

Loved and Loving Johns Epistles Lesson 4 3Q 2009

Walking in the Light: Keeping His Commandments

Thoughts about the title?

If you were making the lesson title how would you complete the title that begins with “Walking in the Light:_____?”

Living a life of Love?

Loving others more than self?

Living to give?

Serving others?

Follow the example of Jesus?

Do what Jesus had instructed?

SABBATH

Read memory text – thoughts? What do you think is meant by “His commandments”?

- Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law Romans 13:10
- If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. James 2:8
- We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 1John 3:14

If Life eternal is “knowing God” John 17:3, and knowing God is the same as passing from death to life, would loving our brothers be evidence we know God and be synonymous with keeping the commandments? i.e. love fulfills the law?

Read the last paragraph “This week, John...” - thoughts? What does love look like? Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly

glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Would what Christ described here be “keeping the commandments”? What if they don’t worship on the same day we do?

Read the first two paragraphs “A pastor had...” In the scenario from the lesson, what if the wife had cheated first, would we then conclude her husband was acting in love? What if after the husband cheated the wife got a gun and shot and killed him, would that be love? Then why do we say that if we “cheat” on God, i.e. our hearts go after false gods He will kill us? What about God? Does our disobedience ever result in God acting in ways other than love? Or is God always love and His actions are always love?

SUNDAY

What does it mean to “know the Lord”?

How can a person come to know the Lord? What sources are available for a person to come into the knowledge of God?

- The Bible
- Nature
- Direct revelation from the Holy Spirit
- Personal experience with God
- Angelic testimony or revelation
- Testimony of another
- Love flowing through another

Read first two paragraphs “The phrase...” thoughts? What does the lesson seem to suggest is the reason this is so important to know? It is true, our eternal destiny is at stake, but what do you think about the reason?

A few verses down in 1 John 2 John states: “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” How did Jesus walk? Was Jesus concerned with saving His own life?

What happens when our motive for knowing God is so that we can save ourselves?

- For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. Matthew 16:25

Thoughts? How would you feel if someone wanted to marry you in order to get US citizenship, in order to avoid getting deported? If that was their motive would love flow in the heart or would that motive obstruct love? What happens when our motive to follow God is to save ourselves? Could the preaching of a save-self message, if persisted, actually obstruct the plan to heal and restore?

Is there any other motive we can have? If we come to God with selfish motives, which is the only way we can come before we know Him since we are born selfish, do we experience a change in motivation in our continued relationship with Him?

What is the change in motivation we experience once we have come to know God?

- Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

What motive do parents have in relationship to their children? What do you think when all we hear is avoiding punishment and seeking eternal reward? I frequently hear people say how can we know if we are saved. I say, have you come to know God so well you can say to Him, "I trust you with my life. If heaven would be a happier and healthier place without me, its okay?"

What was Jesus motive? To glorify His Father and help others, is that to be our motive? Does such a motive increase or decrease fear?

MONDAY

In the top dark section the lesson suggests we read several passages. Let's look at all of them except the two verses in 1John 3, we will get those in a moment.

- “If you love me, you will obey what I command. John 14:15
 - Is this a command or a promise of what we will look like when we love Him?
- Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” John 14:21
- If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. John 15:10
- This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome 1John 5:3
- Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Revelation 12:17
- This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Revelation 14:12

Thoughts on these texts? What idea, concept or belief is the lesson trying to convey in focusing on these passages?

Read middle paragraph, “Keeping the commandments...” thoughts?

Now let’s look at the two verses the lesson suggests from 1John 3, verses 22 and 24

- Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²⁴ Those who obey his commands live in

him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. 1John 3:21, 22, 24

I wonder, why did the lesson leave out verse 23 of 1John 3?

- ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Why do you think they didn't include this verse? Should we include this verse? Does this verse have any bearing on all the other verses John wrote about obeying His commands?

While you think about it let me tell you a story:

When I was in the military stationed at Fort Steward, GA I attended SDA services on base at a military chapel each Sabbath. There were less than 30 people who attended and there were no musicians. A Baptist lady, who worked on base, volunteered her time to come and play the piano for SS and church each week. Naturally, she participated in the SS discussion and listened to the sermon. One week the lesson was on Matthew 5 where Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law but fulfill it. At this point the person teaching the lesson turned to the Baptist lady and began chiding her for not keeping the Sabbath. What would you have done?

I intervened and pointed out that love is the fulfillment of the law and those who crucified Christ wanted Him down so they could have religious behavior during the Sabbath hours. I pointed out her selfless sacrifice was demonstrative of God's law of love written on the heart. After that I was told I wasn't welcome at services anymore.

Who do you think in the story was obeying God's commands?

Read last paragraph – thoughts? How do we express our love to God?

Then what about the Sabbath? Does it matter? If so why?

I was in New Orleans recently having a discussion with several people about the Sabbath asking what they would say to a Christian who worships on Sunday as to the reason for the Sabbath? One person said, "How would you feel if your wife decided to celebrate your birthday on a day that wasn't your birthday, one of her choosing?" What do you think about this argument?

For me I often have my birthday celebrated on days that are not my birthday and it doesn't matter, what matters is the love being expressed from those who have remembered me. Haven't you had that experience?

But, more disturbing to me is the motive alleged for the Sabbath that the Sabbath is for God and He is the one who misses out if we don't remember it. Not at all, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath and the Sabbath was not made for God. Why? What was the purpose in God making the Sabbath? What benefit is there in the Sabbath? Why was it needed in Eden before sin? And what does it mean to be obedient to God's command to remember to keep the Sabbath holy?

TUESDAY

What does it mean to obey? A humble willingness to listen and follow!

What is God primarily concerned with, obedient performance measured or heart/motive? Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.

What about a toddler helping mother garden and pulls up a good plant instead of weeds, intending with all their heart to help mommy? What about an adolescent who pulls up only

weeds but curses mother under her breath for keeping her from doing something else?

Rahab, lied, but was in the hall of faith, why? Is lying good? Why is she in the hall of faith? Because it is not primarily about behavior, it is about hearts that love others more than self. Rahab was willing to put herself in harms way to protect another. Yes she was immature, yes she had a lot of healing and growing in grace to do, but she stepped over from simply watching out for herself to trusting God and putting herself in harms way for His cause.

Read last two paragraphs, “Although...” thoughts?

How do you understand these paragraphs?

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph “Finally...” thoughts? How do you see the connection between the 10 Commandments and the law of love?

THURSDAY

Read 1John 2:9-11

- Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

Thoughts?

Does this mean literal biological brother or does this mean all fellow human beings? Then what would this mean for people who long to see Adolf Hitler burn in hell? Or long to see people

who have wronged them suffer in the end? Or who are looking forward to sitting on committees to determine punishment for the wicked? What about those who look forward to seeing Satan suffer in the end? Are they excused because Satan is not a brother? What about preachers who preach such things?

How do people who claim to be Christian justify hostile attitudes toward the wicked and ideas of brutality at God's hands? Is it related to distortions about God? And do these distortions distort the characters of those who hold them?

Read last paragraph "In Scripture..." thoughts? Does this nullify our discussion about those who look forward to seeing the wicked suffer? Or does this expand to include in darkness those who merely are preferential?

What was the sin of Sodom? Was it related to what John is talking about?

Read Ezekiel 16:49-50

- Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.

What does it sound like is the problem? Failure to love, failure to sacrifice self for other, and instead exploiting others to gratify self!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-4