

#### 4. Walking in the Light: Keeping His Commandments (3Q 2009—Loved and Loving: John’s Epistles)

**Biblical material:** Lev. 19:18; Luke 14:26; John 3:20, 13; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:3–11.

##### Quotes

- Our earth is degenerate in these latter days; bribery and corruption are common; children no longer obey their parents; and the end of the world is evidently approaching. *Assyrian clay tablet 2800 B.C.*
- Christianity teaches such destructive advice as “love your enemies,” “sell all thou hast and give it to the poor,” “resist not evil,” “judge not,” “turn the other cheek.” Anybody that followed such suicidal advice would soon destroy themselves, their family, their race and their country. *Ben Klassen*
- You can safely say that you have made God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do. *Reverend Robert Cromey*
- There is a commandment against bearing false witness against my neighbor. Is there no commandment against bearing false witness against God? If I were a god, I would reserve my greatest wrath, not for those who ignored me, nor for those who contradicted me, but for those who falsely quoted me. *Martin B. Brilliant*

##### Questions

How would you explain in simple terms how God deals with sin? In what way does obedience relate to salvation? How can we change from hate to love? How can we walk as Jesus walked? Why is it important that we love one another? How do we keep God’s commandments without becoming preoccupied with our legal status?

##### Bible discussion

“But whoever obeys his word is the one whose love for God has really been made perfect.” (1 John 2:5 TEV). How could this verse be seen as leading to legalistic perfectionism? As we walk in the light, we *naturally* (if that is the right word in our unnatural world!) follow truth and right. God is not seeking to impose some arbitrary requirements, but wants us to understand that right is inherently right. Right is not right just because God says so, right is right because it is! That’s why commandments need to be understood, so we can agree with the God who makes sense...

I once asked my daughter Rebekah, “How do you really know that you are in the dark?” She looked at me as if I was stupid, and shot right back, “When you bump into things!” So true—and human history is full of us destructively bumping into things. As we fail to love each other, as we follow the Devil’s “alternative way,” then we end up in hate and darkness. “But the man who hates his brother is shut off from the light and gropes his way in the dark without seeing where he is going. To move in the dark is to move blindfold.” (1 John 2:11 Phillips). That’s why God from the beginning tells us to love each other (e.g. Lev. 19:18) and come into the light. “All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.” (John 3:20, 21 NLT).

So as Jesus speaks to his friends before he dies, he gives them this “new commandment” to love one another (John 13:34). And this is to be the sign that we are truly his disciples. See how important that is—and how rarely the church seems to have rightly represented the Lord by doing just that...

God “wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth,” (1 Tim. 2:4 NLT)—showing that it’s not just saving us that’s important, but that as part of the answer in the great controversy it’s important that we understand and agree with God exactly what is true. Then and only then can we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18 NLT). God is not looking for obedient, unquestioning servants but understanding friends: trustworthy children who agree with their loving Father over what is true and right. They walk in the light, following God’s commands—not because they are compelled to do so, but because they would never wish to do otherwise.

### **Comment**

“How did Jesus walk? Certainly in the light with God, due to his perfect obedience to the heavenly Father’s will, to which God himself testified (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). But he also walked in love towards the crowds of needy, lost people whom he daily encountered (Mt. 9:36). Walking in the light is not only characterized by the absence of sin but equally importantly by the presence of love. Those who remain (abide) in Christ cannot fail to display the fruit of the Spirit, in a Christ-like character.” David Jackman, The Message of John’s Letters (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 50.

### **Ellen White Comments**

The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; and it was not made to produce a love which was not in existence; but it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God’s heart... We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us, but that He so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us. {ST, May 30, 1893}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey.... True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97-8}

I would call your attention to the precious promises in the Word of God. All who are children of God have not the same powers, the same temperaments, the same confidence and boldness. I am glad indeed that our feelings are no evidence that we are not children of God. The enemy will tempt you to think that you have done things that have separated you from God and that He no longer loves you, but our Lord loves us still, and we may know by the words He has placed on record for just such cases as yours. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). . . . {TMK 285}