

"If you love me, keep my commandments."

In this article, we will mainly examine chapters 14 and 15 of the Gospel of John. We are at the end of Jesus' work. Judas has betrayed the Lord and is leading His enemies to arrest Him and ultimately crucify Him. In these final hours, Jesus gives His last instructions to His disciples. These are crucial instructions, and we must give them our full attention.

Let's start with John 14:15. There the Lord said:

John 14:15

"If you love me, keep my commandments"

Many people get upset when they hear about commandments. This is due to a distorted view of God's grace, according to which grace and commandments are opposites. Thus, according to this view, since salvation is by grace, we do not need to keep any commandments or, at best, such commandments may be good, but keeping them is not absolutely necessary. What is necessary, according to this view, is to "believe." If we "believe" but do not try to keep the Lord's commandments, there is no serious problem. Thus, according to this view, faith seems to be a state of mind, something I believe, but there is no absolute need to act in accordance with what I believe. It would be nice if I acted in accordance with it, but such an act is not considered mandatory. And here comes the Lord to break down all these mental constructions. "Do you love me?" "If so, then keep my commandments," he said, leaving no room for misinterpretation.

What we have just read echoes His teachings found in all the Gospels, which make clear the profound significance of keeping the Lord's commandments. For example, in Luke 6:46-49 we read:

Luke 6:46-49

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? “Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: “He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. “But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

And Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

As Jesus makes clear, it is not enough to call Him "Lord, Lord." We must also do what He says, His Father's will, His commandments. Calling Him Lord but refusing to do His commandments will not lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven. We just read that! So trying to do God's will is not optional. It is not something we do if we feel like doing it, but if we don't, it doesn't matter. On the contrary, it is mandatory and absolutely crucial, because without it we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This makes doing God's will the mark of a true disciple. The disciple who takes up his cross and follows Him. The one who has chosen the narrow gate and not the broad road that leads to destruction.

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

And **Matthew 16:24-25**

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Do we want to go after Him? Then let us deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. Let us pass through the narrow gate and walk the difficult path, the only path that leads to life. The broad road, the road that the majority follow, the EASY road, which requires no cross, where everything is easy and where we can live like the world without repentance, leads to destruction. Only the difficult road leads to life.

But let us return to the gospel of John and what the Lord said to His disciples on that last night:

John 14:21

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

We love Jesus when we keep His commandments. “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” He said. So these two things—loving Jesus and keeping His commandments—are inseparably linked. We love Him if we keep His commands. And we keep His commands because we love Him. Otherwise, we do not truly love Him. In fact, He said this in verses 23 and 24:

John 14:23-24

“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. **He who**

does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."

It doesn't matter what we say, but what we do. Saying that we love the Lord but not doing what He says is not a sign of sincere "love," but only "love" in words. Truly trying to keep His commandments, even with failures, is what really shows whether we love Him or not. And what is the promise for us, dear brothers and sisters, if we try to keep His words? Jesus will love us and reveal Himself to us! And His Father will love us! He and the Father will come to us and make their home within us! Don't we want that? Don't we want to become the home of the Father and the Son? Don't we want Jesus to reveal Himself to us? I would very much like that! And I believe you would too! But we have to do something about it. **We must keep His commandments.** We must take up our cross and follow Him. We must not walk according to the flesh, we must not walk on the broad path of the world, but through the narrow gate.

Many Christians seek the "secret" of true communion with the Lord. Many preachers also present true fellowship with the Lord as something for which there is a secret, that they supposedly know the key to it and we must follow their recipe to find it. But my brothers, there is no secret! Everything is clear. Jesus made it absolutely clear:

John 14:21

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

The key is to keep the Lord's commandments, His Word. Whoever keeps them truly loves the Lord and will be loved by the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son will make their home in him, and the Son of God will reveal Himself to him. It is that simple and that true.

The Vine and the Branches

After Jesus made this clear, He went on with the parable of the vine:

John 15:1-9

"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, 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, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.** **"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

The Lord continues in this wonderful passage what He said earlier. He is the vine, we are the branches of the vine, and the Father is the vine-dresser. As branches, we must abide in the vine. "Abide in Me, and I in you" he said. If we abide in Him, we will bear much fruit. If we do not abide in Him and end up fruitless, then we will wither and, as the Lord said, we will have the same end dry branches have: they are gathered and thrown into the fire. So we see again that abiding in the vine, truly loving Jesus, and following Him by keeping His commandments is not at all optional, nor is it something that is guaranteed for all believers. On the contrary, it is a daily decision, just as the decision to do or not to do what the Lord commands us is a daily one.

At this point, the parable of the sower comes to my mind: in it, the seed of the Word of God sprouted in three of the four types of hearts it fell on. However, it only

bore fruit in one type of heart. In the other two, it ended up fruitless. Here are these three categories:

Luke 8:13-15

“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who **believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.** “Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, **when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** “But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, **having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**”

The first two categories heard the word, believed it, but did not keep it. The first of these two categories, "believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." The second, "when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity" Only the third category bore fruit. The other two, unfortunately, did not. They probably started out brightly, with joy. But in the end, other things or persecution caused them to change their minds. Yes, they once believed. The Word says explicitly about the first of these two categories that they believe for a while. They were faithful, but only for a while. It is not enough, my brothers, to be faithful only for a while. We want to be faithful FOREVER, until our last breath. Nor is it enough to be fruitless "believers" who serve ourselves. Who call Jesus Lord, Lord, but refuse to do what He says. Instead, we want to be fruitful, to make sure we do the Father's will and serve Jesus by doing His commandments, day by day, until the end.

But let's continue in John 15:

John 15:10-14

“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 remain 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, than to lay down one's life for his friends. **"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."**

Repeatedly, in this last discourse to His disciples, a few hours or minutes before His arrest, the Lord speaks of the vital importance of keeping His commandments. We are his friends if we do what He commands us. We are in the vine if we remain in Him, if we care for and keep our hearts good, so that the seed of the Word may bear much fruit, as the Lord desires for us. Anyone who hears the words "fruit" and "commandment" and feels uncomfortable because we supposedly have nothing to do, since the Lord has done everything for us, should think again. Because the Lord not only does not feel uncomfortable speaking this way, but He makes sure to repeat it over and over again, so that it is very clear what He wants from us and that this is mandatory and not something that, if we do it, will be nice, but if we don't do it, it doesn't matter much. It is so important that anyone who refuses to do His commands, remaining in the vine, if he does not repent, will never know Him, will be cut off from the vine and will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This does not mean in any way that we will not fall or sin! But it means that we try, despite our failures and falls, to keep God's Word. We run the race of faith, and even though we may fall, even daily, we get up and continue, looking to the Lord Jesus:

Hebrews 12:1-2

"... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Love: the main commandment

Now, speaking of the Lord's commandments, there is one that encompasses them all, the commandment to love one another. As we read in verse 12:

John 15:12

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

And lest we deceive ourselves, it is not a cheap love, a love only in words, that is meant here. Rather, it is love in deeds. As John said in his first letter:

1 John 3:18

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

And what this means, he clarified a few verses earlier:

1 John 3:14-18

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

We see this word "abide" again. If you or I do not love our brother or sister, then we abide, not in the vine, but in death! If you and I hate our brother, then we are murderers! And if we do not repent, let us not delude ourselves: we will inherit that in which we abide, namely death. Furthermore, we say that we love the Lord, but our

brother next to us is in need, and we choose to look the other way? Let us not deceive ourselves: God's love does not abide in us, and we do not abide in Him, in the vine! The authenticity of our faith is proven by our actions. Following the Lord does not mean saying the right things—loving only with words—but also doing the right things, loving with actions and in truth. A very clear proof of this is given to us by the Lord in Matthew 25:34-46:

Matthew 25:34-46

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’” “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ‘for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’” “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’” “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.””

And as James said:

James 1:22-27

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. **Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**”

Conclusion

To conclude, dear brothers and sisters: we must strive to keep the Lord's commandments every day. Loving one another—not with words but with deeds—is the main commandment. And if we love one another, we will forgive one another, we will not lust after evil things, we will not speak ill of one another, we will not envy one another. Let us remember the definition of love given to us by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Then we will be true disciples of our Lord. Then Christ will come and reveal Himself to us. Then the Father and the Son will come and make their home in us. Then

we will be friends of Jesus. Then we will speak, and He will listen! And let us not think in any way that His commands are burdensome. No! They are easy, because He supports us in carrying them out:

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**”

So let us strive to do His will. Let us strive to abide in the vine and in the presence of the Lord, a presence that is given only to those who abide in Him. And let us do this until the end, day by day.