



Light from the Word

Christ's Commands to the Church

Key verse: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

When we love someone deeply, we want to do all we can to help them make good decisions and to avoid Satan's pitfalls. As parents, we try to teach our children to do God's will, we try to be good examples for them, and we give them clear, direct instructions either to do or not do certain things. We cannot always shield them from consequences for inappropriate behaviors. There are valuable lessons to learn from the consequences of mistakes. However, if a child faces a life-threatening or very dangerous situation, most parents would choose to take their place if it were possible. We want to help those we love.

Jesus loves us so much that He wants all of us to have a safe haven. He wants us to be a part of His Church, His body (Eph. 1:23), His bride: *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"* (Rev. 21:2). He loves us so much that He did all that was necessary to provide a way of escape from Satan's snares. Jesus did not spare us from all of the consequences of sin (Luke 6:17-27), but He did take our place when we were condemned to die for our sins. Having done all of this for us, Jesus certainly wants us to follow the path He left for us so we do not fall prey to Satan's evil temptations and be eternally separated from God.

In His intercessory prayer (John 17), Jesus prayed that His disciples would know God, that they would have God's Word, He kept them in God's name, He

made so they could be sanctified, and gave them the truth. In addition to praying for His disciples, He also included each of us in His prayer. *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"* (John 17:20). Jesus prayed for you and me!

The commands that He gave us are clear and direct. His instructions are especially powerful because He not only taught us what we must do to please God, but He lived a perfect life, giving us an example to follow. These commands are as relevant today as they were nearly 2000 years ago.

Jesus told His disciples that He was going away, but He added, *"I will come again and receive you unto myself"* (John 14:3). Jesus is coming again to claim His bride. He wants His bride to be ready, so He gave us a clear path to follow as we prepare for His return.

Our lives must reflect humble discipleship and obedience to His messages, which He summarized in two commandments. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 22: 37-40).

Keeping these two commandments requires us to repent (Luke. 13:3 & 5), to become converted (Mt. 18:3), to be born again (John 3:3 & 5), and to faithfully *"abide in the vine"* (John 15:4). To help us abide in the vine, the Bible identifies a number of attributes that should be apparent to those who observe our lives.

If we take the whole counsel of the Bible, it appears that humility stands out above most other attributes as a required possession, if we want to please God. There are many examples in the Bible of individuals who were useful to God as long as they were humble, but when they became proud they were

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no longer useful to the Lord. (See the September, 2014 editorial).

Jesus also commands us to have a servant attitude. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came, not to be served, but to serve. Greatness before God comes from serving, not from being served. *“For whether is greater, he that setteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that setteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth”* (Luke 22:27). Jesus was willing to stoop down in front of His disciples and wash their feet! The Son of God was not ashamed to perform the humblest deed so we could have an example of what it means to serve.

Christ's bride is to be meek: *“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Mt. 11:29). Meekness is mildness of temper, gentleness, easily entreated, given to forbearance even when we have been wronged, submissive to divine will, not proud or self-sufficient, and not apt to complain about divine dispensations. Nicodemus went to Jesus by night and asked for clarity of His mission. Jesus took the time to kindly, clearly explain what Nicodemus needed to understand. The impact that this

had on Nicodemus may not have been immediately apparent, but he later went to the foot of the cross and helped prepare Christ's body for burial (John 19:39-42).

Jesus also asked that His bride be filled with righteousness. *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt. 5:20). Jesus is our justification, enabling God to declare and treat us as righteous because Christ bore our sin on the cross. We are justified by believing, by faith in that redemptive gift. By His grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit we abide in Him and bear fruit of righteousness, and rejoice in hope which is an anchor of the soul. Therefore we are called to be holy, pure, submissive to what God wants for our lives, and to avoid entanglement in those things of the world that would pollute our lives. (Ro 5:1-2; Gal 5:22-25)

Perhaps most importantly of all, the bride of Christ is to be filled with love. God showed us perfect love. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). This was further emphasized in a beautiful discourse by Paul on how we can put that love into action

as he explained the importance of charity in the life of a child of God. (I Cor. 13).

Christ's commands to the Church are intended to bring us together as one in Christ.

“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them” (John 17:10). *“...that they may be one; even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”* (John 17:22-23).

If we love Jesus and keep His commandments, we can be united with His bride for all eternity.

Psalm 26:7 *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.*