

# 1 John 5:1-5

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[ 0 : 00 ] The last time that I spoke to you from the pulpit, I preached for 50 minutes. Not going to do that today.

I feel like we've already been blessed by our congregation with the encouragement that many times a sermon brings. And I hope that we will be encouraged also in God's word.

So join me in a word of prayer, and then we are going to jump in. Father, I am completely inadequate to bring your word to your people.

Father, you have entrusted to us such a high blessing by communicating yourself to us in your word.

Father, I pray that we would meet you there today, that you would meet us. That you would encourage us in this word of encouragement. And Lord, that you would excite us to live for you more and more every day.

[ 1 : 12 ] We pray that in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen. What comes to your mind when you hear the word obedience?

Restraints, restrictions, drudgery, the death of fun. I imagine that the cadets in the room have a particular view of that.

Employees have a different one. Teachers, parents, and their children. Supervisors in the room might all have slightly different pictures in their head.

Ideas that come to mind when that word, obedience, is mentioned. And my guess is that the word burdensome is probably how people think about it in general.

The world at large and even Christians, how we view God's law. Sometimes we feel that it is a burden to us. And, you know, even if we agree with God that, yeah, we should deny sinful temptations, it still feels like we're missing out when we have to obey, right?

[ 2 : 29 ] So I think it is surprising then to hear John tell us today that God's commandments are not burdensome.

As John begins to wrap up his message, as we begin to conclude the letter of 1 John here in chapter 5, he's going to show us how the three themes of this letter, the three giant themes that we have been addressing week by week, truth, love, and obedience, are wrapped up into one another. And so if you'll turn with me to 1 John chapter 5, we're going to begin to conclude John's letter to us. So 1 John chapter 5, starting in verse 1.

If you don't have a Bible, we would very much love to give you one. They're on that side table back there. And we would love to give that to you as a gift. They should already be bookmarked to today's passage.

So if you're not there yet, we invite you to turn to 1 John chapter 5, and we're going to begin in verse 1. The Apostle John says to us, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

[ 3 : 49 ] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

May God bless the reading of his holy, inerrant, and inspired word. John begins simply today, saying, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

If we look, we see there's a little bit of repetition there. We see the word born twice. What's actually interesting is that it's there three times.

See, it's hidden, actually, in the word Father. Father. There's a normal Greek word for the word Father, pater, from which we get paternal or paternity. But that's not the word John uses here.

[ 5 : 07 ] He takes the verb to give life, that word for born here, and he turns it into a name. God the Father is the one who gives birth, who gives new life.

He is the life giver. And so, maybe a more awkward, but maybe a more helpful way to read this sentence in verse 1 is, Everyone who believes Jesus is the Christ has been given life by God, and everyone who loves the life giver also loves those who have been given life by him.

And so, what we see here is that John is trying to get that idea of life, being given life, into every inch of this sentence.

Why? I think he wants to emphasize to us that our new life in Christ presses into every area of our lives.

Our head, our heart, our hands. And here in verse 1, we see that our new birth ties our faith, the confession that Jesus is the Christ, to our love for the church.

[ 6 : 21 ] Everyone, he says, who believes that Jesus the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever else has been born of him.

Our faith ties directly into our love for one another because we all have that same life. And he's going to go on in verses 2 and 3 to show that that love is expressed in obedience, and then in verses 4 and 5, that obedience is tied to the vibrant life we have in Christ's victory, sending us right back to our faith.

And so we see that the Christian life, all of these themes are intertwined. And so our whole life, the whole of the Christian life, is renewed by God's power and is completely tied together because we're whole people.

Our thoughts, our desires, and our actions, they cohere together. They are not separate. They're not distinct. We can't separate them. We're not parceled out into unrelated segments.

We are one body, one soul, one mind, one person. And so our whole lives are renewed by God's life.

[ 7 : 40 ] And when he gives us new life, we are completely renovated. And so our love for others, it depends on our faith because in our faith, in Christ, we see what love truly looks like.

We find we don't need to look out for number one anymore because Jesus has secured us for forever. So love can flourish there in a way that it can't without Christ.

And we also see that Christ has made us partners in his ministry of reconciliation. What is that but love? And that's the core of this verse.

And that's why I was so encouraged this morning. When people got up to share, we just heard on our first anniversary here of public ministry, the Lord revives us and works in every facet of our lives.

And these different stories have shown us how the Lord is at work in every facet of people's lives, equipping us for service, ministering to us in our suffering, coming alongside and serving one another in busy and difficult seasons of life, being family to those who are apart from their families.

[ 9 : 02 ] That's because the same life that you have in Christ animates and indwells and enlivens your brothers and sisters in Christ. You've been given life. They've been given that same life by the same one life giver.

So we can't put help, love, those who have been given that same life. And that's exactly his point here in verse one.

There is a shared love. Our hearts beat as one because we are alive through the blood of the one Savior, Jesus Christ. And so that's what John wants to give us, a picture where we understand that our faith and our new birth are inseparable from love for the church.

So our faith gives rise to our love for Christians by means of our regeneration, our new birth. And so those two strands, our belief and our love, are interconnected. And then John goes on to say in verses two and three, by this we know that love, that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.

For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not burdensome. So not only are our love and our faith connected, but also our love is then intertwined with our obedience to the Lord.

[ 10 : 25 ] In fact, verse two says that loving and obeying God is how we know that we love other Christians. Why would y'all make that connection?

I mean, how could loving and obeying God be how we know that we love the children of God? Well, quick.

What is love? We're actually pretty terrible at answering that, aren't we? Is it fond affection for someone?

Is it giving someone something they desire? Is it participating in something they consent to? That's probably how our culture would break down love, desire, and consent. But giving people what they want is mostly a recipe for disaster.

Parents know this. Teachers know this. Carpenters know this. Bartenders know this. Here's the thing. We didn't create the world.

[ 11 : 31 ] We didn't create ourselves. We don't get to define what love looks like. Because when we do, we mess it up. We love with a wrong focus.

Giving people what they want instead of what they need. We love with partiality. Giving priority to those who most look like us or those we want to impress like we saw this summer in James chapter 2.

Or we confuse what is truly loving. Substituting our own ideas of human flourishing. For God's wisdom. So first, John says, we know that we love others if we love and obey God because on our own, we're not actually good at loving.

We confuse it. We twist it. We neglect it. And second, we know that we love others if we love and obey God because as we have seen through this whole letter, one of the most prominent commands of the Lord is to love one another.

over and over again, we have seen that in this letter. And so, obedience is actually critical to loving others. And it's also critical to loving God.

[ 12 : 46 ] That's why John says in verse 3 that this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. John is protecting us here from near sentimentalism towards God.

It's one thing to say you love God, but it is another thing to actually love him. love is alive. It moves us to action.

Remember from verse 1, this love, the love that prompts our obedience comes from our new birth when the Father saved us, united us to his Son and gave us a new life.

One prominent facet of the new birth is God's promise to write his law on our hearts. That changes our relationship to obedience, doesn't it?

When the law comes to us from outside, as some outside lawgiver, it can feel like a restraint, it can feel like oppression. When the law is written on our heart, obedience rises up out of our own hearts as a delight.

[ 13 : 57 ] It's what we want and I think Psalm 19 perfectly captures this attitude. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandments of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

When God saves us and writes his perfect law on our hearts, obedience is natural and joyful.

But, you might be sitting here and saying, that is not really my experience. Sometimes it feels like a struggle. Everyone around us seems to be, to think that obeying God means spoiling our fun and sometimes we think that too.

[ 15 : 14 ] or they might actually say that obeying God is unloving. Right? I think there are two reasons for this confusion. Human beings are limited creatures.

We don't know everything and haven't had our eyes open to all the goodness of God's law. And, human beings are fallen creatures. in our sinfulness, we try to get our own way.

And, I will point you to Romans chapter 1 for further study of how we choose in our own hearts to suppress our knowledge of God and his goodness and his law.

So, both our limitations and our sinfulness keep us from sometimes seeing the goodness of God's law and just how beautiful obedience actually is.

Now, I'll give one quick example here and it is very prominent in our day and I'm not fixating on it as for itself but I'm giving an example so that we can look to all of God's commands to us and see that

they are indeed good and a blessing to us for us.

[16:27] So, one quick example that's prominent in our day is God's instructions on sex. The world tells us that God's sexual ethic is repressive, unloving even.

Who is God to tell us to limit our expressions of love to marriage? And sometimes, even if we don't agree with how non-Christians portray Christian obedience, we still look at obedience as falling out or as missing out.

So, John's words that, you know, that the Lord's commandments are not burdensome kind of fall flat for us. Well, let's quickly examine that.

Obedience through the lenses of faith and of love. The world and our own hearts sometimes tell us that to be more loving, we should express our love to more people than just our spouse.

And so, the world tells us that before we commit to a spouse, we should at least test the waters. sex before marriage isn't just okay according to our marriage, according to our culture, it's actually wise according to our culture.

[17:43] You know, even loving. Make sure you don't trap each other in a relationship where the bedroom isn't as exciting as you want it. but here's where God's love showing us how commitment leads to intimacy, not the other way around, helps us uncover that lie for what it is.

So the idea that living together to make sure we're compatible, that's actually intimacy auditioning for commitment.

It turns a celebration of love into a pass-fail exam where we subject the other person who we supposedly love to our evaluation to find them acceptable or not.

that's not love, that's judgment. And what does judgment bring with it? Fear. Fear of loss.

Fear of being found unwanted or unworthy. Fear of being left alone. And what did John tell us last week? 1 John 4, verse 18 says, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

[19:05] living together to make sure we're compatible is judgment and fear masquerading as love. But in God's plan for sex within marriage, there is no judgment.

With commitment already assured, there's no need to fear any loss or being left alone. Sex needs not be an audition for anything.

and it returns to what it was meant to be, a celebration of the love between a husband and wife.

And so, you don't secure the relationship based on the excellence or the frequency of your performance.

It's already secure. And we can celebrate that. Fertility or infertility isn't what makes or breaks a marriage. Medical issues that prevent full expression of intimacy won't cause rejection or abandonment because security is already there.

And so, I don't want to go down this road too far. But I want to show for us just in this one example how God's obedience, God's law, they are good for us.

[20:18] When the world tells us that God's law is unloving, we can say, no, it's not. It is for our benefit. He loves and cares for us and that is why He gives us His instruction.

So, everywhere that obedience to the Lord looks burdensome to you or to the world, we can be certain that the Lord has our best interests at heart.

So, our obedience is for our everlasting good. So, when someone who doesn't understand your faith says Christianity is too restrictive or all about rules or anti-freedom or something like that, you can tell them with confidence.

That's not why God gives us commands. He cares what we do, not because He's a meddling tyrant, but because He is a loving Father. His commands are for our good.

So, we might ask, when obedience is hard, when temptation is strong, how can we ground ourselves in that and still walk forward in faith and obedience?

[21:29] John answers in verses 4 and 5, for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? So, we see that John has now come full circle.

He began with faith and here He is ending with it. The new birth started, verse 1, with faith. Faith which led to love. And love, in verses 2 and 3, we see is expressed in obedience to God's law.

And that obedience isn't a burden to us. John says something interesting. I want you to look at the very beginning of verse 4. Obedience isn't a burden to us because, or for your translation might have.

Obedience isn't a burden because our faith is a victory. So, that makes us ask two questions. What does he mean here when he says faith and how is that a victory?

[ 22 : 38 ] Faith isn't just signing off on a doctrinal statement. It is a reminder that we need your feedback on Shoreline's proposal on the doctrinal statement. Faith isn't signing off on a doctrinal statement.

Faith is placing your trust in Jesus, in a person, a divine person, his finished work on the cross, his victorious rising from the grave, his promises.

Faith is placing your trust in Jesus alone to save you from the just wrath of God that you have earned with your sin and with your sinfulness.

Faith is crying out to Jesus, save me Lord. That's why scripture says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

And if you've never done that, if you've never repented of your sins, if you're here today because someone brought you here, but you've never run to Jesus and cried save me Lord, it is urgent that you do that today.

[ 23 : 42 ] He will nail the sin that condemns you to hell to his cross. He will unite you to himself in a victorious resurrection. He will cause you to be born again to everlasting life.

He will give you a new heart and set you on this path of joyful obedience. He will adopt you into his family where he will give and receive love and care.

And this is a free gift of God for all who turn from the world and turn to him. We call that repentance and faith. And it is a good gift of our good Lord.

And actually that is the answer to the second question. How is our faith a victory? It's a victory over the world because the world doesn't tell us to live in the love and the life of our resurrected Savior. The world tells us to trust in ourselves, in our own competence, in being satisfied in the things of this world. But faith tears our eyes away from lesser things and sets them on Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father.

[ 25 : 05 ] Faith keeps us from depending on powerless things and sets us on the rack. And that's how our faith is our victory. And that victory makes obedience to the one who saved us a sweet thing.

So when obedience is hard and temptation is strong, when God's commands don't look like flourishing to you, when the world tells you that obedience to Jesus is foolishness or burdensome or insensitive, John tells us to look back to our faith, our victory.

Jesus crucified, dead, buried for our sin, raised to life again for our salvation, ascended to heaven as our advocate and as our coming king.

God's And remember that our faith, our victory is the conduit through which God gave us new life, life that endures, a life that is invigorated by our obedience.

And so it is through that faith and from that life that come love for God and for others, that love finds its joyful expression in obedience.

[ 26 : 37 ] Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Friends, it is a sweet blessing to deny ourselves for the one who picked up his cross, brought us life, only to find that in so doing, we are blessing ourselves.

Let's pray. Lord, we are grateful to you that you, in your great wisdom and your great love, have brought us to a faith that renews and enlivens every facet of our lives.

Thank you, Lord, that you have not left any area of our hearts, our minds, our hands untouched.

Lord, that you have given your son, that he gave his all, to renovate, rejuvenate, and restore all of us.

Lord, help us to recognize, each and every day, how obedience to you is not a burden, but a joy and a blessing to ourselves, for our families, for our church, and for this world.

Lord, let us be a light in a world that needs it desperately. We pray these things in the matchless name of Christ, our King.

[ 28 : 19 ] Amen. Amen.