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*“Christ caring for People  
through People”*

June 5, 2011

**Mark 12:28-31 The Greatest Commandment**

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”*

*Jesus answered, “The most important one, is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

“Love him with all your soul.”

The Old Testament uses the Hebrew word ‘nephesh’, which means ‘to breathe’. Behind this word is the idea that God breathes life into you. You’re a living soul. You have an awareness unlike any other living thing in all creation because God himself breathes life into you. The New Testament uses the Greek word ‘psyche’, which lies at the root of our word ‘psychology’. It has to do with your will, your drive, your passion, the power by which you live. Put these two words together and we begin to have a concept of ‘soul’

It is this basis on which we make our decisions.

In the same way that your heart is where you feel, your soul is where you decide. Have you ever decided to do something, even though you didn’t feel like doing it? What caused you to be able to do it? You have a will. You’re not driven by your emotions or even your thoughts. Your soul decides. It can even decide not to decide – to allow your emotions to have free rein; but even doing that is a decision of your soul.” (Tom Holladay, The Relationship Principles of Jesus)

The heart and soul - or the feeling and decisive power of our lives – are the crucial elements that bring us to prayer or communication with God. Thus we have the following translation of the Mark passage on this greatest Commandment:

Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.'

(The Message)

Heart - feeling - emotion - passion

Soul – breath – will – decision ... Prayer

All of this is to be involved in our love of God.

Father, how could we ever do less than to love you, after all you have done for us in Christ Jesus. Lord, through your Spirit, teach us to pray with our whole being even as you have commanded us so to love. Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin

(next 2 weeks ... loving with mind ... and strength.)