

“This Is the Love of God”
(1 John 5:1-3)

Introduction: Last week, we were looking at 1 John 4:7-21. Here we saw how important it is for us to love one another. It is important because God commands it, because God gives us this love, because it reflects the nature of God to love in this way, and because those who do not love do not know God. This week, I would like to reinforce this idea in our minds somewhat, and go a little bit further in our understanding of it, by looking at 5:1-3. It helps us by way of review, and then builds more upon it. Why do we need to review? Well, God tells us in His Word that we need to. We need to continually rehearse what we learn until it becomes a part of our lives. James writes, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he had immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does” (1:22-25). It is so easy to consider something for one hour on a Sunday, and then so completely forget what we heard so as to have difficulty even remembering what the sermon was about the next week. It is not those who look at the word and then forget who are blessed, but those who look intently at it long enough for it to become a part of their lives. I want God’s blessing for each of us here this evening, so I want us to continually rehearse these things in our minds until they work themselves out in our actions. Isaiah writes, “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little” (28:9-10).

This evening, John tells us a little more about this love which comes from God. And what he shows us is that,

The love of God makes everything which is of God to be delightful.

I. First, John tells us, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.”

- A. Now this first part is not too difficult to understand.
1. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah of God, has been supernaturally begotten of God.
 2. Now certainly there is more implied here than a mere belief of the facts. A person might believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and still not be saved.
 - a. Do you think that those who are in hell believe that Jesus is the Messiah? There might be some who are unaware of it now. But when the day of judgment comes, they will certainly find out when they stand before Him. But believing it then won’t save them. Believing the facts now won’t either.
 - b. And what about those who are still alive now. Haven’t you ever talked to anyone who professed to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and yet it was clear by the way they lives that they really didn’t believe?

- c. And what about the devils? Do they believe that Jesus is the Christ? Yes, they do. Jesus even had to silence many of them so that they would not give Him away prematurely. And aren't they persons? Yes, they are. But they are not saved by that knowledge.
 - d. I believe that there must not only be that knowledge, but also an acceptance of Christ to be your personal Savior. Those who really believe that He is, come to Him and accept Him as He offers Himself to them.
 - e. And those who do this show that they have been born again from above, that they have been begotten of the Father.
- B. But now the point is, "And whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him."
- 1. Sometimes it is hard to tell which direction the author of Scripture is turning in His line of reasoning. It requires a bit of diligence on our part to understand it. But I think if we take each of these statements one at a time, they will begin to make sense.
 - 2. John says, "If a person really loves the Father, then he will also love those who have been begotten of Him."
 - a. This follows from what John said in 4:21, "And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."
 - b. This also follows from what we saw last week. If you really love God, then you will love those who reflect that some lovely image.
 - c. A brother is one who has been born again from above, who reflects that image. Therefore, you will love your brother.
 - d. Literally, the second part of this verse reads, "And everyone who loves the One who begot, or gave birth, also loves the one who is begotten of Him."
 - e. This one who was begotten could of course refer to Christ. But seeing that John has just told us that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, it is far more likely he is referring to Christians.
 - f. The point is that if you love God, you will love His children as well.

II. And this brings us to the second point. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments" (v. 2).

- A. If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we are born of God. If we love the Father, we will also love His children. But how do we know that we love His children? For if we do love His children, we show that we really love Him. John says, we know that we love the children of God, first, when we love God.
- 1. It may seem a little bit confusing because he is making the point from both sides.
 - a. If you love the Father, you will love His children.
 - b. And if you love His children, you will love the Father.
 - 2. In a sense, there is really no difference between these two statements.
 - a. What is it that makes you love the Father? Isn't it the beauty of His holiness?
 - b. What is it that makes you love your brethren? Isn't it this same image which is being recreated in them by the Spirit of God? Yes.
 - c. But this is the same thing. In both cases, what your heart is drawn to is that image, which is God's image.
 - d. We know that we will love that image wherever it is seen. Therefore, if we

love the Father, we will love those begotten of Him. We will love Christ most of all, for He, more than any other of God's children, reflects that image perfectly. And if we love those who have been begotten of Him, we will love God as well.

- B. But there is one more place where that image is found. It is in His commandments.
1. We mustn't forget that the same Spirit who authored the holiness of the man, Christ Jesus, and who authored that same image in us, is also the author of the commandments of God. Those commandments merely spell out in words what holiness is all about, what the holiness of Christ is, and what the holiness of the believer should be.
 2. And because they share that same image, because they come from the same Author, our hearts will also go out to them in love, because we will find in them an irresistible attraction. This is why the psalmist writes, "My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times. . . Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all *my* heart. Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it" (Psalm 119:20, 34-35).
 3. Therefore, we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and when we do what His law requires of us.
 4. But one other thing should be noticed here. The commandments of God also tells us how we are to love our brethren.
 - a. Therefore, if we keep the commandments of God, we will be loving them.
 - b. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. For this, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of *the* law" (Rom. 13:8-10).
 - c. We see the same reciprocity here. If you love God, you will love His children. If you love God's children, you will love God. Here, if you love your brother, you will have fulfilled the Law. And if you fulfill the Law, you will love your brother.

III. And now here is the concluding point. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

- A. It is a little unclear here what is meant by the love of God.
1. It can refer to the love which God gives, as we have already seen. Or it can mean that love which we have for God, after He has given it to us.
 2. Either way, it doesn't really matter, because of the interrelationship of this love of God.
- B. But this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.
1. If we have this love from God, we will keep them.
 2. If we have a love for God, we will keep them as well. We will obey them.

- C. “And,” John continues, “His commandments are not burdensome,” that is, they are not hard or difficult.
1. When you read the 119th Psalm, you get the very same impression.
 - a. They are not a burden to the psalmist. And the reason why they’re not is that the psalmist loves God.
 - b. Whoever loves God will also love His commandments, as I’ve said, because they reflect His same image that they love so much.

 2. The last thing I would like to do is to show you why the love of God should make our duty not to be a burden to us, and what kind of joy and delight we should expect to receive when we do our duty. (Taken from Jonathan Edwards’ “True Love to God.” In *Sermons and Discourses*. Yale Press. 10:636-643.)
 - a. First, let’s look at why the love of God makes keeping His commandments easy.
 - (i) First, the love of God is able to put to death the only thing which makes keeping the commandments of God hard in the first place, namely, our sin.
 - (ii) What God wants us to do is not really hard in itself. It is our hatred of holiness that makes it hard. If it wasn’t for this, we would have no difficulty at all. All of the difficulty that we experience is nothing more than our wrestling with our sin.
 - (iii) Think about the free offer of the Gospel. What is so difficult about receiving from God forgiveness of sins, perfect righteousness, and an eternal inheritance in heaven forever with Him? Whosoever will may come and drink freely of the waters of life, with no cost involved. All we need is to be willing to come, and to want to be made truly happy. All we need to do is to open the doors of our soul to Christ. This is all that is required. But this is also that which a natural man cannot do, because he will not do it, because his heart is full of sin and hatred against this God. It would be no more difficult than it would be for a person who’s poor to reach out and take a million dollars when it is offered to him. But if that poor person hated the one who was giving him the money, it would make it very difficult for him to reach out and take it. It is the same for one who hates God. He will not reach out and take it, because he does not want to.
 - (iv) But the love of God can remove this obstacle. When Christ comes into our lives by His Spirit, He places His love there, which deals a deadly wound to our sin, which then slowly dies away. With this love now stronger in our hearts than our sin, we can freely take hold of Christ, and we can much more easily do what He commands us, even though we will still wrestle with sin all of our lives.
 - (v) Secondly, when we really love God, He daily supplies us with the strength we need to serve Him. If He left us, we would be helpless to do anything of what He commands. As Jesus tells us, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We must be connected to our source of life. We must be in union with Christ. When we are, Christ takes us by the hand and grants to us the power we need to obey Him.
 - (vi) Thirdly, when we really love God, we will want to do the things which please Him. When we really love someone, we will want to show that

person that we do by doing the things which we know will make them happy. And in doing this, we find our own happiness. The same is true of God. If we really love Him, we will most naturally want to do what He enjoys from our hearts to please Him. Even as Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Jacob loves Rachel so much that his seven years of labor for her seemed like only a few days (Gen. 29:20). In the same way, our love for God will make putting off our sins and putting on our duties to be easy.

- (vii) Lastly, our love for God will make keeping His commandments not burdensome because when we do them, we will become more like Him. Generally, we love something because we see something in that object that is truly lovely. There are undoubtedly people that you admire in the world. You admire them because of some outstanding quality or characteristic. Maybe it is their strength, or their appearance, or their intelligence. And you probably also wish that you had those same qualities yourself. Well, the same is true of God. If we really love and admire Him, we will want to be like Him. And when we realize that it is through obedience to His commandments that we do become more like Him, of course we will willingly and joyfully do them.
- b. And secondly, what should we expect to receive when we do our duty.
- (i) I think overall we can expect to receive temporal, physical blessings, for the Lord promises these things to those who obey Him.
 - (ii) But there are far more important blessings which come to us in the spiritual realm, namely peace of conscience, communion with God and the hope of glory.
 - (iii) We have peace of conscience knowing that when we do what the Lord commands from the heart, we also have the assurance that we are His, our sins are forgiven, and that we are on the way to heaven. Those who live in sin, who refuse to submit to Christ, have nothing but the turmoil of a guilty conscience. Their conscience can only convict them for their sin, for that is all that they do. Everyone desires peace over conflict. The faithful have this peace deeply rooted in their souls.
 - (iv) The second blessing is communion with God. Rebels against His lordship don't experience this, for they are His enemies, and He is at war with them. But the true saints do, and it is their greatest blessing. It is the greatest blessing of the angels that they continually dwell in the presence of the holy God and see His face. It is also ours when we walk with Him in the way of obedience. The Lord comes to us by His Spirit, and fellowships with us in our inner most being.
 - (v) But what we have here is only a taste of what we will have forever in heaven. The hope of eternal glory is the last reward that we receive. It is the hope that what we have only partially experienced down below will one day become fully ours as we are lifted up into the heavenlies to dwell forever with the Lord in the ocean of His love. This hope of glory we can have now, but it is only found in the way of obedience.

- c. And so you see that it is a mistake to think that the keeping of the commandments of God is a burden to the Christian. It is not a burden, but his delight.
- d. And it is a mistake for those who are outside of Christ to think that becoming a Christian means that they are giving up all of the pleasures of life to submit themselves to a life of sacrifice, pain and suffering. Only those who have never tasted of the goodness of the Lord could think that. None who have really experienced the pleasures which Christ offers have ever wanted to return to what they had before. They might because of sin for a while, but they will never forsake Christ to again embrace the world.
- e. In closing, let us examine our hearts with regard to what John has told us.
 - (i) Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Then you are born of God. If not, then you yet stand in need to be born again before you will ever experience His love.
 - (ii) Do you love the Father and His children? You cannot love one without the other. And if you don't love both, then you really love neither.
 - (iii) And lastly, do the commandments of God seem easy and a joy to you, or are they burdensome? If they are easy, then you really do love God. But if they are a burden to you, then you have not yet experienced the love of God. John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are *not burdensome*."
 - (iv) This doesn't mean that they are never a burden. There are times when our sin gets the upper hand in our lives. But when that happens, the truly gracious soul will grieve his loss of holiness, and will earnestly seek the Lord until it is restored to him.
 - (v) If you find on examination that His love is lacking, I would counsel you to call on His name this evening, and ask Him to put His love there. The love of God comes sovereignly from above. It is a free gift given to those whom the Lord Himself chooses. But our God is sovereignly disposed to be gracious, and He will not turn you away if you seek Him with all your heart. Turn to the Lord. Come to Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Take hold of Him by faith, and find the joy and pleasure that is His to give in the way of holiness.
 - (vi) May we all be able to say one day, with Christ, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). Amen.