

February 16, 2020
Experiencing God (7)
Obedience Leads to Knowing God
John 14:15-19, 23-27
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

In today's text, Jesus gives us both a command and a word of comfort. In Verse 15 He said, *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."* Jesus is saying love and obedience are linked together. There is no love without obedience. If we have an obedience problem, that means we have a love problem. Obedience is the way that our love is shown concretely in the world. In any kind of relationship we have, it's important to say, "I love you," or "I am sorry," or "Thank you." These words are important. But if the words are never substantiated by action, we start to mistrust what the words say.

In our relationship with someone, if we are never willing to serve them or if we are never willing to do what they want to do, we begin to have a problem in a relationship with them. We can tell how important this is. Whether you have to remember back to the dating days or whether you are in dating right now, there is a certain dynamic that happens early in a relationship. You may ask, "Oh, would you like to go out?" And the other person says, "Yes," and you say, "Where would you like to go?" "Oh, I don't care, anywhere you would like to go." You may ask back, "Oh no, anywhere you would like to go." And this whole conversation is happening because you are desperate to show the other person that you really take their desires seriously so you keep batting it back and forth. "Oh no, you decide." This is important. Jesus says that it is important in showing our love is by obeying God.

But we need to remember that obedience doesn't come out of fear. Obedience doesn't come out of a slave sense of a relationship with God, but out of love for God. Jesus said in Verse 31, *"The world must know that I love the Father. I love the Father and I do exactly what the Father has commanded me."* It's out of love. In a good and loving relationship, people want to do these good things for one another. Jesus is talking about this genuine and loving relationship with God.

Love leads to action which grows out of the fullness of the heart. Jesus is saying that the action that leads from our love for God is obedience. We want to put God first. We want to please God. We want to know God better and so we obey. This is another aspect of obedience. As we obey God, we grow closer to God. We understand God better and we have a deeper experience of fellowship.

When Moses came to the end of his life, he wanted to know God better, to see God's glory more, and to experience God more. For 40 years he experienced things with God. He saw God deliver Israel from Egypt with mighty miracles because he obeyed God. He saw God provide for Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. God forgave Moses and Israel. Moses' obedience led him to experience God and to know God. Obedience is part of all of this.

In today's text, we can find consolation and comfort as well. Jesus specifically talks about the work of the Holy Spirit. In verses 16 Jesus said, *"And I will ask the Father and he will give you another counselor to be with you forever; his spirit of truth."* And in verse 25 and 26, *"All of this I have spoken while I am still with you, but the Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I have said to you."* Jesus is saying, "I will send my spirit to make this kind of life possible." The Holy Spirit will teach and remind. The Holy Spirit is in us. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus is present in us. We live because of the cross of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.

Obedience is not something that we drummed up on our own. It's something that God is working out in us. It brings the desire to pursue a new life, to obey, to want a relationship with God and to give us the power to actually do it. Obedience is important. But obedience is not saying, "God, should I go to this line of work or to that line of work?" It is not asking God whether I should marry this person or not that person, or whether I should study this or study that, or whether I should move here or move there. All those are important issues that we can be seeking God about. If we hear and sense God's leading, we should obey. But that's not where the real battle is.

The real battle is already clear that we need to obey. We are supposed to love one another. We are supposed to forgive people who have wronged us and to be generous and hospitable. We are to seek unity among believers. We are not supposed to gossip. We are supposed to control our anger. These are clear and that's where the big battle is and that's why we have to obey.

We've got to trust God to live this kind of life. We've got to rely upon God to live this way. Prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and obeying God in the little things are foundations in our life. All these things set a pattern of life and lay a foundation for the big moments of obedience to come. We need to obey what we already know. We need to build our faith, as we study God's Word, reflect on His Word, and obey what God wants us to do.