Obey His Word

(The Benefits of Obedience)
(1 John 3:19-24)
12-14-2025

Introduction: The previous context: 1 John 3:10-18
"God's Children LOVE One another"

*** IT PAYS TO OBEY!**

I. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…*
ASSURANCE OF SALVATION (v.19a)

II. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…*
A CLEAN CONSCIENCE (v.19b-21)

III. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…*
ANSWERED PRAYER (v.22-23)

IV. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…*
THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD (v.24)



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Introduction: Review the previous context: 1 John 3:10-18
"God's Children LOVE One another"

1. Love is a distinguishing trait that separates a believer from a non-believer (v.10)
2. Love is a message believers should know about right from the start of their conversion (v.11)
3. Love is not envious or jealous of the spiritual success or prosperity of another (v.12-13)
4. Love offers the assurance that one has been transferred from the realm of death to the realm of eternal life (v.14-15)
5. Love is not mere talk, but sacrificial action toward others in need (v.16-18)

God expects that His children love each other. NOT just in word but in ACTION.
Verse: 19 – "By This" = this practice of loving one another. Fulfilling God's expectation. Obeying His Word; Doing what He expects. Not just talking about it but carrying it out.

Imagine, if you will, that you work for a company whose president found it necessary to travel out of the country and spend an extended period of time abroad. So he says to you and the other trusted employees, "Look, I'm going to leave. And while I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip." Everyone agrees. He leaves and stays gone for a couple of years. During that time he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally he returns. He walks up to the front door of the company and immediately discovers everything is in a mess--weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the gal at the front desk dozing, loud music roaring from several offices, two or three people engaged in horseplay in the back room. Instead of making a profit, the business has suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and with a frown asks, "What happened? Didn't you get my letters?" You say, "Oh, yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We've even bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have 'letter study' every Sunday. You know, those were really great letters." I think the president would then ask, "But what did you do about my instructions?" And, no doubt the employees would respond, "Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!"Charles Swindoll, Living Above the Level of Mediocrity, p. 242

Do you ever feel like a dark cloud has overshadowed your life?
That feeling in our lives in often due to our disobedience to God. For happiness is the byproduct of doing right. John 13:17 - "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

The hymn: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

The clear emphasis of vv. 19-24 involves God's commands.

--"Keep His commandments" (v. 22)
--"This is His commandment" (v. 23)
--As He gave us commandment" (v. 23)
--"He that keepeth his commandments" (v. 24)

Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in '71 admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

John Kenneth Galbraith, in his autobiography, A Life in Our Times, illustrates the devotion of Emily Gloria Wilson, his family's housekeeper:

It had been a wearying day, and I asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House.
"Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson."
"He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him."
"Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him."
"No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you.
When I called the President back, he could scarcely control his pleasure. "Tell that woman I want her here in the White House." Published by Houghton Mifflin, Reader's Digest, December, 1981

* IT PAYS TO OBEY!

I. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…* **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION (v.19a)**

If someone were to ask you, "How do you know for sure you are a Christian?" How would you answer?

How do I know I am belonging to the truth of God? How do I gain such assurance that I have been born again out of God's truth and thus belong to that truth?

Ask yourself these questions:

"Do I believe?"
"Do I obey?" (v. 23)

Our assurance of salvation is based on two vital evidences:

1) Faith (trust) -- the subjective proof
2) Obedience -- the objective proof

John, in this epistle, emphasizes the objective proof of someone who has been born again -- SEE: I John 2:29, 3:10, 3:14, 4:6, 4:7, 5:4, 5:18.

The verb **"know"** (from *gnosko*) points to an acquired knowledge based on our experience (Hiebert, p. 165).

It means to come to a point of knowing something through practical experience (not textbook/theoretical knowledge, but practical knowledge).

"And hereby we know" - By obeying God's command to love (not merely in word but in sincere action - v. 18), we gain the assurance that we have truly experienced God's truth.

If God dwells in you, He will love others through you.

Works do not save us, but they do bear evidence that we truly have become disciples of Christ (John 8:30-31 - As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;)

John Calvin, commenting on James 2:17, said: "Faith alone justifies, but faith that justifies is never alone."

Faith is not seen by the words of our lips, but by the works of our lives.

"Faith without works is dead." (Ja. 2:20).

There is no such thing as a life-long disobedient Christian.

--Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice. . . and they follow me" (Jn. 10:27)

--Paul stated clearly that the unrighteous (in action) would not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9; gal. 5:21).

--Peter testified that one who professes faith but returns to a lifestyle of wickedness is the a dog returning to its vomit and a pig going home to its mire (II Pet. 2:22).

God wants His children to have assurance of salvation. To know that we have the truth and belong to that truth. This confidence in our relationship with the Lord comes subjectively to us though His promises in Scripture and it comes to us objectively as we obey the Lord who saved us.

II. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…* <u>A CLEAN CONSCIENCE</u> (v.19b-21)

v. 19b

Not only does obedience to God's Word bear witness of one's relationship to God's truth (i.e. salvation), but obedience also has the additional benefit of persuading us that our heart is right before God.

By obedience we **"shall assure our hearts before Him"** (v. 19b)

"Assure" - to have an inner persuasion, to be convinced, to have our heart set at rest.

Is there unrest in your heart? The reason may be disobedience in your life.

"Before him" - Can you stand before God without guilt? Or do you know deep down that there is something in between you and God?

Is there an area of disobedience that would lead you to cower away from Him in shame and remorse? What is it that has defiled your heart? (What villain have you allowed to enter in through the eye or ear gate that has smitten your heart with sin? What TV, video, book, or magazine has dirtied your heart?)

v. 20

"Heart" - "the word is used here in the sense of 'conscience'." (Rienecker, p. 792, citing Marshall).

"If our heart <u>condemns</u> us" - If our heart <u>knows something against</u> us.

Our heart (which is deceitful above all things - Jer. 17:9) will often give us a faulty reading of our state (sometimes it's like a broken compass, or like a broken thermometer).

Due to sin in our life, our heart may say: "See, look at yourself; you are wretched; you cannot possibly be saved; no saved person would think/live/act etc. like you do."

"God is greater than our heart" - "Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God, who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, He knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and it is implied, will be more merciful toward us than our own heart" (Stott, cited by Rienecker, p. 792).

It is better to have the all-knowing God as our Judge than our own conscience. It is the difference between conscience and omniscience (Hiebert, p. 168, citing Plummer).

What disobedience does is it opens the door for Satan –"the accuser of the brethren" – to have an occasion to accuse us and to plague our hearts with doubt and fear.

v. 21

If our heart does not have the ammunition to attack us, we than have a confident assurance that we are right with God.

God intends for us to go through our Christian life with such inner confidence. By obedience we disarm Satan; we lubricate the gears of our heart so that no dangerous sound is heard that might lead us to believe that our engine is shot.

"A clear conscience makes for a soft pillow" (Spurgeon).

Paul's goal in life was to live with a clear conscience toward God and men.

III. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…* **ANSWERED PRAYER (v.22-23)**

v. 22
Does God answer everyone's prayers? No.
The Bibe gives several conditions to receiving answers to prayer, such as. . .

1) Believing Him (Mk. 11:24 - Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.) (Ja. 1:6-7 - But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.)

2) Being close to Him (Jn. 15:7 - If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.)

3) Praying according to His will (I Jn. 5:14-15 - ¶ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.) (cp. Jn. 14:13 - And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.)

4) Obeying and Pleasing Him (Ps. 66:18 - 8 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*)

"Whatsoever we ask" - This is a wide spectrum of answers to prayer. There are many things we can ask for and receive.

"Keep" - To be careful about; to guard so as to keep them from going unattended to. To be conscientious (not sloppy and careless) so as to obey.

"Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause of answered prayer" (Stott, p. 149).

The prayer of the wayward will not get answered.

Prov. 1:24-28 - Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:
26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;
27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me)

Prov. 28:9 - ¶ He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination.

Ja. 4:3 - Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ja. 5:16b - The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much

I Pet. 3:7 - 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Seeking to please God will take you a step beyond strictly obeying Him (it is a fuller demonstration of love).

"A farmer's wife and her ten-year-old daughter were just finishing their breakfast when a phone call urgently requested the mother to come to a neighbor's home a short distance away because of an emergency. Before leaving, the mother kindly asked her daughter to wash the dishes and tidy the kitchen while she was gone. Prompted by her love, the daughter gladly consented. She washed and carefully replaced the dishes, cleared off the kitchen stove, and swept the floor. Since her mother was still not back, she went into her brother's room and made the bed and cleaned the room. Then she took a broom and carefully swept the living room floor and the front porch because she knew it would please her mother. Her love prompted her to go beyond that which had been commanded. So the believer often faces situations in his own life which may not be covered by a specific commandment, but his love prompts him to act in ways he knows would be pleasing to the Lord" (Hiebert, p. 170-71).

v. 23
It's not difficult to know what commands we must be concerned about.

These two incapsulate every detailed rule and regulation of Scripture. To obey these two will result in obedience to all the rest!

The Pharisees had codified the Law into 35 prohibitions and 250 commandments (David Hocking, p. 50).

Love for God and others took precedence (Mt. 22:35-40).

"Commandment" - singular. Why didn't He say, "And these are His commandments"?

God's command is really only one singular command. Two sides of one coin.

As Lenski said, "You cannot believe without loving nor love without believing." Faith and love will always go together.

"Believe on the name" - the "name" stands for the entire person. To believe on His name is to believe on His person; to trust specifically in Him.

To receive Christ is the same as believing on His name. (Jn. 1:12).

"His Son" - Emphasizes Christ's deity and unique relationship to the Father.

"Jesus" - Savior, Deliverer

"Christ" - Messiah

Christ commanded us to love one another in John 13:34.

IV. *When you OBEY God, you reap the benefit of…* **THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD (v.24)**

God abides close to the obedient child of His (SEE: Jn. 15:1-10)

You will never experience the intimate, close fellowship of God unless you make a deliberate decision to live a life of strict, conscientious obedience to His Word.

One of the Holy Spirit's most important jobs in our lives is to assure us of our relationship to God (Rom. 8:14-16 - For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God)

When we sin, we forfeit this vital ministry of assurance that the Spirit wants to give us.

For the child of God, obedience is a manifestation that we know Him.
One ministry of the Holy Spirit is to assure us of salvation (Romans 8:16); When we persist in disobedience, we forfeit that ministry. When we live obedient lives, the Spirit can perform that ministry without interference.

Conclusion:

Hymn: "Is Your All on the Altar?"