

Msg #132 of Scripture Beneath The Surface

“This Is My Commandment”

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

Broadcast Schedule

WOLY AM 1500 - Battle Creek, Sat. 10am - Sun. 9:30am

WLQV AM 1500 - Detroit, Sun. 10am

Also, Internet Stream - www.am1500wlqv.com

WFPM

99.5 FM in Battle Creek - Fri. 3:30pm

99.9 FM in Albion - Fri. 3:30pm

103.7 FM in Jackson - Fri. 3:30pm

Also, Internet Stream - www.wfpmradio.org

Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about love. Love is one of the most important topics in Scripture. No matter what there is on this earth, it's eventually going to pass away. But, God has given us his love, and, this love is eternal. It won't pass away. In first Corinthians, chapter 13, Paul talks about faith, hope, and love. In verse 10 he makes the point that when the perfection of the heavenlies comes to pass, tongues, prophecies, and the knowledge of this present day will pass away. However, it's interesting to notice that when he talks about faith, hope, and love, it is also faith and hope that will pass away. We know that faith is the substance of things not seen. But, when we get to heaven we will see God. We will see all things heavenly. There is nothing that we will not be able to see. When we get to heaven, we won't believe by faith, we will not believe because we have heard of Jesus Christ, but we will believe because our eyes will behold him in all his glory. At the same time, there will be no hope in heaven. The word hope means, expectation for something to come to pass, or to receive something. We will not have to look for that which will come to pass once we are in heaven, for once we're there we will have all things. Christ will be with us and we will be with him, and there will be no necessity for hope, for we will already have received all that was promised.

But, it is love which will never pass away. Love is eternal. And, love is eternal because God is love, and God himself is eternal. When we believed God, and the message of his son, Jesus Christ, we believed that God is love. Love is not just something that exists on the earth today for a time, but it is something that will exist for eternity because it has always existed from the beginning and ever will be in the future. Love is the very essence of God.

Romans 13:10 says, “love works no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” The whole essence of why God established the first covenant under the Law of Commandments for the children of Israel, was to establish the concept of God’s love. Yet, under the Law of Commandments love could not be comprehended in its fullness. It took the earthly manifestation of God’s love through Jesus Christ to reveal to the world what love was really all about. Jesus Christ perfectly demonstrated the love of God for the world. Not only did he reach out to the poor and the lost, healing them both physically and spiritually, but he even allowed himself to be crucified at Calvary in order to demonstrate that love of the Father.

In the New Testament we have ample evidence that there were many in Israel who were sick, many who were lame, and many who were either oppressed or possessed by evil spirits. When Jesus cast out evil spirits, or when he healed the sick or the lame, he was not just demonstrating signs and wonders of God’s power. True, it definitely was a testimony to the power of God, but more importantly it was a demonstration of God’s extreme compassion for us. Love is so important to God that he was willing to become a man, and to allow himself to be abused and killed in order to deliver people from their sins.

We know that Satan’s purpose is to destroy every person who worships God. We know that he tempts the whole world to commit sin. We know that there is no love that comes from Satan. The devil is not compassionate for you or me. It is God who has such love for his people.

But, you know, even though love is the very essence of God, we Christians have very little awareness of the importance of love toward one another that God demonstrated toward us. John 13:34 says, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also should love one another.” Notice that this, according to Jesus, was a new commandment. Love was not the focal point of the Law of Commandments. The Commandments for Israel were based on an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But the new commandment Jesus gave to us was to love one another. But, you know, it’s not always easy to love one another. Yet, in order to enter into a relationship with God under the New Testament covenant of Grace, we must apply love toward one another. We can no longer accomplish obedience toward God by keeping a set of rules. We must enter into the spirit of God’s Word, and therefore we must enter into love itself.

John 15:9 says, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love.” Now notice, that the first word in this verse is the word, as. It says, as the Father has loved me, in the same way love one another. Jesus gave himself for us. Not just on the cross at Calvary, but every day of his life. Now, Jesus was not only God, but he was also a human being. As such, he could have lived a life on Earth according to his own desires, like most human beings live. Humans try to live their life on this earth by setting goals for themselves. They establish their careers and plan for their earthly future. They use up a large part of their lives thinking about themselves and what they would like to do on this earth. But Jesus didn’t live like other human beings lived. He lived a perfect life. Instead of living for himself, he just lived for the Father. Jesus said that the words he spoke were the Father’s words and not his own words. He also said

that the works he did on Earth were not his own works, but were the works of the Father. Jesus occupied his time on earth doing the will of the father both in word and deed. He didn't waste his time. And every day, day after day, he reached out to the people. He taught the people, and he loved the people. When they brought the sick to him he healed them. When people were oppressed or possessed by evil spirits, he cast out those evil spirits, freeing the people from their torment. Everything Jesus did was calculated to demonstrate God's love for his people.

This is also what we, as Christians, have been called to do. This is our earthly calling. The love of God has been shone to us, and because we have gladly received it, it is now our responsibility to demonstrate the love of God toward others just as Jesus did. But then, how can we do it? It's not that we Christians hate one another, but sometimes it seems so hard to know how to help one another.

Now, sometimes when we try to help others, we overdo it, giving more than we can realistically give. But, in 2 Corinthians 8:13-14, Paul explains that he does not mean for others to have their burdens completely taken away if it causes you to be overburdened. He expressly specifies in verse 14 that our ministration to one another in love should be according to an equality. Yes, you should give to one another as the need requires, but not to the extent that you overburden yourself and that others have no burden at all. There is a balance to reaching out in love.

However, usually the problem with Christians is not that they give too much, but that they give too little. And I'm not talking about money. The emphasis in today's church seems to be on giving money. But usually it is always the church on the receiving end, and it is the sheep on the giving end. I'm not talking about giving money. I'm talking about giving love. You and God can work out the money thing. But, when it comes to love, we need to make certain that love is firmly established in our heart, and that the compassion of the Father in heaven overflows from within us and reaches out to those in need.

Ezekiel 34 is an interesting chapter in Scripture. It talks about the absence of love from the shepherds. It talks of how God is angry with the shepherds because they eat the sheep but they don't feed the sheep. Yet, shepherds are not the focus of this message. The focus of this message is the love of God, and the need to reach out to one another in that love. Ezekiel 34:4 lists the different needs of the sheep, and how the shepherds have not fulfilled those needs, but the verse is especially helpful by pointing out what the needs of God's people really are. There are five things listed in this verse. Let me read verse four, and try to notice the five different problems facing the sheep which are not provided by the shepherds. It says, "The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them."

Now, here's five different perspectives for God's sheep. People have needs. Of course in this Old Testament verse it's talking about physical problems. But, we have to take the physical problems expressed here and try to understand what is actually happening to God's people. We

need to know what to look for so that we can be better prepared to meet the needs of others. When it says that the sheep are diseased, or sick, or that they are broken, lost, or driven away, we have to realize that it's not necessarily talking about physical problems, but about spiritual problems. Sure, we all get sick and need God's healing. But the spiritual perspective is that there are people out there who need to be spiritually healed. There are people who need to be brought back into the fold because they have been driven away. When people are lost spiritually, they need to be shone the way to get back to God. When they have fallen down, they need to be helped back up onto the narrow path. If they have fallen away, in the sense they have backslidden, then they need to be prayed for and encouraged to repent. If they are diseased, it means they have been corrupted by the lies of Satan until they can no longer properly understand God's true word. If they have been driven from the church by the hypocritical actions of preachers and church members, then they need to be entreated with kindness and compassion.

You know, I hear stories of people who don't attend church anymore because they are so disillusioned with the type of doctrine demonstrated by today's body of Christ. I'm aware of people constantly looking for a place to belong, but feeling there is no place. It's very easy to point the finger in these instances and to blame people for falling away. And, I in no way want to suggest that we should condone sin, or that we should overlook the responsibility of people to serve the Lord. But just by reading Ezekiel 34, we can easily see that God himself is not pointing his finger at the sheep in every instance, but especially in these verses God sees that the sheep themselves are being abused by the shepherds and those who are considered to be the chief members of the flock.

Love is the very essence of God, and if we Christians are to consider ourselves as Godly individuals, then we must demonstrate the love of God in our relationships with one another. It's very easy to condemn. No, we can't close our eyes and pretend that we don't see the evil. But we as Christians are called to a greater covenant in the New Testament scripture than Israel was under their Old Testament Covenant of the Law. We are called to love those people who truly are the lambs of God's flock.

Now, here's something to consider. The new covenant of Grace means a covenant between God and man whereby God bestows his goodness directly on mankind by his Holy Spirit. That's the true definition of the word, Grace. The Grace of God is divine influence, bringing God's goodness to people by his Spirit, rather than just giving them a law to obey. Because we have the Holy Spirit of God, then we also have the ability to discern that same spirit in the hearts of other people. What we as Christians need to do is to reach out to the lost and to the dying. This is not just those who have never been saved, but it also means those who are trying to be on the narrow path, but keep falling down. It includes the backsliders. It includes those who have been driven away from the body of Christ by an over abundance of hypocrisy. It includes those who have been driven away from the body of Christ by the extreme errors of doctrine in the churches.

God wants to reach out to his people, but he does this through his body. And, we, the church, are the body of Christ. When Jesus was on this earth he demonstrated the love of God, reaching out

to the sick, the maimed, the alienated of God's people. But Jesus is no longer on this earth in bodily form. We are now the body of Christ. Each one of us are members of Christ's body. All of us together are now the body of Christ, and are responsible to accomplish the work of God on the earth just as Jesus accomplished the work of the Father when he was here on the earth. We, as Christians, are the moving, walking, speaking body of Christ. Christ is the head of the church, and therefore, he is the head of the body. We did not take over his mind nor take over his authority. Christ is still the head of the body, but we Christians are the living, moving, speaking, body of Christ now.

As the body of Christ, it is now our responsibility to reach out to the spiritual needs of others around us. We must do the work of Christ in this earth. But, how can we do the work of Christ if we are not willing to give our lives as Christ gave his? How can we do the work of Christ's body on earth if we are so occupied with our own selfish concerns. That's not true Christianity when we are occupied with our own selves. Jesus said that he did not speak his own words or do his own works, but that he only did the works and spoke the words of the Father. It is the Father's work on earth that is the most important thing. Therefore, if the Father is love, then our work on earth is to be occupied with the love of God. In order to reach out to one another we cannot be occupied with self. We need to be concerned of what God would have us do, and what God would have us say, each and every moment of our lives.

Many Christians think that God has put us here on this earth to enjoy the delights of this world. That is totally untrue. God has put us here on this earth to fulfill his will. He tells us in his word that we are not to delight ourselves in this world, or in the things that this world offers, but that we should set our affection on things above, on heavenly things.

People everywhere are hurting. The church seems to recognize the tribulation of missionaries who are persecuted for their faith, but the church seems to have great difficulty recognizing the tribulation of the sheep who have been driven away from the fold. They are very efficient at pointing their finger at those who have fallen down, but not very good at reaching down and helping people get back up. The emphasis of Christians needs to be less on the needs of the church organization, and concentrated more on the needs of the sheep. In these last days, there has been a significant move to have the sheep provide for the shepherds. That's backward. The emphasis needs to be on meeting the needs of the sheep, not feeding the shepherds.

I know I was a sinner, and that my destination was eternal damnation. But Jesus loved me when I was still in my sin. He loved me, not because I was good, but because he saw something in my heart that sorrowed after him. It is this sorrow for sin that separates the wicked from the broken. The Bible says that God does not look on the outside of a man, but that he looks upon the heart. Truly, this is how God is able to send out his love to the lost without rewarding his enemies. God can still bestow his love, not based on whether or not the person is good by his words and actions, but because the person's heart sorrows because of the sin in his life. Because we Christians are under the covenant of Grace, and therefore can receive God's divine influence, then we are also responsible to discern the intent of the heart when we see our brother caught up

in sin. If God looks upon the heart, then we have to do the same thing. People who are genuinely wicked will condemn themselves. We don't have to. It is our responsibility to restore our brothers and sisters whenever possible, even when they are diseased, sick, broken, driven away, or lost.

A moment ago I spoke of how we are the body of Christ, and how Christ is the head of the body. Think about this for a minute. When it says that Christ is the head, it means that the head is that part of the body that is in control of the rest of the body. The head of the body is the authority over the rest of the body and it tells the rest of the body what to do and what to say. Whatever the head of the body decides to do, the body does. The body does not think for itself, the head does the thinking for the body. If we are truly the body of Christ on earth, then Jesus is the head of our body.

Now, here's something to think about. Take a close look at this concept, because it is extremely important. When we choose to let Jesus Christ be our head, then we are actually allowing ourselves to be, 'beheaded.' Yes, beheaded. No, the Bible doesn't mean to physically have your head removed, it means our head, our authority, is taken away and Jesus Christ becomes our authority. When we become true Christians, we actually become beheaded for the sake of Christ. Our head, is removed, and Jesus Christ becomes our head.

Being beheaded for Christ is what is expected of all Christians. But that's not generally what is taking place in Christianity today. There is a great tendency in these last days to claim to be Christians, but to never allow ourselves to be beheaded, and let Christ be our head. However, when we do allow ourselves to be beheaded, then we begin to give a true testimony to our Lord. When we become beheaded for Christ, it finally becomes a testimony that other people can understand. When they see that we have no desire for the things of this world, but that it is only the will of God that we desire, and that it is the will of Jesus Christ that controls our everyday existence, then other people begin to recognize the true love we really have, and that Jesus Christ truly is our Lord and Master, and not just a free ticket to heaven. If you really want to be what God wants you to be, then let yourself be beheaded for the witness of Jesus Christ, and the world will begin to see a difference that cannot easily be ignored.