

John 14 (Part 3) :15, 18-31 • The Dynamic of Love and Obedience

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Open it up to John 14. We're studying through the Gospel of John here on Sunday morning. We're in the book of Genesis Wednesday night, making our way through the Bible, all the way. We even do Song of Solomon, kind of. I usually have to clear out the room of any single people. No, I'm just kidding.

Are you there, John, chapter 14. Last week, you'll remember we focused on just a couple of verses; verses 16 and 17 from this chapter. This is, by the way, like our third part in this chapter cause there's just so much here. And we read those verses, actually, we even read verse 15, although we didn't really cover it. So we're going to read verse 15 again today. And then we're going to skip the verses we covered last week, and then pick it up in 18, and go through the end of the chapter. So follow along with me beginning in chapter 14, verse 15. *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (ESV)*

Now skip down to verse 18. *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.*

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of

this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.” Stop there, let's pray.

Father, speak to our hearts this morning, we look to you to fill us with understanding and insight. We ask you Lord to teach us and we thank you God that you are faithful to do that. So fill our hearts, we pray today in Jesus name, amen.

I don't know if you noticed, you know, as we read through these verses, I wonder how many of you thought, how in the world are you going to get through all that? Well, I'm not. I just kind of made up my mind. I'm not going to go too fast because there's so many things the Lord says here that really deserve our attention.

But I don't know if you noticed, but the first verse that we read, which was verse 15, and then the last verse that we read, which was verse 31, have a very similar sort of a theme and they almost act as like bookends to the theme that we're going to be looking at. And I think that is one of the prominent themes in these verses and I'll put these 2 verses up on the screen so you can just see them side by side, sometimes that helps. And the first one says, *“¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* And then the last verse says, *“³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.”*

When you look at those 2 verses and you can kind of see that obedience is pretty clearly a main focus of what He's talking about there. But in verse 15, it talks about our obedience and in verse 31, Jesus refers to His obedience to the Father. Either way, you've got a couple of passages there that outline for us the theme and that is obedience. But I want you to also notice that there's a unifying element to these verses that is just too easy to miss. And if you look again, you'll see that Jesus gives us some insight into the source and motivating factor behind obedience and it begins in verse 15, once again with, *“If you love me,”* *“If you love me.”*

And then you'll remember as Jesus was talking about His own obedience to the Father, He said, “I obey His commands that the world may know that I love the Father.” So yes, there's this theme of obedience, but there's this other unifying element to the subject of obedience and that is loving God. And what Jesus is connecting for us here is the fact that love for God is crucial to obedience. And He says that, but it's one of those things that we hear and we don't really hear.

And what I mean by that is when you're dealing with obedience or disobedience in your own life, if you've got an area of sin in your life that you're struggling with; we call those besetting sins. We don't often think about, we don't often say to ourselves, well, "I just need to love God more." What people usually say is, "I need to try harder, I need to, you know, get serious about this walking with Jesus thing." And we don't often think about love when it comes to the subject of obedience. And, you know, and the reason is because it's, we don't see it really in our, anywhere around us.

I mean, this is unique. You don't see it in the world in which you live, you don't... The government doesn't appeal to your heart to love them so you'll obey their laws. Can you imagine if the government said, "if you guys would just love me." They don't do that, they have found other much more effective ways to get you to obey, like consequences, right? Drive over the speed limit? Pay a fine, watch your insurance rates go up, you know? Cheat on your taxes? Pay a bigger fine, maybe go to jail. Steal something from your neighbor? Pay a fine, maybe go to jail. You know, we all know what this is all about.

We understand how it works and we have an expectation in the world in which we live that people are going to leverage that sort of consequential result in front of us so that they can get us to comply. That's the way the world works, you know. Anybody? And you know, parents, we did this when we're raising children, right?

The way you effectively train a child about the importance of obedience is you help them to understand that in times of disobedience, there will be uncomfortable circumstances that will ensue, right? Anybody remember when kids used to get paddled? Yeah, I'm old enough to remember that. I'm old enough to remember when public teachers paddled kids in school and don't tell, don't ask me how I know, because I have a story to tell.

But you know, they did it because it was effective and along comes Jesus and He says, "if you love me, you will keep my commands" and we don't even know what to do with that. We are so assimilated into this whole idea of uncomfortable consequences as a motivating factor to obey, this statement that Jesus makes about loving Him just kind of, it kind of goes over our head, you know? And by the way, this is not, He's not guiltting you, this is not emotional manipulation, like someone might say, "if you really love me, you'll, you know, you won't turn me into the police" or something like that, you know.

That's not what Jesus is saying. He is literally saying to you and me that love for Him is a motivating factor to obedience. And I know that might come as a little

bit of a surprise, because it, you know, it frankly does to me too, you know, whenever I read it. We can say it another way, “obedience is the visible proof of our love for God.” Cause you know what? It's real easy to just go around saying, “I love God, I love God, I love God, I love God.” But the proof is in the visible expression of obedience. That's what Jesus is saying in verse 15 and that's important that we understand that.

So, you guys know, I like to once in a while take a word like “obedience” or whatever the key word is we're looking at in a study and put up the definition. Even though we know it, it's just fun to kind of go back and look at it again. So let's do that, up on the screen, according to Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, a very succinct definition of biblical obedience is,

WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

To hear God’s Word and act accordingly.

Holman’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary

That's simple enough, I can live with that. But now we have a couple of questions we have to deal with along those lines and the first is, Why? We'll put these questions up too.

WHY does Jesus want us to obey?

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Well, the why, you know, I could sit and talk all day, I could bring up scriptures all day long about why obedience to the Lord is important and why He wants you to obey. I'll just throw out some quickies here, Romans 6:16 on the screen,

Romans 6:16 (ESV)

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, (you can either be sin's slave) which (you know, is going to) leads to death, or (you can actually be a slave) of obedience, which (Paul says, and that's using kind of strange language, but he says that) leads to righteousness?

So number one reason that Jesus wants you to obey is because obedience ultimately brings freedom, it brings freedom into your life. Next one, John 15:9 through 11.

John 15:9-11 (ESV)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. (we'll get into this next week, or maybe we'll see) Abide in my love. (He says) If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. (look what He says here) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Next reason He wants you to obey is He wants you to be full of joy and do you know that obedience brings joy? Disobedience brings the opposite. Anyone who's had a besetting sin and they've struggled with that area of sin, getting victory, they know that when they fall on their face, they are filled with the opposite of joy, they're filled with heart wrenching turmoil. But walking in obedience brings joy and that's reason number 2. And then I'll give you a third one, Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, (which is another way of saying, surrender yourselves to the Lord to obedience), holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So rule or I shouldn't say rule, excuse me, reason number 3 that Jesus wants you to obey is because it is your spiritual worship and do you know that you were created to worship God? You are created to worship God. Sin, of course, messed that all up and what happens when the life of sin takes hold in our lives, we worship self. But then we come to Christ and He begins to turn it back the way it was meant to be, where we stop worshipping self and we begin to worship our Creator, our Father, the Lord of our lives. All right, so there you go. That's, you know, there's the why.

So now what does Jesus want us to obey? Well, if you look again at verse 15, we've already looked at it several times, but if you look at verse 15 again, you'll notice that Jesus says, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."* So that answers the question, "what He wants us to obey?" All right, here's the problem though, can I just stop you there for a moment? Because do you know that this word "commandments" is a problem for some people? It's a trigger word, in fact, I probably triggered some people a moment ago when I talked about parents spanking their kids.

That's trigger word in our culture today and people get all upset when you start talking about, you know, spanking because it's just not done anymore. Because it's considered to be abuse, which is hooey, okay. But it doesn't matter, it's still a trigger word. Well, so is the word "commandments."

You say the word commandments and there are a lot of people I've learned out there who instantly interpret that word as the 10 commandments. And when they hear Jesus saying, *"If you love me, you'll keep my commandments,"* what they hear is, "I got to keep the 10 commandments in order to show my love and maybe even be saved." And that's a pretty easy jump to go all the way to say, "I have to keep the 10 commandments to be saved."

And that's not what Jesus is saying and so I want to encourage you with that. By the way, there's nothing wrong with the 10 Commandments. Whenever I say, it's funny, whenever I tell people, you know, that we believe, Christians today under the new covenant are, you know, we don't keep the law the way they did for the Jews, I get letters every time from people who say, "what's the problem with the law anyway? The law is good." And you know what, they're right, the law is good, Paul makes that point. There's nothing wrong with the law, but it never could save a person, it never did and it never will. You cannot be saved by keeping the law, okay, so you have to understand that.

But Jesus, and so Jesus wasn't saying, "if you love me, you'll keep my commandments," He wasn't saying "if you love me, you'll keep the 10 commandments." In fact, He's not talking about following rules at all. Because you see, whenever we talk about obedience as it relates to a New Testament believer, we use different language, because, again, it's not about rules, it's not about keeping laws.

We express it differently in the New Testament and there's a reason we express it differently in the... By the way, these things weren't expressed in the Old Testament this way, they didn't talk about obedience in the Old Testament the way they talk about it in the New Testament, and that's because there's a

fundamental difference between the Old Testament and the New. And you'll see it in a few of these verses I'm going to share with you up on the screen. First of all, Galatians 5:25.

Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Guys, what you're seeing there is a New Testament expression of how we walk in obedience. It is through the Spirit, it is by keeping in step with the Spirit, live it, literally living, walking by the Spirit, okay. They didn't use that language in the Old Testament, they use it in the New Testament. You know what the difference is? In the Old Testament, people didn't have the Holy Spirit living in them. The Spirit was with them and the Spirit at times came upon them, but the Spirit did not come in them.

That could not happen until the vessel had been cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb and then, and only then, could Jesus breathe on His disciples as we will get to later on in the Book of John and say, "receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22) Well, what happened when they received the Holy Spirit? What happened when you received the Holy Spirit? The lawgiver, whose laws used to be external to you, have now come in to dwell inside you. So we don't talk about laws and rules anymore that are external to the believer. We talk about following the Spirit because the Spirit is now internal to the believer, which means the law of God is internal to the believer, you get it?

You don't need an external law because the law is in you. No, no, no, the law giver is in you now and He is communicating His righteous requirements to your heart and making them not just something you know, but something you desire. "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13) See that's a completely different dynamic, they didn't have that in the Old Testament. So they didn't talk about following the Spirit the way in the New Testament we talk about following the Spirit. Let me show you another one, Romans 8:14.

Romans 8:14 (ESV)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Galatians 5:18 (ESV)

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Why are you not under law? Because the law is in here, right. And Romans 8, 3 and 4.

Romans 8:3-4 (ESV)

...he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Again, that's how you talk about obedience in the New Testament understanding of obedience. You talk about the Holy Spirit listening to, following, and this is the deal here. So for you and me, we talk about obedience, it's not about keeping rules, it's not about following laws, it's about walking according to the Spirit and that's the challenge of the Christian life, isn't it? It's learning to listen and hear the voice of God through the Spirit.

And people still look for laws. People still ask me, "Pastor Paul, what am I supposed to do?" Pastor Paul's response: "No, no, no, I'm not going to put the law on you." I come back to people, "what's the Holy Spirit telling you?" "Well, I don't know." Pastor Paul: "Well, you better tune in." But you know what, it is hard, do you get...?

I don't want to make this sound easy, learning to lean in and hear from God is hard, that is hard work. It takes time and effort and you got to learn to quiet your soul. You know, we have a teaching in the book of Psalms and we went through Psalms where David talks about quieting his soul and it's a fascinating study through that chapter because the soul, you know, is the seat of our emotions and our intellect and our soul is constantly talking.

In the sense of my feelings, what I feel and what I think, and that's what you hear people talking about all the time. "This is what I feel, this is what I think. Well, I feel that, well, he thinks that." And it's all our soul and our soul is very, very, noisy. And so David talks in the Psalms about, he says, "I have learned to quiet my soul, like a newborn, like a weaned child sitting with its mother, I have learned to quiet my soul." (Psalm 131:2)

Well, that's the only way you're ever going to begin to hear the voice of the Spirit and it's challenging, I'll just say it right now. So here in John chapter 14, at least the part we're looking at. And can I just tell you something, in the coming weeks, we're going to, we're going to stay right here in John 14 till we get through it all.

I'm going to go back over these same verses next week and we're going to bring out some other things that Jesus said because they're just too good to miss. But what we're looking at here in this section of John 14, you can see that He is

emphasizing the foundation of obedience is love. And there are in this, just this short section of verses in the second half of John 14, He 5 times mentions it. Let me put them all up on the screen, you can see them all together. He said,

v15 – *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

v21 – *“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.”*

v23 – *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word...”*

v24 – *“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”*

v31 – *“I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.”*

There it is, there's 5 different verses in that passage. You can see in all of them that love is the motivating factor. Love is the motivating factor behind Spirit led obedience, in other words, real love manifests itself in willing obedience. I think I better say that again, real love manifests itself in willing obedience to God.

Notice I didn't say perfect obedience, because we're not perfect in our obedience, are we? But we are willing and do you know what I want to tell you? For those of you who have been falling down lately, you know how you feel when you fall down, and by fall down I mean you mess up.

You do something, say something, whatever, and it just, it's bad and you know it's bad and you feel terrible afterwards, don't you? Do you know why you feel terrible? Because you have a heart to obey, you're just struggling to get there. But that heart to obey, that comes from the Spirit within you. If you didn't have that heart to obey, you wouldn't feel bad when you sinned, you would just go, “yeah, that's the way it is.”

But when you feel horrible about your sin, that is the ministry of the Spirit speaking to you saying, “you can do better and I'm here to help you do better. Trust in me, lean on me. There will come a day when victory comes, keep pressing in, keep growing, keep learning, keep trying, I'm here.” Yeah.

The more we love Jesus, the greater our desire will become to walk in obedience to His example and His Word. And so when obedience gets challenging next time, and you know it will. Rather than getting frustrated, rather than clenching your teeth and making promises to God that you'll try harder next time, which doesn't work, and rather than giving up altogether,

which sometimes we do temporarily. We sin and then we go, “yeah, what the heck? I might as well just really blow it,” you know. Rather than doing those things, I want to encourage you, try coming to the Lord in prayer and saying, “Lord, help me to love you more, please, Father God, give me a deeper, more intimate love for you.”

Do you know the Bible tells us in the last days that when lawlessness increases on the earth, the love of many will grow cold. (Matthew 24:12) That's just another way of saying people will begin to walk in greater expressions of disobedience because that's what happens when the love of God grows cold in our hearts. We stop caring, we stop pressing in and we start living our lives to please ourselves, but we know where that leads. And so we're saying, “Lord, save me from such a future, fill my heart with real love for you, I want to love you, Lord.” And I recognize at times, and I think you do too, that our love for the Lord isn't always what it should be, that's just flat out the way it is.

And it seems weird to go to somebody and say, “help me love you more.” I mean, I probably wouldn't do that to my wife, you know. But it's different with God, because your love for God has so many implications about your walk with Him, how you live out your life with Him and it's something that He wants to do in you. And I believe it will, it would please the Lord for His Children more often to come to Him and say, “Lord, teach me to really love you with an unfailing love, so that I might walk in a way that is pleasing in your sight,” amen?