

If You Love Me ...

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

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Text: John 14:15-21

I have seen a few people on Facebook showing off their new engagement rings lately. It reminded me of a conversation I read about years ago.

A young woman brought her fiancé home to meet her parents. After dinner, her mother told her father to find out about the young man. The father invited the fiancé to his study for a talk.



"So what are your plans?" the father asked the young man. "I am a biblical scholar," he replied.

"A biblical scholar, hmmm?" the father said. "Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for my daughter to live in?" "I will study," the young man replied, "and God will provide for us."

"And how will you buy her a beautiful engagement ring, such as she deserves?" asked the father. "I will concentrate on my studies," the young man replied, "God will provide for us."

"And children?" asked the father. "How will you support children?" "Don't worry, sir, God will provide," replied the fiancé.

The conversation proceeded like this, and each time the father questioned, the young idealist insisted that God would provide.

Later, the mother asked, "How did it go, honey?"

The father answered, "He has no job and no plans, and he thinks I'm God."

LOVE – what a power packed word!

If you were to do a Google search for the word “LOVE” today you would find billions of web sites that utilize that word in one way or another.



The word “LOVE” can be used as a noun. It can mean fondness, tenderness, warmth, intimacy, attachment, endearment, devotion, adoration, worship, passion, desire, lust, or yearning. It can imply compassion, care, regard, concern, friendship, kindness, charity, and or sympathy.

The word “LOVE” can also be used as a verb. It can mean someone you care deeply for, hold very dear, adore, idolize and even worship.

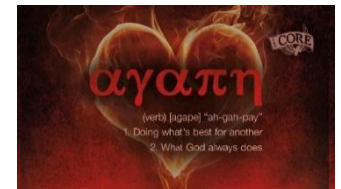
We can also use the word “LOVE” to demonstrate how important something is to us like pizza, football, or sports. Although I don't think we would equate our love for food as being the same intensity of love we would have for our parents, a spouse or our children.



Love can be studied from a sociological, theological, and a relational viewpoint. As Andy Williams said in a song in 1955, “Love is a many splendored thing!” We can live a long time without many things, but I believe to live without love is really not living. For those that are familiar with the Harry Potter movies, you will recognize the quote: “Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all those who live without love.”

The Greek language uses four different words to describe different ways in which love could be expressed.

Agápe – is defined as a Godly love. It is the kind of love that God demonstrated towards His Son, Jesus Christ. God's love for us is seen in God's action of sending us His Son. It was a divine deliberate action on God's part.



For a Christian to love in this manner, they must make God their primary object of worship. This level of love towards God, is most clearly demonstrated in our actions toward God. How we love God will determine our commitment to keep what He has commanded us to do.

One of the consistent words Jesus used in John 14 is Love. At the heart of what Jesus was teaching His disciples in the Upper Room that evening was the connection between love and actions. When Jesus said to His disciples in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” He was essentially saying, “If you Agape Me, you will keep My commandments.”

philo-, phil-, -phile, -philia, -philic, -philous, -phily, -philiac, -philist, -philism
 +
 (Greek: love, loving, friendly to, fondness for, attraction to; strong tendency toward, affinity for; no hate, hatred, dislike, or negative responses)

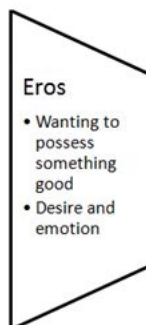
Philia – is often described as a brotherly love. The City of Philadelphia is so named the city of Brotherly Love for the root word Philia. It can be described as “tender affection.” It is the kind of love we have between equals, like between family and friends.

The interaction between the Apostle Peter and Jesus after the Resurrection illustrates the difference between Agape and Philia kinds of love. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved (Agape) Him, Peter could only reply he loved (Philia) Him. In the end, Jesus even questioned Peter if he really loved (Philia) Him. In that exchange, Peter could only muster Philia love for the Lord.

Therein lies most of our struggle as a Christian! With our mind and hearts, we say we love God. But when it **really** gets down to it, do we **really** love (Agape) the Lord? We really want and seek that kind of Agape love, we strive to feel that emotional love through various worship songs, but maintaining Agape love long term, day in and day out – is frankly quite hard. Maybe you have got it all figured out and are able to live in Agape love land all the time. But for me, I know some days all I can say is “I Philia you Lord.”

The other two Greek words that describe love are:

Éros – is a romantic intimate love. I don’t think I need to spend much time on this type of expression of love. The world does an excellent job of pushing this type of erotic love down our throats at every advertising venue it can muster.



Storge – is the protective love that is felt by parents for their children. This word is not used in the Greek New Testament. It is also used in reference to a love for one’s country or a favorite sports team.

The reason I speak of Love is because Jesus in John 14:15 makes a straightforward statement, “*If you love Me, Keep My commandments.*”

God is always calling us – you and me – to the higher level of love – Agape love.

If we have a full, pure, unblemished, love for God, we will want with all of our heart to do the things that the Lord has said we are to be doing. It is a natural consequence of loving the Lord.



There are several things I notice in this simple, yet profound statement, “*If you love Me, Keep My commandments.*”

I. Obedience to Christ is the Natural Consequence of Our Love for Him¹

A. **There is recognition of His Divine Authority** – because He is Lord, He has the right to set His kingdom under His laws and rules.

B. **There is recognition of a close and essential connection between Him and His Commandments** – these are the laws and commands of the Lord. If we are a part of



Obedience to God is an Expression of our Love for God.

His kingdom then we will live according to what He has taught us.

C. This recognition is ever practical. – love manifests itself in the practical realm of doing what we are asked.

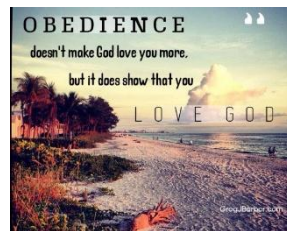
D. This recognition is most thorough and comprehensive – we will keep them all, not just part of them. If we love God, we will not pick and choose which laws we think we can live with. Genuine Agape love will keep them all.

E. This recognition is devotional – love for God will be demonstrated by a willing obedience to the will of God. If God is our full focused devotion, then following His commands will come out of our devotion for God. Even though the Lord is not present with us in bodily form anymore, He is ever present in the form of the Holy Spirit.

II. Love of Christ is the Necessary Basis of Obedience to Him

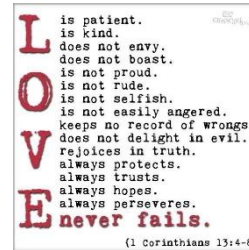
A. To Make Obedience Real – the true key to unlocking the power of this passage is found in putting Love first. It is true, we can be obedient out of duty or obligation. We can also be obedient out of fear of punishment or displeasing the Lord. But “True love” is manifested first – and outflowing from that is obedience because we desire to please the Lord.

B. To Make Obedience Easy – when we turn this around and put our obedience before Love, we end up doing it with an unloving heart. We actually put grumbling above our love and the results are an unhappy, disruptive



Christian. When we put love first, our obedience becomes our joy.

C. To Make it Spiritually and Personally Valuable



Love is the key that makes all our spiritual work of value to God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13,

“If I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains – and have NOT love – I am nothing.”

He goes on to say, *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”*

Paul concludes this great love chapter by saying of Faith, Hope and Love, these three abide – but the greatest is Love (Agape).

III. Loving Obedience to Christ Ensures Divine Blessing

A. The blessing of the Holy Spirit

Jesus tells us in John 14:16-21 a great promise for those that put their faith and trust in God. It is the promise of the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus said in John 14, He would send a comforter soon. He would not leave them as orphans. His Spirit would come and live in them and they would forever be with the Lord through the Spirit of God dwelling in them.



The unbelieving world will not be able to have this Holy Spirit because they do not believe. But those that believe are promised this divine blessing.

B. The Holy Spirit in some of His Special Characteristics – The special benefit of having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is:

(1) *He is our Comforter, Advocate and Helper.* Those that have experienced the presence of the Lord know what great comfort and peace comes from knowing the Lord. Those that know the Lord, realize the Lord is interceding on our behalf before God. That same Spirit provides us help in our time of need.

(2) *He is the Spirit of Truth* – that Spirit that lives within us allows us to have the spirit of discernment to know what is from God and what is not. There have been times in my life when the Spirit let me know that something was not of God and I should leave it alone or simply leave. There have been times when I had that inward confirmation that something I experienced was from God and I should listen to what that person had to say. The Spirit of Truth is that inward Holy Spirit giving us that discernment.



I would be remiss if I didn't point out Galatians 5:22-23. This is a passage of scripture you are familiar with. In light of what is in John 14 concerning Agape love, this verse means so much more.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love (Agape), joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Genuine Christlike love is demonstrated by Agape love. And we do not obtain that from ourselves or our works. It is a gift – an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in us – that enables us to display the aroma of Christlike love – Christlike joy – Christlike longsuffering – Christlike kindness – Christlike goodness – Christlike faithfulness – Christlike gentleness – and Christlike self-control.

C. The Spirit is Known to the Believers but not to the Unbelieving World

The unbelieving world cannot receive the Spirit because they are spiritually blind. The world only receives what it can sense and feel. They walk by sight and sense and cannot receive the Spirit of Truth.

Believers on the other hand have the Holy Spirit ever present with them as (1) an *acquaintance*, (2) to *walk in closer fellowship with God* through their heart, will, conscience and reason and (3) a *permanent dwelling*.

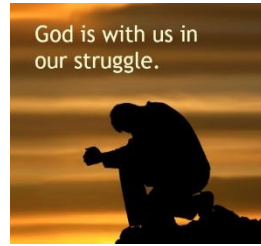
If you have that Spirit of Truth dwelling in you, you will understand verse 20 better: *“At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”*

It is Christ's presence in us that draws us closer to God.

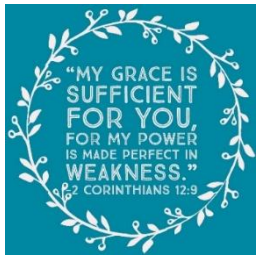
Challenge for Us Today

This has been one of the most difficult sermons I have had to prepare. It sounds so simple, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”*

But as I have been studying this week about this word LOVE, I have been convicted how much I come up short. I can completely identify with Peter when he told Jesus – somewhat dejected, “*Lord, You know I Philia You.*” Sometimes that is all we can muster.



We struggle with relationships in our life.
We struggle with finances in our life.
We struggle with temptations in our life.
We struggle with being consistent in our prayer life.
We struggle in our tithing.
We struggle keeping our yard cut and our house clean.
The dishes pile up in the sink and we become discouraged.



I want us to not become so discouraged in this higher calling of Jesus to Agape Him that we simply walk away and give up. I don't want this one area of your life to become so overwhelming that you add more guilt to your life because you do not measure up in your walk with God.

Maybe a simple word would be helpful. It is from II Corinthians 12:9.

Paul is lamenting a thorn in his flesh. We are not exactly sure what Paul was complaining about – a physical ailment, or some other area of weakness he had. He asked the Lord three different times to take this thorn away from him.

Jesus responded to Peter, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*”

Maybe that is the word for this hour. When we fail to love God with an Agape kind of love, we fail to keep His commandments fully.

I don't know about you, but I know I have failed to keep them this week. And if we had a time of confession today, you too would probably admit you have failed as well.

Let us humbly come to God and allow our weakness to become His strength in us. We do not need to continue to sin, rather we need to confess our sins as He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins.

God's grace is sufficient for our every weakness.

The Lord's strength is made perfect in our areas of weakness.

Lord, make it so in me! Amen.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Outline from The Pulpit Commentary, Volume XVII, John page 252-254