

**My Greatest Devotion**  
Mark 12:28-34  
*Series: Christ our Focus*

1. Introduction:

- a. We have seen the Sanhedrin approach Christ asking for the authority by which Christ was doing his great works.
  - i. Christ counter-questioned them about the authority of John.
  - ii. They refused to answer and Jesus refused to answer their questions.
- b. We have seen two of the three sub-groups from the Sanhedrin come to Jesus trying to entrap him with words.
  - i. The Pharisees with their question on taxes.
  - ii. The Sadducees with their question on the resurrection from the dead.
- c. Today we see that the Scribes come to the Lord to inquire but the main inquisitor is one that is coming with earnestness and upon hearing the response of Jesus, he does what the other two groups do not do and that is to state that the Lord is correct in His assertions.
  - i. He comes under amicable terms.
  - ii. The later verses in this chapter will show that the Scribes were at war with Christ, like the other two groups, but not this scribe.

2. Verse 28 – The difference in this scribe is stark

- a. He
  - i. Came
  - ii. Heard
  - iii. Saw
- b. The scribes
  - i. They counted 613 commandments in the Law
    - 1. 365 prohibitions
    - 2. 248 positive commands
  - ii. They differentiated between Heavy and Light commandments
- c. This scribe wanted to know, of all the heavy commandments, which was the heaviest.
- d. Like the other two groups, here the question is posed
  - i. Which commandment is the most important of all –
    - 1. Greek – Which commandment supersedes everything and is incumbent on all humanity

2. This is a question of great importance for us today and one that we will venture to answer by the grace of our Lord.
3. Verse 29-30 – Man’s first and greatest devotion
  - a. Jesus quotes the Shema
    - i. **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
  - b. Shema – Hebrew for ‘hear’
    - i. It was recited morning and evening by every pious Jew.
    - ii. Josiah, the greatest king of Israel’s history was judged by his keeping of the Shema
      1. **2 Kings 23:25** Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.
  - c. Verse 30 – All
    - i. All is repeated four times in this verse
    - ii. The necessity of a total response of love to the Lordship of God.
    - iii. God is the total lord of all humanity and He lays claim to every facet of the individual
      1. You shall love the Lord your God
        - a. with all your heart – emotions
        - b. with all your soul –spirit
        - c. with all your mind – intelligence
        - d. with all your strength – will
      2. each is prefaced by the Greek preposition **ex**, meaning from the source of
      3. Agape love
4. Verse 31 – Man’s second devotion
  - a. Jesus adds a second commandment from the Old Testament
    - i. **Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
  - b. No other greater commandments than these
    - i. It takes both commandments to realize the one will of God

- ii. Jesus is the first to unify both commands and to state quite clearly that it takes a devotion to God and then to ones fellow man to walk rightly before God.
  - iii. Loving God means that I can love my fellow man. Conversely, loving my fellow man means that I know the love of God.
  - iv. The order clearly demonstrates that love of God is prerequisite to loving one's neighbor.
- c. This loving my brother was understood by the apostles.
- 1. **1 John 4:20-21** If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.
5. Verses 32-33 – The Scribe's answer
- a. Verse 32 – You are right teacher
    - i. No one within the Sanhedrin had ever said this publicly
    - ii. Teacher
    - iii. He affirms that our primary duty is to God
  - b. Verse 33 –
    - i. He affirms one's duty to his fellow man
  - c. He agrees with Jesus that 'burnt offerings and sacrifices' must yield to a right relationship with God and a moral relationship with others.
    - i. The most sacred duties, in other words, may not take precedent over agape love
  - d. Side note – Here we see Christ upholding the Old Testament as binding upon a Christian's life.
6. Verse 34 – Irony
- a. The scribe came to pass judgment but it is Jesus that passes judgment beyond the Torah
  - b. Sovereignly, Jesus declares – You are not far from the kingdom of God.