The Greatest Commandment of All

(Mark 12:28-34)

Introduction:

1. On one occasion, a scribe came to Jesus and asked, “Which is the first commandment of all?” (Mark 12:28 NKJV)

a. This question has been asked of thousands before and after the earthly birth of Jesus Christ.

b. There are hundreds of laws in the Old Testament. Which is the greatest of all?

c. The scribe was not unfamiliar with the law.

1] A scribe is a person who was a copyist and a scholar of the law.

2] He made his income from copying and interpreting the law.

2. The scribe had listened while the Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus difficult questions.

a. The Pharisees and Herodians wanted to “catch Him in His words” (Mark 12:13).

b. The Pharisees and Herodians asked, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” (Mark 12:14).

c. Christ gave them an answer that made His critics marvel at Him (cf. Mark 12:17).

d. Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17).

3. Next, the Sadducees attempted to trap Jesus in His words (cf. Mark 12:18-27).

4. After all these questions, the scribe asked Jesus, which is the greatest commandment of all. Note Jesus’ answer: “The first of all the commandments *is:* ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.And 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 12:29, 30).

Body:

I. Love the Lord with All Your Heart

A. The heart is the part of us that feels emotions.

B. With the heart, we have feelings for other people.

1. When someone is baptized, we often cry with joy in our hearts.

2. If someone close to us gets married, we might shed some tears.

C. It is possible to have deep feelings for a lot of things other than God (sports, people, material goods, politics, etc.).

D. First comes devotion of the mind. Next comes devotion of the heart. We generally feel deeply about our relationship with God.

E. Minds learn with the heart. Warm hearts intensify the desire to serve God.

II. Love the Lord with All Your Soul

A. The soul comes from a Greek word that often means breath.

B. Note how the word “soul” is used in Scripture.

1. People can kill the physical body, but they cannot kill the soul (cf. Matthew 10:28).

2. Jesus offers rest for our souls (cf. Matthew 11:29).

3. Our souls are worth more than the whole world (cf. Mark 8:36, 37).

4. Jesus’ soul was sorrowful, even to death (cf. Mark 14:34).

5. Our souls can be lost (cf. Luke 12:20).

C. “Soul” means the life within us, the breath of life.

D. Christians must love God enough that we would give our lives to Him.

III. Love the Lord with All Your Mind

A. “Mind” refers to the intellect, the thinking part of our lives.

B. The thinking part:

1. Studies the Bible

2. Prepares income tax

3. Makes discoveries

4. Produces inventions

5. Gets trained in school

C. Loving God with our minds is emphasized in the New Testament. For example, the Berean Christians used their minds and “searched the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11).

IV. Love the Lord with All Your Strength

A. “Strength” includes our talents, abilities, and energy.

B. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

1. The sacrifices of the Old Testament consisted of bloody, dead animals.

2. The sacrifices of the New Testament include our lives as we live in service to God.

C. We use the strengths that God gave us to serve Him. We do not work to earn a place in heaven. We work because we love God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

1. Our relationship with God must involve our hearts, minds, souls, and strengths.

a. Imagine one person responding to the gospel invitation the same way he or she pays premiums on insurance policies. He hates to respond but is afraid no to do so. He checks off his list as he walks down the aisle: hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. “Check!”

b. Another person responds to the same gospel invitation. Her motive is love for God. She holds nothing back; she surrenders all to God. This is real Christianity.

2. God is saying, “Give Me all you have, ever hope to be, and I will, in return, take care of you in this lifetime and in the life to come.”