

Seek to Obey His Commandments

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[0 : 00] I'll use the wireless and you can just switch that off. Thanks. Yeah, much sound and no light. I hope that's not continued.

Let's pray and ask God's help. Our Father, we thank you for the great gifts that you gave to your church when you physically left this earth for your word, which as you've said in the gospel reading we had today are not your words, but the very words of your Father.

And for the great gift of the Holy Spirit, another helper. We pray that we would have thankful hearts, that we would treasure these gifts and that by the power of your Holy Spirit and by his help, we would understand your word and that in his strength, we would live it out and share it with the world around us.

We pray all these things through Christ, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Here's a Bible trivia quiz for you.

According to the description at the end of the book of Revelation, what is the first group of people to be cast into the lake of fire?

[1 : 49] It's the cowardly. You can look that up later at your leisure in Revelation 21. The cowardly. The fearful.

The faint-hearted. Now, if you're anything like me, you're beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable. I seem to be hardwired toward being shy and perhaps timid. And it's a precious small step from timid to faint-hearted and from faint-hearted to cowardly or fearful.

Now, others among us, you may not have a personality that bends you toward fearfulness, but at the same time, I can imagine that most of you, probably all of you, if you had long enough to think about it and felt comfortable enough to share it, I imagine that most of us from time to time are all too familiar with the feeling of the pressure of stressful circumstances, with the mounting anxiety, with a knot that begins to form in the pit of your stomach, with a feeling of discomfort, the pounding of your heart, the inability to think clearly.

That seems to be one of my first in this situation. A desire to get away. A desire to flee like a bird to the mountains. I felt that last night when I knew I had to stand up here this morning.

[3 : 35] That's true. Perhaps even a feeling of desperation, panic. Some extent of that is true almost, I'm sure, to all of us.

Well, in the passage of John's Gospel that we read earlier, Jesus speaks directly to this experience. This fearfulness does not need to describe anyone who has become a disciple of the Lord Jesus. In fact, it must not in an ongoing and sustained way. And he gives very clear reasons why. So I invite you to turn to this glorious passage in John's Gospel on page 935, again, of your Pew Bible, or in your own Bible, John chapter 14.

Once again, to place this in its setting, the context of this conversation, it's Jesus' last night before his betrayal and his arrest and his crucifixion.

He knows that his departure is near. And in a section unique to John's Gospel, a long section from the end of chapter 13 right through to the end of chapter 17, he's preparing his disciples for what's about to happen.

[4 : 54] The 11 disciples, which is the 12 minus Judas Iscariot, who has already left on his mission of betrayal, they're disturbed by what they're beginning to understand that Jesus is telling them.

Their hearts are troubled and they're feeling afraid. And it's into this situation that Jesus speaks these words of comfort and encouragement.

So we pick up the conversation in chapter 14 and verse 15. If you love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever. We'll just stop there.

I don't know how comforted you are yet. Because what is Jesus saying here at the beginning? He says, if you love me, well he says, three things will result. Did you notice? Three things.

[5 : 58] First, if you love me, keep my commandments. Or some translations will say, you will keep my commandments. That's first. Secondly, he will pray to the Father or ask the Father.

And thirdly, the Father will give you another helper who will be with you forever. So in the first of these three things, in verse 15, if you love me, keep my commandments.

The Lord is showing us the unavoidable connection between loving him and keeping his commandments. If we love him, we will keep his commandments.

If we don't keep his commandments, we don't love him. It's that simple. It's that unavoidable. It's a simple if-then kind of a statement that we all make.

If you put your hand on the hot element, then you will get burned. When the first half of the statement is true, when you put your hand on the hot element, then the second half necessarily follows.

[7 : 12] You will get burned. That is the type of statement he's saying. So, if you love me, if you love me, if you're in an ongoing relationship of love with me, with the Lord Jesus, then it necessarily follows that you will keep my commandments.

Now, for some of us, this should be a point of encouragement, of strengthening your faith. Ask yourself this question. Do I seek to obey his commandments?

I'm not saying do you never stumble, but is the basic orientation of your heart to obey his commandments?

Do I make it a priority to read God's word in private or in public? To read it with others?

To read it myself? To hear it taught? And with all of this hearing, with the orientation so that I can do what it says? When I live my ordinary day-to-day, Monday-to-Friday life, my weekends, am I trying to obey his word?

[8 : 33] And for many of you, the answer will be yes. If you look in your heart, yes, I fall many times, I stumble daily, but yes, I do, I desire to keep his word. Well, if so, give thanks to God.

Give thanks to God because that is a sign of his grace that has done a work in your heart. Because before he called you to himself, it would have never crossed your mind to live like that.

It would have never crossed your mind as you were going about your normal daily business to ask yourself, am I obeying the commandments of Jesus? It's just not what the worldly way of thinking is. It would never occur to you. And you may, if you were converted late enough in life, you may remember a time before you came to know the Lord when that was true. I don't know, perhaps some of you will remember it.

Isn't it true? Never crossed your mind. But now it is your desire. It is your desire to keep his commandments. And that's only possible because he's given you a new heart.

[9 : 37] A new heart that loves the Lord Jesus and desires to obey his word. So be encouraged. Now for others it will sound foreign.

Perhaps, perhaps you read the Bible from time to time. You taught, you were taught it as a kid. It's a habit you occasionally do. Maybe when situations get difficult you, you dust it off, pull it out of the, the drawer.

I don't mean to, to be little. But, nevertheless, or perhaps you attend church. Perhaps you come once in a while. Perhaps you come every week ever since you've been an infant.

But, nevertheless, this experience I'm describing, this longing to know God's word and to put it into practice, to obey it day by day, it's just, it's simply not part of your experience.

I don't think that way. It would never cross my mind. Well, if this describes you, let the words of Jesus sink into your ears and into your heart.

[10 : 45] If you love me, keep my commandments. And he says the same point again in verse 21. He who has my commandments has them and keeps them, it is he who loves me.

And he says it again in verse 23. Jesus answered Judas and said to him, if anyone loves me, he'll keep my word.

Now, in all this, it's critical that you make sure you get a hold of the right end of the stick, not the wrong end. We don't begin by obeying the commandments of God and work ourselves up into a situation of loving him.

No, the love comes first and it expresses itself in our desire to obey. Remember what Jesus said, if you put your hand on the stove, no, that was me.

He said, if you put your hand on the stove, that corresponds to what? If you love me, right? That's the first thing. Then, the result is, you will get burned or you will obey my commandments.

[12:06] The love comes first, the obedience flows out of a heart that loves the Lord. So, what you need to do, if this is alien to you and you don't want it to be alien to you, is you need to pray to God.

You need to cry out to him to give you a new heart. A new heart that loves the Lord Jesus and desires to obey his commandments, to keep his word.

Now, all of this is important to see because what Jesus is doing is he's laying the foundation for what we said at the beginning, a message of consolation and comfort.

But the message is for those who love him. You might call it the comfortable words. That's what the prayer book likes to call things like this, the comfy words. So he says, if you love me, keep my commandments.

And then remember, there's those two other things that flow from the if. If you love me, keep my commandments. And then this, and I will pray the Father, and then thirdly, he, that is the Father, will give you another helper that he may dwell with you forever.

[13:16] Another helper. This is good news. Indeed. For those, for these disciples who are facing the loss of their Lord physically, the Lord Jesus who had been their helper, their encourager, their teacher, the one who had revealed the Father to them, the one who had guided them, strengthened them, all of those things.

Now Jesus promises them that after he departs, he's not going to leave them as orphans. He's going to give them another helper. Another helper. The Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Truth as he's called in verse 17.

The Spirit of Truth. Now the reason it was important to think about the loving and the keeping his commandments is because he says, this Spirit I will send to those who love me.

He says, the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. just as an aside, actually, I jumped over, but it's worth drawing your attention to, just as an aside, notice how all three persons of the Trinity are involved in helping and comforting his disciples.

Jesus, the Son, prays to the Father. The Father receives his prayer and sends the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells within us and among us to be our helper, to give us strength to live as disciples of the Lord in this world.

[14:51] Thanks be to God. And now, the connection, Jesus goes on to explain between all of that and loving him and keeping his commandments.

He goes on to say that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. Why? He says in verse 17, the world cannot receive him because it neither sees him nor knows him.

They don't even know that there is a Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit exists. But, you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

To the one who knows Jesus, the Holy Spirit is perfectly familiar because Jesus, to know Jesus is to know the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus are so closely linked in this passage that he says he dwells with you even though he's not yet been sent because the Spirit is in Jesus.

[15:59] He dwells with them now in the person of Jesus and then he says I will come to you in verse 18. The Holy Spirit, when the Spirit comes to you, it's me who's coming to you.

The Holy Spirit and Jesus are so closely associated because in fact they are one. Now, the rest of the passage basically drives home over and over again this relationship, the main points that we've just been seeing.

The connection between loving him on the one hand and keeping his commandments on the other, on the coming of another helper from the Father to the ones who love him and obey his word.

Now, sometimes Jesus says a little bit more and explains what he means. Sometimes he repeats the idea, he says it in a different way, he sheds a little bit more light and I urge you to take it home to look over it again and see how he's basically going around and around the same thing over and over again to make sure that they understand.

For example, in verse 22, he's just said a bunch of things and then Judas, one of his disciples, he basically says, I don't get it.

[17:22] He says to him, how is it that you're going to manifest yourself to us and not to the world? He hasn't got it quite straight in his mind. So what does Jesus do? He just goes around the barn one more time.

He says the same thing, if anyone loves me, he'll keep my word and my Father will love him and we'll come to him and make our home with him and so on.

Well, now when we put together then all the different things that Jesus says in this passage, in this passage alone about the Holy Spirit, we begin to see why it is that the disciples don't need to be afraid anymore.

And these are the main points. So I invite you, we're not going to go through them one by one. I think the better effect will be if you do that at home, but just sit back and let these wash over you as it were.

Jesus teaches them that. the helper is like him, another helper. He has been their helper. He will send another helper.

[18:27] The helper's like Jesus. He will be with them forever. He will be with them forever. He gives them life.

He actually joins them to God. He makes them one first with the Lord Jesus himself, one spirit with the head of the body.

Actually, vitally, spiritually linked with the Lord Jesus himself and through him with the Father. a living, real, spiritual union.

He brings to them, this is the spirit again, the helper. He brings to them and makes real to them the love of the Father and the love of the Lord Jesus.

He reveals Jesus to them. He teaches them. He reminds them of all the things that Jesus has said.

[19:38] He brings to them the peace that Jesus gives. Now, it's knowing and more than knowing, experiencing all of these things plus others that are taught elsewhere in the scriptures that will encourage and comfort and strengthen the disciples as they face the prospect of living without the Lord in this hostile world.

Once Jesus is physically departed, that's why he can conclude all of this teaching about the Holy Spirit in verse 27 by saying, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Now, I want us then in the final moments to focus in on this command. Verse 27 at the very end, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

This instruction is a two-edged sword. I think what we're used to doing when we read that is reading those as words of comfort.

They make us feel peaceful, assured. and that's so and in light of all that he's doing, that's true.

[21:00] But, in the light of all that he's been saying. But on the other hand, there's something that we may not fully appreciate about this passage, about this verse, particularly the way it's put in many of our English translations, is this is an imperative.

This is a command from the Lord. A command. the words, let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid, they carry the force of a prohibition.

Don't do it. We might better express the same words as, your heart must not be troubled.

It must not be afraid. In fact, it's even stronger than this because the word translated afraid at the end of verse 27 is the same word that we talked about at the very beginning in Revelation 21.

Cowardly. It's completely lost to us here. Jesus says here, your heart must not be cowardly. Your heart must not be cowardly.

[22:12] In light of all that I've told you and that you understand, and in light even more of what you're about to experience when the Holy Spirit is poured out on you on the day of Pentecost, your heart must not be cowardly.

To whom much has been given, much will be required. Now, I don't want, the last thing I want is for all of you to go away afraid, because that would be the opposite effect of what he's saying.

We don't want you thinking if you suffer fear, you're going to be cast into the lake of fire. In Revelation 21, verse 8, what saves us from ultimate judgment is not our being brave, but the Lord Jesus.

But, the point of this connection that is being drawn with the lake of fire is that that kind of cowardice, that kind of fear, is not a characteristic of the people of God.

It's not a characteristic of those who love the Lord Jesus and are his disciples. So, what do you do then, if you're like me, and you're just naturally inclined to fearfulness, or the rest of you, when

sometimes the, well, I won't even speculate, all kinds of things that cause you to be afraid, and you fear that fear, you feel that fear welling up within you, then, what do you do?

[23 : 35] How are we to do? Well, we do like Jesus did when Judas asked him the question. We go around the barn one more time.

We run these things before our mind that Jesus has laid before us, and we allow these things to give us strength. Run before your mind these points if you're a disciple of Jesus.

In my heart of hearts, I do desire to obey God's word. Point number one. Point number two.

Therefore, because of what the Lord says, I know that I really do love the Lord.

I really am his disciple. Point three. Jesus has asked the Father. Point four. The Father has sent the helper to those who love Jesus.

There is a logical connection to these things. And finally, point five. The helper is with me forever.

All those things we just said, the helper is with me forever.

[24 : 39] The helper joins me in a real and living union with the Lord Jesus, with the Father. He brings the peace of Christ to me. He strengthens me, et cetera, et cetera.

So brothers and sisters, when you feel the icy grip of fear on your heart, you must realize that you're not the slave of that fear anymore if you're a disciple of the Lord Jesus and if you love him.

Turn to this passage. Turn to it this afternoon. Turn to it again and again when you feel afraid. Let its truth sink deep into your heart.

Then you will be able to obey Jesus' commandment and specifically this commandment. Your heart must not be troubled and it must not be cowardly.

Amen. Times faith when ends here on sideutes where it is said and they know they can show them the bad stories