

I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT- THE DREAM OF GOD’S HEART AND OURS

Ps 8:4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?

- A. What does God want most and first? He wants our voluntary love. One of the most important questions to ask God is, “What are You looking for before anything else?” *When we find what God is looking for, then we will find what we are looking for.*

Mt 22: 37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 “This is the first and great commandment.

- B. Jesus did not call this the first option. but a commandment. Loving God is the *end in itself*; however, it never ends with loving God but always overflows with loving ourselves and others.
- C. The love God has for us carries different expressions. Each area represents an area of how we grow in love. We can cultivate each of these as God reveals them and helps us by His Spirit.
1. *God’s love for God*: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
 2. *God’s love for His people*: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength.
 3. *Our love for God*: God’s love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (*Rom. 5:5*).
 4. *Our love for ourselves*: We love ourselves in God’s love and for God’s sake.
 5. *Our love for others*: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God’s love (*1 Jn. 4:19*).

II. LOVING OURSELVES IN THE SAME LOVE THAT GOD HAS FOR US

- A. As believers we are to love ourselves in God’s love and for God’s sake. We will never love others more than we love ourselves by the grace of God. We are to see and love ourselves through the lens of Jesus’ love for us, His work on the cross, and our great value to Him.

Mt 22:39 “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

- B. We *love* who we are in Christ and *hate* who we are and what we do outside of Christ. We rejoice in our identity and life in Christ yet deny our actions and attitudes that are contrary to Him.

Lk 14:26 “If anyone...does not hate ...his own life he cannot be My disciple.”

Mt 16:24 “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross.”

- C. Loving ourselves in God’s grace is to *agree with what God sees*. He sees the eternal story of our lives in His family, not only our temporal story that is flawed with sin and weakness.

- D. You are a new creation in Christ who received the gift of God’s righteousness (*2 Cor. 5:17, 21*). You are to love the “new creation” person—in whom God delights, who possesses the Spirit, and who has an amazing future in God, both in this age and in the age to come.

2 Cor 5:17,21 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [our born-again spirit] is a new creation; old things have passed away...all things have become new...²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God...

- E. We love ourselves for God’s sake, so He fully receives His inheritance in our lives. We can pray, “Lord, let me see what You see and feel what You feel about my life.”

Eph 1:17-18 ...that the Father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...

- F. He wants us to enjoy how much He enjoys us. We are to love all those whom God loves, including ourselves. He wants us to love “the person” that He loves when He looks at us.

Is 62:4 But you shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you...

Ps 18:19 He delivered me [David] because He delighted in me.

Ps 149:9 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people...

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like You?...He delights in mercy.

III. LOVING OURSELVES OR HATING OURSELVES

- A. Self-hatred comes from seeing our worth and success according to the flesh, comparing ourselves to others, and evaluating our lives by the values of this present evil age. We must not evaluate our life according to our looks, how much money, influence or gifting we may have, but see our success and value from being in Christ.

2 Cor 10:12 They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

2 Cor 5:16-17 From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh...¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [our spirit] is a new creation...all things have become new.

- B. To live “according to the Spirit” includes agreeing with how He sees us in our identity in Christ. To live “according to the flesh” includes agreeing with the enemy’s false narrative about our life.

Rom 8:5 Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

- C. When we love ourselves according to the Spirit we are not preoccupied with our limitations, failures, or measure of mistreatment. We trust Jesus’ leadership.

- D. God created each of us in a unique way as His workmanship.

Eph 2:10 We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works [to convey a message], which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- E. David saw God's leadership in his life as wonderful and marvelous, he thanked Him for it. He was able to look beyond his limitations and embrace God's really good story for his life.

Ps 139:13-17 You formed my inward parts [physically, emotionally, mentally]...¹⁴I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well...¹⁵I was skillfully wrought in the lowest parts [mother's womb]...¹⁷How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum...

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

- F. Paul was content to embrace God's will, even in times of lack (*Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:8*).

Phil 4:11-13 ...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content...¹²I have learned...to abound and to suffer need.¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- G. Self-hatred results in a deep sense of rejection that damages our ability to love and receive love. The emotional traffic of self-hatred through preoccupation with our image and what others think about us hinders our ability to love and obey Jesus.

- H. We cannot love Jesus or others well if we are overwhelmed with the "emotional traffic" of rejection, insecurities, comparisons, bitterness, etc. This leads more "emotional traffic" of pride hidden in protecting ourselves and having to be right: so we won't be rejected more.

- I. We must receive what the Word says about the activities we do in God's will—though many are small and go unnoticed by others. The enemy tries to convince us that our life is irrelevant and useless. Jesus remembers and rewards every act of obedience, even giving a cup of water (*Mt. 10:42*).

Mt 10:42 Whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly...he shall by no means lose his reward."

Lk 19:17 Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities

- J. When we know that His eyes are on us, then we do not have to strive to get the eyes of people to recognize our accomplishments, ministry, etc. We do not need to get the time and attention of powerful and popular people because we already have the attention of the most glorious Man.