

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

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Now, we had been studying the Book of Matthew personally because we've kind of been fascinated by it. We spent some time in the. I think the last time we spoke in May on the Sermon on the Mount and what comes after the Beatitudes of what Jesus said, and the subject of the Commandments kind of follows that. This is in the 10th chapter.

You know, the Sermon on the Mount is the fifth, sixth and seventh chapter, and we've been kind of fascinated by looking at Matthew and how he recorded. It seems that Matthew is kind of writing in real time. He's actually recording the events because he was alerted, man. He was a tax collector for the Romans and probably pretty well educated and pretty well able to do the recording of Jesus words as he spoke them, whereas a lot of the other Gospel writers, especially John, are doing it from recall and inspiration at a later date.

So there's a. There's a little bit of a different aspect from Matthew, and of course, Matthew was trying to convince the Jews of so much of Jesus worthiness for being followed at that time. So we've been fascinated by that. Then we came across this talk of my dad's, and I remember it because it was one of the.

Again, one of his early talks, but it really, really struck me. I was really fascinated by it. So we'll give you a little flavor of that along with a few of our own thoughts mixed in. So In John the 14th chapter, though, the apostle quotes Jesus as saying the following words, verse 21, chapter 14 of John. He that hath my commandments, and keeping them he is that loveth me.

And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to Him. The same thought is repeated in John 14:15 and John 15:10. But when we look at the Gospel accounts of Jesus ministry at his first advent, we look in vain to find anything akin to the ten Commandments that God gave to Israel at Sinai. Jesus himself refers in only one place to his teachings as a commandment. It's found in John 13:34 and John 15:12.

A new commandment I give to you. That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another again. 1512. This is my commandment, that ye loved one another as I have loved you. So the question therefore arises, is this what Jesus referred to when he spoke of having and keeping his commandments?

Is this the only thing that is required of us to love our brethren in the true sense of the word? Or did Jesus have something more in mind? To answer the question, we begin with a look at the word that is translated Commandments. In our opening scripture, the word is the Greek word Entele Strong 1785 and is translated Commandment in all but two places. It appears in the King James and there it is rendered precept.

Every other translation, and we looked at about 10 to 15 to 20 of them, all render this Greek word in the text as commandment. One exception is the concordant Greek text. Now, I don't think we see that book on the book table very much, but it was popular back in the 80s and it's a black book about the size of most of our other books, and it's an ultra literal English translation of the Greek. It uses the word direction or directions to translate this Greek word Entillating.

When we look in the Greek lexicons, we find the word defined in two ways. The first of these is a prescribed way into which things are to be done, a command, and this we find very clear from the

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

context, such as when used in Matthew 22:37, 38. Jesus said unto them, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and verse 38.

This is the first and great commandment, quite clearly a reference to Moses summation of the whole law found in Deuteronomy 6. 5. The second definition for the word entille is a charge, an injunction, a precept, and is clearly the meaning of the word when John used it in 1st John 4:20 and 21. If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment, verse 21, and this commandment, this precept, this concept we have from him that he who loveth God, loveth his brother also. This is not a commandment, but a precept that if we truly love God, it will follow as a matter of course that we will love our brother. Why? Because God loves our brother, and love for God signifies a desire and an effort to adapt the feelings and the precepts that God has.

Love is not an action that can be turned off and on like a switch, but by the direction of anyone else. It comes from within the very heart of an individual, and it is the result of experience and interaction between individuals, education, determination and emotion. We would therefore believe that when Jesus referred to his commandments, he was referring to all of the precepts and concepts and directions that he taught to his followers, by his personal example and by the parables he gave, and by the specific words of instructions he gave. Now we're going to spend most of the balance of our time in Matthew 10.

So turn to the 10th chapter of Matthew, and we have the account of Jesus selecting and then sending out his 12 apostles to be his representatives amongst the nation of Israel. After naming, the apostle, Matthew records the instructions that Jesus gave them and what experiences they might expect and how they ought to react. Some of the specific things which he mentions pertained only to the 12, and yet the precepts are applicable to all of Jesus followers throughout the Gospel age and the Gospel age Harvest. Turn with me again, like I said, we said to Matthew 10 and begin.

We'll start in verse 5 and consider some of the precepts that Jesus enumerated, some of the commandments he gave, verses 5, 6, and 7. These 12 Jesus set forth and commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans. Enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus began his instructions to the apostles by restricting them to the nation of Israel, the efforts of those who would represent him.

So they could only go to the nation of Israel at that time. But he knew that when the 70 weeks of favor prophesied by Daniel were complete, that restriction would come to an end. But he did not explain that to the apostles at this time we know not whether they fully comprehended. The reason for only preaching to the Israelites was that they were at the time, in the beginning of that 70th week of favoritism Israel, which must fully expire before they could preach to the Gentiles. The message they were to give was that of a kingdom of heaven was near.

And although the message might be misunderstood to mean that it was about to be established in power and glory, yet the message was absolutely true for those who would receive it into good and honest hearts. The opportunity to become part of the heavenly kingdom would begin 50 days after the death of the one who is now directing this message to God's chosen people. Their message was not one of condemnation for the failures of the past, but of awakening to the prospect before those who would accept Jesus, the Messiah now present in their midst, and so we would see, the

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

first precept that Jesus introduces is one of obedience to the will of God, not only as to when the message was to be preached, but also what was to be preached, and to whom that lesson carries over to all the Lord's followers. The kingdom of heaven was to be the theme throughout this age.

As it was appropriate in the Jewish harvest to announce the presence of the chief reaper, it likewise became appropriate to preach the return of the Lord. When the harvest of the gospel age began. We note that the Master did not ask for volunteers from amongst the apostles to go and preach the kingdom, but assigned the responsibility to all, showing clearly the responsibility of all the Lord's people at this time to promulgate the message of the kingdom, and when the kingdom message was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the method used was preaching by word of mouth, which was the only method available at the time. But when the harvest of the gospel age came, the printed page became the primary message which could best reach the people of God.

For they were no longer confined to that little land of Israel, but were scattered all over the earth, and although the message of delivering the message of the day, the kingdom differed in that time, the message content was essentially the same as it is right now. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the message was to go on to the nation of Israel, the people in covenant relationship with God at the first advent. The harvest message at the second advent went to those of Christendom, already consecrated and in a covenant relationship with God, to appreciate that the Lord was again present, and God wanted them to separate themselves from Christendom and gathered together with those who were feeding on present truth. In verses 8, 11 of Matthew 10, the Master continues his instructions, but the precept he is striving to convey changes from that of obedience to trust, to trust in God to provide for all of their needs and all of their experiences in life.

Verses 8 through 10 of Matthew 10 heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils freely ye have received freely give provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither to coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workmen is worthy of his meat. The apostles had been given an opportunity to follow Jesus, not because of their education, their standing in regard to the community, nor their connection to the religious leaders or sects of their day, but because of their heart condition, and so they were able to give the message freely to those who would appreciate the words of life that they had to give, and we too have received freely, abundantly from the Lord the truth that brings joy and peace to our hearts, and likewise are to Give forth that understanding of truth to those that have an ear to hear, to establish the veracity of their words and give credence to their claims. The apostles were given the right to use the power of their Master to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils.

Think of what this must have meant to these men who had come from lowly walks of life to perform miracles that they had heard were performed by the prophets of old. It is likely that they had seen Jesus perform a few of his many miracles. But we must remember that Jesus chose these 12 apostles near the beginning of his ministry at the time of the Sermon on the Mount, and that many of the recorded miracles of Jesus had not taken place yet they were going to happen subsequent to this time. So it took great trust in the words of the Master that the miracles they would seek to perform would be in harmony with the will of God, and that he would perform those things that they would ask, such as healing the sick and even raising the dead. Throughout their history, the faithful of Israel had been instructed to honor and provide for the prophets of God, to provide for the prophets that God had sent to them.

They were to recognize them as brethren and provide food and shelter, and as a result be blessed by the message that was brought. The message that they brought would be a message of blessing

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

or a communication by God, and even sometimes that message was a condemnation of their previous behavior. For Jesus apostles this became a test of faith to be willing to go to that covenant people with a message that they were on the verge of a change of dispensation, that their Messiah was in their midst and God would no longer deal with them under the law covenant arrangement. It put to the test their trust in God to provide for their needs, while his service he had just done with all the apostles that had gone before them.

I'm sorry, all the profits that had gone before them, they weren't to provide anything more than the clothes that they wore. Nothing that might make them independent, such as money for which to pay their own way. We shouldn't think that these requirements were to remain in force. For later we see that the apostles had one in their midst who was in charge of the bag or the money or the treasury which they used to purchase food, and later we find the apostle Paul laboring with his hands to provide substance for himself and his companions.

Rather this going forth at this time with nothing. But the message for the people was to determine the worthiness of the Israelites and to exercise the apostles trust in the Lord, that they might be able to pass this valuable lesson on to those who would follow them. We might at first think that this lesson has no application to ourselves, therefore not having the power to accomplish miracles as the apostles did. But let us first consider if the curing of those that have physical frailties is really any greater than dispelling the sickness of mind that occurs those in Christendom because of their false doctrines. By the fact that we have been given an understanding of God's plan of salvation means that we are in a position to heal those who desire to know God and His true character of love and justice.

The power to cleanse from the sin that is passed upon all mankind through heredity and come into the relationship of the sons of God is just as real as the curing of leprosy was in the Apostles day. The whole world is reckoned by God as dead in sin, and it is only those who become adopted into the family of God that can be said to have been cleansed and raised from the dead. It is not that we make anyone a son of God, but we can be used by our Heavenly Father to show the way to those who are in a feeling of a need of a relationship with the Heavenly Father, and we can be used by the Father to show the way to those who will eventually can give their hearts in fullness of consecration to do the will of God and thereby have a part in raising them from the dead. In this sense and experiencing the forgiveness of their sins, we may never have the opportunity to literally cast out devils from any so afflicted. But we can dispel the doctrine of devils by dispelling the erroneous and God dishonest honoring doctrines that have so widely been promulgated in Christendom.

And we can do that when we have the opportunity to dispense the truth to others. More than this, we will each have those experiences in our Christian walk where we will need to trust in the Lord's ability to provide for our needs, especially when we are engaged in some way and giving the message of the kingdom of God to others.

Let's move on. In Matthew 10, verses 11 through 16, the Lord begins to inculcate yet another precept for his followers. Verse 11 and into Whosoever whatsoever I'm sorry, into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide until ye go thence, and when ye come into an house, salute it and if the house be worthy, let your peace come in upon it. But if it Be not worthy.

Let your peace return to you, and whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Jesus was here beginning to show the apostles the responsibility they would assume in having the privilege of preaching the message of the kingdom.

Even among the Israelites, there were those that had little love and respect for God. They made the light of the message of the prophets from Samuel to John the Baptist, and believed not the words of those prophets. So Jesus was teaching them to discriminate between those who accepted the message with readiness of mind and those who did not, and to cease to present the truth to those who showed no signs of appreciation. These instructions were not only taught by Jesus, but practiced by him. You will recall that it was Jesus who used the phrase, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear, indicating that if one heard and appreciated the words he spoke, it would generate a proper response in the individual that heard them.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Matthew 7:6, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you. By this statement he indicates that there are those who are unworthy of the truth, and he admonishes his followers to be careful to whom they offer these things that are precious and of great value. The classes he designates as dogs and swine are those who have interests that lie not in the higher things, but those who grovel in the lower things of life that put more effort into how to make money than into how and know and please God. Those who have no interest in heavenly things but are self seekers, devourers, wanting only to ridicule that which they do not understand and cannot appreciate.

Jesus wanted his apostles to realize the value of the message they were proclaiming and the urgency of getting the message to those who would respond and to avoid the waste of time trying to convince those who oppose those views. When he told them that if they were not received or their word appreciated, to shake off the dust of your feet, he was using an idiom that George Lamsda, the translator of the Bible from Aramaic, says means to have nothing to do with them, to leave them alone. We probably wouldn't get that from reading it, but that's what it was really meant. Just leave them alone, and his following remark was about the relative responsibility of those of Israel who heard the message of the kingdom compared to that of Sodom and Gomorrah indicate that the rejection of the message of the apostles was not without consequence for those that were of that favored sense of class of people.

He then tells the apostles to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, because those were among their countrymen and they would seize the opportunity to do them harm. It seems strange to attribute wisdom to the serpent, because wisdom seems to be a characteristic that correctly applies only to mankind and the heavenly orders of things. We note the New American Standard and the NIV both translate the word as shrewd, and the Dialogue uses Sagnatius as a synonym for shrewd, which means a keen sense of perception having far sighted judgment. If this association of wisdom to the serpent recalls to our mind Eve's encounter with the serpent in the garden, we can then appreciate the fact that Satan used the serpent as his instrumentality to deceive Eve, and we can see the shrewdness of Satan's approach to her. He came to her when she was alone, and possibly had the serpent eat the forbidden fruit himself and thus demonstrate no adverse consequences.

Ye shall not surely die, and then promised her greater knowledge and wisdom, and assured her again that she wouldn't die. In this sense we might be able to see the serpent as signifying the wisdom or shrewdness, but as in reality, the powers possessed by Satan, although great, were used in a way in opposition to God, and will be ultimately the cause of his destruction. So Jesus

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

wanted his followers to be keen in perception of his teachings and far sighted in judgment in their dealing with others, and yet not to cause any hurt to his fellow creatures exemplified by the dove.

Let's move on. In Matthew 10:17 Jesus begins to tell his apostles what they might expect in the way of experiences with those who opposed their message. Verses 17:23 but beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues and ye shall be brought before the governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought of what ye shall speak for it shall be given to you that same hour that ye shall speak for it is not that ye speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you, and the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father, the child, and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.

Jesus reminded his apostles that even though they had not been willing to receive him and his message, they should not expect the same. Even though they had been willing to receive him and his message, they should not expect the same from all whom they would preach. The majority were those that have lost the vision. Many were so downtrodden by the rule of the Romans, and so disillusioned by the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, that they were concerned only with their own survival. Many had heard John the Baptist's message of repentance, but it found acceptance only by a relatively few, and so his warning to be on their guard against those who would seek to silence them.

He assured them that if they are brought before those in authority to witness to their beliefs, they should not think that they are alone, and therefore needed elaborate preparations in their own defense and that of the truth, but assured them that the Spirit of the Father dwelling in them would give them the words to speak, and I think that we've probably all to some degree experienced that ourselves. When witnessing to others, words sometimes come out that we really think we didn't know before that time. This promise must have been strengthening to the apostles, remembering that this was the same reassurance God had given to Moses, Jeremiah, and David, and we'll just quote for your reference Exodus 4:12, Jeremiah 1:7, and 2 Samuel 23:2.

You and I have probably never been brought before anyone to give an account for our beliefs. But I think that many of us have had the experience of witnessing to others about the truth and recalling a text to give support to our testimony that we had not thought about for a long time, or that we could not have been brought to mind if we had tried at some other time. Paul must have had a like experience that he relates to Timothy when He said in 2 Timothy 4:17 Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengtheneth me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Jesus warns them that they will be hated because of him, because of his words of life, and they called attention to Israel's failure to keep their covenant. Even in a superficial way, they didn't.

And yet they continued to claim to be God's chosen people, being unaware that their failure to recognize their visitation by God's only begotten was about to result in their casting off from favor from the position that they held. In the face of this, Jesus admonishes them to persevere until the end of their course that they might receive salvation. It is the same conditional promise that he made to the church at Smyrna and all his followers that experienced persecution in the narrow way. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Jesus then instructed his apostles

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

that if they were persecuted in one city, they should flee to another.

Should we take this to mean that wherever we face opposition we are to flee to another place? How would we then interpret the actions of the Master when they came to take him in the garden? He did not flee. How would we explain the actions of Paul when he fled the city of Antioch because of persecution on one occasion? But conversely, when he was about to return to Jerusalem, having been warned that he would be taken captive, he still insisted on going.

Despite that imminent danger. The Master in this case was addressing the specific mission that he was sending the disciples to accomplish, namely to preach the kingdom throughout the city of Israel. The cities of Israel. It was an urgent message to be accomplished before Jesus was to present himself to the nation as their king. If they were persecuted in one city, it would be an indication that there were none there worthy of the message that they had been preaching.

His message was not that there would never be a time when they were to not endure persecution, nor is that the Lord's plan for us. He seems to indicate that their mission at this time was more urgent than the need for the lessons of personal suffering. He would tell us too, that it is not always necessary to wait for persecution to cease of itself, but to watch for the Lord's direction to indicate whether we might be better stewards by fleeing the persecution that limits our service to the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. But if the Lord provide not the way of escape, we are assured that we'll have the strength to endure and the experiences to overcome.

Let's move on. In the next verse is Jesus states his relationship to the apostles that they might expect as a result of being known as his disciples. Verses 24 and 25 of Matthew 10 the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, or the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

And at the Last Supper Jesus would utter the words John records in the 13th chapter of his gospel, verses 13:17 Ye call me master and Lord, and ye say, well, for it is so I am. If I then your master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. The relationship between Jesus and his apostles and his disciples was that of a master and his servants.

The servants were to esteem it a privilege to have the same experiences, to suffer the same persecutions, the same humiliation, the same joys of pleasing their heavenly Father as well. Otherwise, how could they hope to develop the same character as their leader if they had not the same experiences? Paul tells us in Hebrews 5, 8, though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and in Hebrews 12:2, for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. If he had need of the difficult experiences, and if he could endure them for the joy of serving his Father and fulfilling his purpose of bringing mankind back to perfection, how much more the need of these things for all of his followers.

The next concept that Jesus conveyed to his apostles was the proper place for fear in their lives. Matthew again 10:26, 31.

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

Fear them not, therefore, for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness that ye speak in light, and what ye hear in the ear that ye preach upon the housetops, and fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body. In Gehenna are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, that ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Jesus wanted them to know that all things that have taken place in this world in regard to God's people will eventually be brought to light. Those who persecuted the saints will be brought to an accounting for their deeds, and although they were permitted to test the fidelity of the saints, the intimation is that all is under the control of our Heavenly Father. He tells them that they should not let the fear of men deter them from telling forth the truth that he has revealed to them. In the absence of the multitudes, they should proclaim it from the housetops.

Jesus reminds them that those who have had the power over their lives should not be feared, because all they can do is bring this human life to an end. They can only kill the body. It is only God who has the power to destroy both the body and the soul. In Gehenna, symbolic of the second death, man may be able to kill the body, but the human organism. But God has purposed a reawakening for all of mankind, and in the sense that the killing of the human being could not prevent that person from living again in the resurrection.

But if God destroys one in second death, there will be no hope for that one ever to have life again. The soul in this case is representing the character, the personality, the very identity of the individual. Jesus understood fully the meaning of fear and taught this precept not only by these words, but also by his actions. You will recall John's account of Jesus' encounter with Pilate, recorded in John 19, verses 10 and 11. Then Saith Pilate unto him, speakest thou not unto me?

Knowest thou that I have the power to crucify thee, and I have the power to release thee? Jesus answered, thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given to thee from above. Therefore he that delivered me unto death hath the greater sin now saying that to the one who has got you in captivity, that is real courage.

What an example of the total trust of God's providences. That no man, regardless of his authority or power, could interfere with his interests without God's permission, and therefore was in no need to in any way fear this or any other man, and yet you will recall when Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane. Paul tells us that Jesus feared, but does not explain what it was that made Jesus fearful. We're referring to Hebrews 5:7, who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, was heard in that he feared.

We think that the only thing that might have caused fear in the heart of Jesus was that in some way he had fallen short in his mission to perfectly carry out the will of the Father and that as a consequence God would be compelled by his justice to leave his only begotten Son the entire human race in death. In these two instances, Jesus shows by example the lesson he was teaching to his apostles, that is to say, proper fear and reverence for our God and appreciation for the fact that the action of any man cannot thwart God's will for us, and then he tells them how cognizant God is of the things which transpire in his vast domain, and emphasizes the comparative worth of the least of these things and the worth of his specially chosen one. If we have any doubts about the extent of God's love for us or how valuable we might be in his sight, it may be because of our

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

failures to do the things that are pleasing to him, and our failure to know and to take hold upon the precious promises in God's word. How could our Father show how he values those he calls his sons than by saying the words recorded in Isaiah 49, 15:16 I will not forget thee.

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thy walls in the sense of those things which protect are continually before me, and in verses 32 and 33 of Matthew 10, Jesus tells his apostles the loyalty that he expects of them. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

How these words must have echoed in the mind of the apostle Peter. As the cock crowed, he must have remembered not only Jesus prediction of his denial, but these words which showed how Jesus would respond. The denial, the remorse and repentance of Peter should stand as a reminder of the possible consequences of such an action by us. Our failure to confess our association with the Lord may never come to a direct confrontation with unbelievers, asking if we know or follow Jesus, but may come to us as a failure to live our lives in a way that will show that we have been with Jesus, and we have learned of him, and we have accepted his message. Acts 4:13 Jesus continued his instructions to the apostles with the warning that they should not expect that they would complete their earthly course on flowery beds.

Of these the hymn comes to mind, Think not that I am come to send peace on earth I came not to send peace, but a sword for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law and man's foe shall be they of his own household. He that loveth the father or mother more than me is not worthy of me he that loveth the son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it, Jesus remarks in these verses, and it seems at first to be in direct conflict with the message of the angels to the shepherds when they announced his birth and declared glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men. But Jesus here spoke not of the ultimate end that he would accomplish, but of the work of the harvest that he and his apostles would be engaged in, and also of that harvest that would come at the end of the Gospel age where the work would be that of separation.

He did not mean that every follower of his would have a conflict within his immediate family, but that it should not come as a surprise to them if the decision to follow the Master would not be shared by all of one's household. Back in verse 21, Jesus had said that if the problem would become so severe that within families one member might cause the death of another because of the differences of belief, and during the period called the Dark Ages, we find that this was indeed the case.

Our Lord here lays down the very basic requirement for supreme love for the Master, no matter the cost in earthly ties or relationships or means or possessions, and the willingness to take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of our Lord. He does not advocate the abandoning of responsibilities that anyone owes to his family, nor does he even hint that his followers should cease to love those of their natural families. He merely requires that we keep our priorities perspective. If our chief goal in life is to share the reward of being joint heirs with the Master, then that will need to have the greatest priority in our life. The words of verse 39 are not easy to understand even though they are repeated by each of the Gospel writers.

Russ Marten - The Commandments of Jesus

When this thought is repeated by Matthew in chapter 16 and verse 25, it is rendered this for whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. If after one has presented himself in full consecration to God and has been accepted, and then seeks to live after the flesh to preserve this present life with the desire and expectation of earthly salvation, he shall lose all, for he has already given up that opportunity when he presented his all in consecration. The all that we present as sacrifice to the Lord includes the right to life that all mankind receives as a result of the ransom sacrifice of our Lord. But those who give up their lives to be dead with Christ and continue faithful to the end, they shall find their life in the fullest sense on the Divine plane as joint heirs with their Lord.

Jesus concludes his instructions to his apostles with the statement found in verses 40, 42.

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward, and whosoever shall give drink unto those little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. He told them that those who received the message of the kingdom that they would present would be in reality be receiving him and his Father, and therefore an invitation to be part of his bride.

To those who received them as prophets or teachers, or received them as righteous men, and yet were not inclined to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, would also come a reward in the kingdom for their recognition of the position of the apostles as righteous men sent by God to His chosen people, and furthermore, those who did no more than give a cup of cold drink of water, because they recognized them as disciples of Jesus, would not be overlooked in the kingdom for their kindness, and so Jesus wanted His followers to know that they too should be aware of the kindness and the assistance they receive, even from those who have no desire to pursue heavenly things, that they might be like their Father, who is ever mindful of the deeds of those who seek after righteousness and is kind even to the unthankful, and in conclusion, we would say that Jesus taught us by the precepts he presented to us in his teaching and recorded in those gospels. He taught us by the parables he presented to the multitudes, and he taught us by the example of his life.

We would do well to consider the commandments, that is, the precepts and directions on how to walk circumspectly in the narrow way that our Master gives. Let us determine to strive with every power within us to follow his example, that we may attain to that for which we aspire. May the Lord continue to bless all of you as you attempt to do that.