

Love God

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[0:00] Mark 12, 28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, that is Jesus, asked him, which is the first commandment of all?

! And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandment of all. The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

And 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. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God, and there is none other but he. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

[1:19] And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Verse 30, And 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. So what does it mean? What does it mean to love God? To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Four aspects really, isn't it? Man is a multifaceted creature. We see these four facets, these four aspects here.

And this verse captures love to God. All-consuming love. Love that fills the whole of a man, of a woman, all of our being.

[2:18] To love God. And we're reading here, how to love God fully. How can we love God? And how can we love him fully? It's very all-consuming, isn't it, really, this verse.

To love God in such a way. And all of those four aspects of who we are. So we're going to look at those four things, and then loving our neighbour. As ourself. Now, the verse that was referred to is what Israel calls the Shema, which is from the first word, here, which is Shema.

Now, I understand. I'm not very well versed in such things, but in the Old Testament, in the Deuteronomy, it's one of the key verses for Israel.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord our God, and so on. It's a verse that is often quoted amongst the Jewish people.

And they repeat it, I understand, twice a day. Is that more? Perhaps more. And when the children go to bed, they are encouraged to say it. So it's a very important Bible verse, and much loved by the Jewish people.

[3:41] And how can we learn from that verse today? Of course, the Lord Jesus says that this is the first and greatest commandment. So firstly it says, Love the Lord thy God with all your heart.

How can this be? How can we love God with all of our heart? The Bible speaks much of the heart. The heart of man. David cried out, Create in me a clean heart, O God.

In Ezekiel we see how God cleanses the people from idols, and then he creates a new heart. We see that in Ezekiel 36, from verse 26.

God says to them, A new heart also will I give you, Sorry, I'll say that again. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my

statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them.

So God says to the people, I will put a new heart in you, a new heart, a new spirit. How can we love God with all our heart? We need a new heart.

[5:00] We need a new heart. A brand new heart. And God gives us that kind of heart, to love him. God rightfully calls for our heart. All of our heart.

There's that familiar one in Proverbs 3, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path.

So God calls us to have faith that is wholehearted. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. It's rightful and needful that he has our whole heart, that we give our heart unto him.

Our hearts trust. Our hearts love. God, I urge you today to think of this truth, to love God with all your heart. What does that mean? We can say it very easily, but how do we translate that into action?

If we love God with all of our heart, it speaks of our full, passionate emotions for God. It speaks of our intense love, of being wholehearted, of being truehearted, of our affection.

[6:11] You know, what does the word say? Set your affection on things above. There's a total direction change to where we put our affection. You know, the world speaks much of love.

Often it's purely the physical aspect of such things. But God speaks of the spiritual aspect, of real love, unconditional love.

That's what God's kind of love is. Of course, we still have human love, but the love towards God should be an all-consuming love. And so what is the heart?

What is the heart? The heart is the seat of a person's inward life. It is the place of human depravity or sinfulness. And yet, it also can be the sphere of divine influence.

So it's amazing, isn't it? The heart, as we know the word says, it can be deceitful and desperately wicked. Yet the heart can be a place where God resides within us.

[7:11] So it's an amazing contrast, isn't it? Deceitful, desperately wicked, foul, corrupt. Yet God can cleanse the heart, replace the heart, renew the heart, and fill the heart with himself.

So the heart, the heart speaks figuratively of the seat of your personality, of your emotions, of your willpower, of your conscience. It's the centre of the human person.

It's the seat of feelings, of desires, of passions. It's the seat of thought, of understanding, and of the will. In other words, it's the core of one's being, the heart.

What does Jesus say about the heart in Luke 6, verse 45? He says, A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good, that which is good.

And an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, brings forth that which is evil, of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaker. The heart is such a core thing, such a central thing.

[8:18] And the word tells us in Proverbs 4, Keep thy heart, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Keep your heart, guard your heart, let your heart be held in trust for him.

Let your heart be contained unto him. Keep it with all diligence. The heart also speaks of the focus of a life, of the determination of the mind, of the response of the emotions.

How can we grow in this love of our heart? The word speaks much of the heart, and God's heavenly working in the heart. We read, for example, how hearts can be purified.

That's amazing, isn't it? Desperately wicked. Who can know it? God can purify the foulest heart.

Hearts can be hardened, like there's no penetrating, but God can soften the hardest of hearts.

We read, for example, some scriptures that tell us of the heart. Think of this. Think of, what condition is my heart in today? We can go to the great heart doctor, and he can, as it were, put the stethoscope on, and he searches the hearts.

[9:32] He searches your heart. He knows your heart. Better than your heart doctor, he knows your heart. Brother, he knows your heart today. And that's a scary thought sometimes, isn't it? But he knows your heart.

And thank God, even despite the condition of your heart, he can change the heart. Praise God for that. Amen. So what does the Bible say about the heart? Romans 5 verse 5, it says, The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us.

In Acts 15, it talks of God purifying hearts by faith. In 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6, it tells of hearts that receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 3 verse 17, it tells that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you're being rooted and grounded in love. Christ can dwell in your heart by faith.

He takes up residence there. It's like, how does that old sun-mascular song go, that there's a flag flown high in the castle of my heart? Because the king is in residence there.

[10:39] There's a change of rulership. What of your heart today? What of your heart? Does Jesus Christ rule there? The word tells us how the peace of God can rule in our hearts.

You know, if we're feeling like we lack peace, God says that His peace can rule, reign, take authority in our hearts. So, another aspect about our heart is not to be half-hearted.

Not to be half-hearted. Numbers of scriptures speak of the whole heart. The whole heart. Look at these, for example. Psalm 9 verse 1, I will praise thee with my whole heart.

I will show forth all thy marvellous works. Our praise should be whole-hearted. In Psalm 111 verse 1, Likewise, praise ye the Lord, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.

In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. Psalm 119 verse 2, says, Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart.

[11:49] There's much to be said for seeking God with our whole heart.

Deuteronomy 4, 29, it says, Thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 10, 12, says, in part, it speaks of walking in his ways, of serving the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. And I love the verse, Jeremiah 29 verse 13, says, And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

And I will be found of you, saith the Lord. It goes on beyond that. But there's a truth there. He wants our whole heart. And there's many scriptures that speak of seeking the Lord, of searching for him with our whole heart.

Of course, we know there's other scriptures that say there's no one seeking after God. Yet God does instruct us. He commands us, seek him, seek him, seek him. And he helps us do that, I believe.

God wants all your heart. He calls for a faith which is wholehearted. In Acts 8, that scripture that speaks of the interrogation of the eunuch, as it were, as he prepares for baptism, Philip says, when he asks him, can I be baptised, effectively, Philip says, if you believe with all your heart, if you believe with all thy heart, you can.

[13:21] So, it's very important that we are certain that we are giving God our whole heart. Our love is wholehearted. How can we love God with all our heart?

It's by faith. And it's a growing day by day. It's something that is nourished and nurtured as we give attention to the things of God. As we grow in spiritual things, our prayer life, our devotion, helps our heart to be in tune with his heart.

So, we say, love the Lord thy God with all your heart. Secondly, love God with all your soul. Now, the heart is a cardia from which we get cardiology.

Here, this word soul in the Greek, not that we make a fuss about the Greek, but the soul word here is psyche. So, in other words, love God with your cardiology department and love God with your psychology department.

I like to think of it that way. Your cardiology and your psychology. God wants your heart and your mind, or your soul, rather, your heart and your soul here.

[14:33] So, what is the soul? The soul is used of a man's feelings, of emotions, of attitudes, of will. And the word tells us about a war that's raging in the soul of man.

There's a war raging in the sphere of the soul. In 1 Peter 2.11 it says, Peter says, Dearly, beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

Your soul is a battle ground. You may not even realise that. That there are forces vying for your soul, wanting to dominate your soul. Of course, Christ is wanting to liberate your soul, and there's a force that's intent on imprisoning your soul.

There's a war against your soul. Your soul is your personality. It's your will. Some of these things are kind of complementary and overlapping. I've always said that the heart can be the will as well. What I'm saying is my best effort at interpreting these things, so I'm not saying this is thus saith the Lord. I'm just saying, as best as I understand it, what the soul is, the soul has got an intent of the will.

[15:49] It's about a choice of right and wrong, of attitude. All of these things could be embodied in the thinking of what is a soul. It could be our emotional energy.

The word speaks of how our soul can prosper. So our soul can be nourished and blessed. Lot, for all his faults, is described as having a righteous soul.

In 2 Peter 2 verse 8. Now one of the critical things here, and I really want to underline this one, one of the most important things about your soul is that it be saved.

That is what is vital. You can hear this message and think, well it's all about improving myself and loving God as some airy-fairy concept of such.

But your soul must be saved. If your soul is not saved, then it's all in vain. But thank God it says that our soul can be saved. For example, James 1 verse 21 it says, receive with meekness or humility the engrafted word which is able to save your souls.

[16:58] There's a message here that's a soul-saving message. A message that is able to save your souls. Our salvation hope itself is called an anchor of the soul.

In Hebrews 6.19 which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast. This is rock solid. It's as firm and sure as an anchor that's anchored in the rock.

And I know in my travels we came across a huge anchor as some kind of monument. And you can just imagine that huge anchor how heavy it would be and how it was embedded in the rock when they lowered it into the sand.

It would have found a sure resting place. That's what the Bible speaks of as our salvation. It's a hope that is like an anchor of the soul. So friends I urge you tonight and really it's the most important aspect is make sure by God's grace and help that your soul is saved.

If your soul is not saved there's only one other choice. It's lost and that means it's going to hell. And so yet God in his mercy extends grace still today.

[18:12] the opportunity to be saved still is present tense. And friends I urge you today to consider that. Consider your soul tonight.

Because as much as some cults deny it, your soul is immortal. It never dies. It's forever. And it will spend forever somewhere. If you're saved, your soul will be forever in glory with Christ and God.

The glory of heaven. The glory of forever with him. Eternal assurance. But if your soul is lost it will spend forever in the lake of fire. James 1.21 says with meekness receive the engrafted word which is able to save your souls.

So friends I urge you today trust him. It's so critical that your soul is found that resting place just like the anchor finds the resting place that is a sure thing.

Loving God means your soul is centered in him and it changes everything. So we'll go on to the third aspect we've seen love God with all your heart secondly love God with all your soul thirdly love God with all your mind.

[19:31] The mind our minds our intellect have been designed by God as a place to analyze figure out plan to come to know to come to understand to make a decision to think to reason your mind involves your conscience and your willpower.

The Bible speaks about a mind that can be defiled as a conscience that can be defiled. Titus 1 verse 15 speaks of minds blinded speaking of the power of the evil one 2 Corinthians 4 verse 4 your minds can be blinded there's people that are physically blind but some are minded blind the Bible speaks of people whose minds can be corrupted 2 Corinthians 11 verse 3 and of minds that can be evil affected all of these things defiled blinded corrupted evil affected your mind is again a bit of a battleground if you like a battleground on the positive side we see that a mind can be have lowliness of mind Philippians 2 verse 3 humility of mind as Paul had in Acts 20 verse 19 there's a pure mind 2

Peter 3 1 and a readiness of mind as the Bereans had as they searched the scriptures Acts 17 11 so just quickly again humility lowliness purity readiness all of these things it's a good thing to have your mind affected like that and when we love God with all of our mind what does that mean in a way it's like he occupies that foremost that primary place of our thinking of our thoughts of bringing glory to God 1 Corinthians 2 16 it speaks of the mind of Christ so that our mind is shaped after his mind our mind is such that we think like Jesus would think that's how I would understand it anyway Ephesians 4 23 it speaks of how we can be renewed in the spirit of our mind we know that you're constantly getting barraged with propaganda for your mind to feast on through the eye gate the ear gate you're constantly barraged with this onslaught that is of carnality and flesh and we need a brain washing a brain washing talks about the water of the word this is pure water this can cleanse the mind of such things the bible speaks of how to be carnally minded or fleshly minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace so our mind has a spiritual dimension we can be fleshly minded all caught up in chasing the almighty dollar in having our mind geared just like the world is geared where it gives scarcely a thought for the things of

God or we can be spiritually minded which is life and peace that's another alternative there isn't it our mind speaks of our intelligence it speaks of how as a Christian we've got reason and that's enlightened reason the light goes on we're not blinded anymore we're dazzled by the light and the light the knowledge of the glory of God is shone into our lives so the mind is a very precious thing too God wants us to honour him with our brains with our understanding the cultic tendencies that are around where some gurus say switch off your mind let it go blank and just meditate on what I'm telling you no the Bible says that we should reason we should think God says come let us reason together there's a wonderful truth that there's judgment and common sense really that

God gives to us and loving God with all of our mind wow it just blows you away to think of it doesn't it how can I love God with all of my mind so that all my thinking has Christ as the foremost consideration in the choices I made so that does it line up with what he would want me to be and think or do that all my decisions will be founded on God's truth that how we think and what we think about is God helping us it's in alignment with what God says so Philippians 4 verse 8 is a beautiful scripture that tells us how we should think and you know it all I'm sure you all know it Philippians 4 verse 8 finally brethren whatsoever things are true whatsoever things are honest whatsoever things are just whatsoever things are pure whatsoever things are lovely whatsoever things are of good report if there be any virtue if there be any praise think on these things!

[24:51] let our thinking be aligned with God's truth so that it's not what the latest is on the Facebook or what the latest top 40 is or what the latest goss is from Hollywood or what the latest scandal is but it's think on these things things that are good pure lovely praise worthy if we love God with all of our mind our thought life gets converted how we think what we think about how we decide things how we discern good from bad and God helps us as we love him to make those good choices so fourthly we sing love God with all your heart love God with all your soul love God with all your mind fourthly love

God with all your strength how are you using your strength your strength what does your strength mean your strength means your physical ability again I'm saying that's as I understand it I'm not saying necessarily that I'm telling you the gospel truth here but I'm telling it as best as I understand it to be the case but your strength means your physical ability it's your energy it's your ability it's your capacity it's your power your strength and we can use our strength our physical ability for good or for bad your strength we could consider that it is the outward expression of what's going on within ourselves to the outside world it could be our sight our speech our physical actions our strength could be what occupies us what our resources are our abilities our time our strength could encompass things like our vocation our lifestyle our relationships to love

God with all your strength is to fully love him with how we live our lives in what we direct our hands to do in what we direct our ears to hear what our eyes are bent to see where our feet are intent to go how our mouths speak the Lord is the source of our strength we read Philippians 4 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me God gives you the strength to do that which is needful so how can I love God with all of my strength how can I love him with all my strength I think for me it's that sense of how can I use this!

body! that I living in for this temporary time this tent that I in for the meantime that is the body of Andrew Craig how can I use this body wisely how can I keep it as fit and as healthy as possible as long as it can last and use the energy that is in it well you know in Ecclesiastes 9 10 it says do it with all!

what you find to do and for Julie and I for example we try and walk every so often I can't honestly say every day but we try to walk when we can because it's good and healthy for us to walk and walking will keep our bodies strong and thick and healthy so we can serve the Lord perhaps a little longer and allow us to live a little longer on this earth I want that choice how can I keep my body strong how can I keep it in shape because it is the vehicle that God has given you to use while you're on earth so we consider there's things we can do to our body that makes it die quicker okay that's not good stewardship of the body take care of your body take care of it you know there was a time that I went jogging and then my you might be fit and healthier than me and you might want to go jogging for example it's good for you to engage in physical activity what did

[29:24] Paul say that exercise has got some value to it it is profitable so think of your strength today how can I use my hands for God how can I reach out to people and bless them how can I use my eyes to be attentive to what God is showing me maybe opportunities to serve opportunities to do something for his glory to fix my eyes on Jesus would be a good thing to do with your eyes your ears the things that you choose to listen to is it the latest rap or hip hop or is it maybe something that's more useful to you something more edifying for you about your feet you can choose the places that you can go where you can be blessed and be a blessing use your feet to walk to church that's a good thing to use your feet for to go the extra mile for someone you can have a chat to and encourage what about your mouth that's your strength too there's some people here that their mouth are finding it harder to speak as they get older

I knew a man he was such a heavy smoker you couldn't hear what his last words were it was a sad sad sight to see your voice may not last the distance while you've got a voice use it wisely use it for God's glory speak for Jesus Christ be his witness counsel instruct others glorify God with your voice in praise in worship use your words to build people up and encourage so we've seen scratching the surface today of these four aspects of your heart your soul your mind your strength there's other gospel accounts which use words in different order and not so many words but we're looking at this verse which says heart soul mind and strength four aspects of your life and how are we to use them to love God with all of our heart soul mind and strength your strength again it could be like your physical body how you relate to others how you go about your life all of these things there's a whole heart in this to it there's an all consuming sense of it

I like how it reads in Revelation 5 verse 11 where we see the angels and the throne and the beasts and the elders and there's 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands this is Revelation 5 verse 12 it says and they were saying with a loud voice worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing he's worthy to receive strength let's use our strength wisely and let's glorify the lamb let us give him our strength while we've got strength let's use it well there's a time coming when you won't be so strong you will be frailer than you are today it's only a matter of time isn't it we have vessels of clay don't we earthen vessels so so let's look after ourselves and love

God with all of our being love God every single day and it goes on love your neighbour as yourself all that goes on within our heart soul mind and strength exerted out of the body in focus to God and to others what does it mean to love your neighbour as yourself who's your neighbour and sometimes we think well we kind of limit who our neighbour is don't we it's like in the context of Luke 10 where they didn't consider the Samaritans their neighbours they just wanted to have the people that they felt comfortable with but your neighbour is someone who is near you in your sphere of influence it could be people that you've never really said much to people you work with that you've not really even said g'day to they're your neighbour maybe this opportunity that we can think about how can

I learn to get to know them more how can I encourage them how can I truth a royal law he says if you fulfil the royal law according to the scripture thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself you do well James 2 verse 8 and the context speaks of respect to persons sometimes we think well I don't

really like that guy or that person over there so I won't get close to them but James 2 in the context speaks of a respect of persons so we shouldn't have a respect of persons where we categorise people and think that I won't mix with that person for whatever reason it be Galatians 5 says about serving one another in love and it says that all the law is fulfilled in this word love thy neighbour as thyself Romans 13 10 says love works no ill teased neighbour therefore love is the fulfilling of the law loving your neighbour is such a basic essential truth it's often referred to as something that's a core doctrine if you like is to love your neighbour as yourself and as we know

[35:23] Jesus gave the example of the Samaritan who took the time to care for someone who was having trouble on the road of everyday life and maybe there's opportunities that we can find to do just that I know our friend Vic who comes in the morning he often tells me how he sees someone pulled over on the side of the road and he lends a hand in a practical way and I think a very Christ-like way very Christ-like thing to do now of course we can't always pick up every hitchhiker or stop for every stranded motorist but maybe we can have our eyes open a little bit wider to think how can I love my neighbour as myself how can I help people even in those practical circumstances of life because loving is not an option it's a command it's a command a commandment it says just to recap quickly again that verse that we started with where the scribe came and the

Lord Jesus was questioned what's the first commandment of all Jesus answered him and said hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength this is the first commandment and the second is like namely this thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself there is none other commandment greater than these just to close now again I urge you the most critical truth I believe in this message is is your soul saved and you can't save yourself it's only his saving power that can save you it's only his saving work of the cross that can save you yet he extends grace still today and I urge you today I don't know where you're at spiritually you know sometimes we make assumptions about people and we think well they've been coming to church a long time they must be a Christian not so not so there's people here from all walks of life and all kinds of backgrounds and the critical truth is to know him to trust him with all your heart all your heart search for him let God help you as you head in the right direction he'll switch the light on for you he'll make it clear to you he will show himself to you he doesn't hide himself from those who search for him he's he's not hiding away he's right in plain sight and yet some still choose to reject him because you're not receiving him you're rejecting him and rather let us love him love him with all of our heart he is worthy of our love today and he loves you his love is everlasting of course his wrath is truth as well and his wrath will be poured out yet you can flee from the wrath to come and flee into his arms today let us pray to come