

John on Jesus - The Holy Spirit

June 9, 2013

Welcome to Faith Church. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning, we are talking about one of the mysterious parts of the Christian life --- obedience. I know when I say obedience, for some of you, it conjures up images of your mother with a wooden spoon. I don't want those images to color your thoughts. Put them out of your mind. Today, we are not talking about obedience forced upon us from the outside but our own desire to do what is right and our inability to carry it out. We are talking about the obedience each of us wrestles with on the inside.

We are talking about the times we sit on the bed, ashamed, because we keep losing our temper with our kids. We know we are out of step with God's will to have those outbursts of anger but we don't know how to break the cycle. We are talking about Friday nights driving by the gas station and picking up another case of beer, even though less than a week earlier we promised ourselves we were done with the stuff because it was ruining our families and our lives. We want to break free but we can't. Where does the strength for obedience come from?

Unfortunately, when you talk to people around the church, many of them tell you to just try harder. Trying harder doesn't work. There is some much deeper driving you and controlling you. How do we break free and live to please Jesus when trying harder doesn't work? If trying harder is not working, this message is for you.

This morning, we learn where the power for obedience to Christ comes from. We will learn how God gives his children the power for life change.

As a church, we are studying the Gospel of John. This morning, we are in John 14. Take out your Bible and find the chapter. In the pew Bibles, it is page 901.

In only a few hours from this scene, Jesus would be crucified. He chose to spend his last hours with his disciples to teach them how to follow him when he was gone, to teach them how to continue the mission of reconciling the world to God the Father through the Son.

The lessons of Jesus for his disciples in these final hours are given to us in John 13-17. They are lessons we need to hear. What Jesus said about following him when he was gone then are also important for us as we try to follow him today. Continuing where we left off last week, we drop in the text at John 14:15.

The strength to obey Christ is not found in willpower, it is found in worship.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14:15–17 (ESV)

Jesus doesn’t mince words. If you love me, you *will* keep my commandments. I don’t know about you but this verse is so direct, it leaves me with an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. It gets worse when we come to verse 24.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words... John 14:24 (ESV)

Jesus said that love and obedience are connected at the hip. When we don't obey Christ, it is because we don't love Christ. In one sense, this feels appropriate. If someone doesn't have any love for Christ, of course they don't want to obey him. In another sense, this is very frustrating for us this morning. When I first read this, I remember saying to God, "*It is because I love you* that I am so upset about my lack of obedience to you. Now you tell me that the reason I have a hard time obeying Jesus is because I don't love Jesus. That is discouraging!" I feel like I am trying to follow Jesus but when I fail him, I get slapped in the face and he says, "The reason you failed me is because you don't love me." How much more frustrating could this be?

Before you get too upset, there is truth here. Think about this with parents and their kids. Why do kids obey their parents rather than a stranger? They love their parents. Why do they love their parents? They love their parents because they understand a measure of how much their parents love them. When parents love their children, the children love them in response and part of their loving response is obedience. Josh McDowell used to say, "Rules without relationship equals rebellion." In other words, if a kid knows Mom and Dad love him or her, he or she will usually obey them. If you don't love your kids, don't expect them to obey you.

It is similar in our relationship with God. Obedience to Christ flows out of love for Christ. Love for Christ flows out of our comprehension of Christ's love for us and what he has done for us. This means when we struggle in our obedience

to Christ, what is needed is not more willpower. What is needed is a greater vision of Christ's love for us.

As we get a better vision of Christ's love for us, we respond by loving him. One of the ways we love him is through joyful obedience.

This is all well and good. The problem is, how do we come to a better understanding of Christ's love for us? If we could just get that, it seems to put the whole process in motion. Look at verse 16.

Jesus was about to die. When he went to the Father, he asked the Father to give the disciples, and us, another helper to be with us forever. The identity of this helper was vague at this point. Let's unpack this and see what we can learn.

First is the word *helper*. If you have a different translation, you will see this word is translated in a variety of ways --- advocate, comforter, or counselor. In the Greek, the word is rich. There is no single English word that carry all the freight this Greek word carries. It was a term originally used in a court of law to describe a defense attorney. It was someone who came alongside to represent you. They helped you. They came to your aide. They provided the wisdom and strength you didn't have. You were not alone. You had a highly skilled helper on your team working with you.

Jesus was leaving his disciples. He functioned as their highly skilled helper when it came to knowing God and following God's mission for the three years of their ministry together. When Jesus died, he was not leaving them alone. He sent another helper to be with them and guide them, just like he did. We know this helper today as the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, in the Greek there are two words that mean another. One means another of a different kind, like different varieties of apples. The second term means another of the same kind. That means essentially identical. This word for *another* means another of the same kind. The Holy Spirit's presence and leadership would be just like having Jesus with them. Rather than being with them for only three years, the Holy Spirit was with them, and will be with us, forever.

One of the major functions of the Holy Spirit was to help them see and experience Jesus, even though he was no longer physically present on Earth. The Holy Spirit also does that in our lives today. The more the Holy Spirit helped them, and helps us, see Jesus, the more they, and we, will want to obey Christ.

Not everybody was going to receive the Holy Spirit. The text says the world cannot receive him. Only those who follow Christ can receive him. This means, when we ask Christ to forgive our sins, the Holy Spirit comes into us and he helps us to see Jesus and comprehend what Christ has done for us. Our response is love for Jesus, and with that love for Jesus comes increasing obedience to Jesus.

This passage also tells us the Holy Spirit will dwell with us and in us. Dwelling with us means the Holy Spirit is present in a special way when the body is gathered and he leads us to see Christ in corporate worship. He is also in us. The Holy Spirit also guides us in private worship as we read the word and pray. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to help us comprehend Jesus and his

love for us when we are gathered corporately and when we are worshipping privately.

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:18 (ESV)

This verse is often misunderstood. It sounds like this is talking about appearing to the disciples after the resurrection. I don't think this is talking about the resurrection. I think it is talking about Pentecost. In this section, Jesus was not talking about his resurrection. He was talking about the giving of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit being so in-sync with Christ that the Holy Spirit in the disciples was like Christ dwelling in them. Just as we learned last week that to see the Son is to see the Father because they are so in-sync, this week we learn that to have the Holy Spirit in us is to have Christ in us because the Holy Spirit is so in-sync with Christ.

This may be a new concept to you but it is not new in the Bible. In Romans we find the Holy Spirit being considered so in-sync with the Father and the Son that having the Holy Spirit is like having the Father and the Son in you.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. Romans 8:9 (ESV)

Now Jesus is going to give us some deep stuff about how tightly interwoven the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in their work and will. While it is deep, it is not too hard. Just concentrate as we read it and talk about it.

“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me...” John 14:19–21 (ESV)

Soon, the world wouldn't see Christ. He died on the cross in our places for our sins, rose from the grave and after 40 days returned to the right hand of the Father. Even though Christ would be gone from earth, his disciples would still see him. How could they see him? How did they, and do we, know they had eternal life? The Holy Spirit is the answer.

In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
John 14:20 (ESV)

Jesus was talking about Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came, they understood how completely the Son is identified with the Father. It is as if the Son is in the Father. In the same way, we are so completely identified with Christ that we are said to be in Christ. Christ has also chosen to completely identify with us and he has done that by sending his Holy Spirit to live in us. Having the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in us is like having Christ with us.

Then Jesus went back to where he started. Whoever keeps Christ's commandments is the one who loves him. That phrase is like wrapping paper. The solution to keeping Christ's commands is inside the paper. It was the Holy Spirit giving them, and us, a better vision of Christ. It was Christ being with them and the Holy Spirit being in them which enabled them to keep Christ's commands. *When it comes to issues of obedience, it is not a matter of willpower, it is a matter of worship.* When we struggle to obey Christ, what is needed is not more willpower, we need a greater vision of Christ. The one who helps us see Christ's love for us is the Holy Spirit living in us who opens our eyes to Jesus.

This was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. He prayed that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, would give them a greater vision of Christ, because from that vision obedience flowed.

...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16–19 (ESV)

Joy is found in obedience.

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21 (ESV)

Jesus then moved from how the Holy Spirit empowers us to obey Christ by giving us a greater vision of Christ to how the Holy Spirit brings joy to our lives by helping us to see and experience Christ. When we love Christ, God the Father loves us. God the Father is honored when we love the Son. As we obey Christ, Christ promises to manifest himself to us. This means that when Christians obey Christ, we are loved by God the Father and the Son. In the Son's love for us, he reveals more and more of himself to us. The word for manifest is the word for theophany, that means a vision of God. You want to have a vision of God today? Let the Holy Spirit draw you to see Christ. We turn to Christ, we delight in Christ and in reading his Word and following him. That will draw us to obey Christ; the Father and the Son delight in our following of the Son and reveal themselves to us. The more Christ manifests himself to us, the more joy we have.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” John 14:22 (ESV)

Great question, Judas. Judas was wondering how Christ would reveal himself just to those who are following Christ and not to the rest of the world. Judas was picturing Jesus being on Earth and being invisible to half the planet. Judas couldn’t comprehend this. Do the Christians get a special set of 3D glasses to see Jesus? How does this work? That was Judas’ question.

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” John 14:23 (ESV)

Jesus told Judas that the way Christians will experience Christ is through the Holy Spirit taking up residence in their lives. It is the same pattern again. The Holy Spirit enables a great vision of Christ, which produces a love for Christ, which produces obedience. Here we learn that through the Holy Spirit both the Father and Son take up residence in our lives as a result of the obedience.

The word for home in this verse is the same word we studied last week when Jesus said, “In my father’s house are many rooms.” Last week, we looked forward to being in our heavenly Father’s house in heaven. Now we learn that before we get to heaven, Christians will experience God the Father and God the Son, via the Holy Spirit, living in us before we go to heaven and live with God.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. John 14:24 (ESV)

Jesus knew this is hard for us to comprehend so he added, “By the way, I didn’t make this up. This is what God the Father told me to say.”

How does this apply to us? This is the secret of joy. God the Father and God the Son taking up residence in us is our appetizer of heaven. Their presence in our lives produces joy. Joy despite our circumstances because we have God in us and Christ's love for us is so compellingly attractive it is more pleasurable than sin.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

The power for obedience and the joy in obedience are just the beginning.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. John 14:26 (ESV)

The power for obedience and the joy of obedience through the Holy Spirit are just the beginning. When the Holy Spirit came, he would teach them just like Christ taught them and he would bring to their remembrance what Christ already taught them. I like this. The Holy Spirit is like a divine crib note bringing to the disciples' remembrance what they needed to know and how to apply it.

This applied first of all to the apostles. This is how we know the New Testament letters in our Bible are what God wants us to have and are accurate. The Holy Spirit is the one who brought to the apostles' memories what they needed to write down. The Holy Spirit also taught them about how to apply Jesus' words. The Bible was written by the Holy Spirit, guiding them to remember the things of Jesus.

In a similar but lesser way, the Holy Spirit operates in our lives. He brings to our remembrance the stories about Jesus and he applies them to our lives. Let me give you an example of how this happened to me yesterday. I was at a

travel team baseball game in Windom, MN. Daniel, my son, was pitching. It was a moment when I was filled with pride for my boy as he threw many strikes.

Among the spectators on the other team was a kid who was either in high school or just out of high school. The whole game was a constant stream of noise from his mouth and negative putdowns. There was no pause in his rhetoric. Forget family friendly. The game was hard to endure. It was especially hard to endure when most of the verbal filth was aimed at the pitcher, my son. Maybe I just had too stressful of a week but I decided that I wasn't going to tolerate it any more. I got up, walked over to the other spectators and told him to stop. It was ruining the game and wasn't building anybody up on either team. When I walked away, he proceeded to flip me off and throw out a few more visual gestures of profanity.

At that point, I wanted to return and hit him just once. One hit is all it would take because it would be so hard his facial hair would be torn off from the impact. I am not used to an 18-year-old cussing me out and flipping me off for no apparent reason other than asking him to stop his profanity.

As I sat in the stands pondering my next move and remembering what it was like where I grew up in New Jersey, just outside of New York City, and what would happen to him if he used those words and gestures in the neighborhood I grew up in, all of a sudden, into my mind popped a scene from the book of John we studied a few weeks ago. It was Christ washing his disciple's feet, washing the feet of Judas, the feet of his enemy. Then, into my mind popped the words, "Buy him a hamburger." I will admit, I didn't buy him the hamburger. He kept his

obnoxious comments quieter and the game ended by rain but I think I know what happened. It was the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit's job is to bring to our mind the things of Christ and to help us apply it to our lives. That's exactly what he did. That is one of the ways the Holy Spirit works in our lives today. Remember Christ and apply Christ.

We don't have to do this on our own. The Holy Spirit is our helper sent especially from Christ to do this.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I will come to you." If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here. John 14:27–31 (ESV)

The disciples were troubled because Jesus was leaving them. Jesus told them not to freak out. He was going away but he would not leave them, or us, alone. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, was coming to be with them and in them, to be with us and in us.

Jesus said, "You should be rejoicing at my leaving, not grieving." For Christ to be absent means he would be in his Father's presence, which is great. Christ will be the disciples' advocate before God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, would be their advocate on Earth, no matter where they went. Jesus pictured his presence in heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit as an upgrade to just his presence on Earth.

Then Jesus was going to do his great act of obedience. He would die on the cross in our places, for our sins.

Conclusion

It has always boggled my mind how Jesus, knowing full well what he was about to endure --- the flogging would leave him disfigured and unrecognizable as a human being; the cat-o-nine tails that would tear across his back ripping off chunks of flesh and tearing ribs out of his body; the cross that would be the most exquisite form of agony the ancient world could invent --- that he would bear the full weight of sin for you and for me. How could he face this? Where could he find the strength for this unprecedented act of obedience? I do not believe the strength for the cross came from raw willpower. The strength to obey his Father's will and endure the cross came from the incredible love his Father has for him and the Son's experience of the Father's love. It is from the incredible love that exists between the Father and the Son that Jesus found the strength to obey and face the horror of the cross.

This morning, as we struggle for obedience, the answer is no different. It is not more willpower that we need. We need a greater vision of the height, width, depth and breadth of the love Jesus has for each one of us. It is a love that is more than we can imagine. The only way we can begin to comprehend it is when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, begins to open our hearts and mind to understand it. When we begin to grasp it, that is what changes our lives.

This morning, leave with a greater vision of Jesus' love for you. In the Holy Spirit opening your eyes to Christ's love, you will find obedience and you will

experience joy, a joy that can only come from the Father and the Son delighting in you as you delight in Jesus.



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