



The Amish Voice

MAP ♦ P.O. Box 128 ♦ 575 U.S. Highway 250 ♦ Savannah, OH 44874 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ March 2015

The Believer's Life and Walk: Free and Spiritual

Galatians 5:13-6:18

—Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

<p>1. An important section— Paul himself writes</p> <p>2. False ministers make a good impression outwardly—in the flesh—seeking popularity</p> <p>a. To gain approval & to escape persecution</p> <p>b. To make a good showing by adding to their statistical numbers</p> <p>3. True ministers boast in the cross of Christ</p>	<p>F. A Walk Boasting in the Cross of Christ, 6:11-18</p> <p>11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.</p> <p>12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.</p> <p>13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.</p> <p>14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our</p>	<p>Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.</p> <p>15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.</p> <p>16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.</p> <p>17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.</p> <p>18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.</p>	<p>a. The cross crucifies the world & its enticements to men, crucifies the passions & desires of men for the world</p> <p>b. The cross creates a new man, a new creation</p> <p>c. The cross brings peace & mercy</p> <p>d. The cross gives purpose to the scars of life</p> <p>4. Closing: A benediction of grace</p>
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Section V

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE AND WALK:

FREE AND SPIRITUAL

Galatians 5:13–6:18

Study 6: A WALK BOASTING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Text: Galatians 6:11-18

Aim: To focus our entire life upon the cross of Christ.

Memory Verse:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Ga.6:14).

INTRODUCTION:

Should a Christian believer ever boast? Is boasting ever justified? If you are a successful person, there is a great temptation to brag about all you have accomplished. And this is the point: many people take pride in boasting about all they have done. This attitude is particularly wrong when it is applied to salvation. Man had absolutely nothing to do with the saving work of Christ. Jesus Christ needed no help from

man to solve the problem of sin. Consequently, the believer is exhorted to brag on Jesus Christ! Christ and Christ alone is worthy of our praise. We are to boast in the name of Christ and in His name alone.

This passage concludes Paul's letter to the Galatians. Paul's heart was pounding with concern over the Galatian believers and their churches. They had allowed false teachers to enter their ranks, and many of them had begun to listen and follow the false teachers. The churches were on the precipice of deserting God and destroying their witness for Christ and world missions. Usually Paul dictated his letters to a scribe, and when he was through dictating the letter, he closed the letter with a brief blessing and his signature. But note what he did as he closed this letter to the Galatians: he took the pen himself and closed the letter, closed it with a strong exhortation and with a defense of his ministry and of the gospel. He declared in no uncertain terms: believers—minister and layman alike—are to walk boasting in nothing but the cross of Christ.

OUTLINE:

1. An important section—Paul himself writes (v.11).
2. False ministers make a good impression outwardly—in the flesh—seeking popularity (vv.12-13).
3. True ministers boast in the cross of Christ (vv.14-17).
4. Closing: a benediction of grace (v.18).

1. AN IMPORTANT SECTION—PAUL HIMSELF WRITES (v.11).

This is an important passage of Galatians, so important that Paul took the pen from his scribe and wrote it himself. The reference to writing a large letter means large print. Why did Paul write with large print? Several explanations are given.

1. Because Paul wanted to boldly emphasize the points of what he was saying. It should be noted that this is possible, but the scribe could have done this as well as Paul.
2. Because Paul could not write well, so he had to write in bold print in order for it to be read. This too is unlikely, for Paul was a well-educated man.
3. Because Paul had some kind of eye problem or blurred vision. Of all explanations, this seems most likely.

There is no question that Paul chose to personally write this section because he wanted to emphasize its message and to verify that he was the true author of the letter. Why he wrote in large print is unknown.

The lesson for us is this: the message of this passage is important enough for Paul to have taken the pen from the scribe and have written it himself. Therefore, we need to give utmost attention to what is said.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is to be your response to this section? Why?
2. What kind of point was Paul making in this verse?

2. FALSE MINISTERS MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION OUTWARDLY—IN THE FLESH—SEEKING POPULARITY (vv.12-13).

They want to be accepted and approved by the world. Remember: false teachers had infiltrated the churches of Galatia. They opposed both Paul and the gospel he preached. Their major stress was that a person had to undergo the basic ritual of religion, that of circumcision (baptism, church membership, etc.). They made circumcision necessary for salvation. If a person were circumcised, he was well on his way to being saved. Paul attacked this position, making a strong charge against false teachers. He charged them with being driven by worldly motives. Keep in mind that he was dealing with false teachers and ministers within the church. What he had to say is a strong lesson for teachers of every generation.

1. The false teachers sought to gain the approval of their peers and to escape persecution. They sought the favor of men over the favor of God. Many of the earliest ministers of the gospel were priests who saw Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. However, they accepted Him only as an addition to the law. They said that Jesus Christ came primarily to show how God wants us to live; therefore, He only added to the law. The law was still important in approaching God: we were to approach God through both the law and Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was unpopular in the ministry of that day to proclaim that Christ alone was the way to God. The ministers who proclaimed Christ alone were persecuted through ridicule, mockery, abuse, and rejection. A minister who preached salvation

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through the cross of Christ alone was thought to be destroying both the law and established religion. Therefore, the ministers of established religion persecuted the ministers of the cross. As a result, it took real courage to stand up and proclaim the truth. Most chose the easy way out, going along with the established ministry in order to avoid the persecution.

APPLICATION:

How many go along with the *established and popular religions of the world* instead of proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ and His Word? How many fear the ridicule, rejection, and abuse of the cross? How often is a minister tempted to tone down the message of the cross to keep from offending some in the congregation? How many ministers have to fear reaction if they proclaim the simple message of salvation by faith in the cross of Christ *alone*? How many have to fear reaction from their peers and denominational leaders?

2. The false teachers sought to make a good showing by adding to their statistical numbers (v.13). Note exactly what Scripture says: they wanted to have people circumcised so that they could boast in their numbers. Their interest was not so much in teaching people to obey the Lord and the law as it was in building up their own security. They wanted recognition through the appearance of a growing ministry. They sought the approval and acceptance of people more than the welfare of the people. Of course, keeping the law and leading the people to obey God was important, just as every man's teaching is important to him. But their primary concern was the appearance of a growing ministry so that they could secure their own livelihood and position with the people.

APPLICATION:

People are impressed with increased numbers on statistical growth. Everyone knows this—both religious and lay leaders. As a result, ministers are often drawn into the temptation to stress growth in baptism, church attendance, Bible study, programs, or activities. Increased numbers...

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|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • build image | • point to gifts and abilities |
| • boost egos | • stress charisma |
| • convey success | • open doors |
| • enlarge reputation | • help to increase income |
| • secure position | • attract attention |
| • increase opportunity | |

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you give an example of a false ministry that was just for show? Why does God allow these kinds of things? How are you to respond to this type of ministry?

2. In what ways are you tempted to become popular with the world? How can you shift your focus to Christ?

3. Why do some people put a lot of emphasis on numbers? Is it always bad? Why or why not? What conclusion can you reach about a ministry whose focus is always on numbers, appearance, etc., instead of on Christ?

3. TRUE MINISTERS BOAST IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST (vv.14-17).

The cross of Christ is the only boast of a true minister of God, for there is no other approach to God. God accepts a person only if he comes to Him by way of the cross. There is no other way to become acceptable to God. Therefore, the true minister has no other message, no other truth of which to boast. Paul gave four reasons why the cross is the minister's only boast.

1. The cross crucifies the world to men and men to the world. What does this mean?

a. First, the cross crucifies the world to men. The world has all kinds of attractions that appeal to men, and men lust after the attractions. There are such attractions as...

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • position | • sex |
| • power | • pleasure |
| • acceptance | • honor |
| • recognition | • food |
| • money | • possessions |

The list could go on and on to include every appealing attraction on earth, but what is the end of it all? Deterioration, decay, death, and a sense of judgment. Even man himself ages, dies, and decays. There is nothing on earth that lasts and lives eternally. If man wishes to live forever, someone with unlimited power has to restructure this world. Someone has to destroy the world and remake it, everything in it, including the flesh of man. The glorious news is that God has done this very thing. God has shown that He loves this world, and He has demonstrated His love in the most perfect way possible. How?

God sent His Son into the world to die for men and to free them from the world. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He bore the penalty of our transgressions. He took the law's condemnation of death against us and bore the condemnation for us. Therefore, any person who believes that Jesus Christ died for him shall be saved from this world of death. God declares that he will count that person as having been crucified with Christ. The person never has to die. When the moment comes for the person to pass from this world into the next, God will transfer the person right into His presence to live eternally. It will all happen within the blinking of an eye. The

person who believes in Christ will never die, never taste or experience death.

This is what is meant by the world's being crucified to the believer. The believer never has to go the way of the world, that is, the way of sin, corruption, death, and judgment.

⇒ Jesus Christ died to deliver the believer from the world, all its bondages including the bondage of death.

⇒ The Spirit of Jesus Christ (the Holy Spirit) lives within the believer to give him the power to overcome the world in all its corruptible attractions. Through the Spirit of God, the believer has the power to conquer the lusts of the flesh.

b. Second, the cross crucifies men (believers) to the world. What does this mean? When the believer dies to the world, he turns away from the attractions and pleasures of the world; therefore, the believer becomes unattractive to the world. Worldly men do not like what they see, for the believer is rejecting the life-style and pleasures of the world. Consequently, the worldly want nothing to do with the believer. They want him out of their way. They want him as non-existent, as a dead person to them. Therefore, when a person comes to the cross of Christ, the cross crucifies him to the world and its ways. He is no longer attractive to the world.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom.6:6).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Ga.2:20).

2. The cross creates a new man. Nothing makes a person acceptable to God except God's very own Son, Jesus Christ. No religion, no law, no ritual—nothing can avail anything with God except Jesus Christ. Therefore, if any man wishes to live with God, he has to *believe in Jesus Christ and approach God in the name of Jesus Christ.*

Now a very practical question arises: How does using the name of Jesus Christ make a person live forever? Does a person become acceptable to God by just approaching God and saying, “God, I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ”? No! And there is one good reason. God knows who is really sincere and who is not. God cannot be deceived. *Words and false profession*—just using the words “in the name of Jesus Christ”—will not save anyone. A person has to be genuinely sincere. The point is this: when a person is sincere in his belief, God gives the person a new spirit—a recreated spirit.

God actually places His divine nature, the presence of His own Spirit, into the person's life. The person is “born again” spiritually. He becomes what Scripture calls a *new creature, a new man.*

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Co.5:17).

“Beloved, let us love one other: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 Jn.4:7).

3. The cross brings peace and mercy (v.16). Note who it is that experiences peace and mercy: those who walk by the *rule of the cross and of the new creature.* A person who walks after the cross, seeking to live as a new creature in Christ Jesus will be given...

- ◆ the peace of God.
- ◆ the mercy of God. He will experience both the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of God. And most wonderfully, he will be given the *perfect assurance* of eternal life and of God's care.

Note that the church and believers are called “the Israel of God.” This simply means that the church and believers are the true Israel of God, the ones in whom God fulfills His promises.

4. The cross gives purpose to the scars of life. Christ had suffered for Paul; therefore, Paul was willing to suffer for Christ. And suffer he did. He bore as much as any man has had to bear for Christ. The word for marks means the branding marks that masters put upon their slaves. The marks identified the slaves as belonging to them.

The point is clear: Paul had subjected his body so much and suffered so much persecution for Christ that his body bore the marks of such subjection and suffering. He could say that the marks upon his body were the branding marks of Christ—the marks that proved his slavery and service to Christ. Therefore, let no man deny his call and ministry for the Lord. He had strong evidence that he was a true minister of the Lord Jesus: the very marks upon his body. The cross of Jesus Christ drove Paul to serve Christ, even to the point of suffering beyond imagination.

APPLICATION:

The believer who suffers reproach, ridicule, mockery, and other persecutions because of his stand for Christ bears the marks of Christ in his body. Have you ever asked the *Why* question of God when...

- ◆ you are made fun of because of your love for Jesus?
- ◆ you lose a promotion at work because of your faith?

- ◆ you are slandered because you do not laugh at the dirty jokes you overhear?
- ◆ you turn the other cheek, only to be struck on the other?

The next time that you are tempted to ask the *Why* question of God, ask Him *How* instead. “Lord, *How* can I best glorify You in this circumstance?”

“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt.5:11-12, NASB).

ILLUSTRATION:

If you need good directions to get somewhere, the last person you want to ask is someone who is just as lost as you. Like you, he needs a point of reference: how to get there from here.

The geographical heart of London is Charing Cross. All distances are measured from it. This spot is referred to simply as “the cross.” A lost child was one day picked up by a London “bobby.” The child was unable to tell where he lived. Finally, in response to the repeated questions of the bobby, and amid his sobs and tears, the little fellow said, “If you will take me to the cross I think I can find my way from there.”

The cross is the point where men become reconciled to God. If we [are to] find our way to God and home we must first come to the cross.

The only road sign that will do you any good is the one which points you to the cross. There, the lost can be found.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the secret to the power of the cross?
2. What kind of life is lived by a Christian who avoids the cross?
3. How do you cultivate a habit of living through the cross?

4. CLOSING: A BENEDICTION OF GRACE (v.18).

Paul ends the letter to the Galatians abruptly. He will have no more attacks upon his ministry nor upon the gospel of Christ. The churches and their people need to repent and get rid of the false teachers. Until then:

“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (v.18).

ILLUSTRATION:

The choice is clear: either we choose a life that is bound to the law and its legalism, or we choose to bind our fate to the grace of God.

Lillie Baltrip is a good bus driver. In fact, according to the

Fort Worth Star-Telegram of June 17, 1988, the Houston school district nominated her for a safe-driving award. Her colleagues even trusted her to drive a busload of them to an awards ceremony for safe drivers. Unfortunately, on the way to the ceremony, Lillie turned a corner too sharply and flipped the bus over, sending herself and sixteen others to the hospital for minor emergency treatment.

Did Lillie, accident free for the whole year, get her award anyway? No. Award committees rarely operate on the principle of grace. How fortunate we are that even when we don’t maintain a spotless life-record, our final reward depends on God’s grace, and not on our performance!

QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe grace?
2. Are you convinced of God’s unconditional love for you—even when you make a mistake? How can you be sure?
3. Grace is God’s gift to you. What can you give Him in return?

SUMMARY:

Is the cross your point of reference? In order to get a better focus of the cross, you need to remember these major points:

1. An important section—Paul himself writes.
2. False ministers make a good impression outwardly—in the flesh—seeking popularity.
3. True ministers boast in the cross of Christ.
4. Closing: a benediction of grace.

PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES

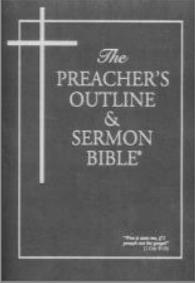
(Reflection & Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:
2. The area that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Statement of Commitment:

This marks our last study in the book of Galatians. We hope you have enjoyed the studies as much as we have. Even more, we sincerely pray that God used the studies to raise you up and place you on higher ground for God’s eternal glory and power.

If you missed even one during the past three years, let us know and we will mail you a copy. Otherwise, seriously consider investing your money in the entire POSB commentary set on page 6. I honestly do not know where you could get such a wealth of information for the price.

—God bless you! Joe Keim



Preachers Outline & Sermon Bible in King James Version

If you are one of those people who is serious about studying and understanding God's Word, but sometimes need just a little bit of help understanding what you read, then I would like to recommend to you one of the Christian's greatest and most trusted tools available in our generation. From the very first time I was introduced to the POSB commentary set, I fell in love with them. What drew me the most is the simple layout, explanations, and illustrations (see sample of John 3:16-17 below). I also like the way this commentary brings in other scriptures to go along with what you are studying. What I would like for you to prayerfully consider is; buy one book and see for yourself how great they are. I promise, you'll have a hard time laying it down. You will learn so much!

Sample Page

(3:16-17) **Introduction:** this is the world's most well known Scripture. Brief and to the point, Jesus revealed God's great love.

1. The fact: God so loved (v.16).
2. The evidence: God gave (v.16).
3. The purpose: to save (v.16).
4. The proof: God sent His Son (the Incarnation) (v.17).
5. The means: through Him (v.17).

1. (3:16) God, Love of: God so loved the world. He loved the whole world. Note several facts.

1. The idea that God loves the whole world is a new idea. The Jews believed God loved the religious (the true Jew) and hated the non-religious (the Gentiles). The same thoughts are held by many in every generation, especially by religionists. The fact that God truly loves is shocking to many. Some wonder and others question how God could possibly love the...

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| • vile person | • murderer |
| • immoral person | • wife beater |
| • child abuser | • prostitute |
| • thief | • alcoholic |
| • street person | • oppressor |
| • enslaver | • bitter, vengeful |

Thought 1. God loves every man, not just the religious and the good. He does not love only the people who love Him. He loves everyone, even the unlovely and the unloving, the unbelieving and the obstinate, the selfish and the greedy, the spiteful and the vengeful.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:12-13).

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

1. The fact: God so loved (v.16).
2. The evidence: God gave (v.16).
3. The purpose: to save (v.16).
 - a. From perishing

E. Revelation 5: God's Great Love. 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- a. To eternal life
- b. By believing

4. The proof: God sent His Son (the Incarnation)

- a. Not to condemn
- b. But to save

5. The means: Thru Him

DIVISION II

THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD, 2:1-3:21

E. Revelation 5: God's Great Love, 3:16-17

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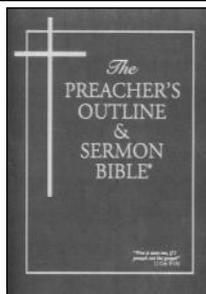
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the Bible, please contact them and order their books.

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You know how valuable the Galatians Outline and Sermon Bible was; now try some of their other books as you continue studying God's word.

Even though the Galatians study is completed, we plan to continue to feature more great Bible teaching and study resources, so we hope that you continue to read each issue and look forward to when the next *Amish Voice* arrives in the mail!

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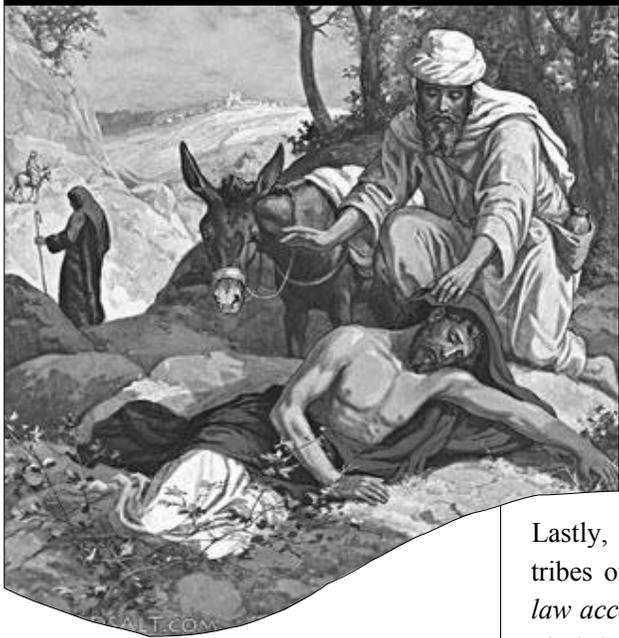
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The Amish Voice

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Comments and Prayers Welcome!

1. If you have any comments, ideas, suggestions, questions, prayer requests, or might want to contribute a possible article for the *Amish Voice*, please let us know.
2. If you enjoy the *Amish Voice* and would like to help us with the cost of printing and postage or if you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*, please contact us.
3. Please pray for us and with us that we would all grow nearer to God.



understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, **is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.**”

Luke, the doctor, records the lawyer’s story this way (Luke 10:25-29): “Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Instead of giving the lawyer an answer, Jesus asks, “What is written in the law?” To which the lawyer responds: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.*

Verse 29 says: ...But the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, **And who is my neighbor?**

Next, let us move on to the epistles of Paul and James, where they continue writing about loving thy neighbor as thyself.

When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he said: *Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill,*

*Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*** —Romans 13:9

Again, Paul writes to the church in Galatia: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*** —Galatians 5:14

Lastly, James writes to the twelve tribes of Israel: *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,** ye do well:* —James 2:8

Eight times, God said: **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!** Each time, it was a command; not a suggestion.

Most of us have been taught that we are not to think of ourselves too highly, and I believe that is scriptural. Matter of fact, I don’t like being around people who think of themselves as better than others. You probably don’t either. However, when we look at each one of these verses, we are told to “*love thy neighbor...as thyself.*” So what happens if I don’t love myself? Can I still love my neighbor?

Let me ask you a question, friend. If your *love for self* could be measured, using a scale of 1 to 10, what number would you give yourself?

If you just gave yourself a 2, 5, or a 7, the reality is, you will have a very difficult time loving your neighbor beyond a 2, 5, or a 7.

Furthermore, if you find yourself tearing others down and putting a low value on their lives, you might first look at yourself and see that it starts with you. First, you

have to love and value your own life. When you find that you can give yourself a 9 or 10, you will immediately notice a difference in how much your value and love for others increases.

Just in case you think I’m somewhere out in left field, let me explain what I **don’t** mean by loving self. I **don’t** mean that you should become puffed up and proud of yourself. God forbid! That’s worldly love and, as you already know, God hates it.

The love I’m trying to describe begins with God. Let’s look at 1 John 4:7-8:

*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of ^[or from] God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for **God is love.***

Consider these facts:

- ◆ Loving others is dependent on us knowing God.
- ◆ The level of love and value I place on self and others goes back to how well I’ve accepted God’s love.
- ◆ If I have a hard time receiving God’s love, I will have a hard time loving who I am. If I have a hard time loving who I am, I will have a hard time loving my neighbor.

So, if I’m having a hard time loving my neighbor, I have to go back to the very beginning; that is, I must learn how to receive the love that flows from the throne of God.

You might ask, how do I do that? I believe it goes back to God’s Word. If you do not read God’s word, your faith in God will become weak and begin to struggle. When your faith in God struggles, so will your life in the area of loving self and others.

Our understanding of love begins with the most frequently quoted verse in the Bible:

Continued next page >

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

—John 3:16

Let's read that promise from God again. This time, I would like for you to place **your name** whenever you see a blank line. Ready?

For God so loved _____, that he gave his only begotten Son, that if _____ believeth in him, _____ should not perish, but have everlasting life (go to heaven).

—John 3:16

This is what the Bible calls being "born-again" or "born from above." In this new birth experience, God reveals His amazing love to you. This miracle will produce in you a new nature that will allow you to love others like never before—regardless of their response to your love.

This new birth is an event that takes place in the moment of time and eternity. It is also the start of understanding and fully receiving God's love. Consider the apostle Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus:

...that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. —Ephesians 3:17-19

As we experience God's love and respond in love, we will be transformed into His image. We will also be fulfilling His greatest command, and that is: *to love God and our neighbor as our self.*

I would like to end this first part of "love thy neighbor as thyself" by sharing a story.

A particular Amish community was experiencing a lot of problems within. Church people were arguing over this and arguing over that. Months turned into years, and small problems turned in big problems. Eventually, some of the families had enough and moved elsewhere. And then more families moved...and then more. At some point, it was said that about 200 families had moved out of this particular community. Of course, this greatly saddened the remaining families and led them to reach beyond themselves for help. They invited wise men from other communities to come and meet with their remaining families.

The big meeting day finally arrived. As family after family arrived and parked their buggies, they walked to an open area where the meeting was to take place. When everyone had found their place, the meeting was brought to order. Next, the wise men asked for members of the community to share the arguments and problems that brought so much heartache and pain to this once active community of Amish families.

One after the other, folks shared from their heart. Sometimes, folks shared in anger, other times in frustration and confusion. Finally, the last member had his say. For a moment, everything became silent as they waited for the wise men to get up and tell them where they had failed as a community.

Jonas, one of the wise men, stood to his feet and cleared his throat. He said, "Friends, now listen closely; your problem is not whether one should or shouldn't wear bright orange when hunting deer, neither does having or not having bulk milk tanks have anything to

do with all the division and anger that has come from this community." Jonas waited a moment, and then continued. "All this confusion, anger, bitterness, and division could have easily been avoided if you had heeded God's command, when He said: ***Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.***"

You see, dear reader; most of our church problems are not what they seem. Neither are family and work problems. In many cases, our bitterness and divisions come from a lack of love for God, then self, and lastly others.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John begins the book by writing to the seven churches. To the Church of Ephesus, the Lord asked John to write:

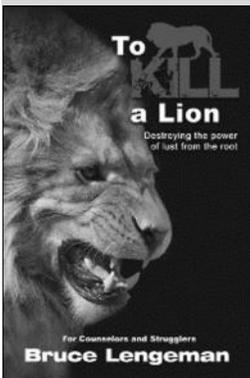
Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. — Revelation 2:4-5

In part 2, we will take some time and see what Jesus meant, when He said, "Loving God and loving my neighbor...."

- ◆ **hang all the law and the prophets. —Matthew 22:40**
- ◆ **There is none other commandment greater than these. —Mark 12:31**
- ◆ **is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. —Mark 12:33**
- ◆ **But the lawyer, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? —Luke 10:29**

—written by Joe Keim

END



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A Fast Pleasing To God

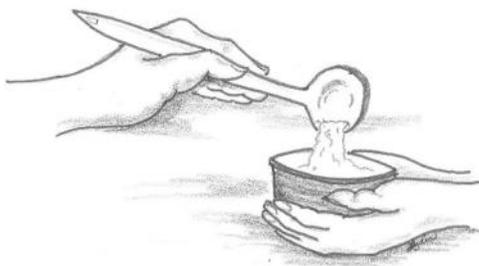
—By Norma

Isaiah 58:11 caught my eye this morning. It says: *And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

We all desire to have God guide, bless, and prosper us continually. But what does it take for this to happen? Many times we feel more like the people in verses 1-5. God's children were fasting and seeking Him, but they were not happy with the outcome. They asked; *Why have we fasted and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls and You take no notice* (verse 3)?

God told them they were taking pleasure in their fasts and afflictions and were fasting for wrong reasons: to be noticed, for strife and debate. God said He was not pleased with this kind of fasting and did not find pleasure in seeing His children afflict themselves. This kind of fasting was not acceptable to Him.

He then described what He wanted His people to do: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, to feed the hungry,



to bring the outcasts in, to provide clothing for those who do not have clothing, and to care for their families (see Isaiah 58:6-7).

God told them that if these things happened, THEN they would see their light and their health, and they would be known for their righteousness. THEN the glory of God would follow them wherever they went. He told them He would answer when they called if they quit judging and blaming each other. If they humbled themselves and reached out to those who were less fortunate, a bright light would scatter the darkness for them. THEN God would guide them, and satisfy them. This brings us back to verse 11, to what we want for our lives!

It gets better.

In verse 12, God told them they would rebuild broken things and would be

called *The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell In*. Wow! Wouldn't we love to be called those things? God concludes by telling them that if they turned away from seeking their own pleasure and speaking their own words, and turned to Him and honored and delighted in Him, He would cause them to *ride the high places of the earth and eat of the heritage of Jacob*.

The gist is this: there is a time when God will lift us up, but first we must truly surrender to Him. If we humble ourselves and lay down our desires, if we surrender our dreams and goals to Him, and if we honor Him, delight in Him, and put others and their needs first, God will not forget. He will raise us in due time.

This is a process. Because we are so blinded to our own pride and our own will, God often shows us things in stages. I am in this process myself. Sometimes I am stunned at my own pride, but He is never surprised. He just takes us to the places we need to go to learn the lessons we need to learn, just like He did with His children long ago. God is patient and will not give up.

END

People of many different faiths, churches, and denominations can tell you what they believe. You can probably tell others what you believe. Often, though, our beliefs are little more than tradition or opinions. Is it okay to get drunk? Is homosexuality wrong? What kind of music should you listen to? Is it wrong to steal? How do we get eternal life? Is it wrong to study the Bible on our own?

How do we find answers to questions like these? To tell someone that stealing or taking God's name in vain are wrong without explaining why does not seem very convincing. To tell others that it is sinful to do or wear certain things simply because that is how we have always done it does not help others understand.

We ought to follow Jesus—not as a slave following a master, but as a child following his or her loving parents. There are indeed times when a child may not understand the whole picture, but must simply obey without knowing why. However, as the child grows up, his understanding should also increase. It is one thing for children to follow rules which the parents understand, but if parents set rules for their children and neither the parents nor the children understand the reasons for those rules, it can be a good thing to ask, “Why?” and to search for the answer.

The scribes and Pharisees had many, many rules. Some came from the Bible. Many did not. Jesus did not mind pointing out to them when their rules were only human tradition, or especially when their man-made rules kept people from following the word of God.

I hope that you read the Bible and pray every day. If you have a good relationship with your spouse, you will talk together and hopefully even pray together daily. If you love your children, you will spend

time with them and show them and tell them that you love them. If you love God, you will spend time with Him every day and show by your life that you care about what he says in His word.

Can you imagine dying and standing before God and trying to explain to Him that you tried to be a good person, that you tried to keep all of the rules of your community, but that you never read the Bible? Will you tell Him that you took your children to church, worked hard, but you never knew Jesus? What if you tried to explain to God that you were taught that in order to get to heaven you had to try to be good, join the church, help others, but that you had no idea what the Bible actually said about eternal life?

Do not let this happen to you. There is a reason why God gave us His word and allowed it to be translated into our own common language. He wants us to know Him and follow the Bible. He wants us to learn how we can be forgiven, why Jesus came to earth to die for us, and how we can be born again. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, how did He respond? He did not tell Satan all about Jewish tradition, but said, “It is written . . .” We are told in the book of Isaiah, “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read” (Isaiah 34:16). In the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119, David tells us in 176 verses how precious God's word is to him and how it ought to be to us. Jesus told the Sadducees, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” (Matthew 22:29). He told the scribes and Pharisees that they were making the word of God of no effect



through their tradition (Mark 7:13). The apostle Peter tells us, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2). The apostle Paul told Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The apostle John wrote, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13). Jesus Himself told us to “Search the Scriptures” (John 5:39).

What would Jesus say to you? Would He tell you that you are in error because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? Would He tell you that you are placing your traditions above God's word? Can you explain what you believe—not just because you were taught to believe it, but because you see and know and understand the truth of God's word? Can you take your Bible and show someone how to be born again? Can you open your Bible and explain to someone how to have eternal life? Do you read the Bible on your own? Do you read and explain it to your children? Will you one day stand before God and tell Him that you have gone to church for 60 years, but have never once read through the Bible?

May we learn to know and love God's word! May we read it every day—and read with understanding. Let us ask God to teach us and to give us the desire to stand upon and live according to His holy word.

—Paul Miller

END



As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you

enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

Introduction to Prophecy

Most people are very interested in the future. What is going to happen in the days and years ahead? Will things get better or will things get worse? Will there be peace on earth or will there be war? What will happen to planet earth? What will the world be like a hundred years from now? A thousand years from now? Is the world going to come to an end? What happens to people after they die? What lies beyond the grave? These are interesting and very important questions. Can you think of other questions that people might ask about the future? Are YOU interested in what is going to happen in the future?

How can a person learn about the future? How can a person know what the future will bring? Does man really know what will happen in the future (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14)? _____ Why not? _____

When it comes to knowing what will happen in the future, man does not have the answers! Man does not even know what will happen in the next 24 hours! Who does have the answers? Who does know what will happen in the days and years ahead? According to Isaiah 46:9-

10, who is the only one who knows all about the future? _____

God knows the future and He is able to declare the end from the beginning. Suppose the Yankees were ahead of the Red Sox by a score of 9 to 3 with only one inning to go. Suppose you were at the ball park watching this game. You would probably think that the Yankees would win, but would you know this for sure? It is possible that the Red Sox could win the game by a score of 11 to 10 (or by some other score). We do not know the final score of a baseball game until the game is over. But God knows all about that baseball game before it even starts. Even before the first pitch is thrown, God knows exactly who will win and what the final score will be. God knows all future events that will ever take place.

God's Predictions Always Come True

Here are just a few examples of God's predictions and their precise fulfillment:

1) God predicted that the temple in Jerusalem would be totally destroyed (Matthew 24:2). About 40 years later this was literally fulfilled as the Romans destroyed the temple under Titus.

- 2) God predicted to Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). Several generations later, following the death of Joseph, this was literally fulfilled (Exodus 1).
- 3) God through Daniel predicted the coming world empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 2, Daniel 7, etc.) with such accuracy that unbelieving scholars have insisted that the book of Daniel must have been written at a much later time because no one living in Daniel's day could have known about these future kingdoms!
- 4) In 1 Kings 13:2, God predicted that a man would be born in the line of David by the name of Josiah. The book of 1 Kings was written three centuries before Josiah's birth!
- 5) In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1, God predicted that a future Persian king would come on the scene by the name of Cyrus. Yet Isaiah wrote this more than 100 years before Cyrus was even born! This is one reason why unbelieving Bible scholars insist that Isaiah could not have written these chapters, because no one in Isaiah's day could have

Continued on next page >

Prophecy, continued

known about this future ruler.
But God knows!

Countless other examples of fulfilled prophecy could be given, including all of the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ's first coming which were literally fulfilled. For example, Micah, writing 700 years before His birth, predicted that God's King would be born in an insignificant town called Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)! This would be analogous to a man living 200 years before Columbus predicting in what town President Bush would be born!

The Scriptures contain predictions of future events uttered long before they transpired, events that no mere human sagacity or foresight could have anticipated. These predictions are so detailed, minute, and specific as to exclude the possibility that they were mere guesses. The only sane explanation for them is that the predictions came from God who knows all future events and who is never wrong in

His predictions.

The God Who Knows All Future Events

God knew all about the future of this world even before He created the earth. God has a perfect plan for this world and God is carrying out His plan. Will God bring to pass what He has purposed for this world (Isaiah 46:11)? We might be surprised by something we hear on the news. For example we might be surprised to hear that the President was shot. But would God be surprised by this? Why not? We might be surprised to learn that two countries have decided to go to war with each other. Would this come as a surprise to God?

The Lord knows all about the future. But how do we learn about the future? Does God keep it a secret and not tell anyone? No, it is not a big secret. God has told us about the future, using men who are called PROPHETS.

**Note: This study
will continue.**

END

No Atheism in the Future

In our devotions, Esther and I read Revelation 5:11: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." My friend, that is 100 million plus thousands and thousands of angels crying out at once. Reading on, it tells us that every being and creature in heaven, on the earth, and beneath the earth will join in during this time of worship - you and I will be there, too. Never before in the history of creation has there been such worship and crying out to Jesus Christ as we will experience at that moment - this



apparently includes the ungodly and even demonic realm. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that

Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). The truth is, there will be no atheists throughout eternity. No, not even one! —Joe Keim



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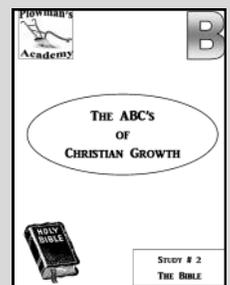
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Ways Parents Provoke

—By John MacArthur

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul writes, "...fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

To "provoke not your children to wrath" suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.

Such treatment is usually not intended to provoke anger. Here are eight ways in which parents can provoke their children to anger:

1) Well-meaning overprotection is a

common cause of resentment in children. Parents who smother their children, overly restrict where they can go and what they can do, never trust them to do things on their own, and continually question their judgment build a barrier between themselves and their children—usually under the delusion that they are building a closer relationship. Children need careful guidance and certain restrictions, but they are individual human beings in their own right and must learn to make decisions on their own, commensurate with their age and maturity. Their wills can be guided but

they cannot be controlled.

2) Another common cause of provoking children to anger is favoritism. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob and Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau. That dual and conflicting favoritism not only caused great trouble for the immediate family but has continued to have repercussions in the conflicts between the descendants of Jacob and Esau until our present day! For parents to compare their children with each other, especially in the children's presence, can be devastating to

Continued next page >

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
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Ways Parents Provoke—Continued

the child who is less talented or favored. He will tend to become discouraged, resentful, withdrawn, and bitter.

Favoritism by parents generally leads to favoritism among the children themselves, who pick up the practice from their parents. They will favor one brother or sister over the others and will often favor one parent over the other.

3) A third way parents provoke their children is by pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds. A child can be so pressured to achieve that he is virtually destroyed. He quickly learns that nothing he does is sufficient to please his parents. No sooner does he accomplish one goal than he is challenged to accomplish something better. Fathers who fantasize their own achievements through the athletic skills of their sons, or mothers who fantasize a glamorous career through the lives of their daughters prostitute their responsibility as parents.

I once visited a young woman who was confined to a padded cell and was in a state of catatonic shock. She was a Christian and had been raised in a Christian family, but her mother had ceaselessly pushed her to be the most popular, beautiful, and successful girl in school. She became head cheerleader, homecoming queen, and later a model. But the pressure to excel became too great and she had a complete mental collapse. After she was eventually released from the hospital, she went back into the same artificial and demanding environment. When again she found she could not cope, she committed suicide. She had summed up her frustration when she told me one day, "I don't care what it is I do, it never satisfies my mother."

4) A fourth way children are provoked is by discouragement. A child who is never complimented or encouraged by his parents is destined for trouble. If he is always told what is wrong with him and

never what is right, he will soon lose hope and become convinced that he is incapable of doing anything right. At that point he has no reason even to try. Parents can always find something that a child genuinely does well, and they should show appreciation for it. A child needs approval and encouragement in things that are good every bit as much as he needs correction in things that are not.

5) A fifth way provocation occurs is by parents' failing to sacrifice for their children and making them feel unwanted. Children who are made to feel that they are an intrusion, that they are always in the way and interfere with the plans and happiness of the parents, cannot help becoming resentful. To such children the parents themselves will eventually become unwanted and an intrusion on the children's plans and happiness.

6) A sixth form of provocation comes from failing to let children grow up at a normal pace. Chiding them for always acting childish, even when what they do is perfectly normal and harmless, does not contribute to their maturity but rather helps confirm them in their childishness.

7) A seventh way of angering children is that of using love as a tool of reward or punishment—granting it when a child is good and withdrawing it when he is bad. Often the practice is unconscious, but a child can sense if a parent cares for him less when he is disobedient than when he behaves. That is not how God loves and is not the way he intends human parents to love. God disciplines His children just as much out of love as He blesses them. "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Heb. 12:6). Because it is so easy to punish out of anger and resentment, parents should take special care to let their children know they love them when discipline is given.

8) An eighth way to provoke children is

by physical and verbal abuse. Battered children are a growing tragedy today. Even Christian parents—fathers especially—sometimes overreact and spank their children much

harder than necessary.

Proper physical discipline is not a matter of exerting superior authority and strength, but of correcting in love and reasonableness.

Children are also abused verbally. A parent can as

easily overpower a child with words as with physical force. Putting him down with superior arguments or sarcasm can inflict serious harm, and provokes him to anger and resentment. It is amazing that we sometimes say things to our children that we would not think of saying to anyone else—for fear of ruining our reputation!

In closing, consider the confession of one Christian father:

My family's all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more—at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God.

Reprinted from John MacArthur and Grace to You ministries.

END



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Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself

—Joe Keim

I was recently asked to speak on the subject, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” After studying and doing my research, I was very much amazed at what I found.

For instance, consider that:

- ◆ Eight times in the Bible we are commanded to *love thy neighbor as thyself*.
- ◆ The phrase, *love thy neighbor as thyself*, is one of the most repeated commands in the Bible.
- ◆ Jesus said: to love God and your neighbor as yourself **is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices**.—Mark 12:33

Why was it so important for God to continually remind us throughout Scripture to love our neighbor as much as we do ourselves? I think we probably all know the answer to that. It doesn't come naturally for us, and it's hard! At times, it's very, very hard! In fact, loving our neighbor as our self is so difficult at times, and beyond our own ability, that we cannot do it on our own. It's

impossible! We have to know a higher power—working within and through us—Jesus Christ.

Let's go ahead and read the eight Scripture passages about loving our neighbor as our self, and then I would like to make a few comments. The first one is found in the Old Testament. The last seven are found in the New Testament.

*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but **thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself**: I am the LORD.*—Leviticus 19:18

*Honour thy father and thy mother: and, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself**.*—Matthew 19:19

In Mathew 22:35-40, the Bible says a lawyer walked up to Jesus and asked Him a question, tempting Him: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus answered him, saying, *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 neighbor as thyself**.*

Jesus concludes by saying: *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

In Mark 12:28-31, we are told that one of the scribes asked Jesus, “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus responded by saying: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself**. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Several verses later, v-33, the scribe responded with: “And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the

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