

Gas in the Tank

#0152

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 26, 1976

John 14:15, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”; this is the secret of obedience. If you love Him, you will do what He commands.

Now, there are two ways to take this, dear friends, and I sometimes ask people who are interested in gardening, if it makes any difference which end of a hoe they pick up. They always tell me it does. You’ll agree that there’s a handle and there’s a blade, and the way to pick up the hoe is by the handle. If you *insist* on picking it up by the blade, you won’t get much work done with the weeds, but you might cut yourself. Is that right?

And so it is with this wonderful text. If you *insist* on cutting yourself with it, that’s too bad. It wasn’t meant to cut you. It was meant to cut *weeds*. Thank God, the Holy Spirit is here tonight ready to do some hoeing in these heart gardens of ours. Let’s let Him! What do you say? Let’s work with Him.

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” John 14:15.

There are several things that this text tells me. One is (and let me be very frank in speaking of it, first of all), to me the Master is saying, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments; if you don’t love Me, never mind. Don’t try because you couldn’t do it anyway.” You see, dear friends, without love, we cannot please the Master. And the only obedience that’s worth anything to Jesus is the obedience that comes from seeking to please Him.

Aren’t you parents like that with your children? I hope so. What good is it for the child to obey if his only motive is fear of punishment on one hand or hope of reward on the other? Now don’t misunderstand me. I know that little ones sometimes have to have some reminders. They can’t visualize the lake of fire, so they have to have something beforehand that they can relate to that establishes the relationship between transgression and result. I understand that. And they sometimes have to have little helps or rewards that they can get hold of right now.

But, my dear friends, Paul says, “...When I became a man, I put away what? Childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11), and somewhere along the line in our Christian experience, we need to be henceforth “...no more children, tossed to and fro... but speaking the truth in love...” to “...grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” Ephesians 4:14–15.

Jesus kept His Father's commandments, He says in John 15:10, and I know it wasn't because He was afraid of the penalty if He didn't. And I know it wasn't because of the hope of some reward. He had all the reward, and He took our penalty and left the reward simply because He loved us. Yes, love is the great motive power. And so, to please our Master, there is only one thing, and that is love. And "If ye love Me," He says, then "keep My commandments" John 14:15.

Also, I find in this text the greatest motive power in the universe to do anything. That's love. So Paul says, "...the love of Christ constraineth us..." (2 Corinthians 5:14.) What does 'constrain' mean? It means it impels me, propels me, compels me. It makes me *do* things. What does? Love, the love of Christ.

So if you're having a struggle with any problem—whether it's quitting cigarettes or getting the victory over whiskey or triumphing over an evil temper that makes your loved ones feel bad and makes you feel guilty when it's all over; if it's criticism and faultfinding, difficulty in the home; children, if your problem is obedience to parents—dear ones, whatever our problem is, the thing that will solve it is love.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments," Jesus says, and if we don't have *enough* love, then perhaps we need to find out how to get some more. You know, I was thinking about it as I was coming down to the meeting, and the weather being what it is, nearly everybody that came tonight came here in an automobile. Am I right? How many of you came in an automobile? May I see your hands? Sure.

Now, what made the automobile go? Gasoline. That's right. And whatever it costs, some people want to go somewhere bad enough that they manage to get the gas. Does it take the gas to make the car go? Oh yes, unless you want to push it, and that's slow work, and hard work, and on some roads, *impossible* work. Let me tell you, dear friends, the road to Heaven is steep enough and long enough that pushing won't get you there. It takes some *gas*—some power, some fuel—and that's love. "And *if* you love me," Jesus says, "you will keep My commandments."

Did you ever hear people say, "Don't talk to me about rules and law; I just want to hear about love"? All right, we'll talk about love tonight. "But if you love Me," Jesus says, you'll do what? "You will keep My commandments." So we're still not very far away from the law, are we?

Ah friends, you can no more separate law and love in God's plan, God's government, than you can separate it in a human heart where there's understanding. What a strange thing it would be for a child to say to his parents, "Don't talk to me about rules and orders and directions; just love me."

Sometimes I tell about the little girl someone told me of, who, after breakfast, said to her mother, "Oh Mommy, I just love you so," threw her arms around her neck. And her mother said, "Well, that's so nice. Mother was just needing a little girl to wash the dishes."

“Oh, but Mommy, I don’t love you that way.” [Mild audience laughter]

I wonder what love is anyway. Have you ever heard people say, “I just *love* ice cream” or “I just *love* pizza”? Is that what we’re talking about? What a strange word to use. At least if we use it for that, we’d better get a different word for what we’re talking about, hadn’t we? Yes.

Love, my dear friends, is an intense and deep abiding desire and purpose to please somebody. That’s what it is. And certainly, you’re not trying to please the ice cream or even please the apple. No. There’s a different word for that: “like.”

But to love God and to love those that He gives us to love, that means to desire to please. And so it’s very natural for Him to say, If you love Me, if you want to please Me, you will do what I say.

I was reading about a young soldier in a distant country who was guarding the headquarters where his commander had his office. The commander was away for a few hours on business, and this sentry was walking up and down. In fact, he was away for several days. Finally, the time drew near. The word was around the office that the commander was coming home that day. For some reason, the sentry thought that he’d do something really nice to please him, so he went down the street and purchased a bouquet to present to the commander when he came. But while he was gone, the commander came—no sentry on duty.

Was that the way to please? No, friends. It never pays to substitute our ideas for Christ’s directions. “If ye love Me” do what? “Keep My commandments.” Keep My commandments, not your ideas of what might please Me. We have a striking example of this in the Ten Commandments. The Fourth Commandment says:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shall not do any work...” Exodus 20:8–10.

Then He tells us the reason: because God made the world in six days, rested the seventh, blessed and sanctified that day, and told us to keep it. Isn’t it a pity and isn’t it strange that so many millions in the Christian world say that they love Jesus so much that they will *keep* the day He rose on and *work* on the day that He said to rest and keep?

“Oh,” somebody says, “I don’t think it makes any difference as long we do it through love.” But He says, “If you love Me,” do what? “Keep My commandments.” And echoing down the halls of time we hear His challenge:

“And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Luke 6:46.

There's only one Lord's Day in the Bible, only one Sabbath in the Bible, only one day that God ever told us to rest on and use as the special day of worship, the sign between Him and His people.

But I've said that all to say this, dear friends: are there other commandments that Jesus has given us besides the Sabbath commandment? Are there? Oh yes. Are they important? Yes. And if I love Him—don't miss this—I'll not substitute my ideas of how to please Him for what He's told me about how to please Him, whatever the subject. Do you follow me?

Take the matter of reading and literature, music, recreation, amusement, dress, diet, education, the use of money, the training of children; has Jesus given us instruction in all those areas? Yes. "And if you love Me," Jesus says, you'll do what? "You will keep My commandments."

"Oh," somebody says, "that seems so restrictive!"

Well, it's all according to which end of the hoe you pick up, my friend. Like I said, if you insist on picking up the sharp end, you won't cut many weeds, but you'll sure cut your fingers. But oh, if we get hold of that handle, friends, if we understand what love is and how to use it in pleasing our Lord, we'll rejoice to do what He says, and we'll find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. That's true.

Now, the problem is that we need gas in the tank. That's the problem. And here it is: In 1 John, the fourth chapter, here's the filling station. 1 John 4:19. Do you agree with me? Is this the filling station? Will you read it with me?

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

What does our love depend on? *His* love. Which comes first? His love. Oh, I'm so glad that it's that way. I could never have started it. *He* started it. Thank the Lord! I love Him because He first loved me.

Is that the way you've found it? Is there a soul here tonight that loved Jesus before He loved you? Is there a soul here tonight soul that thinks that Jesus loves you because you started loving Him? That that's the way it developed? Oh, no. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

"Well," somebody says, "how in the world could God love *us* when we didn't love *Him*?"

That's His secret, but the secret is in the 8th verse and the 16th verse. Three short words, but oh, such wonderful words! Three beautiful, glorious syllables; what are they?

"...God is love" 1 John 4:8.

Look at the mountain peak on the mountains to the west of us here. In the morning, before the orb of day ever comes over the eastern mountains, what do you see over there? Oh, you see the mountain shining. But where did it get the light? It got it from the rising sun. And my dear friends, before you and I ever get any light, Jesus is the light. Before we reflect any of that light of love to others, He from eternity, has been the light and love of this universe.

“We love Him, because He first loved us” 1 John 4:19.

We reflect the love that shines from His face. There is no other—no other light, no other true love. “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

Then, as I said, if we don’t have what it takes to be obedient, children, if we don’t have enough love to love father and mother, what we need is to look at the love of Jesus, and as we see *His* love our love will do what? It’ll grow.

And fathers and mothers, if we don’t have enough love to treat our children with that mingled mercy and justice, that blended firmness and compassion that reveals the true love of God, if we don’t have enough love to do that, can we do it? Not, my friends, by simply practicing biting our lip and clenching our fists when we feel like acting like the Devil. No, no. We need something more than that. We need gas in the tank. We need oil in our vessels with our lamps, and the oil is love, the golden oil of love.

I’m not talking about some gushing emotion. There’s a place for emotion, friends. I like it in its place, don’t you? Sure. But I read something wonderful here in Volume 6 of the Bible Commentary, page 1100, from the prophet to the remnant:

“The love of Christ in the heart is what is needed. Self is in need of being crucified. When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously. It is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will” *SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 6, page 1100.*

“It is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will.” I want to read to you that once more and then I want you to say it with me. What’s the antecedent of it here? Love. Suppose we put the antecedent in there. This time I’m going to read it with ‘love.’ “Love is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will.” All together: “Love is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will.”

You see, if the little girl had understood that and applied it, she would have washed the dishes cheerfully, wouldn’t she? Yes. But she didn’t have a *what* to wash the dishes? She didn’t have an *impulse* to do it. She didn’t have an *emotion* to do it. But she could have had a *choice* to do it because she loved her mother. She could have said, “Look here, I want to please my mother, and whether I *feel* like washing the dishes or not is not the subject. No, no, I want to please Momma. And right now the best way I can please her is to wash the dishes.”

Do you see what I'm getting at, dear friends? Oh, how many people miss a true religious experience because they're waiting for some impulse to sweep them off their feet. And if it comes along, it doesn't last forever, friends. Oh, no! It doesn't make any difference which way the wind blows; it doesn't blow that way *all* the time, does it? North, south, east, west—whichever way the wind is blowing now, just wait a bit, and it'll be blowing from some other direction.

That's emotion. That's impulse. But love is like the compass. We don't look at the weather vane to find out which way is north, do we? Where do we look? The compass. Thank God, it always points that way. And true love always points toward pleasing the one it loves. "And if ye love Me," Jesus says, do what? "Keep My commandments."

"[Love] is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will" *Ibid.*

Let's read it together again, friends. I can get hold of that, can't you, friends?

"[Love] is not an emotion or an impulse, but a decision of a sanctified will" *Ibid.*

But now notice. How is it that I come to the point of *making* that decision?

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

It *always* starts that way. So if I find that my car is not moving, it may be I'm out of gas, you understand. Thank the Lord; I can 'fill up.' How? By beholding Him.

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

My love for God may be in spoonfuls. His love for me is like the mighty oceans, dear friends. There is plenty, plenty of it. Oh, there is no exhausting of that wonderful gift. And so, do I need more love? Ask for it and then behold Him.

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

Once again, repeat that verse with me.

"We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19.

Now, how do we behold His love? We cannot see Him, of course. We *will* see Him someday, but let us think of what He has done to *reveal* His love to us. All around us in the book of nature, He's telling us that He loves us. He sends these planets moving around in the sky, and the moon in its various phases. What for? To attract our attention and to show us that He's interested in making us happy. He sends the sun every morning without which we wouldn't have life. He surrounds us, not only with everything *necessary*, such as food, air, and water, but oh, how much He adds in the way of beauty and enjoyment.

If you had never heard a bird sing, you wouldn't know the difference, but friend, because you *have* heard birds sing, you *do* know the difference, right? And so with sight. There *are* people that have never seen, but you and I see. And if we had never seen, we wouldn't know the difference. But because we *have* seen—the blue sky, the beautiful trees, the little flowers, and a thousand other objects of beauty—we know the difference, don't we?

Think of how many things God has done just to make us happy. He is showing us love by seeking to please *us*. And would somebody be so (what shall I say?), so narrow-minded, so immature, so utterly childish (not childlike but childish) as to say, "Well, if God *really* loves me, I can tell you what I'd like to have Him do to *show* me He loves me." After all He's done.

"What is it you'd like?"

"Well, I'd like a whole gallon of ice cream to eat all by myself. That's what I'd like. If somebody wants to please me, I know how."

Wouldn't that be pitiful, dear friend, to treat even a human being that way, let alone God? Do you see what I'm getting at, friends? We are not to measure God's love by our poor little selfish, indulgent standards.

Now, besides all the beautiful and wonderful things in nature, God has revealed Himself through this Book. He's sent us a special message to tell us about His love. Then He sent Jesus down here, His personal representative; God, in Christ, came to reconcile us to Himself. He took our place, accepted our humanity with all its liabilities, grew up in our humanity, and then went to the cross and died for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Friends, as we see Him hanging there on the tree, can we doubt that He loves us? What more could He do? What more could He do to show us that He loves us? And now He says, I want you to look at Me. And if you do, you'll be drawn. I want you to see Me in creation. I want you to see Me in My life here on earth. I want you to see Me in My death on the cross. And as you look, you'll see that I love you. I'd rather die to save you than try to live without you. I want you. I want your love. I've given everything to show My love to you. Will you give Me your will?

Not waiting for some gushing emotion. Not waiting for the tears to fall from your eyes. (If they fall, fine. They ought to in a sense. I mean, it's reasonable; it's logical.) But, my dear friends, what we're talking about is something deeper than emotion. We're talking about the *decision* of the will to say, "Lord, I see that You've made this world to bring me happiness and beauty. I see that it's the Devil that has made the thorns and the briars. I see that You've revealed Your love in this Book. I see that You've sent Jesus to live for me, and die for me, and dear Lord, I'm going to respond. I'm going to take that will that You gave me, that choice, that wonderful gift of choice, and I'm going to put it on the side of loving You back. Whether I feel like it or not is beside the point."

I'll tell you a secret, friends: if you do it because it's right, the feeling will come sooner or later, sooner or later. But oh, what a wonderful thing it is to do it because it's right, to do it because we've got a recognition of how much, *something* of what He has done; a recognition of how much He has done for us.

And so we can see say,

“Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be,
Ever, only all for Thee.”

If you love Me, He says, you will do that. And the way to love Me, He says, is to see My love for you.

“We love Him, because He first loved us” Ibid.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

Now, will you repeat with me that text of all texts, John 3:16, the in light of our study tonight?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

This is the greatest text in all the Bible. Notice some of those words. Can you think of anyone greater than God? “For God so loved.” Can you think of any greater act that God ever did than to love? “...that He gave...” Can you think of a greater expression of His love? “...His only begotten Son...” Can you think of a greater gift? “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever...” (That means me, that means you, that means anybody) “...whosoever believeth in Him should not perish...” Can you think of anything greater on the debit side, the lost side, than that—“perish”? No. But instead of perishing, you can have what? Everlasting life. Can you think of any greater results? Thank God! Once again, together:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16.

Oh, let us respond to that love with all our heart, what do you say?

[Elder Frazee sings, "Oh, How I Love Jesus."]

Oh, how I love Jesus,
Oh, how I love Jesus,
Oh, how I love Jesus
Because He first loved me.

Do we? How many would like to send Him the word? Thank God for everyone!

Now shall we have a little time of witness, a time of thanksgiving and praise to the One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood?

[Testimony service]

[Congregations sings the hymn, "My Jesus, I Love Thee."]

Our precious Lord, we do love Thee. We thank Thee that Thou didst love us first. We thank Thee that what little love we have has come from Thy infinite heart. And so tonight, we give Thee back the love Thou hast bestowed upon us. Dismiss us with Thy blessing and help us to tell others how much Thou dost love them; for Christ's sake, Amen. God bless you all. Happy Sabbath.

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