

FAQ Document: Assurance Through Obedience – 1 John – Lesson 25

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How do true Christians demonstrate their salvation, and what is the "behavioral test" mentioned in 1 John?

True Christians demonstrate their salvation through obedience to Jesus' commandments, which serves as a "behavioral test" for assurance of salvation. This isn't merely superficial rule-following, but a consistent guardianship of Christ's teachings, driven by a deep love for Him. The text highlights three elements of assurance:

- Saving faith
- The internal witness of the Holy Spirit
- The manifestation of salvation through obedience in one's life

What is the difference between "legal obedience" and "gracious obedience" in the context of Christian living?

"Legal obedience" refers to absolute, perfect adherence to the law—something impossible for fallen humanity—which leads to condemnation.

"Gracious obedience," by contrast, is the loving and sincere, though imperfect, obedience that God accepts under the New Covenant of grace. It's not about achieving sinless perfection but about having a heart devoted to Christ. That love produces a natural desire to follow His commands, with the understanding that our sins have been paid for by His sacrifice.

How does the concept of "keeping commandments" in 1 John differ from the Old Testament Law of Moses?

In 1 John, "keeping commandments" refers specifically to the precepts and commands of Jesus Christ (*entolē*¹), not the Old Testament Law of Moses (*nomos*²). While Jesus' moral teachings align with the essence of the Mosaic Law, the focus in 1 John is on obedience to Christ's specific teachings—such as those found in the Great Commission. This shift directs Christian living toward Christ's words rather than ceremonial or Mosaic regulations.

What is the significance of the word "keep" in relation to Christ's commandments?

The word "keep" implies more than minimal or mechanical obedience. It conveys a sense of guarding, cherishing, and revering Christ's commandments as precious and vital. It's a continuous, moment-by-moment safeguarding of His word—an expression of inner devotion rather than mere external compliance.

How does genuine love for Jesus relate to a Christian's obedience?

Genuine love for Jesus is the driving force behind real obedience. The more a believer loves Christ, the more earnestly they will obey Him. This love nurtures a "devotion to the mind of Christ"—a determination to honor and uphold His word in both heart and daily living. True obedience flows naturally from love, not from legalism.

How does John address the concern that gracious obedience might lead to complacency or "easy" Christianity?

John addresses this concern by stressing that true Christianity involves actively working out one's salvation and maintaining a steady devotion to Christ's teachings. He critiques superficial approaches to faith—such as brief sermons or self-help messaging—that prioritize comfort over conviction. When Jesus is truly Lord, His authority is joyfully embraced, and guarding His truth becomes a daily, heartfelt commitment that shapes all of life.

What assurance does gracious obedience offer to believers despite their imperfections?

Gracious obedience assures believers that God accepts their sincere efforts, even though they are imperfect. Because Christ died for our inability to meet perfection, God values the heart's genuine desire to please Him. The Holy Spirit affirms this truth by bearing witness internally that we are indeed children of God.

How is the example of Peter used to illustrate the concept of gracious obedience and God's focus on love?

Peter—despite his dramatic failures, such as denying Christ three times and returning to fishing rather than waiting as instructed—was still chosen by God to lead the early church. After Peter's denial, Jesus didn't rebuke him with legal standards but asked, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15–17, NKJV). This shows that God seeks love over flawless obedience. A person who loves Christ can still care for His "sheep," even after failure, because God sees the heart and values sincere devotion above perfection.

Greek Word Summary & Footnotes

1. ἐντολή (*entolē*) – *en-to-LAY*

- Definition: A command or precept, especially one given by Christ in the New Testament.
- Context: Refers to Jesus' teachings rather than the Mosaic law.
- Source: Used in 1 John 2:3–4 (NKJV: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments").

2. νόμος (*nomos*) – *NAW-moss*

- Definition: The law, often referring to the Mosaic law or the Torah.
- Context: Represents the legal requirements of the Old Covenant, as distinct from the new

commands of Christ.

- Source: Not directly quoted in 1 John, but used for theological contrast.