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If You Love Me...

John 14.15

Series: Signs of Life

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I. Introduction

- A. Jean and I have had somewhat different parenting styles when it came to disciplining our children
 - 1. I know it's hard to believe our children ever disobeyed their parents
 - a. But we must admit, it happened a time or two
 - 2. Anyway, I don't know where I got this approach
 - a. Maybe it was from my father
 - b. My no-nonsense policeman father
 - c. Or maybe it was from my training as a behavior analyst
 - d. But I tended to focus on the consequences of my children's actions
 - e. "If you do that again, this will happen to you"
 - f. And then, of course, I would be inclined to follow through and deliver
 - g. And that would be the end of that
 - 3. On the other hand, Jean was more likely to reason with our children
 - a. To lay out all the arguments why their behavior was problematic
 - b. She would plead with them, often repeating herself just to make sure they got the message
 - c. Over and over, she would lay out argument after argument, reason after reason
 - d. Until, I think, the kids gave up
- B. In my judgment, her approach took a lot longer
 - 1. I think mine was more efficient
 - a. Got the job done faster
 - 2. But I will say, to this day our kids will say that the voice they hear in their heads is hers
 - a. So maybe in the long run, it all worked out
 - 3. And in any event, I think that if the kids pushed the envelope and kept asking why they must do something, we both eventually got to the point where we said
 - a. "Because I said so!"
- C. The interesting thing is that you can find all of those approaches to obedience and disobedience in the Bible
 - 1. Sometimes God lays out reason after reason for obeying the commands of God
 - a. Paul, especially in his epistles, lays out argument after argument for

- “living a life worthy of our calling”
2. Sometimes God just says, “If you do that, this will happen”
 - a. And sure enough, it happens
 - b. Sooner or later
 3. Sometimes God just says, “I’m God. Do it because I said so”
- D. But I don’t think in our parenting lives we ever had the hutzpah to do what Jesus does in our text today
1. I don’t think we ever pulled out the love card
 2. I don’t think we ever told our kids, “If you love me, you’ll do what I tell you”
- E. That’s what Jesus says in John 14.15
1. John 14:15 (NASB95) — 15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
- F. That seems to be an argument reserved for the eternally begotten Son of God
- II. **Extravagant Promises, Challenging Conditions**
- A. Let’s put this verse into context
1. This is the part of John 14 where there are some extraordinary and extravagant promises
 2. **John 14:12** (NASB95) — 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”
 - a. Jesus promises that the apostles – and the church as we discovered – will actually go above and beyond the works of Jesus
 3. We saw that that’s exactly what happened during the apostolic period
 - a. The gospel exploded all over the ancient world – throughout the Roman Empire, all the way through Europe, even to Spain and Britain
 - b. All the way to the east to India
 - c. And the south into north and east Africa
 - d. And much of that expansion was marked by the kinds of signs and wonders that Jesus had done
 - e. Greater works than these, indeed!
 4. And we saw that’s what is taking place in the church in our own day
 - a. Where the gospel is established on every continent
 - b. And the number of unreached people groups has continued to diminish, especially during the last 200 years as the modern missions movement has exploded
 - c. And everywhere conversionary missions has gone – in which the message that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself
 - d. And that it is necessary for people to turn from their idols and cast themselves on the mercy of Christ for salvation
 - e. All kinds of social and cultural benefits have followed
- B. And the other extravagant promise had to do with prayer
1. **John 14:13–14** (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me

- anything in My name, I will do it.”
- a. “Whatever you ask... if you ask anything... I will do it”
 - b. What an amazing promise!
- C. Of course, those promises, as we saw, had some conditions
1. The promises were for believers in Jesus
 2. Prayers needed to be offered “in My name”
 - a. And we explored what the phrase “in My name” meant
 - b. How it was more than a formulaic appendage to a prayer
 - c. How it required a wholehearted commitment to the will of Jesus
 3. And prayers needed to have a central concern that the glory of God would be exhibited in Christ
 4. It was prayers like that, prayers that meet those conditions, that are the overriding power behind the church doing “greater works than these”
- D. And so, it is in that context, in the context of these extravagant promises and challenging conditions, that Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”
1. Loving Jesus and keeping His commandments are yet additional conditions through which these extravagant promises will be realized
 - a. Through which greater works than these will be done
 - b. Through which comprehensive and thorough answers to prayer will take place
- E. And yet, this text, is packed with rich truth
1. And stands on its own
 - a. Let’s examine it together this morning
 2. **John 14:15** (NASB95) — 15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

III. **Antinomianism Destroyed**

- A. The first lesson we learn is that this verse destroys antinomianism
1. I can already start to sense your protests
 - a. “Oh no! Not another long, fancy theological word!”
 - b. “Not another word like... propitiation!”
 2. Look, if you can learn propitiation, antinomianism is easy
- B. First, let’s start with the root: nomianism
1. Nomos is the Greek word for law
- C. And then you already understand the prefix: anti
1. Anti means against
- D. **Antinomianism = against the law**
1. It is the doctrine that because of the grace of God, the law of God no longer has any place in the life of the Christian
 2. The God of the OT, the God of Mt. Sinai
 - a. The God of the tablets of stone who thunders amid fire and clouds
 - b. Has been supplanted by Jesus
 - c. The kind and gentle – and tolerant – Jesus
 - d. The Jesus who accepts anything and everything – just as long as it doesn’t hurt anybody else

- E. I was in college when the shiny new thing in the realm of theology was situational ethics
1. Situational ethics, promoted by Joseph Fletcher and other theologically liberal theologians, was an attempt to boil down Christian moral and ethical obligations to an essential core
 2. It rejected most of the traditional ethical precepts taken for granted by Christians for centuries
 - a. But it realized that there must be some foundational moral obligations
 - b. Some ethical principles to guide human conduct
 3. For Fletcher that ethic was love
 - a. Love – the attitude and behavior that did that which was deemed good for self and others
 - b. Love – the kind of conduct that accepted any kind of behavior as long as it didn't infringe on the freedom and well-being of other people
 - c. And of course, the individual, got to define what love was for him or her
- F. Back in those days there was conference at one of the eastern seminaries to discuss situational ethics and the new morality
1. The scholars sat around seeking to come up with the fundamental Christian principles which would guide Christian behavior
 - a. And as the discussion unfolded it was clear that the consensus was that really anything was permissible as long as it flowed out of love and didn't hurt anyone else
 2. There was a Roman Catholic priest who was attending, and as time went on he became more conspicuous by his silence
 - a. Eventually, at a lull in the conversation, someone asked him, "What do you think? Do you believe that the only limit on behavior is the principle of love?"
 - b. He answered, "If you love Me, keep my commandments"
 3. So much for situational ethics
- G. Paul had to counter antinomianism in his own day
1. After laying out the gospel with such clarity in Romans through chapter 5
 - a. In which he established the universal and pervasive sinfulness of humanity
 - b. And in which he demonstrated that through faith in Christ alone can we be justified
 - c. And only through the grace of God can anyone be saved
 2. **Romans 6:1** (NASB95) — 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?
 - a. That is the antinomian heresy
 3. **Romans 6:2** (NASB95) — 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
 4. He goes on to lay out why antinomianism is impossible for genuine

believers

- a. **Romans 6:4** (NASB95) — 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
 5. Having been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone we are called on to leave the old life behind and live in newness of life
 - a. We now have the desire, the inclination, the ability that we never used to have, to actually live according to the commands of God
 - H. Dear friends, make no mistake
 1. If anyone is saved, they are saved, not by works of the law but by the grace of God (**Ephesians 2.8-9**)
 2. **Galatians 2:16** (NASB95) — 16 ... by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.
 3. But if anyone is saved, he or she is saved in order to do good works, in order to obey the law of God
 - a. **Ephesians 2:10** (NASB95) — 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
 4. We are new creatures in Christ. The old is passed and the new has come (**2 Corinthians 5.17**)
 - I. So when Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” he destroys the nonsense that anything is permissible
 1. He destroys antinomianism
 - a. He destroys the notion that if you are saved by grace you can do anything you want
 2. No: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”
- IV. **Love: The Fountain of Obedience**
- A. The second observation we take from this text is that love is the fountain of obedience
 1. Love is the motivating condition that produces obedience
 - a. Love is the engine the drives the bus
 - b. Love is the spring which feeds the streams of obedience to the commands of Christ
 - B. The truth is, by nature human beings know the law
 1. Francis Schaeffer – all human cultures have “moral motions”
 - a. All societies have a sense of right and wrong
 2. And in large measure, human beings have an implicit and intuitive sense of the law of God
 - a. Paul, speaking of the human being without the Bible:
 - b. **Romans 2:15** (NASB95) — 15 .. they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...
 3. But what humans don’t have is the desire or the inclination or the power to obey the law of God

- C. Love is that power
 - 1. Love provides that desire
 - a. Love gives us those inclinations
 - 2. Alexander Maclaren: What we want is not law, but power, and what the gospel gives us, is not merely the knowledge of the will of God, and the clear revelation of what we ought to be, but the power to become it... Love does that, and love alone. That strong force brought into action in our hearts will drive out from thence all rivals, all false and low things.
 - a. When Christ comes into my heart, then all the obscene and twilight-loving shapes that lurked there and defiled it, will vanish like ghosts ... before His calm and pure Presence. He, and He alone, entering my heart by the portals of my love, will coerce my evil and stimulate my good. And if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments.
 - D. Love is the fountain of obedience
 - 1. The source of the power we need to live lives pleasing to God
 - a. The strength to fulfill the law of God
- V. **Obedience: The Proof of Love**
- A. The next observation is the converse, the reverse, of the last one
 - 1. **John 14:15** (NASB95) — 15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
 - a. Love is the fountain from which flows obedience to the commands of Christ
 - 2. But the reverse is also true
 - a. Obedience to the commands of Christ is the proof of our love for Him
 - B. In fact, just a few verses later Jesus makes that same declaration
 - 1. **John 14:21** (NASB95) — 21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me...”
 - a. Do you see how that is the very reverse of v. 15?
 - C. Do you love Jesus?
 - 1. How do you know you love Jesus?
 - a. Just because you have warm, fuzzy feelings for Jesus?
 - 2. No! You know you love Jesus because you have a desire, an inclination, a delight even, to keep His commandments
 - a. And you actually do keep His commandments
 - 3. Perfectly?
 - a. Of course not
 - b. We all still struggle with sin, with unbelief
 - 4. But substantially
 - a. And the more we keep His commandments
 - b. The greater is our assurance that we love Jesus
 - c. And that our love for Him is genuine
 - D. In fact v 21 carries with it another extravagant promise!
 - 1. **John 14:21** (NASB95) — 21 “He who has My commandments and keeps

- them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”
2. Jesus promises that if we keep His commandments we will be loved by the Father and the Son, and that the Son will reveal Himself to us!
 - a. The more we love Him, the more we're loved
 - b. And the more we're loved, the more we know Him
- E. John, in his first epistle, amplifies this teaching
1. **1 John 2:3-5** (NASB95) — 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.
 - a. Here's where we come to know Him by obeying His commandments
 2. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;
 - a. Here's the negative, the opposite, of this truth
 3. 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him...
- F. That's the assurance of our salvation
1. Knowing, longing to fulfill, delighting in, and keeping the commands of Christ is prima facie evidence that we really do belong to Jesus
- G. Let's remember something
1. By nature humanity is not inclined to follow the commands of God and of Christ
 - a. In fact, the so-called “good moral secular people” end up seeking to follow the 10 commandments, for instance,
 - b. Not because of any love for God and Christ
 - c. But because they have discovered some self-interest in obedience
 2. But the moment they sense their self-interest is no longer served by following the commandments of God, they're done with the law of God
 - a. Because they don't love God; they don't love Christ
 - b. They love themselves
 3. But when human beings are born again, are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ
 - a. We begin a journey of love with the Lord Jesus
 - b. We have a desire, a longing, a delight to please Christ
 - c. And we discover a power for obeying Christ that we never had before
- H. So be assured, brother, sister
1. As you obey the commands of Christ you will grow in your assurance that you love Him, that you belong to Him, that you are in the family of Christ
 2. Will you obey perfectly?
 - a. Of course not
 3. That's why John writes,
 - a. **1 John 1:9** (NASB95) — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4. And why Paul wrote,
 - a. **Philippians 1:6** (NASB95) — 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
5. You're a work in progress
 - a. And as you grow in obedience, you will be strengthened and encouraged

VI. **The Commandments of Jesus**

- A. Now we've talked a lot this morning about the relationship between our love for Christ and obeying His commandments
 1. But we haven't raised the question, "What are the commands of Christ?"
 - a. Well, that would be another whole sermon – an entire series!
- B. But we must say something, so let's just stick to what we've seen in the gospel of John
- C. Remember John 13 – you know that chapter that comes just before Chapter 14!
 1. That's not in your short term memory; that's in your long term memory
 - a. We studied it last fall!
- D. **John 13:34** (NASB95) — 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."
 1. Let's just deal with that one
- E. One of the commands of Christ is that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ
 1. That we love one another
 - a. That we love the ones sitting around you!
- F. What does that involve?
 1. Well, first it involves serving them
 - a. Remember in John 13 what Jesus did?
 - b. He took off his outer clothes, filled a basin with water, and washed the disciples' feet
 - c. And then He commanded the disciples that that's what they should continue to do with each other
 2. Of course He wasn't talking about actual foot washing
 - a. He was using foot washing as an example for serving others
 - b. **John 13:13–15** (NASB95) — 13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you."
 3. The second thing that loving our brothers and sisters involves is sacrifice
 - a. **John 13:34** (NASB95) — 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**"
 4. How did Jesus love them?
 - a. He gave Himself up for them!
 - b. He died for them!
 5. We're called upon to give ourselves up for our brothers and sisters in

Christ

6. So obeying the commands of Christ involve serving and sacrifice
 - a. Giving ourselves up for our brothers and sisters
- G. And by the way, just doing that, as you're recall from your long term memory, will reap dividends in bringing people to saving faith in Christ
1. **John 13:34–35** (NASB95) — 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 2. In other words, the world is watching
 - a. The world will make a decision about whether your faith in Jesus is genuine based upon how you love other Christians
 - b. How you love your brothers and sisters
 3. And if you love your brothers and sisters, they'll say, “They're the real deal. They not only talk the talk, the walk the walk”
 - a. They're legit
 4. And the more they think you're legit, that you're a genuine Christian
 - a. The more they'll pay attention to what you believe
- VII. **How Can We Love Jesus?**
- A. One final thought
 1. Do you love Jesus?
 - a. I do love Jesus
 - b. But I don't love Him enough
 - c. I wish I loved Jesus more
 2. Maybe you have a hard time loving Jesus
 - a. How can you come to love Jesus when you're heart is cold toward Him?
 - B. The gospels tell a story about Jesus that illustrates this very issue
 1. Jesus was at a dinner party with a Pharisee
 - a. And a sinful woman came in, crashed the party evidently, and anointed Him with perfume
 - b. And weeping, she cleaned his feet with her tears
 - c. The Pharisee was deeply offended at what he was seeing
 - C. **Luke 7:40–47** (NASB95) —
 1. 40 And Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he replied, “Say it, Teacher.”
 2. 41 “A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.
 3. 42 “When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?”
 4. 43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”
 5. 44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

6. 45 “You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.
 7. 46 “You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.
 8. 47 “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”
- D. Have you been forgiven by Jesus?
1. Do you even realize you’re a sinner?
 - a. Until you realize you’re a sinner
 - b. And until you cast yourself on the mercy of Jesus
 - c. And until you trust in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - d. Until you take Christ as your Savior
 2. You will never love Christ
- E. But when you do
1. And when you remember how much Christ loved you
 - a. And as you meditate on Christ’s love for you
 2. You will love Him
- F. And your obedience will follow