

Subject: *Straight Talk about Obedience*

Scripture: *1 John 2:3-6*

John MacArthur told about a man he called the most unforgettable character he ever met, a man named Fred Demara. He was known as the great imposter and they actually made a movie about his life. MacArthur said he was a remarkable man and even joined their church in California. This man Fred Demara made all kinds of claims, falsifying all kinds of documents, forging all kinds of identities, moving all over the country performing functions in such a way that seemed to confirm his claims. He was never educated beyond high school and yet he became a university president chosen by the board because of his formidable educational past, all falsified. The US government hired him as a prison warden because of his training in prison science, police science and law. He became a dentist and practiced for a number of years. He became a teacher and taught at MacArthur's high school. He became a surgeon, practiced surgery for a number of years. He used one hand on the scalpel and the other hand to turn the pages of the book. He claimed to be all of these things at one point in his life it was so amazing that he could do what he did that they made a movie called the Great Imposter. This kind of thing happens all the time. People pretend to be one thing but they are really not that at all. Even happens in the church.

John wrote this epistle to give us assurance, so that we can know if we are truly a Christian (see 1 John 5:13). He lays out a series of tests to evaluate if our faith is real, saving faith. In this way we can tell the counterfeit from the genuine. There is a lot that passes itself off as Christian, but is not the real thing. The first thing John described was the fellowship a true believer has with Christ and the Heavenly Father. Then he said that a true believer is sensitive to sin. He confesses his sin and attempts to avoid sinning. The third test is the test of obedience. A real believer obeys the Lord's commands. Let's look at what John wrote.

1. Obedience and Assurance of Salvation (vs. 3)

- A life of obedience gives assurance that we are true believers.

John's straight talk about sin is directly connected to straight talk about obedience. Sin is fundamentally disobedience to the will of God. ***1 John 3:4*** *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* John's point is clear: we can have assurance that we know Christ if we obey his commands. Now let's break down verse 3. The word "know" is found twice. We know that we know him. The first word has to do with assurance and the second has to do with relationship. There is the knowing of something as a fact, a truth. That's the first word. There is the knowing of someone in a relationship. That's the second word. John is saying that we can know for a fact that we have a true relationship with Christ by this one thing—if we keep (obey) his commands.

Knowing Christ is the same as being saved or having eternal life. This is how Christ described it. ***John 17:3*** *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The word "keep" means to obey. It refers to watchful, careful, thoughtful obedience to His commands, His teachings, His Word. This is not the obedience that comes from external pressure. It is obedience motivated by love and thankfulness. It is not the obedience that strives to meet a perfect standard of conduct. It is obedience that comes from knowing that Christ met the standard we could not meet. This is not the obedience driven by fear or guilt. It is the obedience driven by grace and love. We obey Christ because we want to, not because we have to. We want to obey Him. ***1 John 5:3*** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (burdensome).*

If we are to obey Christ's commands we must know what His commands are. This means we must read and study our Bible. You can know something and not obey it, but you

can't obey something unless you know it. Did you know it is costly when you don't know what you ought to know? We heard about someone who trapped a raccoon and let it out at Steele Creek Park. Someone came to them and told them they could be arrested for that. You can kill a raccoon, but you can't transport one. Did you know that?

The Lord didn't give us any commands about raccoons, but He gave us some commands to obey. One of them is called the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Christ called us to make disciples and follow Him. Sometimes we want to do something for Him instead of the things He told us to do. Christ didn't call us to win arguments. Christ didn't call us to win elections. Christ called us to follow Him and make disciples. In the Great Commission we are called as followers of Christ to observe (obey) "whatsoever" He commanded us. That means we obey all of His commands. We can't pick and choose.

2. Obedience and Profession of Faith (vs. 4)

- A life of obedience proves whether our profession is real.

A person may say that he knows the Lord, but don't be fooled. No matter what he claims, if he doesn't obey the Lord, his profession is false, bogus. Failure to obey the Lord, in spite of what we may claim, is the mark of an unbeliever, a deceiver, an imposter. This is the very reason John is writing this letter. He is showing us how to tell a believer from a make-believer. The church needs to have discernment to tell the difference. Every person needs to know before he stands before the Lord.

Profession is no substitute for obedience. Religious activity is no substitute for obedience. *1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.* One day Jesus will say to many who are deceived, *Matthew 7:21-23* ²¹ *Not every one 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.* ²² *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* ²³ *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* John reminds us later in this epistle, *1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* That verse is inscribed on D. L. Moody's tombstone, and I pray that God will write it in our hearts.

3. Obedience and Love of God (vs. 5)

- A life of obedience is based on God's love at work in true believers.

Another way to describe a true believer is one who is in Him. If we are saved we are in Christ and He is in us. When we obey the Lord it is evidence that He is at work in our hearts. It is evidence that He has changed us and given us a desire to obey Him. This is what Paul says in *Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* When we are saved we have a changed heart that begins to love God and to love what He loves and hate what He hates. We love His Word and His commands are precious to us.

When a believer demonstrates a life of obedience he is showing that God's love has done a full work in his heart. The love of God is perfected or made complete in him. God's love has done a complete work of salvation in him. We normally think of love as an emotion, but in fact, it is more a matter of the will than the emotion. When the Bible says, "God so loved the world" (Jn. 3:16), does that refer to some kind of sentimental, emotional love or does it refer to the love of choice and determination?

God made us with a mind, will, and emotions. All three of these come into play, but the most important thing in obeying God is the will. Mind is important because we must know what He wants us to do. Emotions are important too. But the key, the trigger to obeying God is the decision to obey. And this must be a daily decision.

God doesn't force us to obey. It's a choice we make. Obeying the Lord is one crucial decision followed by a lifetime of smaller daily decisions. The one crucial decision is for us to say, "I will follow You and I will be loyal to You no matter what happens." That is the decision to obey Christ and become His disciple or follower.

4. Obedience and Example of Christ (vs. 6)

- The life of obedience is modeled by the life of Christ.

Jesus always lived in obedience to the Father. He said, "I always do those things that please my Father." That is a life of full obedience. And it cost Him to obey the Father. He suffered because of it. *Hebrews 5:8* *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.* Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered. We have to go through pain and suffering because that's how we learn obedience.

If we are going to walk as Jesus walked we must know how He walked. That's why we read and study the Bible. *John 8:31* *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* Suppose that when you were saved, the Lord stamped these words on your forehead: "Watch me. I'm a follower of Christ." How would that affect the way you live? We don't have a physical mark, but we do bear the name of Christ in this world. The Christian life can be described as becoming who you are. You are a child of God. Live like one. You are a follower of Christ. Live like one.

How can you know for sure you are a Christian? If you obey God's Word, if you can see an overall pattern of obedience in your life, if you want to know and do God's commands not because you have to but because you are so thankful for all He has done for you, then you have reason to believe you are a real genuine Christian.

If you were standing before God and He were to ask you, "Why should I let you into Heaven?" what would you say? We are saved by grace through faith unto good works. Works of obedience are standing in the background as evidence of our faith and His grace in our lives. What would you say to Him?