

Faith, Hope & Love—Part44

1 John 3:23-24

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.

In just two commandments, the Lord summed up for us our lives as believers. And we know that if we now keep these two commandments and continue to keep these two commandments (it is rendered in the *present active participle*) He now abides in us and we now abide in Him; and being in the *indicative* that would be a statement of fact. Living out these two commandments is the only way to bear the fruit that pleases the Father. **John 15:8** says the Father is glorified when we bear the fruit which comes from abiding in Christ and He in us, and thereby prove that we are His disciples. I want you to understand and really take in the implications of obeying or not obeying these two commandments. If you do not believe in the name, for instance, if you let fear instead of faith dominate your life, and if you do not love one another as you have been loved (which is the requirement set forth in **John 15:12**), then you cannot honestly say that you now abide in Christ or that He now abides in you. You don't and He doesn't. Instead, no matter how religious you may be or how good you think you are, you still now abide in your flesh. This would explain those feelings of things not being enough, you not being enough, feelings of dissatisfaction, loneliness, and so on. But keep in mind, as we discussed last

week, these passages in **John 15** deal with your now and not necessarily your tomorrow. So tomorrow does not have to be like today. You can choose to live differently.

This word “abide” means to “stay” or “remain” in a given place. Clearly, the Lord’s goal is that you learn to stay or remain in Jesus and in turn Jesus will remain in you, for He says in **John 15:4-6**, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing.**” And this last statement is why I say over and over again that there is no middle ground. Unless you abide in Christ, unless you live in a way that obeys these two commandments, there is nothing you can do to bear the fruit that pleases the Father. However, because the true implication of this statement has largely been ignored, we—Christians—have lived far too long in great personal and corporate delusion about the level and quality of our true spirituality. Without Him we can do nothing.

John 15:1-11

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in

Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Drawing on the picture given to us in **John 15:1-11**, the Gardner, the Father, saw the depth of my own spiritual delusion, despite my thinking I was so mature and knew Jesus so well. So He started to cut off the dead branches of my life and pruning the ones there were still alive so I could grow to become fruitful and pleasing to God. I have had so many twigs and branches cut off it is ridiculous. There were some branches that I thought were so good, righteous, and full of integrity; yet, the Father just snipped and He snipped, and He continued to snip. Then He grabbed those parts of my life that He had cut off and removed them from the vine and He burned up those worthless branches in the fire. Still other branches that had some life, that were truly drawing nutrients from Jesus, He pruned. It felt a lot like the cutting but with an entirely different effect. As He cut off those places of my life that were dead and dying and pruned the branches that had life, I started to form healthy strong branches which produced His fruit. I found myself clinging to the vine for every part of my life. Drawing life from Jesus, I learned what it means to **believe** in the name (which is far different than just professing the name) and I

learned how to love you as I have been loved.

The picture God gives us in **John 15** is fabulous. A Gardener loves His vineyard, He is careful with the branches that have life, and He has the wisdom and the knowledge to know exactly what to cut and when to cut to optimize the fruitfulness of the branch. He knows how much water and nutrients are needed, as well as the perfect soil to enhance flavor, color, and fragrance. But understand, the only branches which have life are those which cling to the vine—those parts of your life where you actually do believe in the name. The branches that get cut off and burned are those parts of your life where you have given yourself over to fear and you have chosen to believe in your own name and in the name of the false gods you worship, instead of the name of the Lord.

In order to truly abide in Christ and He in you, you must believe in the name; you must bet your life on all that is true about the name. In fact, the key to our ability to love as we have been loved, is to first actively believe in the name; otherwise we will never “feel” safe or secure enough to lay down our lives for our friends, take down our walls of self-protection, and truly let others into our lives with the authority to impact and influence how we live. For most of us, our circumstances and how we “feel” about our circumstances (whether past, present, or future) define for us our reality; it dictates our personal truth; and it defines for us our god. But that is not to be how we—the **Beloved**—are to live. The name is to define for us our reality—our truth—and we must be willing to bet everything on the name regardless of what we see, think, or feel. I know I have said this many times before, but it has not yet stuck. So I must say it again. When it comes to believing in the name, our circumstances are irrelevant and we must not allow them to cause us to

castigate the **name** or cause us to doubt the name, just because we don't like what we are going through and are afraid of what life might bring forth.

His name is powerful; it has the power to drive out fear and bring you freedom. Believing in His name will lead you to a perfect love—His love—which casts out all fear (**1 John 4:18**). In fact, as I said last week, His name gives us no reason to fear at all. Thus, as long as you hold to and choose to embrace your fear, you **DO NOT** believe in the name and you worship a different god. We studied the name of God in Part 3-19 of "Faith, Hope, and Love." I encourage you to go back and study these names over and over again until you are convinced He is who He says He is. Again, actively believing in the name is the key to being safe and secure enough to lay down your life and love as you have been loved. In fact, I think each of us needs to study the name, and practice applying that name in our lives, until we can live and proclaim the truth about the name fully understanding why so many scriptures instruct us to exalt the name:

Psalm 29:2, Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His **name**.

Psalm 66:2, Sing the glory of His **name**.

Psalm 68:4, Sing to God, sing praises to His **name**.

Psalm 96:2, Sing to the Lord, bless His **name**.

Psalm 96:8, Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His **name**.

Psalm 111:9, Holy and awesome is His **name**.

Psalm 113:3, From the rising of the sun to its setting, the **name** of the Lord is to

be praised.

Psalm 148:13, Let them praise the **name** of the Lord; for His **name** alone is exalted.

Psalm 149:3, Let them praise His **name** with dancing.

Luke 1:49, And holy is His **name**.

As we have studied, if you truly call on the **name** of the Lord, you will be saved (**Joel 2:2; Romans 10:13**), for the Lord says in **Zechariah 10:12**, “And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and in His **name** they will walk, declares the Lord.” If you call on the name of the Lord, according to our living Hope, the Gardener will cut off every branch that does not bear fruit; and you will be saved from those parts of your life that are sick, dying, infected, infested, and corrupt even the good healthy branches. And after you have been cut back, He will strengthen you, and in His name you will walk. Remember **1 Peter 5:10**: “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” And you will then walk in His name and live as if He is, in the now of every single one of your circumstances: your Commander in Chief; your Father; your Lover; your Darling; your Defender; your protector; your fortress; your shield; your magnificence; your glory; your justice; your provision; your protection (yes, I said that twice); your tender mercy; your brilliance; your companion; your friend; your God; your creator; your everything; your sweet aroma; your architect; your craftsman. Tell me - what is lacking from this list? If you walk in His name, nothing can truly harm you.

In thinking about this war that we are in and all the ways the enemy has tried to assail us and get us to turn from God to ourselves and to this world, ***Psalm 118:10-12*** speaks of our direct pathway to victory. It does not matter how many evil beings come against us. It does not matter who they use and inspire to attack or defame us. It does not matter what the world demands of us. It does not matter what religion demands of us. And even the intensity or ferocity of the attack does not matter; His name provides us our victory.

Psalm 118:10-12

All nations surrounded me; **in the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.** They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; **in the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.** They surrounded me like bees; they were extinguished as a fire of thorns; **in the name of the Lord I will surely cut them off.**

Three times the Spirit declares, in the name of the Lord I will surely cut off my enemies. It is a guarantee if I walk in the name of the Lord. For my help is in the name of the Lord (***Psalm 124:8***). That is why David said in ***Psalm 20:7***, “Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.” “For the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe” (***Proverbs 18:10***). “Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name” (***Psalm 105:1***).

Does anything we have learned about the name come across as if we should live giving fear dominance over our lives? If you have truly called on the name of the Lord, you are safe. Yes, the cutting and pruning hurts, but you are safe to let go of

the control and let go of all your self-protection. You are safe to lay down your life for one another. In fact, if you believe in His name, you will choose to lay down your life; as a result, you will love as you have been loved.

I was recalling our study in **Revelation 14:1-2** and how God says that His chosen ones, the 144,000 (which is just a picture of the completed bride of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles) have Jesus' name and the name of the Father written on their foreheads. As we studied, the forehead is a symbol, a picture, indicating an ardent religious follower—one who believes not for convenience or necessity, but out of a firm passionate commitment. This image we are given is of a group of people who truly believe in the name and are so dedicated that they cannot be moved from their allegiance to Jesus no matter what comes against them. In fact, they are the ones who follow Jesus wherever He goes, even unto death. Here is the testimony about these 144,000: “And they overcame him [the beast] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death (**Revelation 12:11-12**). This is a picture of what God is doing in our lives. He is cutting so we might follow the Lamb wherever He goes. He is cutting so we might never love our life here in this world, even when faced with death. He is pruning so that as we go forth we bring forth the fruit of His life and light to the world. This is pleasing to the Father.

Colossians 3:17 says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” This is one of those passages in the Bible that gives us no wiggle room and no middle ground. This does not mean that you just walk around and attach “Jesus” to the things you say and do; that is ridiculous (although, I have to say that is how most Christians tend to

apply this verse). With what we understand about the name and what it means to believe in the name, this is an exhortation to always live, every moment of every day, betting your life on the name. This means there will be no room left for fear to occupy your soul. There will be no room for selfishness. There will be no room to run back to your own homes for safety. This means you choose to live in rest and peace knowing that the Lord your God Almighty has you safe and secure all the time. According to **Colossians 3:17**, all that you say and do must come from this place of true active belief in the name of the Lord.

Trust me, this is not something you can fake, at least not for very long. The fruit of your life will always give away what you really believe. For example, if you live according to the name, it will be evidenced by what comes from your mouth. Going back to **Colossians 3:17**. Do you now give thanks and continue to give thanks (“give” is rendered in the *present active participle*) regardless of what God has you going through whether at work, at home, with friends, loved ones, with the attacks of the enemy, etc.? Giving thanks, and continuing to give thanks, is the fruit of Christ abiding in you as you cling to the vine. Therefore, the only way you can truly give thanks and continue to give thanks is if you have settled with the fact that God must cut off the branches that are dead and dying and He must prune those that still have life. You will utter thanks when you believe that every bit of your pain was necessary and therefore not something you have to fear any longer. When you settle this issue with God, He will abide in you and you will abide in Him, for you will cling to Him and not to your fear. Then through Him you will give thanks to God the Father; it will be a beautiful sacrifice of praise which continually flows from your lips (**Hebrews 13:15**). This is a detail you cannot miss. **Colossians 3:17** does not tell

us to just give thanks to God, but to give thanks **through** Jesus to God the Father. This can only be done when He abides in you and you abide in Him. Then He can and will use your body, your mouth, your voice, to give and continue to give thanks to the Father regardless of what is going on in your life. And He (Jesus) will give thanks because it pleases His Father; and for you it will be such a supernatural experience that will prove out that you are a true disciple of Christ. Instead of sorrow, fear, worry, anxiety, unrest, bitterness, complaint, and dissatisfaction, you will be thankful. I know for me, with all my years of complaint, I have become thankful and have come to understand that I would not want to change anything He has done; it has been a perfect path given who I was. Honestly, before Him and I were on the same agenda (that I must be like Him), I did not like the path He chose for me. I had so many other ideas of what He could have done and how He could have done it. But now that I have settled with the goal (His life in mine), I see the beautiful wisdom of all that He has done; and the fruit of it has been fabulous.

Micah 4:5

Though all the people walk, each in the name of his god, as for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.

This needs to be the epithet, the banner, which flies over our lives. We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever—we will believe. It does not matter what god others call on; even if they say his name is “Jesus.” Don’t be fooled. There are so many gods out there and there are so many who go by the

name of “Jesus.” You want to be careful, be wise, and walk only with those who do the will of the Father—with those who walk in the name of the Lord our God. For only those who believe in the name, evidenced by the fact that they give and continue to give thanks through Jesus to the Father, will be the ones who will love as they have been loved. And for people who have nurtured and loved their fear, you will know what it is like when you meet someone who is free from fear. You will know what it is like when you meet someone who does not control everything in their life to avoid pain. You will know what it is like to experience someone who does not deal with you from behind their walls of self-protection. You will know what it is like to be loved by someone who loves as they have been loved.

1 John 3:23-24 is clear. There are only two commandments to fulfill all that Jesus desires of us—just two: to believe in the name and to love one another as we have been loved (**John 15:12**). “Call on the name of the Lord” all you like, give Him thanks even; but mark my word, if fear is your master, if fear is your lord, then no matter how much you proclaim the name of Jesus and thank Him, you will never know the freedom and joy that that erupts from within by giving and continuing to give thanks through Jesus to God the Father, confident that whatever you do in word or deed, you do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Go back, study the names; examine your life and all the places you still refuse to actively believe in His name. Understand why you are safe with Him. Let the truth transform your mind. Ask Him to cut off what is dead and dying and infecting your life. Ask Him to prune the branches that still have some life and learn to cling to Jesus. And when He comes near with the shears, don’t run and hide, don’t fear, don’t withdraw, and don’t pull away. Let Him cut and cut, for He is our Gardener

who knows exactly what He needs to do in order to bring forth the most amazing fruit that brings glory to His name. Continue with this over and over again until His name is written upon your forehead and you follow, and continue to follow, the Lamb wherever He goes, for if you do, you will learn to love as you have been loved. But first you MUST believe in the name.

We have a few more things to unearth in regards to God's divine *agape* love. However, I want to remind you that there is a whole study out there called "Faces of Love." If you have not been through it in a while, I encourage you to go and listen or read and understand what God's *agape* love is all about. Over the next week or two we are going to dive a little further in to our relationships and understand how the intimacy we are to know and experience with one another in Christ translates or crosses over into friendship and marriage, and how neither of these human engagements are in fact substitutes for God's *agape* love.

Let's Pray