

## 最大的诫命——马可福音 12:28-34

### The Greatest Commandment — Mark 12:28-34

#### *Introduction and Outline*

- Scripture Reading: Mark 12:28-34; Deuteronomy 6:4-25

Mark 12:28-34 (NASB 1995)

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; 30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” 32 The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him; 33 and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

- All sinners naturally have some adverse feelings when it comes to “commandment”, because the most basic sin nature is rebelliousness. Sinners don’t like to submit to authority or to be bound by any moral law or commandment. All they want is to do what they like. In some religious circles, commandments are even abused and become a tool of manipulation that guilt-trips people into doing things for the leader. For such people, commandments have absolutely nothing to do with love, if they aren’t direct opposites.
- So, when Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and love others, it must’ve been a completely revolutionary revelation to some.
- The definition of a Christian is one who loves God. “... those who **love God**, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

**Romans 5:5** “... the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

**1 John 4:19** “We love, because He first loved us.”

**1 Corinthians 16:22** “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed.”

- Outline:  
Title: The Greatest Commandment—Mark 12:28-34
  1. The Background
  2. The Question (v.28)
  3. The Answer (vv. 29-31)
  4. The Reaction (vv. 32-34)

#### **The Background**

- The matter of loving God or not divides the people of the world fundamentally into two categories. This division can be found even in the Old Testament:

**Exodus 20:5-6** “..... I, ..... visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of **those who hate Me**, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to **those who love Me and keep My commandments.**” (See also Deuteronomy 5:9-10; 7:9-10 )

Though this ought to be a common sense, yet when a religious circle is filled with all kinds of boring rules and rituals, the emphasis of loving God is practically lost. This is exactly the religious environment of Jesus’ time back then.

- Today’s passage is one of three trick questions set up by the religious leaders for Jesus on Wednesday of Passion Week (Mark 12:13-17, 18-27, 28-34). Matthew explicitly states the purpose of the question was “testing Him” (Matthew 22:35).

### The Question (v.28)

- “One of the scribes came ....., and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him,”: Scribes were the expert scholars in interpreting the Law, so they sent a scribe to ask this question about the Law. This scribe obviously had some respect for Jesus, but Jesus’ later reply (v. 34) implies he was not yet saved, not yet in the Kingdom of God, but just a little closer than the other religious leaders.
- “What commandment is the foremost of all?”: Where’s the trap in this question? It seems totally innocent and harmless. Answer: They wanted Jesus to say anything from his personal opinion. As long as it’s not directly from the Law of Moses, they could accuse Jesus of rejecting God’s Law given through Moses. Jesus’ understanding of the Law was clearly alien to mainstream teaching (cf. **Matthew 5:21-48**). His teaching was so new that it was completely different from the “Law of Moses” that they had grown up hearing. If Jesus, confronted with the question of the greatest commandment, would again give a novel answer not to be found in the Law of Moses, they would surely label Jesus a heretic.

Yet Jesus’ answer was a direct quote from the most important passage in the Law of Moses, which again left them speechless.

**Matthew 5:17** “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

**【Comparison】** So what did the religious leaders have to say regarding the greatest commandment? Answer: They had no agreement whatsoever. The scribes each had their own opinions, and no one knew what the most important commandment was. They counted the number of commandments in the Law of Moses and came up with 613 of them, but they had no idea how to rank their importance.

**Matthew 23:23** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe **mint and dill and cummin**, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: **justice and mercy and faithfulness**; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

**【Insight】** The result of this approach was that the whole concept of **commandments** was twisted. It became bitter, cold, dull, and boring. Just like the impression many people have today, commandments have become a means by religious leaders to **manipulate their followers through guilt trips; little do**

they know that God’s commandments are in fact the most precious and beautiful expression of love, intended to teach man to know God as the Holy, Glorious, Beautiful One who is worthy of being loved with our whole being from our whole heart. This is the original design of the commandments.

### The Answer (vv. 29-31)

- “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;’: This text is well known to the Jews as the *Shema*, which is the Hebrew word for “hear” as in “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh, our God, Yahweh is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4) This statement is the foundation of the entire biblical worldview.

【Thoughts】 Why is this part of the Greatest Commandment? Shouldn’t commandments be orders asking us to do or not to do something? Why not just say: Love God and love people? Because knowing God is the basis for loving God, isn’t it? If one does not know who God is and what He has done, how can one love Him? How can one know how to love Him?

【Insight】 The greatest commandment is not just what God wants us to do, but to have the right order from the inside out. It’s to know Yahweh as the one true God, to ponder His creative power that made the whole universe in six days, to ponder His hatred of sin and grace and mercy toward sinners, and to ponder all His saving works for His people throughout history—these are the starting point of following God’s commandments.

- “AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH”: That is, loving God with your all.

【Definition】 Biblical love is not the kind of ineffable, fickle, vague, subtle, passive feeling as our culture defines love; but rather, it is a self-sacrificing love, a definitive commit of the will, expressed in practical actions of intentional pursuit of the best interest of the one loved. Loving God is the active pursuit of God’s glory, beginning with knowing God and rejoicing in God, to pursue a greater knowledge of God and the joy and spiritual strength from God in order to do whatever is pleasing to God in all things.

【Explanation】 The words “WITH ALL” are two words in Greek: **From + Whole**. The love that God demands must come from our **whole** heart, soul, mind, and strength. This implies that unless God Himself changes a sinner from the inside, it’d be totally impossible for us to render any love to God from our deepest being. That’s why **Titus 3:3** says we were “hateful, hating one another” before salvation. That’s why **Deuteronomy 30:6** reiterates this commandment by prefacing it with the following, “Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

【Explanation】 The emphasis of the four-fold description is **wholeness** rather than division. Our life is a whole unity before God, impossible to be divided strictly. You can’t tell God that you have loved Him with all your heart when you don’t have the action of loving God with all your strength.

- “The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”: The order must be loving God first, followed **secondly** by loving man. When you love a person more than you love God, this person becomes an idol. This idol can be a spouse, a child, or a brother or sister in Christ, or an unbeliever friend. It is impossible to love God without loving man, but it is entirely possible to love man without loving God, just as it is possible to love any other idol without loving God.

It is impossible for a person who truly loves God to not love man. 1 John 4:20 “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

**【Important Clarification】** The key to loving others as ourselves is to **love others, not to love ourselves!** Loving others as ourselves presumes that we already love ourselves enough, and we’re simply asked to love others by the same standard. **We already love ourselves enough!** This command isn’t asking us to perfect the art of self-love. That kind of self-love attitude will kill us!

**【Emphasizing again】** **Denying ourselves, taking up our cross, offering ourselves as a living sacrifice—these are the things God asks us to do to ourselves as Christians!** You can’t find one single command for us to love ourselves in the entire Bible! **The greatest lie Satan wants you to believe the most is that you don’t love yourself enough!**

**【Going Deeper】** Why say “**neighbor**” instead of “man” in general? We can’t help but ask, “*who is my neighbor?*” (Luke 10:29) Don’t just answer in general terms: everyone. “Neighbor” literally means to be **near**. Herein lies a wisdom principle of Christian love—**the principle of proximity**. Consider spiritual proximity (Gal. 6:10), blood proximity (1 Tim. 5:4, 8), and physical proximity (Lk. 10:25-37). **Conclusion:** All those whom God has sovereignly placed near us, those who rub shoulders and cross paths with us in all kinds of relationships and occasions, are our neighbors, whom we are called to love as we love ourselves.

- “There is no other commandment greater than these”: Matthew adds, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Mt 22:40). The entire Old Testament teaches us these two things. What a simple and clear summary!

### **The Reaction (vv. 32-34)**

- “Right, Teacher!?”: So well said! Totally convinced. This scribe really had some respect for Jesus.
- “You are not far from the kingdom of God”: But not yet inside the Kingdom of God.

**【Principle】** There are more than two kinds of relationship with the Kingdom of God. In addition to being inside and being far-far away, there’s the **most scary scenario** where one has arrived at the door of the kingdom of God, but in the end is **just one step away from entering it.**

**【Challenge】** Jesus challenged the scribe to live out the teaching he confessed with his lips. **Would he be able to? If he would see the reality that he didn’t even have the ability, then, when the cross was revealed for forgiveness and salvation, he would .....?**