

Loving Obedience-Obedient Love

BEEN THINKING ABOUT NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS - It is clear that our Father places considerable emphasis on Commands in Scripture, for there are at least 1642 commands in the New Testament alone.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our obedience to God's commands is one tangible way to say "We love you Lord!" Jesus repeatedly stated this principle - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...He who does not love Me does not keep My words." (John 14:15, 23, 24)

Beloved, we dare not miss Jesus' point! Love is not a sentimental emotion, as often portrayed in modern day Christianity. Adrian Rogers once quipped "Now, folks, when people truly love God, you don't see it just when they stand in the congregation and sing "Oh How I Love Jesus," but they obey Him." Yes, God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16+), but God is also Light (1 Jn 1:5+). Love and Light counterbalance one another. We cannot say we love God and choose to walk in the darkness! John says "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 Jn 1:6-7+) The way we live our life, the choices we make each day, will ring forth loudly in heaven either as "I love You Lord" or "I don't love You Lord"! There is no middle ground regarding love of Jesus and love of the world (1 John 2:15+), of walking in the light versus walking in the darkness.

But praise God, Jesus knows that our old "Adamic" flesh nature (still present in all believers) continues to tempt us, on one hand, to run from God's commands (thus leading to licentiousness) or, on the other hand, to attempt to carry them out in our own fleshly strength (which leads to legalism and frustration). But "thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57) for He has given us the Helper, "the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:19b+, Jn 14:16, 26) Who indwells every believer (Romans 8:9+) and Who provides us with both the DESIRE and the POWER (cf Php 2:13NLT ±= "giving you the DESIRE to obey Him and the POWER") to walk in His Spirit and to not carry out the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16). Our part, our responsibility under grace not law (Ro 6:14+), is to daily work out our "salvation with fear and trembling," making choices that are pleasing to God (Php 2:12+). Notice that even the DESIRE for such "holy" choices must be "energized" or enabled by the Spirit. Or to say it another way, every commandment of God includes the enablement by His Spirit. As Spurgeon said "Love is a practical thing; love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy Spirit work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love Him! The obedience which God's children yield to Him must be loving obedience. Do not go about the service of God as slaves to their taskmaster's toil, but run in the way of His commands because it is your Father's way. Yield your bodies as instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your Father's will, and His will should be the will of His child." And as an aside, the best way to know God's will is to say "I will" to God.

In addition to His Spirit, the love of Christ compels (urges, impels) us (2 Cor 5:14+) to choose to obey His commands, "for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3+). And Oh what a reward Jesus promises us in John 14:21 declaring that "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose (manifest) Myself to him." Adrian Rogers explains "disclose Himself to us" by asking "Aren't we talking about the manifest presence of God? Do you see how the Bible links the manifest presence of God with keeping the commandments of God? Because, when we disobey God, we grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30+); we quench the Holy Spirit (1Th 5:19+). The Holy Spirit of God is in us to make God real to us...Can you say: "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known?" Do you know why Jesus is not real to many of us? We're just not obeying His word. Do you want Him to manifest Himself to you? Would you like for Jesus to be real? There's no way apart from obedience!"

When we obey we partake of Jesus' promise that "If you keep My commandments, you will abide (dwell, live experientially) in My love." (Jn 15:10) "We must keep our Lord's command if we would bask in His love. If we live in sin, we cannot live in the love of Christ. Without the holiness which pleases God, we cannot please Jesus. He who cares nothing for holiness knows nothing of the love of Jesus. Conscious enjoyment of our Lord's love is a delicate thing. It is far more sensitive to sin and holiness than mercury is to cold and heat. When we are tender of heart and careful in thought, lip, and life to honor our Lord Jesus, then we receive tokens of His love without number. If we desire to perpetuate such bliss, we must perpetuate holiness. The Lord Jesus will not hide His face from us unless we hide our face from Him. Sin makes the cloud which darkens our Sun: if we will be watchfully obedient and completely consecrated, we may walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have as sure an abiding in the love of Jesus as Jesus has in the love of the Father. Here is a sweet promise with a solemn "if." Lord, let me have this "if" in my hand; for as a key it opens this casket." (Spurgeon) Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey!

The highest motive for obeying Christ is to obey because we love Him. As Spurgeon said "Obedience must have love for its mother, nurse, and food. The essence of obedience lies in the hearty love which prompts the deed rather than in the deed itself." A working mother returned home one wintry day to discover the driveway cleared of snow, the rugs vacuumed, and the dishes washed and put away. This was far more effort than the list of chores had required. "What got into you?" the amazed mother asked her children. "We just wanted to show you we love you, Mom," was their answer. Obeying out of love takes the burden out of doing what God requires. And so we see that love and obedience are intimately intertwined -- Obedient love and loving obedience! As our obedience expresses our love for God, it enables us to experience His love for us.

Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With (loving) obedience glad and steady,
Still to follow every word.

—Havergal

One final thought -- EVERY encounter with each of the more 1600 NT commands is an opportunity to jettison self-reliance and to yield to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Supernatural commands from the supernatural God can only be carried out with reliance on His supernatural power! The Spirit is called the Helper, but don't let His Name mislead you. To say that we need His "help" is to imply we have some ability of our own to obey and are in need of just a little "spiritual push" so to speak. It is better to say that we need Him to "enable" us to obey divine commands, for the word "enable" indicates that without His power we cannot obey (cp this same principle in Jn 15:5, Jn 6:63). Webster says "enable" means "to supply with power, physical or moral, to furnish with sufficient power or ability!" In Philippians 2:12-13⁺, Paul describes the incomprehensible, mysterious synergism between man's free will and God's sovereign provision of His Spirit! To say it another way followers of Jesus are 100% dependent on His Spirit (Php 2:13+), while at the same time are 100% responsible to obey (Php 2:12⁺)! See also the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100)

Lord, with my lips I say "I love You," but with my life I behave as if I don't. When these two are in conflict, I know that it is my life that is speaking the truth. I don't want this conflict, Lord. By learning to depend on the Spirit's enabling power, I desire to prove with my life that I am speaking the truth when I say, "I love You Lord."

We love You, Lord Jesus," we often will say,
But are we as ready His will to obey?
Let's heed what God's Spirit would have us to do—
That's how we show Him a love that is true.

—D. De Haan

- To love God is to obey God.
- How much we are willing to obey is the measure of our love.
- Does my life say "I love You Lord?"

[O The Deep, Deep Love of God](#)

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me

Underneath me, all around me
Is the current of your love
Leading onward, leading homeward
To your glorious rest above

Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus
'Tis heaven of heavens to me
And it lifts me up to glory
For it lifts me up to thee

Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus
Spread his praise from shore to shore
How he loves us, ever loves us,

Changes never, nevermore