

You Shall Love The Lord Your God

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. These words which I command you today shall be in your hearts. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you 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 up' (Deuteronomy 6:5 to 7).

'What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments and the statutes of the Lord which I command you this day for your good?' (Deuteronomy 10:12). 'You shall love the Lord your God and always keep His instructions, statutes, ordinances and commandments ... Listen diligently to My commandments – to love the Lord your God and serve Him with your whole heart and soul ... Diligently keep all these commandments which I commanded you to do; to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him' (Deuteronomy 11:1, 13 & 22). 'Keep all these commandments which I commanded you this day; love the Lord your God and walk always in His ways' (Deuteronomy 19:9). 'The Lord your God will cleanse your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live ... I command you today, to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, keep His commandments, His statutes and His ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you ... Love the Lord your God, obey His voice and cleave to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days' (Deuteronomy 30:6, 16 & 20). 'Listen diligently and heed the commandment and the law which Moses commanded you; to love the Lord your God, walk in all His ways, keep His commandments, hold tightly to Him and serve Him with all your heart and soul ... Cling to the Lord your God ... Take diligent heed therefore, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep all His commandments, to hold tightly to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul' (Joshua 22:5). 'O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and loving-kindness and mercy for those who love Him and keep His commandments ... ' (Nehemiah 1:5; Daniel 9:4).

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment' (Matthew 22:37 & 38). 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first commandment' (Mark 12:30). 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself' (Luke 10:27).

When we carefully read over these verses, we can see that loving God is not an option – it is a commandment. If we refuse to love the Lord with all our might, then we are in rebellion. If we love the Lord then we will keep His commandments and the first commandment is to love Him. If we love anyone or anything more than the Lord, then that person or thing is our god, but if we love Him with all our might, then He is our God. If we join together the subtle promises that are woven within these verses, we can see that the Lord is trying to teach us more than just the command to love him. It is the first, greatest and most important commandment given to mankind because we will be spending eternity with Him. Imagine how difficult it would be to spend so much time with Him if we didn't get along with Him. That is why people who reject God could not live comfortably and peaceably in heaven so on Judgement Day, they are sent out of the Lord's presence forever. Starting from the verse written at the top of the page; we are to obey God and love Him, and we are to teach our children to love God ... we are to make this command an all-consuming aspect of our lives. We are to discuss our love for God when we are at home, when we go out, when we lie down in bed, and when we get up again. That takes in every waking moment of our lives.

After we have established our all consuming love for Him, then the Lord goes on to command us, with just as much commitment, to diligently serve Him, keep His statutes, precepts, ordinances and obey His every command. We are to listen to Him, walk in His ways, cleave, adhere and cling to Him; completely unite with Him in every area of our lives. In return, the Lord will cleanse our hearts and the hearts of our children and our grandchildren through the generations. He will bless us and we will multiply. That is both in the physical and the spiritual. People will be able to have children and they will bear spiritual fruit, but we have to make Him our whole life and He will become our breath – or the length of our lives on earth. The Lord promises to fight for us, as long as we take care to love and obey Him.

Then for those people who keep the covenant the Lord has made with us, we read that He keeps mercy and loving-kindness for those people. That is very special. His mercy is kept for us. His loving-kindness is just for us – for those of us who love and obey Him. He is the great and awesome God Who offers us a covenant, then He blesses those who adhere to it. Cleaving to God is more than just a religious ritual. It is a complete

and total commitment to loving God the Father and also the absolute acceptance of the blood covenant offered to us by Jesus the Son. If we don't love Jesus in the same way as we love the Father, then Jesus said God would not be our Father. 'If God was your Father, you would love Me and welcome Me gladly, for I came from God' (John 8:42). Furthermore, if we want God to love us, then we have to love His Son. Jesus said, "For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from the Father" (John 16:27). If a person loves Jesus, then God the Father will love him, but we have to love and obey Jesus first. 'The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who really loves Me; and whoever loves Me will be loved by My father, and I too will love him and will make Myself real to him. If a person really loves Me, he will keep My word and obey My teaching; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him' (John 14:21 & 23). Yet long before we ever learned to love God, while we were still lost in our sin, He sent Jesus. 'God shows His love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Jesus our Messiah died for us' (Romans 5:8).

We are called to do His will and once He has set His love on us and we cleave to Him, nothing can separate us, and we are to love other believers with the same commitment. 'All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His will and purpose ... For nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God, that is with us in Jesus our Messiah' (Romans 8:28 & 39). 'If a person truly loves God, then he is known by God' (1 Corinthians 8:3). 'Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah, he is a born-again child of God; and everyone who loves the Father also loves the child born of Him (that is a born-again believer). By this we know that we love the children of God; when we love God and obey His command. For this is the love of God – that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous; not a burden' (1 John 5:1 to 3).

If we can understand and listen to what was written in the Old Testament and repeated by Jesus in the New Testament, it will help us understand the full meaning of loving our God. Jesus said, the command to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, is the first and greatest commandment coming just before we are told to love our neighbour as ourself. This type of listening to God is not just with the ears, although it begins with the ears, but it is to listen, to pay attention then obey; to follow the instructions as written in the scriptures and we are also told to love people around us. 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself ... The stranger who dwells with you shall be to you as one born among you; and you shall love him as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18 & 34). 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31).

What happens to those religious people who attend church but refuse to love and obey the Lord? There is a big difference between going to church to warm a seat for an hour or two on Sunday, and having a deep and spiritual relationship with God the Father through our Messiah Jesus. This is what Jesus Himself said about religious people who do not love the Lord: 'Woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe but disregard justice and bypass the love of God ... Woe to you, Pharisees! For you love the best seats ... Woe to you Pharisees! For you are like graves which are not marked and men walk over them and don't know it' (Luke 11:42 to 44). 'I know you and understand that you do not have the love of God in you' (John 5:42). 'They will be lovers of self ... rather than lovers of God, for although they have a form of Godliness they deny the power of God. Avoid all such people and turn away from them' (2 Timothy 3:2 to 5). People who refuse to love God are warned. Jesus said "Woe" to them. In other words, they are doomed unless they repent of their sins and turn to God. Just sitting in church and being religious is not enough for Almighty God; neither is claiming a religion as one's own, enough for God. How many hundreds of people think that claiming to be a Catholic or an Anglican or a Presbyterian or even a scientologist is enough to get them to heaven? Yet they rarely attend church, rarely give God any of their time, and the only time they say the name of Jesus, is as an expletive. Even worse are the idol-worshippers such as Hindu's, Buddhists and Muslims. People like that will never enter the Kingdom of God unless they repent. Just simply claiming a religion is not enough to get us into heaven. Claiming a religion or acting in a pious manner is not loving Jesus and God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Jesus said 'woe' to them.

We tend to bypass the words 'heart and soul' fairly quickly. Many think that it means we should love God passionately with our emotions, but that is not what it means. Most certainly, loving God does involve emotion, and we can become quite teary and emotional at times when we draw close to Him, but that is not all it is. We are to love Him with all our heart (emotion), all our mind (understanding, thought and intellect), all our soul (every aspect of our whole life) and all out strength (physical obedience; what we do to serve Him). Loving God with all our soul or life, is opposite to being a two hour a week Christian who sits in church and warms a seat, or someone who is involved in an empty religion that leads to 'woe'. Finding a way to squeeze God into our lives as a religious afterthought is exactly the opposite of what loving God with our whole life means. Furthermore, it is the thought that we should love God even to the point of sacrificing our lives for

Him. Jesus Himself did that for us, and that is what Jesus is calling us to do. To be acceptable to God, we are to be 'living sacrifices'. That means we are to live wholly for God, to consciously commit ourselves to loving God, if needs be, to the point of death. 'I appeal to you, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service' (Romans 12:1). 'After Jesus had appeared in human form, He humbled Himself further and carried His obedience to the extreme of death – even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus loved the Father and He listened, paid attention and obeyed Him. Jesus loved us with all of His life and soul, right up until He breathed His last breath. 'Before the Passover Feast began, Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and return to the Father, and as He had loved those who were His own in the world, He loved them to the very end' (John 13:1). Jesus loved us with His whole heart; He loved us enough to die for us. Jesus loved us with His whole life and soul; He gave up His Spirit for us. Jesus loved us with His whole mind; He made a conscious decision to willingly go to the cross for us. Jesus loved us with all His strength; He poured out His blood for us as a sacrifice, so we need to love God with the same total commitment. 'O what incredible love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God!' (1 John 3:1).

Amen and God bless you.

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