

Title: "If you love me you will obey!"
John 15:1

Once upon a time, there was a little kindergartener, who was having issues with his mother. His Mom has been controlling his life for over 5 years, and he has "had it" He decides to run away from home. So, he packs his lunch and walks away to start a new life, where he can do what he wants, and is not held down by his evil mother. 10 minutes later a neighbor sees him standing at the corner of their street. The neighbor asks what he is doing there. The boy says "I'm running away from home." "But I'm not allowed to cross the street." What was funny was that even though in words, the boy wanted to leave the oppression of his mother, deep down inside he knew "She was still his mother!" He still needed her He still loved her. and so he still obeyed her rules, "about not crossing the street." It was because of his love for her, his relationship with her, that he still obeyed her. Jesus says a similar thing. He says (John 14:23) "If you love me, you will obey my commands." "If you love me, you will obey my commands." For those who love Jesus, they will want to follow Jesus. Those who love Jesus, will want to please him. and therefore they will want to follow his commands.

At first glance, it seems like a good rule. If you love Jesus, follow his commands. No problema. But then I looked deeper. I saw things which concerned me. What about the times when I fail to follow Jesus' commands. Or worse, what about the times when I don't feel like following Jesus' commands? For example: When I look at the ten commandments, thou shalt have no other Gods thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain how many times have I cussed? thou shalt remember the Sabbath and keep it holy? Do I always keep the Sabbath holy? Do I always keep that day for Godly things? thou shalt honor thy father and mother have I always honored not only my parents, but all authority above me? thou shalt not kill while I may not have actively killed anyone, when God forbids something, He commands the opposite. The opposite of killing someone, (of stealing their life,) is protecting someone in need. Have I always protected the weak, or have I stayed on the sidelines watching. thou shalt not commit adultery thou shalt not steal thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor thou shalt not thou shalt not covet We could name lots of examples where we have not obeyed God. Does that mean "I don't love Jesus?" Or more importantly, when I fail to follow God's commands, does that mean "God doesn't love me?" does that mean "I'm going to Hell?" You know, technically, if it were up to the ten commandments, if our righteousness before God depended on our being able to follow his laws, then in fact, the answers would be God doesn't love you. and Yes, you are going to Hell. These answers are what the Ten commandments gave us and failure is what my sinful nature

bequeathed to me. When I fail to follow God's commands, "God would not love me." and "I would be going to hell." Scary thought. But, "praise be to God," this is not the final case. For in fact, scripture does tell us that God does love me. And because he loved me, he sent Jesus to die on a cross. It was that punishment which paid for all the times I was not able to "follow God's commands." So God loves me, even though I do not always follow his commands. So God loves me, even though I do not always follow his commands, because my sins have been paid for by the death of Christ. Hallelujah! Salvation is ours, as a gift from God.

So, now logic raised another question. Does this mean that it doesn't matter if I live my life breaking his commandments? Does that mean that because I have the love of God, he doesn't care if I sin or not? Since Jesus died for me, can I continue to sin, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone, as long as it is for a good reason? The answer is "no," "not in the least." Just because your eternal salvation is not dependent on your following the law perfectly, doesn't mean you are excused from following the law. Jesus says "if you love me, you will OBEY my commands."

I do want to note what he does NOT say. He does not say "I will love you only if you obey my commands." It is not "obey my commands, then I will love you." Rather it is I love you... always... forever... but because you love me, obey me.

So, Jesus says "if you love me, you will obey my commands." What does he mean by this? Love is a two way street. It is because of your love for Jesus, it is because of his love for you, that you will obey. But understand that OBEY HIS COMMANDS is not just not doing what he forbids. OBEY HIS COMMANDS also means, doing what he calls you to do, doing the work of God, and if called to do it, participating in the miracles of God. In fact, it will only be because of that love relationship with Jesus, that you will be able to do anything pleasing for God.

Scripture has a specific term for this love relationship. Jesus says to abide in him. That love relationship with God, the ability to love God and obey is called "abiding with him." What does it mean "to abide with Jesus?" Jesus makes the analogy with the vine. He is the true vine. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me. Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. We cannot bear fruit unless we are connected to Jesus. Unless we abide in him.

Many people know I have a black thumb. No one calls me to take care of their plants. I am not a gardener. However, I use a more modern analogy Jesus is the electrical wall outlet and I am the Xbox series X. An Xbox series X unplugged can

do nothing. It is dead, no picture... no nothing. But when it is plugged to the wall there is a picture, and there is sound... there is Game!! It is only because it is connected to the wall socket that it has any power to be a working game. It is only because it is plugged into the wall that you can play the game. You might say... unless my plug “abides” in the wall socket I will not be able to do things which an Xbox is supposed to do. Likewise, unless I’m plugged in to Jesus, I will not have the power to obey God. However, if I am plugged into Jesus, I will have the power to obey. So, what is the plug? The plug is faith... faith in Jesus Christ... faith in the promise of salvation through the death of Jesus on the Cross as promised in scripture. The “electricity” is the Holy Spirit which opens our minds to the word of God. Our faith is strengthened every time we lift up the word of God regarding the salvation of Jesus, as the word sung, as the word preached, as the word studied, as the word received in baptism and as the word received in the Lord’s supper. It is so important to study the Bible. That is what strengthens the new creation within us. Study God’s word. Receive God’s word in church. Read and hear the men, John, Matthew, Dr Luke, John, Paul of Tarsus. They so desperately wanted to talk with you. They so desperately wanted to share a message with you. Let them speak to you. Let God speak to you, through them. This is your plug! This is the source of your power. Jesus says “Abide with me” That’s how you abide with Christ. That is how you keep plugged into Christ.

Now, going back to my analogy. Even if your Xbox series X is plugged in, unless it is turned on unless it is showing pictures and bringing a message to those watching it, it is useless. This is what our scripture verse meant by “bearing fruit.” God calls us to bear fruit. However, we will be able to bear fruit only as we are connected to Jesus. We will be connected to Jesus only through His word. And therefore, what is the fruit we bear? What is the message WE are to broadcast? God has called us to share the Gospel. God has called us to share Jesus’ message of love, comfort and hope with all.

Do not be afraid to do this! The fruit which God is asking us to bear, the message which we are to broadcast is one of Great News. I mean think about what is actually happening when you share the Gospel. Sharing good news should be fun. I mean, How would you like to be the doctor who says the treatment is working. The cancer is in remission. How would you like to be the person who informs the buyer of a lottery ticket that they have won \$3 million? How would you like to be the person who tells a POW, “you are free.” Wouldn’t that be great!?

Well, the news we have to share is just as great. The new we have to share is even greater than all that. How would you like to be the person who tells someone who

thinks that God doesn't care about them, who thinks that God's desire is to keep them from doing the fun things in life. How would you like to be the person who tells them that God loves you, God wants to make you happy, truly happy, eternally happy. How would you like to be the person, who tells a man who thinks "God could never forgive all the evil things I have done," as man who has resigned himself to going to Hell, How would you like to be the person who tells him God no longer condemns you for your sins. Jesus Christ has died for your sins. Trust him. We are sent to share some very good news.

But there is more good news. We are not alone when we speak. Jesus' said "You are in me, I am in you." Because Christ abides in us, we are not alone when we speak to others. Any work that we do will not be by our own power, but by the Holy Spirit. Christ said, do not worry about what to say The Holy Spirit will supply you with words. The person who is empowered by the Holy Spirit has a confidence that the work that he is doing for God will not be in vain. Evangelism may sound hard. But we are not alone. Really, the question for us is simply "How will Christ and I handle the situation." Pass this legacy on. Let this be your prayer for your children. Let them know they are not alone. Let them know what Christ has done for them. Let them know about the love of God. Let the love which you show them be a reflection of the love which God had for you when he sent his only son to die for your sins. God loves you so much. Believe it and trust Him. And share that belief and trust with your children. Ignite in them a desire to share that message of God's love comfort and hope, with all. This is the greatest gift which we can pass on to our children. This will be the greatest service we can render to our kids.

Abide with Christ.

Invite & teach others to Abide with Christ.

Amen.