

4. To Love the Lord Your God (4Q 2021—Present Truth in Deuteronomy)

Biblical Material: Deut. 6:4, 5; Deut. 10:12; Eph. 2:1–10; Rev. 14:6, 7; Deut. 4:37; Deut. 11:1; Mark 12:28–30.

Quotes

- The key, then, to loving God is to see Jesus, to hold him before the mind with as much fullness and clarity as possible. It is to adore him. *Dallas Willard*
- (Matthew 22:37 quoted). To do this, we cannot neglect the soulful development of a Christian mind. *J.P. Moreland*
- A test of your love for God is to examine your love for others. *Henry Blackaby*
- Loving God with all our mind means that our thinking is wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things. *John Piper*
- If loving God with all our heart and soul and might is the greatest commandment, then it follows that not loving Him that way is the greatest sin. *R. A. Torrey*
- There is an essential connection between experiencing God, loving God, and trusting God. You will trust God only as much as you love him. And you will love him to the extent you have touched him, rather than he has touched you. *Brennan Manning*

Questions

On what basis are we called to love God? Why did Jesus choose to cite Deuteronomy in summing up the “Law of Love”? How are our minds involved in the process of love, or is it only how we feel? How is love demonstrated? What is the danger in believing that it’s not necessary to think when it comes to matters of religion?

Bible summary

Deut. 6:4, 5 is quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29 FBV: “Hear, Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your spirit, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The thought is similarly referenced in Deut. 10:12. We are made alive in Jesus through God’s great love. Eph. 2:1–10. Rev. 14:6, 7 is the third angel’s message. God brought his people out of Egypt because he loved them (Deut. 4:37). God calls for love and obedience (Deut. 11:1).

Comment

Jesus himself pointed to the use of the mind as essential in commitment to God: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your spirit, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30 FBV).

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus appealed to evidence and reason as he spoke with the disappointed disciples, choosing not to reveal himself so that truth would not be confirmed by his personal endorsement or by appeal to divine authority (see Luke 24:13 and following).

Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of those who demanded unthinking obedience to human traditions. He appealed to thought and investigation, saying, “Please, everyone listen to me and understand.” (Mark 7:14 FBV), as he explained his reasoning.

The use of the mind is clearly encouraged by early Christians. Paul writes “I will pray ‘in the Spirit,’ but I will pray with my mind too. I will sing ‘in the Spirit,’ but I will sing with my

mind too” (1 Cor. 14:15 FBV), while Peter advises “Make sure your minds are in gear. Be clear-headed.” (1 Peter 1:13 FBV).

The command is: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good,” (1 Thess. 5:21), for “God is not the author of confusion.” (1 Cor. 14:33). Faith is defined (Heb. 11:1) as “the substance of things not seen,” not as denying the senses or the use of the mind, but based on higher principles and revelation. The requirement is to use the mind, to thoughtfully explain, to aim to understand: “Keep your mind focused on Christ as Lord. Always be ready to explain to anyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have. Do this in a gentle and respectful way.” (1 Peter 3:15 FBV).

The God of the Bible seeks belief based on understanding. He wishes to be accepted as the God who makes sense, and that such a belief is reasonable, consistent with the evidence.

Charles Hodge observes: “Nothing, therefore, can be more derogatory to the Bible than the assertion that its doctrines are contrary to reason. The assumption that reason and faith are incompatible; that we must become irrational in order to become believers is, however it may be intended, the language of infidelity; for faith in the irrational is of necessity itself irrational....We can believe only what we know, i.e., what we intelligently apprehend.” He also adds, “...faith without evidence is either irrational or impossible. God requires nothing irrational of his creatures. He does not require faith without evidence.”

Similarly, C.S. Lewis notes that faith is not “the intention to believe what you want to believe in the face of evidence to the contrary” or “the power of believing what we know to be untrue.” So, he concludes, “When we exhort people to Faith as a virtue, to the settled intention of continuing to believe certain things, we are not exhorting them to fight against reason.”

This is part of the reason that we can love God—because he asks us to believe based on evidence, not claims, because he wants us to use our minds to make sense of the truth he presents. Our love for him is because of who he is and how he operates, and having understood as much as human beings can, we can be sure that he absolutely trustworthy. We give God his worth (the real meaning of “worship”) because we love him for his wonderful character and his gracious love.

Ellen White comments

It was needful for the followers of Christ to have an intelligent faith, not only in their own behalf, but that they might carry the knowledge of Christ to the world. And as the very first step in imparting this knowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to “Moses and all the prophets.” Such was the testimony given by the risen Saviour to the value and importance of the Old Testament Scriptures. {GC 349.1}

Place no dependence upon changeable feelings, but plant your feet upon the sure platform of the promises of God: Thou hast said it; I believe the promise. This is an intelligent faith. {OHC 124.4}

We need to educate and train the mind so that we shall have an intelligent faith, and have an understanding friendship with Jesus. Unless we continually cherish friendship between God and our souls, we shall separate from Him, and walk apart from Him. We shall make friends of those around us, and place our trust in humanity, and our affections will be diverted from the true object of worship. We must not allow coldness to chill our love for our Redeemer. If we have fellowship with Him, we must ever set the Lord before us, and treat Him as an honored Friend, giving Him the first place in our affections. We should speak of His matchless charms, and constantly cultivate the desire to have a better knowledge of Jesus Christ. {SD 27.4} Prepared