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Brother Kaung

Brotherly Love (2)

Matthew 22: 34 – 40: ‘But the Pharisees, having heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, were gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, demanded, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ And He said to him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets hang.’

Let us bow down and pray: Lord, we thank and praise You, because You gave us another chance to gather before You. This is the holy ground. We shall take off our sandals and stand before You. We say: Lord, whatever words You want to speak to us, please speak. We are all Your servants, listening here. Lord, we pray that You take away any veil or obstacle from our hearts. Open up the ears of our hearts, so that we can hear Your words. May Your word be effective in us, so that we may be brought into the reality by Your word. We acknowledge that, at this end time, there are many falsehoods and substitutes. We ask that You help us so that we can touch the spiritual reality and can be filled by Your love. May Your name be praised. We commit this time before You, Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

This time, we gather together before our Lord to fellowship on brotherly love. Yesterday morning, we mentioned the first thing: God is love. I John chapter 4 tells us love is of God. Those who know love are born of God and know God. I really hope that these words can be carved into our hearts. Oftentimes, we think we have love and are able to love God and our brothers. But in these words, we are told that God is the source of love. Outside of God, there is no love. Whatever love outside of God is not true love. If we love our God with the love outside of God, it is not true love. Oftentimes, we use a love which is outside of God to love God. We do not know how often we have used this kind of love. We do not know how much time we have wasted. Also, oftentimes we love our brothers with a love which is outside of God. For this reason, we do not know how much damage we have done.

So, brothers and sisters, when we talk about love among brothers, the first thing we should know is that we do not have love. This is the position we have to stand before God. Otherwise, we will always be confused on this matter of brotherly love. God is love. Love is the essence of God. It cannot be separated from God. When we receive God, we receive love. When we receive His love, we receive God. This love was not there when man was created. This love is what God has given us when we were born again. This love is knowing God. Because we know God, we have received this love. Also, because we have this love, we know God better. I hope that this is the foundation deeply imprinted in the heart of every one of us.

This morning, we want to proceed to share further on this love. We see that because God Himself is love, His requirement for man is also love. We can say that God's requirement for man is only one. The only requirement is for man to love. God created man because of His love. He created man not only because He loves His Son, but also because He loves man. We remember that in Proverb chapter 8, wisdom is the representation of our Lord. When God created all things, wisdom was there. The Son of God was with God and was daily His delight, always leaping with joy before Him. He not only rejoiced in the world but also had delight in the sons of men. Therefore, we see that God created man out of love. He created man according to His image. When God created man, He gave him a capacity for love. Through this capacity, we are able to receive this love from God, so that this love can come into us to enable us to love God.

Actually, love is a commandment of God. It is not an option for man. Love is a commandment of God. We are not given an option to choose whether to love or not. In other words, this is the will of God. Whether we like it or not, it is God's commandment for us to love Him and to love our brothers. This commandment does not change. It does not change because of our own choice. But, very amazingly, although this commandment is something not changing, God gave man a free will. When He created man, He gave him a free will. What is a free will? It is to say that he can choose. A commandment does not give man an option. In this case, then man can only love Him and would not have an option not to love Him. However, the amazing thing is that when God created man, He gave him a free will. With this free will, of course man can choose. Love is not something that can be forced on, and it is not mechanical. Love is voluntary. Although love is a commandment of God and is His unchanging will, yet He gave man a free will to choose to love or not to love. So, when we love Him, it is voluntary, out of our own free will. When God gave us the capacity to choose, in reality, that is also love.

God put the man He created in the garden of Eden. The garden was full of trees with fruits. All these fruits were to be food to man. This is really the supply of love from God. He knew that the man He created had this need in the flesh. So, He created all the supply for these needs. In the center of the garden, there was this tree of life. This was the calling of love. God was calling man to eat of the tree of life. If man ate this tree of life, love would then enter into him. Then he could love God and love others.

But beside the tree of life, there was another tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God put that tree there to offer man a choice. God seemed to be saying to man; ‘My will is for you to eat of the tree of life. I call you to receive My life. I am going to fill you with My love, so that you can live a life of love. But I do not force you. If you want to live for yourself, or if you love yourself more than Me, or if you want to be independent of Me, you may choose the other one. But remember, if you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the day you eat it, you shall die.’ This was the warning of love; warning man that if he chose the other tree, he would die. In other words, God put before Adam the best and the worst. God put Himself before Adam, to remind him that he needed Him, saying, ‘I called you.’

The first commandment from God to man, on the surface, appears to be negative. ‘That tree you shall not eat.’ To obey the commandment of God is love. Love is expressed in obedience. God shows man that he needs to submit to Him. If he obeys Him, he shall gain life. He shall be filled with love. Then he can enter into a state of bliss. But, if he does not do so, or if he wants to live just for himself, death is before him. Therefore, brothers and sisters, although this commandment appears on the surface to be negative, yet it is positive in reality. Even this commandment is love. God loves him, willing that he may be blessed before God.

God’s first commandment to man was love. From that time on, throughout the history of man, every time God gave man a commandment, there was love behind it. Even the judgement of God is the love of God. Because Adam had sinned, God said that he had to sweat and toil in order to survive. We think that, when Adam was in the garden of Eden, he did not have to sweat. He could have a very comfortable life. When he was hungry, he could go to any tree to get fruit to satisfy his hunger. We may envy him for this kind of life. We feel that we really have to suffer because we have to sweat every day to earn a living. But brothers and sisters, for a sinner, to sweat in order to earn a living is a blessing. If he had nothing to do, he would sin more. Remember David, one day when he should have been fighting with his soldiers, stayed behind in his palace. He had

nothing to do. As a result, he committed a terrible sin. Therefore, even the judgment of God is full of His love. When God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden, He set up at the east of the garden the Cherubim and the flame of the flashing sword, so that the man could not return to the garden to eat of the tree of life. This was also the love of God. He knows that if a sinner lives forever, that kind of suffering will be without end.

Brothers and sisters, after man was created and after he sinned, in everything God has done, we can see the trace of His love. Even when mankind began to multiply on earth, men sinned and did all kinds of evil things. The earth was filled with violence and the shedding of blood. Every intent of the thoughts of men was only evil continually. God regretted that He had made man. He did not regret of His will of creating man. He was only changing His method. Therefore, He destroyed mankind with the flood. But Noah and his family received grace from God. After the flood, when Noah and his family came out of the ark, he took of every clean animal to offer God. When God smelled the fragrance, He said, 'From now on, I shall not cover the earth with flood.' Then He prepared a rainbow in the sky. Every time we see the rainbow in the sky, we think of the promise of God. We see that, although Noah and his family had been preserved, in their hearts, they were still filled with fear. After this great judgment, they really trembled and feared inside. So God comforted them and made a covenant with them. God gave them a rainbow in the sky as proof.

God knows that because man sinned, fruits and vegetables alone would not be sufficient to sustain his corrupted body. So God allowed man to eat meat. But he was not allowed to take the blood as food. For, life is in the blood. One day, God was going to use blood to redeem the sins of man. God knows the corruption of man. Therefore, He started to have government. He ruled that, whoever sheds the blood of others, his own blood will be shed. From that day on, God put mankind under government, for He wanted to preserve man, although they had become corrupted. So here we see again, God's love fully demonstrated.

God has repeatedly dealt with men with love. Although they are so unworthy, this God of love constantly loves men. Let us skip the time of the fathers and look at the story of Israel. Because God is love, and because He keeps His covenant, He told Moses He had seen the travail of the Israelites. He would send him to Egypt to save them from their bondage, not because they were good in their spiritual condition in Egypt, but because of the mercy and love of God. He delivered the Israelites by the hand of Moses. He brought them to the Mount of Sinai, where He gave them the law and the statutes. God wanted them to be His

people, a nation of priests. He wanted to dwell among them, for He loved them. God gave them the ten commandments. In addition, there were statutes and ordinances. These ten commandments summarize all the laws given by God. These ten commandments are the commands of God. These ten commandments express God Himself. These ten commandments are the testimony of God. God wants to display to men what kind of God He is. He wants His people to be like Him as He is. This is the meaning behind the ten commandments.

Today, when we look at the ten commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, we are very much like the Israelites of that time. We look upon these ten commandments from the outside. We feel that this is a burden. We think we are condemned because of these commandments. But when God gave them the commandments, He meant for them to live, not to die because of them. God used His own fingers to carve these ten commandments on the two tablets. On one tablet, the commandments describe the relationship between God and man. The other tablet talks about the relationship between man and man. If we really understand the meaning and significance of these commandments, we shall see that the essence is love. Let us take a look at these commandments.

One day, a Pharisee, who was a lawyer, came to the Lord Jesus, tempting Him. He asked the Lord, 'Which is the greatest out of all the commandments?' The Lord said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your understanding. This is the greatest and most important. And the other is like the first one: You shall love your neighbor. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.'

Now, let us turn to Exodus chapter 20 to look at the first commandment. 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.' (Exodus 20:3). But let us read 20: 2 first, 'I am Jehovah thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' Why they cannot have any other gods besides Him? For He is the God who delivered them out of Egypt. He is their God, their Redeemer. Besides Him, there shall not be any other gods. We know that love is very singular. Love does not allow any other to compete with it. Love has a character, very pure and single. This is how God loves us. God loves us with a love that is single, pure and long-lasting. Therefore, He asks us to love Him in the same manner. The relationship between God and us hinges on this love. God so loves us, singularly, with no other thoughts. Besides us, He has no other purpose. He wants His relationship with us to be the same.

What does it mean that besides Him there are other gods? If we love any person, anything, or any matter outside of God, comparing these with Him, or if we even love these more than we love God, or if our hearts are occupied with various things other than God, then all these become our other gods. If we trust any person, anything, or any matter outside of God, then we have other gods besides Him. All our love should be towards God singularly, just as it is said in Psalms: 'Whom have I in the heavens? And there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee.' (Psalms 73: 25). We should trust Him and rely on Him every day. We should not turn to any other things outside of Him. If we truly love Him, we trust Him. Then we can say, 'With You, it is sufficient.' If we think that He is not sufficient and we need others to supply to us, then we are having other gods besides Him. Sometimes, just like what is said in II Timothy 3: 1 – the end time is a dangerous time. At that time, men love themselves; men love money; men love pleasures. In other words, men do not love God. They have no love for what is good. Men love themselves more than they love God. Men love things of the world more than they love God. Men love worldly pleasures more than they love God. All these things show us that men have other gods besides our God. Paul showed us in Philippians 3 that he desired to gain Christ and to know His power of resurrection and to be conformed to His death. He pursues Christ. But, towards the end of that chapter, he said, with tears, that some are the enemies of the cross of Christ; they pursue after vain glory. Their god is their belly. Brothers and sisters, these words were not spoken to the Gentiles. They were spoken to the believers. Gradually and unconsciously, we begin to have other gods besides God. Why does God so command us? For He loves us. He knows that, only in Him, there is eternal blessing. If we leave Him, we shall fall into sin and death. So, brothers and sisters, the first commandment is about the singularity and purity of love.

The second commandment: 'Thou shalt not make thyself any graven image, or any form of what is in the heavens above, or what is in the earth beneath, or what is in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.' (Exodus 20: 4 – 6).

This second commandment shows us that love is jealous. True love is always jealous. It does not allow any other purpose or any other loyalty. We know we should have God as the center of our loyalty. God is spirit. He has no image. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our relationship with God is in spirit. He wants us to take Him as our center. What we pursue is Him. What we worship is Him. What we serve is Him. But God says we should not carve any images for ourselves. I think the emphasis here is on 'for yourself'. We

should live for God. We should take God as the object of our pursuit. He is the only One we worship. He is the only object of our service. But, sometimes, we do this for ourselves. We consider ourselves to be the center. When we consider ourselves as the center, then we make for ourselves various idols. Actually, these idols express our own intentions and our own desires inside. We can say that these are in fact a projection of ourselves. This is the meaning of idols. The image we make expresses the intentions in our hearts. So, as the Bible says, we are like whatever image we pay homage to. There is a very precious hymn which, I believe, many brothers and sisters know. The hymn starts with these words: 'Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He is not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.' Then one of the stanzas says: 'Whate'er thou lovest, man, That too become thou must; God, if thou lovest God, Dust if thou lovest dust, Go out, God will come in; Die thou and let Him live; Be not and He will be; Wait and He'll all things give.' God knows. If we love Him, we will be like Him. If we love dust, we will be like dust. If our service or worship is towards Him, then we shall be like Him. If we serve or worship things outside of God, then we shall be like the things we worship.

So, this second commandment shows us that God is a jealous God. He is jealous for us, for He loves us. He wants to pour out His grace on us. He knows that if it is not so, we shall go through pain and suffering instead. Even if in judgment, He will visit the iniquity of sinners to the third and fourth generations, yet His blessings will be on those who love Him and worship Him to the thousandth generation. This shows us that God's love is without end. Dear brothers and sisters, what do we take as our center today? Is it God or ourselves? Who is the one that we worship and serve? Do we worship and serve our God, or do we worship our idols?

The third commandment: 'Thou shalt not idly utter the name of Jehovah thy God; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that idly uttereth His name.' What does it mean by idly uttering the name of Jehovah? Why should we not utter His name idly? God's name represents Himself. If we idly utter His name, we are taking Him lightly. Our God is a holy God. Therefore, He says, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' The opposite of sin is righteousness. The opposite of holiness is commonness. Our God is uncommon. He is different from everything. So He wants us to be separated, so that we can have this holy nature and partake in His holy name. To idly utter His name means we take Him as common, as if He was the same with us.

What does it mean to utter idly God's name? Oftentimes, we approach Him with our lips, but we are far away from Him in our hearts. This is to idly utter

His name. Oftentimes, we pray in His name, but we are just seeking our own purpose. This is to idly utter the name of our Lord. Sometimes, we vow in His name to cover up our sins. This is to idly utter His name. We do not see that our God is most holy. Especially at this time, we really do not have any respect for our Lord. Oftentimes, we think we are so familiar with Him. We think our God is so common. We do not take Him seriously. Our God is a holy God. We should have godliness in us. This is the third commandment. God wants us to constitute His nature and His character in us. At this end time, one phenomenon is that men have an outward form of godliness but they deny its power. We see this even among God's children. May God have mercy on us.

The fourth commandment: 'Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of Jehovah thy God: thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, by bondsman nor thy handmaid, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day, therefore Jehovah blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.'

God created the heavens and the earth in six days. On the seventh day, He rested, for He finished all His work. We know that God created man on the sixth day. Thus, for God, He used six days to work and then rested on the seventh day. So, for man, for the first whole day after he was created, he enjoyed the rest of God. Spiritually, it means that because God loves man, He prepared all things for him. So, the minute He created man, He wanted him to enjoy His work. However, because of the sin of man, the peace of God was destroyed. God came to the garden of Eden to look for man. He immediately started to work to restore man. So, this is why our Lord said, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.' We thank and praise our Lord. When our Lord was on the cross, He cried out at the last moment, saying, 'It is finished.' The work is finished. So, dear brothers and sisters, today you are called to enter into His rest. So, the Book of Hebrews tells us that there is a rest reserved for us. Today, we do not observe the seventh day as a sabbath day. We thank God. Today, we have already entered into Christ as our rest. Daily, we can rest in the work He has accomplished for us. This is the love of God. He wants us to rest in the work which Christ has already finished. But oftentimes, we just want to work. We are not willing to rest in the work that He has already finished for us, as if He has not done enough and we have to add to it. This is to violate the sabbath. We should rest in Him. This is the preparation God offers to us out of His love for us, so that we may know Him deeply.

Brothers and sisters, these four commandments represent God Himself. He desires for us to enter into Himself. The essence of all these four commandments may be summarized in these words: You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your understanding. The purpose of God is not for us to outwardly observe this or that commandment. Even when He gave the Israelites these ten commandments in the Book of Deuteronomy, He said repeatedly, 'You shall obey My commandments. You shall love Me, and love Me with all your will.' Through these commandments, God was just telling the Israelites to love Him. What He wants is love. It is not just observing these letters externally. Without love, such external observance is still a violation of the commandments.

Remember the young man who came to the Lord, asking, 'What should I do to receive this eternal life?' The Lord said to him, 'You shall obey the commandments.' He asked, 'What commandments?' The Lord did not use the first tablet; He applied only the second tablet. He said, 'You shall honor your parents. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not do this, or that.' The young man answered, 'I have obeyed all these from youth.' The Lord looked at him and loved him. Then He said, 'There is yet one thing you lack. Sell all things and follow Me.' The Lord knew this young man loved money. If he loved his money, he could not love others as himself. So, we are led to see that what God wants is love, for He is love.

We do not have time to explain further, but we shall go over the other six commandments quickly. The Lord said, 'The other is equally important.' The other six commandments can be summarized in these words: To love others as you love yourself. There is no one who does not love himself. The problem is: if you love yourself, it is not possible for you to love others. It is not possible to love others as you love yourself. For, if you love others, you have to sacrifice yourself. Only our Lord Jesus truly loves us as He loves Himself. He gave Himself for us.

One Pharisee, who was a lawyer, came to the Lord, wanted to tempt Him and asked Him, 'What is the greatest commandment?' This person was well versed in the law. This is why he asked the Lord this question. The Lord answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your understanding. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' This lawyer wanted to show that he had an argument. He dared not mention to love God with all heart, with all soul and with all strength, for he realized he was inadequate in this respect. But he thought he had been able to love his neighbor as himself. So he asked the Lord, 'Who is my neighbor? Is the one living on my

left or on my right my neighbor? What is the scope of this neighborhood? How many people do I need to love?' The Lord then gave him a parable.

A certain man came down from Jerusalem to Jericho. We know that Jerusalem was the place to worship God. Jericho was a place of curse. Jerusalem is on a high hill. Jericho is below the sea level. So, we can say that his man was walking towards corruption. Halfway on his journey, he was robbed, beaten and left by the roadside to die. A priest, also coming down from Jerusalem passed by, took a look and went on his journey. A Levite also passed by, saw him and left. Finally, a Samaritan walked to that place and saw him. He had a heart of love. He also knew there were many robbers on this path. Actually, he was there doing rescuing work. When he saw that man left there to die, although the Jews despised the Samaritans, he bandaged him with oil and wine, put him on his animal, and brought him to an inn. He gave the innkeeper two denarii and said to him, 'Take care of him. If this is not adequate, I shall repay you when I return.' Then the Lord asked the lawyer, 'Who do you think is the neighbor of that wounded man? The priest, the Levite or the Samaritan?' The lawyer was very smart. He quickly answered, 'The one who rescued him.' The Lord said to him, 'Go and do the same.'

What does it mean? It means this. 'You shall love Me. I am your neighbor. You think that it is you who love the neighbor. But it is your neighbor who loves you. I gave My life for you. It is not possible for you to love your neighbor as yourself. You do not have that love. But if you are constrained by My love, and if you accept My love and love Me, then you can love others as yourself.'

Brothers and sisters, now you see in the ten commandments, God did not mean for us to do anything externally. He wants us to see His love. He wants us to open our hearts to receive His love. When His love pours into our heart, then we can love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind. Then we can love others as ourselves. The Lord said, 'If you love Me, keep My commandments. Those who keep My commandments love Me.' Dear brothers and sisters, love is inseparable from the commandments of God, because God has only one command, and that command is love. If we truly love Him, we have to keep His commandments.

All through these years, what has touched my heart is the story of C.T. Studd. We know that C.T. Studd is one of the Cambridge Seven who came to China to preach the gospel. He was a graduate of Cambridge. He came from a rich family and was the number one cricket player. It was like the number one baseball

player in America. His name was known to every household in England. But he was touched by the love of God. So he came to China to preach the gospel. Before he came to China, he started to do some deputation work in various places. Once he was in Edinburgh and was with F.B. Meyer in the church. F.B. Meyer was a young man with great gifts and was greatly used by God. F.B. Meyer received him. In Edinburgh, it was very cold in November. One early morning, around 3 or 4 o'clock, F.B. Meyer saw the light in C.T. Studd's room was already on. Being the host himself, F.B. Meyer was a little worried and wondered if his guest was not feeling well. But it was too early, and it would be too imposing to knock on his guest's room. So he waited. But after a long while, the light was still on. Then he knocked on the door. C.T. Studd responded, saying, 'Come in.' When he entered, he saw C.T. Studd sitting there, wrapped in a rug, because it was very cold. He was reading the Bible. F.B. Meyer said, 'You are up early.' He answered, 'I love my God. I seek His command in His word. I want to keep His command.'

Brothers and sisters, when we read the Bible, we look for promises. Some are pretty lazy. When I first came to the States, I went to the house of some Christians. At the breakfast table, they have a so-called Promise Box. Every morning, they would take one out of the box and said, 'Now, this is how God's blessing will come to me today.' This is the way we love God. But, C.T. Studd was different. He looked for God's command. This is truly loving the Lord. The Lord said, 'One who loves Me keeps my commandments. He who keeps My commandments loves Me. And I shall dwell in him.'

Let us bow down and pray:

Our God, we prostrate before You and worship You. You are indeed love. Your commandments are full of love. We worship You. What You ask of us is only one thing, that we love You and love one another. Deliver us from many of these fragmental things and from the external things. May we be constrained by Your love so that we may love You with the love You gave us and love one another with the love You gave us. May your heart be satisfied. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.