

THE TEST COMMANDMENT!

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

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Please open your Bibles to the gospel of John, the 14th chapter. John 14 and verse 15.
Jesus Christ - God - is speaking to His disciples, that is, He is speaking to you and me, and He says:

"IF, IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS".

In other words those who do not keep all of Christ's commandments, do not love Him!
Now we know that there are many people who claim to love Christ, claim to love God, but do all of them keep all of His commandments? How do we know? How can we tell if someone, or for that matter, you and I, keep all of Christ's commandments and thereby prove that we really love Him ?

The purpose of my Sermonette is to show you that we can know if we really love Christ, or if our love for Christ is just an empty profession, unacceptable to Jesus Christ?

In the 15th chapter of John in verse 10, Jesus Christ repeats Himself and He said: "IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, YOU WILL ABIDE IN MY LOVE, JUST AS I HAVE KEPT MY FATHERS COMMANDMENTS AND ABIDE IN HIS LOVE." In other words, Christ is our example in the correct and acceptable expression of our love for Him, and He, Christ expressed acceptable love to God by keeping all of His Fathers commandments.

What about us? Can we keep all of the Fathers commandments and thereby express our love to God, as did Jesus Christ our example?

Well, the answer is both Yes and No. Let me explain.

The answer is an obvious NO, we can not keep the Fathers commandments as did Christ, because we have all sinned and will continue to sin and fall short in our ability to keep the commandments, no matter how hard we try.

"ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT", says Paul in his letter to the Romans. So, if we all have sinned, and we have, and if we all continue to sin, and we will, how then can we express that we love Jesus Christ with commandment keeping?

In the 7th chapter of Romans where Paul continues to develop an understanding of sin and how to deal with it, he gives us the answer of how we can love Jesus Christ even though we continue to fall short in keeping God's commandments.

In Rom. 7 we find what is known as the Christian Struggle and Paul says in verse 18: "FOR I KNOW THAT NOTHING GOOD DWELLS WITHIN ME, THAT IS, IN MY FLESH". That's what we have just established: We have sinned, and we will continue to sin. Paul knew it, and we know it. Continue in verse 18: "I CAN *WILL* WHAT IS RIGHT, BUT I CAN NOT *DO* IT". Did you catch that? Here is the YES answer to our question. Paul says, he can *will* to do what is right, but he can not *do* it. In other words if we will, in our mind, in our spirit, to do that which is right, that is acceptable to God.

Listen to verse 19: "FOR I DO NOT DO THE GOOD I WANT, BUT THE EVIL I DO NOT WANT IS WHAT I DO." Paul doesn't want to do evil. You and I, if we are converted, do not want to do evil. When we do evil it isn't *us* that does evil, it is *sin* that is in us that causes us to do evil. Read it for yourself in verse 20 of Rom 7:

"NOW IF I DO WHAT I DO NOT WANT, IT IS NO LONGER I THAT DOES IT, BUT SIN WHICH DWELLS WITHIN ME."

In other words, it is our inward desire not to sin that counts, not our lack of, or our superior law-keeping.

Can you see now why the answer to our original question is both YES and NO.

But someone might say, that sounds like double talk. I mean anybody can say: "I really wanted to do what is right, but sin - the devil made me do it." In fact, someone might use this line of reasoning without even knowing what the will of God is, without knowing what His commandments are.

Well, because of that, or to avoid that, God gave us a test commandment, a test commandment that establishes if you knowingly and with understanding willed to do that which is right or not.

A test which shows both God and our fellow man if you really love God or not. That commandment is the 4th commandment, the Sabbath commandment and I dare say that if you know the Sabbath commandment, that is the weekly and the annual Sabbaths you will know most of the rest of God's commandments, his statues and His ordinances.

Think about it! The world, that is the society we live in, can teach us and require of us that it is wrong to lie, steal and murder, but would our desire not to do those things prove that we love God? No, not at all! There are lots of people who keep these laws without acknowledging, in fact without even knowing God. No, that wouldn't prove anything.

But, when someone keeps the Sabbath holy, well, why would someone do it? Is there any government, any society in this world that requires of its citizen to keep the Sabbath holy? No, not a one, except of course the Jews and they don't accept and acknowledge Jesus Christ.

So, anybody who knows about and keeps the Sabbath holy, received such knowledge from God, through His Word the Bible.

Lets face it, humanly speaking, the 4th commandment makes no sense at all. Most human governments and religions will acknowledge that man should rest one day out of the week, but primarily for health or recreational reasons, not because God said so. But to insist that it has to be the 7th day from sunset to sunset is not only not required, but rejected, and ridiculed and condemned as working for your own salvation. In other words, you are called and labeled a Judaizer, and what could be worse than that!

And so, the 4th commandment does indeed become our test commandment. With the Sabbath commandment God has given us the ability to discern if someone keeps certain laws because man said so, or because Jesus Christ said so. God has not left us without a clear sign to identify those who love Him, identify those with whom we are to fellowship, identify those who constitute the true Church of God.

In the 31st chapter of Exodus verse 13, God through His Word said:

"SAY TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, (in other words, 'SAY TO MY PEOPLE'), YOU SHALL KEEP MY SABBATHS, FOR THIS IS A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS, THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT I, THE LORD, SANCTIFY YOU".

Today, God through His Son says:: "IF, IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS", but someday soon He will say: "BECAUSE, BECAUSE YOU HAVE KEPT MY COMMANDMENTS, COME NOW AND ABIDE IN MY LOVE AND THE FATHERS LOVE FOREVERMORE".

Praise God for His love, His mercy and forgiveness, and for His Sabbath.

Brethren, I appeal to you, hold fast what you have and what you know, so that no one, no man, will take your crown.