

LOVE

TEXT: Various

THESIS: To get to the foundation of love so that we can build from it outward.

INTRODUCTION:

1. It is easy to forget that love is a basic fundamental principle of the Christian faith.
 - a. In Matthew 22:34-40, “when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 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. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
2. Now, this was not a new question.
 - a. This was a question which, with some others, divided the Jewish teachers into rival schools, and was a constant bone of contention--one of "those strivings about the law," against which Paul warns Titus to, “avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” (Tit. 3:9)
 - b. Yet, the Jews divided their commandments into greater and lesser commandments and were not really agreed in details.
 - c. For example:
 - i. Some pronounced the law of circumcision was greater.
 - ii. Others said it was sacrifices or washings that was greater.
 - iii. In fact, they went so far as to document 613 commandments in the law.
 - (1) 248 positive laws and 365 negative laws and then they were divided further into these heavy and light commandments.
 - (2) And, this was the reason they had so many questions of which was the greatest commandment so that they could keep it instead of keeping the whole law.
 - iv. But James tells us that, “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)
3. Now, in answering this question of the Pharisees, Jesus quoted the "shema."
 - a. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:” (Mk. 12:29; Deut. 6:4).
 - b. The shema was a sacred prayer (considered to be the essence of Jewish religion) that was recited at least twice daily by adult Jewish males to declare their faith.
 - i. This was actually, the standard of their faith.
4. Then, the Lord continued speaking to them of the love of God for where there is love for God, there will be service and obedience.
 - a. But the love for God cannot be divorced from the love for one's neighbor (Lev.

- 19:18).
- b. There was no greater or lesser commandment here because to love the Lord and thy neighbor were both the foundation of the 10 Commandments.
5. Now, if we have the right relationship with God, we will have no problem with His commandments.
- a. Paul reminds us to, “. . . love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13:8)
6. And so, we want to think about love this morning in two ways:
- a. A love for God.
 - b. A love for neighbor.

DISCUSSION:

I. LOVING GOD

- A. Loving God involves the total person, it involves centering all desires in God because he is the source of our richest joys and our obedience is the fruit and evidence of love.
 - 1. This is why Jesus said, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:30)
 - 2. To love God is to fill our whole heart, that inner sphere in which all the workings of the personal consciousness originates.
 - a. It is loving God from affections or emotions as well as our will.
 - b. Moses penned, “Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,” (Deu 10:12).
 - (1) Having reverence for God means that we serve him with affection, understanding and judgment.
 - (2) To devote ourselves to his honor, being hearty, zealous in his service and cheerfully laying out ourselves to advance all the interest of his kingdom among men.
 - (3) This is loving God with all our heart.
 - 3. To love God is to love him with the whole soul, our existence, all your life which is our temperaments, desires and character; the undivided person.
 - a. John wrote, “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” (Rev. 12:11)
 - b. Our love must be that which will sacrifice ourselves from the world and be willing to give our lives for Christ.
 - (1) We do not shrink back when threatened by evil; that’s not love.
 - (2) Our love must remain firm in our Savior because we give him our life.

4. To love God with all our mind is our intellectual nature.
 - a. Our powers of thought and will so that we are devoted to him.
 - b. In essence, our whole understanding is to be given to him.
 5. To love God with all our strength is loving God with all our power, with all the devotion and powers of our heart, the soul, and the mind.
 - a. It is written in the Old Testament that, “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.” (2 Ki 23:25).
 - (1) Now, this sounds like David, except it is not David.
 - (2) It is talking about king Josiah who was the most obedient king the world has ever seen in that he recognized sin, he eliminated sinful practices and he attacked the causes of sin.
 - b. Likewise, when we love God, we must not only remove sinful actions, we must also eliminate causes for sin: the situations, relationships, routines, and patterns of life that lead us to the door of temptation.
 - (1) This is loving God with all your strength.
- B. Now, loving God is a response to God's love.
1. For, God loved us first.
 - a. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)
 - b. The word, "Herein" in this passage points us back to vs. 9 which says, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”
 - (1) We must know that God could have expressed his love further by making the world more beautiful or by giving us a dozen more moons or a hundred more mountains.
 - (2) But instead, he demonstrated his love for us in giving us the greatest gift of the highest expression of love; a Savior.
 2. Loving God therefore, is a response to God's love which was so grand in that he sent His Son to die for us.
 - a. For, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:8)
 - (1) God’s love is not like human love.
 - (2) His love is so great that he had Christ pay the debt we owed that we might live through him.
 - (3) Christ died, not for friends, but for enemies: it says, “while we were yet sinners.”
 - b. Why?
 - (1) For, “God so loved the world.” (John 3:16)

- (2) Because God is love:
 - (a) He loved the world instead of hating it.
 - (b) He so loved that he gave his Son.
 - (c) He love us enough to keep us from perishing.
- c. Thus, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us . . .” (1 John 3:16)
 - (1) That, the love of God is seen in Christ and His love is shown on the cross.
- d. Christ is love and he voluntarily died for us.
 - (1) He said, “. . . I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself . . .” (John 10:17-18).
 - (2) He laid down his life on the cross of his free will for the life of the world.
- 3. Loving God is a response to God's love whose love keeps us on the straight and narrow.
 - a. It is written, “. . . My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:” (Heb 12:5).
 - b. We cannot neglect the correction of the Lord because when we do, we do not see the hand of God.
 - c. When we do not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we do not strongly regret our sin and therefore, we disapprove his Divine judgment and mercy.
 - d. God’s chastening hand does not show the anger of God, it shows his love.
 - e. And so, every child is chastened and reprovved for their good.
- C. Now, loving God involves:
 - 1. Obedience
 - a. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)
 - (1) Keeping the commandments will be the result if we love him.
 - (2) This is the only proper evidence of love to Jesus, for mere profession is no proof of love; but that love for him which leads us to do all his will, to love each other, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow him through evil report and through good report, is true attachment.
 - (3) The evidence which we have that a child loves its parents is when that child is willing, without hesitation, gainsaying, or complaining, to do all that the parent requires him to do.
 - (4) So the disciples of Christ are required to show that they are attached to him supremely by yielding to all his requirements, and by patiently doing his will even in the

face of ridicule and opposition.

- b. For, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (Jn. 14:21)
 - (1) True love produces obedience.
 - (2) Let us not say that we love him as we sit and do nothing (Jn. 14:31). This is not love
- c. The Bible says that we will abide in his love if we keep his commandments (Jn. 15:10).
 - (1) While we know that love originated with God and that Jesus loved the disciples as God loved Him with infinite love, his disciples may abide in His saving love by keeping His commandments and not just by following the commandments which please us or are "easy" (1 John 5:3).
 - (2) Keeping all the Lord's commandments brings great joy both to the Lord and to His disciples (John 16:24) because ". . . his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)
- d. Therefore, "Keep yourselves in the love of God . . ." (Jude 21)

2. Loving God involves sacrifice.

- a. Jesus said to, ". . . his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Mat 16:24-25)
 - (1) We are to prepare ourselves to say "no" to the strongest of cravings and those of earthly ease, comfort, self worth, and honor.
 - (2) To take up our cross, not once, but all the time because the cross is the pain of self-denial required and is the symbol of doing our duty, even at the cost of the most painful things.
 - (3) To follow Christ is to take him for our master, our teacher, our example; to believe his doctrines, to uphold his cause, to obey his precepts, and to do it though it leads to heaven by the way of the cross.
- b. This is why Paul said, ". . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom 12:1-2)
 - (1) As the animals on the altar during the Old Law sacrifices

was surrendered completely to God, so our bodies should be devoted to his service; not as slain, but as living sacrifices which is our reasonable service.

(2) And, we are not to be conformed to the world because the spirit of the world is against Christ seeing that Satan is "the Prince of this world" and that Christ died "to deliver us from this present wicked world."

(3) So, instead of following the ways of the world, the Christian must be "transformed," changed into a new form of life by the renewing of your mind, by having a new spirit and walking after the Spirit, demonstrating the will of God.

c. Essentially, seeking, "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness . . ." (Mat 6:33)

3. Loving God also involves commitment (2 Cor 11).

a. Being, ". . . faithful unto death . . ." (Rev 2:10)

D. Now, loving God includes:

1. Loving the church in that we will keep it pure, doctrinally sound, and Christ-like in attitudes.

2. Loving God includes loving the truth.

a. Or as David said, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." (Psa 119:97)

b. Men will perish if they do not have a love for the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

3. Loving God includes loving unity.

a. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4:3)

b. It is sad that some Christians love a good fight among brethren who split over matters of opinions, breaking the church in two and leaving the rest of the congregation to choose between them.

c. We must never be a heretic, never self-willed because, ". . . Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." (Titus 3:10-11)

(1) The power of truth is substituted by some for error and for what?

(2) Personal preferences or the prosperity of advantages.

d. Unity is so precious and of great value and if we love God, we must love unity.

II. LOVING THY NEIGHBOR.

- A. Loving a neighbor begins with loving self.
1. We need to love ourselves because:
 - a. We are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27).
 - b. We are important to God and His church (Psa 8:4)
 - c. We are to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).
 - d. We are loved by God.
- B. Loving a neighbor is also a response to God's love.
1. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:34)
 - a. A badge of discipleship, by which we are known and that distinguishes ourselves from all others is that we love one another.
 - b. We are to love our fellow-man as we love ourselves.
 2. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” (1 John 4:7)
- C. Now, loving a neighbor involves:
1. Helping others.
 - a. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men . . .” (Gal 6:10)
 2. Loving a neighbor involves praying for one another.
 - a. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed . . .” (Jam. 5:16).
 3. Loving a neighbor involves visiting others.
 - a. For, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction . . .” (Jam 1:27)
 4. Loving a neighbor involves sharing the gospel.
 5. Loving a neighbor involves forgiveness.
 - a. “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” (1 Pet 4:8).
 - b. And, the Bible further describes love in 1 Cor. 13:4-9 by saying, “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful nor does it think on evil; it does not rejoice with unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” (emphasis added)
- D. Now, loving a neighbor includes:
1. Loving our enemies.
 - a. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,

and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Mat 5:43-44).

(1) This will help the enemy.

(2) Or, as Paul said, ". . . if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom 12:19-21).

(a) This will help us.

2. Loving a neighbor includes loving sinners by bringing them to Christ.
3. Loving a neighbor includes loving family.
4. Loving a neighbor includes loving the brethren.
 - a. Peter said, ". . . see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" (1 Pet 1:22)

CONCLUSION:

1. What is the greatest commandment?
 - a. To love God with all your being.
 - b. And the 2nd is like it -- love your neighbor.
2. This kind of love is not something that is said, it is not a feeling that each of us get.
 - a. This love is demonstrated.
 - b. Love has always been more easily demonstrated than has been defined.