

SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF OBEDIENCE

1 John 3:19-24

Intro: One thing that is very obvious in the Apostle John's first epistle, is that he strongly teaches the importance of obedience. In fact, that is true of all of the Bible. At the time when the Lord God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He gave them a commandment that they were required to obey, with a warning of the consequences if they failed to obey. I am sure that most of you remember what the Lord God said to them. In case you don't, let me remind you He said. You will find these words in Genesis 2:16-17:

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And then if you turn to the very end of the Bible, you will find that it closes with several commandments, two commandments issued in the form of a warning. The first of these is in Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

And then the command follows, issued as a warning in verses 18 and 19:

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

I have never taken the time to count the number of commandments that are found in Scripture, and I don't of anybody who has. But I am sure that I can safely say that there are thousands of them scattered throughout the Word of God. And I am talking about commandments given by God, and this would include the commandments given in Scripture by the writers of Scripture who spoke or wrote as the messengers of God.

However, we need to exercise spiritual discernment in looking at the commandments of Scripture. They were not all written to us, like the commandments given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Many of

the commandments of Scripture were given to individuals, as when God gave orders to the prophets of the OT as to where He wanted them to go, and what He wanted them to say, or do. We have been studying various NT books here at Trinity in recent days: James, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, and now 2 Thessalonians. Also 1 and 2 Peter and 1 John. These epistles are full of commandments directed to us, the Lord's people.

Now we are not saved by keeping the Lord's commandments, but, as the Lord Himself said to His disciples just shortly before He was arrested and put to death, the Lord measures our love for Him by whether or not we keep His commandments. We are told in John 14:21 that the Lord said this to His disciples:

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

And then our Lord added in response to a question that was addressed to Him by one of His disciples,

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me (John 14:23-24).

A person cannot be saved by keeping the Lord's commandments, but we show that we are saved by keeping His commandments. We are not saved by what we do for the Lord, but by faith in what He did when He died on the Cross for sinners. In fact, we can't keep the Lord's commandments in our own strength, but by the strength He gives us. Nevertheless, we are responsible to see to it that keeping His commandments is what we intend to do.

So when you read the commandments which are directed to us those of us who know the Lord, remember our Lord's word which are recorded for us in John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

But one thing is certain regarding the commandments of Scripture: If we are going to do them, we have to know what they are. Here in 1 John 3, beginning especially with verse 10, and going down to the end of the chapter, the Apostle John was dealing with a very important commandment. And this is not the first time he has mentioned it in 1 John. *It is*

what the Lord called, “a new commandment,” that we as the people of God are to love one another. This “new commandment” was stated by our Lord to His disciples in John 13:34-35. Let me remind you again of what it is:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The part of this commandment that makes us know that we can't love like this, is in those words, “as I have loved you.” We need the Lord's help if we are to love each other like the Lord loves us. Dr. Mitchell used to talk about people who would say about another Christian, “I like him, but I don't love him.” If you have to say that about another believer, or if I do, then we have a big job to do. The Lord didn't love us and save us because we were loveable. In fact, we were all very unlovable. We were sinners. We were God's enemies. But by the miracle of God's grace, He set His love upon us, and sent His Son to die for us, and so we are to love our fellow-saints in the same way that the Lord has loved us.

Now we have gotten down to verse 19 in our study of 1 John 3, but I want to pick up verse 18 as we go into verse 19 so we will all understand what verse 19 is all about. (Read verse 18.)

I see in this passage, going on down to the end of chapter 3, three major benefits, or blessings, which come to us as a result of our loving each other in the Lord. There are many more than three, but the Apostle John mentioned three blessings in these verses which are conditioned upon how we love each other.

I. THE FIRST BLESSING (1 John 3:19-21).

The blessing is stated in verse 19.

Why was it that the Apostle John wrote this epistle? Oh, he had several reasons, but what was the main reason? I hope you know by now that it is stated in 1 John 5:13. (Repeat it.)

Both the first part of verse 19, and the second part, have to do with *knowing* and being *assured* in our hearts “before Him,” that is, in the presence of the Lord. When you have this kind of assurance you are not going to be worried about whether or not you are saved.

The order of the words in the Greek NT read like this: *“And in this we shall know that of the truth we are, and before Him we shall assure our hearts.”*

The Apostle John meant that as we really love one another, not just in word, but truly love one another, we shall always be brought back to the solid realization that we are of the truth, that it is through the truth of God’s Word that we have been saved, so that in the very presence of the Lord we will be fully persuaded, will be absolutely confident in our hearts that we are saved. What a promise this is!

By loving each other, God Himself sees to it that we enjoy the blessing of being assured in His very presence that we are of the truth. You see assurance is not based upon some kind of a feeling, but the testimony of God Himself in response to our obedience to His command that we love the people of God.

Verse 20 shows that we need to pay attention to our hearts. Our hearts will condemn us, will convict us, when we are not loving toward the Lord’s people. And we know that if our hearts condemn us, God knows more than we perceive with our hearts, and we can be sure that God is not pleased with us. God is omniscient. He knows all things. He knows us better than we know ourselves. And He has put in our hearts the ability to warn us when things are not right with the Lord. Things can’t be right with the Lord if they are not right with any fellow believer. One fault is too many! The heart is used here for our conscience. It is one of the functions of the heart. When there is something wrong with the motor of your car, you get a message on your dash which says, “Service engine soon.” That’s how God moves upon our hearts to tell us that He is not pleased with us. We must never ignore what our hearts are telling us. I hope you remember that Solomon said in Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

The good side is in verse 21. If our heart does not condemn us, if it tells us that everything is right in our attitude toward each other, “then have we confidence toward God.” And this applies to those to whom we are the closest. This is mother’s day. Make sure that there are no problems between you and your mother, if you are fortunate enough to still have your mother with you.

But let us go on to:

II. THE SECOND BLESSING (1 John 3:22).

Notice that this verse begins with an “and” which means that it is a part of what the Apostle John had just been saying. He is still talking about how we need to love each other.

Did you know that our relationships with other believers can have an adverse effect upon our prayer life? When Peter was writing to wives and husbands in his first epistle, chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, he wrote to the wives first, and then he had this to say to the husbands:

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

So the teaching of this passage emphasizes what is going on in our lives with the other members of our families, and works out from there. A husband who is not treating his wife in a loving way, is going to have trouble when he gets on his knees to talk to the Lord. In fact, he is going to have trouble even getting started to pray. The psalmist said in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” To have an unloving attitude in our hearts toward each other, or even toward one other person, the Lord does not hear us. And if He doesn’t hear us, He doesn’t answer us.

To keep God’s commandments is to obey them. And one of his most important commandments, is that we are to love one another as the Lord Himself loves us. But one of the ways the Lord has of assuring us that we belong to Him and that we are living the way He wants us to live, is that He answers our prayers, “whatsoever we ask.” Of course, if we are living within the commandments of our Lord, it is going to make a difference in what we ask the Lord for, or in what we want the Lord to do for us. Our main concern in our lives, every day that we live, must be that in our hearts and in our lives, we live to do what is pleasing to the Lord. And how can we know what is pleasing to the Lord? It is all in the Bible. And one of the most important of those commandments has to do with the love that we have for each other. There is no way of knowing what blessings would be ours if we were using the greatest care to please the Lord each day. The transformation in our lives would be so great that we would have people asking us for a reason for the hope that we have in our hearts.

Now you know what the second blessing is; what about the third

blessing? We see it in the last two verses of our chapter, 1 John 3.

III. THE THIRD BLESSING (1 John 23-24).

Notice that this verse also begins with “and.” So we are still dealing with the same subject of our love for each other. The Apostle John, following from what he has just said in verse 22 about the Lord’s commandments, uses that word twice here in verse 23, and once again in verse 24.

Do you notice that there are two commandments in verse 23, *but that the Apostle speaks of them as one?*

Have you ever noticed in particular these words which the Apostle Paul used when he was preaching the Gospel to the people in Athens. The account is given in Acts 17, and I am thinking in particular about verse 30 where it is recorded that Paul said that “God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Paul also, in the opening part of his epistle to the church at Rome, said in verse 5,

By whom (that is, by God) we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His Name (Rom. 1:5).

Since God has called upon all men everywhere, and this would mean in every generation, to repent, and they do not repent and “believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ,” this means that all unbelievers are guilty before God of gross disobedience. And this is why there is so much hatred in the world. It is impossible for anyone to love as Christ loves us, and as God loves us until there is obedience to the Gospel when people believe in Christ and learn to love as they never have been able to love before.

So what does this mean for those of us who do “believe on the Name of [God’s] Son Jesus Christ,” and we keep His commandments? It means that we are dwelling in God, and that God is dwelling in us. It means a life of a special fellowship and a special relationship with God. This is what it means to abide in God, or to abide in Christ. It is the most sacred relationship that it is possible for people on earth, who know the Lord, to enjoy with the living God and His Son Jesus Christ. And we know this experientially “by the Spirit which (or Whom) He hath given us.” This is what the Apostle John was speaking about back in chapter 2, verses 24 and 25:

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the

beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.
25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life (1 John 2:24-26).

Concl: So here you have it, three very precious blessings, or benefits, which we can enjoy to the full by living in obedience to the commandments of our Lord.:

- 1) The assurance of our salvation.
- 2) A fruitful prayer life.
- 3) A life of intimate fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

So how does this apply to us?

First, none of it applies to you unless you believe the Gospel and trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from your sins and give you eternal life. If God is putting a desire in your heart for such a life of joy and peace, then open your heart to God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul expressed what you need in these words:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

If the Lord is speaking to your heart, and you will know it if He is, then turn to Him and ask Him to save you through faith in Christ.

But what about those of us who know the Lord? The answer is also clear, isn't it? We need to pay close attention to the Word of God, to learn its teachings, and to pay close attention to how God wants us to live, praying that the Holy Spirit will enable us to live a life of true liberty in Christ as we walk in obedience to His Word.

May the Lord enable each one of us to understand our need, and then to turn to the Lord to work out His will in our lives.