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**“Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”
(I John 2:3).**

Obey the Commandments

Central Truth: Obedience to God gives assurance of salvation.

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Topic: Commandments; Obedience: To God.

The children sing a chorus. “If you're saved and you know it, say 'Amen!’” Underlying those words are two great principles. (1) You can be saved now. (2) You can know now that you are saved. The first epistle of John was written so that you who believe may know that you have eternal life (I John 5:13). God wants you to have assurance of salvation.

One proof that a person is saved is that he practices Christian obedience. But take care to understand the teaching at this point. One is not saved by obedience; he obeys because he is saved.

There may be several reasons that one would seek to live by Bible standards. (1) He may think, “If I live right, God will bless me.” That is a profit motive. (2) He may think, “If I don't live right, God will punish me,” That is a fear motive. (3) He may think, “If I live right, people will respect me and I will profit from it.” That is a selfish motive. (4) The one great reason for obeying God is, “I will live right because I love God and want to please Him.”

“Trust and obey, / for there's no other way / To be happy in Jesus, / But to trust and obey” (John H. Sammis).

I. SALVATION IS THE BASIS OF OBEDIENCE (I John 2:1, 2)

Here is an excellent summary of the Bible doctrine of salvation; Notice the four pillars of salvation mentioned in verses 1 and 2.

A. We are saved by the advocacy of Jesus. *“We have an advocate*

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (verse 1). An advocate is a representative, a mediator, one who pleads another's cause. The prophet Isaiah said that Christ would make intercession for the transgressor (Isaiah 53:12). Hebrews 7:25 relates His saving work with the fact that He ever lives to make intercession for sinners. That is what Jesus referred to when He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). No other person on earth or in heaven can represent us before God and secure our pardon. It is Jesus only.

B. We are saved by the propitiation of Jesus' blood. *“He is the propitiation for our sins”* (verse 2). He gave himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. His blood becomes the covering by which the record of our sins is blotted out. Jesus' death on the cross was not just a terrible miscarriage of justice which interfered with God's plan. It was God's plan. Jesus came into the world for the purpose of dying for sinners (I John 4:10). Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash away sin.

C. We are saved by the scope of Jesus' grace. His sacrifice paid the debt for sin, *“and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (I John 2:2). You will never meet a person whom God does not love. You will never meet a person for whom Jesus did not die. There is no distinction before God between Jew and Gentile, for God is rich in grace to all who call on Him (Romans 10:12). That is why “whosoever will” is affixed to God's call to salvation.

D. We are saved to be like Jesus. This teaching should never encourage a person to be careless in sin. It rather should encourage one to be careful that he does not sin and to be more and more like Jesus Christ, the righteous one (verse 1). Having been redeemed at so great a price and to such a wonderful inheritance, the child of God must never surrender to the impulses of sin in his nature (Romans 6:12). He must be pure as Jesus is pure (I John 3:3).

If you want a motive for obedience, this is the best. You have been saved by God's grace, through the sacrifice of God's Son, and have become God's child. Obey your heavenly Father!

II. ASSURANCE IS THE RESULT OF OBEDIENCE (I John 2:3-6)

The more you obey the Father, the more assurance you will have. The more assurance you have, the more you will want to obey.

A. An inward desire to obey gives assurance. *“We do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (verse 3). Look at the motive, not just at the deeds. One could obey and hate the discipline involved. But to

obey because one loves God and wants to please Him is the basis of assurance. When the desire is there, and it is expressed in actions of obedience, God's Spirit bears testimony with our spirit that we are truly children of God (Romans 8:15). Why do you read the Bible, pray, attend church, and discipline your life? Why, indeed!

B. The agreement of conduct with testimony gives assurance. To profess to know God and not obey His principles is to show oneself to be a liar (verse 4). Neither saint nor sinner will respect such a person. One who professes that he knows God but denies Him in his lifestyle is an abomination (Titus 1:16). On the other hand, when one testifies that he is a child of God, and his lifestyle agrees with that testimony, he is encouraged and people are edified. One who has a problem with assurance should check his motives and actions.

C. The motive of love to obey gives assurance. The love of God reaches its fullest aims when He makes a sinner into a saint who delights to do the will of God (verse 5). Remember that the Christian does not serve God for profit or from fear, but because he loves God and wants to please Him. God says that the divine love within us is the bond that holds all things in place (Colossians 3:14). There is no greater guide in life than to keep oneself in the love of God.

D. Following the example of Jesus gives assurance. Consider the challenge in these words: "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*" (verse 6). The example of Jesus Christ is the guideline for Christian conduct (I Peter 2:21). He has given His Spirit to live in us. His love is spread abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. It is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. It would be an amazing thing if Christians did not live like Christ.

Here is how obedience gives assurance. The believer has an inner motivation to live so as to please God. As he does so, he discovers that he is living a new life just as he has professed to be a new person — confession and conduct agree. He lives that new life because he loves God and wants to please Him. And he realizes that he is living as Jesus lived. The Holy Spirit uses that to create a great assurance in his heart.

If you lack assurance, ask yourself if you are saved. If the answer to that question is affirmative, then look at the quality of your obedience to God. You may find the answer there.

III. LOVE IS THE MOTIVE FOR OBEDIENCE (I John 2:7-11)

Take care that you understand the Bible meaning of love. It is more

than an emotion, though the element of affection is there. It is more than human feelings of dearness and tenderness. It means commitment. It requires the giving of self for the sake of another. It means that one loves the unlovely and unloving. It means that one loves another for the good that can be done to the other, whether one gets any good out of it or not. It is a totally unselfish surrender of one's rights for the sake of the beloved.

A. Love is God's unchanging requirement. It is the commandment God gave in the Old Testament and repeated in the New. Jesus personally commanded us to love one another, adding that our love to others is to be the same as His love to us (John 13:34, 35; 15:12). In such a lifestyle sinners can see most clearly the difference Jesus makes. *“As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another”* (I Thessalonians 4:9). Obey God because you love Him. No other motive will be acceptable.

B. Love is based on a personal relationship with Jesus (verse 8). If the demand to love seems too strong, remember that the Christian does not operate on his own resources. Christ lives in him (Galatians 2:20). The Holy Spirit indwells him (1 John 3:24). The love of God is broadcast in his heart (Romans 5:5). Everything is based on the believer's being a new kind of person in Christ Jesus. Tell God if you cannot love as you should. Ask for His help. He can love through you and His love will become your own. Jesus makes it possible.

C. Love is manifested in attitude and in action (verse 10). Blessed is the Christian who enjoys unity, shows compassion, expresses love, manifests pity, and deals courteously with his peers (1 Peter 3:8). That is the sign that Christ lives in him.

Have you heard the saying, “The spirit spoils the gift”? It is possible to do the right thing but make it wrong by manifesting a bad spirit. It is not enough to obey God. We must want to obey Him. *“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”* (Psalm 40:8). That is the spirit we should manifest in obeying God. Love delights to obey.

D. Love is more than mere words. First John 2:9 reports of a man who says he is obeying God but by his attitude shows himself to be in rebellion against God. Wrong deeds put the lie to right words. Serving Christ is both saying and doing. We need the counsel of I John 3:18, *“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”* Remember the old adage, “Your actions speak so loud I cannot hear what you are saying.” Jesus said, *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21).

E. Love is an evidence of salvation (verses 10, 11). The love of God within us, expressed to fellow believers about us, is proof that we have passed from death unto life (I John 3:14). The unsaved person can love his family and friends. But he cannot love with the love of God. Only the person who lives in God can love the way the Bible says Christians are to love. *“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”* (I John 4:16).

Hezekiah, king of ancient Judah, set a good example of obedience to God. The Bible reports, *“He clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments. . . . And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth”* (II Kings 18:6, 7). We should follow that example each day.

Questions for discussion

1. How do you know you can be saved now?
2. How can you be sure you are saved?
3. What motives might a person have for serving God?
4. What does I John 2:1, 2 say about how a person can be saved?
5. Why is salvation the basis of all service to God?
6. How does obeying God assure a person that he is saved?
7. What should you do if you lack assurance of salvation?
8. How does love affect Christian obedience?
9. What Bible example can you find which teaches obedience to God?
10. Why is it necessary to both trust and obey to be happy in Jesus?