

## **Briefing Document: Core Themes from The Certainty of Our Assurance "1 John Lesson 25, July 2, 2025"**

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and crucial ideas presented in the "1 John Lesson 25" sermon, focusing on the nature of true Christian assurance and the role of obedience.

### **I. The Core Question of Assurance: "How Do You Know You Are a Christian?"**

The central theme of the sermon is the certainty of salvation and the ability to differentiate between "true Christians and Christian impostors." The speaker emphasizes that this assurance is vital for both personal conviction and for guiding others.

**Behavioral Test:** The lesson directly addresses the question of assurance by introducing a "behavioral test" derived from 1 John 2:3–6: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

**Three Elements of Assurance:** True assurance of salvation is presented as having three interconnected elements:

- **Saving Faith:** The initial act of faith itself.
- **Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit:** The Spirit's interaction with that faith.
- **Manifest Obedience:** "Your salvation is manifest in your life by your obedience."

This final point is the primary focus of the sermon, indicating that genuine faith will naturally produce a life of obedience.

### **II. Defining "Keeping His Commandments": More Than Mere Compliance**

The sermon delves deeply into the meaning of "keeping His commandments," moving beyond a superficial understanding of rules or legalism.

**"Keep" as "Guard" and "Revere":** The word "keep" (Greek: *tēreō*<sup>1</sup>) is defined as "maintain possession of," "holding on to something," "embracing something," and primarily, "guarding something very precious." It implies a positive attitude toward guarding the commandments, not merely avoiding sin. The concept of "revering" the commandments is also introduced, meaning to "hold them in reverence."

**Habitual and Continuous Safeguarding:** Keeping commandments is described as "habitual," "moment by moment, day by day, the safeguarding of His word." It's an "attitude of the spirit rather than an act of the letter of the law."

Christ's Precepts, Not Mosaic Law: A crucial distinction is made between "commandments" (entolē<sup>2</sup>) and "law" (nomos). John, in his epistles, uses entolē to refer specifically to "the commandments of Jesus Christ," not the Old Testament Mosaic Law. This is supported by Jesus' Great Commission, where He commanded teaching "all things whatsoever I have commanded you," not Moses.

Consistent Devotion to the Mind of Christ: Keeping Christ's commandments means a "consistent guardianship in your life of what Jesus taught." This requires "a consistent devotion to the mind of Christ," leading to an "overconsuming desire that Christ's word be honored and a determination that Christ's word will be guarded not only in the heart but also in the things you do every day."

Effectual Obedience from the Heart: The "knowledge of God that comes by the gospel is not ineffectual... it flows out of the obedience from your heart." It is not a "legalistically have-to-be obedient" or "superficial obedience," but rather an internal, heartfelt desire to please Christ.

### **III. The Nature of Acceptable Obedience: "Gracious Obedience"**

The sermon clarifies that the required obedience is not about human perfection, but rather a "gracious obedience" under the New Covenant.

Legal vs. Gracious Obedience: Two types of obedience are presented:

- Legal Obedience: "Absolute conformity to the law of Moses to the precepts of Christ... without any failure." This type of obedience would condemn everyone, as "nobody" can achieve it. The law "demands... absolute perfect obedience without a single failure; if you break one... you break all of them."
- Gracious Obedience: This is the obedience God desires under the New Covenant (covenant of grace). "A loving sincere obedience no matter how defective is still accepted by God." This is exemplified by King David, who despite his severe failings, was "a man after God's own heart" because he "still loved God with all his heart."

God's Acceptance of Imperfect Obedience: God accepts our "loving, sincere obedience even though it's very, at times, very defective" because "those sins have been paid for by His Son." God "doesn't see them... He can't look upon sin. It's all been paid by the death of His Son and now by grace God looks at your heart and He sees you love Him and He's satisfied with your obedience."

The Example of Peter: Peter, despite his inconsistencies and denial of Christ, was chosen as a foundational preacher. Jesus' post-resurrection questioning of Peter ("Do you love Me?") three times, instead of focusing on his disobedience, highlights that the heart's

love is paramount. "That's all He wants... graciously asking him, 'Do you love Me?' That's the heart of the issue—what is your internal attitude that yields obedience in your life."

Obedience as a Result of Love: The greater the love for Christ, the greater the obedience. "The more you love, the greater your obedience; the less you love, the less your obedience." This love should compel a person to be a "guardian of the precepts of Jesus Christ," seeking to please Him.

#### **IV. Distinguishing True Belief from Superficial Claims**

The sermon challenges common misconceptions about what constitutes a Christian, emphasizing that belief in Jesus' existence is insufficient.

Beyond Simple Belief: Simply "believing in Jesus" (as even Muslims do, viewing Him as a "master teacher") or walking an aisle and saying a prayer is not enough for salvation.

Sons of Disobedience vs. Obedient Children: The unregenerate are characterized as "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), inheriting disobedience from Satan. In contrast, "the regenerate are obedient children" (1 Peter 1:14). Disobedience is a "characteristic of false believers," while "obedience is a characteristic of true believers."

No "Fence-Sitting": The sermon warns against being a "fence sitter" or "neither hot nor cold" (Revelation 3:16). While mistakes will be made, God desires for believers to "step out" and act, allowing Him to correct them if they are wrong.

The Rich Young Man: The example of the rich young man who claimed to keep the commandments is used to illustrate that Jesus was looking for a heart attitude of love and willingness to obey, not just outward conformity. His refusal to sell his possessions revealed his idolatry and lack of love for God.

#### **V. Love as the Fulfillment of All Commandments**

Ultimately, the sermon concludes that love for God is the driving force and ultimate fulfillment of all obedience.

Obedience Connected with Love: "Obedience is always really connected with the word... love." Loving God and one's neighbor fulfills "the whole law."

Commandments as Demonstrations of Love: The Ten Commandments are presented not as burdensome rules but as "simply a list of ways that you can demonstrate that you love God and your neighbor."

Desire for More Obedience: True believers "rush into the place where the precepts of scripture are taught... because the people love Christ, they long to be stronger in the Lord and to love Him more and thus be more obedient."

Jesus' Command: "If you love Me, keep My commandments": John's emphasis on obedience stems from Jesus' own words in John 14:15 (NKJV). This simple truth is the core of Christian assurance.

In conclusion, the sermon asserts that true Christian identity is evidenced not by perfect adherence to a legal code, but by a heartfelt, continuous, and sincere "gracious obedience" that springs from a deep and abiding love for Jesus Christ, whose precepts are treasured and guarded, even amidst human imperfection. This love is what ultimately satisfies God and provides the assurance of salvation.

### Greek Word References

1. **\*\*tēreō\*\*** (τηρέω): Pronounced \*tay-REH-oh\*. This Greek verb means "to keep," "to guard," "to preserve," or "to watch over carefully."
2. **\*\*entolē\*\*** (ἐντολή): Pronounced \*en-to-LAY\*. This Greek noun refers specifically to a command or instruction, particularly those of Christ.