

THE GREATEST PRIORITY

Scripture reading: Matt. 22:34-40;
Deut. 6:4, 5;
Luke 7:36-50.

Intro: Often the question is asked, Where do you start in the Bible to find out what it is all about? If you were to condense it all into one thing, what would that one thing be?

This was really the question that was asked by this expert in the Law, "a lawyer." The account is given also in Mark 12:28-34 and in Luke 10:25-28 -- thus emphasizing its importance!

The answer is important for two ^{other} reasons:

- 1) It was given by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it has the greatest authority. No one can dispute His word.
- 2) It originated with the Lord God of Israel and Moses was commanded to teach it to the people, and the people were to teach their children.

The account in Luke where our Lord was in the home of Simon, the Pharisee, throws added light on this most important statement:

"Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

(Read Luke 7:36-50.)

From these passages let us consider three questions:

- 1) What does it mean to love the Lord?
- 2) How do we express our love for Him?
- 3) Why should we love Him?

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE THE LORD?

It means two things:

- A. It is an OT expression which is equal to that of believing in Him, or of receiving Him as Savior.

Not only does the Luke passage bear this out, but so also do the following three verses -- two of which we know very well:

- 1) Rom. 8:28.
- 2) 1 Cor. 2:9.
- 3) 1 Cor. 8:3,

"But if any man love God, the same is known of him."

This gives added meaning to vv. 6 and following in Deut. 6. Not only were they to love the Lord themselves, but they were to lead their children to the Lord so that they would love Him, too.

But it does not stop there. What we are in name, i.e., people who love the Lord, we must be in fact, in daily experience.

And so we see also in the actions of the woman in Luke 7 that . . .

B. To love the Lord means that we express that love to Him,

1. By wanting to be with Him.
2. By worshiping Him.
3. By sacrificing for Him.

What a rebuke to Simon and to men generally that he did not love the Lord like this woman did.

As we see . . .

. . . in the love of a husband for his wife, or
. . . in the love of a disciple for his master,
love meant that the one loved was preferred before everyone else. This is the way the Lord wants us to love Him.

II. HOW DO WE EXPRESS OUR LOVE FOR THE LORD?

We can follow the example of the woman in Luke 7 -- by being with Him, by worshiping Him, by prayer -- telling Him that we love Him. BUT -- there is one way above all other ways: BY OUR OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD!

But we cannot obey it unless we know it, and we cannot know it unless we read it!

Note how this is brought out in the book of Deuteronomy. See Note #2 on p. 225 in the NSRB -- the three ways that love is spoken of in Deuteronomy. For an example of our love for God, cf. Deut. 11:1, 13, 22.

Also see John 14:15,

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."
Note John 14:21, 23 -- and the contrast in v. 24.

There is no part of our lives which is left untouched by this.

III. WHY SHOULD WE LOVE THE LORD?

Is it not a little ridiculous that we should ask a question like this? It is like our consideration on New Year's Eve: Why would the Lord have to leave us the Lord's Supper to remember Him? How could we forget Him? And yet we do!

Let me just give a few of the many reasons:

A. Because He wants us to love Him.

Do you need any greater reason than this? Is your heart not moved to its very depths when you see this in the Word of God?

How can we keep the tears back when we read about Peter and the Lord after Peter's denial -- John 21:15-17. With all of the lessons that passage contains, one thing is obvious: the Lord wanted to hear Peter just say it!

B. Because of all the sins in our lives He has forgiven.

The sinner woman in Luke 7 teaches us that.

But, perhaps some of you young people are saying, I was saved before I got into a lot of sin. Then thank God for sparing you because it is only by His grace that that is true in your case.

John Monsell wrote those heart-rending words,

"My sins, my sins, my Saviour!
They take such hold on me,
I am not able to look up,
Save only Christ to Thee;
In Thee is all forgiveness,
In Thee abundant grace,
My shadow and my sunshine
The brightness of **Thy face.**

"Therefore my songs, my Saviour,
E'en in this time of woe,
Shall tell of all Thy goodness
To suff'ring man below;
Thy goodness and Thy favor,
Whose presence from above
Rejoice those hearts my Saviour
That live in Thee alone."

- C. Because this is the way to greater fellowship and greater blessing.

Cf. John 14:21, 23.

- D. Because of the many times He has answered prayer.

The only reason He has not done more is because we have not prayed as much as we should.

But note what the Psalmist wrote:

"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

This is Psa. 116:1, 2.

- E. Because of the way He providentially keeps us day by day.

David wrote in Psa. 145:17-21,

"The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

"The Lord is near unto all those who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

"He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

"The Lord preserveth all those who love him, but all the wicked will he destroy.

"My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord; and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever."

Concl: We can all say what the Psalmist said in Psa. 116:12,

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

Do you love the Lord tonight? Have you trusted Him as your Savior?

If you do know Him, is it true that in your life, with your whole heart and soul and mind, it is evident that you love the Lord? Have you told Him so today? Does your obedience to the Word show that you love Him?

Whatever our desires might be for 1975, let this be first!