

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

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7

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THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Jim Stauffer

“And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” (Matthew 22:37)

How often have we considered the details of this command. The obvious point made is putting everything else behind our consideration of our heavenly Father and seeing we revere Him by obeying His commands (John 14:15).

There is a text I would like to explore as we look at this command. It is during the sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5:38-48**. This text ends with **verse 48** that says, *Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*. It begins with four illustrations of the conduct necessary *to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*.

First, our Lord compares the Old Law with His admonition. **Mat. 5:38,39**, *You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also*. Then we have, **Mat. 5:40** *“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”* This is followed by **Mat. 5:41,42**, *“Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. “Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”* Each of these texts challenge us to do exactly what our Savior did as related to us in **1 Peter 2:21-24**, *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to*

righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

Verses 38-42 are followed by the text that tells us to love our enemies as Christ did by dying for them and as God has by sending the sunshine and rain on the just and the unjust. This is the call to all the world to become more than that to which our fleshly emotions call us. We are to be God’s children (**1 John 3:1**) and disciples of Christ (**John 8:31,32**).

Our response to the treatment we receive at the hands of both brethren and enemies is to be as our Father in heaven would respond. He has revealed His mind sufficiently to us that we can indeed know what to do in such cases.

This is what Peter teaches us when he says, *...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....* (**2 Pet. 3:18**).

Diplomacy

Ethan R. Longhenry

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one (**Colossians 4:5-6**).

Perhaps some of the most important people who rarely receive much recognition from society are diplomats. These individuals learn all about the culture and ideas of the people with whom they speak and they try to advance their nation's causes and purposes and to defuse any crises that might arise. Many wars have been avoided because of the skilled work of diplomats; sadly, bad diplomacy is probably one of the reasons that many wars have taken place. While diplomacy has great value among nation-states, those who believe in and follow Christ should also be working diligently on diplomacy amongst themselves and toward those who

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are without.

Much of the Gospel involves interpersonal relations. The message of the Gospel is to be taught to others (**Romans 10:14-17**). The proclamation of the Gospel, by necessity, is an attempt to persuade others to accept the message and obey it (**cf. 2 Corinthians 5:11**). When believers make their defense for the hope that is in them, they are to do so in a respectful and gentle way (**1 Peter 3:15**). Believers are to soberly consider how they conduct themselves among those who are outside, having speech seasoned as with salt (**Colossians 4:8-9**).

Paul's image there of speech seasoned as with salt is very important, for it shows the balance that we all must maintain. Food with too little salt is bland, tasteless, and not very valuable; food with too much salt cannot be stomachied and is expelled. So it is with our speech. If our words have too little salt and are entirely bland, providing no challenge and no distinctiveness from the world and its attitudes, they have no value. They cannot persuade anyone to change their ways. But if our words have too much salt, and are intentionally rough, demeaning, overwhelming, vindictive, harsh, or even just overly blunt, they get rejected without due consideration. People are left with a bad taste in their mouths, and we have become a hindrance toward them coming to a knowledge of Jesus the Christ!

While we must make sure that we do not compromise the message and that we focus on the message and not fancy rhetoric (**cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5**), we must speak and act diplomatically among those who are without. Our defense must be robust but done with respect and gentleness (**1 Peter 3:15**). We must understand that sinners sin and that God wants them to come to the knowledge of the truth so that they can change their ways (**1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9**). What good does it do us to lecture sinners about their sin if they do not yet understand how Jesus is the Lord and Christ? How can we show them the love of Christ if the first thing they experience is cold judgment? And if our speech is disrespectful, harsh, and unloving, how will they perceive Jesus' mercy and compassion?

We must act diplomatically because of the Lord whom we serve and of whom we are representatives, and in a sense, ambassadors (**Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 5:20**). If we speak in the name of Christ, we represent Christ, and how well are we really reflecting and properly representing Christ as we speak toward others?

Diplomacy is not merely a concern when we are around outsiders. There are going to be times when we

are going to be called upon to confront one another about weaknesses and sins (**cf. Galatians 6:1-3**). There will be times of immature actions, misunderstandings, and hurt feelings among fellow brothers and sisters in Christ just as in any other family (**cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-28, 1 Timothy 3:15**). In these circumstances, diplomacy among believers is critical.

We must always remember that everything we do should be done for edification (**1 Corinthians 14:26**). Our words must work toward that end. We must be careful to make sure, however, that how we speak with one another matches our motivations. It is entirely possible to have the intent to encourage but speak in such a blunt, sharp, harsh, or arrogant way so as to really discourage and tear down. The more we get to know one another, the easier it is to speak more casually and with less thought, and then things tend to go wrong quickly.

How can we speak diplomatically? We must remember what our Lord said: do unto others as we would like them to do to us (**Luke 6:31**). How would we want to be approached? We must also remember that we must remain humble servants of Jesus, knowing how we have often been tempted and have proven to be weak, and knowing how unworthy we are of the grace and mercy shown to us (**Galatians 6:1-6**). We are no better than they; just different. We must make sure, above all, that we are not just motivated by love but are acting and speaking in love (**Eph. 4:15-16**).

Diplomacy does not mean that we just do not address problems and let them fester or cause division or apostasy. Diplomacy does not mean that we lose any spine or backbone and just let people do or say whatever they want to do or say. Diplomacy does not mean that we must become weak about matters of sin. Instead, diplomacy demands that we are as concerned about how we communicate to others as much as we are concerned about what it is we are communicating. Our choice of words, our tone of voice, and our mannerisms communicate as much, if not more so, than the actual substance of the words we use. The best of intentions are quickly undermined by poor communication and a lack of concern about speaking diplomatically.

Diplomacy, in the end, is the recognition that we must communicate in ways that win people over even when hard truths must be expressed. We must be aware of the power that exists in words and speaking, as James makes clear in **James 3:1-12**, and that we can repel people from Jesus as quickly as we can win them over for Him by how we speak. We have never been given license to speak harshly and sharply merely

because we are commissioned to preach messages that ought to convict people of sin and encourage them toward righteousness and truth. Instead, we are to speak with others in the same manner as we would like to be addressed. Let us therefore give thought to how we speak with one another, in humility considering how our speech can be properly seasoned so as to persuade our fellow man to serve Christ the Lord!

THE LAW OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK

One day I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by inches!

The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, he was really friendly. So I asked, 'Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!' This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call, 'The Law of the Garbage Truck.'

He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they'll dump it on you. Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the streets.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Life's too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so ...

Love the people who treat you right.

Pray for the ones who don't.

Life is ten percent what you make it,
ninety percent how you take it!

Have a garbage-free day!

"Faith is not believing God can,
it is knowing that God will."

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

To Seek And To Save

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10)

Thanks be to God for sending his Son into this world so that all who obey that Son can be saved eternally

(John 3:16; Heb. 5:7-9). We stand amazed as we go through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John letting our minds retrace the beautiful life Jesus lived. It is difficult to imagine that this man would ever be ill treated and rejected but he was. Then one day we see him in the garden in such agony that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). We watch as he is led from that garden to endure trials in which he is mocked, ridiculed, spit upon, beaten unmercifully and finally we see him walk that lonely road to Golgotha where he is crucified (Mark 15:1-25).

Think for a moment about the words of 1 John 3:1, *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God."* That great love is seen in God sending his Son into this world to be an atoning sacrifice for us (Rom. 5:8-9; 1 John 4:9-10; Luke 22:39-44; Gal. 1-3-4; Titus 2:11-14). Because of that great love we have the exceedingly precious and magnificent blessing of having been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (1 Peter 1:18-21; Col. 1:12-14). The great love of God is seen in the Son of God who gave himself for the church purchasing it with his blood (Eph. 5:25-26; Acts 20:28). We should be impressed and our hearts filled with gratitude to the Father who has made it possible for us to be a part of that church. As members of this body, we are the family of God and we are on our way home. Going home to a place where all tears will be wiped from our eyes and there will be no death, no mourning or crying or pain and everything will be made new (Rev. 21:3-5). As the family of God, we weep together and we rejoice together (Rom. 12:15) and, yes, we dream together of how it will be when we all get to heaven. How beautiful heaven must be and we can know that there is a place in it for us and it is made possible because the Son of man came into this world to seek and to save the lost.. Choose to obey the gospel and be saved (Rom. 10:17; James 1:21); choose not to obey and be lost (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Choose to be in Christ and be saved (Acts 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:9-10).

What a priceless blessing it is to be a child of God (Rom. 8:16-17). I pray God's love and tender mercy will surround you all the days of the rest of your life on this earth and though I may never meet many of you on this side of eternity, hopefully, one day we will meet just inside that city. To God be the glory forever and ever!

Charles Hicks; swabbie5256@gmail.com

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

Elders:

Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer

Deacons:

Bill Miller

Brandon Jimison

Joe Hurd

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-620-0563

Check out the following websites:

facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist

lenexachurchofchrist.org

News and Notes:

Alma Baumgartner, Jan Patrick, Trudy Mullen, Denese Goring, Brooklyn Boyer and George Root. Tracy Richardson now recuperates at home L.A. Stauffer currently in rehab.

Sunday Morning Bible Class - Messianic Pathway - OT to NT - Jim Stauffer

Wednesday Evening Bible Class - Home and Family - Ron Peck

Sunday Morning Sermon - The Key to Spiritual Conduct

Our Gospel Meeting:

3/14/21 thru 3/17/21

Ken Chumbley

Flier to follow under separate cover.



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10