supposed to become, not what you are supposed to do.

So, I meet a person and they say, “I am struggling to find the will of God,” and I am thinking, “I already know the main will of God for your life: the first commandment. It is the first priority.”

They are mainly focused on what they are supposed to do, and God does care about that, but what we are supposed to become is more important and this needs to capture our understanding, our mind. So, I talked to some young people and they said, “I want the greatest calling there is, the greatest.”

I said, “Good. You can have it.”

They said, “Good. Is that a prophecy?”

I said, “Yes, it is.”

What some of them are thinking is that the greatest calling means the biggest stadium in which to minister. The greatest calling is not about the biggest stadium. Truly, it is about having the biggest heart you can give in cooperation with the grace of God.

This is real. It is not just a cute statement. The greatest calling is within the reach of every single one of you if you want it. You may never minister in a stadium, but you can still live the great commandment, which is the greatest calling.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART

Paragraph E. We will look at each of these four and we will spend most of our time on the last one: loving God with all of our soul, because I think that is the one which challenges us the most.

We will start with loving God with all our heart. We are to love God in a way that involves and touches our emotions. It is not just a cold, distant, obedient, dutiful servanthood. It is not that we are involved in a program of ministering to people in a dutiful and responsible way. We are to love God in a way that effects and stirs our emotions. I am not talking about emotionalism. I am not talking about stirring ourselves up, but I am talking about consciously doing what is in the Word of God, which increases our desire for God.

Now the Bible makes it clear that we have a significant role in determining how our emotions develop over time. Some imagine that whatever happens in their emotions, just happens, but I want to tell you that you have a significant involvement in the development of your emotions and of how you feel.

It takes a while to change your emotions, but you can change them. Our emotions will follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. You set yourself to pursue something and your emotions will take hold of it the longer you pursue it. It is just how the human spirit works.

WE NEED TO SET OUR LOVE ON HIM

When Jesus said, “Love Me with all your heart,” He meant, “Love Me in a way that causes your emotions to take hold of Me and to connect with Me,” because it is within the reach of every human to do that.

In Psalm 91:14, God talks about the person who sets his love on God.

If we set our love on Him, our desire for love will increase. We need to make it an object of focus, go after it, and not just say, “Well, I love God kind of on the way, you know. Sure, I love God in a general sense.” That is not enough. We need to set our love on Him and say, “Lord, I want my heart and my emotions to be engaged in my pursuit of You.” Again, I am not talking about how we express our emotions in a meeting. I am talking about the way our heart engages with God.

Now, as you change your mind, the Spirit will change your emotions. You have power to change your mind, and the Spirit will change your emotions, according to what you do with your mind. Some folks say, “I just grit my teeth and change my emotions.” How does that work? You set your mind on pursuing things and your emotions will follow in time.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND

Paragraph F. The second sphere is loving God with all our mind. We do this by filling our mind with that which inspires love for God instead of filling it with that which diminishes love for God. Our mind is the doorway to our inner man. What we do with our mind greatly affects our capacity to love. If we fill our minds with the right things, our capacity to love increases. If we fill our mind with wrong things, our capacity to love diminishes.

Now, much of our life and even most of our life actually occurs in our mind. Maybe that is a strange idea, but most of your life actually occurs in your mind. Your mind is going twenty-four hours a day. It never stops. It is not supposed to stop. It never will. It is designed that way. Your mind will be actively going twenty-four hours a day, for billions of years. There is never a time that your mind stops, never.

Paragraph G. The language of the human spirit is images, it is pictures. That is the language of your spirit. If I say, “Pink elephant,” you do not just think of the concept. You instantly picture a pink elephant. Our mind is an internal movie screen that continually shows pictures. It is always running and it will run forever. It will never stop. When you sleep, you recognize a fraction of one percent of the images. We call those *dreams*, but you are never aware of the vast majority of the images.

OUR MIND IS LIKE A VAST UNIVERSE

Paragraph H. Your mind is like a vast universe within. It is vast. You will be learning and remembering things for billions of years and you will never exhaust the capacity of your mind in the resurrection. It is vast.

In this age there are so many layers in the natural mind, that we cannot recall most of what is in that big hard drive called *the human mind*. It is a vast universe. It can never be turned off, never. For billions of years, the images can never be shut down, but they can be directed. The images can be changed. We can replace the dark thoughts with new ones. We can rewrite the movie script which goes on on the inside. We can rewrite it.

Now, it is interesting that we are the producer, we are the main star, and we are the consumer in that movie script. We produce it, we act in it, and we watch it. We are both the hero and the villain in all our movies, and some others are involved as well. Now, that is kind of funny, but it is actually true.

The reason I am saying this, is that with the vast influential power of the mind, it is amazing that so many believers are so casual about what they do with their mind. The mind is this glorious and powerful reality that has vast potential. It is amazing what believers do with their mind and the amount of time they fill their mind with entertainment and the amount of time they daydream about vanity, when they have the Holy Spirit and a Bible and the kingdom of God.

The Lord is saying, “Love Me with your mind. Do not fill your mind with so much entertainment and do not be so absorbed in daydreaming about vanity. Take hold of the reins of your mind. Read the Word of God. Love Me with your mind.”

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH

Sphere number three is loving God with our strength. To love God with all our strength refers to our natural strength and our natural resources. Our natural resources are more than just money. They are our time, our physical energy, and our words.

Now, we express love for God by the way we choose to invest our resources. When we give God our strength or our resources, we express our love for God in a way that is meaningful to Him and in a way He cares about. Again, I am not talking about money only. I am talking about all our strength. God takes that personally. He takes it as an act of love, because it is costly for us to give our resources to Him. It costs us something. We lose something in the natural when we give our resources to Him. Now, He always returns them. He multiplies them and returns them, but for that moment we actually lose them. We do this because we love Him and He takes it personally. He smiles and He says, “I like that.”

It says in Hebrews 6:10 (paraphrased), that God will not forget the love you show towards Him when you do things for other people. You are actually showing love to Him and He sees it that way.

Now, the normal thing to do for all human beings is to use our resources to increase our personal comfort and our personal honor. We use our time, we use our money, and we use our words to obtain more honor and to get more things coming our way. There is nothing wrong with that. We are supposed to do this, but we are not supposed to use *all* our strengths that way. Part of our strength we are to give away. We are to sow it with a view to loving God. We give it away and we actually lose it temporarily, because we love Him and He receives it as a statement of love.

SOWING INTO GOD’S BANK

Paragraph K. Every time we invest our strength into our relationship with Him or into His purposes, He sees it. Now, when we sow our time, when we sow our money, when we sow our physical energy, we are sowing it into God’s bank, so to speak. God takes careful record of it, He records it, He notes it, He remembers it, He esteems it, He values it, and then He returns it to us, but multiplied.

You give God your time and I assure you that when you give God your time, you are giving Him a chance to increase your influence. When you are giving Him your time you are giving Him some of your effectiveness and your productivity. I give God a couple of hours and I say, “God, that was a few hours I could have been productive in. I could have built my life more strongly.”

It is as if He says, “I know.”

“But I am giving You those couple of hours and I am giving You part of my productivity because I love You.”

The Lord may say something like this, “Watch this. I will return your productivity back multiplied. You will never outgive Me, never!”

Now, the issue is this: God will give it back in His way and in His time. If you measure it in months, you will not see it accurately, because you need to measure it in decades.

It is true. I remember when I was first called to prayer. I was pretty excited by the concept of prayer. When the Lord first called me in my early twenties, in a really definitive way, I told everybody. I had not prayed yet, but I told everybody, “I am an intercessor.” I was so excited that I had received a call, but I did not quite get what it was. Then I started doing it and of course it wore off pretty quickly. I hit that wall and I said, “Oh man, this is intense,” because it was so boring.

And I ran into another problem besides boredom. Boredom was my first problem and I thought, “Oh, this is a great story. It is a great thing to tell people, but it is a really boring way to live.” If you had told me back then, that I was going to lead a twenty-four-hour prayer ministry, I would have said, “Not a chance, prayer is not my thing.” I mean, literally, I would have said, “I love God, but prayer is not my thing. It is not what I am good at.”

PRAYER SEEMED SUCH A WASTE OF TIME

So, first I was excited, then secondly, when I did it I was bored, and thirdly, I had a theological problem or a philosophical problem: it seemed like such a waste of time.

The time issue troubled me more than the boredom issue. I said, “Listen God, I love You, but if You let me throw this prayer thing away and You just let me loose, I can do a lot for You. I can be far more productive if I can use all that time to go and do stuff. I will lead more people to You, Lord, and I will encourage more people. I will make more impact for love if You will just let me loose and let me off the hook with this prayer thing. Not just because it is boring, but because it is so time-consuming and it is cutting into my productivity.”

Of course, I did not hear any of this, but the Lord answered me back several years later. He said, “You need to measure your productivity in terms of decades and not in terms of months. You will have far more productivity if you give Me those couple of hours every day. You will lose your immediate productivity, but I will return back to you far more than you would have had if you had not sowed your time in love before Me, doing it My way.”

THE FASTED LIFESTYLE

2 Corinthians 12:9. I call this verse the principle of the fasted lifestyle. This is the main principle and main verse I use when I think of the fasted lifestyle. Paul is suffering persecution and he is pained over it. People are speaking wrong things about him, lies about him. He is getting beaten with whips. He is being put in prison. People are undermining his ministry and hindering his money. Every time he turns around, something is coming against him, and the Lord appears to him and says in effect, “Paul, let Me explain something to you. My grace is sufficient for you, because My strength will be perfected in you as you continue in weakness” (v.9, paraphrased). That is an interesting phrase.

Now, the weakness the Lord is talking about is not moral weakness. He is not saying, “As you keep sinning and seeking forgiveness, you will see how nice I am.”

That is true. You *do* see how nice God is when He forgives you and He forgives me, but Paul is not talking about moral weakness here. He is talking about voluntarily embracing weakness in the choices he is making, meaning, if he walks into that one city and preaches, he is going to get beaten up. He knows it. He is going to get hit with rods, but he walks in, he preaches, and they beat him. He comes back and it is as if he says “Ah, I am just really set back. I am in pain. I cannot minister for a while.” In other words, he voluntarily embraces weakness in terms of his productivity and strength.

And the Lord may say, “You wait and see what I will do.”

Now, you do not go and stir people up and cause trouble. You just be faithful to the truth and trouble will find you.

TYPES OF WEAKNESS

Another type of weakness is prayer. I give up a couple of hours of my time—my time is my productivity—to sit in a room and tell God what He tells me to tell Him. You say, “God, I can do more.” God says, “No, give Me your productivity, your time. You tell Me what I tell you to tell Me.” That is weakness, because I am giving my strength away.

You tithe your money. You give ten percent and go beyond that and give another ten percent. When you give your money, you are giving your strength and your ability of influence. You actually really lose it. When you give one hundred dollars, that one hundred dollars is really gone. It is as if the Lord says, “In My accounting system, I will return the financial strength you have lost. I will return what you have lost in productivity by giving Me your time. I will return everything back to you in My timing.”

TWO DIMENSIONS OF GRACE

That is called weakness, but weakness is the context in which God releases His strength. Now, when He says, “My grace is sufficient for you,” the word *grace* has two components. There is a mercy dimension of grace, which is unmerited favor. God forgives you.

We talk about His grace and often we mean His mercy or His willingness to give us unmerited favor. We do not deserve it, but we get it. There is a mercy dimension to grace, but there is a bigger dimension to grace than mercy. Mercy is a sub-unit of grace.

The other dimension of grace, which is what it mostly means, is God’s enabling or God’s empowering in your life. So, the Lord is not saying, “My forgiveness for you is sufficient.” He is saying in effect, “My enabling of you is sufficient. If you will embrace weakness, you will see a greater enabling. You will see a greater increase called *perfected strength*.”

FIVE WAYS IN WHICH WE FAST OUR STRENGTH

Paragraph M. We fast our strength in five main ways as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The five main areas are by serving, by giving money, by praying—because that is an investment of time—and by blessing our adversaries, by speaking words of blessing instead of speaking words to settle the score, to get even. Instead of speaking words to put our adversaries in place, we bless them, we speak opposite words.

The fifth way is by fasting food. Fasting food is not really about hunger. It may seem that way if you are new at fasting. Fasting is mostly about physical weakness. I mean, you are hungry for a day or two when you fast. You are always hungry a little bit, but the compelling hunger lifts.

The far bigger problem with fasting is that you are emotionally, mentally, and physically wobbly. As I go on different fasts, I say, “Lord, I have work to do. I cannot pay attention. I am staring. I am making a handout. I am writing the same sentence ten times. Lord, I have the Friday night meeting in one hour. I cannot make it work.”

It is as if the Lord says, “Stay with it. Stay with the fasting.”

Fasting is physical weakness. We do not have the same ability, we do not have that clarity of mind. Our emotions get wobbly, our mind is wobbly, and our body is wobbly. We really give our strength to the Lord when we do that.

But, when you fast, do not measure it in months. Measure it in years and you will have far greater productivity when you look back over ten years. God really does take it into account.

FASTING BY SERVING PEOPLE

Serving people is a form of fasting. When you are serving people, you really lose time and energy. You really could use that same time and that same energy to enrich your life. You give time and energy which you will never get back except that God returns it in His own way later.

And He receives it as love. It is as if the Lord says, “I take it very personally that you invested yourself in that way.”

Now, this is called *loving God with your strength* and He wants us to love Him with our strength. This is different than loving Him with our mind and different than loving Him with our heart.

LOVING GOD WITH OUR SOUL

Now we will go to the final sphere, the fourth sphere: loving God with our soul. When we love God with our soul, this is related to how we derive our identity. How we establish our identity is related to loving God with our soul.

Let me explain. Our identity is determined by how we define success and value, by how we see ourselves. The most natural way we define success is by our accomplishments. Or we get our success from other people’s approval. But what the Lord wants us to do, is find our identity, our definition of success, in our relationship with the Lord instead of in our accomplishments or from other people. We all naturally and automatically find our identity in what we accomplish and who recognizes us. It is as if the Lord says, “I want you to go on a journey of shifting in a radical way the way you define success and therefore, the way you derive your identity, the way you see yourself.

GOD’S LOVE FOR US DETERMINES OUR PERSONAL WORTH

Paragraph O. This is a foundational point. This is Christianity 101, but it is a foundation of which we need to be constantly reminded. God’s love for us, and the fact that He loves us, is what determines our personal worth.

The reason I am worth so much and the reason you are worth so much, is because God has chosen you and He loves you. Secondly, because you have responded back and you love Him. Now, it is not a small thing that you love Him. That is not a small thing, it is not an automatic thing.

Of all the billions of people on the earth, about a billion people—according to the statistics—love God. That leaves about six billion people who do not love God.

Now, you are so used to being saved that you think this is not a big deal. No, you are in the significant minority of history. You are of the minority to whom God said, “I love you,” and by the grace of God you said, “I will take it and I will return it, I will love You too.” Beloved, that is what makes your life successful in the most profound sense.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Paragraph P. We need to be anchored in the truth that our success and our worth are based on the fact that He loves us and we love Him, instead of it being based on our accomplishments, our recognition, our possessions, and our relationships. Those are the natural ways through which we get our identity: by how much we achieve and who recognizes it. But that is a really broken system.

Because of our natural mindset and because of the darkness of our mind, almost everybody's first response—unless they unlearn it—is to feel rejected and neglected by people. The whole human race feels this way.

So, if we get our identity by being recognized by people, our default is to feel rejected and neglected and we will have so much emotional traffic in the way. Then our accomplishments seem so small and so unnoticed, that we do not like them. They say, “That ministry? It is pathetic. It is not even worth it.”

Most people look at their accomplishments and they despise them because they seem so insignificant and so small. So, that means most people are in an identity crisis of the hugest proportions. They think most of the people around them are rejecting and neglecting them and they think most of their labors are really, really small and unnoticed by anybody. So, they are in a crisis of identity and it creates a storm of emotional traffic on the inside, a storm of constant preoccupation with trying to find some way of feeling valuable.

Then, all the media tells us how to do it with all the fashions and looks and styles. I am not against all that stuff. I am against some of it, but not all of it.

We are just in a storm of being preoccupied with figuring out how somebody can look at us and say, “Wow!” People spend their entire lives for decades caught up in that whirlwind and they cannot really connect with God in any way compared to how they would be able to, if they were not living with this identity crisis.

THE CONFESSION

Paragraph Q. The confession. This is a sentence I started saying some decades ago when I come under pressure. When you come under pressure it makes you philosophical. I think it makes almost everyone philosophical. You say, “Why am I even doing this anyway?” When pressure hits, it makes us ask big questions.

I would go through the different answers and the only way I could get comfort in the early days and also in these days, is by using this same sentence, this very simple sentence. I would say, “Wait, wait a second. My ministry is not very good. My relationships are not that great. My money is not so cool. I am really not so great in this and I am not that great in that.”

Then I would hear that little whisper, “But, I really love you, Mike. I really love you and I am God.”

You know what? That works for me. The Genesis 1 God, the only one who has Genesis 1 on His resume, He likes me—the Genesis 1 God.

I would say, “You know, that works. Wow.” I would get this idea that I have it made.

Then the Lord would say, “That is not it. It is not enough that I like you. I want you to respond and to love Me. If I love you and you love Me, you are already successful.”

Going through the philosophical questions I could feel the pressure, and the only way I could land with comfort was by saying, “I am loved by God, and I am a lover of God, therefore I am already successful. I made it! Everything else is icing on the cake. I have already made it!” Then I would be happy.

If you feel successful, the relationships, the money, the difficulties, the problems, and the resistance come into perspective.

BURNOUT

Burnout does not come from hard work. Burnout comes from working with a wrong spirit. You will not get burned out, because you work long hours. You get burned out, because you are working long hours with a wrong spirit, meaning, you are working to become successful at the heart level. When you work in order to become successful, the work will burn you out. If you work because you already are successful, the work will actually strengthen your spirit. So, if we work from success, we get renewed, but if we work to become successful, we get burned out. I can do long hours at IHOP–KC and I can be involved in difficult problems in people’s lives and difficult solutions if, in my core, I already know I am successful. But if I am doing the work so I can prove that I have a ministry, that work will burn me out and I will be disillusioned.

So, the Lord wants us to shift the way we get our identity. This is how we love God with our soul, so that our identity is in our relationship with Him and not in what we produce with our hands or who recognizes us.

It is a journey to make the change and to make that identity shift. It is not a one-day decision. You make the decision one day and then you just go on that journey and you stick with it. I have been on that journey for years and sometimes I lose my way and then I sign back up. I lose my way and I sign back up. I lose my way and I sign back up.

I lose my way, I become philosophical, and the only way I get my comfort is by saying, “I am loved and I am a lover, therefore, I am successful. OK, my problem is not that big, because my spirit is happy now.”

When you have a right identity it removes so much of the emotional traffic. You can love God far better with a clear spirit. Jesus said, “Love Me with all your soul,” and this is what I believe He meant.

JESUS IS OUR PREMIER EXAMPLE

Paragraph A. Jesus is the premier example of loving God with all His soul or with a right identity, with a kingdom identity.

Now, none of us have that identity by nature. We focus on it and we cultivate it. Again, we have to sign up for it thousands of times, and we lose our way and sign up again.

Now, Jesus’ identity was rooted in the fact that He loved God the Father, and He loved people. That was where His identity was. It was in love. His identity was in His humility. Jesus’ identity was not in the response the people gave Him when He was here on the earth.

Philippians 2:6-8. The place where Jesus’ humility is most clearly expressed is when He became a man and died on the cross. Let’s read it. “Jesus, who being in the form of God...” (v. 6, paraphrased). This is Paul talking.

There is some really unusual language here if you are not familiar with these three verses, but these three verses are a gold mine. They are an absolute goldmine of truth. This is a steak that you could eat for ten years! If you studied only these three verses for years you would never exhaust them. They are so vast in their meaning.

JESUS MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION

“Jesus, being in the form of God...” (v. 6, paraphrased). So, He had the form of God. He had all the power of God. He had all the privileges that go with having all the power of God. That is what it means to be in the form of God. He had all the power and He had all the privileges that go with the power. It was all His. He was in the form of God.

“He did not consider it robbery”—that is an interesting phrase—“to be equal with God, but He made Himself of no reputation” (v. 6–7). A number of translations say, “He emptied Himself.” Jesus emptied Himself or He emptied Himself of reputation. That is what this is talking about. He decided He would live in a way without any regard to how the people responded to Him or gave Him recognition or affirmation. He emptied Himself of living for human affirmation. That is one part of this, it is bigger than that, but it is a part of it.

JESUS HAD A SERVANT’S HEART

“Taking the form of a bondservant” (v. 7). Now, He took on the form of a bondservant. He adopted the outward lifestyle of a bondservant. It means that when people saw Him through His words and actions, He exhibited the behavior of a servant.

The reason He took on the form of a bondservant when He became a man, is because for all eternity He had a servant’s heart. Jesus did not become a servant when He became a man. He always had a servant’s heart, but when He became a man His servant heart was openly seen in the human arena.

In the ancient world and even in our world today, being a servant was not something that was esteemed. It was actually a real put-down because the word means *a slave*. A man in the ancient world, who was a slave, had very little value. That is how He exhibited His behavior, like a slave, and nobody knew the truth about who He was. The reason He took on the form, or the outward behavior of a slave is because inwardly He had a servant’s heart.

JESUS CAME IN THE LIKENESS OF A MAN

It says that He became of no reputation. He decided when He was in the human arena that He would not live in regard to how men valued Him. He made Himself of no reputation. He said in effect, “I am not going to live by what they say about Me. If they completely ignore Me, I am going to live the same way before God. If they want to make Me king, I will not be king except by the will of God. I will not go high. I will not go low. I will be of no reputation. What they say will not move Me in any way.” This is remarkable.

“And He came in the likeness of a man, being found in the appearance of a man” (Phil. 2:7–8, paraphrased). Now, that seems pretty cool. Being human is really awesome unless you are the uncreated God. Then, being human is a real step down. For the rest of creation, being human is a real step up, but for the uncreated God to be human was a dynamic, significant limitation and restraint. This is a huge statement.

When He became man—the incarnation, when He was born—I cannot imagine what the angels said. I cannot wait to talk to them face to face on a regular basis and ask them things like, “What did you think when Jesus became human?”

They may say, “Oh my goodness, it shocked all of us. We could hardly even believe the report.”

Maybe they will say it all differently. It is shocking. There is nothing to compare it to. Even a king in a palace becoming a slave in the field does not compare to God becoming human.

TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD

Paragraph B. Let’s look at this strange phrase: “Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (v. 6). So, to be equal with God means to be equal in privilege and in honor, to be equal in the privileges that are God’s.

You can apply this two different ways. I believe both ways are valid. Both ways have an application. Jesus could have said that He would not take anything from God the Father by insisting on having the equal privileges that God the Father enjoyed, because He is as much God as the Father. But that would not have been robbery.

Then on the other side of the spectrum, He did not consider it robbery—or take anything from Himself—if He refused all the privileges.

Here He is—God—but refusing all the privileges. He can take them all and He would be not be stealing anything from the Father or He can refuse them all and would not be stealing anything from His identity or the glory of who He was. He could have gone in either direction. He could have said, “I want all the privileges of the Father.” The Father would not have looked over the balcony of heaven and said, “Hey, wait, you are taking all of My privileges,” because He deserves the Father’s privileges. It would not have been robbery.

Now, the angels might have looked at Him and said, “How come You are living like a poor man? You are God.” Jesus might have said, “It does not take anything for Me at all to live like this, because My identity is not in what I have before men. My identity is in My relationship with God. My identity is in humility and in love, not in what I get from men in My thirty-three years on the earth.”

You have to read these notes a bit and say, “Huh, intense.”

“What did I just say?”

“I don’t know, but it was intense.”

That is OK, but what I am saying is to take these notes and a few of the phrases and just work on them. Take them to the prayer room and say, “Lord, write this on my heart.”

JESUS WAS FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN

Paragraph C. After the incarnation, after He became human, He had two natures. He was fully God and fully man. Now, the Father only has one nature. Jesus is the only one in existence who has two natures. No human

has two natures and the Father and the Spirit only have one nature, but Jesus has two: He is fully God and fully man.

This is a great mystery. Though He was never less than God for the thirty-three years that He was on the earth, He lived as though He was never more than a man, meaning, He had the form of God, and He had the power to greatly influence people. In the form of God He had all the power of God and all the rights to use it. That is what it means to have the form of God. He had all the power and all the rights to use it to influence people, but it was as if He said, “No, I am not going to do it. I am going to be like every other godly person. I am going to pray, fast, and wait on the Spirit, and when the Spirit leads Me, then I will use God’s power to influence people. I will wait on the Spirit like every other human being has to.”

Now, it was essential that Jesus took this humility because if He was going to qualify as a human savior, a human high priest, He had to live totally within the boundaries of humanity.

So, you could interview Jesus and say, “Jesus, how are You doing with this significant downgrade of being human? How are You handling this? Is it really hard to get used to?”

Jesus might say, “The humility is necessary,” because He had to live within these restraints in order to qualify as a human savior for us. He might say, “It does not make any difference to Me. My humility has been in place from eternity past. I do not get My identity from My power before people. My identity is in humility and in love. It is not in what people do. It is not in how they respond to Me.”

JESUS IDENTITY WAS ROOTED IN GOD

Paragraph D. In denying Himself of these privileges by being a servant, He did not deny His true identity, but rather He was actually being true to Himself. When He was a servant it was not an exterior role. He did not take on a foreign role or put on a foreign garment. When He was a servant He was totally at home and He was true to His true self, because He has been a servant from eternity past.

When He is the king of the earth in the Millennial Kingdom, when He will be openly seen as King, He will be one hundred percent a servant. He will be the same.

Paragraph E. Isaiah 53:2–3. This is an interesting passage. “He has no form or comeliness, and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected...and we did not esteem Him.”

Jesus emptied Himself of His reputation in the eyes of men, because as a man He embraced this lifestyle of a servant. He had to do it in order to enhance us, because He could not have saved us if He did not live in the constraints of humanity. He had to be human to do it. He had to keep the rules, so to speak, and stay inside the boundary lines of humanity if He was going to be a human savior. That was no problem to Him because His core identity was humility and love.

JESUS IDENTITY WAS NOT IN HIS POWER OR IN HIS ABILITIES

So, as He embraced this lifestyle, every single person who met him, every person without exception—His mother, His father, everyone—greatly underestimated Him and they underestimated His abilities.

When He was twenty years old, living in the neighborhood, not one human being had any idea how superior His intellect and abilities were. He had no need to show them in order to garner a response which would enhance His life to make it better. It was as if He said, “I have no need to show how unique and how superior I am.”

The opposite is true of us. We get our identity by recognition from people. We go out of our way to show how unique and superior we are. We work overtime to prove we have more than everybody else has.

Here is Jesus, twenty years old, walking through town, far more intelligent, far more powerful, far more gifted than His closest companions ever knew. Even the twelve apostles never knew.

When Jesus visits John on the island of Patmos sixty or seventy years later, John, who knew Jesus best, fell like a dead man. He looked at Jesus and said, "Aaaghh!" Jesus might have said to him, “You did not really know Me that well, did you?” It is as if John said, “I had no idea You were at this level.” Jesus might have said, “I am way beyond this.”

But think about it: nobody knew how superior He was. Nobody knew how distinct He was. He appeared ordinary with no special form. That meant He had no status in society. He had no comeliness. He had no specific attraction that made anybody turn their head and notice Him, and He was completely at peace in His Spirit and completely at peace in His heart. Now, that is an identity based in God. He is our example.

JESUS CAME TO DIE FOR US AND MAKE THE FATHER KNOWN

Paragraph F. What was most important to Jesus was to tell the Father’s story, to make the Father known and to enrich our lives by dying for us. He was absolutely preoccupied in making the Father known and enriching our lives.

“Yes, but what kind of applause did You get?”

Even His main guys denied Him and at His resurrection, when Mary Magdalene said He rose from the dead, they did not even believe her. They said in effect, “No way, He did not rise.” His main guys did not buy it.

If His core identity was in having power over people, then the incarnation would have been a denial of His true self. When He became a man, He did not deny His true self. His identity was in love and humility, not in showing His power. He showed His power in order to accomplish the will of God, but it did not enhance who He was.

I am just guessing, but when I think about Jesus, I do not think that when Jesus walked around the earth He said, “Oh, boy, do I have power!” I mean, He did Genesis 1.

JESUS IDENTITY WAS IN HIS LOVE

I believe when He walked around the earth He thought, “Oh, how I love to love.” It is as if you meet a little baby, an infant, and you get right up next to him and say, “OK little guy, let’s arm wrestle right now, you and me. Come on, put it right there.” And he cannot even put his arm up.

Then you say, “OK, forget the arm wrestling. I want to show you my superior power. Bring the chess board out right now. I am going to set you in your place.” The little guy would look up and just spit.

When an adult sees a little baby, they do not say, “Wow, do I have power over you!” An adult sees a little baby and says, “Wow, I love you.”

When Jesus was among His people, He was not thinking about how to wow them. He was thinking about how He loved them. He had so much more power that it was not even an issue. People were always trying to get Him to prove His power. It was as if He was saying, “That is like arm wrestling a baby. I do not need to show Myself superior. There is no point in it.” It is like playing chess with a baby.

When you see a baby, you do not think, “Wow, do I have power over you.” You think, “Wow, I love you. Wow, I feel for you. I want to make your life strong.”

Jesus’ identity was not in His power. His identity was in His love. That is where He lived.

JESUS DID NOT SERVE TO PROVE HIMSELF

Paragraph G. Jesus did not serve to prove something, but when He served He expressed the truth of who He was. He was so comfortable washing the feet of the disciples. There was nothing un-God like about washing feet. He was true to Himself. He had that same heart a billion years ago and He will have it a billion years from now. He will always love washing feet. This is what He is like, because His identity is in the right place.

And the Lord says to us, “Love Me with all your soul. Establish your identity in your relationship with Me and you will love Me with so much more clarity and depth.”

Amen. Let’s stand. Let’s open our heart before the Lord.

“Father, we come before You now. We come before You and we say we want to love You with all our soul. Holy Spirit, I ask You to move in this room.”



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