

a sermon on The First Great Commandment:

TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS, MINDS AND SOULS!

Robert Baral  
3/24/2007 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. A PROPOSITION

II. THE TEXT - MATTHEW 22:36-40

III. INTRODUCTION

IV. WHAT IS THIS LAW TO WHICH CHRIST REFERS?

V. GOD'S JUSTICE AND GOD'S MERCY

VI. THE BALANCE BETWEEN GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY IN HIS LOVE

VII. GOD'S LOVE FOR US IN THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF THE EUCHARIST

VIII. CAN MEN LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE HEART, SOUL AND MIND?

IX. THE MORAL CALL FOR DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST

X. IN CONCLUSION

XI. REFERENCES

## I. A PROPOSITION

It is within GOD's Love of justice and mercy that we learn to love Him with all our hearts, minds and souls, and our neighbours as ourselves!

## II. THE TEXT - MATTHEW 22:36-40<sup>1</sup>

36 Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law?

37 JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love The Lord Thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is The First and Great Commandment.

39 And the second is like unto It, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets.

## III. INTRODUCTION

The Lord JESUS CHRIST reveals to us in MATTHEW 22:37-40: "...Thou shalt love The Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and Great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets."<sup>2</sup> What shall we make of the first part of this, The First Great Commandment, that we love The Almighty with every ounce of our being and every spark of our life? And how is this, coupled with the Second Great Commandment, together thus called "...all The Law and the prophets" by our Lord?

## IV. WHAT IS THIS LAW TO WHICH CHRIST REFERS?

"The Mosaic Law in EXODUS has three parts: The Decalogue [or Ten Commandments] (EXODUS 20:1-21), The Book of The Covenant with civil and religious ordinances (EXODUS 20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (EXODUS 24:12-31:18)."<sup>3</sup> It is The Ten Commandments themselves which here demands our attention, and which may be divided into two parts: "[The First Table, which holds] The first four Commandments [that] pertain to the relationship of the Israelites with GOD [and so too Christians to CHRIST], and [the Second Table, which holds] The other six [Commandments, that] deal with the social relationships within The Covenant

---

<sup>1</sup> 1, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40.

<sup>2</sup> 1, KJV Bible, MATTHEW 22:37-40.

<sup>3</sup> 2, Walvoord and Zuck, The Decalogue (20:1-21), page 138-139.

community,” then ancient Israel and now The Church. <sup>4</sup> To love The Lord with all our heart, mind and soul leads us from within to keep The First Table of The Ten Commandments, thus fulfilling our duty to The Almighty. To love our neighbours as ourselves, who are like us made in The Image of GOD, leads us from within to keep The Second Table of The Ten Commandments, thus fulfilling our duty to our fellow man.

#### V. GOD’S JUSTICE AND GOD’S MERCY

Why should men love GOD, and with all their hearts, minds and souls? Consider The Almighty’s Justice, which calls all men to keep His Commandments, and that fully. Yet, no man is able to keep The Law perfectly, for the breaking of one Commandment is the breaking of them all. And, sin being the violation of GOD’s Law, we are all then sinners! And, as it is written in EZEKIEL 18:4, The LORD declares that “...the soul that sinneth, it shall die!”<sup>5</sup> Where then would every man left, all of us as sinners being condemned to earthly and eternal death, if there were only GOD’s justice?

So we are brought to seek the mercy of GOD. By His suffering, death and resurrection at The Cross, JESUS CHRIST pays the price for our sins which we can not pay. By His amazing Grace, He forgives us our sins which we can not earn, nor do we merit! Because, as it is written in ROMANS 5:8-9, “...GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him!”<sup>6</sup>

See the balance between The Creator’s justice and mercy, both of which together show forth the fathomless love which He has for us, mere fallen men! For when we, as it is written in I JOHN 1:9, “...confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!”<sup>7</sup> This is The Divine Love which our Maker has for us! This is, as The Catechism of The Catholic Church states, “The Grace of The HOLY SPIRIT [Who] has the power to justify us, ...to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us [as Saint Paul says in ROMANS 3:22<sup>8</sup>] ‘the righteousness of GOD through faith in JESUS CHRIST’ and through Baptism” into His death and

---

<sup>4</sup> 2, Walvoord and Zuck, a. The introduction to the Decalogue (20:1-2), page 139.

<sup>5</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 18:4.

<sup>6</sup> 1, KJV, ROMANS 5:8-9.

<sup>7</sup> 1, KJV, I JOHN 1:9.

<sup>8</sup> 1, KJV, ROMANS 3:22

resurrection!<sup>9</sup> O what Divine Love, that we are not able to give that which is due to Him, and yet He gives to us His people that which is not due to us! There are many reasons for us to love GOD with all our hearts, minds and souls. But among them all, is this not the greatest?

## VI. THE BALANCE BETWEEN GOD’S JUSTICE AND MERCY IN HIS LOVE

So if GOD The Father’s justice demands that all men keep His Law fully, and the breaking only once of only One Commandment is reason for our eternal damnation, yet His mercy calls us to The Cross of GOD The Son to be forgiven our sins and receive eternal life! We see this balance of justice and mercy in ROMANS 13:8-10, where we are reminded by Saint Paul that we are to love our fellow man as GOD loves us: Mercy is found in the bookends of Verses 8 and 10, which themselves revolve around the core of justice in the first half of verse 9. As The Creator’s justice is always tempered by His mercy to us, seen most clearly in The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, so He calls men to do justly to their fellow man in the spirit of love!

From ROMANS 13, observe: “[Verse 8] Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled The Law. [Verse 9a] For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not ...[murder]<sup>10</sup>, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; [Verse 9b-10] and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of The Law.”<sup>11</sup> The Christian man is especially called to live GOD’s Perfect Love towards – justice and mercy – towards his fellow Christian and towards all men! How is this possible? As we learn to love GOD with all our hearts, minds and souls, we then learn to love to our fellow man!

So Matthew Henry observes that, “If the love be sincere, it is accepted as the fulfilling of The Law. Surely we serve a Good Master, that has summed up all our duty in one word, and that a short word and a sweet word--love, the beauty and harmony of the

---

<sup>9</sup> 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1987, page 535.

<sup>10</sup> 4, NKJV, EXODUS 20:13 - The Sixth Commandment reads more closely to The Hebrew text in The NKJV – Thou shalt not “murder,” rather than the KJV translation – Thou shalt not “kill.”

<sup>11</sup> 1, KJV, ROMANS 13:8-10.

universe. Loving and being loved is all the pleasure, joy, and happiness, of an intelligent being. GOD is love..., and love is His Image upon the soul: where it is, the soul is well moulded, and the heart fitted for every good work!”<sup>12</sup> As Saint John says in I JOHN 4:16, “...GOD is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him!”<sup>13</sup> Does a man love GOD? Then where is his love for his fellow man, who like himself is made in GOD’s Image? Does a man desire to learn to love his neighbour? Then where is His love for GOD, Who made both he and his neighbour by The very Word of His mouth?

## VII. GOD’S LOVE FOR US IN THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF THE EUCHARIST

In The holy Sacrament of The Eucharist – our Great Thanksgiving – is the constant sign, seal and salvation which GOD bestows upon we His people, who are the thankful sheep of His pasture! By rightly receiving This Sacrament within the faithful Church, the Christian man is constantly called to rejoice in The Divine Love Incarnate, Who gave Himself for us, that we might live again and be His adopted dear children! It is where the full Divine justice and mercy meet on our behalf: CHRIST pays the debt of our sins for violating His Own Commandments. And then, by His finished work at Calvary, He washes us clean of our sins and makes us white as snow!

Now we may better see what our Lord has done for us as we read His Words of The Last Supper in MARK 14:22-24, “And as they did eat, JESUS took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My Blood of The New Testament, which is shed for many!”<sup>14</sup> This is The Divine Justice and Mercy Incarnate, Who shed His Blood to redeem us back to Himself! It is such Love that we are called to learn to return to both GOD and men in The First and Second Great Commandments!

We see how Divine Love – in both its justice and mercy - meet for us in CHRIST’s Blood! So Matthew Henry observes, “...how it pleased The Lord to bruise

---

<sup>12</sup> 5, Matthew Henry, ROMANS 13:7-10, Justice and Charity, II, Of Charity.

<sup>13</sup> 1, KJV, I JOHN 4:16.

<sup>14</sup> 1, KJV, MARK 14:22-24.

Him; ...[this is His] precious Blood, ...the pride of our redemption; ...[His] Blood is the life, and made atonement for the soul[s of many]. ...[this is] the pouring out of His soul [for us]... Blood has a voice...; and therefore [His] Blood is so often mentioned, because it was to speak [on our behalf]... It is called The Blood of the New Testament; for The Covenant of Grace became a testament, and of force by the death of CHRIST, the testator... to be shed for many, to justify many... It was sufficient for many, being of infinite value; it has been of use to many... How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that The Blood of CHRIST is shed for many! And if for many, why not for me?"

15

### VIII. CAN MEN LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE HEART, SOUL AND MIND?

Does our Redeemer ask too much of even Christian men in The Great Commandment? How is it possible for men to fulfill what CHRIST commands here, that we should love GOD with all our heart, soul and mind? Would our Saviour command us to do what we, even in Him, could not accomplish? If we can not keep GOD's Law perfectly as mere sinful men, does our Redeemer ask too much of us? To all these questions, we must reply, "By no means!" He calls us to holiness in Himself, leads us on to true piety, arms us for the battle and gives us the victory! He works to restore His Law in us which Adam and Even knew in The Garden face to face before The Fall!

The Law of Mercy of The New Testament does not then abolish The Law of Justice of The Old. Rather, as The Catechism of The Catholic Church declares, "...the work of CHRIST [in us]... is the work of The HOLY SPIRIT [in us] and, through Him, ...becomes the interior Law of ...[Love]." <sup>16</sup> So does GOD drive into our very core His Perfect Love as a spiritual nail driven into the hardened woods of our hearts! Thus does GOD fulfill in the hearts, minds and souls of Christian men what the prophet foresaw in JEREMIAH 31:33: "But this shall be The Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith The LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write It in their hearts; and will be their GOD, and they shall be My people!" <sup>17</sup>

Therefore what our Lord calls us to in The Great Commandments shows for us as

---

<sup>15</sup> 5, Matthew Henry, MARK 14:12-31, The Institution of The Lord's Supper, III, 4.

<sup>16</sup> 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1965, page 531.

<sup>17</sup> 1, KJV, JEREMIAH 31:33.

Christians what we are to be in Him! GOD forbid then, that we should refuse to seek to obey what Our Saviour has called us to keep!

For our Saviour JESUS CHRIST both imparts His perfect righteousness to cover our sinful souls, so to save us from damnation. And He infuses His perfect holiness into us, so to remake us like Himself! Consider how our Lord equips us to fulfill His Great Commandments to us, as Scofield says: “(1) He was made under The Law [GALATIANS 4:4]; (2) He lived in perfect obedience to The Law [JOHN 8:46; MATTHEW 17:5; I PETER 2:21-23]; (3) He was a minister of The Law to the Jews, clearing it from rabbinical sophistries, enforcing it in all its pitiless severity upon those who professed to obey it...[LUKE 10:25-37], but confirming the promises made to the fathers under the Mosaic Covenant [ROMANS 15:8]; (4) He fulfilled the types of The Law by His holy life and sacrificial death [HEBREWS 9:11-26]; (5) He bore... the curse of The Law that the Abrahamic Covenant might avail all who believe [GALATIANS 3:13-14]; (6) He brought out by His redemption all who believe from the place of servants under The Law into the place of sons [GALATIANS 4:1-7]; (7) He mediated by His Blood The New Covenant of assurance and grace in which all believers stand [ROMANS 5:2; HEBREWS 8:6-13], so establishing the ‘Law of CHRIST’ [GALATIANS 6:2] with its precepts of higher exaltation made possible by the indwelling [HOLY] SPIRIT” in us! <sup>18</sup>

#### IX. THE MORAL CALL FOR DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST

By The Grace of GOD The Father to us in The Son, His Law comes to be written upon our hearts because His Presence comes to dwell in us! And so CHRIST’s two Great Commandments to us are anything but mere abstract precepts! They are the guide rails by which we run on the tracks of life, by which we give to GOD what is due to His justice in joyful thankfulness and gladly receive His mercy to us at The Cross! So indeed the Christian man is called to love GOD with all his heart, soul and mind! In doing so, he will seek to live out The First Table of The Ten Commandments in all that he says, does and is. These are what, by GOD’s justice, we so rightfully owe to Him: The First

---

<sup>18</sup> 6, Scofield Reference Notes (1917 Edition) on MATTHEW 5:17.



Commandment from EXODUS 20:3<sup>19</sup> - "You shall have no other gods before Me!"<sup>20</sup>  
The Second Commandment from EXODUS 20:4<sup>21</sup> - "You shall not make unto you any  
graven images!"<sup>22</sup> The Third Commandment from EXODUS 20:7<sup>23</sup> - "You shall not  
take The Name of The LORD your GOD in vain!"<sup>24</sup> And The Fourth Commandment  
from EXODUS 20:8<sup>25</sup> - "You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it holy!"<sup>26</sup>

The Christian man is not an island unto GOD alone, but is also called by our  
Saviour to love our neighbour as ourselves. These are what, by GOD's justice, we so  
rightfully owe to others - to live out in all that we say, do and are - The Second Table of  
The Ten Commandments: The Fifth Commandment from EXODUS 20:12<sup>27</sup> - "Honor  
your father and mother!"<sup>28</sup> The Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Commandments from  
EXODUS 20:13-16<sup>29</sup> - "You shall not murder! You shall not commit adultery! You  
shall not steal! You shall not bear false witness!"<sup>30</sup> And The Tenth Commandment from  
EXODUS 20:17<sup>31</sup> - "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor!"<sup>32</sup>

How shall we make a start of keeping The First Great Commandment? Let us  
have no other gods before The LORD, but rather give all our worship and adoration to  
Him and Him alone! Let us cast down the idols in our lives, that the thrones of our hearts  
be reserved for CHRIST alone! Let us not take His Name in vain by thought, word or  
deed, but let our lives be a living Sign of The Cross every day! Let us keep The Lord's  
Day holy each Sunday, not forsaking The Congregation of GOD each appointed Day, but  
resting on That Day in He Who saves us by His precious Blood! And as we learn to keep  
our Lord's First Great Commandment to Him, so shall we learn to keep our Lord's  
Second Great commandment to others!

---

<sup>19</sup> 1, KJV Bible, EXODUS 20:3.

<sup>20</sup> 7, The Ten Commandments, Commandment I, Protestant version.

<sup>21</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:4.

<sup>22</sup> 7, The Ten Commandments, Commandment II, Protestant version.

<sup>23</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:7.

<sup>24</sup> 7, The Ten Commandments, Commandment III, Protestant version.

<sup>25</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:8.

<sup>26</sup> 7, The Ten Commandments, Commandment IV, Protestant version.

<sup>27</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:12.

<sup>28</sup> 4, The Ten Commandments, Commandment V, Protestant version.

<sup>29</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:13-16.

<sup>30</sup> 4, The Ten Commandments, Commandments VI, VII, VIII, IX, Protestant version.

<sup>31</sup> 1, KJV, EXODUS 20:17.

<sup>32</sup> 4, The Ten Commandments, Commandment X, Protestant version.

## X. IN CONCLUSION

The Perfect Love of GOD is seen in both His justice and mercy. The Law of GOD convicts us all as sinners who are worthy only of the judgement. The Cross of CHRIST offers us all the pardon which we neither deserve nor can merit. This is the kind of Perfect Love which The Almighty calls us to return to Him and show to our fellow man. In The blessed Sacrament of The Eucharist we receive the sign, seal and salvation of The Love of GOD, where His justice and mercy meet on our behalf. Seeing these things, we may begin to learn to follow our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and by the indwelling renewal of His HOLY SPIRIT in us, be remade more each day in His Image! For it is within GOD's Love of justice and mercy that we learn to love Him with all our hearts, minds and souls, and our neighbours as ourselves! May it be ever so for all who profess The Name of CHRIST, and may all men come to salvation in The Blood of CHRIST! In the Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost, AMEN!

## XI. REFERENCES

1. "King James Version." Bible Works 6 [computer program]." Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
2. "The Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament Edition." Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Scripture Press Publications Inc., USA. 1983. Ninth printing 1988.
3. "Catechism of The Catholic Church." United States Catholic Conference. Doubleday of Random House, Inc. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland. 1995.
4. "New King James Version." Bible Works 6 [computer program]." Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
5. "Matthew Henry's Commentary." Bible Works 6 [computer program]." Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
6. "Scofield Reference Notes (1917 Edition)." Crosswalk.com, Commentaries. <http://www.crosswalk.com>.
7. "A Brief Overview of The Ten Commandments - Aseret Hadiberot." Hebrew for Christians. John J. Parsons. retrieved 10/04/2006 AD. [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/Ten\\_Cmds/ten\\_cmds.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/Ten_Cmds/ten_cmds.html)