

HOW TO LOVE THE LORD

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If you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15).

No one can come into heaven who does not love the Lord above all things. The first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). People who have this love in their hearts, find the gates of heaven flung wide, with angels there to welcome them. But those who do not have this love cannot get into heaven, and would not be happy there! There is not an angel in all of heaven who did not first have to learn on earth how to love the Lord.

It is most important, then, that we should love the Lord. And since we cannot possibly love Him if we do not first know who He is, therefore He has made us so that we might be able to learn about Him. And so that we might know Him, He came down from heaven and dwelt on earth for a time. Because of that, we can think of Him, can behold His glory, can know all the wonderful things He has done for us, and so we can give thanks to Him and bless His holy name.

But perhaps you do not quite understand how to love the Lord. Maybe you think that in order to show your love, you must do some great and wonderful deed. Perhaps you think, "I am too little and too weak now, to do anything which will show the Lord how much I love Him. When I grow up to be an adult, when I am big and strong, then I will explore far countries to tell people about the Lord, or I will save my country in time of war, or I will become very wealthy and help poor people. You think that these deeds will show the Lord how much you love Him. But right now you may think that you can't do anything."

But it is not through great deeds that we learn to love the Lord. Even adults are weak in the sight of heaven. They are compared to children in the Word, and also to sheep, who have no strength and who cannot even protect themselves against the wolves who would devour them. The Lord, who cares for His people, is compared to the shepherd who watches over his flocks and guards them from every harm.

And the Lord gives you a way, right now, to show your love for Him. There is only one way in which sheep can show their love for the shepherd, and that is by following him, by keeping close to him, by going wherever he tells them to go. And so the Lord says to all of us, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:21). This is the way for all people, children and adults, to truly love the Lord.

What does it mean to keep the Lord's commandments? He does not command us to do things that we are not able to do. And so He does not command you to do great deeds which are beyond your strength. He only asks you to do things that lie within your reach. He tells you to do certain things that you can understand: to obey your parents and teachers; to be kind to one another; to always tell the truth; to be industrious and sincere in doing the tasks which are required of you; not to be jealous, or quarrelsome with your neighbors; and always to think of the Lord and of His Word as holy. Sometimes these things seem very small and scarcely worth doing. There is nothing heroic about them. And when they interfere with something else you would like to do, you may be tempted to reject them and cast them aside.

And yet these are the very things by which you can show your love to the Lord. These are the only things by which you can be prepared for heaven. These things are like food, which the Lord gives you to eat to build up your spirits, even as He gives you all the things you eat to build up your bodies and make them strong. It is these very things which are meant in the Lord's Prayer, when you ask, "Give us this day our daily bread." Those words are a prayer to the Lord to give you little things to do every day, by which you can show your love to Him and so draw nearer to Him.

In the sight of the angels, these seemingly little things, done day by day in remembrance of the Lord's Word, are greater deeds than any of those you dream of doing someday. These things are the Lord's commandments, of which He said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (John 14:21).

Amen.