

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus said that Loving God first and most, and then loving others, would unlock the Law and the Prophets!

Mark 12:32-34

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.

Notice Jesus did not say, “Welcome to the kingdom of God!” but rather that he was getting very close.

The keeping of the Law was not going to save Him, but he was not far from a kingdom that was drawing near!

What was he lacking? The obedience of faith! He was caught in the knowledge trap.

John 13:17

¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

8 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. ² If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³ but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

We get free from the knowledge trap when we begin to see that God knows us inside and out.

Maturity in Christ- sanctification- is partly closing the gap between what we know and what we live out.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

⁴ “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

In the context, loving God first and most, and passing these things to their children, would ensure that Israel would remain in the promised land.

As the first command, it holds an important lesson: All obedience must proceed from a heart of love for the one we obey.

John 14:23-24 ²³ Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

2nd command

Leviticus 19:17-18

¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

As the second command, the heart of God is revealed: Love me first, and once that is settled, live for others!

Romans 13:10

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law

Loving God means joyfully obeying Him; loving your neighbor means joyfully serving him.

The perfect fulfillment of these commands was Jesus dying on the cross for us, in keeping with His Father's Word.

Luke 23:39-43

39 One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" **40** But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." **42** And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" **43** And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

The lawyer is just close to the kingdom, and this thief gets in?

This man had not loved God well, and certainly not his neighbor. How can he be with Jesus in Paradise?

Love is the fulfillment of the Law! Jesus fulfilled the Law for us, so that the righteous could live by faith.

Look what faith compelled this man to do: he publically defends Jesus, accepts responsibility for his own sin, and prays a prayer for mercy that acknowledges Jesus as the King of Heaven.

The righteousness of Christ, granted to us by faith, justifies us before God.

The righteousness of Christ, imparted to us by faith, leads us to do as He did!

Christ in me compels me to give to God the first and best part of all I have- time, talent, and treasure.

Christ in me compels me to invest what remains in the precious lives God puts around me.

Am I stuck in the knowledge trap, or am I working out love for God and man in practical ways?

When in doubt, ask Him!