

-1 John 5:1-3

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

I think that the Easter celebration is the greatest of all. Now don't get me wrong – I love Christmas and Thanksgiving and Pentecost but the joyful message of Easter celebrates victory and joy and God's love for us. We have during these past weeks once again made that spiritual trip through Lent and Good Friday and Easter. Emphasized is that central truth of Christianity that God in love gave His Son Jesus to suffer and die on our behalf and that Jesus rose victorious from the dead. A woman who was new to the Christian faith and attended our Bible Information Class several years ago was awed by the fact that God gave His Son. She said, "I don't know if I could give up my son especially for a sinful world." She was impressed by God's love. Aren't you also?

That, in turn, leads you to love God. You know the Bible passage, **"We love God because He first loved us."** (1 John 4:19 KJV). A former Muslim said that the big and many differences between the Christian religion and the Muslim religion could be described this way. "Christianity teaches that a person loves God because God first loved him. The Muslim religion teaches that Allah might love you if you first love him." There is no question whether God loves you – as amazing as it is, He does love you. And you love Him, don't you? The question we have and that is answered in these verses from the Apostle John's first letter is "How do we show our love for God?" Let's reword that question to be more accurate because the question ought not to be how do I want to show my love for God, but "How does God want me to show my love for Him?"

There is a good book written for husbands and wives (and I highly recommend that book) titled "The Five Languages of Love." The author, a Christian man, states that a wedded couple needs to know and to discover what their spouse's primary love language is. It is not 'how I want to show love for my spouse' but 'how my spouse wants me to show my love for her'. The five languages are 1) Words of affirmation and appreciation; 2) Acts of Service; 3) Receiving Gifts 4) Quality Time, and 5) Physical Touch and Intimacy. In many cases it might be a combination of some of these languages of love but usually there is one that is primary. What is God's love language? How does He want us to love Him? There are many ways He wants us to show our love for Him. An important way is mentioned by John. **This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands.**

Love God by obeying His commands. You have heard the statement, "Actions speak louder than words." However, to be specific, God is not simply saying actions but obedience. Obedience includes actions but it goes beyond actions such as being forgiving, being content, not hating, not greedy. Nor do we have to guess what the obedience is that we are to do. God makes it clear that we show our love for Him by obeying His commands. The summary of His commands is "The Ten Commandments." Do you know what the Ten Commandments are?

But why does God need us to show our love for Him by our obedience? Isn't it true that God knows all of our thoughts and attitudes of our heart? Certainly, that is true. The frightening part of God knowing our thoughts, of course, is that He is fully aware of all of our sins – our jealousies and lusts and greeds and hatreds and sinful fantasies – all those things we don't want anyone to know. The comforting part of God knowing what is in our hearts is that He knows our regrets and our problems; He knows our love and praise and respect for Him, all of our good intentions and aims. But we might ask, "Well, if God already knows the love in our hearts, why is it that a language of love for God of love is that of obedience on our part?"

The answer is that indeed God knows whether there is love in our hearts for Him even without our actions and obedience to the commandments. That we are to show our love for God by obeying His commandments is not so much for the sake of God but for our own sake. You see, we might deceive ourselves into thinking that we love God when we really don't love Him as we should. Listen to these words that are in the verses right before our text for this morning, **"I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**" God is sternly warning you and me "Don't simply say that you love me and then continue to ignore what I command. You are not fooling me; you are fooling yourself that you love me." God does not want you to be a victim of deception, especially your own deception.

Yes, because of our sinful nature we have a struggle with sin and we do fall and fail daily, but one who defies and continues on in willful sin has a real problem. For example, a pastor met with a member of the flock who continued to be unfaithful to his wife. The pastor told him that the real problem was even more serious than a marriage problem, as serious and hurtful as that was, but it was that he lacked love and respect for God and the first thing he ought to do was to take care of that problem – and then the marital problem would get fixed. “Oh no,” he insisted. “I still love God.” The pastor then quoted the words of Jesus in John 14:15 “**If you love me, you will obey what I command.**” Notice that what Jesus said was a statement of fact, not a mandate to obey.

Do you have a love for God problem? It is a serious question, but what about if you continually hold hatred in your heart, if you keep on cheating, if you continue in porn without fighting against it, if a person continues to gossip, lie, or bully? Would not the Lord say, “Look, if you love me, obey me?” Luther captured it well. As he gave a definition for each commandment, the starting sentence was, “**We should fear and love God that....**”

Isn't it wonderful that we show our love for God by obeying Him? Obedience does not earn forgiveness or heaven for us. Heaven has already been paid for by the obedience of Christ and by the shedding of His blood on the cross. How am I saved? You point to the cross. How do I show love for my wonderful God? Now you point to the commandments. **This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.** Sometimes we might think that God is making our lives burdensome and taking all the fun out of life by giving us commandments. It is as if God in heaven looking down upon mankind said, “How can I make life for people unpleasant and miserable? I know what I'll do. I will give them some commandments. I will give them seven commandments. No, make that Ten.”

The commandments of God are great blessings to us in many ways. I will list three ways.

1) The commandments do show our sins but also point to our need for a Savior. We need to know that we are in trouble because of sin and, therefore, ought to seek help.

2) Also, with the commandments our loving God is seeking to protect you. Here are some examples:

- a. With the Commandment, You shall not kill, God is protecting your life
- b. You shall not steal, God is protecting your property
- c. You shall not commit adultery, God is protecting his gift of sex and marriage
- d. Don't bear false witness, God is protecting your reputation and the truth
- e. Remember the Sabbath Day, God is commanding you to hear and study His word to strengthen and preserve your faith – He does not want you to fall from faith and end up in hell.

3) They also direct us who love the Lord how we can show that love. A young man who was dating a girl whom he really loved wanted to do something special to show his love. But what should he do? Should he write a poem for her? No, he wasn't good at composing poems. How about singing a love song to her? The trouble was that his singing sounded more like a croaking frog than a good voice. Should he send her a picture of himself? No, that was a bad idea. Should he go on face book and tell her that he loved her? Probably not a good idea for then the whole world would know and that might embarrass her. But then he realized that she loved flowers. And so he sent flowers which she did appreciate.

God wants us to show our love in a variety of ways such as praising Him, bringing offerings to Him, and thanking Him. But remember again these words, **This is love for God: to obey his commands.**

Make me to walk in your commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head or heart or hands
Offend against my God.