

## **“Yes, He loves you!” John 15:9-17**

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

I don’t know how good is your imagination, but we should try to recreate these very personal feelings, these experiences. Imagine... joyful longing, cheerful impatience, overwhelming excitement, you just can’t wait for that to happen, you are fidgeting, you are buzzing in your heart...

Now, now it will happen! But what will happen? The most beautiful, the most wonderful, the most amazing person, the One who loves and cares for you more than anyone, the One whom you love more than anyone, He will finally tell you...

Tell you what? He will tell you, He will reveal you – what He truly likes, how to please Him, how to overjoy Him, He will tell you exactly how you should express your love so that it would gladden Him the most. Finally, you will know it.

Your excitement is about to spill over... what will He tell you? You can’t wait any longer! Can you imagine such situation? Can you recreate such feeling? Can you experience such excitement? I hope we can try at least a bit...

But what am I talking about? You should be able to guess the answer. It should be obvious to us as Christians. Do you know the answer? Yes... this is about our loving God revealing to us what pleases Him, it is about His Commandments.

Feeling disappointed? Did you expect something different? But that is how we should be feeling hearing our loving God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit revealing us His gracious will for our lives. But usually we don’t feel that way.

Our natural reaction often is the very opposite. O, commandments... obedience... so unpleasant, so restraining! For whom? Perhaps for someone who doesn’t realise that they are loved by this amazing God more than they can comprehend.

Perhaps for someone who doesn't know Jesus and doesn't love Him for what He has done for them. But it shouldn't be so for Christians. If it is, it tells how much we have been shaped by the spirit of the world, instead of being shaped by God's Spirit. Yes, this world doesn't know the Triune God. They don't know His self-sacrificial love and eternal commitment to us. They don't know how He looks with love and delight to every human being, whom He Himself has formed in His image and likeness. And because they don't know how precious they are in His sight, they blindly look to satisfy the longings of their hearts elsewhere.

Today we live in the age where *my* freedom, *my* choice, *my* autonomy all are elevated as the ultimate values. "If only I could be in a situation where no one tells me what to do, where I could make my own unrestrained choices and to decide for myself what is good for me and what is not, then... then I would be happy and satisfied."

They can't be more wrong. They are not gaining freedom; they are simply choosing obedience to a different master. To their own wicked hearts. But as every self-conscious person would recognize, our hearts are not only full of twisted desires, but also with numerous desires that are contradictory and mutually exclusive.

How can anyone, being in the right mind, choose obedience to such capricious, demanding, never predictable and never satisfied master? No happiness once you set your feet on that road. This is exactly what the Bible means by sin – our foolish and voluntary enslavement to terrible masters.

Jesus shows us another way, infinitely better way. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

This is how it works. Everything begins with the Father's love. He loves the Son with eternal, everlasting love. This love flows through His Son Jesus Christ and is abundantly poured over us. As the Father loves the Son, so the Son Jesus loves you.

With fervent and never-ending love. When Jesus speaks and reveals His love to you, what He has done for you, the Holy Spirit convinces us and enables us to experience this love, and then God's love kindles our hearts so that we can love Him back.

However, this divine love is not some vague and formless feeling. It has a certain shape and direction. Here they are. "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

How did Jesus abide in His Father's love? Yes, by keeping His Father's commandments. By always living in obedience to His Father's will. "[My Father is always] with me... for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8:29)

This is where we get to the buzzing excitement: “These things [Jesus has] spoken to you, that His joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” The Father loves His dear Son. The Son delights in doing what is pleasing to His beloved Dad.

And this obedient love brings immense joy to Jesus. He knows how to respond to His Father’s love. He knows what is pleasing to His Father, and He delights and rejoices in being able to do His Father’s will.

Now He wants to share this joy and delight with you. Now Jesus commands us to love Him the same way He loves His Father so that our lives, too, may be filled both with the divine love and with the divine joy. Can you see it now – this is why we should be excited to learn what pleases our Lord Jesus.

Besides, we need to remember something very significant – Jesus’ obedience didn’t cause the Father to love Him. Jesus’ obedience was in response to the Father’s love. Similarly, our obedience is not going to earn us God’s love. Our obedience is our response to this gracious God, who loves us first, and such fitting response is accompanied with overwhelming joy.

We could illustrate it with family relationships. When we experience self-denying and caring love of our spouses, when we see how they lie down their lives for us, this love transforms us, and in response we want to please them with all that we are.

How joyful it is when you know what will bring the greatest pleasure and delight to your spouse, how joyful it is to strive to make them happy! Similarly, with our God and our Lord Jesus Christ. So, how should we love? Jesus shows us.

Our love should have the same direction and the same motivation as Jesus’. His love is not one-directional. One direction is towards His Father, and another – towards us. He loves His Father by doing His will, and His motivation is – to bring us back into the wonderful embrace of our divine family, whatever the cost.

Similarly, Jesus wants our love to be directed both ways, towards Him and the Father, but also towards all the people whom He has placed in our lives. So, first, how can we please our God and our Lord Jesus? By keeping His Commandments...

When we fear to lose Him the most, when we love Him more than anything and when we trust Him above everything and everyone else. When we call upon Him, in our joy and sorrows, in our needs and fulfilments, and in our time of leisure.

When we respond to His invitation to fellowship together surrounded by His family. This makes so much sense. For we can’t claim to care about our God if we don’t trust Him, don’t love Him and desire something or someone else more than Him.

Or if we don’t want to converse with Him, but ignore and reject His invitations to spend some time together. Thus, the first three Commandments teach us to love our God. But how can we live in loving obedience serving our neighbours?

We do it when we honour those in places of responsibility – our parents, civil and economic leaders, pastors, teachers. When we protect and nourish the gift of life. When we cherish and enjoy the gift of marriage.

When we are faithful and generous stewards of God's good gifts. When we speak truth and care about our life together in our communities. When we are grateful, appreciate and rejoice in what our Lord in His grace and mercy has given to us.

This is what loving obedience to our God and love to one another looks like. For we can't claim to love one another disobeying those in authority, or neglecting the gift of life, or dishonouring the gift of marriage, or being greedy or deceitful, or coveting what we don't have. Thanks be to God, that He so patiently instructs us!

And as we strive to lead this new life of loving obedience, Jesus fills us with the divine joy. For we know that not only we ourselves, but also our lives are pleasing to the One, to whom we owe everything, and who always loves us first.

May the Spirit of Jesus fill you all with excitement and joy so that you could cheerfully live such lives of loving obedience, for the delight of our Creator and Redeemer and for a blessings and benefit of our neighbours.

Concluding just one little reminder. Remember how Jesus calls His disciples and you? His friends. Jesus considers you His friends. That is the picture of a powerful sovereign, who has all authority. Everyone is under His authority.

No one is exempt from doing His will. But there is a huge difference between slaves and those who are called friends. Slaves don't understand what their master is doing, what His plans and hopes are. Friends, on the other hand, are those in His inner circle. Those with whom He speaks openly and shares His plans and future hopes.

Friends know Him as He is, they have His ear and can enjoy His company. You are Jesus' friends. He calls you His friends. He shares with you His hopes – to one day see you and countless others of His friends gathered for His divine feast without end.

And He explains us what He is doing to make it happen, and invites us to participate. That is such a wonderful privilege to be Jesus' friends. No one deserves it, no one can choose it. Instead, Jesus Himself has picked you, has called you into His inner circle and have appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit. How?

By keeping His Commandments, by striving to love one another... for Jesus loves you every day more than you can imagine, and nothing is going to change that.

Amen.