

Obeying His Commands

Why was this Epistle Written to the Church?

That we would know God & His will, practice righteousness, experience fellowship, and live lives full of joy!

Christ : The Chief Cornerstone

He is the eternal, incarnate, Word-of Life (1 John 1:1-2); our faithful, just, forgiver of sins (1 John 1:9); our righteous Advocate (1 John 2:1), and propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2)! He is the source of knowledge, the imputer of righteousness, the foundation for our fellowship, and the provider of joy!

Holiness, Fellowship and Forgiveness

Christians have potential through the power of the Holy Spirit to choose to not sin (1 Corinthians 10:13); however, we still choose on occasion to walk in darkness (1 John 1:8,10). Though Christians are justified and in a permanent state of positional forgiveness (Romans 5:1), our sins fracture our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and with other Christians, such that forgiveness is needed for reconciliation and restoration of fellowship (1 John 1:9, Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15; 18:21-22).

1 John 2:3-6

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

⁴ He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

Conditional Truth

- 1 John 2:3-6

<u>If</u> we keep His commandments, <u>then</u>	<u>If</u> we don't keep His commandments, <u>then</u>
We know Him.	We don't know Him
The truth is in us.	We're liars
The love of God is perfected in us.	The love of God is not perfected in us.
We are in Him.	We are not in Him.
We walk as Jesus walked.	We walk in darkness.

Is 1 John 2:3-6 *prescriptive* for salvation, or *descriptive* of the Christian life? **Descriptive!**

- Interpretations:
 1. **For Christians** (the primary audience for this epistle). In these verses John is amplifying prior teaching that our sins not only break our fellowship, they tarnish our testimony (we look like liars, hypocrites, etc., especially to those outside of the Church)
 2. **For non-Christians**. There are those inside and outside of the church that speak and periodically act like Christians; however, they don't really know Him or keep his commandments.

Jesus used a similar means to teach in *Matthew 7:21-23*

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name,

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cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

- The Conditional Statement is Implied:
 1. **If** you do the will of the Father, **then** you will enter the kingdom of heaven.
- Clarification :
 1. *Ephesians 2:8-10* - We're saved by grace, through faith, not of works, but unto good works.
 2. *John 6:29* - The most important “work” is to have faith in Jesus!
- Interpretations :
 1. *Isaiah 64:5-6* - Simply doing things (works), even claiming to do them in Jesus' name, doesn't merit salvation. The only acceptable good works are those that are a consequence of salvation (which is by grace through faith in Christ as Savior and Lord). All else is but filthy rags!
 2. *2 Corinthians 13:5* - If you have no desire, or a limited desire, to trust in Jesus as Lord and do His will, then you should thoroughly examine yourself.

What should Christians think or feel about God's commandments?

- *1 John 5:3*

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.
And His commandments are not burdensome.”

- *Psalms 19:7-11*

⁷ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired *are* they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there is* great reward.”

- Question:
 - What do *you* think or feel about God's commandments?

What should be a Christian's posture before God?

- *Mark 10:35-45*
 - We shouldn't be arrogant and demand things of Christ! We should humble ourselves before Him and view ourselves as His bondservants, i.e., those who have willfully chosen to enter under the authority of, into perpetual service to, the King of Kings!
 - Consider the Apostle Paul, who referred to himself as a bondservant (e.g., Romans 1:1).
 - Remember (1 Peter 4:10):

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Minister it to one another. Actively serve one another.

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- *Philippians 2:1-15*
 - We should be like-minded, unified, humble, looking out for the interests of others, behaving like bondservants, obedient, doing things without grumbling or complaining, and blameless.
- Questions :
 - Are you submitting to Jesus in faith, trusting in Him as your Lord, and willfully, joyfully, without grumbling, obeying His commandments? OR
 - Are you trusting in your good works, making yourself Lord and doing what you want to do?
 - What is your posture before God?

What are His commandments?

- *Matthew 22:34-40 / Deuteronomy 6:1-5 / Leviticus 19:18*

“But when the Pharisees heard that He (Jesus) had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*’”

- What enables a Christian to love (Romans 5:1-5)? Justification, the filling of the Spirit, the outpouring of His love, enables us to love! But what does that look like?

The Great Shema : Application

- *Deuteronomy 6:6-9*
 - These verses reveal a life characterized by a walk with God, in which one is a witness!
- *Deuteronomy 6:4 [1]*



Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one

עֵד = Witness

Love Thy Neighbor : Application

- *Leviticus 19:9-10* – Help meet the physical needs of the poor.
- *Leviticus 19:11* – Don’t steal, deal falsely (deceive), or lie.
- *Leviticus 19:12* – Don’t make false claims or vows, don’t take God’s name in vain.
- *Leviticus 19:13* – Don’t cheat anyone, or steal from anyone. Don’t withhold payments.
- *Leviticus 19:14* – Don’t maltreat the disabled.
- *Leviticus 19:15* – Show righteous judgment, and no partiality (especially based on economic status).
- *Leviticus 19:16* – Don’t spread gossip, or reveal confidential matters. Don’t do things that could harm your neighbor.
- *Leviticus 19:17* – Don’t hate. Rebuke sin.
- *Leviticus 19:18* – Don’t seek revenge. Don’t bear any grudges.

This list is not exhaustive, but representative!

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Summary Statement

The Christian life should be described or characterized by walking in God's light, through joyful, humble obedience to Jesus as both Savior and King, in which we love God and others in accord with His will through the power of His Spirit within us. When Christians fail to obey His commands, we are effectively walking in darkness, damaging our fellowship with God and with other Christians, as well as tarnishing our testimony and effectiveness to be a loving witness for Jesus.

Application Questions

- To what extent do you want to obey God's commandments?
- To what extent do you enjoy obeying God's commandments?
- To what extent are you obeying God's commandments?
- To what extent do you view yourself as a servant and act accordingly?
- Is there an area in which you're kicking at the goads?
- Is there any area in which you need to confess sin?
- Is there anything that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do?

End Note

[1] It is claimed by some that the two letters *ayin* (א) and *dalet* (ד) are enlarged in existing Hebrew manuscripts, and that these two letters, when taken together, spell that word 'ed which means *witness*, thus indicating the import of those who profess faith in God to be His witnesses . For example, see:

http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/The_Shema/the_shema.html