

The Privilege to Obey God

I John 5:2–3

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Many Regard God's Commandments a Burden—

1. This was the attitude of Israel and Judah in the days of the prophets (Jeremiah 23:33–40; Malachi 1:13; Micah 6:3; Isaiah 43:22–24).
 - a. It was common to refer to a prophecy as a “burden” meaning “something carried” or “brought” by the prophet (Isaiah 19:1; Ezekiel 12:10; Zechariah 9:1; 12:1; Malachi 1:1).
 - b. However, the Jews were making a play on the word and implying that the prophecy was not something carried but something to be carried or borne (Jeremiah 23:35).
 - c. They forsook the house of God, neglected the Sabbath, the feasts, the sacrifices and the tithe, all the while complaining that it was “weariness” to obey Jehovah.
2. The Jews had by their traditions transformed the commandments of God into grievous burdens (Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46). They did this with:
 - a. The Sabbath (Mark 2:27–28)
 - b. Fasting (Luke 18:12; Matthew 9:14; Leviticus 16:29–31)
 - c. Washing hands and vessels (Mt 15:2; Mark 7:3–4, 8)
3. Some today regard the commandments of God as “burdensome.”
 - a. That professing believers regard the commandments of the Lord burdensome is reflected by their attitude toward obedience to the Gospel (namely, water baptism), the first day of the week observance of the Lord's Supper and their preference for a “social gospel.”
 - b. That saints regard the commandments of God as burdensome reflected by their attitude toward assembling, giving, participating in Bible study or living a holy life.
 - c. The unbeliever justifies his rebellion by pointing to the absurd and burdensome “fence laws” and “traditions” which so-called Christians bind on themselves and others which have nothing to do with the Gospel.

B. However, the Commandments of God Are Not a Burden (I John 5:2–3)—

1. Surely obedience is required (Hebrews 5:8–9; Luke 6:46; Revelation 22:14).
2. But, this obedience is a joy and a privilege for the disciple:
 - a. Of all the yokes imposed upon men Christ's is the lightest (Matthew 11:28).

- b. The Christ whom we obey is not a taskmaster (Matthew 11:29).
- c. His yoke is truly easy and light (Matthew 11:30).
- d. Obedience to Christ brings us into true freedom (John 8:32, 36).

C. How Shall I Convince the World that God's Commandments Are Not Burdensome?

1. The solution to the problem stated right in the text (1 John 5:1–4).
2. Obedience is “driven” by two things: *faith and love* (John 14:15; Matthew 28:18–20).
 - a. Faith *settles* all questions about authority, necessity and purpose.
 - b. Love *settles* all questions arising over opinion or preference.
 - c. Faith and love *overcomes* objections of boredom, weariness or burdensomeness (cf. Genesis 29:20; John 14:15, 23).
3. We will not motivate one another or the unbeliever with continual harangues about “duty” apart from the proper motivation that must *rest upon* faith and love.
 - a. I am persuaded that the problem men have with serving the Lord is not so much ignorance about what they must do as it is them finding in their hearts the motivation to do it.
 - b. It is not that they do not know they should, it is that they aren't concerned that they don't.
4. How shall we deal with *that* reality?

II. DISCUSSION:

A. Men Will Never Obey Christ Until Convinced He Is Christ—

1. It is a question of authority.
 - a. See this exemplified in Pharaoh (Exodus 5:2).
 - (1) Moses appeared in Egypt with Aaron and a rod demanding that Pharaoh release his 2,000,000 relatives from slavery (Exodus 5:1).
 - (2) Prior to appearing before Pharaoh they had gathered the elders of Israel and spoken the words of the Lord and shown the signs of confirmation (4:29–31). They were convinced of Moses' authority.
 - (3) Pharaoh doubted that Jehovah was a god greater than he himself was (Exodus 12:12).
That being the case, He had no authority in Egypt.
 - b. See this exemplified in the Rabshekah of the King of Assyria (II Chronicles 32:13–14).
 - (1) The Assyrian monarchs had overrun Syria–Palestine more than once (see: *Unger*).
 - (a) Most recently Tiglath–pileser III had put Israel and Syria to tribute and Shalmaneser V had taken their rebellious kings captive.
 - (b) Now, their grandson, Sennacherib is camped about Jerusalem demanding its

surrender.

(2) The Rabshekah being ignorant of God compares Him to the only gods he knows—the gods who are no God (cf. Isaiah 37:19; Galatians 4:8; Acts 19:26).

(a) He defies Jehovah because he is unconvinced of His authority (II Chronicles 32:15).

He writes slanderous letters impugning Jehovah and his anointed, Hezekiah (v. 17).

(b) He spoke against Jehovah as he did the gods of the people of the earth (v. 19).

(c) Sennacherib and his Rabshekah did not believe that Jehovah was God.

c. See this exemplified in the wicked men of Job's day (Job 21:12–15):

(1) They laughed and played and spent their days in pleasure (vv. 12–13; cf. 21:7–8).

(2) Because things were so well with them they did not feel any need for God, neither in their ingratitude did they feel any obligation to Him; therefore, they had no inclination to obey Him (vv. 14, cf. Proverbs 30:9a).

(3) They say, "What has He ever done for us; how will prayer and worship of Him profit us?" (v. 15)

2. In each of the above examples the proof was forth-coming:

a. Pharaoh experienced the full force of God's mighty hand in the form of the Ten Plagues: blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and—finally—the death of the first born.

b. Sennacherib retreated from Jerusalem after the Destroyer passed through the camp in the night and slew 185,000 of his soldiers. Sennacherib was later murdered in his own bed in Assyria.

c. Job's speech ends without any evidence that the wicked were rebuked and punished for their insolent and rebellious words. However, the message of the whole book is that God is righteous and He vindicates the blameless and punishes the wicked.

3. In each example God's authority is established; the question is answered: Jehovah is the only true and living God.

B. The Gospel Is Intended to Establish Christ's Authority & Prove His Love for Man—

1. We must begin at the beginning:

a. In preaching to the lost...

(1) I have observed that some begin the Gospel story with baptism.

(2) We must start where the prospect is in relation to Christ:

(a) With the Pentecostians, it was "repent" (Acts 2:38).

(b) With Paul, it was “arise and be baptized” (Acts 22:16).

(c) With the Jailer, it was “believe” (Acts 16:31).

b. In restoring the erring:

(1) I have observed that we want to talk about consequences rather than motives.

(a) We confront with the threat of corrective discipline.

(b) We talk about this “affects” the church, or the sinner’s family, or any number of things.

(2) We must draw the erring with the “cords of love” (cf. Hosea 11:4; Romans 2:4).

(a) The lost sheep needs to see the Shepherd coming for him (Matthew 18:11–14).

(b) He needs to remember how the Lord loves him (Ephesians 2:11–14a).

2. How will we get men to obey Christ?

a. We must “evidently set forth Christ as crucified” (Galatians 3:1).

b. We must preach only “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:1–2).

c. We must convince men that Jesus “showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3).

d. We must persuade them that “all the prophets...have foretold of these days” (Acts 3:23–24).

e. We must show men “the goodness of God” and convince them of His “forbearance and longsuffering” (Romans 2:4; II Peter 3:15).

f. Yet, we must also let them know that Jesus is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14; I Timothy 6:15) that all authority in heaven and earth is His (I Corinthians 15:27; Matthew 28:18–20).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. The Man Persuaded of the Master’s Love Regards Not His Duty as Onerous—

1. The ox or the ass does not hate his master because he puts him under the yoke (Hosea 10:11).

a. A wise master does not ill treat his beast (Proverbs 12:10; Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 13:15; 14:5).

b. Such a beast knows his master’s crib (Isaiah 1:3; cf. John 10:1–5, 27).

c. That beast bears the yoke gladly (Hosea 11:4; cf. Numbers 22:27ff.)

2. The true believer knows that His commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3)

B. Will You Obey Christ Today?