

August 9, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 14:15-24.

1. Explain the connection between loving Christ and obeying Christ as it is stated in verse fifteen.
2. What is significant about the fact that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the great privilege for believers who possess the Holy Spirit in the matter of obeying Christ?
4. How are love, God's word, the Holy Spirit, and obedience connected in this text?

IF YOU LOVE JESUS, IT SHOWS John 14:15-24

One day in the future, the Lord willing, we will arrive at that great passage at the end of this Gospel that John wrote, where we read about our Lord's restoration of Peter. In that conversation, Jesus asked Peter if he had *agapei*, self-sacrificing love, for Him. Peter responded that he did indeed have *phileo* love, a very strong affection for Jesus. There really isn't too much distinction between the words. But, there is a reason Peter did not claim the greater love.

There is no doubt in my mind that all of the men in the inner group of eleven disciples (that is minus Judas Iscariot) were sure they loved Jesus. They believed they loved Him so much that, like Peter, they would die for Him. They had lived with Him for three years and

were all in for what they thought was Jesus' plan for restoring the kingdom of Israel. They had learned so much from Jesus. They had experienced His loving care in some amazing ways. Of course they loved Him.

Now Jesus was revealing to this band of faithful followers that He was going to leave them and go back to God the Father in heaven, from where He had come. This was unsettling to the disciples. In the words of 14:1, *there hearts were agitated*, stirred up. What were they supposed to do if Jesus was absent? Well, Jesus told them they were going to do greater works than He did.

That was all well and good, if the men had understood it. But, still they loved Jesus so much they didn't want Him to leave. Jesus challenged the disciples with an expectation that still stands today as the real proof of our love for the Master. If we love Him, we will prove it by keeping His commands. In other words, "Talk is cheap." Anyone can say anything. Whether we mean what we say will be proven by what we do.

Have you ever tried to keep Jesus' commands? Are you even aware of His commands? Do you even know what He expects His followers to do and how He expects us to live? If you have even the slightest understanding of these things, you know that it is virtually impossible for us to muster up the self-discipline and human strength and wisdom to pull off this kind of obedience. Everything about us, from our fleshly desires to the world we live in, cries out for us to obey our own desires which generally means to disobey Jesus. How does Jesus expect us to obey?

Jesus promised the disciples and us that we will be able to keep His commands because He is still with us in the person of the Holy Spirit – if not in bodily form. He has already sent us the Helper who helps us know Christ's commands and obey Christ's commands. If we are not attempting to obey Christ, it has to be because we are devoid of the Holy Spirit or quenching the Holy Spirit's influence, which is to grieve Him. Our actions and attitudes prove our love for Christ. We can do this because He has given us the necessary Helper to that end.

We Are Not Orphans (vv. 18-20).

Our Master did not leave us to flounder on our own (vv.18-19). He promised that He comes to His own people with the idea that He comes again. He promised the disciple, “*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you*” (v.18). These sound like the comforting words of a loving father. The followers needed such comfort. They had invested everything in the Messiah. They had great confidence in the future, a restored kingdom in which they would be significant leaders. Now the Messiah was revealing to them a plan that shattered all their dreams. It was not bad enough that He would be killed, buried and rise again (whatever that meant), but He was also going to leave them and return to God the Father.

Yes, the future looked rather bleak, but Jesus promised that He was not going to leave them alone like orphans who suddenly lost their Provider and Sustainer. In fact, Jesus promised that He would come to the disciples. Since nearly the beginning of the Church this statement has been interpreted three different ways. First, there are those who think it means, “I will come to you again after I am risen from the dead and before I return to the Father” (Chrysostom 375). Or it is possible that Jesus meant, “I will come to you in the person of the Holy Spirit after I have returned to the Father and He has sent the Spirit to indwell you.” A third view, held by Augustine, concludes that Jesus meant, “I will come to you again at the end of the age when I set up My kingdom” (Augustine, 375).

It is not a cop out or weak compromise to conclude that all three of these interpretations are borne up by the text and larger context. At the same time, it does seem that the immediate context focuses on the physical return of Jesus to the disciples after the resurrection. Be that as it may, we cannot overlook the larger application that Jesus drew to all Christians. Believers in every age are not left without provision and direction because we have the presence of God in the Holy Spirit. True also is the fact that all believers in every age look forward to the Lord’s physical, bodily return. It is this intimate association both now and in the future that makes Christ’s followers distinct from the rest of the world.

Jesus’ presence with His followers is important because it reminds us that we are unique. He said, “*Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live*” (v.19). There are three separate promises contained in

this sentence. First was the sad promise that Jesus’ personal ministry to, appeal to, invitation to the masses of the world was over. He had come to His own and His own rejected Him (John 1:11). After He rose from the dead, He did not reinitiate His previous ministry of teaching and healing.

Second is the promise that the disciples would see Jesus in person, in bodily form. The evidence does indicate that while Jesus remained secluded from the masses of the world after His resurrection, He did appear only to His followers. Paul gave us a short list of those who experienced Jesus’ physical presence after the resurrection including up to 500 at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). The disciples did not understand this promise until after Christ rose from the dead.

Third is the promise that because Jesus lives, those who trusted Him and followed Him would enjoy eternal life. This is the foundational promise of salvation. It rises or falls on the reality of Christ’s resurrection. In the larger application, it is the promise of not only enduring life, but abundant life both now and in the future.

Here is the point. The complete work of redemption that Jesus accomplished for those who trust Him puts His people in a unique situation in life and in eternity. We usually grasp the eternal part quite well. Being in an intimate relationship with the One who died, rose again, and returned to heaven to intercede for us guarantees that we will live forever in His presence. However, at the same time, this intimate relationship with Him also makes us distinct from all the “normal” people of the world. Because His sacrifice removed our sins, we can no longer be like the people of our society who are still guilty of sin because they cannot not sin. Again this distinction is all because of our unique, intimate relationship with Jesus.

While He was making promises to the disciples, our Master promised us a most intimate relationship. He promised, *In that day you will know* (v.20a). Maybe the first question this promise generates is, “When was (or is) that day?” Follow the argument in Jesus’ teaching of this wonderful promise. Jesus related that He must die, rise from the dead, and return to the Father in order to intercede with His blood for all who will trust Him and confess their sins. At the same time, He taught that He must die, rise again, and return to the Father in order to ask the Father to send the Divine Helper, the

Holy Spirit (v.16). He revealed that the Divine Helper will live with the believers forever (v.16b), and that the Divine Helper dwelling with us makes us distinct from the world who cannot know Him (v.17). The great truth then is that in the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus still provides and teaches us His followers (v.18-10).

Therefore, because the Holy Spirit teaches us, “We know.” For the disciples, *that day* was the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and indwelt them. For us *that day* is when God the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us at the moment of regeneration when by faith we trust Christ to forgive our sins which we confess.

At that time, we will understand “in.” Jesus said that in that day the disciples will know, *that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (v.20b)*. Jesus revealed the mystery of God the Father and Him being one. In Jesus’ case, He—being God the Son—was coequal with God the Father. He lived every moment in God the Father, the most intimate relationship. This is why Jesus was able to insist that all His works and all His teaching were God’s works and teaching. That is also why Him bearing our sins was so agonizing. It forced God the Father to turn away from Him for a time.

A second mystery is that when we confess our sins and trust Christ to forgive us, God miraculously places us in Him. We are not just near Him, in His presence, or close to Him. We are in Him as much as a branch must abide in the vine or it will cease to be alive. Therefore, this concept of deriving our life from Christ because we are in Him in the most intimate relationship is stated 89 times in various ways in the New Testament. Because we are in Christ, we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Because we are in Christ, we do not perish when we die but go into His presence (1 Cor. 15:18). Because we are in Christ, we have no fear of being condemned for sin in the future (Rom. 8:1). These are incredible privileges for those who are “in” Christ.

The person who trusts Christ for salvation is eternally secure because He is also **in** us. That is most obvious through the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the promised Helper sent by the Father, literally lives within the soul of each redeemed saint. Paul taught the details of this miracle by writing, *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Romans 8:9). Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? (1Corinthians 3:16). He also wrote, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being (Ephesians 3:16). The promise is great! Because it is true, how then should Christ’s followers live?

We Are Not Legalists (vv.15, 21-23a).

Jesus’ teaching forces the hearer to ask, “What does love look like?” That question must come up because Jesus taught that disciples are expected to love Him. Notice His statement of possibility: “*If you love me*” (v.15a). Surely, every follower of Christ loves Him, right? How can we grasp the magnitude of His work for us and not love Him?

Those ideas might seem true, and yet Jesus’ words force us to admit that maybe people who claim to follow Him will not truly love Him. He said this to the eleven most faithful. And we know that Judas the betrayer loved the passing world because he loved himself. But within a matter of minutes even these faithful eleven would prove that they loved life more than Jesus when they run away and hide from the temple police. We who claim to be regenerated, forgiven of sin, also claim to love Jesus. So do we? Probably there are literally millions of people in the world who make this claim. Are their claims really true? How can you prove your claim?

The answer to these questions is that love looks like obedience. If I love, I obey. Jesus put it like this: “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (v.15b). An imperative in the New Testament Greek text is a command. There are over 200 imperatives found in the words of Jesus recorded in the four Gospel accounts. So what are Jesus’ commands. Very briefly His commands look something like repent the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 4:17). Or rejoice when you are persecuted (Mt. 5:12). Let your light of good works shine before men (Mt. 5:16). Be reconciled to your brother (Mt. 5:23). Agree with your adversary (Mt. 5:26). If your eye offends you, pluck it out; if your hand offends you, cut it off (Mt. 5:29-30). And with those examples, we are not even out of the first chapter of the Sermon

on the Mount! The fact remains that if we love Jesus, our lives will be conformed to what He commands.

Obedience requires having commands to obey. Jesus told the disciples and us, “*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them he it is who loves me*” (v.21a). Nearly the whole world has Jesus’ commandments available. No major language group is without a translation of the Bible. But the verb *has* does not mean to have available or even to own a copy. Jesus meant the person who grasps, who has come to own for himself, My commands. Only people who trust Jesus grasp His commands. Multitudes of people read and even study Jesus’ commands without grasping what Jesus requires.

Some people even preach Jesus’ commands but never *have* them. Preachers of the social gospel wax eloquently about the need for redistribution of wealth from those who have to those who don’t have. But those pious preachers never come close to understanding that the only reason for good works is to help sinners realize that they are sinning against God their Creator who has provided salvation from the penalty of their sins through Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, there are many people who actually understand what Jesus commands, but never *keep* those commands. The word keep does not mean to protect in a safe place, as a valuable placed in a bank vault. It means to observe, to practice, to do. People who keep Jesus’ commands live lives that are shaped by those commands. The lesson is that the person who loves Jesus **WILL** live a life that is noticeably distinct from the multitudes of people who do not love Jesus. Jesus’ commands make us different from sinners. Common sense is enough to lead to that conclusion. And many sinners in the world have more common sense and, therefore, expect more of Christians than the people who claim to love Christ.

Notice that this love for Christ is reciprocal. “*And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him*” (v.21). If we love God the Son (which is proved by our obedience to Him), God the Father will love us. It’s pretty great to be the object of the Creator’s love. Jesus also clearly stated that if we love God the Son, He will love us. Isn’t that pre-supposed? Doesn’t God love the world so much that He sent His Son to die for us? Yes, but the transaction of love will never be complete until we confess and forsake the sin that offends Him. If sinners choose to

disobey the One who offers love to them, they truncate His love and open themselves up to His wrath. God warned us through Paul, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth* (Romans 1:18).

We love Christ. When we do, God the Son loves us. When He loves us, He makes Himself known to us. That is how we understand His commands. That is why we endeavor to keep His commands. How can we truly comprehend this magnanimous Savior and choose to live in our sins that caused Him to suffer? Yet, if you tell a person that he or she proves love for Christ by avoiding sin, you will be accused of being a legalist.

Seventy years ago, Arthur Pink nailed this issue that is still pestering God’s people today. “How this verse rebukes the increasing Antinomianism [living without law] of our day! In some circles one cannot use the word ‘commandments’ without being frowned upon as a ‘legalist.’ Multitudes are now being taught that Law is the enemy of Grace, and that the God of Sinai is a stern and forbidding Deity, laying upon His creatures a yoke grievous to be borne. Terrible travesty of truth is this. The One who wrote upon the tables of stone is none other than the One who died on Calvary’s Cross; and he who here says, ‘if ye love me, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS’ also said at Sinai, that He would show mercy unto thousands of them, ‘that love me and, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS’! (Arthur Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, vol. 2, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1945, p.368).

Obedying Christ’s commands is not the means for forcing Him to love us. Obeying Christ’s commands is the result of Christ loving us. No wonder the world doesn’t know Jesus (vv.22-23). This distinction was highlighted when Judas asked a very important question. *Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”* (v.22). This was a very common sense kind of question. “Why do we know Christ but the world doesn’t?” That is an obvious distinction. Christians have to look differently, live differently, and think differently than the unsaved world who has ever seen Christ. You cannot come to know Christ and continue to live like those who don’t know Him.

So what hope is there for sinners in the world if Jesus does not manifest Himself to them? The world's only view of Christ is through the lens of His followers. Judas asked how it was that Jesus would manifest Himself to the disciples but not to the world. Jesus answered him, "*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him*" (v.23a). It almost sounds like Jesus gave the answer to a different question. How do we connect this response to Judas's question? Jesus simply repeated His previous teaching: People who love Him keep His words. God loves the person who keeps Jesus' words.

The implication here is that if you keep Jesus' words, you will manifest Christ to the world. So what kind of view of Christ do we give to the world? Knowing how hard it is to keep His commands, we might wonder how we can possibly give an accurate view?

We Are Helped Toward Right Living (vv.16-17; 23b-24).

Our help lies in the fact that God gives us the Spirit of truth. True followers of Christ are never without the Helper because Jesus authorized the coming of the Holy Spirit. He promised, *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever* (v.16). Jesus promised to give another Helper of the same kind. He promised to send the Helper who would not only take His place, but who will do the same kind of work in the hearts of His followers that He did. Therefore, the Holy Spirit of God **helps** us manifest Christ.

If He is the Helper like Christ, and if He is living within us, and if He is teaching us, will not our lives reflect His presence? Just as surely as the disciples' lives reflected that they had been in the presence of Jesus. That is what happened with these disciples after Jesus had returned to heaven. The religious authorities persecuted them for preaching Jesus. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus* (Acts 4:13).

Our testimony should sound a lot like Jesus because the Holy Spirit is truth. Jesus promised to send the Helper, *even the Spirit of truth* (v.17a). Because He is the Spirit of truth, He will never reveal

or teach anything contrary to the Bible. Therefore, as He fulfills the promise to "teach you all things," the Holy Spirit must be teaching us the Word of God. That is precisely what Jesus prayed in our behalf when He prayed to the Father, "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17).

Therefore, it must by all means be true that true followers of Christ are distinct. This is the way it must be because the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. He promised to send the Helper, the Spirit of truth, *whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him* (v.17b). The sinners who are the majority in the world are not being taught or sanctified (set apart for God) by the Holy Spirit. They cannot participate in the work of the Holy Spirit because they cannot know Him. They cannot know Him until they yield to the conviction He brings through the word of truth, the Bible. They can talk about Jesus, talk about God, and talk about the Bible but continue to be devoid of the Helper who is like Jesus. Therefore, they will reject Jesus' commands, refuse to live by them, and reinterpret them to mean something Jesus never meant.

And while that is happening, the followers know the Holy Spirit intimately. Jesus taught, *You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you* (v.17b). It is not just that we know about the Holy Spirit. Anyone can read the Bible and know about the Holy Spirit. We whom He has regenerated and who He is living within know Him most intimately.

Therefore, a right response toward Jesus' words is right living (vv.23b-24). It must be this way because God is in the house. God promised, *and we will come to him and make our home with him* (v.23b). Because God the Holy Spirit makes His home in us, we belong to Him. How can we claim this intimate relationship and then live as though He isn't home? God the Holy Spirit never takes a vacation.

In the 18th century there was a German sculptor named Johann Heinrich von Dannecker. He was famous for sculpting a statue of Jesus that seemed to bring to life the very character of Christ. It had not been an easy task. He had labored for two years to create the perfect picture of Christ, but alas, when he was finished, it was just a statue of a man. Though discouraged he was determined to try again. Over the next six years he labored on the project. But during

this time, God was doing a work in the man's heart. He came to know Christ intimately during that time. As he grew to understand Christ more and more, it seemed like his knowledge was transferred into his work. In the end, Dannecker had created a likeness of Christ that often brought tears to the eyes of those who viewed it.

Some years later, Napoleon Bonaparte saw Dannecker's work and sent for the sculptor to do a commissioned work for him in exchange for a phenomenal price. Bonaparte asked the man to create a statue of Venus the goddess of love. Dannecker rejected the wealth and the fame that would have been his for doing the project. He told Bonaparte, "A man who has seen Christ can never employ his gifts in carving out a pagan goddess!" That is the result of the intimacy that comes from being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

When He came to indwell the believers, God brought His words with Him. *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*" (v.24). So the simple proof of salvation is this: Do you live according to the Bible? I do not mean your interpretation of the Bible. If I love Jesus, my life will illustrate the plain teaching of the Bible. What is most surprising is that many sinners seem to understand better what the Words of God say than saints who claim to have those words.

The conclusion is obvious and very simple. If we love Christ, we will endeavor to keep His rules. We are able to keep His rules because He has sent within our hearts the Helper who is like Him, the Holy Spirit. Because we have this intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit, we must by all means be distinct from people who do not know Him. It is not just that we will want to be different, or know we should be different, or even try to be different. The conclusion is that because we are indwelt and, therefore, in a most intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit, we **will be** different from those who do not.

This is as simple as concluding the truth about the law of gravity. If you throw a ball into the air, because we live under the effect of the law of gravity, the ball will come down. It is not that the ball might come down, or that the ball will want to come down, or that the ball has the potential to come down. Gravity demands that the ball will drop. And the indwelling Holy Spirit will help us live according to Christ's commands, He will help us live out our love for Christ. Not maybe. Not could be. He will. And that makes us distinct.