

The Commands of Jesus – Laying the Foundation

“If you love me then....”

1/5/2020

Please turn in your Bibles to **John 14** and hold it for later in the sermon.

One of the last set of instructions Jesus gave his disciples is contained in these words.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Now historically, within the Christian churches, we’ve really emphasized heavily the part about making disciples by baptizing them. But sadly, we often stop there. And what Jesus mentions next is just as important as baptism. In fact Jesus talks way more about us **obeying his commands** than he ever does about **baptism**. And while Jesus was baptized just once, he lived every day obeying His Father’s commands and desires and he gave about **50** specific commands for all of his followers to obey.

And so, if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ, it seems important to understand what Jesus commanded us to do if we’re supposed to obey his commands.

Notice, Jesus doesn’t tell us to help people **understand** his commands, or **appreciate** his commands or **discuss** his commands or **memorize** his commands. He simply says that we ought to **obey** his commands.

This morning I’d like to **lay a foundation** of understanding the importance Jesus stressed on obeying his commands and then in the next several weeks I want to lead you into looking at his commands and how they ought to impact our lives.

Early in Jesus’ ministry he taught on a hill for everyone to hear. It’s often known as **The Sermon on the Mount**. During this sermon, Jesus talks on a wide variety of subjects and describes what his disciples look like in living their lives. During this sermon, Jesus speaks at least **13 specific commands** and then he concludes his words with this **application point**.

Matthew 7:24 (NIV) *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

And a few verses later he adds: *“But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.”*

Luke’s version of this same teaching begins with: *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? **Luke 6:46 (NIV)***

I don’t know about you – but I know I want to live a life which makes a difference in the piece of the world in which I live and in the lives of the people I rub elbows with.

Later in his ministry, Jesus was teaching the truths of God in a powerful way and a woman in the crowd called out, *“Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”* To which Jesus replied, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and **obey it**.”* Luke 11:27-28

Notice you’re not just blessed if you hear God’s Word or are fascinated by God’s Word or memorize God’s Word, but you’re blessed if you both hear it and then proceed to obey it. I’ve known many people who’ve known God’s Word, quite well. If you gave them a Bible knowledge test you’d be convinced that they must be a strong Christian. But when you watched their life, they looked nothing like a follower of Christ. And sadly, that’s often the turn off to non-Christians being attracted to Christ. Not Christ himself – but His followers – you and I. Because while many self proclaimed Christians may **know about** Jesus, they don’t really **know** Jesus. Someone might have a lot of head knowledge about someone but that doesn’t mean they actually know that person.

And that takes us to the exact point Jesus makes concerning a relationship with Him and obeying him. It took place in the Upper Room with his disciples, those closest to him. They’d spent the last 3 ½ years getting to know him. They’d closely observed him in every aspect of daily life. They ate with him, slept with

him, watched him treat hurting people with compassion, tenderness and grace and watched him challenge the religious hypocritical leaders at the time with harsh criticism.

As a disciple of a rabbi in that culture, your goal was to become just like your rabbi. It was more than just learning what he had to teach intellectually, it was to become just like your teacher.

So, we're in the Upper Room and Jesus is trying to prepare them for his impending crucifixion and what would happen after that.

And he says this to them these words out of **John 14:15-24**. So, open your Bibles to John 14 and follow along.

Notice the repetition in this passage.

John 14:15 *"If you love me, keep my commands.*

John 14:21a *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.*

John 14:23a *Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.*

John 14:24 *Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.*

4x times in this one section Jesus emphasizes keeping his commands. But he doesn't emphasize obedience in isolation. He doesn't just say that we should obey him. He repeatedly links our love for him with keeping his commands. Obedience to Christ's commands **flow out of our relationship** with Him. And yet, it seems to me that sometimes God must feel a bit like a frustrated parent, who's children tell them that they love them but then are constantly going against their wishes.

Jesus makes it quite clear that it's not possible to be one of his disciples, and hence be a member of God's family and continue to live in disobedience to the plan God has for your life.

I would bet that if I asked how many of you love Jesus – we'd see most hands go up.

But if I asked, *"how many of you consistently live a life of obedience to Christ's commands"* there would be far fewer hands go up. Jesus says, this shouldn't be the case.

Many years later, one of the apostles that was in that Upper Room that night wrote this excellent summary of what Jesus said.

1 John 2:3-6 (NIV) *We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

That's some pretty strong language. You're a **liar** if you claim to be in a follower of his, a disciple, or a son or a daughter in God's family, and yet don't do what Jesus commanded us to do.

But don't miss this amazing statement tucked in the middle of that. *. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them.* Who doesn't want God's love to be perfected in them?

Two Important Considerations:

1. The ultimate goal is not merely your obedience. **The ultimate goal is the reflection of God's glory and goodness which flows out of an ever deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.**
Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* The lives of Christ followers shouldn't be a detraction to the message and beauty of Christ. Instead Christ's disciples ought to live in such a way that it makes people sit up and take notice of the goodness and kindness of God as they see His character reflected in you. And that happens as we love Jesus and obey His commands.
2. **You can't keep these commands on your own.** Perhaps, you've attempted to keep the Lord's commands, yet you keep failing. Maybe you can relate to the frustrations of **Audrey** who writes in response to keeping Christ's commands: *"When I read these and when I read the Lord's Word, I confess I am so very discouraged, crushed in spirit and very fearful because I know I could never obey all of this. I don't know anyone that can be perfect or obey all of this. I fail daily, either in attitude, heart, mind, body in action or lack of action and sometimes in many ways. I miss the mark...have everyday of my life. Does this mean I*

don't love my Lord enough? Were the original disciples perfect? They were faithful for the most part, but were they perfect? Where is the joy and peace in trying to be perfect in everything and messing up continually? I don't get it at all...if we are to be perfect and can be in our Lord, why aren't we? I can not remove my sinful nature from me and stop sinning altogether. Lord knows I've tried and continue to try. I try so very hard to fulfill and obey my Lord, to be perfect, and I fail miserably daily, my feeble attempts are barely anything. Is there really any hope for me? I agonize over this. I truly don't get it. What am I missing here? Please don't tell me to pray more or that I lack faith. People of God, anyone of you, have you mastered all of your sin, are you perfect? Do you fully obey? If you are and do, I want to know how you are doing it. Help me understand please. Why would the Lord require of me that which I can not do? Isn't that why He came and died for us? I never totally have peace about this...never do I believe or can I accept that I'm being faithful because I know I fall short, and I know I'll never obey perfectly. I so deeply desire to fully walk in the Spirit and do everything right, but I fail at it."

Can anyone relate to Audrey's frustration. She so wants to honor Jesus by living a consistent life of obedience to His commands but finds herself failing constantly, either in thought or actions. I know I sure can. So often I find myself doing things or thinking thoughts that I know do not honor and glorify Jesus. They are self-centered and seek to glorify or satisfy my selfish desires rather than His. And what I've found is that I can't be perfect in action and deeds by my own strength. I need the power of God living inside of me. And that's what's so amazing is that God understands our inability to live the kind of life of obedience to Him. And so, just after Jesus called us to live lives of complete obedience to Him, he told his disciples that he was going to be sending the Holy Spirit to live within them and empower them to live the kind of lives that He calls us to live.

Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote similar words of frustration to Audrey's in **Romans 7**. He was so frustrated with his inability to live a life of perfect obedience to Jesus' commands, even though he really wanted to. But then you see God's glorious hope and power found in chapter 8 where Paul writes:

Romans 8:1-2 (NIV) *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

1 John 3:9 (NIV) *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because **God's seed** remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*

This "seed of God" is the indwelling Holy Spirit that lives inside of everyone follower of Jesus Christ and is there to remind you of Christ's teachings and to empower you to live a victorious sin free life. But I've found that the key to victory over sin is to focus on the beauty and the glory of Jesus rather than on your sin, and rely on the Holy Spirit to refocus your mind and heart constantly in that direction. So, when you notice yourself being drawn to satisfying your selfish desires call out for the Holy Spirit to redirect your attention to the glory and beauty of Jesus. Refocus on how much He loves you and demonstrated that on the cross. Concentrate on the fact that He sees you in the best light possible. He sees you clothed in His righteousness, not in your sin. And He has an amazing plan for your life. He wants to use you to display the character and goodness of God to everyone around you. He wants to empower you to live a life that attracts people's attention because you don't live like other people. You respond to difficult situations and challenging people with grace and compassion and hope.

As I close let me ask you a couple of questions:

- How are you doing in living a life of obedience to the commands of Jesus?
- Was 2019 a year that you saw progress in that regard?
- What's your strategy to improve in this area in 2020?
- What specific areas are a challenge to you?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you conquer those areas and completely turn them over to His control.

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One of Jesus’ last commands was to go make _____

What two things were involved in doing this:

1. _____
2. _____

In the Upper Room with his disciples Jesus ties two things closely together. Our _____ for Him and our _____ to Him.

Therefore our _____ to Him flows out of our _____ with Jesus.

According to 1 John 2:3-6, what are we if we claim to love Jesus and yet don’t obey Him _____

What does it mean that “*God’s love is made complete in you*” if you obey His commands?

Two Important Considerations:

1. The ultimate goal is the _____ of God’s glory and goodness which flows out of an _____ with Jesus Christ.
2. You can’t keep these command _____
How can you successfully keep Christ’s commands?
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