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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Diagnosing Your Heart Condition

Matthew 22:34-40

The greatest grief of my life... that I don't love God more than I do!!

Look at what God the Father has done for me... by creating me and sustaining me with food, clothing, shelter, and a hundred thousand pleasures; by choosing me before the foundation of the world and calling me to be one of His own; by granting me saving faith and repentance; by forgiving all my sins and adopting me to be a child of God; by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit; by bearing with me all these many years and sustaining me spiritually as a believer

Look at what Christ the Son has done for me... overlooking my blasphemies and my low opinion of him while I was lost; taking all my sin from me and laying on His own shoulders; dying in my place under the wrath of God; rising again to give me new life; sending His Spirit into my heart; protecting me from the Evil One and interceding constantly on my behalf at the right hand of God

Look at what the Holy Spirit has done for me... convicting me of sin and working faith within me, revealing Christ crucified in my heart; sealing me as a child of God, breathing our "Abba, Father" within me; convicting me in an ongoing basis of sin and bringing me again and again to repentance; leading me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake

And yet, I struggle with how cold and distant my heart is from God

How like the church at Ephesus I can be, **forsaking my first love**

How distinterested in the things of God I can be

How I can sing a passionate songs about God and my heart be far from Him:

Give me one pure and holy passion

Give me one magnificent obsession

Give me one glorious ambition for my life

To know and follow hard after you

When I see lyrics like that, I am convicted by the weakness of my love for Christ
I want instead to burn with love for God... but my heart is sluggish and peevish

This morning we are confronted for the second time with the First and Greatest
Commandment:

***Matthew 22:37 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and
with all your mind.'***

What is this love? That is the question ahead of us this morning

More than that, how can we remedy the problem if we know we lack that love??

Love is the greatest subject in the world...

Love inspires more songs, more poetry, more novels, more drama, more artistic
expressions than any other topic by far

We use the word love to express a remarkably wide array of feelings: we can love cherry
pie, college basketball, our newborn infant, our wife of thirty years, our favorite movie, a
beautiful sunset, and yes, we can love God

We use the word "love" to express all of these attachments, these attractions, these drives
and desires

I. What God Wants More Than Anything Else

A. Jesus Tested by a Lawyer

***Matthew 22:34-36 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got
together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶
"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"***

B. Jesus Very Orthodox Answer

***Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with
all your soul and with all your mind.'***

Fuller account:

***Mark 12:29-30 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel,
the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your
heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'***

C. Love the Lord your God with everything you have

1. “with all your heart”

a. Heart = the central part of you... the part that loves and hates, the part that thinks and chooses... in Scripture, the heart does MANY THINGS

i) Thinking

ii) Feeling

iii) Deciding

iv) Planning

v) Desiring

2. With all your soul

Usually throughout the Scriptures, however, the “nephesh” refers to the human soul...

a. BUT we could take “nephesh” to refer to the principle of LIFE

b. As if to say “with every fiber of your being” love God

c. Or “as you live and breathe, so you must love God”

3. With all your mind

a. The mind is that part of you that thinks... that reasons... that meditates...

b. Christ is commanding that all your thought life be pleasing to God, in every way

c. Your intellect given fully to loving God... to delighting in the depths of His mind

d. Your imagination in full services to the worship and admiration of God

e. Your mental powers, your science, your philosophy, your logic, your deductive skills, your powers of observation and argumentation, your MIND given over fully to love for God

4. With all your STRENGTH

a. The focus here is on the BODY

b. That you would present your body to God every moment as a living sacrifice

- c. That you would present to God every power available to you, that you would POUR OUT your strength and energy completely at the foot of God's throne in devotion to Him
 - d. That you would be spent, used up, poured out, given over completely to God... even to death if need be
- D. With ALL Your Heart, and ALL Your Soul, and ALL Your Mind and ALL Your Strength
- 1. The concept is to HOLD NOTHING BACK
 - 2. To love God completely, with everything you have
 - 3. To be WHOLEHEARTED in your devotion

Psalm 9:1 I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders.

II. A Second Commandment Like It

- A. Jesus Went Beyond their Request... Adding a Second One
- B. The Second Commandment is Like the First One

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

- C. We'll Discuss it more next week
- D. Everything Depends on these Two Commands
 - 1. Jesus neatly organizes all 613 commands in the Law of Moses... indeed, all the commands in the Bible, in these two headings

Matthew 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- 2. If you truly LOVE GOD as God commands, and truly LOVE NEIGHBOR in the same way, Jesus said, you will be perfectly obeying all the commands of God
- E. Judgment Day: God Actually Requires This!
- F. Saving Yourself is Impossible

^{ESV} Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

This is the perfect Law that Paul means: LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART SOUL MIND AND STRENGTH

1. We MUST HAVE a Savior... and that Savior is Christ
2. Christ HAS kept this Law perfectly!!!

III. What Does it Mean to Love God?

A. Jonathan Edwards: *Treatise on Religious Affections*

1. Context: assessing the First Great Awakening
 - a. Sweeping changes... religious excitement... major upheavals
 - b. Huge crowds coming to hear gospel preaching, especially by George Whitefield
 - c. Many people swooned under his influence... initial changes occurred
 - d. However, in the parable of the Seed and the Soils, Jesus warned about stony ground hearers of the word, who at once heard the word with joy, but since they had no root quickly fell away
 - e. Some years later, now, Edwards—the most careful thinker and accurate spiritual assessor perhaps in church history—put his skills to work in assessing the nature of true revival
 - f. He likened the initial enthusiasm of the Great Awakening to the cherry blossoms of spring; some of them may ripen into mature and sweet fruit; many others simply fall to the ground and produce nothing
2. Opposite views of the awakening... two equal and opposite errors concerning all the excitement and outward emotion....

Error #1. Religion is ONLY in the extreme displays of emotion, turbulent outward experiences

Error #2. Religion is NEVER in these displays, but is ONLY in “reason and judgment, and in dutiful behavior” [Opposition from “Old Lights”... Charles Chauncy]

3. Satan’s scheme: push unstable souls into excesses, create a backlash effect; early in the Awakening, Satan pushed people to EXTREME displays of emotion toward God, and the tendency then was to see true religion only in that light; if you didn’t show these extreme emotional displays, you weren’t really born again; and few people seemed interested in genuinely enquiring concerning the ROOT CAUSES of all those emotions; but as things moved on, there came a BACKLASH... people began to think of ANY emotional display whatsoever as from the devil, resulting in a COLD, LIFELESS FORMALITY to their Christianity

3. Edwards's goal: to determine a way by which we can judge true Christian experience... "What is the nature of true religion?" What is that virtue that is pleasing to God?

4. Central text: Sermon Series on 1 Peter 1:8

1 Peter 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy

5. Edwards's doctrine: TRUE RELIGION IN GREAT PART CONSISTS IN HOLY AFFECTIONS

6. Edwards's amazing insights into the human heart

a. Every human heart has two great faculties

i) Understanding: The ability to perceive everything it encounters, to assess it, analyze it, understand it for what it is, judge it, etc.

ii) Affection: the ability to be INCLINED TOWARD something or repelled from it... in short to LOVE IT or to HATE IT... to a greater or less degree;

Engineering job; Ion implanter used a rare-earth magnet called a samarium-cobalt magnet to bend an ion stream; these magnets were the most powerful magnets I had ever seen and they were a lot of fun to play with;

- Paper clip thrown anywhere within a four foot radius would immediately be drawn to the magnet with incredible speed
- The magnetic force worked right through drywall or other metals like aluminum; I could make metal objects stick to an aluminum strip by hiding the magnet on the other side of a wall
- Object lesson on the basic nature of the human heart: God has designed the heart with the capacity to be ATTRACTED TO or REPELLED FROM everything in the universe; the attraction of the heart TOWARD something is called LOVE; the repulsion from something is called HATRED
- The stronger the ATTRACTION the greater the LOVE; and in this passage we are commanded to LOVE GOD with every power we have, with every motion of the heart, with every action of the body
- We are commanded to love God more than anything else in the universe
- This is the first and greatest commandment... and it stands over every instant of your lives, assessing you

- b. True religion in great part consists in the heart ATTRACTION TOWARD GOD, and toward the things of God and the people of God and the commands of God and the Kingdom of God and the plans of God and the word of God

Picture a number line of affections... the further right on the line, the more you love something; "0" is perfect neutrality; and negative means you dislike something; the further left on the line you move, the more you dislike, and even hate something

- c. This is the very thing that Christ is commanding here... this is the SUMMATION OF THE LAW OF GOD
- d. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit has come... to move us to obey this command

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

God wants us to LOVE HIM

A. Loving Nothing More Than God or Equal to God

1. To love any created being more than God is IDOLATRY
2. Compared to our love for God, any other affection should look like hatred

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple

B. Cheerful Sacrifice of Obedience

Love for God is measured by cheerful sacrifice in the obedience of God's commands as recorded in Scripture for the delight in and display of God's glory and the good of God's people.

C. Sacrificial Obedience

1. Love is measured by obedience

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commands.

2. Love is measured by sacrifice

Luke 14:33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

3. Love is measured by delight in sacrificial obedience

- a. 1 Corinthians 13 implies that even immense sacrifices can be made with a wrong attitude

1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

- b. It is not enough just to obey, or even to obey sacrificially obey... we need to delight to obey

2 Corinthians 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver.

V. Diagnosing Your Own Heart

A. How Love for God is Assessed: Cheerful Sacrifice of Obedience

Love for God is measured by cheerful sacrifice in the obedience of God's commands as recorded in Scripture for the delight in and display of God's glory and the good of God's people.

1. Is there a principle of sacrifice in your love for God?
2. Is the sacrifice done cheerfully or under compulsion?
3. Is the pattern of the sacrifice God's commands as recorded in Scripture?
4. Is one motive of the cheerful sacrifice the display of God's glory?
5. Is another motive of the cheerful sacrifice an expectation of delight?
6. Do you have the good of God's people in mind?

B. Evidence that the Love of God is Not in You

Presbyterian evangelist Samuel Davies, "Evidences of the Want of Love to God", preached April 14, 1756 in England

John 5:42 I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

Evidence that you do not have the love of God in your hearts:

1. If the native hatred for God in your hearts has not been subdued
2. If your thoughts and affections do not fix upon Him with affectionate endearment above all things

"If you love God sincerely at all, you love Him supremely above all..."

3. You do not give God and His interests preference above all other things

Many claim to love God, but they never make the LEAST SACRIFICE of anything precious to them for His sake; one who loves God will regularly and cheerfully make sacrifices to pursue a love relationship with God; it is bitter evidence of a lack of love for God in your hearts if you make no sacrifices for Him

4. You do not labor for conformity with Him

The goal and finish line of our salvation is this: **CONFORMITY TO Christ**

Romans 8:29 "In love he predestined us to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

It is a bitter evidence that you do not have the love of God in your hearts if you make no effort to be conformed to Christ

"Do you delight in holiness? Is it the great business of your life to improve in it? And are your deficiencies the burden of your spirits, and a matter of daily mourning and repentance to you?" If not, how can you say the love of God is in you?

5. You do not delight to draw near to God in the ways He's ordained

God has laid out means by which we are to seek Him, to draw near to Him: prayer, Scripture intake and sweet meditation, consistent reflection on the death of Christ, personal worship... drawing near to the throne of grace in time of need; public worship, the Lord's Supper, etc.

These are the means by which God will be found by us as we seek Him with all our hearts; it is a bitter evidence against you that you do not have the love of God in your hearts if you do not delight habitually to draw near to God in these ways

6. You do not make it the great business of your life to please Him by keeping His commandments

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

If you habitually disobey in any one area, or if you obey only under duress and as if in constraints, it is bitter evidence against you that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

"Now recollect, is there not at least some favorite sin which you willfully and knowingly indulge yourselves in? And are there not some self-denying, mortifying duties which you dare to omit? And yet you pretend to love God?"

"You may have your excuses and evasions: you may plead the goodness of your hearts even when your practice is bad—you may plead the strength of the temptation, the frailty of your nature, and a thousand other things; but plead what you will, this is an eternal truth, that if

you habitually and willfully live in disobedience to the commandments of God, you are entirely destitute of his love.”

7. Summary:

“Does the love of God dwell in you or not? Or even worse, do these descriptions of the LACK of the love of God dwell in you or not? Are you deluding yourselves if you say, ‘I love you Lord, though my natural enmity against you still remains unsubdued. I love you above all, though my thoughts and affections are scattered among other things and never fix upon you. I love you above all, though I prefer a thousand other things to you and your interest. I love you above all, though I have no interest in having an intimate relationship with you. I love you above all, though I am not careful to please you by obeying your commands.’ Can anything be more absurd? Make such a profession of friendship to some other person and see how they will take it! Will they believe that you really love them? No, common sense will teach them better. And will God, do you think, accept that as supreme love to Him which will not pass for common friendship among mortals?... DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED...”

VI. Therapy for Distant Hearts: James 4

A. Start with Christ! Imputed Righteousness is His Perfect Obedience to these Commandments

1. Christ DID love God with ALL of His heart, soul, mind, and strength
2. He would rather die than disobey His Father
3. He lived every moment of His life loving His Father

John 14:31 the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

John 8:29 I always do what pleases him.

4. Our salvation in Christ is BASED on this love... it was for love of the Father that Jesus died for us
5. And it is the very fabric of the garment of perfect righteousness Christ wove for us with His thirty plus years of perfect obedience to the Father: Christ saying I LOVE YOU, FATHER
6. This is the righteousness given to us as a gift

1 Corinthians 1:30 Christ Jesus... has become for us ... our righteousness

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Say to yourself: "I can never perfectly love God with all my heart... but Jesus did. And by simple faith in Christ God will see me as loving Him perfectly in Christ."

BUT... don't end there

The essence of salvation is to conform us to Christ so that we are LIKE HIM... so that we actually DO love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength

Much of sanctification is grieving at our own hardness of heart, and idolatry and proneness to wander from loving God

B. James: Steps to Recovering our Love for God

We all tend to have adulterous hearts that stray into worldliness... that is, into idolatry which is spiritual adultery:

James 4:4-10 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1. Call the wandering of your heart spiritual ADULTERY
2. Identify worldliness: the idols that had taken Christ's place in your heart
 - a. Worldly pleasures
 - b. Sexual sins
 - c. Materialism
 - d. Workaholism
 - e. Worldly entertainments
 - f. Food
3. Recognize that to live for these things is the ESSENCE of worldliness... and that it makes you an enemy of God
4. Understand the JEALOUSY of the Spirit within you... He ENVIES INTENSELY (NIV)... means He is very jealous for your affections

5. Rejoice in the promise that God will give you "MORE GRACE"... we need "MORE GRACE"
 - a. Not merely grace for initial salvation
 - b. But MORE GRACE... the grace to keep you loving Jesus day after day and year after year in this tempting world filled with idols
6. James points to the Scripture as the avenue of this additional grace

James 4:5 Or do you think Scripture says...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

- a. Scripture is the primary avenue for the recovery of a heart of affection for Christ
 - b. Saturate your hearts with Scripture for the goal of recovering your love for Jesus
7. Meditate on the statement James gives you

James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

8. Identify PRIDE in your heart... it is always pride that causes us to stray from loving God... we think too highly of ourselves and think we know better than God how to be happy and fulfilled
9. Submit humbly to God... come back to Him as to your KING, and put yourself under His authority
10. Resist the devil... understand the devil was the one feeding you temptations to get your heart to wander from Christ; the devil is the pimp who gets the prostitute of the world so alluring; the devil dresses up the world and makes the world very attractive, painting her eyes, choosing the glittery and skimpy costume that makes the world overpoweringly tempting... it is the DEVIL who set the whole thing up; RESIST THE DEVIL and he will FLEE.... He will RUN FOR HIS LIFE, because the powerful Holy Spirit will cause him to flee
11. Come near to God: draw close to Him with prayer and words of love and worship... say "I love you Lord; I am so sorry I strayed; I am sorry I allowed my heart's precious affections to be poured out on an idol rather than on you
12. God will then come near to you!!!
13. Wash your hands, you sinners
 - a. Get rid of the practices that you are confessing

- b. Change your life... stop doing the things
14. Purify your hearts, you double-minded
- a. Fight the battle of the mind
 - b. Think of your Lord, and set your affections on Him
15. Be willing to grieve emotionally over the straying of your heart... be emotional over it... the Spirit was grieved when you strayed... so you should be also

James 4:9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

16. Humble yourselves... however painfully, and let the Lord restore your heart

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.