

## Matthew 22:34-40

<sup>34</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> 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."** <sup>38</sup> "This is the great and foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'" <sup>40</sup> "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Isn't it wonderful how sometimes the Lord's grace is so amazing, that He would reveal truths to us, even when our heart isn't pure? The Pharisees and Sadducees had been unable to agree on which of the 613 laws in the Pentateuch was the greatest and they saw that Jesus had somehow come up with His own theology. They believed that this was the perfect question to illuminate that Christ had a message outside of the law. These Pharisees, or experts of the law, saw Jesus silence the Sadducees, so they put their heads together to find a question which would stump Jesus; yet, what happened was anything but what they expected. Jesus being the Word answered them according to the Word. He brought them to the foundation of our Lord, love! Our God calls each of us to love Him first and foremost. If we truly do, then our lives will produce fruit according to His Word. Look at what Jesus has to say about us loving Him in **John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** Nothing could be any clearer. Our problem is that we struggle with loving ourselves over God and our fellow man. Whenever we do that, we quickly fall into a cascade of sin. Just like rushing waterfalls, our sin quickly sweeps us away into a torrent of immorality and decadence. Even our national leaders are seen almost daily being exposed for lascivious, which in many cases is seen as a license for our young to follow in. Remember, the problem didn't start here with having a strong sexual appetite. The problem started long before that. People, who make decisions like these, chose a long time ago to love themselves over God and their fellow man. Often, they may not believe that this is what they are doing, until they are exposed, and then their loved ones and closest friends are stained by such selfish choices. Friends, we are no different! Our habitual sins, whether they are lived out in our fantasies or in our physical bodies, is a reflection of a lack of love that we have towards God, as well as those around us.

Is it not true, that if we truly loved God and our neighbors as ourselves, then we would make very different choices in this life? If we truly honored God and one another, then we would not go down roads that would later bring us to a head on collision with destruction. If we ordered our lives upon love alone, then the law would indeed be fulfilled in our actions. We would choose not to indulge ourselves in immoral pleasures, we would choose not to steal and lie. Hatred and covetousness would not pollute our hearts when those around us tasted success that we had wanted or worked for. We would find it very natural to congratulate and quite distasteful to backstab. Is this really an honest evaluation of our hearts? Dear friend, if it's not, then it should be. These words spoken to these scribes and rabbis two thousand years ago are just as relevant to us today. I exhort you to take the time today to give an honest assessment of the love, or lack of love in your heart. Choose today, to make Jesus Christ your first love, and then choose to love your neighbor as yourself.