

### ***Non-Burdensome Christianity***

*1 John 5:3*

1 John 5, verse 1. Now, I read these verses over and over and over and over and over again. I was telling James not long ago that preaching through *1 John* is tough. I mean, maybe, there's almost a simplistic style here, but *John* is difficult for me. Maybe some of you find him much easier than I do, but, reading through this, I want – I mean, many of you know I used to be an engineer, so I like to think about things logically, I want to see two plus two equals four. I want to look here and I want to find order. I want to find a clear linear direction somewhere that you...establish this, establish this, establish this, establish this...because you're going in this direction and you're coming to these conclusions over here and I find *John*, at times, perplexing.

Listen to this: **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...”** (1 John 5:1a)

Now, if I was going to make that statement, my next statement might be, “And everyone who loves God has been born of God.” You see, I'm talking about those who have been born of God and I say, “Yeah, everybody that's been born of God, they believe, and they love the brethren, and...”

But that's not what *John* does. It's almost like we get this conjunction “and” in this first verse bringing these two thoughts together and yet, it's like *John* just leaves faith, and leaves being born again, and jumps over to loving the Father and loving whoever has been born of the Father. I mean, I don't know, maybe that's not perplexing to you guys, but to me – it's disjointed. Until you begin to really see what's really happening here. I mean, after I read this thing over and over and over and over for several days, just reading this over and trying to put together some kind of fluid thought here. How does this all link together? What's the relationship here?

Think with me here: **“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.”** (1 John 5:1)

So if you believe, it proves you've been born again. If you love the Father, it follows that you will love his children, whoever has been born of him. **“By this we know that we love the children of God...”** (1 John 5:2a) How can you know if you love the children of God? Well, by this: **“when we love God, and obey his commandments.”** (1 John 5:2b)

Verse three: **“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For...”** (1 John 5:3a) – now this is interesting, because that means his thought is still continuing here – this could be “because” – here's the reason why his commandments are not burdensome – *because* **“everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”** (1 John 5:3b)

That's why his commandments are not burdensome, because everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. To me, at first, that seems disjointed. **“And this is the victory that overcomes the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”** (1 John 5:4)

And it's like now he's returned to where he started in these first five, believing in Jesus Christ. In [verse] one it was believing that Jesus is the Christ; here it's believing that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now, you don't have to read this little epistle of *1 John* for very long before it becomes quite obvious that *John* does have a particular style of writing. I told you before that John Piper likens it to a bee that flies around a flower. It's kind of like he buzzes around this flower of faith, and then he'll go over and fly around this flower of love, and

then he'll go fly around this flower of righteousness, and then he'll come back. And each time he doesn't take the exact same circle around the flower, he adds little things, nuances. Martyn Lloyd Jones likens it to this, he says John is no logician, where he's logical, systematic, linear. Lloyd Jones likens John to a musician, to a poet.

Martha, is that right? [Unintelligible answer from audience] See, now that shows you right there, Lloyd Jones is right, because that's not the answer that I would give.

But look, here's the thing about John. There is one sense in which John is repeatedly linear in his thinking. He repeatedly gives us what we might call an "if-then statement," or an "if-then conditional statement." If this condition is met, then this is true. He does this over and over and over again.

Think about it. If we confess our sins – this is in chapter 1 – if we confess our sins, then what? There's going to be forgiveness. (1 John 1:9) If we - this is chapter 2 – if we keep his commandments, then we know that we know him. (1 John 2:3) If we keep his word, then we may know that we are in him. (1 John 2:5) If we love our brother, then we may know that we abide in the light. (1 John 2:10) If we confess the Son, then we know that we have the Father. (1 John 2:23) If we practice righteousness, then we know that we have been born of God. (1 John 2:29) If we're born of God, then we do not practice sin. (1 John 3:9) If we love the brethren, then we know that we have passed from death to life. (1 John 3:14) If we love in deed and truth, not in word only, then we know that we're of the truth. (1 John 3:18-19) If we know God, then we will listen to the apostles (us, John says). (1 John 4:6) If we have the Spirit, then we know that we abide in him. (1 John 4:13) If we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, then God abides in us, and us in him. (1 John 4:15)

You see, he does, in that sense, repeatedly, gives us these conditional propositions like no other author in Scripture. Nowhere else in Scripture do you find just the barrage of these kind of conditional statements. What are they? Well, they're statements that look like this: If A is true, then B is true. If A is true, then you are a Christian. If A is not true, then C is true – you're a liar, the truth isn't in you. That is very logical reasoning. The thing is he takes all these logical one-liners and he just throws them in there in a way that to my mind says, "Aw, John!" But, I'm glad for it if it helps Martha, and others who are more minded that way.

But here's the thing. John delivers these propositions, these conditional statements – to do what? He gives these to us not just to compare Christians with the lost, but to compare and contrast professing Christians who are real to professing Christians who are not real. That's the comparison in this book. You see, the liars are those who say they're Christians, but aren't. That's the lie. Brethren, there's nothing more important for any one of us in this room today than this: is that we're able to say, I'm a Christian and it's real, not false.

Do you realize everything, think about it brethren, **"...what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Matthew 16:26) What will you give in exchange for your soul? This is not unimportant to any one of us. This matters. Brethren, how are we going to deal with life? You think about what you heard in that first hour – what are you going to do when they say you have cancer? What do you do when you get the phone call that your son is dead? How do you deal with life? I think about that all the time. I hear about situations in this world on a regular basis and I think, how do they deal with that when they have no Christ, and they have no solid Rock?

I think of watching people that are being killed by ISIS and think, all their hope in Allah and Mohammed is gone at that point; it's failed them. Or you think about the Orthodox Christians that are being put to death and their god - they don't worship the God of Scripture - and suddenly at that point, all hope has failed them. What do you do? How do you live life? How do you face the end of life? How do you face death? How do you face standing before God? There's only one hope in this world. Brethren, I will tell you this: whether or not a Republican becomes the next president doesn't really matter in the final analysis of things. Whether you inherit a large sum of money, brethren, those things don't answer to our greatest needs. This one thing matters. This one thing answers to it –

death is coming, hell is moving, the wrath of God is coming and our only hope is not to be found in merely calling ourselves a Christian but to actually be one.

There's so much at stake. So much at stake. Everything is at stake. Your soul is at stake – as to whether you're a true Christian or not. There's so much confusion, and what does John do? John takes up his pen to obliterate such confusion. He wants to be clear. He wants to give us clarity about what this is. And you know what, brethren, I'll tell you this, a lot of people get uncomfortable. A lot of people get uncomfortable when we start looking at what true Christianity is. It makes a lot of people uncomfortable because what happens? Well, it shakes people.

There are those that say, "Hey, Christians are those who believe. Just leave it right there. You don't have to go further. That's it, that's all, don't add anything. Leave me alone with my simple faith. I don't want to have to look at my life. I don't want to have to look at the nature of saving faith. Don't talk to me about being born again. Don't show me what saving faith does. Don't talk about that new birth. Don't talk about commandment keeping, loving deeds, practicing righteousness, not practicing sin, all that stuff. I want to hear, 'Just believe.' I want to hear, 'God loves me. Has a wonderful plan for my life.' I believe in Jesus, leave me alone."

That how a lot of the world is, that's how some people that come in here are. We have people leave because they don't like when true Christianity is put to the test. But if there's anything about *1 John* that you know, it is absolutely imperative.

Listen, listen, if there is so much deception in the world, if there are so many who are liars, remember, "**Many... have gone out into the world.**" (1 John 4:1)

Jesus says, "**Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord...'**" (Matthew 7:21)

And he says, "**I never knew you.**" (Matthew 7:23)

If there are so many that are deceived, brethren, it is in your best interest and my best interest to put our faith to the test. That's what John's first epistle is all about – put it to the test. Because if this is true, you are born again. If this is true, you are in him. If this is true, you are in the light. If this is true, you abide in him. If this is true, you do love the Father. If this is true, you have eternal life. But you have to look at the conditions. If A is true then B is true. And if A is not true, B is not true. That's how John argues. We have to come back here. We have to submit ourselves to the word of God.

With thunderous voice, John says, "No, I love you too much not to tell you what true saving faith looks like. Too much."

Of course, brethren, of course, Christianity is about faith in Jesus Christ, but John wants us to see that wherever there is true faith, there is a whole life. That's Christianity. It's a life, a fullness of life. There's a life associated with being a believer. True believers do believe in Jesus Christ, but there's more. They've been born again. You see that in 5:1 – they've been born again. Believers prove they've been born again. But you go back to chapter 1, what did you have there? Confessing sin. If you say that you don't have sin, if you're denying that you are as bad as Scripture says you are, if you have a way of downplaying sin in your life, if you're there, Scripture says, "It's not well with you."

You know what's true? What's true is the Spirit of God comes in and convicts us of sin. What's true is if you've been born again your eyes have been opened, not just to see who Christ is, but to see who you are, and to see what your sin is. People that have been born again are sensitive to sin. People that have been born again may have their falls and even not repent for a season, but they are like David, oh, they hurt for it. And they're not

right, and the world is not right, until they repent and make things right with God, until they're confessing, and until they're broken before him.

That's what John is teaching here. John goes on to say, "You'll walk like Christ."

He goes on to say, "You will keep the commandments that he gives."

He gives us these things – he talks about the fact that you will love the brethren, you will practice righteousness, you will purify yourselves, you don't practice sin, you will love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, you will listen to the apostles' doctrine, you will love God. Do you see it, brethren? This is a whole life associated with being a believer, a whole life. There are realities that must always accompany faith if it is to prove genuine.

Okay, but we're in 1 John 5:1-5. And so, here in these verses, John has been giving us all these "if-then" statements. Now I realize he doesn't always use "if" and "then," but you can imagine they're there. What are the conditional statements that we find here in these first five verses? Let's look at them.

Verse 1: **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God..."** (1 John 5:1a) Now you don't find "if" and "then" there but it is an "if-then" statement. It's a conditional statement. We can imagine those there. It basically would read like this: if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, then it confirms that you have been born of God. That's exactly what that's saying.

Again, verse 1, **"...everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him."** (1 John 5:1b) What's our "if-then" statement? Well, if you love God the Father then it must follow that you also love all those who are born of God.

How about verse 2? **"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments."** (1 John 5:2) Well, you can turn that into an "if-then" statement – if you love God and obey him, then you can know that you love the children of God.

Verse 3: **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."** (1 John 5:3) The King James Version says "grievous". If you love God, then you will keep his commandments in a manner that is not burdensome.

Now, here's the thing I want you to see. After he speaks about faith in the first half of verse 1, where he says that if you believe Jesus is the Christ then you've been born of God – now, he's going to get back to that, it's not so disjointed as it first appears, he's going to get back there – but watch when he starts talking about love. Watch how this thing develops. First, it's if you love the Father, but a true love of the Father is always connected with obedience. And true obedience to the Father is always a glad obedience, not burdensome. And it is that kind of glad obeying of the Father that will always prove to be love for the brethren. Why? Because that's what his commandments are all about, right? The commandments that John has in mind all through this letter are loving the brethren, loving the Father, it's a love to God and it's a love to our brethren. That's how this thing progresses.

Well, brethren, right here is where I want to focus our attention today. I named this sermon *Non-Burdensome Christianity*. You know what? Scripture describes two kinds of – remember – remember, John is comparing not just the saved and the lost. John is comparing those who profess to be Christians and it's true with those who profess to be Christians and it's not true.

You basically have two kinds of professing Christians in the world. Those who find God's commandments burdensome and those who don't. This is clearly life and death issue. Notice verse 4. **"For..."** – which means what

he's talking about continues on, here's the reason why God's commandments are not burdensome – **“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.”** (1 John 5:4)

You see what he's talking about, he's talking about those who are born of God. He's not talking about a better state of Christianity versus a worse state of Christianity. He's talking about those who have been born of God and those who haven't. That's what's at stake here. That's what he's putting on the table here. This is the issue. John is saying that this is the very reason why God's commandments are not burdensome. Why? Because born again people overcome the world.

Well, what does that have to do with it? We're going to look at it momentarily but the thing I want you to see is that only born again people react to God's commandments in a manner that is not burdensome. But here's the thing. Brethren, in a hundred years this will play itself out and show itself true in every one of our lives. And you know what happens in a building like this with a group of people like this? Is you, folks, are largely – you fall into these two categories. You're not just the overtly lost. We have a room full of professing Christians. And the question on the table right now is this: God's commandments – burdensome, or not? Because if you've been born of God, he's saying they won't be.

This is not something that I made up. This is something that God says. This is something that God had John write and preserve in Holy Scripture for the duration of this age that men and women might have a sure test as to whether they've been born again.

You see, any faith that doesn't accompany the new birth, the radical transformation, is faith that doesn't save. That's why James can come along and say, **“Faith without works is dead.”** (James 2:26)

This has to do with you and me. You know what? I know, you know, as well as I do, that typically people assume right off, without hardly giving any thought at all to it, that they do not find God's commandments burdensome. I'm sure if we went around and took a survey, I doubt most of you would write that down.

In fact, even though this is talking about professing Christians, those who are true and those who are false, you would find this to be true even if we went out there on the streets to the overtly godless. Those who don't go to church, those who don't read their Bibles, those who don't have any kind of normal prayer life, those out there whose doctrine is not biblical. We can go out there and you know what you're going to find? If you go door to door and you say, “Do you basically approve of God's commandments or disapprove of them?” most of the people are going to say, “I approve of them.” Most people are very quickly and very flippantly going to say, “Oh yeah, I'm on the same page with God.”

But all you have to do is start describing the God of the Bible. All you have to do is start describing what the God of the Bible says. How the God of the Bible looks at sin. You start thinking about this – brethren, there's a bumper sticker; I've seen it before: *Why is everything I like either illegal, immoral, fattening, or addictive?*

Have you ever seen that? You answer the question – why is it? Why is everything I like either illegal, immoral, fattening or addictive? What's the answer? You know what? That is a tongue-in-cheek way, that is just a light and humorous way of saying, “I love what God hates.”

And you see when it's done like that, men feel innocent. It's done light-hearted. But you know what? There's a seriousness beneath that that is not funny. I mean, brethren, think about the God of Scripture. Think about the God of Scripture when it comes to purity. He hates divorce. He hates it. You might squirm because you've been divorced. I'll tell you, brethren, he hates it. He does not approve of it. You say, “Well, there's exceptions.”

I understand. But brethren, even though there may be times when it's permissible, the thing is, when a divorce takes place, it is breaking a bond that God put together. You are separating what God has joined. God hates it. God does not approve of it. That is not according to God's original design, when it comes to divorce.

God forbids homosexuality. He calls it an abomination. He forbids all sex, altogether, without exception, he forbids all sex outside of marriage – period. And marriage by his definition is between a man and a woman. Brethren, he comes along, has his Son come into this world and he says, "I'll tell you this, if you even look at a woman and lust after her, you've committed adultery in your heart already."

And he says, "And you better cut that hand off or you're going to go to hell."

He is very plain. We have a God that throws people into hell. If you don't think so, you've never read Ephesians chapter 5. In Ephesians chapter 5 you find sexual immorality, you find sins like that, and Paul says, "Don't be deceived, it's because of these very things the wrath of God is coming."

"Oh, but I love her!"

God's going to throw you into hell if there is not repentance and a turning to Christ and a turning from that sin.

I guarantee you – you know, you start looking at the God of Scripture, he is very serious. He says that the wage of sin is death. One sexual sin, the wage is eternal death. That is the God of Scripture. That is how exact he is. That is the kind of purity that he demands. That is the holiness that we are speaking about when we speak of the God of Scripture. He does not approve of pornography. He does not approve of immodesty. He does not approve of most of the T.V. shows and the movies and the advertising that takes place in this world. He hates it. It is not according to his character; it is not what he approves of.

Now remember, John is primarily comparing the true Christian with the false Christian, not the overtly lost. And the thing is, the person in our midst that claims to be a Christian, but is not, they are of a very singular character. It's interesting. They know what they have to say, they know what the answer has to be, "Yes, I approve of God's commandments."

They know that they need to answer that way. They know they need to answer, "Well, no, I don't find them burdensome."

The problem with the professor who's not real is – what keeps him going? Fear. Fear keeps him going. He's afraid. He's afraid that if he doesn't do these things, if he just turns his back wholesale on Christ and walks away from him and from the Church, he knows there's hell, he knows too much truth to do that. And so, he not only plays a game in front of others, he plays a game with himself. Always trying to convince himself, "Yeah, I want that, I like that, I delight in that."

That's what he knows he needs to want, it's what he knows he needs to desire. But he knows that if he just wholesale rejects it, even though there's something in his heart that's longing after the world, he says, "But if I go that way then I'm just dashed on the rocks." There's destruction. He's afraid of hell, he's afraid of what God might do to him. But you know what, all the time, it's burdensome.

Because if the truth be told – what they really want? The KJV translates it "grievous"; the NET, "weighed down". That's the idea. The word "burdensome" here just has to do with a weight. Imagine you had a 30-pound weight just chained around your neck. It's just heavy. It's restrictive. It doesn't let you run and do the things the way you want to. It's a weight. It's oppressive, restrictive, it holds you back. It chafes on your neck – those who are Christian in name only.

You know what the thing is about these people? They really want to be set free. That's what they crave. You know what one of the greatest indications of this is? Is where you find joyless Christianity – supposed. It's where you find, or the individuals that you find, where – you know what, getting together with God's people on the first day of the week, that's not the highlight of your week, that's the lowlight of your week. It's like, "Oh, we gotta go to church, I dread that."

You do it because you feel like you have to do it. That's the idea here. It's where God's rules, God's statutes, God's commandments – they're this code of ethics that come at you from the outside; they press upon you, but your heart isn't for that. Your heart really wants to run in another direction. But you feel like you force yourself against what you really desire because you don't really want to go to hell. That's what happens.

And people like that typically won't admit it. But take a person like that, bring them away from the church and stick them in a worldly office situation, a worldly factory situation, a worldly college situation, a worldly family situation, and watch them spread their wings. It's like they're smelling the free pure air of living the way they want to live. And you can see it. Watch that person who – I mean, put them in a position where their Master's name is just being drug through the dirt and they can just laugh. They're free. They don't have to act like it bothers them.

If you truly love the Lord, it'll bother you.

I can remember as a young believer where I kind of at first took everybody at their word. It just didn't enter my mind why anybody would profess to be a Christian if they weren't. None of my buddies, nobody I knew – the last thing I would ever do when I was lost was profess to be a Christian. *Why?* I mean, I was a nominal Catholic, but I didn't want that.

I can remember after I got saved going to a movie, and it was just filthy; the language was filthy, I came out of there so grieved. I got back to a gathering of these people from this singles' group from this large church and I said, "Aren't any of you grieved?"

They were looking at me like, "What are you talking about?"

It was like I threw a bucket of cold water on the whole deal. I said, "Didn't you guys hear the Lord's name just abused?"

And one of the girls said, "I didn't even notice."

Why? You know what? You know what the commandments are that John primarily talks about in his epistle? Commandments to love. We know that all the commandments hang on the commandments to love God and to love our neighbor. His primary concern is love. Think about God's commandments. Jesus Christ tells us, if you're going to follow me, you've got to die.

You know what, in this letter, he says if Jesus Christ laid down his life for the brothers, you should lay down your life for one another. These are his commandments. They're commandments of love. Those are his commandments. He wants us loving others. He wants us counting others more valuable than ourselves. He wants us giving our life to the things that pertain to others more than the things that pertain to ourselves. He wants us humble. He wants us looking to the needs of others. He wants us sympathizing. He wants us putting ourselves in feeling for those who are in prison as though we ourselves are in prison. He wants us to feel the needs, and the wants, and the hurts of one another to that degree. He wants us washing feet. He wants us giving to others. He wants us sacrificing for others. He wants us laying down our lives.



But I'll tell you this. This is foreign language to the person who is the Christian in name only. You know what you find with the Christian who is one in name only? These things – no, their heart is going in a different direction. Oh, they are glad to have other people love on them. They're the people who take, take, take, take. They're the people that feel entitled. They're the people who feel hurt. Oh, they get their feelings hurt all the time. Why? Because you don't treat them the way they think they deserve to be treated.

You see, they don't have regard – God's commandments to lay down your life and become nothing to help others? That doesn't register. Their hearts are not for that. Boy, if you can get them in a circle where they can cry on your shoulder about how they've been wronged, they'll do that, just like that. These are the people who, God's ways, they don't square with their ways. They love to take, they love to be offended, and they love to tell you what they deserve.

And when they ever do something for other people – because they know that at times – that's what the false professor does. He grits his teeth and he tries to do the things that he sees that God would have him to do, but it's never done freely. It's never done with joy. And so people like this, you know what they do? Any time they do something for someone else, they write it down. They may not have it on paper somewhere but they've got it up here. And boy, they can recall it in a second, "I did this for you!"

Not this right hand forgets what the left hand – "Really, I did that?"

"Really, Lord, when did I see you [thirsty] and give you something to drink?"

See there's a forgetfulness in true Christianity. But oh, this person. This person, they remember these things.

How about this – God's commandments. Just coming into the New Testament, how God forbids idolatry. Jesus says, "If you love family members more than me – not worthy of me."

"You love your own life more than me – not worthy of me."

"If you don't forsake all that you have – can't be *my* disciple."

Oh, Scripture, God's commands – they forbid idolatry. The false Christian does love other things more. They won't admit it. They won't admit it, but there's a gnawing desire for the things that the world has. They want money. They want freedom to do their own thing. They want their own way. And again, the reason they won't outright forsake this whole thing is because they fear. But you know what, secretly, they love the music of this world, they love the things the world loves, they love all the stuff, they love the success. God's commandments are grievous. They're burdensome.

But here, consider this. Consider the true believer. To this person the commandments of God are not burdensome. Well, here's the thing, if not burdensome, what are they? They're a delight.

Psalm 119:47, "**I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.**"

Or how about Psalm 112:1, "**Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!**"

Psalm 40:8, "**I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.**"

Did you get that? Your law is in *\*here\**. Isn't that what the new covenant promised? The new covenant in Jeremiah 31 says, "**I will put my law within them.**" (Jeremiah 31:33)



You know the beauty of being a true Christian? The commandments of God are no longer this code that come from the outside that oppress me. It's now on my heart, which means what? What the psalmist does is he puts these two thoughts together: delighting in the law is equivalent to having the law on your heart.

That's the true Christian. That's it. Do you see what salvation is all about? Some people say, "It's a pass out of hell." It is that. But it's much more than that. What is it? Salvation is all about God taking the sinner and turning that sinner so that his own heart is aligned with the will of God. You see, salvation is about God making us like him.

"Be holy as I am holy."

"Be merciful as I am merciful."

We're predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. You see what it's all about? Christ came to do the will of his Father. Why are we saved? Because it's predestinated for us to be conformed to his image. What is the beauty of that image? It is to love what God loves. It is to delight in what God delights in. That's what this is all about. His commandments are not burdensome. This is what it is to be born again.

Listen, if you'd rather go down to the tavern and drink your life away, and that's what you're given to and that's what you like...look, brethren, you've got to think with me here. Where is this whole thing going? Look at the transition into verse 4. Brethren, notice this with me. Let's read 3 and 4 together.

**"...this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For..."** or *because* – this is why the commandments are not heavy, why? – **"...everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."** (1 John 5:3-4)

Do you see what John is saying here? Worldliness is what causes God's commandments to be burdensome. Do you catch that connection there? The commandments of God are heavy when we follow the course of this world.

Brethren, do you remember back in 1 John chapter 2? John describes the world. He gives us three descriptions of it. Do you remember what they were? The lust, or desires, of the flesh. The lust, or the desires, of the eyes, and the pride of life. You know what? It's a man's lust, it's a man's pride that keeps him from being able to obey the commandments of God with joy. That's what it is. You find somebody in here that's professing to be a Christian but they're not truly one? You're going to find a person who thinks God's commandments are a burden; they're grievous; they're a weight. You know why? Their desires and their pride.

God wants us to love other people. God wants us to sacrifice for other people. He wants us to lay down our life. Think with me here. Brethren, the Hamilton's are bringing on a whole new group of children from Tibet.

"So what? What does that have to do with me? I want that car! I'm going to get that car, I'm going to get that pair of tennis shoes. I'm going to get that new cell phone."

"But didn't you hear what I just said? There's a need over there."

"I don't care. I'm going to go \$400 a month into debt with this new car, and I'm going to pay full coverage insurance, and I'm going to do this for the next five years. And no, it won't lead me where I have the ability to give to the poor, give to the needy, give to the widow, give to needy families in the church, but I don't care! You know why? Because I want to look good in that car."

Brethren, this is what he's saying.

The commandments of God are not burdensome, why? Because if you've been born again, you've overcome the world. And the world is all about these things.

But brethren, that's not all there is in the equation. What's the other thing? Our faith. What does that mean? Brethren, I'll tell you this: wherever somebody is born again, wherever they have this new life, new life awakens faith. What is faith? Faith is when I see Christ for the first time desirable. Before we were born again we never saw him as desirable. We acknowledge maybe that he died for sinners. We were afraid of hell so we said we believed in him. But he wasn't desirable.

Listen, brethren, doesn't Scripture paint this picture for us? You've got a man, he's going through a field, he finds a treasure buried, he goes and sells all that he has that he might have that treasure.

Faith is when you see Christ more valuable than anything else because faith is believing. True faith is believing what's true. There's nothing more valuable than Christ. Suddenly, we behold him – that's what John is saying. You behold him as the Christ, the Anointed, the Priest, the King, you see him as the Son of God. The Son of God, you see him as God the Son.

Brethren, when we're born again you know the first thing that happens, you know the first thing that the new birth brings in? It's with the new life. Our eyes are opened and suddenly we see everything different, we see Christ different. How do we see him? We see him beautiful. Suddenly we see our sin. It makes us recoil. We were more evil than we ever could have imagined we were evil. Suddenly we see our sin for what it is. We see that we deserved hell. And we see Christ as our only hope. We see him as beautiful. We see him as irresistible and we receive him. That's what Scripture says – you believe and you receive, "To as many as have received him."

Yes, you're going to receive him – when? When are you going to exchange everything, forsake everything for Christ? Only when you see him as more valuable than everything else. And that's what the new birth does. You open your eyes and you behold the glory that you never saw before.

Do you see how all this works, brethren? What is it? Well, when that happens to you, suddenly your desires – I mean, for one, it just smashes the pride of life! Because in his beauty you see your ugliness. In his highness, in his glory, you see you. And you know what? It's not pretty.

And it humbles. And the desires – my desire is for him, and you know what suddenly happens? That faith overcomes the world. Because of what? At one time we were dead in our trespasses and sins and were following the course of the world, following this course of the prince of the power of the air. Why were we following the course? Why were we just led along? Why? Because of our desires. We're led along on this leash of our desires; we just want all this stuff that's in the world. The desires of our eyes, anything that was beautiful, anything that looked good. Anything that looked good in the eyes of the world. The degrees and the power and the success and the money, and that house, and that car, and that woman's body. That's the stuff, the desire of the eyes.

But what happens – those desires are crucified, Galatians 5 says. And what happens? Oh, our desires – we find him altogether lovely. Our desire is for him. The desires of the flesh – brethren, by the Spirit we put those things to death. The pride of life. Oh, brethren, we become like little children. This is the picture. You see that faith in Christ overcomes the world and in the overcoming of that pride and those desires, there is a delight in his ways. Look, if I love him, I love his ways. If I love him, I love what he desires. Doesn't Scripture say, "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness**"? (Matthew 5:6)

I'll tell you, from the time God saved me what I find burdensome. I find my sin burdensome. But the fake Christian – they don't find their sin so burdensome. Few tears. Few sighs over sin. They find the fact that God requires them to do what they don't want to do, or to not do what they really want to do – that's what they find burdensome.

To the true Christian, true freedom is going to be to smell the air of glory, when no sin will cross my path forevermore. That is the heart's desire. Brethren, let me tell you. When Jesus comes along and he says, "Come unto me, all you who are burdened and heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28) I have to think this is one of the primary burdens he has in mind. You're burdened. Yes, burdened with sin, undoubtedly. Heavy laden like Pilgrim in *Pilgrim's Progress*. You've got this big ol' load on your back, undoubtedly. All that wickedness, all that you've done, the guilty record, all the guilt – guilt, guilt, guilt.

But you know he doesn't qualify or quantify or describe exactly what burden he has in mind. He just says, "If you're burdened." And one of the burdens is this. I mean, Christ is the place you want to go if God's standard is a burden to you. Why? Because his blood just washes away all the guilt of all your transgressions against that law and he gives you a new heart and he puts his Spirit within you. And he writes his law on your heart. Brethren, when Christianity is a drudgery, it's a dead giveaway you don't have the real thing. I'm not saying being a Christian is always easy.

But I'm saying this: the true Christian knows the delight in his heart of following in the footsteps of Christ. He knows a joy. Yes, all the darkness of this world may grieve him. Yes, his own sin, and his own liveliness of his own flesh yet remaining may grieve him, but there is a joy in Christ, and there is a joy in his ways and there is a true hungering and thirsting after righteousness and it's real. And there is a joy, there is a joy of having a conscience that has been washed, and now says, "You're forgiven. You're forgiven. You're forgiven." It speaks peace to us. There's joy in that.

Brethren, what we're talking about here, true Christianity that does not find God's ways a burden versus that Christianity which is really no Christianity – not true Christianity – that finds, really, the Christian life to be a burden. Life and death. Born again or not. This will bear out in every one of our lives. Everyone in here who professes to be a Christian, this will prove true. Every one of us. Brethren, if you come up short of this, what do you do? You hear his words, "Come unto me, come unto me."

If you're burdened, if this is all a burden, if you're under this burden, "Come to me." It's only there you find freedom. He says he'll set you free. There's real freedom in him.

Brethren, the greatest freedom that you can have is when you wake up and you want to do God's ways and you delight in his ways. That's freedom. When you can wake up and say, "I want to do God's will today. Lord, help me do it." You can look in his word and say, "That's good, I desire that."

And, you fall on your face and you stumble and don't do it perfect and you can confess and go back to Christ and there's fresh cleansing and fresh life and...but that's the life of the Christian. Don't live this Christianity that is just this burden. I mean, it's the long-faced kind of Christianity. Don't do it – don't live that Christianity, that's a lie. Why? Because it doesn't profit you, it doesn't profit you. Abandon it like the plague and run into the arms of Christ.

*Father, we pray for the reality of this to play out here, oh, I desire, I desire a church full of people that don't find your commandments burdensome, that find them a delight, that find them written on their heart, that find that they hunger and thirst after righteousness, that find that they're most free when they most are running in the way that you ran. Lord, we know that this takes the power of the Almighty God. This takes new birth, this takes new creative power. We pray for such unleashing of your power, oh Lord, life, power, reality, we want it here. We want it, we want those hearts that have the law written, hearts that have been transformed, that old stony heart thrown away. Lord, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.*