

“Devote Yourself to the Lord”
(Mark 12:30-31)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This evening,

We’re looking at a familiar command –

One that Jesus tells us sums up

Everything God requires in the Law and Prophets –

That shows us everything the Lord desires of us today.

This is what He was aiming at

When He sent His Son into the world to save us:

That we might *consecrate* ourselves to Him –

That we might separate our hearts

From the world, from every sin, from every other pleasure,

And devote ourselves completely to Him.

It’s closely connected to what Paul called us to last week,

Where he wrote, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18):

We are not to be filled with desire for the world –

We are not to be under the control of sin,

Or even of those things God gives us as blessings –

But we are to be filled with the Spirit –

We are to be entirely under His control,

Because when we are,

We will devote all our powers to do the Lord's will.

This is what the Lord has always wanted.

He said to His people in the Old Covenant,

“You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (Lev. 20:7-8).

He says the same to us in the New:

Paul writes, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification [holiness, set apartness]; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (1 Thes. 4:3-8).

Peter writes, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY” (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Clearly, the Lord wants our devotion.

B. Preview.

This is what we want to think about this evening

Because of the very strong connection

Between our devotion to the Lord

And our effectiveness in reaching others for the Gospel.

If we're not devoted to Him,

We won't be devoted to His work;

And if we're not devoted to His work,
We'll actually accomplish very little of it in our lifetime.
This may be the reason
We haven't be able to more than we have
In reaching others with the Gospel.

II. Sermon.

A. So understanding that we are to devote ourselves to the Lord and His work, let's consider the level of devotion to which He calls us.

Some churches have reduced what the Lord wants from us
Down simply to knowing and believing the Gospel –
If we've heard the Gospel,
And believe it's true,
If we've gone forward at an altar call
And prayed the Sinner's Prayer,
That all God expects.
But we know that isn't true.
He wants us to trust His Son.
He wants us to turn from our sins.
He wants us to do whatever He tells us to do –
Everything right and good –
He wants us to follow Him
Wherever He leads us.
How often does He want us to do this?

Are one or two worship services on Sundays enough?

Are we going above and beyond the call of duty

If we throw in a midweek Bible Study or Prayer meeting,

Or personal devotions from time to time?

He wants us to trust and follow Him at all times,

Every day, every hour, every second.

Paul writes, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

And how much effort does He want us to put into following Him?

Is 10% enough, 30%, 50%?

He wants 100% –

The *very best* we have to give Him.

That’s what Jesus tells us in our passage,

When He answered the scribe’s question about the greatest commandment –

What is it that the Lord wants from us

More than anything else in His Word?

He wants the level of devotion –

The kind of love –

That will empower us to do all He calls us to do.

Jesus says, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH’” (Mark 12:30).

Gill does a good job of summarizing what Jesus meant here where he writes, “In regeneration, when God puts his laws into the heart, and writes them in the mind; love is produced in such persons, to God the Father, who has begotten them again, according to his abundant mercy; and to Christ, who has saved them

from their sins; and to the blessed Spirit, who has quickened and comforted them: and this love is in some measure exercised as it should be, and as here directed to, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; that is, with all the powers and faculties of the soul; or with the affections, as under the influence and guidance of the more noble faculties of the soul, the mind, the understanding, judgment, and will . . . and with all your strength; which answers to the phrase in Deu. 6:5, ‘with all your might’; that is, with the greatest vehemency of affection, in the strongest expressions of it, and with all the strength of grace a man has.”

God wants our love for Him to be so great

That we direct every power and faculty of our being

To honor Him in every possible way.

When something takes hold of our hearts –

Whether it’s a person or a thing –

All our attention focuses on it.

Everything in us conspires together to get it.

It’s all we think about –

That’s how the Lord wants us to love Him.

When we look at the church today –

If we step back and look at ourselves –

Is that what we see?

This kind of love is rare.

How many of us would say we have it?

But this is clearly what He wants from us:

Because He’s worthy,

Because He’s earned it,

And because without it,
We won't be able to do
What He calls us to do.
He wants us to be able to say
With the apostle Paul,
"For the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

B. Understanding that this is what He wants,

How can we love Him more?
How can we be more devoted to Him?

We need to understand
That it doesn't happen automatically,
Nor does it happen quickly –
It takes time and effort.

We also need to understand
That it is first and foremost a matter of the heart –
God can and does command us to love Him,
And be devoted to Him;
And by the work of His Spirit in our souls,
We can obey this to a certain degree.
But if we want a greater devotion,
We must have a greater love –

We can try and force ourselves
To give ourselves more to the Lord;
But that kind of effort usually ends in failure.
The problem is we're continually fighting our own hearts.
The only way to win the battle
Is to change the direction of our hearts –
To focus all the streams of our affections on Him.

This, by the way, is one of the reasons
We've been studying revival.
We know that during times like this,
The Lord pours out more of His Spirit
And His people become more consecrated –
More devoted to Him –
Because their love for Him increases.
That's exactly what we need.

But we also need to understand
That we don't have to wait for a revival for this to happen –
This is easier during a revival;
There's more of God's Spirit available;
But there's something we can do now:
Something along the lines of what we saw last week:
Not allow ourselves to be drunk with wine –

Not to be under the control of anything in this world,
Certainly nothing bad,
But not even anything good –
And instead be drunk with,
Filled with,
Under the control of,
The Spirit of God.

This, as I said this morning,
Is why we have devotions –
Why we read the Bible and pray:
To build ourselves up in God's love.
We don't do them
Just because it's our duty –
Although if we can't do them for any other reason,
We should do it for this.

This is one of the main reasons
We meet together for worship:
That we might grow in love with the Lord.
That we might encourage one another to love Him more.

It's one very important reason
We have a mid-week study and Prayer meeting –
Because it strengthens the work of the Spirit in our souls,

And so strengthens our love and devotion to the Lord.

The more time we spend with Him –

Thinking about Him,

Meditating on His love and mercy,

Serving Him –

The more we will love Him.

And the more we love Him,

The more we will devote ourselves to Him;

Which is why the Lord calls us

Always to be worshiping Him.

Paul writes, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2).

That’s why when we do these things,

We need to focus on letting these things affect our hearts.

We can’t just do them to say we’ve done them.

We must do them with the goal of increasing our love and devotion.

- C. Finally, we need to understand that unless we are devoted to the Lord in this way, we won’t accomplish very much in our lifetime of the things that really matter.

We do need to believe

That the things that have to do with the Gospel and God’s kingdom

Are the things that really matter.

We do need to believe
That whether we get that education we wanted,
That job, that house, that car,
Whether we hook up with that person
We're hoping to marry,
Really isn't going to matter much on the Day of Judgment –
Unless, of course, they get in the way
Of our love and service to God.

The only thing that will matter on that Day is:
How much we loved the Lord,
And devoted ourselves
To reaching the lost with His Gospel,
To equipping them,
And to sending them into the work.

This is the end/purpose of everything we've seen this month:
We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit,
So that we might have a stronger faith,
That we might see more clearly what the Lord says is true,
That we might love Him more and devote ourselves more fully to Him,
That we might do the work He calls us to do
In loving our neighbor as ourselves,
By reaching out to them with the Gospel.

Unless we have the level of love and devotion He calls us to,

We won't be willing to pay the price to do this work.

That's why He commands us

To love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength,

And our neighbor as ourselves.

May the Lord grant us His grace

To grow more in our love for Him. Amen.

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