



I. INTRO

A. We will be in John 14 this weekend...

B. I would like to begin with one assumption and one question:

1. **My assumption:** We are all theologians...
2. **My question:** Is your theological orientation rooted more in **duty**, or **delight**?

C. It is from this vantage point that I would like us to look at just **one verse** today:

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

D. To provide some context...

1. These words were spoken just a few hours before the crucifixion -- the most profound and provocative event in human history. God on a cross.
2. This section of John's Gospel is referred to as **The Farewell Discourse**, the final instructions of Jesus before His arrest, His suffering, and His death.
3. Another immediate contextual piece is that Jesus has told the disciples He is leaving and they are perplexed, anxious, and a bit defensive. The disciples were thinking things were just getting rolling (raising Lazarus from the dead helped!).

E. Now, to focus in on John 14:15 -- There are at least two ways to view this verse.

1. **Either the goal is obedience** ("*If you love me, obey my commandments.*" NLT)
2. **Or, the goal is love.** (How we view this verse tips our hand regarding a theological "base camp." Do we have an obedience orientation, or a grace orientation?)

F. I would submit to you that the goal, the focus of John 14:15 is NOT obedience. The focus is **loving Jesus**. Obedience is the fruit, not the goal. (In other words, loving Jesus manifests itself in responsive obedience.)

II. BODY

A. I'd like to take our remaining time to consider two questions:

1. **What does it mean to "love Jesus"?**
2. **And then I would like to (very) briefly address: The first stage of obedience.**

B. What does it mean to "love Jesus"?

1. We need to view this verse in the broader context of the gospel...

- a. The essence of the gospel is that it is NOT good **advice** (as our culture would view it), but the gospel is Good News – and is rooted in history.
- b. This is what separates Christianity from EVERY other religion or belief system. Christianity is not based on what we must do in order to please God, but on what God has already accomplished through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

2. We need to ask, “**What does John¹ mean when he uses the verb agapaō?**”

(We’re more used to the corresponding noun *agapē*.) Let’s look at another verse:

- a. *“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”* John 3:35
- b. God the Father delighted in, He enjoyed, He preferred, He esteemed, He was passionate in His love for the Son. This is not about loving in some dutiful or sentimental way. It’s “get to” love, not “have to” love.
- c. *Agapao* is not always used in a positive way...
 - 1) *“People loved darkness rather than light.”* John 3:19 [Their secrets remained secret.]
 - 2) *“People loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”* John 12:43

3. **Ultimately, we are controlled, or dominated by whatever we love this way.**

Here is how theologian and author John Piper says it: “Loving Jesus is not a matter of doing excellent things. It’s a matter of delighting in an excellent Savior.”

4. So, as we practically prepare our hearts to celebrate the resurrection, **how can we (re-) orient ourselves to love Jesus?**

- a. **Reflect on God’s love.** The only reason we have access to salvation is that Jesus loved us first.
 - 1) Here are two verses worthy of our reflection:
 - a) *“We love, because He first loved us.”* 1 John 4:19
 - b) *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Romans 5:8
 - 2) Does it make sense to you that to miss the mark by even a millimeter is still to have missed the mark?

¹ John is considered, “The Apostle of Love” by theologians because of how much he talks and writes about love. This is quite a change from his “Sons of Thunder” days.

- a) God is infinitely just and at the same time infinitely merciful. We call that a paradox, or “seeming contradiction.”
- b) God’s justice and mercy intersect at the cross.

3) Jesus lived a perfect life and a criminal’s death...

b. **Pray.** Do you see Jesus as beautiful? As worthy of your love and devotion? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to help you².

1) *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”* John 14:16

2) *“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 said to you.”* John 14:26

c. **Focus more on what He has done than on what we must do.** The gospel is not about something we do, it is about what has been done for us. (This does not excuse our sinfulness or patterns of sin.)

C. A quick consideration of what I might call, **the first stage of obedience.**

1. The Church has made “obedience” a “religious” word, not a spiritual word.
2. *“For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”* Romans 5:19
 - a. Greek word *hupakouo* means, “to listen under,” and is the opposite is disobedience, or *parakouo* - “to listen around, beside.”
 - b. Additionally, the Latin word from which our English word *obedience* is derived means “to hear.”
3. So, an obedient life is a life that, first and foremost, makes room to listen to God.
4. It is inevitable that when the object of our heart's worship changes, our obedience changes. When Jesus saves a person, s/he is infused with a new sense of the glory, wonder, and majesty of God. We then have a new desire along with a new power to obey.
5. It is by Jesus’ perfect obedience that we are saved, and it is by our growing obedience, compelled by our love for Christ, that we express our gratitude for so great a salvation.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Jerry Sittser wrote a book entitled *A Grace Disguised*. In an instant, a tragic car accident claimed three generations of his family: his mother, his wife, and his young daughter.

² *“Draw me after You and let us run together.”* Song of Solomon 1:4

- B. We have a grace disguised opportunity here at King's Harbor...
- C. King's Harbor, I want to invite you on a journey. (We'll talk more about that after Easter.)
- D. Let's love Jesus, let's spend this transition season seeking to find our delight, comfort, and joy in Jesus.
 - 1. Let's treasure Jesus, be satisfied in Jesus, and abide in Jesus.
 - 2. Let's let our joy overflow into keeping His commandments and touching other people's lives (invite friends, relatives, co-workers to Easter services).
- E. Next weekend we will spend time in Luke 24...