

Know and Obey for There's No Other Way

1 John 2:3-11

Introduction

1. 3 great questions of life are probably all answered by one word. The 3 questions are these:

- 1) What is the one true test that determines if your faith is real?
- 2) What is the one word that reveals whether you are merely a professor of salvation or a genuine possessor of salvation?
- 3) What is the one thing that God desires most from His children?

The one word is the same for all 3 questions: the word is obedience.

2. Charles Colson in his masterpiece entitled *Loving God* said the essence of the Christian life is obedience: "if you love Him you will obey Him."

- To love Him is to obey Him, but also:
- To know Him is to obey Him!

So intimately wed are the ideas of love and knowledge that John will use the word love 42 times in 1 John and he will use the word know 45 times in 1 John.

"Know and obey for there's no other way, not better way to show that you love the Lord."

3. For John, there is a huge difference between saying and doing and saying and knowing (note: 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9). Here in 2:3-11 John points out that obedience provides a test in 4 areas that will reveal the genuineness of our faith and provide avenues of assurance that we know Him, are in Him, and that we abide in the Light (all portraits of true salvation!)

I. Obedience is the test of our confidence. 2:3-5

- Now (or "and") by this, transitions us to a new subject and looks forward to what follows.
- John now teaches us how we can know that we know the God who is light.
- Obedience is the test. John says:

1) Enjoy certainty. 2:3

- Now by this (looks forward) we know (cont.) that we have come to know (W.A.R.) Him, if we keep ("guard" cont.) His commandments (13 in 1 John; 6 in 2:3-8).
- Keep means to guard carefully as a treasure. We are to guard or treasure His (God's) commandments as precious.
- Gnostics argued for a mere intellectual knowledge, mystical and esoteric. John argued for a relational/spiritual knowledge, practical and life changing.
- The New birth, coming to Christ as advocate and atonement, places a new desire and passion in our hearts to keep his commands. That desire to obey and our decision to obey gives a certainty that I know Him!
- Jeremiah 31:31-34, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not

according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

"Keeping the commandments is not a condition of knowing God, but it is a tell-tale sign that one does know God."

2) Escape hypocrisy. 2:4

- First "if we say" (cf. 2:6, 9)
- Negative corollary to verse 3.
- He who is in the habit of continually saying, I have come to know Him and does not ... is a liar and in this one the truth not is.
- Disobedience exposes these sayers as liars and hypocrites. Truth is altogether absent from their life.

Illustration

Tragic story of Saul in 1 Samuel 15. Note especially verses 2-3, 9, 10ff – 23. Obedience is doing God's work God's way. Obedience is doing what God wants YOU to do, when God wants you to do it, where God wants you to do it, the way God wants you to do it.

3) Experience maturity. 2:5

- This verse is set in contrast to verse 4 but takes God's argument a step forward, tying together the relationship of knowing God and loving God.
- It is a faithful summary of John 13 – 16.
- Keeps (cont.; 3x)
- Love of God (obj. gen) – our love for God.
- Is perfected (W.A.R.; cf. also 4:12, 17, 18 & also in the context of love) – reaches maturity, its intended goal.
- Thus we know Him (v. 3) and are in Him (a concept found 35 times in the gospel and epistles of John). What a contrast between a sayer and a keeper!

Illustration

Why do I stay faithful to Charlotte and my marriage vows? 1) Have to? 2) Need to? 3) Want to! I am constrained and compelled not by law but by love. Fidelity to her does not make us married. Fidelity to her reveals and proves we are married!

Jesus prayed in John 17:21, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Obedience, faithfulness to His commands is the test of our confidence and a testimony of our love.

II. **Obedience is the test of our confession. 2:6**

- Verse 6 is the 2nd of the false teachers' claim to know God, a claim when rightly understood can be made by a believer.
- The issue of becoming like Jesus now confronts us directly. It is one thing to say you know Him. It is something altogether different to walk like Him.

1. **You have a statement to prove.**

Claim: In Him (God generally, Christ particularly) I am continually abiding. I know Christ. I love Jesus. I am rightly related to God. Vance Havner, that witty North Carolina evangelist, makes this issue plain when he says, "What we live is what we really believe. Everything else is just religious talk."

Transition: Words are good, but words are not enough. You have a statement to prove.

2. **You have a Savior for a pattern.**

1 Cor. 11:1 - "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

Eph. 5:1 - "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children."

1 Pet. 2:21 - "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."

Ought – morally obligated

Walk as He walked – like father, like son. Like Savior, like saint. Christ's life becomes my life, my pattern, my goal. W.W.J.D. is rooted here.

Illustration

Children, especially little boys, love to imitate their daddy. When I refereed basketball, Grandmother Galloway made little referee uniforms for the twins because they wanted to be like daddy!

- Do you want to be like the Father? Do you want to be like Jesus?

Transition: Obedience is the test of our confession.

III. **Obedience is the test of our commandment. 2:7-8**

- Brethren (or "beloved," *agapetoi*) or "dear friends" is a term of endearment used by John 6 times in this letter (2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). It begins a new thought, but also continues and expands what John has already written, especially his focus on "the commandment." What does John say about "the commandment?"

1. **It is proclaimed in conversion. 2:7**

- It is not new, but old, that which they had from the beginning. As we shall see, it is the commandment to love.
- John's opponents minimized our ethical behavior, "how we live doesn't matter, it's what you know." John says not so.

- From the beginning – looks to their conversion and the beginning of the Christian life. It was crucial then and it is crucial now. Nothing has changed in this regard.
- Old – also rooted in the Law: Leviticus 19:18, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

2. It is personified in Christ. 2:8

- On the surface verse 8 seems to contradict verse 7. Is the old man losing it? No, he wants us to see how the “old commandment” took on new meaning in Christ!
- The old is new in Him! Jesus said in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
- In Christ the love commandment is strengthened, expanded, given a depth of meaning and understanding it never knew before.
- You want to see love fleshed out, look at Jesus.

Transition: But there is more and better news.

3. It is present in the Christian. 2:8

- True in Him and in you. The love Christ has for us we can now have for others. John 13:35 adds, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” This is a new sacrificial, Christ-type of love.
- We do not love others because they are lovely. We do not love others if they are lovely. We love others period. We love others even if they are not lovely because that is how Jesus loves us.

4. It is perfected in the consummation. 2:8

- The new commandment has inaugurated a new age, a new day.
- Perfect love as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has dealt a deathblow to darkness. Darkness is on the run but it cannot outrun the light. In fact the darkness is already departing and the true light already shines!
- The Light of the World (John 8:12) has come. The King of Light and Love is already reigning, and the fullness and consummation of that reign is just around the corner.

Summary

Love is not new. It is as old as God (1 John 4:8) and rooted in the Law. Yet it is new to us in conversion and new in its depth in Jesus. It is new in experience, emphasis, expression and endurance. It is old as the sun and new as the dawn.

Transition: Obedience to love, it is the test of our commandment.

IV. Obedience is the test of our communion. 2:9-11

There is a tradition that when John was an old man at Ephesus they brought him out on a pallet to speak to his people. All he said was, “love one another.” When asked why he simply replied, “It is enough.” This was quite a change from the John who: 1) Was called a Son of thunder, 2) Wanted to forbid others from ministering in Jesus’ name (Luke 9:49-50), 3) Wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village that would not receive

them (Luke 9:51-56), 4) Along with brother James, fought over who would be first in the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:35-45).

God had done a great work in John's heart. John now understood how important it is that we love others.

Verses 9 – 11 bring this section to a close and further address the issue of love and its importance, especially for the believing community.

1. **It affects our position. 2:9**

- Final “he who says” statement (cf. 2:4,6)
They said – “I know Him” (2:4)
They said – “I abide in Him” (2:6)
Now they say, “I am in the light” (cf. 1:5,7)
- Hates (cont.) his brother (i.e. his neighbor; cf. Lev. 19:18), but particularly those in the Christian community.
Lit. “in the darkness” is until now.
Positionally “in the darkness” means lost, apart from the life of God.
- If you hate because of face, place, or race you are in darkness, you are lost, you are unregenerate. No middle group, no in between position.

2. **It affects our practice. 2:10**

- Pos. corollary to v. 9.
- Loving your brother, you continually abide in the light.
- No cause for stumbling (*scandalon*, offense) in him, i.e. living and abiding in the realm or sphere of light, there is no stumbling (either for himself or for others).
- *Scandalon* – trigger for a deadly trap.
- Loving others as an evidence of living in the light, he blesses / he does not curse, he lifts up / he does not tear down, he helps / he does not hurt or hinder.
- He indeed is walking as Jesus walked (v. 6).

3. **It affects our perception. 2:11**

- V. 11 stands in contrast to v. 10, and reinforces v. 9.
- You hate you 1) are in darkness, 2) walk in darkness, 3) do not know where you are going, 4) are blind.
- In the darkness there is not only the absence of love, there is also the absence of God. And the tragedy is, they don't even know it, they have lived there so long.

Conclusion

1. Charles Finney noted, “Revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God. ... When revival comes, obedience to the truth is the one thing that matters.”
2. On the walls of an old medieval castle, these words were discovered:
You call me Master and obey me not.
You call me Light and see me not.
You call me the Way and walk in me not.
You call me Life and desire me not.

You call me Wise and follow me not.
You call me Fair and love me not.
You call me Rich and ask me not.
You call me Eternal and seek me not.
You call me Gracious and trust me not.
You call me Noble and serve me not.
You call me Mighty and honor me not.
You call me Just and fear me not.
If I condemn you, blame me not!

3. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me you will keep my commandments."