

Trust and Obey Summary and Questions

Hypocrites. One of the most commonly cited reasons by those outside the church on why they're staying away from the faith. They say they see too many people who call themselves Christians, but whose actions say otherwise. The author of 1 John is trying to tackle this very issue even in the early church. His prayer is that the people who are following "the Way" would truly know who He is, and in doing so, allow their lives to be impacted.

Of course, even if we commit to following His way perfectly, it doesn't mean we'll never make mistakes. In fact, we all still make mistakes regularly and are prone to sin. John knows this and presents the morally satisfactory solution that Christianity offers in regards to sin and its consequences: Jesus. He says that even if we do end up sinning, we have an advocate who stands in our corner, he understands our situation, who's walk where we walk and defends us in front of the judge. Our advocate has a strong case too, but not because we're deserving of mercy, but more because of what He does for us. He is the Righteous one who appeals to the Father on the basis that the penalty of our sins has already been paid because of what He did on the cross, therefore he is asking not just for mercy, but for justice! What great comfort we have in Jesus. By dying for us, He is the propitiation for our sins. That is, in giving himself up for us, he has satisfied and appeased the wrath of God against sin. And the incredible thing is that it's not even just for us, it's for the whole world! That's quite an overwhelming thought given there is so much darkness in the whole world.

So what now? Well there's only one appropriate response. Obey. This advocate who laid his life down for us, he not only pays for all the sins of our past and present, but also wants to show us how to live as we walk into the future. The call to obedience is not an easy one though as it means we are surrendering our own will, and choosing to trust in His instead. But we must not obey only out of fear. Obedience both comes from and is perfected in love. The moral values of Christians should always come to fruition in love. There is a cost though. As we seek to follow the way of Jesus, and in doing so surrender our own ways, it means that we're willing to completely change the direction of where we are heading in life and may even have to "move some furniture around" when it comes to the composition of our lives. Easier said than done but surely it's the only way if we've invited him in to be "Lord". It is made easier as we remember that he's not asking us to do anything that he wasn't willing to do. After all, He was obedient to the Father even to the point of death, even death on a cross. That fact alone should compel us to trust and obey. To trust in the redemptive work of our Advocate and Saviour, and to obey him as he moulds us to be more like him.

1. Justice and mercy are both key terms in describing how a Christian is saved. Which of these has been easier for you to relate to and why? What makes the other one more difficult?
2. J.I.Packer sums up the New Testament in three words; "Adoption Through Propitiation", would you be able to come up with three sentences to explain what that really means? Can use Romans 8 and Ephesians 1 as other texts from the Bible to help you.
3. What is one area of your life that you struggle to obey God in? Why do you think that is?

Spend time to pray for each other. Pray that 1) the Holy Spirit would give you strength to comprehend the love that God has for you, and 2) that knowledge of His love would spur you on to love and good works and that any hindrances or fears would be removed.