



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

➤ **Matthew 22:34**

Now when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they assembled together.

➤ **22:35 And one of them, an expert in religious law, asked him a question to test him:**

➤ **22:36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"**

➤ **Matthew 22:37**

**Jesus said to him,
'*Love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your mind.*'**

➤ **22:38** **This is the first and
greatest commandment.**

➤ **Matthew 22:39**

The second is like it:

**'Love your neighbor
as yourself.'**

➤ **22:40** All the law
and the prophets
depend {hinge} on these
two commandments."

- A legal expert from among the Pharisees asks Jesus a question in order to test him,
- "***Which commandment in the law is greatest?***"
(Matthew 22:36).

- **No love was lost**
between the expert or scribe
and the Sadducees.
- The profession
of the **scribes**
was to interpret the law
in all its many
rules and regulations.

- As the Sadducee did not accept the oral law at all.
 - The scribe would no doubt be well satisfied with the failure of the Sadducees.

- This scribe came to Jesus with a question which was often a matter of debate in the rabbinic schools.
- In Judaism there was the tendency to expand the law into hundreds and thousands of rules and regulations.

- But there was also the tendency to try to gather up the law into one sentence,
- One general statement which would be a concise statement of its whole message.

- There were those who believed that there were lighter and weightier matters of the law,
- That there were great principles which were all-important to grasp.

- As Augustine later said,
 "Love God--
 and do what you like."
- But there were others
 who held that
 every smallest principle
 was equally binding
 and that to try to
 distinguish between
 their relative importance
 was highly dangerous.

- The scribe who asked Jesus this question was asking about something which was a living issue in Jewish thought and discussion.
- For His answer Jesus took two great commandments and put them together.

- **"Hear, O Israel,
the Lord our God
is one Lord."**
(Deuteronomy 6:4)

- That single sentence is **the real creed of Judaism.**
 - It is called the **Shema.**

- Shema is the Hebrew verb “to hear”.
- It was and is the sentence with which the service of the synagogue always begins and ends.

- When Jesus quoted this sentence as the first commandment, every devout Jew would agree with him.
 - Then, Jesus said:
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
(Leviticus 19:18)

- **In its original context**
it has to do with
a man's fellow Jew.
 - It would **not** have
included the **Gentile**,
whom it was quite
permissible to hate.

- But Jesus quoted it **without qualification** and without boundaries.
- He took an old law and fined it with **a new meaning.**

- **The new thing** that Jesus did was to put these two commandments together.
- No **rabbi** had ever done that before.

- Jesus was saying that the only way in which a man can prove that he loves God is by showing that he loves his fellow man.

- If we really listen to and ponder the words Jesus is saying,
it is a little more difficult than it first sounds.
- *Love God with all your heart.*
How do you do that?
 - How do you love God with all your soul?
 - How do you love God with all your mind?

- We usually love things we can explicitly experience with our senses.
 - Things we can touch, see, smell, taste, hear.
- How do we love God, something we can't explicitly experience with our senses?

- How do we experience God in general?
 - Who is considered to be my neighbor?
- These are all questions that rise up and don't have any clear answers.
- So, Jesus' commandment, which is the core of this Gospel passage, isn't nearly as straightforward as first seemed.

- There are over 600 commandments in the Old Testament, and this Pharisees is really challenging Jesus when he ask him which commandment above all the rest is the greatest.

- And Jesus names not one but two commandments from the Hebrew Scriptures.
- The first commandment that Jesus gives, was no great surprise to the Pharisees.
- They heard it before and knew it well.

- What was a bit surprising to the Pharisees was the second commandment:

- “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
(Leviticus 19:18)

- **It was a bold move by Jesus** to elevate this commandment to the level of the scripture that inspired the Shema.
 - Jesus is really throwing **a curve ball at the Pharisees.**
 - How can you put love of neighbor **on the same level** of love of God?

- The key problem in interpreting this double commandment is that we lose sight of the biblical meaning of love.

- Our culture has equated love with intense emotion.

- To love is a stronger response than to like.
- Both are measures of a response to something outside us.

- We like chocolate:
we cannot help ourselves.
- We love a movie:
it entertains or moves us.
- We love a boy or girlfriend:
they make us happy.
- We love a spouse:
they complete us.

- **Biblical love**
is not passive
and it is not strictly emotional.
- In the Old Testament,
there are references to
many kinds of love.
- The word “**love**” alone
is found **131 times** in O.T.

- But the love referred to by Jesus is the love of Deuteronomy 6:5, the love of Jehovah God.
- This love is far from passive.
 - It is the active response of the faithful person to the love of God.

- God's love is also active.
- God chooses (elects) to love his creation.
(**John 3:16**)

- To love God with all one's heart, and soul, and mind, is to choose to respond to God even as God chooses to love us.
- Feelings and emotions do not enter into the equation.

- The word "love" is a flexible term in the English language.
- This explains how a person can say "I love tacos" in one sentence
 - And "I love my wife" in the next.
 - But these various definitions for "love" aren't limited to English.

- When we look at the ancient Greek language in which the New Testament was written, we see four distinct words used to describe the concept we refer to as "love."

- Those words are:
 - agape,
 - phileo,
 - storge,
 - eros.

- Only two of these are used in the New Testament (phileo and agape), it is important to understand how all of them work as compared to each other.

- In the New Testament, the principle word used for love is “agape”.

- phileo is the most general form of love in the Bible,
- Encompassing love for fellow humans, care, respect, and compassion for people in need.
- The most common form of phileo is friendship.

- Agapáō
and never philéō
is used of love
toward our enemies.
- Agape is greater
than that of phileo
because of its moral import,
- Love that
expresses compassion.

- We are thus commanded to love (agapáō) our enemies,
- To do what is necessary to turn them to Christ,
 - But never to befriend them (philéō) by adopting their interests and becoming friends on their level.

- Storge

is a natural response to a fellow human being.

- Romans 12:10:

"Love one another with brotherly affection."

- Storge love is natural, unforced, familial love;
- A great example of storge love is the love that a parent has for a child.

- The opposite of storge,
 - Is astorgos,
is used twice in the New Testament.
 - The definition of astorgos is "devoid of natural or instinctive affection, without affection to kindred."
 - In 2 Timothy 3:3 it is translated as "heartless" or "without love."

- Eros
is the word
for passion
or desire.

- Eros comes from the mythological Greek god Eros
and was the god of love,
the god of sexual desire,
physical attraction.

- We confuse
love with sex.
- We have been corrupted
by
movies, T.V., books
that love and sex
are one and the same,
 - They are NOT!

- Both phileo and eros are used sparingly in the New Testament.
 - Agape refers to what can be called loving-kindness.
- It is not passive emotion, but active mercy.

- Agape is marked by patience and generosity,
- Both acts generated by the one who loves.
- In short,
loving is a choice,
not a feeling.

- To love God with all our heart, mind, soul is impossible when we think of love as an emotion.

- How does one conjure up feelings for something as remote, mysterious, and disembodied as the concept of God?
- We cannot look into God's eyes, wrap our arms around or even see the face of Jesus.

- **If we could**,
that might evoke in us
a profound feeling of love.
- We might fall in love with
Jesus' beauty and grace
**if we could know him as
Mary and Martha
and Lazarus did.**

- But, we are commanded to love **an intangible God.**
- It is likely that many **will admit failure in** a deep, abiding affection for a God who is often distant and unknown.
- Nonetheless, to love God **is our duty as Christians.**

- Likewise,
loving our neighbor
is difficult.

- If love is merely
our passive response
to the person next to us,
we are likely to be
more often repulsed
than moved to love.

- How can one look into the face of an enemy and feel unqualified love?
- It is nearly impossible.

- But, biblical love is not passive.
- It is not something that occurs to us without our control or will.
- Biblical love is something we willingly do.

- It is loving-kindness, merciful action that is both generous and continuous.

- Herein is the good news...

- To love one's neighbor as oneself is to act toward the other as one would act toward those close to you.

- We treat the stranger as well as we treat those that we love emotionally.

- When the action to each is equal, the love to each is equal.
- This is counter to what we expect, but it is in keeping with what the commandment requires.

- This means that, to those with whom we are intimate,
- To those we do not know,
 - To those who may be detestable,
 - And even to those who are our enemy, we can act according to the law of love.

- We can be merciful and gracious.
- To love the neighbor as ourselves is to make a conscious choice and act upon it.

- Jesus laid down **the complete definition** of religion.
- (1) Religion consists **in loving God.**
- (2) Loving our **neighbor.**

- **It means that**
 - we must give to God total love,
- a love which **dominates** our emotions,
- a love which **directs** our thoughts,
 - a love which is the **dynamic** of our actions.
- All true religion starts with the love which is **total commitment of life to God.**

- **The second commandment**
which Jesus quotes comes from
Leviticus 19:18.
 - Our love for God
must issue in love
for mankind.
 - But it is to be noted
in which order
the commandments come;
 - It is love of God first,
and love of man second.

- **It is only when we love God** that man becomes lovable.
- Man is not a collection of chemical elements, not a brute creation, but that man is made in **the image of God** (**Genesis 1:26-27**).
- It is for that **reason** that man is lovable.

- **Take away the love of God**
and we can become
angry at our neighbor
the unteachable;
- **Pessimistic** about man
the unimprovable;
 - **Callous** to man
the machine.
 - The love of man
is firmly grounded
in the love of God.

- **To be truly religious**
is to love God
and to love the men
whom God made in his own image;
- And to love God and man,
not with a nebulous sentimentality,
but with that total commitment
which issues in
- **Devotion** to God
- Practical **service** to mankind.

- How do we love God?
- By having a forgiving spirit,
 - By loving God's people.
 - By worshiping God
 - By studying God's Word
 - and letting it correct us,
 - enlighten us,
 - and send us out in loving action to the world.

- When we love God's people,
we are always,
and at the same time
loving God.
- They are inseparable.

- Surprisingly, sometimes our emotions follow suit and we actually feel a love of other, like the love of God.
- But the emotion is not commanded.
- Only the action of love is commanded.

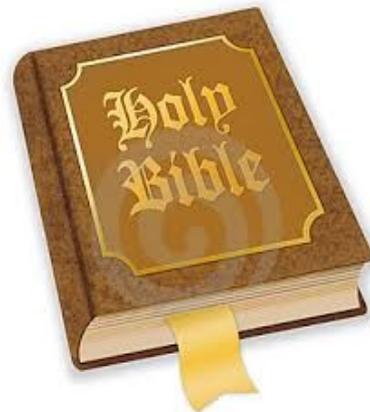
- On your own
you cannot do this.
- But in Christ,
this we can do,
even when we
don't feel like it.
- Philippians 4:13
**I can do all things
through Christ
which strengthens me.**

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say**

“Come”.

Revelation 22:17



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