

(So Great a Salvation) Keeping His Commandments

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of keeping God's commandments as evidence of eternal life and the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers in their walk with God.

Duration: 44:27

Topics: "Commandments"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the first evidence mentioned in the epistle, which is the importance of walking in the light. He emphasizes that walking in darkness is a lie and not in line with the truth. The preacher then discusses the atonement and how it justifies God in pardoning sinners. He explains that when believers fall into sin, they should judge themselves, forsake their sin, confess it, and seek the cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus. The preacher encourages believers to strive to please God, walk in the light, and diligently seek more understanding of God's will.

Transcript

We're dealing these days, in this hour, the evidences of eternal life as found in this little first epistle of John. In John chapter 17 and verse 3, our Lord declares, And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. Many people that you will meet who carry the name Christian will not have had fellowship with God, merely fellowship with other people about God.

Many of these are going to become concerned about the absence of spiritual reality. Some, in despair perhaps, are going to turn and go back into the world. John, speaking of such a company, said, They have gone out from us, they went out from us because they were not of us.

There will be others whose hearts will be stirred for reality. They'll want to know Him, not just about Him, but Him whom to know is life eternal. And so I'm suggesting that you mark these various verses we'll be using service by service.

I would hope that you've already put a number one down to the left of six in the first chapter. Just a small one so that you understand this is the first of eight different evidences in this little epistle. So that when you're taking someone into the word, it will not mean having to read it, but you can turn directly to it.

In that first evidence we read, if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. And so the first question you're going to ask the person that you're endeavoring to help is this, Well, how do you walk? What is the purpose in your life? Is it to please God to walk in the light or is it to somehow walk in as much darkness as you can and still escape the consequences? A good question and it's going to start the thinking process and the Spirit of God will use it like an x-ray to show what's within them. Now we understand that walking in light involves accepting God's gracious cleansing from sin, forgiveness and pardon.

Obviously anyone who's come this far has discovered that they were sinners, dead in their trespasses and sins. They have repented of their sin, they have received the Lord Jesus Christ, and have qualified for the first words of the second chapter when John writing says, My little children, this is a term of affection. This is a father speaking to his own one who loves those that he addresses.

And the Apostle John is finding or directing this letter to those who qualify as God's little children. Born into the family of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now this means that they have already been awakened and convicted and brought to repentance.

And repentance as we've said is a change of purpose and direction and governing principle from pleasing oneself to pleasing God. And they've savingly received Christ as Lord and Savior. And you'll notice the next words in this first verse of the second chapter.

And we write unto you that you sin not. Now sin is a choice. We've got to remember that.

A choice to please oneself in a way that God has forbidden. I think it's time for a definition. I think we think with definitions.

Temptation is the proposition presented to the intellect to gratify a good appetite in a bad way. Now let me say that again. Let me emphasize it.

Temptation is the proposition presented to the mind, to the intellect, to gratify a good appetite in a bad way. A forbidden way. Now understand that from that the appetites are not bad.

We know what they are. These urges or drives or propensities that we call appetites. Appetite for food, for knowledge, for pleasure, for security, for sex, for status.

All of these drives or urges God put into our first parents. And when he had completed making them in his image and likeness of them and all else, he said it is good. So let us not deface and defile that which God has called good by saying that the appetites are bad.

The proposition that the enemy presented to our first parents was to gratify these good appetites in a way that God had prohibited. And that is temptation. They were tempted to do it.

When Mother Eve decided to do it and Father Adam concurred, for he was standing there at the time we are told. And he consented to it and did as she had done. They made a choice.

And the choice was to satisfy their appetite in a way that God had forbidden. That is the definition of sin. Sin is the decision of the will to gratify an appetite in a way that God has forbidden.

Now understanding that, then, we know that sin is the decision to yield to temptation. The apostles' admonition is really translated like this. Do not run into ruin.

Do not promote your own misery. Don't make a choice that is going to bring you under the chastening judgment of God. My little children, do not sin as what he is saying.

Don't make such an unwise and unhappy choice. Remember he wrote in this epistle in the earlier part of the first chapter, And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. To be happy, we must be holy.

There isn't any escaping that. Holiness and happiness are absolutely inseparable. If you think that you can be happy by disobeying God and by sin, Then you are, really, you are morally insane.

There is no happiness in sin. There may be momentary gratification of an appetite, But it always carries with it misery, unhappiness, and often ruin. Sin and misery are as inseparable as happiness and holiness are.

And we must remember it. But we got to understand something else. When the apostle says, My little children, do not sin, There is a reason for it.

He has said that these things were written that they might know that they have eternal life. Did you realize that there is absolutely no assurance of salvation When we are living in disobedience and in known sin? Let me explain it to you. I get it from 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19.

The Lord knoweth them that are His, And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. And anyone who names the name of Christ, Living in known disobedience to the will of God, Has no assurance of eternal life. The Lord knows who are His, Let every one that names His name depart from iniquity.

That's so important. Now in the following verse, He says, And if any sin, Understand this, that there is always the possibility of a child of God being overtaken in a fault, And falling into temptation and yielding to sin. We explained that and dealt with that yesterday.

There's all the difference in the world, In the way a child of God, truly born into God's family, Would fall into temptation and yield to sin. He hates it, what he did, he hated the time he did it, And his whole heart cries out to have it rectified and made right. He's going to deal with it the way God has prescribed.

He's going to judge it and forsake it and confess it, And know the cleansing of the blood. But John gives to us this marvelous encouragement, And if any man sin, We have an advocate. That word is not used that way very often.

We're accustomed to seeing this Greek word in another form. You know what the word is? It's parakletos, Used of the Holy Spirit. Comforter.

Here it's translated advocate. You know there's a verse of a song that says, And my name is written on his hands. We have one in the glory.

A man there, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who loved not his life unto death, Who died that he might vindicate the holiness of God, And make it possible for God to be just, And the justifier of him that would receive Jesus. And he's there, able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. And our names are written on his hands, And he is advocate.

He is parakletos. He's the one to go alongside to help. He's the one who pleads our cause before the judge.

The word advocate in this sense, As it's used, parakletos, Has to do with the counsel for the defense, The legal assistant, The pleader, And intercessor. And our Lord Jesus Christ, In all in his exaltation to the Father's right hand, Pleading for us, representing us. Oh, how marvelous it is that we should have that at this point.

And then that beautiful statement, And he is the propitiation for our sins. He's the covering. The atonement of Christ was intended as a satisfaction of public justice.

God can't repeal the moral law, Nor can he set aside the spirit of its sanctions. To dispense with the sanctions for breaking the law Would be a virtual repeal of the precepts. God can only set aside the execution of the penalty When something shall be done That meets the demands of the true spirit of the law.

In Romans chapter 3, verses 24 to 26, We read that there are reasons, And the plan and purpose of the atonement Is to justify God in the pardon of sin And the releasing of sinners From the full execution of the penalty of the law. Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, Having satisfied the law, And having publicly vindicated the holiness of God, So that God can be just, And the justifier of him who repents and believes, And we have, therefore, in him, This one who is our advocate and our covering. What must we do as a child of God when we fall into sin? Our first works again? Judge ourselves, forsake our sin, and confess it, And know the cleansing of the precious blood.

So John is talking to children whom he wants to have joy, To children. But are all who might read this children? He does give that second evidence now in this third verse. And it's so important for you to write a number two next to verse three.

Hereby we know that we know him, If we keep his commandments. For that we keep his commandments. I mentioned yesterday that there was a Gnostic heresy that John told.

The Gnostics pretended, as they said, to have much knowledge, Superior knowledge, special illumination that set them apart from others. Their understanding was, or what their propaganda was, That because they had this higher insight, They could continue to live in sin. They could continue to indulge their evil fashions.

And they could continue to practice their unholy habits. And God would be just as pleased with them As if they were living ascetic and pure and holy lives. They denied orthodox teaching.

They denied the word of God. So John is dealing with that. And he is saying here in this verse, Anyone who claims to know God, But does not keep his commandments, Well, he's the same as the one who says he knows God and he walks in darkness.

He's a liar. And truth isn't in him. There are many today, That we're going to meet in the course of your ministries, Who are the products of a cheap, Sometimes extremely shallow evangelism.

With their mouth, they can recite orthodox theology. And many of them have denied the necessity of repentance. If you'd have met me, As short a time ago as in the sixties, You would have, no pardon me, in the fifties, Late fifties or early fifties, You'd have found somebody that would fight you to the ground, In

denying that repentance had any place in the preaching of the gospel today.

I remember when a preacher colleague said, You know, I think it's time for us to look again at this thing of repentance. And I took my finger and wagged it under his nose, And I said, Donald, I want you to know that I've got this thing settled. Repentance is Jewish, And it has nothing to do with the preaching of the gospel today, And I'm not going to get mixed up in that.

He said, all I said was, I think we ought to look at it again. I said, no, I've made up my mind. Well, I made up my mind, but a book came to my hand, That Bethany published, I think it's out of print now, I'd like to see it.

In fact, it got printed and out of print, and I didn't even know it. I'd been urging Ted Hagree for a long time to put out H.A. Ironside's Except You Repent. And I understand you did, and the whole edition's gone, And I never got the copies I was hoping for.

Well, that's my fault. It's still a great book. Here was a dispensationalist who took umbrage with all of his dispensational friends, Saying, I think they're making a terrible mistake when they say that repentance is not for the dying.

All right, we have a great many people that we're going to meet, Many of whom are going to come to us as basket cases, And they're going to need help, And we're going to discover that they know the plan of salvation. They got it all up here, but if they die as they are, they're going to miss heaven by 18 inches, Because it never migrated down here. They know it all here, but they don't.

You see, salvation isn't a scheme. Salvation isn't a plan. Salvation isn't a decision.

Salvation isn't a system of doctrine. Salvation isn't a list of scripture verses. Salvation is a person.

David knew it. He said, Jehovah is my light and my salvation. Paul knew it when he wrote to that church at Corinth.

And in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and 5, it said, Examine yourself whether you be in the faith. Prove your own self. Know you're not your own self.

How that Christ be in you, except you be reprobate. This man that challenged me on the subject of repentance had a radio program in one of the towns where I and my family were living. And a man from another church in the same city came to him, called him up, and said, Pastor, you know, I go to such and such a church, a big church.

He said, I'm one of the personal workers. He said, last Sunday something happened. I'm not listening to your program on the air, and I wanted to talk with you about it.

He said, the pastor gave the invitation, and a lot of folks came. And I went to a man, a nice looking businessman type. And I got his name and his address, and I asked him what he came for.

And he said he came to be saved. And so I had a scripture verse there, and I opened to it, and it was, He that hath the Son hath life. And I said, do you believe that? He said, yes I do.

So I wrote down saved. And I said, do you want to be baptized? He said, I don't know, should I? He said, yes. So that church they baptized the same day they made a profession of faith.

Have you got any questions? You know that verse you've got that says, He that hath the Son hath life. Yes, we just read it. The question I have is this.

I believe it. You ask me if I believe it, and I believe that He that hath the Son hath life. But the question is this.

How do you get the Son? And you know, so what I told him, the pastor said, No, what did you tell him? Well, I told him that the pastor would take care of that in his church membership classes later on. So with that, he went off and he was baptized. Did I do right? And the pastor on the phone, my friend said, Do you think you did right? He said, No.

No, I did wrong. I should have known how to explain to him. He said, did the man making the inquiry.

Pastor, how do you get the Son? And the personal worker was just as ignorant as the person who would ask the question. And they're going to find a great many people that have a great many very deep and very real needs. Now, what is the sinner's attitude toward this, the commandments? Is there anything in the scripture that tells us what the sinner thinks about the law? What the sinner knows about the law.

In 2nd Romans chapter 2 and verse 14 and 15, we find that it says, When the pagans who have not the law do by the nature of the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written on their hearts. When God made man, He took great care to put in, now I guess if you were to use computer terms, He'd say, had a hard disk already programmed inside that person. And on that disk, on that inner knowledge, is written the law of God.

Every person that breathes the breath of human life, I'm convinced, according to this scripture and my experience with people in Africa who never heard the name of Jesus, I'm convinced that the law is written on their hearts. They were given by God not only this law that's there inscribed, but they were given the power to choose good or evil. It isn't written, this law upon tables of stone, it's written in their conscience, in that with knowledge that God has a standard equipment for the human family.

He did that so that the law would never be very far from them, nor would it be hard to be understood. Every person, and I'm going to go so far as to say even those that have never heard the name of Jesus, because I've found it so, every person is a moral agent. And every moral agent knows what is right and can never mistake his real duty.

He knows it. And he knows that his duty is to will and to choose that which he knows to be right. But at the age of accountability, at some point there, I don't know when it was, the script word says, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, everyone that breathes the breath of human life has made the decision to not do what is right, but to do what they wish to do that will gratify their appetites in the way they choose to gratify them. And that's why the word says, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I say, I don't know what that time is, and I don't know why.

And I don't think anybody else does. And I think the church has gotten into a terrible problem in the amount of bondage because certain people in the past thought they had to answer questions that God's Word doesn't answer. The Scripture tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but it doesn't tell us why all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Oh, I know there have been theories that have been put together by those that thought they had answers, but if you examine their theories carefully, generally they're found not to hold up very well. I don't think this word of Scripture does tell us why all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but it tells us that they have. That every person breathing the breath of human life made a sovereign choice, that is, sovereign in the kingdom of their own heart, to please themselves as the end of their being, as the reason for their being, and self-pleasing became the governmental principle by which they live.

And therefore, every sinner has already made a choice that he's going to do what he wants to do, irrespective of the will of God and irrespective of the rights of others. That's sin. Now, the essence of it is this.

I am going to decide how to satisfy my appetites. I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to please myself.

I'm not going to let parents or God or even government tell me how to be happy. I'm going to take charge of my life. Or, as it's put into poetry, I am the master of my fate.

I'm the captain of my soul. That's the essence of sin. That's the attitude of the sinner toward the commandments.

Now, in contrast to that, what is the attitude of the person that's been born into the family of God, whom John can say, my little children? First, we've seen that repentance precedes forgiveness and pardon. Repentance, as we've noticed, and you'll notice again how it will occur throughout this book, there is that change of purpose from pleasing oneself to pleasing God. The renunciation of this principle, I'm going to decide how to be happy.

It consists in the turning of the soul from selfishness to benevolence and from disobedience to obedience, said Charles Finney. Now, obedience to the commandments is really all that God requires. A believer is a person who has committed his will to seek the highest good of God in the entire universe.

Now, if you're a child of God, have been born into God's family, and can accept the address of the Spirit of God through John, my little children, then one thing is clear. You have purposed in repentance preceding faith and forgiveness to please God in everything. That is the essence of keeping the commandment.

A believer is someone who has determined to love God and his neighbor. Let's explore that for a moment. First in great commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

You know, and I know, and we had saw last night in the illustration, that love, the love of the Scripture, is not an emotion. When God says, thou shalt love, it's a commandment, and commandments are that which have to do with the will. And therefore, the person that loves God is the person who has made a purpose and a decision and a commitment to seek the highest good and happiness and joy and satisfaction and blessing of God.

And by the same token, to seek the highest good and blessing and joy and satisfaction and fulfillment and well-being of neighbor. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and love thy neighbor. And this love, therefore, is to will good, to will the highest good for all persons for their, for its own sake.

And this includes a consecration, an entire consecration of the entire being, every part of our being to this end of seeking the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of others. I'm going to

read to you something from Finney. In his Systematic Theology, on page 99, he wrote, The Bible everywhere assumes that sincerity or honest intention is moral perfection, that it is obedience to the law.

Terms sincerity and perfection in Scripture language are synonymous. Uprightness, sincerity, holiness, honesty, perfections, are words of the same meaning in Bible language. Now, the intention, the intention, setting of the will, the fixing of the purpose.

Again, on page 104 in his Systematic Theology, the law of God requires us to will or intend the promotion of every interest in the universe according to the perceived relative value for its own sake. In other words, that all our powers be supremely and disinterestedly devoted to the glory of God and the good of the universe. You say, well, that's pretty hard, that's pretty heavy.

Well, perhaps it is. But this second evidence of eternal life isn't so light either. And it's important for us to understand it.

Hereby we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. Is He talking about the 613 acts of righteousness to do or not to do that our Jewish neighbors subscribe to? Or is He talking about something that is the intention or the purpose of the heart to seek the highest good and blessing of God and all in the entire universe? I believe it's the latter. And when the heart is set and the heart is fixed to please God, then the other things are going to fall into line.

He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But you say, wait a minute, this is very difficult. I don't know.

I'm not sure that the purpose of my heart is to please God in everything. Every person, everyone hearing my voice, knows the state of his own intentions. You know what you intend to do.

Now, if you don't, you're out of touch with reality. You have a very serious mental problem. And that's a possibility.

And there might be someone here or someone listening that is in that condition, and that's one that requires another kind of assistance and help and ministry. But every person that is in touch with reality knows what his intention is. Is it your intention to please God or to please yourself? That isn't that difficult.

Such states of consciousness are part of our awareness of being. Not to know that you exist or to know the purpose for your existence implies insanity. You're here.

You're you. And you know just as much as you're here and that you're you, you know whether or not your purpose is to please God or to please yourself. It's that simple.

For a person to say, I do not know whether or not I truly purpose to please God in everything, has to be construed to mean, I have not yet made the choice to please God in everything. To say, I don't know whether I have, means I haven't made that choice yet. Because when you've made the choice to please God and seek His glory, and to seek the highest good and blessedness of your neighbor and yourself, you know it because it is a commitment of the will.

It's a choice. And if you say, I not know it yet, I'm not sure, just means you haven't made the choice yet. To please God in everything.

And that means you haven't repented. And that means you're not keeping the law. And that means that you don't know Him.

We know that we know Him. We keep His commandments. And His commandment is that we should seek the highest good and blessedness of God and our neighbors, that that becomes the ruling passion and the governing, controlling principle of our lives.

Well now, you can find at this point the explanation why there's so much religious profession and so little practice of true religious faith and life in our day and in our time. Because we've had, as I mentioned to you, in my own state ministry for many years, no place for repentance except the plan of salvation. Assume that you're a child of God.

And repentance was something that I considered to be absolutely apart from any place or importance in the preaching of the gospel. Oh, I'd give anything to go back over those years and find the products of my evangelistic zeal and warn them to flee from the wrath to come. Because I misled them on the most important subject in all the world.

And there are multitudes like that. There's only one basis on which God can forgive and pardon sins. And that is on the basis of the repentance on the part of the sinner and His full acceptance of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross where He satisfied the holiness of God, vindicated His holiness and made it possible for God to pardon sinners.

So that repentant heart coming thus to the foot of the cross so to receive Christ, that one is the one that's been born of God. Oh, these texts and this scripture is a severe blow to false teachers of our day and time and it's a severe blow to all pretenders of religious knowledge. Anyone who continues to live in known sin, thinking that all they will lose is their reward, is in for a sad, sad awakening.

And all false boasters who consider the righteousness of Christ to be a covering for their continued personal unholiness, ah, what a warning this scripture is to them. God's Word declares that such are all liars and there is no truth of God in them. Hard words.

But you see, I didn't write the scripture. All I'm trying to do is bring our attention to focus on what God said. And He said, He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.

And the truth is not in him. I didn't write it. God, by the Holy Ghost, through the most loving, tender-hearted of the Apostles, the Apostle John is the one who wrote that.

And so the Apostle lovingly entreats all the readers and us so to live as to assure our hearts before him, who so keepeth His Word. In him is the love of God perfected. My dear friend, let it be perfected in you and in me, that hereby we may know that we are in him.

Let me close with something that came from the pen of John Wesley. When I started preaching, I was the pastor of a little country church out at Lake Osakis between Osakis, Minnesota and Long Prairie, Minnesota. A little, long-abandoned country church.

The neighbors had kept up and kept painted and fused varnish so they'd have a place to bury their friends. And they asked me to come in and be pastor. I'd reached the ripe old age of 18.

I'd started Bible school when I just turned 16. I'd been there two years. I'd had to leave in the middle of that year.

And Mr. Marquardt, who was pastor up at Long Prairie, called down to the Bible school and said, we need someone to have services out here for the summer. And the lock fell on me. It was propinquity.

I happened to be in Frank Bass's office the day that Mr. Marquardt's telephone call came. And he said, Barrett, what are you doing this summer? And I said, well, I don't know yet. He said, you're going up to Leslie near Long Prairie to be their pastor for the summer.

So I said, I'd never been a young people. I started out right then. The first week I was there, I remember they had ladies' aid.

And I went and all these ladies around, I was learning how to balance a cup of coffee and a plate of salad on my knee and shake hands and talk at the same time. I was all, I was terrible. I spilled.

But worst of it was when a lady got behind me and she said, Reverend Reedhead. And I looked around to see where the preacher was. And then I realized it was me.

And she said, I've got a problem. And I said, oh, have you? I had a problem too. I didn't know what to do.

And I got a problem. And I said, well, I'll try to help. What is it? She said, my daughter.

She's just in that dating age. What should I do? And you know, I had some cake and coffee in my mouth. And I thought I was going to strangle.

I thought I was going to choke. I was sure I was going to die right there. Because the only thing I could think of was, well, I guess maybe I should date her.

But that wasn't the answer. That wasn't the right answer. And so I choked back and muttered, you know, and in doubt mutter.

So I muttered, well, the only book I had with me when I went up to be pastor for the summer was a Scofield Bible, a Cruden's Concordance, and two volumes of Wesley sermons. And friend, if you've got to start out with the bare minimum, you couldn't do better than that. And I want to tell you that I've never been out of reach of Wesley sermons in the 51 years since I went up there.

Because that man knew God. And he walked with God. And God spoke through him.

And I wanted to just say a little bit to you right now. Can you say, Thou art merciful to my unrighteousness, my sins thou remember'st no more. Then for the time to come, see that you fly from sin as from the face of the serpent.

For how exceeding sinful does it appear to you now. On the other hand, in how amiable a light do you now see the holy and perfect will of God. Now therefore, labor that it may be fulfilled both in you and by you and upon you.

Now watch and pray that you may sin no more. That you may see and shun the least transgression of His law. Do all diligence to walk according to the light you have received.

Be zealous to receive more light daily. Use all the knowledge and love and life and power. So shall you daily go on from faith to faith and daily increase in holy love.

Shall we pray? Father of Jesus, we thank and praise Thee that Thou hast given to us this Thy holy Word. Oh, how we rejoice, our Father, in this revelation Thou hast given to us of Christ. Might it be that Thy Spirit shall speak to every heart and we'll glorify the Lord Jesus whose we are and whom we serve in His worthy name.

Amen.

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