

Lesson #12 – Love and Justice: The Two Greatest Commandments – 15-21 Mar 2025

Christ would have us understand the nature of God's commandment. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (verse 21). Love comes from God. "Everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (verses 7-8). Therefore, whoever loves God must of necessity love his brother also. He must love all men, for God's love is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). And this shows that men cannot learn to love God by first loving their fellowmen. Love to God is first (see Mark 12:29-31). No man can love his neighbour unless he loves God, because love is of God; and nobody can love God without loving his brother. Love is one. It cannot be forced, for the use of force is sure death to love. It must flow spontaneously. Yet we have the statement, "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Human laws are wholly a matter of force; but God's commandment is that we should love one another, and that cannot be a matter of force. The law of God is love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). "Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8, 10). When God spoke His law, it was because "He loved the people" (Deuteronomy 33:2-3). It is clear from the Scriptures that the law of God is love, even the love of God. But God Himself is love. He does not merely have love, but love is the very life of God. The law of God is His life. And this brings us to the words of Jesus: "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50). The commandment of God is life eternal, and to know God is life eternal (John 17:3), showing that the commandment of God is His own life. We know one only as we know his life. We know God only by knowing His life, His life is eternal life; but His commandment is life eternal, for His commandment is His life. Having the life of God is the law for man. How do we receive this life of God? God has put His life in His Son — "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). Scriptures testify that life eternal is in the Son of God — "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). All were written so that we believe in the Son of God to have life eternal — "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). Whoever has the Son of God has life — "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). Without the literal Son of God, we have no love, no life.

Sunday: The Two Greatest Commandments – Read Matthew 22:34-40. As the law of God is summed up in two parts, the first four commandments relating to man's love to God, and the last six relating to man's love to his fellowmen, does that mean that governments can enforce the last table of the law? To see the fallacy of that idea, you only read the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's" etc. There is a commandment of which no earthly government can ever take any notice. A man may be almost eaten up with covetousness, and yet human laws cannot punish him, and the officers of the law cannot even tell that he is covetous. So, it is evident that the second table of the law cannot be enforced by human government. But no other commandment of the second table can be enforced by human power any more than the tenth. For the law is spiritual. Every part of it is spiritual. The sixth commandment, and the seventh, and the eighth are spiritual, as well as the first. The keeping of the commandments does not consist of outward form. If there is no spiritual life in the soul, there is no commandment keeping. It is a mistake to suppose that because the last six commandments define man's duty to man, they have no relation to God. They are the commandments of God, and of God alone. It is man's duty to God to love his

fellowman. Love to man can spring only from love to God. Love to God cannot exist without love to man. "For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). The two tables of law are not duty to God and duty to man, but they are love to God and love to man. Duty may be enforced, but love cannot be. The law is love, for love is the fulfilling of the law. But no human power can force a man to love another. Therefore, no human power can enforce the law of God. God Himself cannot force men to keep His own law, because it is a law of love as He Himself is love. But He puts the keeping of it into those who are willing, by shedding His love abroad in their hearts.

Monday: The Two Greatest Sins – What is our two greatest sins today? "Our greatest sins which separate our souls from God are unbelief and hardness of heart. Why is it that we are so unbelieving and unimpressible? The reason for it is, we are filled with self-confidence. We feel self-sufficient. If we receive some token of God's blessing, we take it as a guarantee that we are all right; and when reproof comes, we say, "I know that God has accepted me, for he has blessed me, and I will not accept this reproof." What a terrible condition we would be in if the Lord did not bless us! We must study Christ, the Pattern of character that God has given us. If we have a garment to cut, we study the pattern. And in the Christian life, we must give up our own ideas and plans, and go according to the Pattern. But instead of this, we work away from the Pattern. We should not be full of self-conceit. We must say as did John, "He must increase, but I must decrease." – Ellen White {RH August 27, 1889, par. 2}.

Tuesday: God Loves Justice – What would our families and churches look like if we focused on Micah 6:8 and intentionally put it into practice in both word and deed? We would be honest men and women. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). The word of the Lord enjoins upon the Christian the most strict and thorough honesty; the most constant and undeviating integrity and equity. To speak of a dishonest Christian would be not only a criminal use of the name Christian, but it would be as great a contradiction, as to speak of a dishonest honest man, or of an insane sane person. But, living as we do, when "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off:" "yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey" (Isaiah 59:14-15); it is to be deeply feared that the principles of justice and real Christian honesty are not well understood and thoroughly cultivated by some that professedly depart from evil, and claim a high regard for the holy and perfect law of God. Self-interest to the rights of others, mould the course of the selfish man. Wrapped up in self, man seems to forget while dealing with his fellow man, that his interests are to be consulted equally with his own. That our actions should be weighed in the scales of justice, and our accounts balanced as in the sight of God. "A just weight and balance are the Lord's" (Proverbs 16:11). "A false balance is abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 11:1). "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Corinthians 10:24). "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). "Render therefore to all their dues" (Romans 13:7). Sadly, many who profess to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are dishonest people.

Wednesday: Called to Establish Justice – Read Matthew 23:23-30; What does Jesus teach here about what is most important, what do you think He means when He refers to "weightier matters"? The Pharisees were very particular to pay tithe on the smallest herbs of the garden, yet, while so scrupulous and exact in this, they were not carrying out the same principle in their deal with their fellowmen. So, Christ sharply rebukes their inconsistent course, while at the same time he enjoins the obligation to pay the tithe even in the smallest matters. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (verse 23). Is it any different today, with our Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders? No different! Many in Adventism work on Sabbath, regarding the Sabbath lightly, commit many other open sins, yet as they bring tithe into the treasury, our church leaders dare not rebuke those open sins.

Thursday: Who Is My Neighbour? – Read Luke 10:29. Yes, who is this my neighbour to whom I should ever be polite, and courteous, tender, thoughtful, and kind, whom I should love as myself? How shall I always be able to recognise him? Shall I know him by his skin or dress? "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" Did the question justify him? If not, then we are not justified in our caste prejudice or favouritisms.