

John 14:15,21,23

### Introduction

Each of these verses deals with the themes of love and obedience. Two of the three go further and speak of the rewards of obedience. Together they make a blessed Gospel chain. Going to treat them together, and learn from them the nature, motive power and rewards of the Christian life.

### The nature of the Christian life

Living in obedience to the commands of Jesus, **If you love me, you will obey what I command** (John 14:15). Note the authority with which He speaks. He doesn't say "God's commands", or "the ten commandments", but He says "what I command". He has divine authority. The teaching of the Gospels and the Epistles contain His commandments, the all-sufficient guide. Not just for the disciples in the Upper Room, but also for all people in every generation all round the world to the end of time. His commandments cover all the main areas and relationships of life. They are plain and clear. He instructs us about our relationship to God, neighbour, church, society, enemies, state, priorities in life, use of possessions and talents. It is not for us to pick and choose which commands suit us, for they are all meant to be kept.

We not only have His commandments but also His own life, which was a perfect example and outworking of these rules. **Learn from me** (Matthew 11:29), not just "do this", but "copy me". Is there any clearer guide to conduct our lives than "what would Jesus do?" It behoves us to study the Scriptures, not least the Gospel stories, and treasure His words, note every commandment as it applies to our situation, and ask for the Holy Spirit to aid us in its application. Apply His commandments to our lives, be true to our convictions about Christ's commands, and carry them out at all costs.

If there is a commandment we do not relish – that is a warning that there is something wrong in the heart which needs to be put right. If we love Him, we will be anxious to have that put right. This is the great test of our love for Jesus – not our profession or how we talk, but our desire to please Him. It is a strange home where everyone says they love each other – and yet they are not speaking, they cause each other anxiety and grief, are inconsiderate and unkind, causing pain and constant turmoil. When we love Christ, our desire is to please Him, we want to know what commandments apply at the moment, and want to keep them.

### The motive power of the Christian life

Firstly, we love Christ. When we first believe Him, we contemplate His love to us, and this inevitably makes our love for Him burn and grow. The Christian life begins with that personal relationship – a relationship of love. Not just an outward show of external actions that suggest we have orthodox beliefs, but an inward personal relationship that is trust in, and love for, Christ. "The general current of much church life runs too much towards externals and too little towards deep burning love to the

person of Christ.” “To love Christ is the very heart’s core of true religion.” Jesus said to Peter, as He says to us, **Do you truly love me?** (John 21:16).

If we answer “yes”, this leads to a desire to please and serve and obey Him. The commandments of Christ are cold, hard, alien to the selfish, self-willed nature, and only love to Him will make them desirable and lovely and attractive. Even if we forced ourselves, and obeyed them in a cold mechanical reluctant way, out of fear, that sort of obedience would be useless. Outward acts of service without heart are worthless. There is no real keeping of Christ’s commandments without love. Love is the mightiest force in the world. It makes us do things that compulsion will never get us to do. Love provides the power to keep the commandments.

The main care of our lives is to do right, and to do it because we love the Lord. The more we love and grow in love, the more anxious we are to please Him. Doing “the bare minimum”, and making a distinction between “the essentials and the unessentials” are meaningless to love. Love asks how we may please in the least detail. Shows itself more obviously in going beyond the essentials, beyond the bare minimum.

The guide entitled “Seven reasons for believers baptism” poses the question “Is believer’s baptism essential to salvation?” to which the answer is “no”. The next question is “Why then do we need to be baptised?” The answer is “Because the Lord Jesus wishes it. If there were only a dim suspicion that He wished it, it surely would be enough.”

David’s three mighty men risked their lives to get him water from his childhood’s well, for which he had expressed a passing wish. Shall we do less for Him than they?

#### The rewards of the Christian life

**He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him... My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him** (John 14:21,23). Is this not a strange thing to say, that he will be loved by the Father? Doesn’t the Father love all men? Certainly, John 3:16 tells us so. But God has a special love to His church and His people. He shows yet more special love still to obedient children. “The love of God is not a featureless uniformity of goodwill” (Archbishop William Temple), i.e. not equal love on everyone regardless of behaviour. C.f. in a family, children who are obedient receive special expressions of love, which are not theirs if they are disobedient. Privileges, rewards, treats if obedient; chastening, privileges withdrawn, lose of favours if disobedient.

So, in God’s family, when we walk contrary to God, He walks contrary to us. Prayers go unanswered, guidance, help and blessing are denied us, and we lose the joy of our salvation. The Father exercises wise discipline in His house – a rod for the disobedient, and smiles for the obedient. The Lord deals differently with us according to our condition and character.

The Father and the Son will make their abode with the obedient believer. *μονη*, meaning permanent dwelling place, not a temporary lodging. **That Christ may dwell**

**in your hearts by faith** (Ephesians 3:17). He will be perfectly at home in the heart of the obedient believer. He will settle down, not just hover on the threshold.

Amazing – we are indwelt by the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What condescension by them! What an honour for us! And what possibilities for us. Divine resources within our breasts. Consider what this means in terms of wisdom, power and grace. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not just near and by our side, but within, dwelling in our heart. We have too low a standard of possibilities of Christian fellowship, Christian enjoyment and Christian living. We need to go in for this blessing!

Another reward is the special manifestation of Christ to our soul. Experience of renewing, revolutionizing, cleansing, elevating powers – are deepened, enriched and broadened. We have the conviction of the divine hand at work. God is confirmed and reaffirmed to us. Spiritual things become increasingly real. At conversion, this is a bud, but it comes into flower as we experience more of the revelation of Christ to our heart. We have assurances of His love, actual supernatural continuous communication of Christ to the heart, leading to fuller knowledge, sweeter love, larger possession of fuller Christ. Just like climbing a mountain – get wider view as we get higher. “Every act of submission to His will cleanses the lenses of the telescope from some film on them, and the stars look brighter, larger and nearer” (Alexander Maclaren).

**For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance** (Matthew 25:29). **The Lord confides in those that fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them** (Psalm 25:14). **Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me** (Revelation 3:20). “One piece of honest, loving obedience is worth all the study and speculation of the unloving heart, if it means seeing Christ”.

It is meant to be our continuous and precious experience that our beings are His permanent abode – as long as His conditions are fulfilled. If self rises up again, reasserts itself and shakes off Christ, the sense of His presence vanishes. Walking obediently and closely with God brings joy and comfort which the inconsistent do not know. Men who really enjoy the blessings of God’s presence are like Enoch, who walked with the Lord.

There is more of heaven on earth to be obtained than many Christians realize. They are more clear about Christ’s pastoral work than about His present work. The present work of Christ is in us – and so often we are vague about this. Scarcely dare to believe in actual and miraculous manifestation of Christ – here and now to those who love and serve Him.

Are spiritual things real? Is our experience of God distant? Do we believe Christ will do something in and for us if we obey Him? Do we believe He will show Himself to us? If we are not experiencing His revelation of Himself in our lives, it is because we do not know or believe it is possible, or because we are careless about Christ’s practical sayings and words. Holiness and happiness are linked to each other more than we care to realize.

## Conclusion

If we want to know all that God has for us, the pathway is obedience. We must walk in the way of obedience, and then Christ will meet us and unveil more and more of His love. How can I get love and obedience? We love Him when we realize He loves us. We know that when we see Him dying on the Cross. The order is – His love, our love, our obedience, His further revelation. Try Him and see.