

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

THE IDEA OF “COMMANDMENT-KEEPING” IS REPUGNANT TO A LOT OF PEOPLE TODAY.

- a. Some equate it with “law-righteousness” (which they mistakenly call “legalism”)
- b. Others look upon keeping God’s commandments as a heavy, burdensome thing.

BUT REAL CHRISTIANS DO NOT FEEL THAT WAY ABOUT KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

- a. The apostle Paul was a real Christian. Listen to what he said about keeping the commandments of God in **1Cor 7:19**.
 - ▶ KJV: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”
 - ▶ NKJ: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”
 - ▶ NIV: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts.”

IN THIS LESSON . . .

- a. I want us to consider what the Bible writers say about keeping the commands of God.
- b. And, if there is anyone among us this morning who has a negative attitude toward “commandment-keeping” I hope this lesson will help to bring about a change in your attitude.

1. BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT COMMANDMENT-KEEPING, LET’S JUST TALK ABOUT THE COMMANDMENTS.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD?

- a. We ought to have the attitude that **Moses** had.
 - ▶ Deut 6:24 ~ “And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.”
- b. We ought to have the attitude that **David** had.
 - ▶ Psa 119:86 ~ “All Your commandments are faithful . . .”
 - ▶ Psa 119:151 ~ “. . . And all Your commandments are truth.”
 - ▶ Psa 119:172 ~ “. . . all Your commandments are righteousness.”
- c. We ought to have the attitude that **Paul** had.
 - ▶ Rom 7:12 ~ “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

2. NOW LET’S TALK ABOUT COMMANDMENT-KEEPING: WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMANDMENT-KEEPING?

WE MUST NOT EQUATE COMMANDMENT-KEEPING WITH “LAW RIGHTEOUSNESS” (“PERFECTIONISM”)

- a. The only righteousness that is possible for us is the righteousness that is based upon faith, not our keeping of the law.
 - ▶ Php 3:7-9 ~ “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;”
- b. Righteousness based upon law requires sinless perfection.
 - ▶ Gal 3:10 ~ “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

- c. We must have regard for the law of Christ . . . and strive to do all that he commands . . . but we must never think that (1) we are doing it perfectly, or (2) that we somehow “deserve” to be saved, or (3) that we have somehow “earned” salvation.
- ▶ Such an attitude would be horribly wrong on the part of Christians.
 - Tit 3:3-7 ~ “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
 - Gal 2:21 ~ “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”
- d. Unfortunately, many, in reaction to “law-righteousness” (which they mistakenly call “legalism”), have gone to the extreme of saying “commandment-keeping” is not important.
- ▶ Yet Paul is the one who said, “**keeping the commands of God is what matters**” . . . and no one could ever accuse Paul of teaching that we can be counted righteous before God on the basis of keeping the law!
 - ▶ “Legalism” is simply “Strict, literal adherence to the law or to a particular code, as of religion or morality” (AHD).
 - We ought to strictly adhere to the law of Christ.
 - + Matt 23:23 ~ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. **These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**”
 - + Lk 16:10 ~ “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and **he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.**”
 - + Matt 28:18-20 ~ “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - But we must never deceive ourselves into thinking that we keep God’s law perfectly.
 - + 1Jn 1:8,10 – “ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”
 - And we must realize that righteousness based upon law requires sinless perfection – and is, therefore, unattainable.
 - + Gal 3:10 ~ “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’”

WE OUGHT TO THINK OF COMMANDMENT-KEEPING AS “FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE”

- a. Compare 1Cor 7:19 with Gal 5:6.
- ▶ 1Cor 7:19 ~ “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”
 - ▶ Gal 5:6 ~ “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”
- b. Keeping the commandments of God with a willing heart is “faith working through love.”

- ▶ By keeping the commandments I demonstrate my FAITH **Jas 2:14-18**
- ▶ By keeping the commandments I show my LOVE . . .
 - To Jesus
 - + **Jn 14:15** ~~ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
 - + **Jn 15:14** ~~ “You are My friends if you do what I command you.”
 - To God
 - + **1Jn 5:3** ~~ “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”
 - To the children of God
 - + **1Jn 5:2** ~~ “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments.”
- c. When you think about it in this way, keeping the commandments of God is very important!

WE OUGHT TO THINK OF COMMANDMENT-KEEPING AS A PART OF WHAT IS INVOLVED IN HELPING US TO BECOME A NEW CREATION

- a. Compare **1Cor 7:19** with **Gal 6:15**.
 - ▶ **1Cor 7:19** -- “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”
 - ▶ **Gal 6:15** -- “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”
- b. Isn’t it clear that keeping the commandments of God is a part of what God uses to help us become a “new creation”?
 - ▶ Becoming a new creature is a blessing we enjoy by being in Christ
 - **2Cor 5:17** ~~ “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”
 - But to enjoy this blessing involves keeping certain commandments. For example, . . .
 - + being baptized to put on Christ (**Gal 3:27**)
 - + putting off ungodly attitudes and habits and putting on godly attitudes and virtues in order to become more and more like the Lord (**Col 3:5-17**)
- c. Again, when we think of keeping the commandments of God as necessary to becoming a new creature in Christ, then keeping the commandments becomes very important!

I BELIEVE THIS IS THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMANDMENT-KEEPING.

- a. Keeping God’s commandments is a demonstration of our faith and love!
- b. Keeping God’s commandments is a part of the process by which we can become a new creation in Christ!

BUT, IS COMMANDMENT-KEEPING A BURDEN TOO HEAVY TO BEAR?

3. IS COMMANDMENT-KEEPING ALL THAT DIFFICULT?

NOT ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO HAVE DONE IT THE LONGEST!

- a. Like the apostle John: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” -- **1Jn 5:3**.
- b. If you were to ask some of the elderly saints in this congregation, they would agree with John, and with the psalmist . . .
 - ▶ **Psa 119:129-136** ~~ “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them. 130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. 131 I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments. 132 Look upon me and be merciful to me, As Your custom is toward those who love Your name. 133 Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me. 134 Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts. 135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes. 136 Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law.”

THE HARDEST PART IS DECIDING THAT YOU REALLY WANT TO KEEP ALL OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS!

- a. Trying to decide what you want to do is often harder than doing it.
 - ▶ Remember what James says about this in **Jas 1:6-8** ~ “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”
 - “double-minded” is literally “two-souled.”
 - + It means “undecided” (Vincent’s); “wavering, uncertain, doubting; divided in interest” (Thayer)
 - The man who really hasn’t made up his mind that he wants to obey God in everything He commands cannot expect to receive help from God.
 - But when we make up our minds that we really do want to obey God in all things He can and will help us.
 - + **Eph 3:20** ~ “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”
 - + **Php 4:13** ~ “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

WITH GOD'S HELP WE CAN KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS!

- a. God will protect us and provide for us as we try to keep His commandments
 - ▶ **1Cor 10:13** ~ “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”
- b. God will help us in our efforts to live our lives in obedience to the His commandments.
 - ▶ **Php 2:12,13** ~ “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”
- c. Even if we are forsaken by all others in times of greatest need, God will still be with us!
 - ▶ **2Tim 4:16-18** ~ “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!
- d. Consider these examples:
 - ▶ Abraham “Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (**Gen 26:3-5**).
 - ▶ David -- “Depart from me, you evildoers, For I will keep the commandments of my God!” (**Psa 119:115**).
 - **1Kgs 11:38** -- “Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you. . . .”
 - **Ac 13:22** -- “And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will’”
 - ▶ **Zacharias & Elizabeth** -- “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (**Lk 1:5-6**)

CONCLUSION

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT WE KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD?

- a. If we really want to receive mercy from God, we are going to have to keep His commandments.
 - ▶ Psa 103:17,18 ~~ “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, 18 to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.”
- b. If we really want to have fellowship with God, we are going to have to keep His commandments.
 - ▶ Jn 14:21, 23 ~~ “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. 23 . . .If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”
- c. If we really want to be able to pray to God, and have God hear and answer our prayers, we are going to have to keep His commandments.
 - ▶ “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1Jn 3:22)

Friends and brethren, do you have respect for all of God’s commandments?

Are you making diligent effort to learn God’s will for every area and aspect of your life?

And are you determined to keep all the commandments of God?