

***The Great Sayings in the Gospels***  
***Message 131***  
***The Two Great Commandments***  
***Mark 12:28-34***

Mark 12:28-34

- 28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?
- 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:
- 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.
- 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.
- 32 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:
- 33 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.
- 34 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.

**Introduction:**

I have often wondered how a person could be “not far from the kingdom of God.” We think of being truly converted ( or ‘saved’) as a toggle switch, one either ‘is’ or ‘is not’ in the kingdom. What is revealed here is that there is a process which moves one from outside to inside of God’s salvation. Sometimes it is a very quick process, but sometimes it goes on for a while. This man who spoke with Jesus this day was in that process. We do not know if it was ever completed or not, whether he actually, at some point, became a believer or rejected Christ and died in his sins, but it is interesting to observe a man here right on the cusp of conversion, but not yet there, not quite.

Jesus knew that if he truly embraced the principles that he was espousing that he would ultimately be forced to reject the religion of ‘Works Salvation’ taught by the Jews and embrace Justification by Faith as taught by Jesus.

In the teachings and doctrines involved in this subject we learn something important and useful. All sin, no matter how large or (seemingly) small, strikes out at God and our fellow man. It is a principle that we sort of naturally reject but it is true nonetheless.

All obedience to God (done, of course, from a right heart) honors Him, expresses love for Him, flows out of love for God and is helpful, useful, and constructive to our fellow humans.

We greatly err when we think that serious disobedience (is there any other kind?) somehow does

no harm. This is one of those subtle messages contained in almost all of the moral teachings of our day.

At the same time the moral climate of our day suggests that serious devotion to God necessarily causes and creates harm to other people. The parents who choose to educate their children at home to provide them a better moral climate, the business person who refuses to be forced to take part in wickedness, and the church which denounces and stands against the immorality of our day, are all considered to be harmful to the general welfare of the culture. And the same culture glorifies rebellion against God, against His Laws, and despises His Word on almost every subject. It is as if we are living in a spiritual 'Bizarro' world where nothing is as it should be.

Our entertainment culture has two kinds of villains: the one who has thrown of all moral good and the one who is too devoted to the Christian faith and I think the second one is considered more dangerous than the first. The 'ideal person' is a little bit wicked but mostly good, at least when 'good' is defined in popular terms.

We also err when we think that God's commands are given just to prove that He is 'The Boss' and have no real value in and of themselves. Every requirement, every law, every expression of the 'will' of God is good for the welfare of the one keeping it and for everyone around him/her.

### **The Two Great Commandments, On these hang all the Law and the Prophets.**

Some of the commandments are obviously connected to these principles and anyone can see that.

#### **“Thou shalt have no god beside Me”**

- Clearly, if we love God supremely we will not worship any other.
- First of all because He does not want us to,
- and Second, we will not desire to.

#### **“Thou shalt do no murder”**

- Obviously, if we love our neighbor we will not murder him.
- and, know that it is God's will for us not to murder, our love for Him will restrain all murderous impulses, should we ever have any.
- But, beyond that, it is no good for us, ourselves, to harbor thoughts of murder toward others, hence:

Matt 5:22-24

- 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
- 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Wrong thoughts and attitudes toward others take us out of the proper attitude of worship toward God, therefore, they are not to our benefit. Therefore, obedience to God concerning the commandment not to murder shows love for God, love for others, and is good for our own spiritual welfare.

### **“Thou shalt not steal”**

Also has some obvious connections to the Two Great Principles because if we love our neighbor (no matter who he might be - Jesus taught us that all men are our neighbors) we will not take his property, no matter how much he has or how little we possess, even when it is framed in terms of moral good, as in the concepts of Socialism.

But the thought processes associated with stealing also harm us...and they strike out at God.

John Baptist taught soldiers to ‘be content with your wages’ and to not take from others wrongfully, Luke 3:14.

Paul taught Timothy, ‘having food and raiment let us be therewith content,’ 1 Tim. 6:8.

And, the writer of Hebrews (13:5) echoed Paul, ‘be content with such things as ye have.’

Contentment with God’s provisions for us is a way of expressing love for Him. Covetousness, which is the root sin of stealing, is a rebellion against Him and is destructive to our own souls. It is a cancer which, if not eradicated, will eat away the very fabric of one’s character.

**Now, let us think for a few minutes about one of the mos prevalent and well accepted sins of our day.**

### **“Thou shalt not commit adultery”**

In the opinion of some this is a very narrow sins, one only committed if he violates the marriage vows. But the Law of God, when read in its’ entirety is clear that it forbids all physical intimacy except that within the framework of a legitimate marriage. Marriage, of course, is that which God created originally in the Garden of Eden, one man and one woman, joined in a covenant of mutual faithfulness for life. The modern movement to expand the concepts of marriage are in direct violation of God’s Word and Eternal Law.

Adultery is a profound sin. It was judged in the Mosaic Law as worthy of death by stoning. It is a crime against God’s ordinance of marriage and the covenant that goes with it. One cannot, at one and the same time, love God and despise the very core of the fabric that he created to guide and govern the human race.

The rationale most often given for adultery is “love.” “We were in love,” is assumed to explain the sin, rationalize it, and absolve the wrong of it, but it is a lie. One does not express love foe another by involving the other in a crime against God that puts that person in danger of eternal damnation.

1 Cor 6:9-10

- 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
- 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. KJV

The adulterer, except he repent earnestly before God, will surely perish. He/she cannot inherit God's kingdom, i.e. eternal life.

Our culture is entirely too presumptive concerning God's forgiveness. I was once speaking to a woman who was contemplating leaving her husband for another man. As I explained to her the seriousness of what she was doing, I reminded her that it was adultery. "I know," she said, "but I will ask God to forgive me and He will."

There is the assumption that one can merely acknowledge a sin to God and ask forgiveness and receive it, even if one continues on in the activity that he knows to be a sin. **THIS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE!** God does not forgive based on apologies or some arrogant admission of sin without real repentance. He does and has, millions of times, forgiven sin when the person who committed it turned from it in shame, horror, and total brokenness, but I do not know of a single biblical instance in which He has forgiven one for a sin that he refused to give up.

Rom 13:9-10

- 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

To involve another person in immorality is to do them harm, to work 'ill' to one's neighbor. The person who loves another desires what is best for them and would not at all do the wrong to them intentionally.

Some think that adultery and fornication are victimless crimes when both parties are consenting but this is also not true. I recently was told a story concerning a woman who had once been mistress to one of the religious leaders of our culture. If I were to say the name, most of you would recognize it. Ultimately his sin with her, along with many others, was made public and he had to resign in disgrace. The woman today is a person without morals and without faith. If she dies in that state, according to the Word of God, she will eternally perish.

Now, certainly, she was a willing participant in the sin but I am convinced that the one who should have cared for her soul, pointed her to God, and demonstrated righteousness to her will bear responsibility before the Great Judgment of God for what becomes of her soul.

I am sure that the two of them, at some point in the relationship, were of the opinion that they 'loved' one another. But she contributed to his public disgrace and he was a part of her total

departure from God. They both worked monstrous ill in each other's lives. They did not love each other.

Adultery and fornication are rooted in selfishness, not love. They destroy lives and sometimes destroy souls. In fact, they will destroy every soul that touches them unless there is profound repentance.

And the really sad thing is that Evangelical Christianity has gone silent on the subject for the most part. Oh, we will condemn a public figure whose sins are revealed, but we do not continually caution our people against this wickedness that continues to swallow up lives, wreck them, and subject them to bondage and misery.

Listen to me. To love God and others is to keep His commandments. There is no love in rebellion and wickedness.

1 John 2:3-10

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

John was fully persuaded that love for God and love for our fellow creatures was expressed only in the keeping of the commandments of God. To love another person is to 'abide in the light' and cause no 'stumbling' in his/her life.

I wonder if we as so-called Christians believe that truly any more. When sin presents itself to our minds, do we say to ourselves, "No, I love God too much to do that." Or, when we are tempted to do wrong, think wrongly, speak wrongly to others, "No, I might harm them if I do that and I want only the best for them."

Truly Jesus reduced all of scripture, all of the Laws of God, all of the responsibilities of every person into two very brief but profound statements.

"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.”

You and I are left to contemplate these questions, “Do I love God?” And, “Do I love my neighbor.” And the test is really simple.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. KJV

It is certain that one cannot earn his salvation by keeping the Law. It is just as certain that those who refuse to do and practice the will of God cannot be saved.

Do you truly love God? What does the evidence say?