

Four Weightier Matters of the Law

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I think we would all agree we are living in the last days. I don't think there is any question about that. So, let's turn in 2 Timothy 3:1 out of the NIV and is very familiar territory. It's by way of an introduction of a specific topic. Paul is talking to young Timothy and prophesying at the same time.

2 Timothy 3:1 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. (NIV)*

The Greek word for *terrible* means "dangerous" or "difficult, dangerous, difficult times in the last days. Now he goes on to quantify this; notice the first thing he says.

2) People will be lovers of themselves ... (NIV)

As opposed to loving the Father and opposed to loving their neighbors as themselves. Then it goes on to describe some of the characteristics of these people who love themselves.

2 continued) ... lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy ... (NIV)

It's no secret, the United States, Canada, Australia, Western Europe have become unholy, particularly in the sense that they reject God Almighty. They are becoming secular nations. Even church attendance is at an all-time low in all of these countries.

3) without love [love towards God Almighty, love towards others], unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good ... (NIV)

Obviously, lovers of things that aren't good.

4) treacherous, rash, conceited [the Greek means 'lifted up with pride'], lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— (NIV)

Putting pleasure in front of God Almighty. We have to understand that this is addressed to the church as well. This is addressed to Timothy who was a minister in the church.

"Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God"

Verse 5 in the New Living Translation.

5) They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT)

The Greek word for *power* is interesting, it means “mighty works” or “miracles”. They will reject the mighty works and the miracles of God Almighty. Of course, the world now rejects the mighty works of God Almighty because the world believes in evolution. At least the “sophisticated, educated” world. They put God completely out of the picture and deny His mighty works of creation.

7) always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)

Paul’s description fits the church but also the world surrounding the church, because Satan is attacking both.

Now notice what the author of Hebrews has to say. If you do some research on the book of Hebrews, the early manuscripts call it, by way of introduction to the book, simply “To Hebrews”. That means of course, to Jewish Christians. This book is addressed to Jewish Christians whom you would expect, growing up in Judaism, to be very knowledgeable in the scriptures. But they had a problem.

Hebrews 5:11 *There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen.*

12) You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. (NLT)

It’s obvious from this admonition that those to whom he is writing, have gone away, forgotten or ignored the basic things that we should know.

12) continued) You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. (NLT)

Verse 13, in the King James.

13) For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (KJV)

The Greek word for *unskillful* Spiros Zodiates in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament defines *unskillful* as “ignorant of true doctrine”. They are ignorant of true doctrine. These are Jews who should know the scriptures. So, we see that Jewish Christians at this point were ignoring fundamental principles. They had their minds somewhere else.

As the end approaches, the last thing we would want to be accused of is “unskillful in God’s Word”, in understanding and applying God’s Word in our lives. Remember it’s one thing to know God’s Word. But that knowledge is irrelevant if we do not apply it in

our lives. That was a theme of Gordon's sermonette. We have to know but we also have to do and apply.

Back in 1957, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote, in the booklet Why Were You Born? which was one of the first booklets I ever read said:

Bible study is of value only in proportion as the knowledge revealed is incorporated into your character and you are actually living it.

I'll read it again:

Bible study is of value only in proportion as the knowledge revealed is incorporated into your character and you are actually living it.

With that in mind, let's notice Christ's admonition to the religious leaders of His day and of course, by extension to all of us today. Notice they were also not focused on fundamental principles, as the book of Hebrews points out. These religious leaders are not focused on the fundamentals. Go to Matthew 23:23. We know the whole chapter is about Christ taking the religious leaders of His day to task because they said one thing and did something else. We see from what we are going to read here that they had a major problem.

Matthew 23:23 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: [now he lists three] justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. (NKJV)*

He calls them *the weightier matters of the law*. That's Strong's #926, it's the Greek word *barus* and Thayer in his Lexicon says this about the definition of that word. He says there are two definitions, one is literal and the other is symbolic. The literal meaning is "heavy" and "weight". But the symbolic meaning, which is more important for us today (I'm quoting him now) "of great moment or importance". The NIV and the NLT translate the latter part of verse 23 as this:

23) but you have neglected the more important matters of the law ... (NIV, NLT)

The Philips translation translates it as:

23) neglect the things which carry far more weight in the law ... (PHI)

Today we would describe the Scribes and the Pharisees as "majoring in the minors"; ignoring the major points, drilling down and focusing on very minor points. They were neglecting the three major points: justice, mercy and faith. In other words, their focus was in the wrong place and they were on the receiving end of Christ's wrath as a result.

Now, let's look at Luke's account. This is an earlier admonition of Christ but we are going to see it is very similar. Luke 11:42 is earlier but notice the important similarities.

Luke 11:42 *But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice [which we just read in Matthew 23:23 but notice this] and the love of [the translations say "God" but if you look at the interlinear, they all say love of the God. The Greek word Ho is omitted, so is not translated] God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. (NKJV)*

The Greek word for *pass by* in the New King James is translated in the NIV as *neglect*. *You have neglected the love of the God and justice*. The New Living Translation says *you have completely forgotten justice and the love of the God*. This was a different time but the same admonition and instruction, therefore we can only conclude it must have been on Christ's mind and therefore it must be very, very important. If we put these two scriptures together—these two verses—we find:

There are four weightier matters of the law. *Weightier matters* meaning "heavy, harder to lift, harder to accomplish, of greater importance, not to be neglected".

By these scriptures Christ says to us, then and today "I'm going to require something more of you, something that is harder to do, something that is more important."

When you think of this, it's relatively easy to sit in the comfort of our airconditioned homes in the summer, sitting in our easy chairs, taking out a check book and writing out a tithe check. That doesn't take much effort. It's not very strenuous. It's relatively easy to do. But Christ is saying, I'm going to ask you to do some things that are far more important and more difficult and contrary to your very human nature. You are going to have to fight to do these things. As we know from scripture, Christ tells us:

"I'm going to judge you to see how much you love Me and to see if you are willing to follow My example and My admonitions by doing what I tell you to do and what I require of you".

As we get near the end of the age—and we are near the end, we just don't know when the final curtain will come down. But as we do get closer to that time, we have to realize that the weightier matters of the law are far more important, the closer we get to the end, and to our end. As we near the end of this unprecedented age and it's becoming more unprecedented with every passing day, we dare not neglect the "weightier matters of the law". So, the title of the sermon is:

The Four Weightier Matters of the Law

We're going to take them in order—four points. The first one we know and is in Matthew 23.

1. The word "justice".

Christ is saying we cannot omit proper justice. We need to define our terms and the Greek word for *justice* is Strong's #2920 and it's the Greek word *krisis* and it literally means "a decision and by implication, justice, especially the divine law". It can also mean "judgment". In Matthew 23 and Luke 11, most all of the translations—just about every one— translates that word as "justice", whereas the King James translates it as "judgment".

Encarta the World Dictionary of the English Language says this about the term *justice*.

Fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made.

So, *justice* in this context, is easy to see and means "fairness". In the decisions we make and how we treat people is to be based on God's law and Christ's teachings. We are also going to see that "justice" and "judgment" go hand in hand. They are linked together because proper judgment will lead to true justice. Proper decisions will lead to true justice.

We all know that Christ's justice is different from human justice.

I recently had that pounded home because I had a Jury Duty notice this past week. You are looking at man's justice verses God's justice. In Isaiah 11:1 is a prophecy about Jesus Christ but it gives us information about Christ's justice.

Isaiah 11:1 *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, [out of David's line] and a Branch [referring to Jesus Christ] shall grow out of his roots: 2) And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel [Hebrew means "advice"] and might [Hebrew word can mean "mastery" and we know Jesus Christ "mastered" Satan when He was on this earth], the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *fear* means "reverence".

3) And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: (KJV)

Verse 4 is out of the NIV.

4) but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. (NIV)

He will make decisions that will bring justice for those who are poor and those who are needy. We are told in the New Testament that we have to do likewise. In John 7:24, in

just one verse, I am reminded of this in my rebuttal of this jury duty summons because this is how we are to judge, not how man is to judge.

John 7:24 *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* (KJV)

The word *judgment* is the Greek *krisis*, Strong's #2920. We grow in Godly judgment, as individual Christians, by exercising the mind of Jesus Christ. We are told, *let this mind me in you which is in Christ Jesus* in Philippians 2:5. If we exercise the mind of Christ, we will have righteous judgment. Will Rogers had a comment about judgment that tickles your funny bone and is true.

Good judgment comes from experience. Most experience comes from bad judgment.

That is true—we learn the hard way, don't we? The fact is, if we use the mind of Christ, we will avoid bad judgment. Bad judgment leads to no justice. If we use the mind of Christ, it will lead us to good judgment and justice for all.

So, in closing out this first point, Christ says, "I'm going to require something more of you. Something harder to do, something that is more important." You must always be fair and just in dealing with others. You must always be that way. Doing so is one of the "weightier matters of the law".

The second weightier matter is:

2. Mercy.

Christ tells us we cannot omit mercy; we cannot ignore mercy. The fact is, judgment—anytime we make a judgment—it must always be tempered with mercy. The laws of the land don't take that into consideration at all. The laws of the land are entirely different. But judgment must be tempered with mercy and mercy is part of true justice. Doing what is right—making right decisions. Notice James 2:13—it links *judgment*, the Greek word *krisis*, with mercy.

James 2:13 ... *because judgment [the Greek word *krisis*] without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.* (NIV)

The Amplified Bible says,

"for judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. But to the one who has shown mercy, mercy triumphs victoriously over judgment."

Notice what Christ had to say about mercy in Matthew 5—the sermon on the Mount—verse 38, His very first sermon. Setting the stage for His whole ministry and He is talking about first things, principal things, the most important things.

Matthew 5:38 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (KJV)*

As I have mentioned before, my grandfather was the foreman of a very large ranch in central New Mexico in the end of 1800's. New Mexico wasn't even a state at that time. My dad grew up around the turn of the century, having been born in 1905. He told me he grew up on that ranch and herded cattle and said that if they caught a man stealing a horse, they wouldn't steal his horse, they would hang him on the spot. Because a horse to a cowboy is life. You take a horse away from a cowboy out in the middle of nowhere and you are putting him in great danger. They didn't have to wait for the police or the county commissioners to come along, they made a judgment and if he had stolen the horse, he was hanged. This was a little more than 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. Going on in verse 39 out of the NLT.

39) But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also.

40) If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too.

41) If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. (NLT)

Here we can see that mercy is absolutely counter to human nature. Christ requires more of us and mercy is something that goes counter to most every aspect of human nature. Paul continues that same point in Romans 12:19. Here we see that mercy is the exact opposite of vengeance. Mercy is the exact opposite of getting back at somebody. Paul is saying to the brethren at Rome and to us today:

Romans 12:19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (KJV)*

What we are being told here is that God Almighty, our Father, is going to settle scores, not us. God will settle the score, not us. Therefore, we have to have faith in that fact. If we walk away after somebody slapped us in the face then our Father will ultimately settle that score.

20) Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (KJV)

When I first read that and then I heard in sermons that you were dumping coals on a guy's head, that would obviously be painful and even deadly. But that was not what it meant. It's a metaphor taken from smelting metal. They would have a furnace where the metal to be smelted was located. They would build a fire underneath it and also build a fire above it so that the metal would be melted more easily. It could be liquified more

easily and so separate the metal from the impurities in the metal. Therefore, talking about heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head is intended to purify the enemy or cleanse the enemy. It is intended to produce good fruit, not some punishment or something evil. The following verse reinforces that—verse 21.

21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (KJV)

So how can “heaping coals of fire” be evil when we read verse 21—it can't be. We have to overcome evil with good. Mercy is the exact opposite of vengeance. If somebody offends us, does something against us, human nature wants that person to pay and to really pay. Back in the '90's in Worldwide days, in one of the churches in this area, a man highly offended a woman—she did not like it. She was pretty vocal about it and I was standing nearby. She was talking to a group of three or four people and she said that he must come to me and grovel on his knees before I would forgive him of this alleged offense. In other words, she was saying,

“I want him to pay and I am going to make him pay before I forgive him.”

We just read that mercy triumphs over vengeance—didn't we read that?

With that in mind go to Luke 10:25, It is talking about mercy triumphing over vengeance or getting back or making somebody pay.

Luke 10:25 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted [the Greek means “to test him”] him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

26) He said unto him, what is written in the law? how readest thou?

27) And he answering said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28) And he said unto him, thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (KJV)

“You have to do it,” Christ said.

29) But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbour?

30) And Jesus answering said, [now He is defining for us, who is a neighbor] A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho ... (KJV)

Jericho was a city of priests and it's estimated in Christ's day about 12,000 priests resided there. So, this “certain man” was most likely a Levite, I don't think that's a stretch. It was the most traveled road in all of Judea and used by the courses of priests going back and forth for Temple duty. As typical of Luke, in the details that he gives, he said he went down from Jerusalem down to Jericho. These details prove the authenticity of Luke's writings because Jerusalem is at 2850 feet above sea level. Jericho is 845 feet below sea level. It is the lowest inhabited city in the world. The difference between Jericho and Jerusalem was over 3700 feet, in just fifteen miles.

To put that in perspective, Snoqualmie pass is the major east-west pass between Seattle and Eastern Washington and the rest of the United States. It's on I90 and that pass is fifty-four miles from Seattle. The pass is 3000 feet. Most of us locals have been over that pass and know how steep a climb that is. Here, there is a greater altitude gain between Jericho and Jerusalem and not in fifty-two miles but in fifteen miles, so that is a hike. That's an effort. Going on in verse 30.

30 continued) ... and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. (KJV)

This was serious.

31) And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32) And likewise, a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. (KJV)

Clark's commentary says this about this passage:

Priest and Levite are mentioned here partly because they were the most frequent travelers on this road and partly to show that these were the persons who, from the nature of their office, were most obliged to perform works of mercy. And from whom a person in distress had a right to expect immediate comfort and their inhumane conduct here was a flat breach of the law.

What law was that? Go to Deuteronomy 22:1 in the New King James. This priest and this Levite obviously knew this law and the lawyer Christ was talking to, would also have known this law and the Scribes and Pharisees surrounding Him knew this law.

Deuteronomy 22:1 *You shall not see your brother s [the Hebrew word for brother has a very broad application, it refers to far more than just a blood brother] ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them [as this priest and Levite hid themselves from this man who was beaten up]; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.*

2) And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him.

3) You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother s, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. (NKJV)

.....from helping your brother. That's my addition.

4) You shall not see your brother s donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again. (NKJV)

If this is true about an ox or a donkey, how much more is it true about a human being. Go back to Luke 10:33.

Luke 10:33 *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was [this man who was left for dead]: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him ... (KJV)*

Clarke's commentary goes on to say:

Samaritan is mentioned merely to show that he was a person from whom the Jew had no right to expect any help or relief because of the enmity that was sustained between the two nations.

He was viewed as an enemy by the Jews. But notice what the Samaritan did.

34) And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35) And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

[He could have just walked off at that point—the Samaritan—and said “Let the Inn keeper take care of it; we’re sharing the load. I’ll do my part; he’ll do his part.” He didn’t do that; he took total responsibility and paid the inn keeper for any future costs he might incur.]

36) Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37) And he [the lawyer] said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (KJV)

The parable had to be a shock and an insult to the Jews. Christ portraying this hated Samaritan as fulfilling the commandment, while portraying the Jews as circumventing the law. Obviously, they didn’t like that, but it was true. It’s hard for us to show mercy when we want to retaliate, when we want to make somebody pay for what they have done. Or it’s hard to show mercy if we look down on others because they are somehow beneath us and we don’t help them in their time of need. We have to remember that our Father grants mercy to those who show mercy. Remember Matthew 5:7, one of the blessings; *“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”* It’s irrespective of race, it’s irrespective of age, it’s irrespective of male or female. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Remember, Christ said “I am going to require something more of you, something harder to do, something that is against your human nature” and mercy is certainly one of those.”

Now let's go to the third weightier matter of the law.

3. Faith.

Christ says we must not omit real faith. Let's define our terms. The Greek word for *faith* is Strong's #4102 and it's *pistis*. Thayer's Lexicon gives two definitions of the word *faith*.

1. "Conviction of the truth of anything; a belief."

He goes on to say:

The conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things; the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ.

So, it's "conviction of the truth."

2. Faithfulness.

That means the character of somebody that can be relied on. Therefore, we see that faith has these two definitions:

a conviction of the truth and a belief in the truth,

These also are to be in us so that our Father is able to rely on us and trust us to do the right thing. With that in mind, we can go to Hebrews 11—the faith chapter—and read verse 6. This sets the stage for this "weightier matter of the law" because without it we are in deep trouble.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to [the Greek word "the" is omitted] God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (KJV)*

This is encompassing both meanings of that word. If we don't have faith, we can't please God and if we can't please God, we are not going to be in His Kingdom eternally. When we first came into the church—at least when I did and I think it's true of most of us—we grew in faith that God really existed. We proved that. We proved that the Bible is His Word. Those are some of the very first things that we had faith in and developed faith in. There is something more to faith. In James 2:19 we see that faith doesn't end there—it can't end there.

James 2:19 *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! (NKJV)*

So just believing that there is one God is not enough—the demons do that and they are going to be destroyed. Later in our lives, on our path towards conversion, that faith

became associated with healing, didn't it? From James 5; we associated faith with healing. In many cases, that's where faith stopped. There is scriptural precedence that we need to have faith in healing.

James 5:14 *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

15) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (NKJV)

Certainly, in the sixties and early seventies, faith was intimately tied in with this whole subject of healing. But faith has a much broader import than just healing. Or just that God exists or that the Bible is His Word. We have to have faith that God is involved with us every minute of every day. We have to have faith in that. We have to have faith that God either causes or allows trials to come our way for our ultimate good. He doesn't do it to see us suffer. We have to have faith that whatever we are going through, as bad as it is, it is for our ultimate good. It could be a death of a mate, of a child—it is for our ultimate good.

We also need to have faith that our Father is right beside us in every trial; He has not walked away from us. We can walk away from Him, but He does not walk away from us. We can distance ourselves from Him through sin, we know that. In every trial He is right there beside us. He has not left us. We need to have faith that our Father will avenge us. If we have that faith, then we are not going to fret and stew about what somebody does to us or says about us or some injustice that has happened to us. We will have faith that our Father is going to set it all right at some point. We have to have faith that the Almighty will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We try to live a healthy life, eat right, exercise, do all of the things that we can do, but if something comes our way—it might be genetic or something we don't know why it's there—we have to have faith that our Father, as long as we are doing what we should do, will step in and do those things that we cannot do.

Then we also have to have the faith that our Father wants us in His Kingdom. He's not trying to wash us out of His Kingdom. When I first went to Texas A&M, the first sergeant looked me right in the eye and said

“I'm going to do everything I can to make you fail. I am going to do everything I can to make you quit.”

Our Father is not that way. He wants us to succeed and we have to have faith in that. Isaiah 41:10 shows that this is what we have to have faith in. When we are going through difficulties and trials and tribulations, this is where the rubber meets the road.

Isaiah 41:10 [Yehovah is speaking] *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: [Here's a promise] I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (KJV)*

Or course we know that we have to walk by that faith. We won't turn there, but in 2 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says that we are to walk, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, "by faith and not by sight". That is a weightier matter of the law.

Then we have to have faith that Christ will step in and help us when we have doubts; when our faith maybe falters a little bit. In Mark 9:17, in the New Living Translation, Christ promises to help us when our faith wavers a little bit and we have all been there.

Mark 9:17 *One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk.*

18) And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. (NLT)

How many would like to watch their son go through that?

18 continued) ... So, I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't do it." (NLT)

Verse 19, in the King James.

19) He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20) And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. (KJV)

An awful sight.

21) And he asked his father, how long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22) And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: (KJV)

That's what demons do. Remember the parable of the sheepfold? A thief comes in to steal and to kill and to destroy? That is the mission of demons and that's what this demon was trying to do—to destroy him.

22 continued) ... but if [there's a level of doubt] thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.

23) Jesus said unto him, if you canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24) And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears [you can imagine being a father or mother in this situation], Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. (KJV)

The New Living Translation says,

24) *The father instantly replied, I do believe but help me not to doubt. (NLT)*

We've all been there in some horrible trials, haven't we? We will have moments and times when doubts come in and we know where those doubts come from—the adversary, the one who wants to destroy us. This father is saying, “help me not to doubt”.

25) *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

26) *And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.*

27) *But Jesus took him by the hand, [notice what Jesus did] and lifted him up; and he arose. (KJV)*

That's Christ's promise to us when we go through a trial. He will lift us up. We have to have faith that Christ will do the same for us as He did for this lad. Over time, we have learned that faith is far more all-encompassing than we thought when we were first converted. It should encompass everything that we do. That we can rely on our Father for everything should be a facet of every single part of our lives. World events show us daily that our only hope is in God Almighty. Before this is all over this is going to be pressed on all of us. Remember Christ said, “I'm going to require something more of you? Something harder to do, more important”. Faith is certainly that.

The last weightier matter of the law.

4. The love of God.

In Luke 11:42 Christ mentioned this in the second account of Him talking about the “weightier matters of the law”. Christ is telling them and us today, that we must not omit the law of the God—the true God. That's what Christ said in John 17—*this is life eternal, to know the God.*

The Good News Translation translates this verse:

Luke 11:42 *How terrible for you Pharisees. You give to God one tenth of the seasoning herbs such as mint and rue and all the other herbs but you neglect justice and love for the God. These you should practice without neglecting the others. (GN)*

The Contemporary English versions says:

Luke 11:42 *You Pharisees, you are in trouble. You give God a tenth of the spices from your gardens such as mint and rue but you cheat people and you don't love the God. You should be fair and kind to others and still give a tenth to God. (CEV)*

Then the Holman Christian Standard Bible says:

Luke 11:42 *But woe to you Pharisees you give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb and you bypass justice and the love for the God. These things you should have done without neglecting the others.* (HCSB)

In the earlier days of the church, certainly when I came in, in the mid '60's, the focus was not on love, it was on obedience—obedience to God's law. Those who were there in those days know exactly what I mean. The law was pounded and we had to obey. The church did not stress love, the speakers did not stress love very much because that's what the Protestants did and they had a mushy concept of love. The church ran yelling and screaming away from that concept because we didn't want to be like the Protestants. So, love wasn't much talked about in the '50's and '60's and early '70's.

But here and for our discussion today, love has three parts that we need to consider—to think deeply about. The first aspect of love is our Father's love and His Son's love for us. Their love for us. Think about that—let's go to 1 John 4:19. This has everything to do with our calling and with why we are sitting in a seat today, worshipping God today, on His Sabbath day according to His Ten Commandments.

1 John 4:19 *We love him [God Almighty], because he first loved us.* (KJV)

The first part is His love for us. We have learned to love God Almighty, why? Because He loved us enough to call us, to open our minds, He loved us enough to offer His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. His Son loved us enough to give His life and to endure horrible pain and suffering because of us. We are here because the Father and the Son first loved us. James 1:17, talks about the Father's love for us and His Son's love for us. We have to always remember this.

James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, [not from Satan, not from the world, not from our energies and intelligence] and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (KJV)

It is hard for us as human beings to comprehend God's all-encompassing love for us. We have to try and we have to work at it, because we are so limited in our thinking and understanding. But we have to make this fact a fundamental part of us, which is that our Father and His Son love us. They loved us before we even knew They existed. They love us and our obligation, as we're going to see, is to return that love.

Which leads to the second aspect of love. The first is their love for us. The second aspect is our love for our Father and His Son. In Matthew 22:35 the religious leaders of the day were trying to trip Christ up, to find something against Him, embarrass Him and of course we know, trying to find a way to kill Him.

Matthew 22:35 *Then one of them, which was a lawyer [not referring to our concept of a lawyer today, it means an expert in the mosaic law, so this could have been a Scribe or a Pharisee, we don't know], asked him a question, tempting him [it means testing him], and saying,*

36) Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37) Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God [Christ's Father, Christ's God] with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38) This is the first and great commandment. (KJV)

We are told here that we should love our Father, we must love our Father, more than anything else and we must put Him first in our lives in every way and in everything. All we do should have one goal. Every thought, every word, every deed, should have one goal. In John 8:28 we see what that goal is. Christ is talking about Himself and we are to emulate Christ, so here we see what Christ's goal was. His ministry on this earth, the job that He had—what was His goal?

John 8:28 *Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*

29) And he that sent me is with me: The Father hath not left me alone; [what is His goal?] for I do always those things that please him. (KJV)

This is Christ's goal, it should be our goal, every minute of our lives. With that in mind, look at 1 John 3:21. John reinforces and restates this understanding of what our goal should be.

1 John 3:21 *Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to [it should be "the" God, as it is in the Interlinear] God with bold confidence.*

22) And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him. (NLT)

So, the point is, when talking about the second aspect of love, of loving the Father and His Son, we should follow in our older Brother's footsteps. We should follow His example, when He said, I come to please My Father, we need to do the same thing.

Then the third aspect of love in this context that we are talking about—the “weightier matters of the law”—is our Father and His Son's love in us. In Romans 5:5, in the (NIV), we see this different concept— Their love in us. We often don't think enough about this concept of Their love that is unlimited inside us.

Romans 5:5 *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (NIV)*

God's love has been poured into us through repentance and baptism and the laying on of hands and the coming of the Holy Spirit. His love now resides in us. We obviously

then have an obligation to take that love in us and shed it to others. Not just keep it selfishly inside us. I have mentioned 1 John 3:14. several times as a verse that after thirty years or so of reading it, I read it one day as though I had never read it before and as though this was the first time I had. It hit me like a bolt of lightning as though I had never read or understood it before.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, [how do we know?] because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (KJV)*

Verse 16 out of the New Living Translation.

16) We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So, we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. (NLT)

So, this third aspect of love is that we demonstrate our Father's love in us by how much we love the brethren. How much we care about them, how much we pray about them, how much we serve them—we demonstrate daily our love for the brethren. This is a measure of how much of God's Spirit is in us and His love is in us.

However, as we noted in the beginning, we live in the last days, don't we? There is a problem in the last days with love. In Matthew 24:3 Christ is sitting on the Mount of Olives and He is talking to His disciples.

Matthew 24:3 *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (KJV)*

continuing to verse 10.

10) And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (KJV)

In and out of the church. Verse 12.

12) And because iniquity shall abound [in and out of the church], the love of many shall wax cold. (KJV)

The New American Standard translates this as: *Most people's love will grow cold.*

As Mark Sappington pointed out recently, this word *love* is Strong's #26, and is agape, the love of God. So, at a time when we should be growing in our Father's love, growing close to Him, we see at this end time, just the opposite occurs. Instead of growing in love, the love of many for the Father and for His children is becoming cold. Just the opposite. Who is behind this? Our adversary, the evil one of course. Therefore, we must make this our focus. This is a "weightier matter of the law", this is the love of God for us,

our love for Him and our love for the brethren. It should be our focus. John 13:35 shows we want to be known by this.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (KJV)

This is what Christ said. Did the apostles follow up on that and reinforce that? 1 Peter 1:22 shows that Peter did not ignore this, rather he emphasized this.

1 Peter 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls [we are hopefully heading in that direction] in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned [not fake, but true love, honest love, sincere love] love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (KJV)*

We can have all the knowledge in the world, we can have all the understanding, we can quote Hebrew and Greek and all of that, but if we don't have love for one another, it doesn't amount to a thing. It counts for nothing in our Father's eyes. We have to deeply understand our Father and His Son's love for us. We have to deeply understand that we have to love our Father with all our being and put Him first and honor what Christ has done for us. Then we have to understand that Their love resides in us and we had better be exercising that love and showing that love. Remember Christ said "I'm going to require something more of you, somethings that are harder to do, something that is more important" and love is certainly the epitome of that.

Let's wrap this up. There is no doubt we are in the end time—no question. Times are indeed perilous. In our little town, we've had two shootings in the last week. One fellow was tending his garden in his front lawn in one of the better areas of town and a car came by and they shot him three times. He's paralyzed for life. His wife is pregnant. They didn't know him, they just drove by and shot him.

Then another family—a young Hispanic man and his wife and his two children were driving in town and a car pulled up and asked him what gang he belonged to. He said he don't belong to any gang and he sped off and they fired, I don't know how many bullets into his car and killed him. His wife and two children are now left without a husband and a father. We see mass shootings all over our country. Every day on the news, there is another mass shooting. Perilous, perilous times. It's an absolute necessity for us, the ecclesia, to get our lives in order and focus on the most important things. We must not get distracted by all this other stuff that Satan throws out there, as well as other well-meaning people to get us off focus, just like the Scribes and Pharisees. They were focusing on the mint, anise and cumin and they were missing a huge part of our Father's law. They were majoring in the minors.

Recently there was a local church—not part of Pacific—but in the mid mid-West, and there is firsthand knowledge of this, that recently split over the wearing of masks. Talking about majoring in the minors. They just split right down the middle, over the

wearing of masks. Those who were for it and those who were against it. Neglecting the “weightier matters of the law”.

We have discussed today, those weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, faith and the love of the God. Remember Christ said, I’m going to ask something more of you, much more difficult and why is that? Because what He is asking of us goes completely in the opposite direction to our human nature. We are going to have to fight our own selves and that requires the Mind of Christ, the Mind He had when He conquered Satan, when He told Satan to get out of there. We need that same Mind. It requires us to change from the person we were when we were called, into the image of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This has been made possible by Christ’s death and the Father offering His Son. It is a difficult process because it requires us to take a good, hard, honest look at ourselves; an unvarnished look at ourselves. How does the Father see us? Not how we want to be seen but how the Father sees us.

We have to take a look at ourselves to see how we compare to the example that Jesus Christ set while He walked this earth. In the matters of justice and mercy and faith and love, how do we compare to our Father’s Son while He walked this earth? Is it recognizable? Are we following in His footsteps, or not? Let’s make sure, as we approach the very end of this age that we focus on the important matters. That we are not omitting the “weightier matters of the law”.