

OBEDIENCE TEST

Tuesday, February 13

Reading: 1 John 2

1 John 2:2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. 4 The man who says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: 6 Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.*

A story is told of Mahatma Gandhi in his younger days. He had read the gospels and was impressed with Christ and so he began seeking to learn more about Him. When he tried to enter a church in Calcutta the usher said he was not welcome because he was not of the right ethnic and social class. That church was for “high caste” and whites only! Gandhi determined that if this was how “Christians” acted, then he would be better off remaining a Hindu. “If it weren’t for Christians, I’d be a Christian,” Gandhi stated.¹

While I am sure Gandhi’s picture of Christ was far from complete, he saw enough in that particular Christian to know that he was not living like Christ. This turned the man who would become India’s greatest spiritual leader away from Christianity. In these verses, John presents us with another test to determine if our faith is genuine or not. The obedience test tells us to look at our everyday life and compare it to that of Jesus Christ. A true Christian will be living in obedience to the Father.

Some take the obedience test to mean that Christianity is about obeying a list of rules. They turn genuine faith into a series of “do’s and don’ts” that you must check off to be truly saved. But that is not John’s point! The essence of obedience does not have to do with a bunch of rules, but with our attitude. You can obey the rules and still not be obedient because you are doing it with the wrong attitude and motive.

Look at Jesus Christ. How did He display His obedience to the Father? Was it through following a bunch of rules? No. Christ displayed His obedience through His love for God and others. This love was dramatically displayed when He obediently gave His life on the cross (see Philippians 2:5-11). That is what obedience is all about! It is about doing God’s will because you love Him and want to help others have a saving relationship with Him. If our hearts have the right motive, then our actions will follow!

How might history have been different if that usher had acted like Jesus and lovingly accepted Gandhi into the church? How might this man’s life have been changed if he saw Christ in the lives of those who called themselves Christians?

LESSON: Are you passing the “obedience test?” Do you daily walk as Jesus walked? Does your love for God and others drive you to obey God’s call on your life?

¹ <http://www.kansascity.com/living/religion/article18756585.htm>