

## Is The United States A Christian Nation? (Part 7)

Christ's Disciples Submit in Love  
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Given 28-Mar-09; Sermon #929

Are you aware, that in 1893, when Congress was considering putting the phrase, "In God We Trust," on American coinage, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church officially petitioned Congress to not do so on the basis of their claim that America never has been a Christian nation? Some in the past have recognized this, and I have gone into this subject, because naming the United States a Christian nation is done so often it is commonly accepted as truth, and therefore goes unchallenged. America is called Christian, but its Christianity is not the Christianity of the Bible.

As God views His work on earth, the Kingdom of God and the world are two very distinct entities, and it is very helpful to understand this. In the Matthew 13 explanation of the parable of The Wheat and the Tares, the "field" is the world, and as Jesus showed in His parable, the world is literally filled with tares. It is the Christians who are few. In verse 41 of Matthew 13, God's kingdom is inferred only in an end-time context, and that context shows that there are some tares within it—the church—and then they will be separated from it by angels.

The parable makes very clear that the world—the field—is the abode of the enemy. In fact, it is a very dangerous enemy, said so elsewhere in the Bible, and the individual Christian is perceived as a soldier enlisted in warfare against the world. Novelist John Steinbeck, who authored *East of Eden*, stated near the beginning of that book, "The soldier is the holiest of all men because he is the most tested of all men." Tie this to "Onward Christian Soldiers, going as to war." The author of that poetry, Sabine Baring-Gould, knew what he was talking about.

Charles Spurgeon, a prominent Protestant theologian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had this observation regarding the Christian soldier and the world. He said,

Always keep your armor on because you are always in the midst of enemies wherever you are. You are not a soldier in barracks or at home, but you are a soldier in the enemy's country. You are in the country of a malicious enemy who hates Christians with a perfect hatred. The world understands that you are its natural antagonist. Be assured that it will take advantage of every opportunity to destroy you.

In the previous sermon I placed emphasis on the primary foundational attitude of a child of God, and what he must have toward God. It is humility, called in the King James Version "poor in spirit." This quality resides in those who wholeheartedly and clearly recognize their spiritual poverty as compared to God, and they greatly desire to be like God. Jesus likened them in a different place to a young child not yet conformed to the world's image. Now this tests their conversion frequently.

These children are not puffed up by a suspicious prideful ego, but willingly submit to God's instruction without a whole bushel of justifications as to why they cannot submit. Without murmuring, or any other manner of attracting attention to the self, they will sacrifice to go the extra mile, to take the lower seat, to be last in line, to love their enemy, to not retaliate evil for evil, and they will wash feet. They will do unto others as they would have others do unto them. The Christian does this, because the reality is that they are deferring to God. Remember that. They will go the extra mile because they are deferring to God. God says to do it, and so they defer to Him.

Now why do they do this? It is because they love Him, and give evidence of this love by submitting, but this submitting is not just to God alone, but also to men.

Recall that in a previous sermon I asked the question, "Why do we do these things?" I said that there are two closely-related answers. The first and most obvious is because we love God, and we love Him because we are coming to know Him, and Jesus added this explanation: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." So we submit and do so.

The second reason is less obvious, and at times can even be somewhat scary. We do what He says simply on the basis that He said it. There is so much that we do not know about Him and His reasons for commanding things, but we do what He says because of a background of experiences with Him, and we are coming to trust Him, and so we step out without having complete answers.

I want you to turn to Romans 5.

**Romans 5:6** For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Notice the pronoun, "For when *we* were still without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." That is you and me, and of course everybody else as well.

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Let us go now to Ephesians 5 for a little bit of explanation.

**Ephesians 5:21** ... submitting to one another in the fear of God.

In this case he means that within a congregation we submit to one another.

People who love each other submit to each other. Another way of saying this is that people who love each other defer to each other. We just read that God loved us before we loved Him. We see an interesting thing here, that in order to establish a relationship, He mercifully deferred to reveal Himself to us and thus begin a relationship with us. He deferred to us despite the fact that our conduct proved that, at the very least, He did not mean anything to us. There was no respect. Remember David said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." We largely ignored Him.

The enmity against Him that we had may have even been outright rebellion, but He deferred anyway to us and began giving us gifts so that we could respond to Him, and thus a relationship began. Do you see what I am heading to here? Before we can have a relationship, God had to, in a sense, lower Himself down to our level, as it were, and defer to those who were His enemies. He sought us out in order to have a friendship and a family relationship with Him.

Now He did not stop there. He deferred to us by giving us gifts so that we could respond, and thus a relationship began. And how did we respond? We began returning a love given in His deference to us. We submitted to His call for faith in Christ's sacrifice and repentance. That was the beginning of our expressions of love given in return. It was the beginning of our deferring to Him in return, but in reality it was the love of God given us paying its first dividend to God in that His love shed abroad in our hearts was being returned to Him.

This is a rather lengthy explanation, but I want you to reach a conclusion with me, because remember, the subject is, "Is America A Christian Nation?"

What I have just gone through, the unconverted will not do, except (there is an "except") in a very half-hearted fashion. They will not return God's love. Somewhere along the line of life, sometimes very quickly, sometimes very often, the carnal mind will find ways, reasons, justifications for drawing lines in the sand, saying, "This far, and no farther." It is through their works that the drawing of the line is revealed. It is through their works that the lack of the fear of God is revealed. It is through their works that their failure to love Him is revealed. At some point, their submission will stop.

I want you to turn now to a scripture we have been through three or four times, but it is very important to this series of messages. We are going to go back to I John 4.

**I John 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

I think we understand by this time when John uses the term "spirit" here, that God actually, through John, is saying the spirit is in the man, and the man is a false minister, as we shall see very shortly. He uses the term "spirit," and then that quickly, in the last phrase says, "because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Now we know for sure what John is talking about.

**I John 4:2-3** By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

This is a key scripture for this time of the year as we approach Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. The apostle John isolates two broad principles here by which we are able to identify who is false and who is true, and (this is more important to you and me) where we stand in John's evaluation.

The key is this word "confesses." A person confesses what he is, who he is by what the person says, and we will say "preacher."

The second one I must admit is sometimes very difficult to determine. The second one is by the person's manner of conduct and the fruit produced from the same.

Now we get back to you and me again. In like manner, our confession before men and God is made and is the testimony from which we will be judged.

We are going to go into this judgment thing for a little while here, because it is important to you and me. We are approaching Passover, and we want to make sure that we are confessing ourselves before God in a right manner. Now remember, God is judging us by (1) what we say, and (2) by what we do. And really, in a sense, the more important of the two is what we do, and we will see that in just a moment.

Let us go to Jeremiah 17. We are going to string some scriptures together here, and they are almost self-explanatory. We are going to go back to the Old Testament part there so we can see that God's message system has been in existence from the beginning.

**Jeremiah 17:10** I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

That is exceedingly clear. This is what God says He judges men according to.

Let us go from here to the New Testament to Matthew 16, where Jesus said:

**Matthew 16:27** For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

That is a very clear statement.

Let us proceed forward to the book of Romans, but this time a different author, but you are going to see they all say the same thing. The apostle Paul writes:

**Romans 2:6** who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

We are going to stay right in the book of Romans, but we are going to go to chapter 14 because it zeroes right in on you and me here.

**Romans 14:10-12** But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Each will give account for himself to God for what you say and for what do. Brethren, we are giving account to God right now. I do not mean right at this moment, but I mean during our lifetime, and we are confessing before God by the words we say and by the actions we take.

Let us go a little bit further in this. We are going to go back to the book of Revelation, chapter 2, and verses 22 and 23. Of course, Revelation is written specifically to the church, and it is an end-time proposition here.

**Revelation 2:22-23** Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Some organizations try to tell their membership that works mean nothing. That is one to raise the eyebrows on.

**Revelation 20:12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The books of course are the books of the Bible. Brethren, everybody—every single person—is judged by what he says and by what he does.

Please do not get the impression whatever that we are saved by our works. We are not. We are being judged, though, according to our works, and we have the opportunity to make changes for the better and to glorify God in what we change to.

**I Peter 1:17** And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.

Fear there has the force of reverence; not being scared, but being very respectful; reverential respect.

One more thing I want to pick out of this verse is that Peter says the Father judges without partiality. I am of course doing this because I want us to see that we are being judged according to what we do with what we have been given.

Let us go to Luke 12 for a bit more on judging.

**Luke 12:47-48** And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will [We are talking about works.], shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know [was ignorant], yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

God's judgment is absolutely fair. He discerns perfectly, most measuring what we and all others have done against what we have been given.

Now what is the one broad biblical character quality that describes and bears more weight in God's judgment than all others? We have got to know this because we want to make sure that we are doing what it is that God says bears more weight with Him than anything else. In fact, it might be that it bears more weight than all other things combined.

To what best use can any of us put the gifts of God toward pleasing and glorifying Him? What is it that demonstrates truly and significantly to God, who judges us, that we indeed are separate from the world and that we truly are His witnesses?

We are going to go to the book of I Corinthians because this was a congregation that was really, in one sense, messed up. It had all kinds of spiritual problems, and so the Apostle Paul gives very many important answers to kinds of things that a true Christian congregation can go through because we can be subject to the same things, the same kind of weaknesses, the same kind of wrong thinking as the people in the world, because the same human nature is going through our minds. It is part of us. But we want to know what God requires of us more than anything else.

We are going to begin in I Corinthians 12, verse 27, and then we are going to go to I Corinthians 13, verse 3. Let us read through that.

**I Corinthians 12:27-30** Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of

tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

**I Corinthians 13:1-3** Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

In verse 27 of chapter 12 is Paul's opening statement in this section. It actually begins a new paragraph, and this section provides a bridge between the subject matter of that which preceded it in chapter 12, and the subject matter of chapter 13, and actually on through chapter 14 as well.

I want you to understand that what Paul is saying in these verses here leaves nobody in the church out. It is addressed to all members of the church. Paul makes it clear in chapter 12 that every member of the body of Christ has been gifted by God to perform functions within the spiritual body even as each individual cell in each part of the human physical body is designed to carry out functions—even very specific functions within it.

The human body is the model that Paul uses, and verses 28 through 30 tell us that some functions in the spiritual body—or we might say some members in the spiritual body—are more prominently displayed than others in the body are. In the same manner, some of the cells in the physical body (like the skin, like the eyes, like the tongue) are right out in front. Everybody can see and hear them. They are prominently displayed.

Now in the comparison, you see, an apostle is prominently displayed. So is a prophet, and so is a teacher. In like manner some functions or members of the spiritual body may have what we might call "flashy" gifting. However, human nature, being what it is, has the tendency to make some feel slighted and jealous. This is exactly what happened in the Corinthian church body.

The fruit of that was that some members became highly competitive with each other, and thus their vanity made them strive to get attention. Some members became very critical of others. Others turned in on themselves in a state of resentment. Either way, they created disunity in the body because they were not performing their function in submitting, in deferring to God, and letting Him run His church rather than them focusing on men. This was caused by them being more concerned about pleasing themselves than pleasing God.

How would you like it if your tongue suddenly took it on itself to shut down? You could not say anything because it was jealous of the ear which got all the attention listening.

You see, it is kind of funny, weird, strange, and odd, but that is what Paul was talking about, only he applied it in a spiritual situation within the church body. What was happening is that they were undermining their own relationship with God, and in addition, they were creating division within the congregation. They were doing this because they were seeking to satisfy their vanity and to receive recognition in the form of praise from other members in the congregation. Meanwhile, they were

overlooking the fact that Jesus Christ—the One we have to impress, the One who is judging us according to what we do, the One who purchased the church with His own blood, in John 8:29, in way of contrast said, "I always do what pleases the Father." That is the example.

This was God in the flesh, and He deferred to His Father in heaven in everything, even allowing the Father to have Him put to death, and He took it without a murmur. He went to His death without complaint because He knew it would please the Father. He is our model. The people in the Corinthian church were not following that model. They were following human nature. This is why verse 31 says, "Eagerly desire the best gifts." I want to connect this to I Corinthians 14, because Paul's instruction here just continues right on.

**I Corinthians 14:1** Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy [or speak under inspiration; that is, being led by the spirit of God].

Anybody can do that. God has enabled us to do it.

Now look at verse 39 of the same chapter. Here Paul is winding up his argument, and he says:

**I Corinthians 14:39** Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues

This continues right on through chapter 14, and he reminds us twice in chapter 14 that it is not wrong to ask God for gifts. But Paul says in the last verse of chapter 14:

**I Corinthians 14:40** Let all things be done decently and in order [or we might say rightly arranged],

The "why" of asking for gifts, and how they are used, makes a huge difference in the way God judges us. The last phrase in chapter 12:31 is more clearly translated, and is just as correct, "And I will show you a more excellent path." Sometimes we misunderstand "way." "Path" is very clear. It is something we walk on. It is something that we conduct our life on.

What Paul is showing us here, brethren, is that we are being forced to choose, to make choices. It is as though Christians are walking a path that frequently has forks in it, and God wants to see which fork we will choose. I am going to put this more forcefully. We **must** choose. If we are going to keep moving along a path, we must choose. If we stop all befuddled, we go nowhere.

Considering the context of these two chapters here, will it be the fork of submissive humble service that builds oneself in the congregation, or will it be the fork of competitive self-aggrandizement, seeking recognition and praise, whose fruit is division?

So God is giving us a choice. He wants to see what our works are going to be. Will they be works of wisdom and love, or will they be works of self-centeredness?

Now we come to the place where we see it is not wrong to ask God for gifts, but it is wrong to use them wrongly. For those of you who are here in Mountville where I gave my sermonette, I showed you that Jesus said that God is more willing to give us good gifts than we are willing to give our children good gifts. Paul followed this by saying it is not wrong to ask for gifts, but it is wrong to use them in a wrong way. He is saying make sure you choose the right fork and use them in the right way.

We are now going to read those first three verses in chapter 13 again because I want us to really get some kind of a glimpse of how important this most-important-of-all qualities is that God can give to us.

**I Corinthians 13:1-3** Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

I want to add Galatians 5:6 to this so that we can see a practical use of what we are talking about.

**Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus [meaning after we have become members of His body, after we become part of the church] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Paul is making a comparison here. He says that circumcision and uncircumcision, which represent the works that we might do, avail nothing, but what is important is faith working through love. It is a comparative statement. What is important is faith working through love. Love is what is important in contrast to any work of and by itself. Love is what God has shed abroad in our heart by means of His spirit, and it must be joined with faith in God, which God has also given, and then used in a manner pleasing to God, not the self.

Jesus' life illustrates and demonstrates God's way. Though He was rich, He became poor. Though He was Creator, He chose to become servant of all. All of God's converted children are empowered to choose to do the same in their area of operation within the body of Jesus Christ. It is this enabling that God withholds from none of His children, but makes all the difference in the world as to how we use any other more specific gifting or challenge or skills we develop. This enabling triggers and continues the circumcision of the heart. The enmity against God begins to be removed.

This jewel—gifting of love and faith—is what turns a person from self-centered to God-centered. This is what changes a person's reasons for and why he does things. This enables a person to see circumstances and events from a godly perspective, and this too requires a growing process of development, but the good news is that we are empowered to accomplish it, whereas the unconverted are not.

Let us look back again at the illustration Paul uses there in I Corinthians 13, verses 1 through 3. In each verse, the Greek term translated "charity" or "love" is *agape*. *Agape* is the word the apostles used to indicate godly love.

Most of us could not help but be impressed by someone who could speak or who could sing in a beautiful angelic language and tongue, or who possessed powerful prophetic gifts, but these abilities, Paul said, amount to nothing more than religious noise—a clanging symbol—unless motivated by love and used for the purpose of love rather than vanity.

Now, who would not be impressed by someone who understood all mysteries and possessed all knowledge? And yet, if those marvelous gifts are not used in self-sacrificing service to others in love, they are altogether worthless. Who could possibly criticize someone who had mountain-moving faith,



or who gave all their possessions away, even to the sacrifice of their life to others? But Paul says that if they are not done for purposes of love, they are devoid of value from a Kingdom of God perspective.

All of these illustrations might be very impressive to those in the kingdoms of this world, but they are utterly insignificant from God's point of view compared to love. These abilities of which Paul speaks may be nothing but vanity and ego-building showing-off, or a money-making performance. Demons are capable of doing miracles, but do they do them out of love? They do them to deceive. They do them to capture people and take them into spiritual slavery. They may be nothing but vanity and ego showing-off, so they have nothing of value within the Kingdom of God—the kingdom that God is creating.

What is important is godly love, combined with godly faith and godly hope. It is that level of love that is demonstrated by Christ's life and sacrifice. No matter how impressive a gift, a talent, an achievement may be in its own right, it has no Kingdom of God value except in so far as it manifests God's love and it looks like Jesus Christ.

We are going to stay within the book of I Corinthians, and turn to some verses in chapter 16. It is just like they are the exclamation stamped right at the end of the book, considering especially what he just wrote in chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 (which is the resurrection chapter). This book really ends with a spiritual explosion of things that are really valuable to our Christian life. Now look at what he says at the very end.

**I Corinthians 16:13** Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

Those in submission to God, in love, are to be the object of our thoughts and actions.

We are very strongly reminded at the end of this book that we are still involved in a war. Paul has not forgotten about that. These two verses here are the kind of commands that would be given to a soldier. We must never let this slip from our mind. I am talking about the fact that even when we are surrounded by friends, there are still unseen evil spirits lurking to attack and to draw us into sin.

We must never let our defenses down, and we must never put away our sword. We have to see ourselves as if in the trenches on the battlefield. We are either patiently waiting for the next attack to begin, or we are already in the thick of a battle against malicious unforgiving and relentless enemies. This is why the apostle Paul closes the book of I Corinthians in this way.

First he says, "Be alert." "Be vigilant." "Be aware." "Be watchful to thwart the spiritual forces of this world." We are to think of ourselves as sentinels who are on guard. It was Thomas Jefferson—one of the founders of this nation—who said, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." That is what Paul says here. "Be vigilant if you want to keep your liberty, your freedom, before God, and not fall into slavery."

Then Paul says, "Be steadfast." It means be steady, be stable, that we should be firmly defending the interest of the God of our nation—the Kingdom of God. By this he is implying holding fast to the faith—the truth of the gospel once delivered for all time to the saints.

And then he says, "Be courageous," because the battle we are involved in is exceedingly important, and that this is no place for cowards and weaklings, which is really what we are, and so he has to urge us on. He is saying never let it slip from our mind that God did not call us to failure. He expects us to act in His behalf by faith and His promise that He will never leave nor forsake us. He will always be there, but He is forcing us to make choices.

Now Paul says, "Be strong." That is synonymous with "Be courageous." There is something interesting here in the Greek. As I was studying, I found that it is written in the subjective tense so as to instruct us that we are to understand we are to draw on our past experiences with God in order to be courageous and strong.

Why would Paul say something like this? It is because Israel was very good at forgetting. God performed a miracle every day by putting the manna out there for them to eat so they could get the picture that God was there providing for them. He was right there, and then ten minutes later they would be rebelling, doing something really weird. Paul said that should not happen to you. Call on your past experiences with God, because He is there, and we know it, but He will not reveal Himself until we make the choice. He is forcing choices. We must choose, because it is those choices that show what our works are going to be, and this is what He is judging us on. He educates us, and then gives us choices on what He just educated us.

We do not always pass the test, but He is always there. We go to Him. We ask forgiveness, and sure as anything He is going to test us again. That is what a good teacher does until we get it right. Israel never got it right, but God working in us will get it right. So do not drop out on Him.

We are to be aggressive against our spiritual enemies in the world, but even so, love must always dominate. Do you know why? It is because those demon spirits are not the only things that are involved. They are working through human beings, and God wants us to make a witness to those human beings, and that witness is the way we respond to the choices God is forcing on us

What am I saying? I am saying that those people are being used. They do not know it. Their time for salvation has not come yet. So God is saying, "Make use of this situation." But always remember you are dealing with people who are in the most cases ignorant of what is going on. He wants us, then, to show them that there is a better way. We must always understand that the people who are involved in these choices we must make are not our enemy. It is the spirit world that is our enemy, and they are the spirit that is within those people.

Let me use a cliché here. We are dealing with people, and they may look on the outside like they are the enemy, but always we are to understand that they really are not the enemy. The enemy really is Satan and the demons, and so that puts us into a position that this old cliché I am going to give you should be understood by us and made use of. We are to hate the sin, but we are to love the sinner. That is so simple, but it is a truism. It is a principle that we must follow, because God is counting on us to make the right example before these people. We are His witnesses that He is God.

We are still talking about love. Now we are going to go to I John 4, because we have to extend out from our dealings with the world as stuck inside the church. In these verses he is talking to the church now, to fellow members.

**I John 4:7-11** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. [John says things so simply.] In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [or the payment] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We are to strive to emulate the kind of love for our brethren that Jesus showed toward you and me. He died for it. That is a pretty high standard. John's primary purpose here, his primary thrust, is that love must be expressed within the church. But understand, that if we are at all going to reflect God, it must be expressed at all times, in all situations, and that, brethren, is our goal in life.

Continuing on with the thought of love.

**I John 5:2-3** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.

This is the Bible's clearest, most specific statement defining what God's love is and will do in God's children's lives. It is keeping His commandments. It is also right here that we must define what is meant by commandments in their broadest sense. I want you to follow this reasoning.

Go back to the Old Testament to Proverbs 13.

**Proverbs 13:14** The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.

Now, who is the wisest being that you know? It is God.

Turn to Psalm 119.

**Psalm 119:97** Oh, how I love Your law. It is my meditation all the day.

**Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

All these things will become clearer in just a moment.

**Psalm 119:165** Great peace have those who love Your law.

These verses express serious directions for the conduct of a Christian life. In each case the Hebrew word translated "law" is Torah.

I figured that its usage in Hebrew is not clearly understood by most of us. It does not specifically mean "law." Every place in those verses it was translated "law." Not every place in the Bible, but in those verses, and by far and away, most verses in the Bible where the word "law" appears, it is "Torah" that is underneath it.

But in the Hebrew, the word "law" does not have the same sense as an English-speaking person would normally think of it. To a Hebrew-speaking person, Torah means direction; Torah means teaching; Torah means instruction. It is derived from the verb, ya'rah, which means "to point out," hence, "to teach."

The word of God is that which points out or teaches God's will to man. Torah, derived from ya'rah is its noun form. It is more accurately to be understood as teaching, direction, or guidance.

Now, within the Bible it indicates "direction from above," that is, from a heavenly source—the highest source that anybody can turn to for wisdom. The highest source that anybody can turn to for instruction, for direction, is from God.

Torah does not specifically indicate a restriction as the English term "law" does. It does not indicate something imposed, as the English term "law" does. Rather, it indicates the means of reaching a goal or an ideal. It is to be understood as the means to an end. It is a very, very valuable resource. It is an extremely valuable guide.

Torah is teaching and guidance given by God to enable His special people to reach the goal He intends them to become. His goal is His offspring in His image. Instead, people see it merely as a body of rules imposed, and thus a weight of restriction. That is why John said it is not grievous. It is not burdensome. It is a sign on the pole that says, "Go this way!"

Do you feel burdened when you are trying to go from this city to that city, and you see a sign on a pole that says, "This is the way you want to go"? Does that not make you feel good? "I'm going in the right direction!" That is what the word Torah is supposed to mean. "Go this way, and you will get there." What is so hard about that? People see it as merely a body of rules imposed, and thus a weight rather than a freeing and guiding power.

Now, Torah includes the Ten Commandments, as its most basic and specific part of the body of instruction and guidance, but the reality, brethren, is that it is the entire Bible. Do you understand what I am saying? Torah includes the entire Bible.

All of the direct statements, all of the examples given that show godly conduct, all of the attitudes described, all of the metaphors, the figures of speech, and the multitudes of symbols that reflect God's character and His perspective are all included within the term "Torah," because every single one of them teaches, "Go this way, not that way."

"Do you want to reach the same goal that I have for you, or do you want to go off?" So God forces us, as it were, through these tests to make choices. Which fork are we going to take?

Brethren, the sign says, "This way, not that way." Is that something that is a burden to have—the wisest source we can turn to? He says, "This is the way. Walk you in it." That is love. That is what love is.

This is why Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4 says that, "man must live by every word of God." The whole thing is His law. The whole thing is His Torah pointing the direction which fork to take whenever those things pop up.

Thus, when God says He is going to put His laws into our mind and write them on our heart, He is not speaking of the Ten Commandments. He is speaking of every aspect of His guidance and direction so that we will believe as He does, and therefore live life as He does: Eternal life. That is the kind of life God lives.

In John 8 the principle instruction in that chapter is exceedingly important to us because the issue in that chapter goes a long way toward discerning whether America is a Christian nation or ever has been a Christian nation.

In that chapter the Jews peppered Jesus with a number of questions. "Where are You from?" "Who are You?" "Who is Your Father?" He had already told them. Of course they did not believe it. This eventually worked around to where they said, "Why, we are Abraham's children, and because of that we have never been in bondage." Jesus did not accept that one bit. He said, "If Abraham were your Father, you would understand what I am saying."

The very fact that they were living life, the very fact that they did not understand what Jesus was saying, proved to Jesus that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ was not the god of the Jews, and in verse 44 He dropped a bombshell on those people when He told them their father was Satan.

In verse 43, He said, "You cannot bear to hear My words." The word "bear" has to be inserted in there when you put it together with verse 44. They kept rejecting Jesus. They could not bear to accept what He said because the spirit of Satan was working so strongly in those people they fought Him tooth and toenail so that they did not have to accept what He said, and thereby held themselves innocent.

Here is the principle from John 8. If a person truly is of God, he will hear God's word and he will understand it, and because he understands it, it impacts on his mind and he feels obligated to obey it, not reject it. The United States of America has shown by its history it has consistently, decade after decade after decade, rejected the word of God while at the same time taking the name "Christian" upon it and defiling God's name through its disobedience.

One of the clearest clues that you can know that it rejected the word of God all the way from its very beginning is how and by what means its nation was formed. It was formed through the crucible of war. America is a war-making nation. This stamps it right on them. This is not a Christian nation. A Christian will never go to war because Jesus never went to war. When He had the opportunity, He rejected the opportunity. He said, "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight." But this is not where His kingdom is from, and so He obeyed the higher power, which did not give Him power to go to war. A Christian does not have permission from Jesus Christ to go to war. This is one of the clearest of all things we could possibly use to understand God's kingdom is a kingdom of love.

You know, virtually every part of the culture of the United States is competition and war-driven. It does not matter whether it is economics, because leaders in economics will tell you, "Economics is war." Most of our popular sports are founded upon very intense competition against others. Even academia has a war aspect to it. Where do you think all these people are coming from who say there is no God? They are coming out of academia, and they are teaching those concepts to others.

Do you know how bad things are becoming? This very week Notre Dame University—one of the highest-rated Catholic schools in the United States of America—invited that murderer Barack Obama to come and speak at their graduation. And I say "murderer," because he has removed the bounds on abortion: The murder of the unborn. They invited him to speak before their students.

There is Harvard and Yale. Most of those Ivy League schools began as church schools. Harvard I know was a Methodist University. What are they today? They are the well-spring of atheism. We are not a Christian nation. There was a time in our past when the moral standards in the United States were very much higher, and many of them were based upon Christian principles, but those things do not a Christian make. The works that the nation has involved itself in are proof-positive that it is of the world.

**John 13:34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you [meaning to the same standard], that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Murder is not love. Our streets are filled with immorality.

Let us look all the way back to Genesis for a final scripture. Let us look at our father Abraham, which the Jews thought they were doing, but most certainly showed they were not. Turn to Genesis 26. This is what God says about Abraham.

**Genesis 26:5** ...because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

He was a godly man, and he is the father of a godly nation that is now forming, and to whom, under Jesus Christ, the rulership of the world is going to be turned over to. It is going to be turned over to Jesus Christ and Abraham's children.