

Help from on High

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[0 : 0 0] John chapter 14 beginning at verse 15. Jesus says, I will come to you 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 the Father and you in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

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. 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. That is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Please be seated. First, let me thank my dear brothers who so ably preached the word in my absence. Thank you, dear brothers, for standing and holding forth God's word with such excellence. Thank you. I heard some of those sermons and was truly blessed and I know you all were blessed as well. So we're continuing our studies in John, as you can see, the Jesus we need to know. I remember something recently. I had forgotten all about this event that took place.

Maybe it was PTSD or something. I don't know. I just blanked it. I don't know. But one time I dropped my daughter Bethany off at FSU and I was on my way back. I was in this big SUV.

[2 : 2 6] I think I had moved some stuff with her back to her dorm there. And on my way back, and this was a pretty new, they gave me a new, I rented it. It was pretty a new SUV. Nice, sweet, man. I think it was a Tahoe or something. Man, it was, boy, it was riding nice. And I got a flat. I mean, the car only had like a thousand miles on it and the tire blew out. It blew out in small town Georgia.

All around me, there were these sizable homes with big yards that came to the edge of the street. So again, no pavement, no place to pull over. And I didn't feel comfortable pulling over someone's lawn.

This ain't Miami. But there was a left turning lane in the center. So I pulled into the, so I'm in the middle of the street. And my tire is flat and I can't, and you know, those new big things, you, it's kind of, you have to have the manual to figure out how to get the spare tire from underneath the car. You said, thank you. And I had never experienced, I was totally, I'm out, I'm just, you know, you know how men, you know how we do men, you pop the hood and stand there and look at it.

Don't know anything to do. So I popped, I popped the hatch at the back and just stood there trying to figure out how, how, how do I get that? Where is the tire? Is it, is it really under there? And how do I get this thing out? Well, I'm standing there and you know, I, so I just, I said, let me, I got a call. I got a call enterprise. So I called them and it, cause I figured they could send somebody out to get me. They said, where are you? I said, I don't know. I said, well, our computers are down and we don't know where you are either. Uh, well, we, we're, we're working on it. So you're going to have to wait. How long is that going to be? We don't know. Okay. So I'm in the middle of the road in small town, Georgia, looking very conspicuous by the way, uh, in the middle of the road, you know what I mean? Um, um, and feeling very uncomfortable. I will tell you, I'll, I'm not lying to you. I'm sorry to tell you that. I know that that may be striking, but I felt very uncomfortable as a black man. I felt very uncomfortable. Okay. Um, I didn't want to go knock on someone's door. So I'm standing in the middle of the road waiting for help to come.

And I had my back turned and a tow truck goes by me. I'm like, Lord, what did that say?

[5 : 18] 15 minutes later, the guy comes back and he helps me. Check this out. He was a pastor. And when he passed me, he said, something told me to come back to make sure you were okay.

I'm sorry, but I believe that was the spirit of God that led that dear brother back to me when I needed help. Every day, saints, we need help.

Every day, you and I need help to live as disciples of Jesus. We can't do it. We can't do it on our own.

We need mucho gusto help. And every day, God sends us help. Every day, you, don't miss this, every day, you have all the help you need to live as disciples of Jesus.

He has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. You, I'm going to say it again. I know sometimes we doubt it because we don't see it, right?

[6 : 40] We don't see it. But I'm going to say it again. You have everything you need. You have all that you need to live as disciples of Jesus. You have everything you need.

What is that? To honor him. Do you believe it? And all he wants is your heart.

All he wants is your heart. We're in a great passage. Time is really running here. I'm getting up late today, it looks like. we're in this great passage where Jesus has just made some great promises, powerful promises.

We looked at them last time. He promised that we, as his disciples, if we believed in him, we would do his works and greater works than he did. He promised that he would answer our prayers.

He promised that, that if we believed in him, that if we prayed in his name, we talked about what that meant, but if we prayed in his name, anything in his name, he would hear us.

[7 : 41] But now he begins to, I think he's still in that same vein, but he's taking it into a deeper level.

What is the ultimate goal here? In one sense, I mean, what is he, that is in our hearts, what does he want from us as his disciples? He wants us to obey him.

But that obedience is to overflow out of hearts that love him. He's not asking for some bare bones obedience, which would be drudgery, by the way.

He's, he's, he's, he's, he's, he's commanding us. This is a command. This is not an option. He is commanding us to love him.

And out of that love will come a life of obedience. How in the world is that going to happen?

[8 : 51] He says, the spirit comes that we might love Jesus, that we might love him. Four times in this passage I just read, four times, he mentions this idea that if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Four times, the fourth time he says it negatively, if you don't keep my commandments, you don't love me. So when Jesus repeats himself, you gotta figure we better understand and stop and understand this.

And he does it four times. I mean, that's a lot. He's driving home the point, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Now that can, to some people's minds, that can sound kind of harsh. Because how can he command love? How can he even insist, in some people's minds, on obedience?

I mean, he's insisting on it. Obedience sounds like law. Love sounds like grace. But obedience sounds like law. First of all, this is the first time this has ever happened in the scriptures.

[10 : 12] This is the first time this has ever happened in the history of how God deals with humanity. Let me give you the big one. Deuteronomy, chapter 5.

This is the, Deuteronomy is the restating of the law. They get ready to go into the promised land and Moses says, okay, let me make sure y'all got it because your parents, they heard it and as kids you might have heard it but your parents messed up, let me say this again.

I want to keep this in front of you. So in Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 6 and 7, here's how he begins. I am the Lord your God, that's the covenant name, Yahweh, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, you shall have no other gods before me.

That's how he begins. God is calling for the Israelites undivided devotion. He's not saying you can worship other gods but I must be first.

That's not what that means. Instead, he is saying you shall have no other gods before my face. That means where does God's face shine?

[11 : 30] Everywhere. You should have no other gods before me, before my face, you shall have no other gods, period, is what he's saying. But why not?

I mean, the nations worship all these things they call gods. Why do we only have one that looked weird to the nations by the way? Well, here's the reason. He says it.

Because in love and grace, God had delivered the Jews from slavery in Egypt. He had demonstrated his love by spanking Pharaoh real good so that his people would be free to be with him.

He had proved his love first by showing them his grace. grace. That's why the Ten Commandments isn't just law, it is grace and mercy from God.

God. Because I've done this. Give me your heart. Give me your devotion.

[12 : 41] And it's funny that in the next chapter in Deuteronomy, in chapter 6, verse 4 and 5, Moses gives them what Jews call the Shemach. It means hear.

That's how it begins. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

He commands love. But he commands love because of his matchless grace of delivering them because he has shown them great love.

He's like a husband who loves his wife and expects her to love him back. His grace produces love and obedience.

Jesus comes to, and he calls his church his bride, he comes now to us as the covenant God and now he says to his bride for whom he's about to die, if you love me, keep my commandments.

[13 : 56] The same thing. His salvation though is much deeper than salvation from human tyranny or human oppression. Human oppression is bad, it's horrible, God will do away with it, amen.

But there's something worse than human oppression. I know that's hard for you to feel that, but there's something worse. And what is worse is the oppression that you and I experience every day when we rebel against God.

It's called sin. Jesus comes, Moses' deliverance was only a type, a picture of the ultimate great deliverance to come.

Jesus comes to bring us that ultimate deliverance. You see, if he had come to set them free from human oppression, then he would have delivered them from the Romans right away. He would have wiped out Caesar and made Israel great again.

But he didn't do that because that was not the ultimate purpose for his coming. It was to deliver the Jews and the Gentiles, all who believe in him, from the tyranny of their sins.

[15 : 03] And he did it because of love. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, he comes in love to deliver us. And now, now, Roy, you've been delivered by the love and grace and beauty and kindness of the Lord.

And he says to you, if you love me, keep my commandments. once God has set his love on you, he will never turn away from you.

And now he says, you've experienced my love. Don't turn away from me. I've loved you with an everlasting love.

He set his love on you before the beginning of the age, before the beginning of creation. God said he will love you, his people. And now he comes in time and space and says, if you love me, if you receive my love, not love me back, keep my commandments.

It's a response to love. love. And it's funny because in this passage is the first time that Jesus ever calls his disciples to love him.

[16 : 36] I mean, I think I, I didn't see anywhere in John and I can't think of anywhere. I think this is the first time he's actually called his disciples to love him personally. This is a personal, this is not a general type of love.

This is a personal, if you love me, love implies, and this is one reason why he can command it, it implies a choosing.

It implies a choosing to place a high value on someone and receiving that someone with great favor. You've chosen. You don't just fall in love.

Don't believe that. Crazy. You have choosing. That person has attributes that you've been waiting for. I prayed for Sandy.

Y'all don't know, I think I told you this, 12th grade, Overbrook High School. High school of Will Smith, after me. The Smiths rule. And I prayed that God would give me a wife in college.

[17 : 43] Went to Penn State. She went there. So God sent me to Temple University. Ah, there she is. And she's exactly what I asked him for.

I asked him for exactly what she, it was amazing to, she fit everything I was looking for.

And then I chose to love her. I didn't fall in love. She's exactly what I was looking for. I wasn't what she was looking for at the time, but that's another story.

Yeah. she got the memo from God finally. Praise the Lord. So yeah, love is, it's a choice.

It is finding the light in someone. He's saying, choose me. Find the light in me. Find favor in me as your ultimate supreme love.

[18 : 50] Now listen, there is a powerful emotional component to loving Jesus. To loving anyone for that matter, but to loving Jesus, there's a powerful emotional component.

And you know you see it, it won't be on the screen so you can turn if you want. You see it in Luke 7, you know this story. In Luke chapter 7, verses 37 to 47, Jesus goes into the house of a Pharisee and this dear woman comes in.

Everybody knew who she was. She was that kind of woman. She was mis-round the way. Everybody knew about her.

The Pharisees knew about her. And she comes in bawling. She's weeping. She's overcome. She comes up to Jesus' feet.

She weeps on his feet. She's, I mean, tears are falling on his feet. She pulls out some expensive ointment and she anoints, she pours it on his feet.

[19 : 49] She's massaging and pouring on his feet, kissing, the Bible says, kissing his feet. And she must have had very long hair. Remember, Jesus is on the floor. They're reclining at the table.

So she gets down on the floor and she lets her hair down and she's wiping the ointment with her hair. What an act of devotion.

I mean, wow. Now the Pharisee didn't get it. They didn't understand what's going on. They said, if he really was a rabbi, a man of God, a prophet, he would know what type of woman this is that's touching him.

And so I think that made our Lord angry, but he was controlled. And so he tells a parable and he comes to the punchline.

Here's the parable. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.

[20 : 53] You see, she knew who she was. She knew how she had lived. She knew her life, but she also knew that here is one who didn't care about that, who loved her in spite of her, who loved her, who saw her.

Who sees you. Who sees you when nobody else sees you. Who sees you when you're alone. Who sees you in the dark. Who sees you in your car.

Who sees you and yet, and yet, and loves you. You're mine. Have you been forgiven little?

You know, I'm not that bad. I'm not a, I'm not like, you know, I'm not a drug dealer, you know. I got a few, I got a few handguns, a few problems, you know. I've done a few things, you know, here and there.

But, you know, I'm, you know, I'm not a sinner. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner. But I'm not a sinner. Yes, you are.

[22 : 03] You see, you may be a nice one. You know, the one that looks good. The one that does stuff that nobody sees. And guess what?

Even if you do, by the way, but even if you didn't, you got a mind full of stuff. Oh my goodness, the stuff that goes through our minds. And he sees us.

So have you been forgiven little or much? And by the way, this is not the stuff in your past. This is your present and your future stuff. He says, I see it all.

I see it all. nothing is hidden from my sight. And I love you. Darrell, he says, I love you. There are moments when that should bring up in you a great swell of emotion.

emotion. You may not be the most emotional person. You know, some of us are not very emotional people. But I want to tell you something. When you understand the love of God for you, the love of God for you in Christ Jesus, there will be some emotion.

[23 : 18] You may not run around the church like Kevin Smith. You may not jump up and say hallelujah like Becky Broadwell. But let me tell you something. You're going to have some emotion. Because love does have emotion.

emotion. And so you're going to have an emotional attachment to Jesus. But he didn't say that, did he? He didn't say if you love me, have emotions.

He didn't say if you love me, feel me. He could have. And it's part of it. But he didn't say it. If you love me, keep my commandments.

In other words, don't tell me you love me if you're living like I would live. Don't tell me you love me if you're not following me.

Now again, look at his disciples. Did they follow perfectly? They were some messed up brothers, man, I'll tell you. And even going to the book of Acts, the greatest missionary team in history, Paul and Barnabas, have an argument so deep that they split up.

[24 : 28] didn't go to the book of Galatians and Peter and Paul has to confront Peter publicly because Peter was acting, as he says, acting in a way not in keeping with the gospel.

He was showing preference to Jewish believers over Gentile believers. See, we would call that somewhat racist. It was probably more than that though, but that's another story.

And so they had hangups. They were not perfect disciples. You will be perfect one day, but you're not there yet. And you're not going to be in this life. But however, he says, if you love me, keep my commandments.

Well, how does that work? He made a promise that you would receive help from on high. I mean, verse 16, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

I'm not going to go much into this right now because we have communion, but I want to say a little bit about that. what Jesus promises is another helper will come.

[25 : 50] In the text. I will give you another helper. You see it in the text? Another helper. He says, and you know him, for he is with you and will be in you.

Am I in the book? Am I in the book? Mike, am I in the book? Okay. All right. I'm not over there, so I'll make sure I got it. Now listen. Another, the word another there means another of this kind, of the same kind.

Okay. What kind will this helper be? This spirit, Holy Spirit. What spirit of truth he calls you? What kind of helper is he referring to?

Well, who's been with them? Jesus. So this other, another helper that's coming is going to be like Jesus.

Jesus is God in human flesh, so this other helper's got to be God. Jesus says, I was with you, but now this new helper is going to be in you.

[26 : 59] Hold. I'm trying to get my head around this. I'm just, I'm, I'm, this is blowing me away. He will be with you forever. He dwells with you now and will be, and will be in you.

So Jesus is saying somehow this new helper is coming. This helper that's like me will actually be me because I'm going to be in you now.

So, how is it possible that messed up folk like us can love Jesus and keep his commandments?

It's because the spirit of Jesus himself, whom he calls the spirit of truth in this passage, it's going, it comes and takes up residence in us. Remember what Romans 8 says?

If, if any man does not have the spirit of Christ, he's none of his. So you have to, in order to be a believer in Jesus, it's because the spirit of God, who's also called the spirit of truth, who's also called the Holy Spirit, who's also called the spirit of Christ, takes up residence in us, makes us alive, born again, so that we see the kingdom of God, we see the king of the kingdom, and we come a-running to the kingdom, because now we got eyes to see.

[28 : 24] Now we're alive. Dead people don't go anywhere, but live people move. We're alive now, spiritually, and we go running to Jesus, and Jesus says, oh, that's great, because now I'm in you, and I'm going to do something.

I'm going to transform you. And that transformation will look like this. You will have a heart of love for me, you will delight in me, you will, because you, you, you will choose me, you will give yourself to me, by, and you will display that by obeying me, following me, wherever I tell you to go.

How do you know you're a Christian? How do you know you are a, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm leaning on the word disciple more and more, because the word Christian is a good word, but it gets a little confused.

Disciple, to me, gets to the heart of it. That's what Jesus had, disciple, he calls to be disciples. Follow me means disciple. When you are a disciple of Jesus, you've been, you are somebody who's been overwhelmed by his love.

Someone who's been just saturated by his beauty and his kindness and his mercy to you, someone who recognizes I don't deserve any of it, but he has done it unilaterally without asking my permission.

[29 : 57] He has chosen to love me. And in choosing to love me, he takes up residence in me so that now I have a real desire to follow him.

That's how you know you're a disciple. You have a heartfelt desire to follow Jesus because you love him. And you're loving because he first loved you.

And it's real. It's a real love because the spirit of God is making it real to you. And so obeying him at times may be difficult.

But when Jesus says, follow me, when Jesus says, obey me, the first thought should not be I'm a sinner and I can't. That's not the grace.

That's not, some people think that's how you get, that's the grace of God. That's not how you understand grace. No. Your first thought when Jesus says, follow me and obey me is, yes, Lord, but help.

[31 : 01] Yes, Lord, but help me. That's the Christian response. That's the disciples' response. I'm coming wherever you say, but Lord, I'm going to need your help because I'm scared.

because I'm weak. And if you're Kevin Smith, you're not too bright. I need you. So his commandments to you are life.

They're not burdensome. They're life. Because you love him. When you love somebody, you want to please them. Right. Right. Right.

Ladies, if you are single and you're dating a young man who does not seem to want to please you, run. Call Uncle Rev. Kev. I'll come over. Goodbye. Goodbye.

If a man loves you or a woman loves you, they want to please you. That's part of what love is. There's a story.

[32 : 07] I'm going to wrap it up because we got to go. There's a story I came across. A dear woman was married to a schlep of a man. He had lists that she had to comply with.

25 things he wanted her to do in order to be a good wife for him because really it's all about him. It's all about me. You all right? Every day he took out the list and he checked off the things that she had completed.

Cooking. Check. Cleaning. Check. She was a homemaker evidently. Care of the kids. Check. At the end of the day he would let her know how she did.

20 out of 25. 22 out of 25. You're getting better, honey. 15 out of 25, woman. You better get a... What's wrong with you? Well, this went on for years.

The woman was miserable. She did marry to be tied to a checklist. And the things she was doing, she was doing, they were good things. Things that she knew she wanted to do but then they were important but she had higher hopes for her marriage relationship than being tied to a demonic man who gave her a checklist.

[33 : 19] After a number of years, praise the Lord, he died. The woman felt a weight lift from her shoulders because she had been performing, listen, performing for years.

She had been doing her duty and hating every minute even though the duties themselves weren't innately bad. Two years later, praise the Lord, the same woman fell in love with a new guy, a guy who had no lists.

He told this woman that all he wanted to do was to love her. He wanted her to wake up in the morning knowing that he loved her. In the middle of the day, he wanted to be able to call and remind her that he loved her.

Come on, husbands, keep doing this. At night before they retired, he wanted to reassure her that he loved her. He wanted this love for her to be her every waking thought of her day.

He wanted her to know his love, not his lists. One day, this dear woman was cleaning the house and doing stuff around the house and she opened up a drawer and she found this paper in there.

[34 : 40] She, what is this trash in my drawer? She opened it up. It was the list from the previous husband and she started giggling. She was cracking up because she realized she was doing everything on that list without effort in her new marriage.

Everything she had hated doing out of requirement by the first husband, she was doing for the second husband and loving it. All the second husband had was love.

It brought joy to this woman, to her home and all that she did for it. She was overpowered by love. Until you know the love of Jesus, you will try to be good and moral and a nice person and all that kind of good stuff but it will be a burden to you.

It will drive you insane because you got this list. Maybe your parents gave you something you have to live up to. I didn't say Jesus, I said your parents. Maybe you got your own list because you're such a perfectionistic person, you want to do well and so you got your own list but here's the thing about those lists.

They are burdensome and when you miss one, they are heartless and will beat you down and tell you you're bad and you're worthless and you're no good.

[36 : 15] But when you meet the love of Jesus, here's a love that creates life in you. Here's a love that doesn't have lists and he does want you to follow him.

But it's not so that you can earn his love. It's because you do love him. You're so saturated by his love, you want to follow, you want to obey him.

You can't wait to say yes to Jesus. And I think sometimes as Christians, we forget this. And we treat Jesus like that first husband and he's nothing like him.

That's the devil. Jesus doesn't have a list. What he has for you is love and acceptance.

But he will not love and accept you and leave you like you are. His love and acceptance will transform you. But when you're being transformed, you're going to say, thank you, Jesus.

[37 : 14] What I used to be. But your love, your love is making me whole. Hallelujah. Father, Lord, as we come to this table, we want to remember your love.

He will not remember your love. He will not remember that you gave yourself for us not because it was drudgery but because you looked at our sorry state and your heart went out to us and you made us your own.

Help us, Lord, to receive that love every day and in response to that love to give ourselves to you. to follow you because we love you too.

May our love grow. Thank you that your love is perfect but Lord, our love isn't. Grow our love, please. Our love for you, for the Father and for the Spirit.

And Lord, just maybe you will grow our love for each other too. I think you will. In Jesus' name.

[38 : 30] We ask. Amen.