

John 13:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Analysis

If ye know these things (εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε, ei tauta oidate)—Jesus assumes they possess the knowledge from His teaching and example. The condition is reality: "since you know." But knowledge alone doesn't constitute blessedness. **Happy are ye if ye do them** (μακάριοι, makarioi; ποιῆτε, poiēte)—makarios is the beatitude word (Matthew 5:3-11), denoting deep spiritual blessedness, not superficial happiness.

The sharp contrast is knowledge versus obedience. Blessedness comes not from knowing Christ's teaching but from doing it (James 1:22-25). The Greek present tense "if ye do" (ongoing action) requires sustained obedience, not one-time compliance. This captures Jesus' consistent emphasis: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Knowing that Christ washed feet doesn't bless; washing others' feet in Christ-like humility brings blessing. Jesus establishes Christianity as orthopraxis (right practice), not merely orthodoxy (right belief).

Historical Context

First-century Judaism debated the primacy of study versus practice. Pharisees emphasized Torah study; Jesus emphasizes doing. This verse addresses the perennial temptation to substitute theological knowledge for obedient action. The early church struggled with this—James addresses believers who hear the word but don't do it. Reformed theology affirms faith alone saves, but genuine faith produces works (James 2:14-26).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What teachings of Christ do you know intellectually but fail to practice consistently?
2. How does obedience to Christ's commands bring deeper joy than mere knowledge of them?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	ταῦτα	οἴδατε	μακάριοί	ἐστε	ἐὰν	ποιῆτε	αὐτά
If	these things	ye know	happy	are ye	if	ye do	them
G1487	G5023	G1492	G3107	G2075	G1437	G4160	G846

Additional Cross-References

Luke 11:28 (Parallel theme): But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

James 4:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

James 1:25 (Parallel theme): But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Ezekiel 36:27 (Parallel theme): And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Revelation 22:14 (Parallel theme): Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Psalms 19:11 (Parallel theme): Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Exodus 40:16 (Parallel theme): Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he.

Galatians 5:6 (Parallel theme): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Genesis 6:22 (Parallel theme): Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

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