

Which Commandment Is First?

About Revival

First obey: the great commission or the greatest commandment?

Christians everywhere have taught and been taught the command of Jesus to go into all the world and share the Gospel- and well they should. Millions, over the centuries, have come into the kingdom of God because of the obedient fulfillment of the great commission.

However many Christians do not feel comfortable in sharing the Gospel--some even feel guilty for not doing so. They have not been taught to get to know Jesus personally, to love Him, to desire to obey him. Jesus said "If you love me you will obey me". Trying to obey without a loving relationship with our Lord is exactly what the Pharisees did during the ministry of Jesus. They were relying on their own "works" without allowing God to prepare them for ministry through the communication that comes out of a personal loving relationship. That is exactly what happens today. Christians try to obey the great commission without first obeying what Jesus called the greatest commandment.

They asked Jesus: what was the greatest commandment? We all know His answer "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then He said the 2nd greatest command is like the first--we are to love our neighbor as our self, (to want the best for them as we want the best for ourselves). The 2nd is like the 1st because when we love God, we love who He loves--He loves us and our neighbors. To obey the 2nd greatest command; it is necessary to first obey the greatest command. The progression is to (1) love God (2) love who He loves--our neighbor and (3) out of love for our neighbor, share the Gospel. The 1st and 2nd commands are so alike or inter-connected that obedience of the command to share the Gospel becomes a very natural thing. Surely then, the great commission is the third greatest commandment. But, we should not begin with the 3rd greatest--we need to begin with the 1st.

If we are not loving God in an active exchange of love, we surely cannot love our neighbor with God's kind of love. And the key to loving God is to consistently receive His love--to be motivated and empowered by the love of the God of the universe. If we don't receive God's love, we cannot give it to our neighbor. But, if we have a personal loving relationship with our heavenly Father, we love who He loves--His love passing

through us causes us to want the very best for our neighbor. Of course, the very best is Jesus. So when we love the Lord and our neighbor, we want to fulfill the great commission. Here we have two ways of fulfilling the great commission. Without a personal loving relationship with our Lord, we love our neighbor with human love. If we don't love our neighbor with God's love, the only desire to fulfill the great commission comes from our emotions or a sense of duty or a desire to "keep the law. This, of course, is used by God because when the Word of God is presented, it never "returns void"--without effect (Isa 55: 11). But the Christian that is doing his duty is not benefited because God's love does not pass through him. The great commission can be fulfilled in this way but that is not God's intention. He wants us to be servants as Jesus was a servant--a real servant wants the very best for those he serves (God's kind of love). With a servant's heart; the Holy Spirit enters in (Acts 1:8)--then we are not only more effective in fulfilling the great commission, but we are built up in God's grace through the activity of a personal loving relationship with our heavenly Father... that is revival!

Our heavenly Father loves us very much and wants us to return His love--to be at home with Him now and forever. Many people have repented of their sin and received Jesus as their Savior and then, because of some circumstance, have withdrawn--they have never entered into a continuing personal relationship with God the Father through Jesus our Lord.

They received the love of God as they received His loving forgiveness. But they did not realize they could dwell in God's love--to have a permanent home with Him through an on-going loving personal relationship. The temptation is to look upon salvation as a one-time experience that qualifies us for heaven; but it is so much more than that. To be saved from our old sin nature and actually enter into a new life with our heavenly Father is surely the greatest blessing of God. But there is a second blessing and that is to have a permanent, ongoing relationship with our Lord. Jesus described it as abiding in Him or being in union with Him.

The promotion of the teaching of a personal loving relationship with our Lord is, a sure way to revival. It will not only put down legalistic thinking about the great commission but it will enrich many Christian lives with the power of an exchange of love with God. After all, He created us for fellowship and without relationship, there is no fellowship. With fellowship there is revival.