

The Greatest Commandment

by Phil Beach Jr.

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength, and soul, and we must seek God's love and be filled with His Spirit to live a spiritual life.

Duration: 58:26

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4

Topics: "Worship", "Love", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the significance of love as the greatest commandment, drawing from 1 Corinthians 13 to illustrate the characteristics of a spiritual person. He challenges the congregation to reflect on their own lives by substituting their names into the scripture, revealing how far they may fall short of God's love. Beach highlights that true spirituality is not measured by gifts or knowledge but by the love of God manifesting in our actions towards others. He outlines five essential characteristics of those growing in God's love, including keeping commandments, forgiving others, exercising self-control, being willing to suffer wrong, and serving others. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper understanding and experience of God's love to transform lives and relationships.

Transcript

...to turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. And I'd like to entitle this teaching tonight, The Greatest Commandment. The Greatest Commandment.

We're all familiar with 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and we've all read it many times. Before we get into a very interesting... well, I guess I can put a very interesting practice that we're all going to participate in tonight. I want to, first of all, point your attention to this question up here that I've written on the board.

What is a spiritual person? Now, that's a rhetorical question, which means I don't want you to answer it out loud, but I want you to begin to contemplate that thought in your mind as we progress in the lesson tonight. And I think that at the end of the lesson tonight, you will properly understand what a spiritual person is and what a spiritual person is not. So, just remember this question.

What is a spiritual person? Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 13, that's the famous love chapter, is it not? I am going to ask each one of us to participate in an activity. In order for us to be able to know, first of all, what the greatest commandment is, we know Jesus taught us that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength, and soul. What we're going to do tonight is we're going

to test your spiritual progress as a Christian.

And by the grace of God and by the gentleness of Christ, we're going to be able to see in a very clear way how well we understand the love of God and how well we are growing in the love of God. You see, the love of God is something that we grow in. Here's how we're going to do it.

I'm going to read 1 Corinthians 13 and I'm going to make two changes. First of all, in the place of love, I'm going to place my name, Phil. But I want you, as you listen to me, I want you to place your name in the spot whenever you hear the name Phil.

The next change is oftentimes the way to measure your progress is to find the opposite of what you should be and say that. Therefore, before we go into our lesson tonight and discover the five essential characteristics of one who is growing in the love of God, I want to just give you a quick opportunity to test yourself. And of course, this list that I'm making up here is just something that I did as I read 1 Corinthians 13.

I said it would be more effective for me to read the opposites because possibly I'll see it in a new light. And that will show me how I fall short of God's love but will stir me on to keep seeking God's love. So what I want you to do is place your name in your mind when you hear my name.

And I'm using my name because I'm worried about me. See? Okay. Phil is impatient, unkind, and often harsh in my words towards others.

Phil is easily stirred to jealousy and envy and often is preoccupied with how important he thinks he is. This causes me to often brag and speak of myself and my accomplishments and my gifts to other people. I am arrogant.

Phil acts in untactful, non-gracious, boisterous ways oftentimes. This is really to secure attention for himself. Phil seeks his own interests and uses people to further his own interests and desires.

He always views life, friendships, and places of authority and leadership in relation to what he can gain personally from it that he might obtain more power, protocol, and control over people. Phil is easily angered when anything frustrates his plans or gets in the way of his path. There is vengeance in Phil's heart.

Phil will often remember the wrongs that people have committed against him and bring them up to hurt them. Phil always holds the failures of a person against them and never lets them forget. Phil uses the past failures of people to manipulate and oppress them so that they feel guilty and inferior to them.

Phil often secretly rejoices when someone fails or falls into sin saying it served them right, they deserved it. Yet Phil becomes bitter and resentful when people are blessed and secretly cries out in bitterness, why can't I be like that? Phil has absolutely no tolerance when it comes to people, no trust in people, nor any hope when trying difficult situations arise. Phil always fails himself and others when the going gets tough.

Quite interesting, huh? To read 1 Corinthians chapter 13 in that light. Now I want to encourage you to place your name in the slot of the scripture where it says love and when it says love is kind, think about what the opposite of kindness is and see whether or not your actions and your personality and your way with people is kind or unkind. Well what we've seen just now is we've seen the inevitable sin that each human heart is plagued with.

For it is only God's love through the person of Jesus Christ that can change you and I from falling so short of God's love and expressing it in our actions towards other people. Are we beginning to get a different perspective on what is a spiritual person? In the book of Revelation, just as an introduction here, Revelation chapter 3, I want to just show you that Jesus, not in Revelation 3, Revelation chapter 2, Revelation chapter 2, Jesus was very concerned about this word love and I'd like to read verses 1 through 4. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this, I know your deeds and your toil and your perseverance and that you cannot endure evil men and that you put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and you found them to be false and you have perseverance and have endured my namesake and have not grown weary but I have this against you, you have left your first love. So, it is apparent that Jesus is very concerned about this issue of divine love working in the life of the believer.

He's so concerned that he will commend a person for their faithfulness, for their perseverance, for their giftedness, for their stand for what is right but yet he will tell them that he has something against them if their love for God is getting cold. Listen closely. You can persevere, you can stand for what is right, you can be a zealous Christian and have a heart that is not growing in the love of God because those things in themselves don't necessarily require a heart of love as we see right here.

But a heart of love can only enable us to walk the way Jesus wants us to walk. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 as we read it. Now, I'd like to bring your attention to Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3. And not only did Jesus find it an important issue to bring out to the church in Ephesus regarding their love for him but the apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 3 also considered this issue of love to be so important that he while writing to the Ephesian Christians breathed out a prayer for those that he loved so dearly and you'll find that the contents of the prayer the main gist of the prayer revolves around his desire for them to excel and grow and increase in the love of God.

Ephesians chapter 3 beginning with verse number 14. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derive its name that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth and to know the love of Christ Wow! which surpasses knowledge that you might be filled up to all the fullness of God. Friends I want to point out something very very important for you tonight.

You cannot separate being filled with the fullness of God from being filled with his love. You can't separate the two. He that saith I am filled and full of God but loveth not is not full of God's Spirit.

I don't know what he's full of. Were you thinking that? I don't know what he's full of but it's not God's Spirit. Because when a man is filled with the Spirit of God and is growing in possessing the fullness of God he is right along the same path right in a parallel way he is growing in the love of God which means 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is being fulfilled in his life.

The acid test. The nitty gritty to any degree of spirituality in a believer's life is how well do they find themselves walking down the road of 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Friends I want to tell you if you find yourself infatuated with a spiritual experience if you find yourself being involved in what you consider to be an infilling of the Spirit of God but it is not changing your character it is not changing your ways it is not affecting your life and in your dealings with people it is not of God.

It's not of God. It can't be of God. For he that is walking in God's Spirit and is growing in the fullness of God is also being changed by God.

The fullness of God's Spirit brings change in a believer's life. And that's what we must look for. The change.

That's why Paul put 1 Corinthians chapter 13 in the middle of 12 and 14. Because it is possible to excel in the spiritual gifts and forget, yet I show unto thee a more excellent way. Because you can be gifted and be a real, real bum.

Unkind. Cantankerous. Vengeful.

Slanderous. Boastful. Proud.

Arrogant. Inflated with self-worth. Intolerant.

Impatient. Like to remember the sins of others and bring it to their attention when it's to your advantage. Oh, but you can prophesy.

And you can pray in the Spirit. And you can understand all the mysteries of God. And you can excel in doctrine and theology.

But fall real short of pleasing God. Yet, show I unto thee a more excellent way. When believers become acquainted with the gifts of the Spirit and lose sight of the most important gift, which is love, catastrophe results.

Confusion results. Division results. Factions result.

Because vessels who are not being changed by the power of God's love are excelling in giftedness. And it can't work. It doesn't work.

We need, we need to seek God to be filled with the fullness of His love. And as we're filled with the fullness of God's love, our temperament changes. Our actions change.

There's a spiritual person. There's someone I want to be with. I don't care if you can move mountains with your faith.

I don't care how much you know, how skilled you are. And let me tell you something, God's not the least bit impressed either. But you know what God is impressed with? I'm going to bless them that curse me.

I'm going to do good to those who spitefully use me. I'm going to be kind and gentle. I'm going to walk in humility and meekness.

I'm going to cover my brother when he sins. I'm going to restore him in the spirit of meekness. You want to impress heaven and God and angels? You start becoming like Jesus.

You could prophesy all you want. You could speak in tongues all you want. You can excel in spiritual knowledge of the Word all you want.

But when you walk, and your walk isn't worthy of your profession, friends, you're doing more harm than good. You're doing more harm than good. There was a day in my life years ago, when I was praying, my

heart was grieved at the thought of God's people beginning to excel in the spiritual gifts.

And I couldn't understand why. And after praying for a long time, I realized why. Because if God's people ever really started excelling in the gifts of the Spirit, without being on the foundation of God and His love, it would turn into the most awful, abominable thing.

Because you would have people who were gifted, that were cutting and biting and devouring and chewing each other to pieces. Because love somehow became inferior. When love should be the central theme.

And I'm not talking about love that we talk. I'm talking about love that works through us in our actions. That's what real love is.

Doesn't the Bible say, Let us not love only in word, but in deed and action. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. There's only one motive that God accepts as being pure in His eyes. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse number 2. We'll begin with 2 and then read 3. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.

Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love. Can you see that? Paul was joyful because he sensed that there was a labor of love. There was a motive of love for God.

You see friends, when God takes our heart and washes it in His love, our walk changes, our actions change. And 1 Corinthians chapter 13 becomes more and more and more applicable to our life. Because of the power of the Lord working in us.

Now listen, I want to take you through 5 steps and show you the 5 characteristics of a man or woman who is growing in the love of God. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples. That you perform signs and wonders and miracles.

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples. That you have love one for another. Not that we disannull the possibility of signs and wonders and miracles.

But the glitter of signs and wonders and miracles disappears in light of Him. 5 steps. I want you to take these down if you don't have pen and paper.

I want to encourage you to get this tape. Step number 1. The first characteristic of a man or a woman who is walking and living and growing in the love of God is keeping God's commandments. Now in 1 John chapter 3 verse number 22.

You don't have to necessarily turn to these if you don't want to. If you can follow me you can. But I want to just walk through this so we don't run out of time and really get too rushed toward the end.

I'll just stay sort of one kind of a flow and you can follow with me. 1 John chapter 3 verse number 22 and 23. Whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments.

And do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as He commanded us. And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in Him.

And we know by this that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He has given us. One of the characteristics of one who is growing in the grace and in the knowledge of God's love. Listen closely.

Keeps the commandments of God. Not the religious commandments. Not the ceremonial commandments of the Old Testament.

They were done away in Christ. But the moral commandments of God. Thou shalt not lie.

Thou shalt not slander. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Those commandments have not been done away in Christ.

Now we can't be saved by trying to keep those commandments. But once we are saved and once we receive of the Spirit of God. Then God gives us the power not to do those things.

But the ultimate victory of the Christian is by the power of God's love working in your life and my life. We keep God's commandments and they are not grievous or burdensome to us. 1 John chapter 5. 1 John chapter 5 verse 3. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments.

Listen. And His commandments are not burdensome or grievous. The reason why God's commandments are not grievous or burdensome.

Is because we are being prompted and compelled and empowered by God's love. Let me ask you a question. If you are doing something that you love, is it grievous to you? Of course not.

Oh, it's so hard to be a Christian. Well, my friend. You need to ask yourself a question.

First of all. By whose strength are you attempting to be a Christian? If you are trying to do it by your own strength, you will never do it. The Christian life is impossible to live.

By human strength alone. But by being empowered and filled with God's spirit. But let's not leave it hanging there.

Because there is so much garbage floating around today. In the name of being filled with the spirit. It grieves my spirit terribly.

Do not. Do not disassociate. Filled with his spirit.

Growing in his love. If I am not growing in his love. I am not being filled with his spirit.

That's the acid test. Always go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. There's the picture of spiritual growth.

There's the picture of the spiritual person. There's the picture of what pleases God. Number 2. Now I want you to remember.

That all of these characteristics. Can only be wrought by God's love. Working and growing in us.

But yet you can be gifted. You can have a charismatic personality. You can be skilled in your mind and be a good teacher.

An administrator. Without love. These cannot be accomplished without love.

But you can function in a gift. Without love. Without love.

One more thought for number 1. Before we go to number 2. God's commandments are not grievous. But they actually become a delight. Psalm 40.

Verse number 1. Psalm 40. God's commandments. That is walking.

And growing. In conformity to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Not only are they not grievous or burdensome.

But they become a delight. Psalm number 40. Listen to this.

Verse number 6. Sacrifice and meal offering thou hast not desired. My ears thou hast opened. Now we preached on this months ago.

The scripture when it speaks of my ears. He has opened. That refers to being a love slave.

Which means. God has filled my heart for love with him. I believe the title to that sermon.

Are your ears pierced? And I can remember a lot of people looked. Are your ears pierced? But you see the Lord wants to pierce our spiritual ears. Bread offering and sin offering thou has not required.

Then I said behold I come in the scroll of the book it is written to me. Listen to this. I delight to do thy will.

Oh my God thy law is within my heart. There is why the commandments of God are not grievous. God writes them in our heart by the finger of his love.

Number 2. Number 2. Now this is the one. This is one that we are going to wrestle with. But we need to face reality.

We need to keep things in proper perspective. So we don't get off chasing the rainbow. Hoping for you know the golden chest at the end of it.

Did you ever find a golden chest at the end of the rainbow? No. That's right. You find an empty one.

Listen to this now. Number 2. We forgive all who hurt us. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4 beginning with verse number 31.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and glamour and slander be put away from you. Along with all malice. Be kind to one another.

Tender hearted. Forgiving each other. Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of who? Of God. Now you tell me if that's not the highest calling the scripture ever calls the believers to do. To be an imitator of God.

In what way? In respect to God's willingness to forgive in the person of Jesus Christ. Listen. This is a holy and awesome responsibility.

As God through the person of Jesus Christ. Canceled and forgave all the sins that were ever committed against him. We are called to do the same by the power of Christ's love that works in us.

We must be willing to exercise the same principle of forgiveness towards others. As God has exercised towards you by Christ. Impossible.

You're right. But with God all things are possible. You cannot do it in yourself.

I hope that tonight some of us are brought into conflict. It's good to be brought into conflict. Because it puts things in proper perspective.

We must realize that we're called to do that which we cannot do on our own. Which therefore forces us to recognize our need for him. And when you fall short in some of these areas, which you will.

Don't allow yourself to be condemned. Don't go on a guilt trip. But simply thank God that you see yourself for who you are.

A wretched sinner. And you see Christ for who he is. The power of God to change you.

This brought great joy to my heart. Number three. Not only do we keep God's commandments.

Not only do we forgive all who hurt us. By the power of God's love working in us. But number three.

We exercise self-control. And we learn not to make provision for the flesh. This is a real big one.

You see today the Christian wants to be spiritual without being changed. We associate spirituality by things that we can do. Gifts.

Abilities. Talent. And all of those things God said are worthless.

If we do not have his love working in us. Changing us. Self-control.

He who lacks self-control in an ever increasing way. Is not growing in God's love. And he who says I know God's love.

Or I am growing in God's love. But lacks self-control. Is deceived.

Romans chapter 13 verse 14. I love the word of God. Romans 13 verse 14.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we go. Make no provision for the flesh.

In regard to its lusts. You see the secret of the Christian life. Is not to find God eradicating our fleshly nature.

God will not eradicate your fleshly nature. When I say eradicate. I mean take out of you all tendencies to be tempted to sin.

That will never happen. But the Christian needs to learn. That we should not make provision for.

What that means. Is if there is a temptation in our heart. To make a provision for the flesh.

You say well what does the flesh do? See I am not going to even tell. I will show you in the word. See.

Let's go to Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5. Now remember friends. When we are being filled with his love. We learn self control.

Which is one of the fruit of the spirit. Which means that we do not make provision for the flesh. Now here is something that is going to blow your mind away.

Do you want to know what lurks within. Within. The flesh life of each one of us.

Someone says brother Beach. The bible says that when we become Christians. We become new creatures.

I know. And Paul is writing to Christians. Becoming new people and new creation in Christ.

Does not mean. That God takes out of us. The tendency toward the flesh.

But he gives us provision. So we don't have to fulfill it. He gives us a new heart.

Which means he gives us a new will. That is what the word heart means in the old testament. In other words.

Before we became Christians. Our will was against God. But now that we are Christians.

He gives us a new heart. He gives us a new will. He gives us a love for him.

That causes us to want him. See. And then the spirit of God produces Christ's character.

Ephesians chapter 5. Beginning with verse number 16. Galatians I mean. But I say walk by the spirit.

And you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. It doesn't say you will not have desires of the flesh. Well up within you.

It says you won't carry them out. That's the secret. Now here's what it is.

For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit. And the spirit against the flesh. These are in opposition to one another.

So that you may not do the things that you please. If you walk after the flesh. But if you are led by the spirit.

You are not under the law. Now listen. The deeds of the flesh are evident.

Now remember up here. Look up here real quickly. Learn not to make provision for the flesh.

How can a Christian who is a new creation. Steal. Or fall into.

Ready. Immorality. Impurity.

Sensuality. Idolatry. Sorcery.

Enmity. Strife. Jealousy.

Outbursts of anger. Disputes. Dissension.

Faction. Envy. Drunkenness.

Carousing. And things like these. These are the works of the flesh.

And the Christian must learn. By the power of God's love. And only His love.

Listen. You can be schooled in theology. And fall into adultery.

You can prophesy. You can be used in the word of knowledge. And you can teach the greatest sermon.

And preach the greatest message. And walk out of church. And go home.

And sit out in front of the television. And watch pornography. And you know it.

But you can't do that. If you keep yourself in the love of God. And walk in His love.

Don't put your security in what you can do. Put your security in God's love working in you. And you keep yourself in it.

Because you can walk out of God's love. Walking out of God's love does not mean you lose your gift. It doesn't mean you lose your ability to communicate as a person.

Let me tell you something. If you're a teacher. You'll be a teacher if you're backslidden.

If you're a preacher. You'll still be able to preach when you're deep in sin. But if you walk in God's love.

You can still be what you are as a person. And your gift can flow. But the thing about God's love is it'll keep you from sin.

Hallelujah. God's love keeps us from sin. I like that.

God's love keeps us. Let's move on now. Because it's quarter of and we're running out of time.

Number four. This is another toughie. Number four.

Number four. We become willing to suffer wrong. We become willing to suffer wrong rather than seek revenge.

Now in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 you'll read it. Verse number 7. Paul told the Christians who were taking other Christians to court. I say that again.

There were Christians taking other Christians to court. Paul said you should have rather been willing to be defrauded. You should have been willing to be wronged than to take another Christian to court before the unbelievers.

Paul said there's utterly a fault among you. When Christians cannot suffer wrong from other Christians and come out losing in the natural rather than bring them to court to try and get what they deserve, they lack love and they are insulting the gospel of grace. We must learn when we are dealing with our Christian brothers and sisters in everyday affairs and everyday dealings, we must learn that it is pleasing to God to learn to suffer wrong.

To be defrauded rather than to seek revenge. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay.

You meditate on that. And you let God help you to understand that. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 7. Luke chapter 6. If you're writing these scriptures down.

Verses 27 through 35. Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you.

Do good to them who despitefully use you. That's Jesus' commandment. 1 Peter chapter 2. Verse 18 to 25.

Jesus left an example for us to follow. What was the example? When they reviled him, did he revile back? No. When they cursed him, did he curse them back? No.

What do we do when someone steps on our toe? We look for a sledgehammer. Don't we? Last one. Number five.

We seek to serve, care, and help others. Others. We seek to serve and care and help others.

We seek to please God rather than ourselves. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Verses number 14 and 15. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 14 and 15.

For the love of Christ controls us. When the love of Christ controls you, here's your philosophy about life. Having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died, and he died for all.

Listen. That they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. Listen.

As soon as you get the revelation that you are to live for him, you cannot live for him and not live for your brother. He that says, I love God, but looks at his brother and says, I wish you were dead. Something's wrong.

Your love for God will always be seen by your action toward other people. Particularly the household of faith, the church. When you love him, you love those that belong to him.

In so much as you have done unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto who? Jesus. Wow. Isn't that neat? Galatians chapter 6 verse 2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

What was the law of Christ? Love. How sweet it is. I always say that.

Jackie Gleason didn't know what he was talking about when he said how sweet it is. Because there's only one thing sweet, God's love. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5. Here's what Paul believed regarding his life.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord. Listen. And ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Paul considered himself a servant to the church. Wow. There's love working within the heart of believers.

Mark chapter 9 verse 33 through 37. The disciples were walking along and they were arguing about something. Guess what it was? Who's going to be the head honcho in this group? Who's going to be the chief? Jesus knew their faults.

And then when he sat them down, he asked them, What were you guys talking about on the way? Boy, they turned all pink and purple. And Jesus told them a story. And basically this is what he said.

The greatest among you will be the servant. Serve, care, and help others. Do you want to be great in God's kingdom? Serve people in love.

Serve people in love. What is a spiritual person? One who is filled and continues to be filled with God's love. Consequently, their life changes on a daily basis.

Their eyes get off themselves and their eyes get on Jesus. And they learn to fulfill these five major characteristics in an ever increasing manner. Now you know why Paul prayed that we would be filled with God's love.

We need a baptism of love. And you know where to get it? The person of Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Christ.

Okay, let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we thank you Lord.

Lord, we thank you Lord that your concern for us is so intimate. Lord, I thank you that we can gather together and see how far we do fall short. But not become discouraged, but rather encouraged.

Because only when we have things in proper perspective can we really sense the need to seek you. Lord, I pray that by the gentleness of your spirit, you would show every soul here tonight their need for you. Show them their need by showing them how far they fall short.

Give us honesty tonight Lord. Let us be honest. And as we see how far we fall short, show us your love.

And draw us closer to you. So that we cannot be deceived, but changed daily by your love. What's that you're singing? Hallelujah.

Let's just sing that chorus. Lord, fill us with your love. Show us the more excellent way Lord.

Hallelujah. Give us that baptism of love Lord. Hallelujah.

Thank you Lord. We love you Lord. We want more of your love Lord.

Change us Lord. Lord, I need you.

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