

True Devotion
(Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37)

Introduction:

- I. There is a problem that is very prevalent in the church today.
 - a. Many people think that when the Bible says some things, that they are to be redefined.
 - i. Love – Are we to love our enemies? What does this mean?
 - ii. Right / Wrong – Just how far can I go?
 - iii. Devotion – Just how much is “all” of my heart, soul, strength, and mind?
 - b. As a result of this, Christians struggle with problems not because the right thing is too difficult to do, but because they have placed themselves so far from the right thing that they are unable to resist doing what is wrong.
 - i. If we live with a complete desire to really love all people, we will not struggle in areas such as hospitality, compassion, consideration, or other areas.
 - ii. If we live only concerned with doing what is right and not questioning how far we can go, we will not be as tempted in each of those areas of ethics.
 - iii. If we completely, and I mean *completely*, devote our lives to God, we will truly die to ourselves and live to him.
 - c. To solve many problems that Christians have today, to rid ourselves of the weaknesses that plague our churches, and to bring ourselves to the highest level of Christianity that we can imagine.

Discussion:

- I. Ask yourselves one question: How is the church today different from the church of the first century?
 - a. We do the same acts of worship.
 - b. We worship on the same day of the week.
 - c. But, their devotion was far more powerful than that of many Christians today.
 - i. They died willingly, rather than denounce Christ.
 1. Many Christians today would rather deny Christ than be ridiculed a little for it.
 - ii. They quit jobs that kept them from living up to what they should be.
 1. Many Christians today forsake their families in order to make more money, and then wonder why their children do not love them.
 - d. Why are we not like them?
 - i. Do we lack the ability to do what they did? Is it possible to be as devoted as them?
 - ii. Do we lack the knowledge of what to do? Did they know something that we do not about following Christ?
 - iii. No. Because of this, we can be sure that we are less devoted than they are, not out of weakness or ignorance, but by choice.

1. We are less devoted than they are because we choose to be less devoted.
2. Paul, in Romans 1 and 2, uses a statement: “They are without excuse.”
 - a. What is our excuse for being less devoted? Is it our parents’ fault? Is it because of the times?
 - b. You know as well as I do that we can blame no one but ourselves. We are less devoted than they were because we do not intend to be as devoted as they were.
 - c. It is this lack of intention that causes weakness and apathy among Christians. We need to fight to restore this devotion to the church and reverse this problem.

II. What we can do to help us solve this problem is to take God’s word for what it is and not try to modify it to fit our lifestyle.

- a. Read the lesson texts with me.
 - i. Matthew 22:34-40
 - ii. Mark 12:28-34
 - iii. Luke 10:25-37
- b. Just what do these writers intend when they say that we are to love God with *all* of our heart, soul, strength, and mind?
 - i. How much effort should we put into church attendance?
 1. It only makes sense that someone whose life was changed by Christ, and whose aim in life is to please Christ and God with *all* of his actions would go to *all* worship services of the church, right?
 - a. If I love God with *all* of my being, would I not by necessity go to worship every time? What does it say about us when we decide not to attend? We do not love him with all we have, nor do we intend to please him with our actions. We are hence no different than those who do not have God.
 2. Therefore, we need to look at “missing church” not so much as a problem, but more as a symptom of the problem. People are not weak Christians because they miss worship services; they are missing church services because they are weak Christians. They do not intend to go—otherwise, they would.
 - a. Also, we do not need to make church attendance the gauge of measuring spiritual strength.
 - i. How many hours a week does the most religious Christian attend?
 1. In most cases, it would be four. Now think of how many hours there are in a week: 168. If one attends every worship service, that is only 2.38% of the week. If your spirituality consists only of going to worship, you are less than 2.5% Christian!
 2. Granted, about 10 hours per day are used in necessary things, like eating and sleep,

leaving us with about 98 hours per week that we choose to use to God's glory or not. Even then, however, the person who only attends worship services is only 4% Christian.

- a. We should not be satisfied that someone is attending services. We need devotion.

III. Now I would like you to think about three different people.

- a. Cosmo is concerned only with the world. He has no care for religion, whether public or private devotion of any kind to any "higher power." He is a good person, though. He regularly donates to charity, has adopted two children, and observes every law in this country to the best of his ability.
- b. Farris is religious publicly. He never misses worship—he is there when the doors are open. He regularly takes part in the worship, doing whatever is asked of him. However, when he is not at worship, his life differs in most regards from the Christian life. He does not care about the laws of the land: he is above them. He does not care about the poor. He does not care for true devotion. He is religious because it makes people look up to him.
- c. Alex is considerably pious in his personal life. He is a true servant for the church, doing anything asked of him, whether it be fixing the church van or changing light bulbs. He also donates to charity and is very careful to love everyone and always do what is right. However, he barely ever attends public worship services.
 - i. How does his life differ from that of Cosmo? He believes in God, but it does not make him very different! Can he be a true Christian if he is not really different from a completely worldly person?
 - ii. Is his life any better than that of Farris? Not really, he has neglected to worship with Christians. His life is not very different from Cosmo, either.
 1. We would readily say that Cosmo is not ready to die and be judged, because he has no concern for God, even though he does many great things.
 2. We would also readily say that Alex, for missing worship, is not prepared to die.
 3. Yet Farris sounds eerily like most Christians today. They go to church, sing, hear a sermon, and go home. This is the extent of their devotion.

IV. I want you to *seriously* think about some things with me now.

- a. Why do we speed? Do we not know it is wrong? Are we incapable of following the speed limit? We speed because we do not intend to obey all of the laws of the land. Is this excusable? Would a police officer pull you over and let you go because you did not know that you were speeding, or that you could not stay within the limit? This is ridiculous.
 - i. Yet many Christians feel the same way about their lives. They know that their lives are not truly devoted to God, nor do they intend to devote themselves fully to God, yet they still believe they are going to heaven.
 - ii. Is there not something amiss here?

- b. Why do we curse? We often justify it by saying that we were angry, or “it just slipped.” Do we think that Jesus was kidding when he said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks?” If we curse, we are only admitting that we have subjected ourselves to it too much. We have filled our hearts with it.
 - i. We are supposed to have our speech “seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). This is so that people will *hear us talking* and notice an obvious difference from the world. Cursing does not do this.
 - 1. II Timothy 2:16 – “Shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”
 - a. Profanity *is* prohibited. Our society can see that it is not always good (children, public places, etc.). We need to as well.
 - b. “Idle babblings” – What does this mean? It means useless or pointless speech. Talking just to talk. Gossip, dirty jokes, and such are not to be a part of our lives either. We will give account for the idle words we speak (Matthew 12:36).
- c. Why do we constantly slip into the same sins time after time?
 - i. The reason is the same as that of the two previous topics: we do not intend to fully please God and do what we are supposed to do. There is no excuse. There is no one else to blame. We must take responsibility.