Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

When I was young, MacDonalds had a Big-Mac competition. If you bought a Big-Mac and recited its ingredients within a very short period of time, you could get a second one for free. So, I learned to say, two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickled onions, on a sesame seed bun. And I’ve never forgotten how to recite those ingredients. And the other day, because my family stayed longer than expected, we watched the Superbowl together. And the half-time show was by Rihanna. And my children could recite the lyrics of the songs that Rihanna sung. It is incredible what we can remember, isn’t it. So, who here could recite the 10 Commandments?

Well, the answer to that question probably has to do with a couple of factors at least:

* The first is **repetition**. Just hearing something many times can make it familiar. That’s how it is with song lyrics, for example. If you hear a song often enough, you start to memorize the words. And some of you have heard the 10 Commandments read many, many times. And that may be why you know the 10 Commandments well.
* But another factor is **how you view the 10 Commandments**. For if you love them, you will surely know them well. And it is one thing to be able to recite the 10 Commandments, but quite another to love them and to love trying to obey them.

But this just begs the question: **Should we love the 10 Commandments**? Should we be earnest or eager to obey them? For the plain fact is that there are many in the wider church today who say that the law has no place or function in the Christian life. And they recite verses like **Romans 7:6**: “*We are released from the law*,” and **Romans 6:14**: “*You are not under law but under grace*.” And they argue against reading the 10 Commandments, regularly, in worship. And any mention of the law and our obedience receives the accusation of legalism. So, again, should we love the 10 Commandments? Well, let’s consider our New Testament passage to see what it reveals about the Christian’s attitude towards the law.

1. And the first thing to note about our passage is that it **Speaks to Those Who *Already Are* Children of God**. And we see this in the first part of verse 1, which says, “*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*.” And verse 2 describes all these ones as “*children of God*.”
   1. One of the key teachings of the New Testament is the need for sinners to be **born again**. Because our natural spiritual condition is that of being dead in trespasses and sins, which makes us hostile enemies of God, we *will* not and we *cannot* seek God in and of ourselves; we must first be born again *by God*. Jesus said exactly this in **John 3:3**: “*Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*.” And the Holy Spirit does this through the preaching of the gospel. He changes our condition or nature, and makes us spiritually alive – haters of sin and lovers of Christ.
      1. Now, just to be clear, the call of the gospel is to receive Jesus Christ, to believe in His name. And *you* must do this. You have heard everything that has been said during this service about Jesus Christ and salvation, and you must weigh it all up and choose to receive Him as your Saviour and Lord. But listen to **John 1:12-13**: “[*And] to all who did receive [Jesus], who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*.” So, we do not become children of God because we are born to believing parents. So, it’s not a biological or gene thing. And ultimately, it is not even because of a choice that we made; it is because we were born again of God.
      2. So, again, if you believe in Jesus Christ, it is because you were born of God, or born again by the Holy Spirit.
   2. And there is wonderful **encouragement** in this truth. **1 John 3:1** puts it this way: “*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are*.” And I want to encourage all of you who are believers to write this verse out and put it on your fridge. Memorize it and recite it, regularly: “*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are*.” You see, the sins we commit each day can lead us to doubt our salvation. But what they should do is to drive us back to Christ and the cross. Your place in God’s family does not depend on your obedience; it depends on Christ’s perfect obedience and complete sacrifice. And so, when guilt and doubt presses down, confess your sins, resolve not to sin again, and remind yourself of God’s promise: Because of Jesus Christ, I am a child of God!
2. So, this **Passage Speaks to Those Who Already Are Children of God**. And that means that everything that follows is not about *how you become* a child of God; it is about how those who *already* *are* children of God must live. And what we see is that **Children of God will strive to love all their brothers and sisters**. And we see this in the second half of verse 1: “*And everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of Him*.”
   1. I am sure we all understand how a **warrant of fitness** works. The mechanic will test every aspect of your car to make sure it is safe to drive. Brakes – check, steering – check, tyres – check, suspension – check; Ok. Car is safe, good to go. Well, if you are familiar at all with John’s epistle, you might remember that he provides believers with **three ways to test the genuineness of their profession**. They are the moral test, the social test, and the theological test. If you test yourself for these three things and come up with three ticks, you can be sure that you are a genuine believer. And the wonderful thing about these three tests is that they do not require A+ perfection for a pass. There just needs to be some basic evidence of these things for a pass.
   2. And our first point was basically about **the theological test**, which is that you love the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ, and you know that He is your only hope of salvation. And again, just to be clear, this is not about having comprehensive theological knowledge about Jesus; it means that despite all your flaws and failings, you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross and rose again for the forgiveness of your sins. If you believe this, it is a sign that your profession of faith is genuine.
   3. And we will come to the moral test in a moment, which is our focus today, but **the social test** is what this part of verse 1 is about; it is that you love all your brothers and sisters in Christ. “*And everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of Him*.”
      1. And the key point here is that word “***whomever***.” You see, there are some brothers and sisters in Christ who are easy to love. They love you back, they share the same beliefs as you, and you have similar personalities. But you will find that sort of love in any human society. What makes the church of Christ different is that you love those who are *not* showing you a whole lot of love and maybe have even hurt you, or they have different beliefs or convictions than you, or they have a different personality, one that just gets under your skin. But you don’t ignore/hate/eish them ill. Instead, you consciously view them as sinners saved by grace, just like you, children of God, by adoption, just like you, those for whom Christ died, just like you. And so, though there may be many things about them that you do not like, you say, “This is my brother or sister.” And you cultivate an attitude of love, you speak, lovingly, to them and about them, you pray for them, and you show them practical acts of love.
      2. And **this is difficult to do**; it is not our natural inclination. But if we see the desire to do this in ourselves, and efforts to love in this way, and we are troubled by our failures to love in this way, then this too is evidence that our faith is genuine. For it is only the Holy Spirit who produces this sort of love and the conviction of sin when we fall short of this sort of love.
      3. But the main point here is that children of God will strive to love all their brothers and sisters.
3. And this brings us to our third and major point. It has to do with **the moral test**, and it arises out of verse 2 and the first half of verse 3: “*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*.” So, **Children of God will obey their Father’s Law**.
   1. Congregation, do you think that Jesus obeyed the law of God? Do you think that obedience of the law was important to Him? You better, because that is a key part of salvation. You see, it is our failure to keep God’s commandments perfectly that makes us deserving of hell. For God can only accept those who are perfectly righteous into heaven. So, Jesus came to earth to do two things: First, He came to obey God’s law perfectly. That’s His whole life. And second, He came to pay the price for all our commandment breaking. That’s the cross. So, when you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and believe in who He is and what He did, then your sin is taken away and His perfect obedience is credited to you. Think of it as like having every dirt-stain removed from your skin and being dressed in a perfect white robe. And we need *both*! And what it means in terms of your salvation standing is that God now sees you as perfectly righteous and He can now receive you into heaven.
   2. And this is what those verses that I quoted at the beginning of the sermon are about: **Romans 7:6**: “*We are released from the law*,” and **Romans 6:14**: “*You are not under law but under grace*.” You see, there are many who think that they can earn heaven by trying to keep God’s law. But they are wrong. The law only reveals our sin; it cannot save anyone. We are saved by grace alone, through Christ’s obedience and sacrifice alone, which we receive by faith alone. So, **what we are released from is using obedience to the law to try and earn salvation**.
   3. But that does not mean that we free to ignore the law. Our text says, “*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*.” Earlier in the letter, John said, “*And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.**Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him*.” And cadets and GEMS, did Jesus say anything about keeping His commandments? Can you tell us? He said, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*.”
   4. And just to be clear here, we are **not talking about the ceremonial laws** **of the Old Testament or the civil laws of Israel**. What we are talking about is the moral law of God, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments that we have in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They are the laws that were written on stone tablets, by the finger of God, and placed in the Ark of the Covenant.
      1. And if you want a really good summary of the Christian’s attitude towards the moral law, look up **Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 19**. Here are a couple of portions, which I have partly abridged:

**19.5** – *The moral law binds all people at all times to obedience, both those who are justified and those who are not. The obligation to obey the moral law is not only because of its content, but also because of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ in no way dissolves this obligation, but greatly strengthens it.*

**19.6** – [Although this law is not about how we earn our salvation] *nevertheless the law is of great use to [believers]... By informing them—as a rule of life—both of the will of God and of their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals to them the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. Therefore, when they examine themselves in the light of the law, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin, together with a clearer view of their need of Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful [for believers] because, by forbidding sin, it restrains their corruptions. By its threats it shows them what their sins deserve, and, although they are free from the curse threatened in the law, it shows the afflictions that they may expect because of them in this life. The promises of the law likewise show to the regenerate God’s approval of obedience and the blessings they may expect as they obey the law…*

So, the law guides how we live, it reveals our sins, it restrains our sin, it reveals the consequences and blessings that disobedience and obedience bring, and it makes Christ and His saving work for us more and more beautiful.

* + 1. And **Jen Wilkin**, in her book, ‘*Ten Words to Live By*,’ has done a great job of summarizing this whole topic. She said, “Lawfulness is Christlikeness. To obey the law is to look like Jesus Christ.” Mic drop! In 13 words she nails the whole matter. For surely, if Christ loved the law of His Father in heaven and obeyed it perfectly, then it should be our highest joy and privilege to strive to do the same.
    2. **Titus 2:13-14** say that believers serve the Lord Jesus, “*who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people … who are zealous for good works*.” And the law is our Father’s gift to us that we might know what lawlessness is and what good works are!
       1. So, as His child, do you want to demonstrate your gratitude to your Father in heaven for your salvation? Use the law.
       2. Do you want to do what pleases Him? Use the law.
       3. Do you not want to do what grieves the Spirit? Use the law.
       4. Do you want to confirm your election? Use the law.
       5. Do you want others to see your progress in sanctification? Use the law.
       6. Do you want others to see your good deeds and glorify God? Use the law.
       7. Do you want to become more and more like Christ? Use the law.
       8. Do you want to show your love for Christ? Use the law.

And all of the language I just used is the language of Scripture.

Well, brothers and sisters in Christ, as we draw to a close today, please note the final words of verse 3: “*And His commands are not burdensome*.” Boys and girls, do you know what a **burden** is? It is a heavy weight. And it is hard to make progress in anything if you must carry a heavy burden. And lots of people, including, sadly, many professing Christians, view God’s laws as a heavy burden. They say: ‘Why must I do this and not do that? That is not what I want to do. That is not what makes me feel happy and fulfilled. That may have been OK for another time and culture, but it is not for me or us today.’ Well, the commands of God are *not* a burden. God hasn’t given us His law to make us unhappy or to take all the fun out of life. On the contrary, He is our Creator and Father; He knows what is best for us. And His law is the way of life and blessing and order and purpose and goodness. We may not understand why, at times, and it may seem to us like really hard work, at times, and very often it will not be what we feel like doing, but the commands of God are not burdensome.

The Psalmist put it this way: “*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way*.” And these are not the misguided words of Old Testament David who didn’t understand the gospel. This should be the attitude of every child of God to the law of his or her Father in heaven.

And that is why I called this this sermon ‘Ten words that prove your adoption.’ Ten Words is an abbreviated way of describing the Ten Commandments. And every child of God is an adopted child, by grace, through faith in Christ. And one way to test the genuineness of your adoption is whether or not you read Psalm 119 and go Amen! That is what I believe. I *do* love the law of God. And I *do* want to obey all of it.

So, as we move through the Ten Commandments in the next few weeks, may that be your response both in terms of words and obedience – O Lord, “*How I love your law*”! Amen?