

Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

1789 Iglehart Ave

St. Paul, MN 55104-5215

www.dtminc.org

Ph. (651) 283-0568

John 14:12-17 -- Love, Obedience, and the New Covenant

We saw in an overview of Jn. 13:31-14:31 that Jesus was attempting to teach His disciples about the new dynamic that would be made available as a result of His return to the Father. The interrupting questions of the disciples, while distracting, served to reveal the purposeful thrust of His thinking, i.e., to talk about the Holy Spirit. In Jn. 14:12-15, Jesus introduced some aspects of what would become available to them when the indwelling relationship which He experienced with the Father (i.e., the Father living in Him and He in the Father) came to be extended to them, and to anyone who would believe in Him. I would like to retrace some of our steps in Jn. 14 to pick up on some highlights that we skimmed over before.

Notes:

Vs. 12 - This is where Jesus' thoughts began to shift from Himself to His disciples, and others who would believe in Him. The first aspect of the new dynamic of the indwelling Spirit would be the ability to perform miraculous works like Jesus Himself had. The phrase, "because I go to the Father" refers to the coming of the new Comforter, which the Father will send at Jesus' request (vss. 16,17,26; cf. 16:7; Acts 2:33).

Vss. 13,14 - *And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do* -- The Greek is, "and/also what anything ever y'all might ask/request (at a point in time) in/with/by My name, this (thing) I will do". This appears to be an amazingly broad, open-ended promise, though in reality there are some important parameters for what is being said here. First, the "and" at the beginning of the clause indicates that this is not a completely new thought. Rather, it is another example of what would be introduced as a result of Jesus' going to the Father. Just as there would be miraculous power available, there will also be an effective prayer dynamic that will be made possible. Secondly, asking "in My name" is more than simply a password, or a magical formula. It stands for asking for what is in accordance with Jesus' character, authority and will. *that the Father may be glorified in the Son* -- This provides a third limiting parameter. The purpose of the answer being granted is that it would bring honor to the Father through the Son. This means that anything which would dishonor either God the Father or Jesus would not be something which would be promised by this utterance. *If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.* -- Notice that here, as also in the previous verse, Jesus' presents Himself as the active agent who will respond to their requests, "I will do it". Now He also is teaching them to ask Him. He is also the recipient of their prayers.

Vs. 15 - *If you love Me* -- This is the first part of a conditional statement. The Greek verb here is describing a possibility, "if ever you might love Me". Once the condition is met, the remaining part of the statement will follow logically, or of necessity. *you will keep My commandments* -- The verb has changed to a simple future, which is meant to communicate certainty to this latter half of the proposition. Obedience will follow, or accompany, love for Jesus. You cannot have true love for Jesus without also valuing and obeying His wishes. It may be possible for a person to obey Jesus, at least for a time, without loving Him. The statement does not speak to that possibility. What it does say is that genuine love will produce, or be accompanied by, obedience.

For whatever reason, most of us tend to hear Jesus' words here in a backwards fashion. We immediately start evaluating our performance to see if we are really loving Him. We somehow misconstrue His words to be saying, "Now, I want you to prove you love Me by your obedience." We even think that He is instructing us to work more on our performance so that our love for Him will grow. That is totally opposite of what is really being said here. This statement is not meant as some kind of performance evaluation. In the context this is the third ingredient of the new dynamic which will be introduced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is meant as a promise to claim and to expect. Just as the promise of miraculous works, or of effective prayer, were to be expressions of the new life-dynamic, so now, as a result of the Spirit's presence, hearts that love Him will now be inclined to obey Him. Note the parallels in the construction of the sentences:

(1.) "the (one) believing... the works I do he will do..." (vs. 12).

(2.) "Whatever you ask... I will do..." (vs. 13). "If ever you might ask anything... I will do it" (vs. 14).

(3.) "If ever you might love Me... you will keep My commandments" (vs. 15).

This is a continuation of Jesus' introductory thoughts about the new Spirit-dynamic, not a change of direction in His thoughts. Furthermore, from Luke's account of the last supper, we find that Jesus had earlier referred to the cup of wine as "the new covenant in My blood" (Lk. 22:20). This would have brought certain OT passages to the minds of the disciples that referred to this topic (Jer. 31:31-33; 32:37-42). The essential difference of the new covenant was that God's Law would be written upon the hearts and minds of His people. Obedience would no longer be foreign to their "uncircumcised hearts" (cf. Deut. 29:1-4; 30:1-6), but would be the natural outworking of their new hearts. Ezekiel's expansion on this theme taught that they were to receive new hearts and a new Spirit, which would enable, even "cause", them to walk in obedience (Ezk. 11:14-20; 36:22-38). In light of this background, it makes sense that Jesus would refer to obedience as a result of a new heart attitude, the result of the receipt of a "new Spirit" from God. Under the old covenant, obedience was too often motivated by fear (Deut. 4:1-28; 5:29), though even from earliest times God was attempting to reveal to them His loving character and appeal to the loyalty and obedience that springs from love (Deut. 4:29-40; 5:10; 6:4-9). The inner transformation of the heart brought about at new birth introduces an entirely new variable into the equation of human behavior. Now, as we understand the love commitment of the Father, and we are ministered to by the messages of assurance and acceptance by the indwelling Holy Spirit, we become able to no longer fear rejection, judgment or punishment (I Jn. 4:9-19; Rom. 5:1-5; 8:14-16). Even the "fear of the Lord" begins to take on an entirely different hue, and we even find it to be a delightful awe (Isa. 11:3), instead of an oppressive dread. Obedience does come more and more from a heartfelt desire and delight to do His will (Phil. 2:12,13; Ps. 40:8).

Vs. 16 - *And I will ask the Father* -- The Greek is, "and/also I (Myself) will ask", emphasizing the distinction between His part of this equation and their own. They would not be able to do these things without the enabling power of God. Jesus will ask His Father for this very thing, the indwelling empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, to be given to them. *and He will give you another Helper* -- There are two Greek words for "another". One, allos, means "another of a similar kind", "another-like" (cf. II Cor. 11:4 - "another Jesus"). The other word, heteros, means "another of a different kind", "other", "strange" (cf. II Cor. 11:4 - "a different spirit"). The word translated as "helper", and its related forms, have a broad range of common translational meanings. The word in Greek is paraklētos, from which we have the English derivative, "paraclete". Basically, it means "one called/invited alongside (usually to help or assist in some fashion)". The breadth of translation options comes from the various applications that this term may have in different contexts. It has been rendered as "helper" (NASB) or "comforter" (KJV) in this context (Jn. 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7), or as "advocate" (I Jn. 2:1). In addition, related forms are variously translated as "exhort", "encourage", "urging", "entreaty", "console", or "appeal". (This is significant when talking about the gift of exhortation or encouragement in Rom. 12:8. It is important to see that there may be a wide range of expressions of that gift.) Jesus had functioned in this capacity for the disciples. Now He is saying that He would ask the Father to send a replacement who would be like Him. *that He may be with you forever* -- The Greek literally is, "in order that (purpose clause) He might be (being) with you into/unto the age". The significance of this phrase is that Jesus is saying that while His stay with them has been temporary, the Holy Spirit will not leave them. It was God's purpose to make available to them an ever-present Helper-like-Jesus.

Vs. 17 - *that is the Spirit of truth* -- Lit., "the wind/breath/spirit of the reality/genuine/truth". This is not just a "truthful or genuine spirit". It is the Spirit, or "breath", of what is real. It is the clear, fresh wind which comes from what is real, and carries the fragrance of truth wherever it goes. It is like the idiom we have, "a breath of fresh air", only specifically in this context it is opposed to the stagnancy, the dankness and stench of unreality, "phoniness", deception, misperception, and confusion. *whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him* -- The world is not able to receive, grasp or take this "breath of fresh air" because it does not perceive or experientially know Him. *but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you* -- The disciples do experientially know this "breath of fresh air". He has been dwelling alongside of them (para), so they are familiar with the "smell". However, Jesus goes on to say that this "wind of what is real" will actually come inside of them (en) to live. What will that do to their lives? This is the essential difference of the new covenant. The Spirit of God no longer will live only on the outside, "among the people", or "in their midst". He will actually come into their hearts to live and to dispense His character and influence within and through their unique personalities.