

LOVING OBEDIENCE, THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH, AND HOW OUR LORD FEELS LOVE FROM HIS FOLLOWERS

John 14:15-26 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. [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."

We are in the early stages of studying the longest conversation/sermon John records of Jesus alone with His disciples. This "*discipleship sermon*" runs from John fourteen through to the end of John sixteen. The crowds aren't mentioned here. Jesus knows He's in the last 24 hours of His earthly life. And there are certain things His followers must remember. Last words are usually very important words.

As you can see from the title of this teaching, it's hard to pick out one solitary topic in Jesus' sermon. He has much to say and so little time. But the thoughts seem to cluster around the themes of *His disciples' love for Him manifested by their obedience*, *His own departure* (death) *and resurrection*, the *manifestation of the Father and the Son to His disciples*, and *the inward comfort and presence of the Holy Spirit*.

But even these three subjects aren't really treated as *separate* subjects. As you'll see - and this is what makes this a very tricky text for congregational study - each of these ideas is packaged with the others. They are all *intertwined* in their importance and effect on our lives. So we'll *study* them separately just for simplicity sake, but I think you'll see they don't come apart like the sections of a tangerine. They're more like the mixture of hydrogen and oxygen in a glass of water. They're only separate on paper, not when you're quenching your thirst. So let's get on with it. I have *five points* I want to draw out of Jesus' words:

1) OUR OBEDIENCE IS HOW JESUS FEELS OUR LOVE

We're so used to looking at our relationship with God from only our own end. Most of our worship songs are about how *we* feel about *God*, or *Jesus*. But by far the most important thing in our walk of discipleship isn't how *we* feel about *God*. It's how *He* feels about *us*.

What we're considering in this first point rarely gets considered. We can talk all day about how much we love Jesus. But the important question is *how does Jesus feel about our love*. How does He *recognize* it? How does He *sense* the love of His followers?

John 14:15, 21-24 - "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments....*[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."

Think deeply about what we're considering in this text. Jesus is *telling* us how He feels loved by His followers. And the money point is *not* living by the words of Jesus is *the* sign that we do *not* love Him - John 14:24a - "Whoever does *not* love me *does not* keep my words...."

There is no missing this *four-time-repeated* conclusion from our Lord. There is something in the way Jesus re-words the very same sentence in quick succession (20, 21, 23, 24). He comes at the subject from the *positive* end - what *loving* Him looks like (20,21,23). And then, unable to let the issue rest, He comes at the same argument from the *negative* end - what *not* loving

Him looks like (24). What conclusion is He laboring to construct in our minds if not that more people **proclaim** love for Jesus than **actually** love Jesus?

Is it just possible Jesus is trying to caution us that in any relationship of mutual love it is easy for one of the parties **offering** love to choose to **express** that love in a way the **receiver** of that love doesn't appreciate or accept? Could it be Jesus is recognizing a very contemporary trend to think we have expressed our love for Jesus adequately when we sing to Him or send our kids to Christian clubs and schools or give certain amounts of money to His cause?

That any of these acts is proper and good isn't in question. The point of this text is different. Our **obedience** is how Jesus **feels** our love. That is the dominant theme of His closing sermon to His disciples. This is what He majors on in His final intimate words. That **doesn't** mean we **can't** love Him in worship or prayer or giving or a host of other Biblical means. But it most certainly **does** mean none of these expressions of love **reaches** Jesus **as love** if the whole life doesn't crave orienting itself around His commands. We will only be **deceiving ourselves** if we think He considers anything an expression of our love **apart** from this.

One more thought. That Jesus constantly called His followers to obedience is beyond question. There's nothing new in this idea for any of us. But here, in these final words, the emphasis on our **obedience** is specifically tied to His approaching **absence** from His followers. And one can't help but get the idea Jesus was urging a commitment to obedience **after He was gone** that would be no less vigorous than when **He was standing right in front of them physically**.

I think Jesus knows there is no chance in the world I would fail to listen to **anything** He said if He were standing right in front of me right here and right now. If I saw Jesus and shook His hand just like I can see you and shake your hand - and if I **knew** this was Jesus in the flesh - the thought of just **ignoring** Him would be nothing short of ludicrous.

I could not ignore Jesus right in front of me. That's why Jesus stresses obedience as it relates to His coming **physical absence**. His presence in my life is no less **real** just because I no longer **see** Him. This is Jesus' way of pressing the **same** loving obedience in His **absence** that we would all express in His **presence**.

2) **OBEDIENCE IS NOT ONLY HOW JESUS FEELS OUR LOVE. IT IS A DIVINELY APPOINTED MEANS FOR UN-TROUBLING OUR HEARTS**

We studied this briefly last week. Consider it again:

John 14:1, 21-23 - "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me....[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."

There is a reason many have a hard time **enjoying** the whole concept of **obeying** our Lord. Obedience, by its very nature, implies **something compulsory**. That's the difference between **obeying a command** and **considering a suggestion**. Obedience implies a **must** - a **have to**. And ever since the Fall of mankind we don't like being **told** what to do.

That's why it's very important to pay attention to the development of Jesus' sermon. This entire section of Jesus' discipleship sermon starts out with the familiar words, "**Let not your hearts be troubled....**"(14:1). Appropriate words, these, after the troubling - shattering - words and events of the first half of chapter 13.

That **un-troubled heart** theme continues right through to the end of Jesus' sermon at the end of chapter 16. The opening subject of "**many rooms in heaven**" in chapter 14 is an obvious fit here. As is the coming of the "**Comforter**" - the **Holy Spirit** - in today's text.

But how does the summons to **obedience** fit in? Where's the comfort there? And the idea I want to unpack for just a moment is this. Certainly obedience doesn't **earn** anything from God. We don't **qualify** for divine love and acceptance by our diligence. No, the text is clear. Obedience is our expression of grateful love to our Lord. That much seems obvious.

But obedience is also more than that. Obedience isn't just how our love for Christ is **expressed**. Obedience is how our love for Christ is **nourished** and **developed**. This is the wonderful promise Jesus offers in **John 14:21, 23** - "**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....**[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.**"

We already know from John's gospel God loves **"the whole world"**(3:16). There is no one **unloved** by Father God. Jesus died for the sins of the **"whole world."** So what does Jesus mean when He says the one who loves by commandment keeping will be **"loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him"**(23)? Or, **"my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him"**(24)?

And the answer is, I believe, Jesus draws a straight line between loving Him through treasuring His words and **sensing His love for us in our own hearts.**

This is huge. Our whole world, in various misdirected ways, wants to **know God** in a perceived manner. We want to know Him on the inside of our beings, not just on paper or in creed. And Jesus hits it on the head when He says He would come and **"manifest"** Himself to us (23), and also that He and the Father would **"make our home with him"**(23).

The choice of that **"home"** word is very deliberate and calculated. This entire encouragement sermon was born in the promise of actual **"homes"** for us all with our Lord. There would be an actual **home** for us to be together eternally. He was **preparing a "place"**(14:2).

And now Jesus talks about another **"home."** But this time it's not a home for **us** in the future but a home for the **Father** and the **Son** and the work of the **Holy Spirit** right now - **John 14:23** - **"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."**

So there no escaping the comparison of these two **"homes"** and the very **tangible nature** of the presence of the Godhead in our hearts **here and now** as we treasure and carry out His words in our obedience. Obedience is how Jesus **feels** our love **for Him**. And obedience is how we **feel** the presence and comfort of God's love **for us**.

This is so important. Without loving, serving obedience - the kind that gets down and washes dirty feet (**John 13**) - we will very quickly have to **fake our love for Jesus** as hypocrites must and also **fake feeling His love for us** as fake worshipers must. Only loving obedience keeps everything genuine and true. It's good for us.

3) THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE PRESENCE OF JESUS, AND THE CHURCH

John 14:16-18 - **"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. [18] "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."**

The only point I want to stress here is one that you wouldn't easily see just reading your English New Testament. The **"you's"** in **verse 17** are all **plural "you's"** in the Greek language.

If I stand here behind this pulpit and say, **"I'm talking to you,"** you will have a hard time knowing whether I mean **"you," Pastor Chris**, or **"you," the entire congregation listening to me**. But in the Greek there is a specific form of the plural that makes it clear Jesus used a **plural "you"** when he said, **"...even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you"(17).**

Remember, He **could** have chosen an **individual "you."** But He **preferred** the **plural**. And I'm absolutely certain He had a good reason for that choice. What Jesus wanted to stress to these disciples whom He would soon be leaving was **they would find a special sense of His presence by the power of the Holy Spirit when they came together in His name.**

Please hear our Lord - **your** Lord - the One who **feels our love by our obedience** - please hear **that** Jesus say, **"If you want to feel the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, get thee to a church!"** He knew centuries of church history and dismal corporate failures might cause His followers to think of the church merely as an expendable institution. That's why He very intentionally linked it with spiritual presence and life. There is more in the church than flighty church attenders think.

4) TROUBLED HEARTS NEED TO REMEMBER THE PROOF AND POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM THE GRAVE

John 14:19-20 - **"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."**

These disciples would see Jesus again - albeit, briefly, in just a **"little while"**(19). And on **"that day"** Jesus said, they **"will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."** Everything would be different in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The rest of the New Testament bears out the fact that, in spite of trials a-plenty and persecution unending, these disciples never again doubted their Lord. Everything was different - **permanently** different - when they saw their Lord risen. For the rest of the world the career of Jesus **ended** with His grave. For the church, it just **began**. They could never doubt again that Father God was **in** Jesus just as Jesus had said.

And they could never again doubt that **they too were in Jesus and He was in them (20)**. That meant their own resurrection was as certain as His. And for these first disciples that meant they could **risk everything for Christ and His Church**. They were eternally safe. They had a future in Christ that couldn't be taken away. They could spend their lives lavishly for their Lord knowing they were only moving closer to eternity with Him. All of life suddenly became **investing** in a very real eternal kingdom.

5) THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SCRIPTURES

John 14:25-26 - "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.**"

One final thought. You can **trust** your Bible. Jesus told these first disciples - those who would **record** everything Jesus said and did - that the Holy Spirit would insure **completeness** and **accuracy**. Everything we needed to know from our Lord has been given. And everything has been given **accurately**.

Trust your Bible. Treasure your Bible. Delight to obey it.