

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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The Importance of Obedience

By Brian R. Kenyon

“Obedience,” along with its synonyms, seems to be a bad word among many people today. However, the Bible clearly reveals the importance of obedience to God (cf. Lk. 6:46; Jn. 14:15). From First John 2:3-4, let us consider four truths concerning the importance of obedience.

The Basis of Assurance

As John begins this paragraph, he writes, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3). In no uncertain terms, John says we can *know* that we know God! This knowledge is not a subjective feeling or emotion, but is based on objective truth (cf. Jn. 8:31-32). “We do know that we know him” is the first among many similar statements in First John (2:5, 18, 21, 29; 3:19, 24; 4:13; 5:2, 15, 18-20). The basis of our assurance is obedience! The word “keep” means to observe or to keep close guard in order that one may do or act according to these injunctions. “Commandments” are what Jesus commanded His disciples (such as love, Jn. 13:34). The word “commandment,” introduced here for the first time in this epistle, occurs throughout (cf. 1 Jn. 3:22-24; 4:21; 5:2-3). In this letter, “commandment” is synonymous with “the message” (1 Jn. 1:5), “his word” (1 Jn. 2:5), “the truth” (1 Jn. 2:21), and “that which ye have heard from the beginning” (1 Jn. 2:24).

We cannot truly *know* God unless we obey His will. Elsewhere, in a contrasting passage, Paul writes about some who “profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit. 1:16). Obedience is the basis of our assurance!

The Manifestation of Knowledge

John writes, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:4). Obedience is not so much a prerequisite of knowing God, or a condition that must be fulfilled in order to know God, but is rather the evidence that we do indeed know God! Those who say they know God but do not do His will are “liars.” To claim to know God without acknowledging His claim upon us as Lord is to be deceived (1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 2:20). Earlier John said that to assert we are sinless is to make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10), but here he says that professing a relationship with God without living His commandments makes us the liar! When we so lie, we demonstrate a chief characteristic of the devil (Jn. 8:44). In these kinds of people, the truth has no place! Let us realize the importance of our obedience. It is the manifestation of our knowledge!

The Evidence of Our Love for God

John continues, “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 Jn. 2:5). The one keeps God’s word has his or her love completed, or matured. Note again, “keepeth his word” and “keepeth...his commandments” (1 Jn. 2:4) are two ways of teaching the same thing, where “word” refers to the whole message, or revelation, from the Lord. How can one who does not keep the word of God truly know God? Even more importantly, how can one love God without keeping His word? The “love of God” in this context refers to our love for God. The word “perfected” means to stand complete. Love can only reach its highest

when we obey the Lord's will! Listen to what John writes elsewhere,

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. ²²Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³Jesus 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. ²⁴He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (Jn. 14:21-24)

Obedience and love for God are inseparably linked!

By this obedience and perfected love, we have confidence that we are "in Christ"! Though common in Paul's writings, "in him" is here expressed by John for the first time. "In him" conveys an intimate relationship, which emphasizes fellowship between Christ and His disciples. To be "in Christ" is to be a Christian (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). To "be in Christ" is "to know him" (1 Jn. 2:3-4), which is to "abide in him" (1 Jn. 2:6). Are we confident that we are in Christ? Surely we see the importance of obedience!

Following the Example Of Jesus

John concludes this paragraph, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 Jn. 2:6). The perfect expression of love for God is found in Jesus' own example. The word translated "abideth in" means to stay, or remain, in the sphere of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3). A form of (continued on page 4)



James W. Huggins

October 23, 1920 - September 7, 2011

Almost from the inception of the school, brother Huggins served as one of our instructors for fifteen years, until his retirement from FSOP in 1985. Though retired from the classroom here, brother Huggins continued serving the Lord, from working with a preacher training school in Trinidad to mission campaigns in Central and South America to one on one Bible studies in the very nursing home from which he departed this life. He left behind a legacy of faithfulness, and we will certainly miss him! Funeral services were held on September 12 in Auburndale, Florida.

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*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

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“Do You Understand the Local Church?”

37th Annual Lectureship **Jan. 16-19, 2012** Brian R. Kenyon, Director



Joseph DeBose



Steve Vice

MONDAY

9:00 The Local Church in Reality Teral Walker
 9:40 The Local Church in God’s Purpose Jackie M. Stearsman
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Christ’s Authority Over Local Churches (Rev. 1) Sam Hester
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Functional Issues And The Local Church

1:30 What Is Local Church Autonomy? Bruce Daugherty
 2:00 Abuses of Local Church Autonomy David Stearsman
 2:30 Church Cooperation and Autonomy Sam Hester
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Insights from the Church at Jerusalem Keith Cozort
 7:45 Revealing God’s Manifold Wisdom Eric Dawkins, Sr.

TUESDAY

9:00 The Godhead’s Role in Local Churches Steve Atnip
 9:40 Apostles and Prophets in First Century Local Churches Earl D. Edwards

10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Christ’s Complete Knowledge of Local Churches (Rev 2-3) Brooks Boyd
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Weaker Or Stronger Local Church?

1:30 Elderships and Shepherding the Flock Johnie Scaggs
 2:00 Scriptural or Unscriptural Practices? Bruce Daugherty
 2:30 Stable or Unstable Members? Eric Dawkins, Sr.
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Insights from the Church at Antioch British Carlton
 7:45 The Local Church in Three Figures Jimmy Clark



Chad Tagtow



Logan Summers



Jackie Stearsman

WEDNESDAY

9:00 Each Member’s Role in a Local Church Joseph DeBose
 9:40 Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers in the Local Church Earl D. Edwards
 Today
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Christ’s Demands for Local Churches to Repent (Rev. 2-3) Jimmy Clark
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Preaching And The Local Church

1:30 From Where Do Preachers Come? Rick Kenyon
 2:00 Taking Heed to Self and Doctrine Mike Elledge
 2:30 Preaching What Is Profitable Freddie Clayton
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Insights from the Church at Corinth Benjamin L. Radford, Sr.
 7:45 Importance of Local Church Membership Billy Lambert

THURSDAY

9:00 Deacons Serving Well Chad Tagtow
 9:40 Women in Local Church Development Billy Lambert

10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Christ’s Promises to Local Churches Who Overcome (Rev. 2-3) Melvin Otey
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Local Churches And Evangelism

1:30 Evangelistic Insights from Paul Jackie M. Stearsman
 2:00 Personal Work in the 21st Century Steve Vice
 2:30 Taking the Gospel to the Masses William Howard
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Insights from the Churches of Galatia Logan Summers
 7:45 A Local Church with Proper Direction Melvin Otey



Earl Edwards



Mike Elledge



Sam Hester



William Howard



David Stearsman



Johnie Scaggs



Ben Radford, Sr.

concerning the local church is beneficial in any climate. Study and learn about these important topics among others who love God, His word, and the fellowship we have with one another. Understanding the local church will help us better glorify God!



Melvin Otey



Billy Lambert



Rick Kenyon

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this word is used twenty-three times in First John, in reference to things abiding in us (cf. 2:14, 24), and to that in which we abide (cf. 2:10, 24; 3:14). This word also emphasizes communion, or fellowship with God (cf. 1 Jn. 3:24). By his use of the word “ought” in “ought...so to walk,” John teaches a moral obligation to manifest the basis of our profession (cf. Rom. 8:12-13). We are to “walk” as Christ walked, and “walking” refers to a way of life (cf. Jn. 8:12; 12:35). How did Christ walk? In perfect confidence in God, in perfect obedience to God, and in perfect love for God! Are we following the example of Jesus? The Son of God obeyed the Father’s will (Jn. 5:19-30), and so must we (Mt. 7:21)!

Conclusion

The one who says obedience is not important, does not understand obedience as God teaches it. Obedience is the basis for our assurance; the manifestation of our knowledge of God; the evidence of our love for God; and the imitation of the example of Christ. Do we have assurance, knowledge of God, love for God, and the example of Christ in our lives? May the Lord help us to understand the importance of obedience! 🙏

**Appreciation Dinner to Be Held
Tuesday, January 17, 2012**
The school will host its first annual appreciation dinner on the Tuesday night of our next lecture-ship. The school’s board of directors decided that this would be a more expedient way to show our appreciation to our boosters as well as to let others know about the work of the Lord through the school. Please call or email the office today to RSVP! We will have genuine, Florida style Bar-B-Que, cooked by some of our very own! We are asking that participants make a donation of \$10.



As we approach the time of year when we begin to focus on our 2012 budgets, please remember the school. What better work is there than faithfully training men to preach the faith once delivered?

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