

# If You Love Me...Keep My Commands

Pastor Grant van Boeschoten - Hawkwood Baptist Church

A two week series looking at 1 John

It could have been a 3 week series, and if it was, the titles would have been

If You Love Me... Keep My Commands

If You Love Me... Love One Another

If You Love Me... Walk in the Light

These are 3 of the main themes of 1 John. Those who are Christians are ones who obey's Christ's commands, love one another, and walk in the light of God's truth.

- But this is a two week series, so we will talk about obeying Christ's commands this Sunday, and loving one another next Sunday.
- You'll just have to study 1 John for yourself if you want to look at Walking in the Light.

## Who is John?<sup>1</sup>

- We first meet John in Mark 1:20. He is the brother of James, son of Zebedee and Salome.
- One day, James and John were with their father Zebedee in their fishing boat mending their nets. Jesus calls James and John to follow him, and they leave the nets, the boats and their father to follow Jesus.
- John becomes a disciple of Jesus, and in the gospel of John, he is referred to as "the one that Jesus loved."
- He was at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. Jesus asked John to look after Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- John was one of the disciples who ran to the tomb to find it empty on Resurrection morning.
- Tradition has it that John remained in Jerusalem until Mary's death, which is said to have happened near the middle of the first century, (about 20 years after the resurrection of Jesus).

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<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, Curtis. *1, 2, 3 John*. Founders Study Guide Commentary. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2011.

- Iranaeus lets us know that John later took up residence in Ephesus. The early church believed that the book of John, as well as John's 3 letters were written while he was in Ephesus.
- John also was exiled to the island of Patmos as a prisoner, and while he was on that island, he wrote the book of Revelation.
- John likely died around 100 A.D. and according to Jerome lived 68 years after the resurrection of Jesus.
- John's writing is characterized by his love for God and God's people and also by the authority that he teaches with.

## Why does John write this letter, 1 John?<sup>2</sup>

- John writes this letter to encourage the church, especially in the face of some very persuasive false teaching that was going around.
- He wants for the people hearing the letter read out to have an assurance of their salvation. He wants for them to be able to discern false teaching. He wants to speak very clearly about how a person can know that they are in a relationship with God.
- The main teaching that John is against is called gnosticism.

## What is Gnosticism?<sup>3</sup>

- Gnosticism changed the requirements for being a Christian exclusively to knowledge. If you had the correct understanding and wisdom, then you could be saved.
- This means that nothing that you did mattered. Instead, the only thing of real value was the knowledge that you had.
- The practical result of this focus on knowledge was arrogance, exclusivism, and a general disregard for those who did not have your knowledge.
- Because the gnostics said that what you did didn't matter, you no longer were accountable for any of your actions. They assumed that the physical body was completely evil, and doomed to sin. No matter how hard you try to obey, says the gnostic, you will sin anyways, so why bother trying.

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<sup>2</sup> Tuck, Robert. *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude, Revelation*. The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary. New York; London; Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan, Curtis. *1, 2, 3 John*. Founders Study Guide Commentary. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2011.

- I'm sure that you are seeing how damaging this gnosticism can be, if a person was to adopt this belief and let it play out in their life.

John writes to counter these gnostics, and throughout 1 John he gives 3 tests, or proofs for salvation.

## John Gives us 3 proofs.<sup>4</sup>

1. The moral test - Christians are people who increasingly live a righteous life.
2. The social test - Christians will show godly love to one another.
3. The doctrinal test - Christians love the truth of God, we can say with our whole being, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

## If You Love Me Obey My Commands.

### 1 John 2:3-6 HCSB

This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," yet doesn't keep His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.

I remember a few years ago finding a note in my stocking on Christmas Morning. My kids had written 3 magical words for the gift that they wanted to give their parents. "We'll be good."

What a beautiful intention.

Quite often, my wife Brenna will say to our kids, "If you love me obey me". And I understand that.

Jesus said to his disciples the same thing,

### John 14:15 HCSB

"If you love Me, you will keep My commands.

Remember that the Apostle John is the author of both the Gospel of John, and this letter that we are now reading.

Eugene Petersen paraphrases 1 John 2 this way

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<sup>4</sup> Boice, James Montgomery. The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

**1 John 2:3–6 The Message<sup>5</sup>**

Here's how we can be sure that we know God in the right way: Keep his commandments.

If someone claims, "I know him well!" but doesn't keep his commandments, he's obviously a liar. His life doesn't match his words. But the one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. This is the only way to be sure we're in God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.

How many people do you see who claim to love God, but don't even know what Jesus taught?

**If you love Christ, keep his commands.**

This is the test for if we know Christ. The gnostics said that you have to have a special kind of knowledge, an exclusive knowledge. John is showing us that the knowledge that we need is one that a Disciple has of his Teacher. We are disciples of Jesus, we don't need special information. Instead, we prove our knowledge through obedience.

**Indulgences and Works**

500 years ago there was a real problem in the Church. People had been sold a lie. They were told that they could have their sins atoned for by purchasing indulgences.

It was a revelation to Martin Luther and many of his contemporaries that you can't earn your way into heaven, and you can't buy your way into a right relationship with God. The verse that they held on to was

**Romans 3:21–24 HCSB**

But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed —attested by the Law and the Prophets —that is, God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Salvation is a free gift. Obedience to God is the appropriate response of love for that gift.

My kids don't promise to be good so that I might become their father. They make their promises because they love their parents, their desire to be good flows from love.

That's how it works with us and God's commands.

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<sup>5</sup> Peterson, Eugene H. The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005.

## Keep his commandments

The greek verb for keep means to “be on the watch so as to obey and to fulfill.”<sup>6</sup>

Are you on the watch for God’s commands. Do you know where to find them?

Where is one place that you might look, if you wanted to see what Jesus taught?

I would look to the Sermon on the Mount that I find in Matthew 5-7. Jesus lays out the ideals for the Kingdom of God.

### **APPLICATION - Read through Matthew 5-7 this week and study and learn what Jesus teaches. Then obey.**

John was there in person to hear this sermon on the mount preached. He probably heard Jesus preach that same message many times over. Do you think that this is what John is talking about when he says,

“This is how we can be sure that we have come to know Him, by keeping His commands.”

I say yes. John is thinking about that. He is also remembering what Jesus said right before he was arrested. John 13-17 is 5 chapters of Jesus speaking plainly with his disciples on the same night that Jesus was to be arrested and charged with blasphemy.

Here is one of the things that Jesus said on that night

#### **John 15:9–10 HCSB**

“As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

There is a connection between loving God & keeping his commands that we often overlook.

### **Obeying God’s commands is a real way to show God our love.**

#### **1 John 5:3–5 HCSB**

For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden, because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Do you agree with John, “His commands are not a burden”.

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<sup>6</sup> Vaughan, Curtis. *1, 2, 3 John*. Founders Study Guide Commentary. Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2011.

The person who has not learned the blessing of obedience sees a command as a burden because he hasn't learned to count the cost of disobedience

Lets talk about when laws that feel like burdens.

Maybe the speed limit says 50 km h, but you think that the road should allow for 70 km h. What is the cost of disobedience.

- Fear - what if you get caught
- Money - a ticket if you get caught
- Potential for harm - speeding may cause an accident, etc.

What do you gain from speeding? Maybe you "save" a minute.

The difference with speeding and God's commands is that our police force is not omnipresent. They don't always know when you are speeding.

But God knows when we are disobeying. Part of the cost of disobedience is the cost of relationship. I'm not saying God disowns you, because when we are faithless he remains faithful. But, when we knowingly sin against God, what does that say about our love of Him.

Furthermore, when we actively obey God, what an incredible way to demonstrate our love of God to God, and to the world around us. Your obedience is a witness. You disobedience costs you more than you know.

But lets take this example one more step.

What if you were caught speeding and didn't have the cash to pay the ticket. What would happen?

If your speeding is deemed a "lesser fine", then you simply cannot register your vehicle for the next year without paying the fine.

But if there are multiple violations and a large fine, there will be a warrant issued for your arrest, and you will spend time in jail.

When it comes to the burden of sin, we are unable to pay the fine, because the debt of sin is more than any person can carry.

Jesus is the one who has paid for sin. We only find forgiveness from Jesus Christ. The commands of Christ are not a burden, but if we do break them, he does forgive us.

But living a life that confesses Jesus with your mouth while openly breaking his commands is not OK.

His commands are not a burden. Instead they are a blessing.

When kids disobey parents, that's a burden. When they obey parents, it's a blessing.

There were those in the church who would say that they “know” God in spite of their clear disregard for his commands. They were talking about their gnostic ideals of knowledge. John addresses that person specifically in...

### **1 John 2:4 HCSB**

The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” yet doesn’t keep His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

The word liar is a very strong word for John to use.<sup>7</sup> To be caught in a lie is a very embarrassing experience. These aren’t people who are misguided. These are liars. Its one thing to be misunderstood, but does a persons guard ever go up fast when they are accused of lying.

John makes this accusation because he loves those in the Church. He wants to be as clear as possible. **DON’T BELIEVE THEIR LIE! YOU CANNOT KNOW GOD AND IGNORE HIS COMMANDS!**

Are their people today who claim to know God, yet do not keep his commands? Don’t listen to that person. Don’t let them influence you. They don’t have the truth. If they knew God, they would want to obey him with everything that they had. If they knew God, they would ask his Holy Spirit to help them obey, and to make them holy.

John isn’t the first to call people liars who claim to know God, and disregard his commands. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about these sorts of people as well.<sup>8</sup>

### **Matthew 7:21–23 HCSB**

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! **Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!**’

There are people today who minimize obedience. Don’t be fooled by their rhetoric. Our lives are to be lived for the glory of God. How can we glorify God by willingly going against his commands.

Some of us today equate God’s commands with legalism.

Legalism is about the letter of the law, and trusting in the law for salvation. Legalism looks down on those who don’t keep laws.

Jesus never broke a single law of God. But Jesus showed amazing love and compassion his entire life.

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<sup>7</sup> Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933.

<sup>8</sup> Carson, D. A. “1 John 2:3–27.” In *D. A. Carson Sermon Library*, 1 Jn 2:3–27. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016.

Today, I am not encouraging you to be a legalist. I don't want you to obey God's commands just for the sake of obeying God's commands. I want to encourage you to show God you love by exhibiting a willingness to do whatever he asks you to do.

If you are good at obeying a certain command of God, and your neighbour is not, how will you respond. Will you shame them? Will you show them compassion? Will you ignore the sin, and allow them to live in costly disobedience?

Jesus forgave sins, and encouraged the sinners to "Go and sin no more."

### **1 John 2:5–6 HCSB**

But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.

The gnostics say that their knowledge is exclusive. John says, "But whoever keeps his word." God is not limited to an exclusive club of people. Whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is perfected.

Another word for perfected is matured. What does a mature love for God look like?

A mature love for God is demonstrated by keeping his word.

- we show that we trust God, that we know his commands are given because of His love for us, and we trust Him.

Finally, those who are maturing in Christ begin to take on a resemblance to him.

### **1 John 2:6 HCSB**

The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked.

A mature Christian resembles Christ.

Martin Luther says, "It is not Christ's walking on the sea, but His ordinary walk, that we are called on to imitate."

I know that sometimes obedience to God feels unnatural. Sometimes it is counterintuitive.

Here are some practical ways to obey Christ.

Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

Jesus calls us to do everything that we can to be in right relationships with one another.

Jesus calls us to not look with lust at other people.

Jesus calls us to pray.

Jesus calls us to forgive us we have been forgiven, freely and as a gift.

Jesus calls us to not make promises, but instead to be people of our word. Your yes should mean yes, and your no should mean no.

Jesus calls us to trust him and not live lives of worry and fear.

Jesus calls us to not retaliate with vengeance against others who harm us, but to turn the other cheek instead.

Jesus calls us to apply his teachings to our lives.

Am I being practical enough for you this morning. Is there something here that you can put into practice in your life.

Sometimes you look at what Jesus taught, and you are tempted to follow some commands, but not others.

Sometimes it's different than that. You look at the command, and you look at your life and what you want, and you don't see how the two can line up.

Sometimes you choose to break the command, because you've found some way to justify your actions.

Will God throw you out of this family, because you have gone against his word? Is there any grace? Is there any hope?

### **1 John 2:1–2 HCSB**

My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

Jesus, is your advocate. Jesus, says, don't look at his sin, I've already paid for it. I've taken the punishment. Jesus says, It wouldn't be fair to inflict the punishment of sin twice. I paid the price. Let this one be called righteous.

If you are in Christ, then he is your advocate before a just and holy God. If you are not a Christian, then he is your only hope for forgiveness.

My kids promised me for Christmas that they would be good, and they are great kids. But they aren't perfect. What do you think a loving father should do?

I help them clean up the mess. I love them and forgive them. I don't load more weight on their backs. I help them understand life, so that they can go beyond what they would know on their own.

God's commands are not a way to earn your salvation. Keeping God's commands is the appropriate response of love for one who has been forgiven.

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