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Keys to Greater Works

John 14:15-18

Intro: In [vs12](#), Jesus delivered to the disciples, one of the greatest and most important promises the Church has for fulfilling its mandate to reach the world with the Gospel. Jesus assured them that, after He was gone, they would continue His work on the earth and not just continue it, they would actually do greater works than even He did while He was here! The greater works He is referring to is the spiritual miracle of regeneration; it's seeing lost sinners come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior as evidenced by a changed attitude towards the things of God and a transformed life. This is exactly what Jesus has commissioned the Church to be doing on earth during His absence and the fulfillment of this wonderful promise has been manifested time and again throughout church history.

Of course, a promise this great doesn't come without some conditions and this one has at least 4. 1st, It only applies to true followers of Jesus Christ; you must be born again. It's not enough to just call yourself a Christian, anybody can do that; even the worst reprobate can wrap themselves in a title if it suits their particular circumstances but that's not what Jesus is referring to here. No, this promise to see greater works of evangelism and the life transforming power of the Gospel could obviously only apply to those who have truly been transformed by the Gospel. I'm sure an unsaved individual, in repeating the content of the Gospel they have heard to another lost person, could actually play a part in pointing that person to salvation in Christ. Such is the power of the Gospel. But, that same individual could never really be expected to lead anyone to Christ since they have yet to come to Him for salvation themselves.

2nd, this promise will only be fulfilled through the channel of proper, persistent prayer. In fact, this condition is actually a promise to the believer. Jesus says that whatever the believer asks for in prayer; if it aligns with His character and desires and will glorify the Father, He will do it. There's no "maybe", or "we'll see" implied at all in [vs13-14](#). If we have been identified with Jesus by faith (born again); if we approach God solely on the basis of what Jesus has done for us and if we are faithful to live the life of Christ; our prayers will be answered. The power to perform these greater works only

comes from God and He has ordained prayer as the means by which He will bless us with that power.

We're going to address the next 2 conditions today but it bears repeating that these are not suggestions Jesus is giving us on how to grow a church or how to do effective evangelism. These conditions are critical for accomplishing not only the mandate of the Church in general but in seeing God's will done in our own personal lives as well. We can't just look at these verses and say in our hearts, "That's all well and good; someone should get right on that." No, these conditions are how we should be living; they should be part of our regular spiritual walk and if they're not, we must put every effort into adopting them into our daily routine. I'm not saying that a failure to do so will bring down fire and brimstone on your head but it will severely limit your effectiveness for the kingdom of God in this world.

15- The 3rd condition for seeing Jesus do even greater works in us is obedience flowing from love. Now, love and obedience aren't just conditions for seeing greater works done, they are also conditions for the effectual prayer just mentioned (**13-14**). If we do not possess a love for Jesus and a desire to obey His commands, our petitions will go mostly unanswered. If we have a loving desire to obey Him, our prayers will be answered (**1 John 3:22**). Of course, while this verse is 1 in a series of 4 conditions, it also stands alone and teaches us about the proper link between love for Jesus and His commandments and what having them both in our lives actually proves.

The most obvious lesson here is that if we truly love Jesus, we must (and will) keep His commandments. It's critical that we understand that true love for Jesus and obedience to Him go together; in fact, they're inseparable. There's a false belief floating around that God's commandments have no place in the Christian life because we are now under His grace. Thus, in the name of grace, the God of holiness and justice is eliminated. Those that follow this line of thought say that the only necessary guide for ethics is love. So, destroyed marriages, adultery, deceit, rebellion, covetousness – all are allowed as long as they don't hurt anyone and that the underlying basis for them is love.

This concept of love makes a travesty of biblical love. Any love that fails to result in obedience to Christ's commands is not the kind of love Jesus is

talking about here. Love is a valuable guideline for life but only if it conforms to the love of God; which means it must also conform to the commands He has given. This truth doesn't devalue love. On the contrary, only love will successfully move us to keep Christ's commandments. Love is the only true foundation for obedience and obedience is the only logical outcome and sure result of love.

The world has a concept of morality; what it thinks is right and wrong; but this morality refuses to even acknowledge the commands of Christ so it is powerless to keep them. Morality will not compel us to obey Christ's command, only love does that and love alone. When love for Jesus enters our hearts, it drives out baser concerns. What happened when the Philistines brought the Ark of the Covenant into their temple? The next day they find their idol of Dagon fallen over on the ground. They propped it back up but then the next day, it was back on the ground with its head and arms knocked off. It was actually lying on the threshold of the door like it was trying to escape God's presence. So to, when Christ fills our hearts, rebellious and defiled attitudes vanish before His calm, pure presence. Only His presence in my life can suppress my flesh and stimulate my spirit. If I love Him, I will keep His commandments.

Another lesson from this verse can be seen in the reverse. If loving Jesus means we will keep His commandments then keeping His commandments is evidence that we love Him. Jesus points out this truth Himself in [vs21](#). John also points this out in his first Epistle ([1 John 2:3, 5](#)). How do we know that our loving obedience is evidence that we belong to Jesus? In our natural state ([sinful](#)) the power to obey God is not in us. When a person begins to obey God, first by accepting His offer of salvation in Jesus Christ and then by an increasing desire to live a Christ-like life, this is the evidence of a divine and supernatural working in their life. Its proof God is present in their life and has begun the miraculous work of regeneration in them. This should bring a measure of assurance, as Paul states in [Phil1:6](#)...

Now, if loving Jesus means we will keep His commandments; what are His commandments? We can jump back to [13:34](#) for that answer. So, if we love Jesus, we must and will love other Christians. But what does this mean? It means service – when Jesus washed the disciples feet, He gave us a picture of true Christianity. It's an attitude that divests itself of its own rights in order to serve others. Loving others also means sacrifice – we're not

called to serve only when it's convenient or doesn't cost us anything, we're called to serve when we'd much rather do something else. Finally, it means sharing – sharing ourselves with other believers and sharing the Gospel with the lost.

Do we love Jesus? If so, we'll show it by loving others and by doing what He desires. For the believer, disobedience is not just a failure of performance or strength; it's also a failure of love. Those who love Jesus most obey Him most joyfully and naturally. To say, "I really love Jesus but I just don't want Him to tell me how to live my life." is a gross misunderstanding of both Jesus and what love for Him really is. The essence of obedience is not in the action taken but in the heart of love that prompts us to act. If we love Him we will keep His commandments.

16-18- The last condition is found in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is agreed on by all Christian faiths but there's a large section of the Church that's still unsure of Who exactly He is and what He's all about. This is an abnormal situation from the viewpoint of Christ's teachings because He clearly taught on the Spirit here in our text and will again in the next few chapters. His teachings in our text were given to comfort His disciples and all who follow after them throughout the church age. Knowledge of and dependence upon the Holy Spirit are necessary conditions for doing the greater works mentioned in **vs12**.

The 1st thing that must be settled in our minds about the Holy Spirit is whether He is a real person, whose job it is to get hold of us and use us or is the Holy Spirit merely some vague power we're to get hold of and use to our benefit. This is critically important as a matter of truth – either the Holy Spirit is a real person or He's not. It's also important from a practical standpoint. If we believe the Holy Spirit is a mysterious power, our focus will constantly be, "How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?" If we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, our focus will rightly be, "How can the Holy Spirit get more of me?" The first concept is completely pagan. The second is NT Christianity.

The idea of a Holy Spirit that's just a divine influence, power or force that we are somehow to get a hold of and use, leads to self-exaltation and self-sufficiency. Those that think this way and believe they have acquired a greater portion of the "Holy Spirit" power are almost always full of spiritual

pride and strut around as if they're part of some superior order of Christian. But, if you see that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person full of majesty, glory, holiness and power, Who condescends to live in our hearts, take possession of our miserable lives and make use of them, this truth can and will humble you. We can see the differences between these 2 concepts of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Acts 8 tells the story of Simon the sorcerer who apparently accepted Christ as his Savior through the preaching of Philip in Samaria. But he knew little about Christianity and made the mistake of thinking that the Holy Spirit was a power to be purchased. He even offered the Apostles money to receive "it." Peter was having none of that (**20-23**).

The other example comes from the start of the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas (**Acts 13:2**). In the 1st case, a person attempts to get and use God, who he imagined was just a power; in the 2nd, God got and used 2 individuals.

The Holy Spirit is not just a power or force; He is a member of the Trinity, equal in all ways both to the Father and the Son. When Jesus says that the Father will give them another Helper, He's not talking about some compensation for the disciples to make up for the loss of Him. He's not promising to send some thing; its another divine personality that's going to be sent. This personality will have knowledge, for He'll know about the disciples' distress. He'll have feelings, for He'll identify with them in their distress and comfort them. He'll have a will, for he'll determine to carry out the commission for which He's being sent.

Everywhere the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Scripture His personality is stated or, at the very least, implied. So, if the Holy Spirit is a person, what sort of person is He? As we have just stated, the Holy Spirit is God and our text proves it. Jesus refers to Him as "another Helper." It helps to know that there are 2 different words for "another" in the Greek NT. The 1st one is allos – which means another just like the first one. That's the one used in our text. The other word is heteros – totally different. If the Helper to be sent is another exactly like the first one, then Who is the first Helper? Jesus! Thus, the 2nd Helper is to be just like Him; He'll be another divine being living with them and in them.

Does it really matter if we know and constantly recognize that the Holy Spirit

is divine? Yes, it does! If we know and constantly recognize His deity, we'll also recognize and rely on His work. If we don't, then we'll foolishly rely on our own limited wisdom, shallow love, human strength and other fallen resources, and forfeit what He alone can provide.

Since the Holy Spirit is a divine being, equal to the Father and Son in all respects, what does the Holy Spirit do? One could answer that the Holy Spirit is most active in the sanctification of believers, in the inspiration of Scripture and in giving gifts to those in the Body of Christ. While each of these is true, they're still not the best answer. The best answer is found in [16:13-14](#). The role of the Holy Spirit is primarily to glorify Jesus Christ. When we understand this then all the other things mentioned are naturally included in this one great, overriding purpose. The Holy Spirit will not speak of Himself but of Jesus. Thus, any emphasis on the Person and work of the spirit that detracts from the Person and work of Jesus Christ is not of the Spirit's doing. Important as He is the Holy Spirit will never supercede the place of Jesus in our thinking. But, wherever Jesus is exalted, we know the Third Person of the Trinity is at work.

How does the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus? **1st**, by teaching about Jesus in Scripture. The authors of both the OT and NT were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures and what they wrote was all about Jesus. Now, this same Spirit is promised to be given to the disciples, to come upon them – to be in them – so that nothing about Jesus' work or teachings necessary for our salvation and the growth of the church would be lost. He worked in the first disciples to preserve the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and He works in us to understand it and apply it to our lives.

2nd, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by drawing lost individuals to Him. As we've already seen, apart from this activity of the Holy Spirit, no one would ever come to Jesus. Without the work of the Spirit, no one could ever see, know or even receive spiritual things. The Holy Spirit opens blind eyes so the lost can see the truth. He clears their minds so they can understand what they see, and He gently woos their wills until they come to faith in Jesus as their Savior. Without this work there wouldn't be a single Christian in the world. By this work the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus.

3rd, He glorifies Jesus by reproducing Him in believers. He does this by leading us to greater victory over sin; by praying for us and teaching us to

pray; by showing us God's will for our lives and enabling us to walk in it. A Helper is one who is with you to strengthen you. He gives us strength to stand for truth, to take the right side, to stand against evil. He is also, like Jesus, our Advocate (paracletos) – one who is called along side of. Both are working together for us. Both are praying for us (**Heb 7:25** – Jesus “always lives to make intercession for” us); (**Rom 8:26** – the “Spirit Himself make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”)

What could ever trouble us? We can't be troubled about our salvation because Jesus has purchased it for us and the Holy Spirit has sealed it in our heart. Plus, they're both free to plead our case before the Father! Likewise, we can't be troubled about our growth into the image of Jesus Christ because that's the goal of the spirit's work in our lives.

Finally, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by calling His followers into Christian service and by sustaining them in it. The Holy Spirit doesn't give us spiritual gifts to make ministry exciting, He gives them to make ministry possible. He must call us into service and He must empower us to do it. The encouraging thing is: if He's called you, He will provide the spiritual strength and stamina to accomplish the task. Where God guides, God provides.

Has The Spirit lead you into such service? If so, persevere! If not, begin to desire His leading, then seek it, pray for it and expect Him to guide you into His will, a will that inevitably leads to bringing glory to Jesus Christ.

The important point of this section is that, although Jesus is going away from them, His followers will not be left without supernatural resources. They will have the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit granted to them, available to them. They will possess a love for Jesus that will be evidenced by their complete and willing surrender to obey His commandments. They will also have the promised opportunity of continued, close, intimate fellowship with their Savior through the channel of prayer.

All of these resources are not just available to believers, they are critical for the accomplishing of the greater works that Jesus has just promised. The fact that this is a promise from Jesus Christ, One who is completely true and does not change means that these greater works will be seen. Do we see them in the church today? In places, sure; but do we see them in our own lives and in our own church? Could it be that we have yet to enjoy the full

scope of this promise because we are not yet fully willing to meet the conditions? There may be something to that statement. We should analyze our own hearts and see if our daily desires match up with those of our Lord. If not, we must pray and ask God to continue to work on our hearts and attitudes through the Holy Spirit to bring us more in line with His will. 😊