

Love the Lord Your God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 November 2018

[0 : 00] Well, as many of you are aware, we started a three-part series titled Difficult Commands last week, at which time pastor considered Jesus' command that we love our enemies.

! We were reminded that none of us can do that perfectly.! Today we come to an equally challenging command. Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

And love your neighbor as yourself. Perhaps you, upon hearing those words, have already decided that you can love God or you can come to a place where you love God.

But your neighbor, that's another thing. But whatever your view is, I hope you will see that these commands are linked and we need God's help to carry them out.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you for this time of worship.

[1 : 31] And we declare, O Lord, that we need your help. We need your guidance. We need your direction.

We need you to speak to us. We need our Lord for this time to be meaningful. And so, Lord, would you cause our hearts to be fertile and would you cause the words that we speak to be your words. Would you grant clarity to me? And would you grant, O Lord, the gift of comprehension to all of us. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Well, our topic today is simply love the Lord, your God. And it's based on Matthew's account of Jesus responding to questions put to him by the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

[2 : 38] It's found in Matthew chapter 22 verses 34 through 40. That's Matthew 22 verses 34 through 40.

I'll ask you to turn to that passage of scripture. Listen to what Matthew records. Verse 34, Matthew writes, But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, meaning Jesus, had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

And he, Jesus, said to the lawyer, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[4 : 03] On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. When you think about your relationship with God and your neighbor, I'm wondering if there is one word perhaps that defines your relationship with God and your neighbor.

Is it fair? Is it hate? Or perhaps it's indifference. You know, really, it doesn't matter.

I just simply don't care. It doesn't bother me one way or the other. In Matthew chapter 22, verses 34 through 40, Jesus tells us that it should be love.

That the word that should characterize our relationship with God and with our neighbor should be love. The essence of the verses we just read is this.

Love should be the fountainhead through which all of our interactions with God and our neighbor flow.

[5 : 29] In other words, love should be our motivator and the evidence of our salvation. Love should be both the thing that motivates us.

And it should be evidence of our salvation, motivated by love and driven to love. I've organized my thoughts around three points.

First, the command to love the Lord our God. Second, the command to love our neighbor. And finally, grace to love God and our neighbor.

Before considering point number one, allow me to provide a bit of a background. The question that Jesus was asked and his response is found in three of the four gospels.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew 22 records three questions that Jesus was asked by the Pharisees.

[6 : 46] The first question dealt with taxes. The second dealt with relationship and the resurrection. And the third, that we have come to deal with the law.

According to Matthew, the Pharisees were seeking to entangle him. Entangle Jesus in his own words.

See Matthew 22 verse 15. Now it is noteworthy that the Pharisees and Sadducees try to entangle or to entrap Jesus using those three categories.

Dealt with finances. You know, everybody's concerned about money. So let's trap him as it relates to his viewpoint on money. And if we don't get him there, then maybe we'll get him as it relates to relationships.

Everybody is interested in relationships. And if we don't get him there, then surely we'll get him as it relates to the law. As it relates to the commandments.

[7 : 54] The Jews were so much into. But I don't want to spend a great deal of time considering their motivation at all.

I want us to get into the meat of the subject matter. Let's consider the first of the commands.

The command to love God. The scripture reads in verse 37. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Not some of your heart. But with all your heart. And with all your soul. And with all your mind. Jesus said to those who would listen.

And he said further that this is the great and first commandment. And here Jesus was quoting the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. Chapter 6 verse 5 which says, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

[9 : 07] And even today. These words form a part of a quite popular Jewish prayer.

That is said often twice per day. And while Jesus was referring here to the entire law. It is important to note that the first four commandments.

First four of the ten commandments deal with our relationship with God. Here is what they are. And you know them. The first is, You shall have no other God before me.

The second, You shall not make for yourself a carved, a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above.

Or that is in the earth beneath. Or that is in the water under the earth. Number three, You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

[10 : 08] For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. And number four, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

The placement of those commandments as the first four, no doubt confirms their supremacy above the others. And as we examined our text, we cannot help but note its intensity.

The intensity of these words that Jesus speaks to us. The completeness of the words. Intense in the sense that there is no room for lukewarmness.

The use of the terms, All your heart, all your mind, and all your soul are intended to mean complete love.

All your heart, Jesus says. All your mind, all your soul. Complete in the sense that they encompass every aspect of who we are and the weight we apply to them.

[11 : 21] Nothing we do, say or think, is outside of the purview of this command. We would do well to ask and to answer this question.

How do I know that I truly love the Lord? See, the reality is that loving God is more than just an emotion.

It's more than a feeling. It's so much more. We see from these words of Jesus that there must be a completeness, a wholeness.

when we love the Lord, we must embrace the fact that the Lord is our God. that He is supreme, that no one comes before Him.

Loving the Lord means that we embrace, that we recognize, and accept the fact that He is supreme. There is no other God before Him.

[12 : 39] Loving the Lord means that He must be obeyed. Sometimes love is taken to mean in ordinary context, a mere emotion that is not accompanied by action or evidence.

But a careful reading of this passage clearly shows that this is not merely about feeling. Consider 1 John 5 and 3, which says, this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

We cannot have this kind of intensity towards God. We cannot love Him with our whole hearts, with our whole minds, and with our whole souls if we don't keep His commandments.

It's simply not possible. Apostle John tells us clearly that the love of God, to love Him, means to keep His commandments.

There are requirements. There is evidence. There is a demonstration of the love that we have. And you, you and I are no different.

[13:57] Someone tells us that they love us. We expect there to be evidence. Don't tell me that you love me if you don't treat me right. Don't tell me that you love me if you can show me some evidence.

What is the evidence? The evidence of our love for God is that we keep His commandments. Evidence that we love Him is that we must know and value His word.

How do we keep His commandments if we don't know and value His word? In Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verses 7 through 9, we find these words.

You shall teach them. That is the law. Teach them diligently to your children. And shall talk of them when you sit in your house.

And when you walk by the way. And when you lie down. And when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. And they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

[15:14] You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. You must know the one you love.

That's the point. The point is you must know Him and you must value His word. And so the challenge for us today. Those of us who say that we love the Lord is that we must get into His word. We must know His commands. We must know Him. To love Him is to know Him. You must know the one that you love.

and then we see also in those words that we just read that there is a command to talk about Him. To share who He is. The evidence that we love the Lord is that we share about Him. We talk about Him.

[16:14] We teach them. The scriptures tell us that we ought to teach the Lord, teach the word diligently to our children. Talk to them when we sit.

And there is a sense of constancy. There is a sense that this is the thing that occupies our time. That the word of God is foremost in our minds.

That there is nothing that takes preeminence above it. That the word of God is first and foremost. that's what Jesus is saying to us.

Jesus is saying to us that listen everything everything that we are everything that we are about should be shaped by our love for God.

Indeed our love for God is evidenced by the fact that it shapes the word of God shapes and our love for Him shapes our world view.

[17:18] How do we see the world? How do we you and I see the world? Do we see it through God's love? You see there is a sense that these words of Jesus when taken together mean that we live that we breathe and we act with an awareness of God and we act with an awareness of God we live we breathe we act Jesus says love the Lord with your whole heart and with your whole mind with all of your mind and with all of your soul you and I are challenged by these words to view the world through through God's prism through the word of God in times of trouble we see God in the midst working things out for His glory because of this perspective that we have because of this viewpoint that we have because of this love that we have because we are tied up in this thing as it were because it overwhelms us because our hearts are filled with God because we are in love with Him everything we see every experience we have we see in light of God's word and so in times of trouble we see God in the midst working things out for His glory in times of happiness we know that He indeed is our delight and then sorrows come we see His comforting hands

Jesus commands that we infuse our whole person our heart our affections our mind our intellect and our soul our spirit with love for God our whole person which is ultimately a desire to please Him ultimately what it is a desire to please Him what's behind this command what's behind it I think the first thing that we can say for sure is behind this command that God is a jealous God God says I want your entire devotion I want you I want not half of you I want 100% of you it's because He's a

jealous God and you and I understand that you and I understand that emotion
He is a jealous God He does not want to share you with anybody else so that's why Jesus says all of your heart all of your mind and all of your soul He wants us in our entirety because He is a jealous God not prepared to share your affection with anyone else He wants to occupy the throne of your heart He wants to be the one to guide your mind He wants to be the one that you look to in times of trouble and you delight in He wants to be the one that you realize is the source of everything that comes to you He doesn't want to share you with anyone not with your spouse or your children or with your pastor or with your friends or with anyone else
He wants devoted and holy people I told you this is a difficult command He desires all of us what's behind this command it's for our good ultimately it's for our good it's our reasonable service question is do we fall short of this do we fall short of this command the truth is that unless you are perfect you do fall short way short sins Consequences of sin, which is disobedient, disobeying God's law.

It's exchange from God. That's what it is. Not just for a time, but forever. But thanks be to God, the story does not end there.

[23 : 04] It does not end there. But if it did, if he required perfection from us, if he required us to obey this law all by ourselves, we couldn't do it.

Couldn't do it. Let's consider point number two, the command to love our neighbor. Command to love our neighbor.

First question that you and I ought to consider is, who is our neighbor?

Who is our neighbor? You see, because Jesus gives us a clear command. Jesus says here, the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love your neighbor as yourself. I'm here to challenge us today. I'm here to challenge us today with the words of Scripture. Because the Bible tells us that we ought to be defined by love.

[24 : 16] We ought to, people ought to know us because of the love that we have. Jesus said that we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Your neighbors are not just people who live in the same area that you do. Every human being is your neighbor.

Remember, consider the account. Luke chapter 10, verses 29 through 37, which Jesus talks about this man.

He was injured. Jesus said the man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers.

You know the story. And he was stripped and he was beaten and perhaps left for dead. And a priest walked by.

[25 : 24] Walked by and when he saw the man, he went on the other side and he ignored him. He ignored the man. And likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place, he saw him and he walked on the other side.

But a Samaritan, someone with whom he did not interact, someone who was distant, came upon him.

And he had compassion on the man. And he went to him. And he bound up his woes, pouring oil and wine on his woes.

Then he set him on his own animal. He ran out of his way. Ran out of his way. He was inconvenienced by someone who ordinarily would dislike him, who in fact probably hated him. Inconvenienced himself. And he took the man to an innkeeper. And he paid for his care. Took care of him.

[26 : 39] And Jesus said, who among them? He asked, who among them was his neighbor? The Samaritan. The one who showed mercy.

Jesus commands us to do likewise. He commands us to do likewise. To be neighbors to every man. You see, the truth is, you might ask yourself, are my neighbors only those who love us?

My neighbors only those people who love me? Are my neighbors only those people who are lovable? Is it only those people who love me?

Am I only commanded in scripture to love those who love me? Am I only commanded in scripture to love people I find attractive who are lovable? I forget the others.

what about those who hate us? What about us? What about those who are Christians just like us?

[28 : 06] Only those who are Christians are everybody. Be commanded in scripture to love our neighbor and that includes everyone.

Perhaps you struggle with this. Listen to what 1 John 2 9 through 11 listen to what it says. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother he's still in darkness. whoever loves his brother abides in life and in him there is no cause of stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. John tells us John tells us further the loved letters love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

[29 : 28] Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. John makes it very very plain. John says if you love you're born of God and if you don't love you're not born of God because God is love.

And so the challenge the question that you and I must ask ourselves today do we harbor animosity in our hearts for the brethren and indeed for anyone else.

The scriptures condemn us if we do. If anyone says I love God and hates his brother John tells us he is a liar for he does not love his brother whom he has seen and he cannot love God. If he doesn't love his brother whom he has seen he cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment that we have from him.

Whoever loves God must also love his brother. I told you this was a this is a difficult command.

[30 : 59] Whoever loves God must love his brother. We are not only called to love them but guess what?

We are called to love them as we love ourselves. You know it's one thing to love someone it's quite another you go to another level when you love them the way you love yourself.

That's what Jesus says. Jesus says want to be my disciple? You must love your neighbor and love them as you love yourself.

That's a tall order. No doubt many of us can say we love people but we love them to different degrees and we hardly love anyone and we love ourselves.

Imagine imagine a church filled with people who love and who love one another as they love themselves.

[32 : 05] Imagine how easy it would be for us to approach one another and know that there is no judgment and know that there is no critical eye that is looking at us.

I know that there is forgiveness where it should exist and we are challenged people who name the name of Christ to love and to love one another as we love ourselves.

Imagine that. Imagine if we practice that. How is it expressed? How do we express this love? You know the commandments.

You talked about the first four. Consider the next six. You told in scripture to honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, your neighbor's servants, or anything that is your neighbor's.

[33 : 26] Yes, the call to love one's neighbor as one's self is a high bow. But we are called to it.

We are called to forgive what others regard as unforgivable because of this love.

That's what we are called to as believers. Remember, we've been purchased by Christ. And we are called to have faith in him, to lose ourselves in him, to be submerged in him.

And he calls us to forgive others with God as unforgivable. To give sacrificially because of love.

To be friendly, the unfriendly because of love. To love someone, the truth is that to love someone is to be more vulnerable.

[34 : 42] No question about it. Perhaps, like most of us, you've been hurt by someone you have loved. And so you've decided not only that you won't love that person, but you will not love too many other people either.

The truth is, this command to love comes with no exception. There's no exception clause.

To love one's neighbor is to have high regard for the things that concern your neighbor. to love one's neighbor is to have high regard for the things that concern one's neighbor.

In other words, to love someone is not just to be available when they call or to listen to them when they complain.

They ought to be on your mind and you ought to put yourself in their places sometimes. And I wonder how Sally is dealing with such and such.

[35 : 56] I wonder what's going on with Tom. I wonder how I might help. What can I do? And to reach out.

Reach out. When we love one another as we are called to in Scripture, very often people don't have to tell us what's going on in their lives.

We know it. We can see the change. love. This kind of love that Jesus talks about requires us and calls us to come closer to one another, to be true brothers and sisters in Christ.

To love one's neighbor means to not gossip or backbite. Not to speak evil about one's neighbor, about one another.

It should not be named among us. Listen to what Paul writes in Philippians 4 and 8. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

[37 : 14] Think about these other things that we look for and we talk about as it relates to our neighbors. I want to tell you something about an attitude that some of us have with respect to our neighbors.

You know, we don't go out there and beat up our neighbors. Very often, we don't hate them either. We don't wish them ill. We just simply don't care. We're indifferent. We are indifferent. We just don't care.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter to us. And that's not love. There's no in-between. Jesus says we ought to love.

And love requires demonstration. Love requires action. To be indifferent towards someone. It's not love. To be uncaring towards someone is not love.

[38 : 32] We ought to care. We ought to care what the other person is going through. We ought to care about relationships. We ought to build relationships.

We ought to work on relationships. And of course it's hard sometimes. Of course some people rub us the wrong way often. But that's okay.

Life is short. Better it is for us to obey the scriptures than to follow our own little minds.

It gets us in trouble all the time. Wrap yourself into the love of God and into the commandments of God and into your own fleeting feelings.

What is interesting about these two commands that Jesus gives to us is that not one of them pointed to a sacrificial law.

[39 : 34] Not one of them pointed to a ceremonial law. Not one of them pointed to the law of circumcision. or any other law as being the most important.

Jesus pointed to loving God and our neighbor as the most important because everything rests on them. Everything rests on love.

Indeed Romans 13 8-11 tells us Oh no man anything except to love each other for the one who loves another has done what?

Has fulfilled the law for the commandments you shall not commit adultery you shall not murder you shall not steal you shall not covet and any other commandment are summed up in this word you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor therefore love is fulfilling the law love does no wrong to a neighbor therefore love is fulfilling the law Paul writes to us in Romans but listen my final point my final point is grace to love grace to love how many of you know that we can sigh as hard as we want for as long as we want and we'll fall short of what we are commanded to do in scripture Jesus tells us that we are to love God with all of our heart listen to this want you to hear me now Jesus says to us love the Lord with all of your heart that's what he says to us but we know our hearts are wicked your heart is wicked and my heart is wicked we simply cannot follow this command on our own listen to what

[41 : 45] Jeremiah writes about the human heart in Jeremiah 17 9 Jeremiah writes the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick who can understand it is what Jeremiah writes about the human heart Jeremiah says that we are doomed because our hearts are sick who can understand the human heart who can know it and you know that what I'm saying is true and we can be as holy as we wish but we know that these words are true the heart is deceitful above all things

and it is desperately sick and this is the thing that Jesus says that we are to love the Lord with this sick heart this sick heart but thanks be to God thanks be to

God because we are told in Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 6 and Romans 2 verse 9 these words that the Lord your God shall circumcise the heart and the hearts of our offspring so that we may live and a Jew and a Jew is one inwardly and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit not by the letter see God does a work in our hearts those of us who are believers he's done a work in our hearts he's done he does a work in our hearts through the spirit and only God can do this work only he can fix circumcise and crush the stuff off of our hearts only he can do that work only he can have a principle of love in our hearts only he only he can do that only he can give us ongoing grace to love only he can do that only he can do that and he does it and he does it for the believer and when you and

I love when you and I find ourselves loving God and loving our neighbors we love ourselves not because of us but it's because of him it's because of what he's done for us and what he's doing for us that's why how many do know that despite the work God has done in our hearts we still don't love perfectly we cannot love perfectly we can't do it perfectly but that's not an excuse when we talk about our imperfection it's not to excuse the fact that we don't love so I don't want anybody leaving here today saying you know what we said that we can't do this perfectly so such and such a person I don't love him that's okay I'm going to leave that one until I'm perfected that's not what I'm saying I'm not saying that at all we are to strive for perfection and when we are convicted in our hearts we are to change we are to ask the Lord to give us grace to change it is our imperfection our imperfection that caused God to demonstrate the greatest act of love we've ever seen when Jesus died on the cross for the unlovable Jesus died for the unlovable died for the sinful on the cross those who did not love him those who were his enemies he died for us and only Jesus only Jesus did this perfectly only he loved perfectly only he loved God perfectly only he loved man perfectly and guess what guess what he did guess what

God did God credits Jesus' perfection to us let me accept him by faith he gives us the grace to accept him and he credits to our account Jesus' perfection his love perfection to our account unbelievers don't have that benefit the Bible teaches us that if this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and he sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins John continues he says the love if God so loved us we are also to love one another no one has ever seen God if you love one another

[47 : 24] God abides in us and his love is perfected in us you want to know you want to know whether you are a believer or not you ask yourself how are you doing in the love department do I love God do I want to spend time with him do I want to get to know him better and you know what it is many of you you've been in love before or you are in love today of course I'm not talking about that kind of love but I'm saying you understand what I mean you know what it is to be in love with God you want to know who he is you enjoy spending time in his word you enjoy talking to him in the morning do you listen to him do you love your neighbor as you love yourself perhaps you say as we close that such and such is just so unlovable well I wonder if you think you're a saint wonder if you think you are a saint despite your and my shortcomings

Christ demonstrated his love for us by dying for us and he continues to intercede for us guess what he's not ashamed of us not ashamed to call us his brother I want to challenge us today to get rid of indifference I want to challenge us to consider the needs of others above our own needs for Christ's sake I challenge us even in the remaining moments of this message to ask the Lord Lord how can I love you more

Lord how can I love you more how can I love you more how can I demonstrate my love for you more Lord how can I love my neighbor more what a good question for each one of us to ask even if you were in school you can ask that question Lord how can I love my friends more how can I demonstrate that how can I express the love that you have for me to them how can I reflect this love for some of you the Lord might say you need to draw closer to me through prayer and Bible study if you want to love me more for others the Lord might say you need to shake off the sin that seems so enticing to you perhaps others he might say you need to step out in faith you need to have faith in me and still others he might say you just need to take a love plunge take a love plunge just go head in you know the neighbor who is indifferent the neighbor who doesn't love you or who you think doesn't love you just need to plunge in you just need to get to go and head for and watch me change things that's what

I don't know what the Lord will say to you today but I challenge you to ask those questions I'm going to ask the praise team to come now as we close Father Lord thank you for your word Lord we stand and we confess us that we have violated your commandments time and time again we ask oh Lord for your forgiveness we ask for the enablement of your Holy Spirit to be true to the words we have heard today Lord convict our harm convict us to action oh Lord Lord let us be marked by love let those who hear this word those who are gathered today let us be marked by intentional deliberate constant and consistent love oh Lord let us pursue love once or the other and indeed Lord let us love you more every single day in Jesus name and all God's people say amen