

The Significance of Obedience

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 February 2015

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] We've covered two sections so far of 1 John and in those John gave us two tests to know whether! our salvation is genuine remember the first test is believing the truth about Jesus that he's both! God and man and for someone who believes that truth 1 John 1 for promises full joy and then the second test comes in 1 John 1 5 through 2 2 which we studied last week and that test is whether we acknowledge our sin and we'll refer back to that quite a bit tonight as we look at the next section so let's do some reviews to get us started remember in verses 6 through 10 of chapter 1 we saw three ways to tell whether someone's claims to be a christian or false and each had to do with how the person views sin each of them started with the words if we say in the new king james and the first is in first john 1 6 first john 1 6 says if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth so the first false claim is to have fellowship with god while failing to reflect his moral character and remember when we talk about walk it refers to a way of life or daily practice so to walk in darkness means to live contrary to the moral character of god and to live a sinful life so to claim fellowship with god without having a moral life and practicing the truth then is to live a lie and remember we talked about how god cannot compromise his holiness to accommodate sin and then verse 7 showed us the positive side of walking in the light verse 7 says but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of jesus christ his son cleanses us from all sin so we just talked about how god can't compromise his holiness to accommodate sin yet god knew that we'd fail to be perfect so god provided a way to cleanse us from all that sin a genuine christian then walks habitually in the light and we said light is synonymous with truth and holiness in this case and not in darkness and in this case darkness refers to falsehood and sin and remember that the word habitually is key because walk means direction rather than perfection john's point is that if christians live in the light where god is then there's mutual fellowship between god and them and as long as there's pure openness to the light of divine truth christians failures are under the cleansing power of the shed blood of christ and only in the savior's work on the cross can there be fellowship between the infinitely perfect god and man then the second false claim was in first john 1 8 and that says if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us so the second false claim is that we have no sin and the idea remember is that our sin nature is completely gone and if we say this we deceive ourselves and people who make this false claim believe that they're incapable of sinning the good news though is in verse 9 and it says if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and continual confession of sin is an indication of genuine salvation the term confess here means to say the same thing about sin as god does and that means to acknowledge his perspective about sin rather than focusing on confession for every sin john had in mind though a subtle recognition and acknowledgement that one's a sinner and in need of cleansing and forgiveness we also spent some time talking about how the original text of verse 9 proves that when we confess the sins we know god will also cleanse us from the sins about which we are unaware because the greek text for verse 9 lacks

the second our sins is indicated by the italics in the english text so literally the text reads if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us these sins these sins so we can paraphrase it like if we confess our sins he will forgive the sins we confess and moreover he will even cleanse us from all unrighteousness so if we confess our sins he will forgive the sins we confess and cleanse us from all unrighteousness so that's another reason we can confidently say that our christian walk means direction rather than perfection then 110 had the third false claim of people who wrongly claim to be true believers and 110 said if we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar and his word is not in us so this false claim is different than the one in verse 8 because the people in verse 8 say they're incapable of sinning the people in verse 10 acknowledge that they can sin they

just say that they never have sinned or no longer sin anymore so knowing that you're capable of sin and admitting that you have sinned are two completely different things but just as he did with the other false claims john followed the negative with the positive because remember the first two verses of chapter 2 he said my little children these things i write to you so that you may not sin and if anyone sins we have an advocate with the father jesus christ the righteous and he himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world so in the original greek the if before anyone sins carries the added sense of and it's assumed that we all do but when we sin we have an advocate someone who provided propitiation for our sins and remember that propitiation means appeasement or satisfaction and because of god's mercy all repentance centers have a savior in the new material that we're going to cover tonight we'll see the significance of obedience and you'll see that it fits really well with what we talked about last week and that's why we spent so much time on the review because those who obey god's word give evidence that they're genuine believers and obedience then is another way to tell that our faith is real so let's read the text this is first john two verses three through six john says now by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments he who says i know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him but whoever keeps his word truly the love of god is perfected in him by this we know that we are in him he who says he abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked so we're going to break those four verses into three sections and verse three has the test so we'll look at the test first verse three again says now by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments as we get deeper and deeper into first john we'll see that verse three starts with one of john's favorite phrases by this we know and 42 times in this letter john uses the form of the word no and this time john says that he's going to tell us how to know that we know him so if you read some of the commentaries on the first sentence of verse three you'll see they get hung up on debating who the pronoun him refers to in this phrase many say that the him refers to jesus and that's because john has just referred to jesus in verses one and two when we when he talks about having an advocate with the father jesus christ the righteous and because john's next words then are now by this we know him assuming that's the case makes sense so we'll make the assumption tonight that the him refers to jesus in this case but if you're wondering let's think about that for a minute because what if john really is referring to god the father as some others claim and really for john jesus is so closely linked with the father that a precise distinction between the two really seems irrelevant because fellowship is with both the father and the son and so if we know one of them we know the other so it really doesn't matter even if john is referring to the father rather than jesus the message of tonight's passage is the same so if you look at that first phrase again it says now by this we know that we know him does john say that we may know him or we might know him no we'll find out that john is very rarely qualified in what he says he's almost very direct and want to a fault as he goes through here he's talking about knowing the lord intimately here and it's unqualified in what he says he's saying that we will know him we may know that we know him in this case and in all of first john the apostle uses no in the sense of knowing the lord intimately so every time you hear about no in there you can think of it that way so right off the bat we can see that this verse is going to tell us how we can know jesus and how we can have assurance of our salvation so in contemporary christianity if you think about it assurance is very often ignored these days it's ignored by people who assume that if you just pray a prayer walk an aisle or make some kind of statement or get baptized that you're saved it's not even a question for them and some people say that everybody who believes in god however they imagine god to be is saved but on the other side of the spectrum assurance is also ignored by people who claim that you could lose your salvation so these people say that rather than feeling assured about your salvation you're better off to be nervous about it so this teaching makes some true believers live in the state of fear then that even if they were saved they might lose their salvation so i put this quote in your handout just to try to address that and with so much understanding about assurance is it really possible to have full assurance of our salvation and to really know that we're saved and we're on our way to heaven and the scripture says yes it's possible and of course not only does the bible teach that assurance is possible the bible commands us to pursue assurance and assurance is also a privilege and i like this part of the quote it says assurance is also a privilege it's part of your birthright as a christian you ought to know that you're secure that's a privilege that you should enjoy so god wants us to be assured of our salvation and one way we get assured of our salvation is looking at passages like first john but we also see that elsewhere because if you look at second peter 1:10 peter wrote therefore brethren be even more

diligent to make your call and election sure and then in second corinthians 13 5 paul wrote examine yourselves as to whether you're in the faith test yourselves do not do you not know yourselves that jesus christ is in you unless indeed you are disqualified so going back to first john 2 3 john gives us a way to have that assurance john says now by this we know him and the greek there is in the perfect tense it looks at a past action with continuing with roles so you can think of it this way it's really as if he's saying by this we continue to know that at some point in the past we came to know him and we still do so let's move along to the last part of the verse now how does the remainder of the verse say that we can continue to know that we've come to know him says by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments john likely has in mind what he heard jesus say listen to jesus's own words in john's gospel here's john 14 15 jesus said there if you love me keep my commandments then later on in john's gospel jesus said these words in john 15 10 and 11 jesus said if you can keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as i have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love then in verse 11 he says these things i've spoken to you that my joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full so does that joy may be full reference remind you of something that's what we looked at in chapter 1 verse 4 of first john it's the same words that john used there so by keeping jesus's commandments we demonstrate that we know him and because keeping those commandments gives us full joy we need to consider what it means to keep jesus's commandments and keep is john's favorite word instead of do so once again keep is john's favorite word instead of do and the greek word there means to guard to keep watch over to obey or to observe so it really focuses on keeping an eye intently on something and doing that with purpose in mind so you're doing it intentionally you're not just accidentally obeying those commandments so real knowledge of god has an intellectual moral and spiritual component that can't be separated and the knowledge of god described throughout the text of scripture is intellectual it's also experiential meaning that we can experience it and it's dynamic and this knowledge is gained through living a life in spiritual relationship with the one true god but this is not new to the new testament either because we see the same principle illustrated in the old testament think about jeremiah and the promise of the restoration from exile given to jeremiah it was that the people of god would know the lord so listen to jeremiah 31 31 through 34 and you'll see that this is not a concept unique to the new testament jeremiah 31 31 31 through 34 says 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 so listen to jeremiah 31 34 one more time that's where god said 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 for i will give forgive their iniquity and i will remember their sin no more so here's another quote that i put in your handout and that's the israelites had a special relationship with the lord that was established through the election of the nation and the promise he made to abraham but their failure to live out the commands of god which was outlined in deuteronomy 27 through 32 led to their ejection from the land in exile in babylon so the history of israel then proves and provides unmistakable evidence that communion and fellowship with god require obedience to his commands so that's why you can see it's not just a new idea for the new testament this is something that god's people should have known all along that fellowship with god requires obedience so before we leave our discussion of first john 2 3 let's consider one more thing do you think john is telling us that we have to perfectly obey god's commands to prove that our faith is genuine well one of the reasons why we spent so much time reviewing last week's verses is that those verses give us the answer because remember back to first john 1 8 first john 1 8 just told us that if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and make god out to be a liar and the issue here then is whether we take god's commandment seriously and whether we're trying to keep them so we may not keep them perfectly and we may not even have a perfectly consistent desire to keep them but if we truly are born again then we'll live our lives with regard to god's commands and we'll want to follow them more often than not so whenever scripture speaks of the righteousness of the faithful it does not

exclude the remission of sins but it begins with it so the certainty of faith depends on the grace of christ alone but piety and holiness of life distinguish true faith from that knowledge of god which is fictitious and dead so think about that when you when you consider this passage look at that first line again that's on your handout whenever scripture speaks of the righteousness of the faithful it does not exclude the remission of sins but on the contrary begins with it so obedience to god is not what brings about our justification our justification comes by faith alone but obedience as a pattern of life does give evidence that we have been saved and to know him involves a personal relationship that transforms practical behavior so that brings us to the second section of the study we've seen the test and then in verses 4 and 5 john recaps the truth so we'll see the truth and he's going to tell us the truth that's revealed by the test so here are verses 4 and 5 again they say he who says i know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is a liar and the truth is a liar and the truth is a liar and the truth is not in him so we'll take those verses one at a time so look at verse 4 again john says he who says i know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him once again you see that john's being a little wishy-washy there and just comes out and says if you don't keep his commandments he's a liar but uh or you're a liar in that case but as in 1 6 someone may profess a fellowship with god which his life shows that he lacks and we see that john just very directly calls that person a liar and that's because disobedience shows a lack of personal knowledge of christ if we claim to know christ while disobeying his word we actually do lie and not only does the conflict of word and action make the person a liar but it also shows that the truth lacks a controlling influence in that person's life so the idea is similar to the statements made earlier about the false claims in 1 6 1 8 and 1 10 in such a person that person is seriously out of touch with spiritual reality what's internal will eventually come to the surface so not only is the claim of such an individual false but the truth is absent from that person's life in this case the person lacks the divine nature which alone makes possible the genuine knowledge of god and to enjoy that genuine knowledge a person must be of the truth so listen to the exchange between jesus and pilate in john 18 37 this was when jesus was on trial before pilate and in verse 37 pilate therefore said to him are you a king then jesus answered you say rightly that i am a king for this cause i was born and for this cause i have come into the world that i should bear witness to the truth everyone who is of the truth hears my voice so you can see then that if you pay [20 : 14] attention to the truth and are of the truth you will want to do what jesus says that you should do do so in stark contrast to the one who claims to know god but doesn't keep his commands and is branded a liar the person who keeps god's word is indwelt by the truth and the love of god and that love of god is perfected in him and that's what we see in first john 2 5. first john 2 5 again says but whoever keeps his word truly the love of god is perfected in him by this we know that we are in him so once again we have a little bit of disagreement from some bible teachers we respect about the meaning of the phrase the love of god some say it means the love of god for the christian and some say it means the christian's love for god and based upon the context the christian's love for god is what john has in mind because john intended briefly to show what god requires from us and what is the holiness of the faithful and once again this is a concept that is in the old testament as well because moises said the same thing when he summed up the law in deuteronomy 10 12 and 13 so listen to moises words in deuteronomy 10 12 and 13 moises said and now israel what does the lord your god require of you but to fear the lord your god to walk in all his ways and to love him to serve the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the commandments of the lord and his statutes which i command you today for your good so listen to those verses in deuteronomy one more time and hear the consistency with first john moises said and now israel what does the lord require the lord your god require of you but to fear the lord your god to walk in all his ways and to love him to serve the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the commandments of the lord and his statutes which i command you today for your good and then later on in deuteronomy moises said these words in deuteronomy 30 19 and 20 he said i call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you that i have set before you life and death blessing and cursing therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live that you may love the lord your god that you may obey his voice that you may cling to him for he is your life and the length of your days and that you may dwell in the land which the lord swore to your fathers to abraham isaac and jacob to give them so once again the old and new are completely consistent with each other because we hear moises talking about obeying the lord and walking in his ways and back in first john look again at the first sentence of first john 2 5 it says but whoever keeps his word truly the love of god is perfected in him and the verb translated perfected there is in

the perfect tense and it's used four times in this letter in in this letter it's always used to describe completion or perfection of love so you can think of it by saying truly the love of god is completed in him so now look at the last sentence of verse five it says by this we know that we are in him and we don't know for sure whether this sentence refers backwards to god's love being made complete in us or forwards to walking as jesus walked and depending on the version you have with you tonight the english bibles relate that a little bit differently because the new king james treats the sentence as though it looks forward to what we'll see in verse six so which interpretation then is correct here and in this case i'm going to tell you that complete certainty is impossible but john likely intended the last sentence

of verse five to look forward and backwards because this is what is called the saddle text it ties together the material that's come before with the material that's going to come after so it's a transition that sums up what we've already looked at and it frames the discussion and lays the foundations for what we're going to see next and that's the discussion of abiding in him so john met the sentence to go with both the words of verse five and verse six because remember that when john wrote the letter chapter and verse designation weren't there they were added after he finished and because the last sentence of verse five fits with either verse we'll look at it before moving on to verse six and john says by this we know that we are in him so we again see the by this we know phrase so what do we know this time says by this we know that we are in him and here's how matthew henry summarizes the answer to that he says we know that we belong to him and that we are united to him by that spirit which elevates and assist us to this obedience so again we know that we belong to him and that we're united to him by that spirit which elevates and assists us in this obedience so in him then is an example of john's theology of eminence so and by that we mean the christian in god and jesus god and jesus being in the christian and god and jesus being in each other and this concept is actually found 35 times in john's gospel and john's epistles and it's in formulas like to be in and to abide or remain in so we'll see that quite a bit as we continue on through first john and when we're born of god then we've been begotten into an intimate relationship with each member of the godhead the father the son and the holy spirit and by keeping the commandments then we bear witness to the union that we have with the godhead now the people who wanted to criticize john would like to describe this union as a mystical union that's meant only for a few but the old testament background to the indwelling presence of god points to a different direction because the old testament tells us that god will dwell in the new jerusalem among his people we see that in ezekiel and then also in the new covenant the one who believes will have an intimate knowledge of god that's brought about by the indwelling nature of the holy spirit and we'll have the law written upon our hearts and we'll have our hearts circumcised to obey god and that comes from deuteronomy we also see it in jeremiah 24 jeremiah 31 and ezekiel 36 so it's not an isolated concept that believers will know god and in john's description of the new covenant this indwelling takes place on a mutuality not fully described in the old testament because god not only dwells in the believer but the believer is also in god and so the real message here is that this is not a mystical status meant for an elite few but it's a spiritual relationship that's common to everyone who believes in jesus who's the mediator of the new covenant and for some examples of how god dwells with the believer and how the believer dwells with god listen to jesus's own words the verses from john 14 21 through 23 record a conversation between jesus and judas not iscariot and in john 14 21 jesus is speaking first jesus says he who has my commandments and keeps them it is he who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my father and i will love him and manifest myself to him judas not iscariot said to him lord how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world jesus answered and said to him if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him

so you can see how god and jesus are dwelling with the believer and then in john 17 20 and 21 which we know as jesus's high priestly prayer jesus said these words and again this is john 17 20 and 21 he said i do not pray for these alone but also for those who will believe in me through their word that they all may be as 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 so listen to verse 21 again it says 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 so notice how the christian is in god and jesus god and jesus are in each other and in the christian as well so jesus then really takes the old testament concept one step further god doesn't dwell with us necessarily he is in us so he is both with us and in us at the same

time so so far we've seen the test in verse three and we've seen the truth in verses four and five and then in the final verse tonight we'll see the tendency so the tendency is what we have there and at first glance that may seem like a weak word just because it fits the alliteration to a t literally but it actually is a good word that fits there because most dictionaries define tendency similar to this says a characteristic likelihood a predisposition to think act or proceed in a particular way a characteristic pattern or point of view and that's exactly what john is going to be talking about here he's going to be talking about a characteristic pattern and a predisposition to think or act in a particular way so look at verse six again it gives us the tendency of the true believer he who says he abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked so here's another of the in him phrases that we talked about like at the end of verse five and the word abide here means to remain or stay around and the remaining or abiding then is evidence that salvation has already taken place and not vice versa the fruit or evidence of salvation is continuance in service to him and in his teachings and the abiding believer then is the only legitimate believer abiding and believing actually are addressing the same issue of genuine salvation and jesus explained the importance of abiding in him in john 15 4 and 5 john 15 4 and 5 give another example too of how the true believer abides in jesus and how jesus also abides in the true believer so here are those verses in john 15 4 and 5 jesus said abide in me and i in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me i am the vine you are the branches he who abides in me and i in him bears much fruit for without me you can do nothing and when jesus says without me you can do nothing he means nothing of eternal significance so going back to first john 2 6 what does john say should be the tendency of someone who says he abides in christ says he who abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked and as we discussed last week and earlier tonight in the review remember that walk means direction rather than perfection and jesus's life of obedience then is the christian's pattern those who claim to be christians ought to live just as jesus did because they possess his spirit's presence and power believers can mirror christ's faith love piety obedience and self-sacrifice and this pattern of life then will give greater assurance that we are in him so once again we're back to assurance of our salvation if we behave a certain way so consider one more thing here too the verse says that the believer ought to walk as he walked instead of saying that the believer must walk as he walked why do you think that is well think about it this way the christian as a child of god ought to obey god because of a sincere desire to do so it should be a joy to follow in the footsteps of the one who died for us so that's why we have in your blank there the christian as a child of god ought to obey god because of the sincere desire to do so because it should be a joy to follow in the footsteps of the one who died for us so like the other test we've studied so far the application of tonight's passage is pretty easy to see one thing about john being so direct it's kind of hard to miss his message but we see at least four things from this text and the first is that we can have assurance of our salvation so once again we can have assurance of our salvation and remember god wants us to be assured of our salvation secondly we see that obedience gives evidence of our love for god once again obedience gives evidence of our love for god then third believers abide in god and jesus god and jesus god and jesus also abide in the believers so believers abide in god and jesus god and jesus abide in believers and then finally number four is that believers want to obey god's word so believers want to obey god's word you know some people can get caught up in obedience because they think they have to to prove that they're saved if you're doing it because you have to that could be a concern you really should be doing it because you want to and when you want to obey god's word that's when you really can have more assurance that you are saved so look back again at verse three now by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments with that let's close with a word of prayer dear lord we thank you that you have given us ways to test our salvation and have assurance that we are saved and if anyone is struggling with that tonight help those people to use tests like these to really examine themselves and get comfortable that they are one of yours and if they're not comfortable help them address that as well we pray for those of us who do have assurance of our salvation that we'll be mindful of where we can help others have the same assurance when they truly are saved and help help help us always have the desire to want to obey your word in jesus name we pray amen so you