

183. The Gospel of John—17:14-19

"With Jesus Behind the Veil" Part 17

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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By the time we come to John 17—Jesus' crucifixion is only a few hours away.

Once again, by way of review—the evening started in the upper room back in Chapter 13 with Jesus and His disciples observing the Feast of Passover together. Yet as we studied Chapters 13-16—it was obvious that Jesus was more concerned for His *disciple's* welfare than He was for His own.

He knew that after He returned to His Father, and they began to take the gospel into the world fulfilling the Great Commission—they would be the targets of Satan's unrelenting attacks by his demon foot-soldiers and the fallen world system which he controls.

A system that he would use incessantly to trip them up, take them down and even remove them from the earth (martyrdom).

The Lord stressed this after they left the upper room and were making their way through the streets of Jerusalem towards the Golden (eastern) Gate which they would use to exit the city before crossing the Kidron Valley and making their way up the Mount of Olives towards the Garden of Gethsemane.

He used the time to drive home this truth to prepare them for what was coming (John 15:18-20). Then The Lord Jesus continued to reinforce this reality after He stopped teaching His disciples (directly) and began to pray for them to His Father (in their presence) thereby teaching them about these things indirectly.

In essence, the bulk of Jesus' prayer that night for His disciples concerned spiritual warfare—and in particular that His disciples would be *victorious* in their battle with the devil and the fallen world system he controlled—that they, like the Lord Jesus Himself, would be '*overcomers*'.

Just how would they overcome the world?

—The same way Jesus did...

—Through the power of God, unleashed through personal holiness.

The idea of personal holiness doesn't get a lot of Christians fired up today—but make no mistake about it—personal holiness is the key to spiritual victory—even as Jesus pointed to His personal holiness as the basis for His victory over the world (John 16:33)—

John 17:14-19 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

As we said last time, the words '**holiness**' and '**sanctify**' both come from the same Greek root and mean—"to be set apart." To be set apart from the world's values, actions, philosophies and ideologies, to be used exclusively for God's glory—this was Jesus' life on earth in a nutshell!

So very simply, holiness is basically to be *in* the world, but to never be or a part *of* the world.

As we stressed last time, this is God's will for us—but because the world we're living in is so corrupt and wicked—how can we accomplish this?

Well, Jesus tells us through His prayer to the Father for His disciples—"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth...I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." (verses 17 and 19)

So once again, Jesus is communicating to us that personal holiness is the key to spiritual victory—and that personal holiness is achieved by staying in, feeding upon and living out the Word of God in our daily lives as children of God.

But as James tells us—Christians can be "*hearers of the Word without being doers of the Word*." (James 1:22)—Why is that?

Why would a child of God take the time to come to church and hear the Word of God being taught—but then not want to live it out in their lives?

Well first of all, the answer to that might be because—they really aren't a child of God in the first place!

John 10:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

From that point in Luke 6, Jesus goes on to say that *obedience* to the Word of God and not just *hearing* the Word is the fruit that demonstrates whether a person is a true child of God or not.

Matthew 7:21 (NKJV)

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.

1 John 2:3-5 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

As a professing Christian you should enter into some honest self-examination to make sure you are in fact a child of God—

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith...

1 Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV)

³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged [someday by God].

But listen, I know there are many who *are* children of God and who don't obey Him as they should—and they wrestle with why.

As we brought up last week—

- What motivates and animates our obedience to Jesus and His Word?
- What will take a Christian from a mere hearer of the Word to a faithful full-on doer of the Word?

Jesus said, "**If you love me, obey my commandments.**" (**John 14:15**)—in other words, "*If you say you love Me—prove it by obeying Me!*"

Last week I asked how many of you love Jesus—and all of you raised your hands. But then I asked a deeper question—"How many of you are in love with Jesus?"

Of course, that question probably caused some of you to think to yourselves—

- "**How do I know if I'm in love with Jesus?**"

Well, that's a fair response to a probing question—so let me try to give you a simple answer that hopefully will help you understand what being in love with someone looks like.

1. When you're in love with someone—they're the first person you think about when you wake up in the morning; and the last person you think about before going to sleep at night.

Because when you're in love with someone—they affect your mind—they dominate your thinking! Last week we said that spiritual warfare is primarily a battle for control of our *thinking*. That the Bible teaches that the mind is actually the *main* battlefield ('ground zero') in our war with the devil—the place where most spiritual warfare is fought.

Satan knows if he can control your thinking, he can control you—even as Solomon said in the Book of Proverbs, "*as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*" (Proverbs 23:7)

That's why sin had so little control over us when we first fell in love with Jesus and got saved—He and He alone dominated our thinking (not sin or self)!

2. Another characteristic of being in love with someone is that—you want to please them—their happiness and not your own becomes the driving passion of your heart—as when you first fell in love with Jesus.
3. Also, when you're in love with someone—you want to talk about them all the time—to the point where people start avoiding you because they're tired of hearing you go on and on about this person in your life that you're so crazy in love with!

Isn't that what happened to many of us when we first fell in love with Jesus?

4. I'll give you one more characteristic or practice of being in love with someone (especially true for young women in love)—you have a habit of writing the name of the person you're in love with on everything you own!

Ladies you remember when you were in middle school (junior high) or maybe even high school how you wrote the name of your boyfriend (or someone you dreamed of being your boyfriend) on your notebooks, your hands, your arms—and pretty much any makeshift canvas you had access to!

In fact, this is how the children of Israel acted when they first fell in love with Yahweh (God) and were on their honeymoon after God brought the nation out of Egypt into the wilderness and married them there at the base of Mt. Sinai.

The LORD makes a point to mention it—that during their time in the wilderness how they wrote His name on the flaps of their tents and on their horses' bridles.

Israel's relationship with Him was beautiful initially—but after a while they got *used* to God and as such—their love for Him cooled and their passion faded.

God laments this when He says to them through the prophet Jeremiah—

Jeremiah 2:2, 5 (NLT2)

² “Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the LORD says: “I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness...

⁵ This is what the LORD says: “What did your ancestors find wrong with me that led them to stray so far from me? They worshiped worthless idols, only to become worthless themselves...

This cooling off in love and passion for God was not limited to Israel in the Old Testament—it is very much a reality in New Testament times—including today.

Jesus laments this very thing in His letter to the church of Ephesus—

Revelation 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴ ...I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

The idea here is '*honeymoon love*'—Jesus is telling them that they were still going through the *motions*, but they had lost the *emotion* in their relationship with Him.

One pastor rightly brings some balance by saying—

“A couple that has been married for a long time doesn’t always have the same thrill of excitement they had when they first dated. That is to be expected and is fine—if that excitement has matured into a depth of love that makes it even better than the first love.”

Of course, the same is true in our relationship with Jesus—but that doesn't mean we stop being in love with Him either! So with that in mind let me say that your obedience to Jesus will be directly tied to how much you are in love with Him.

➤ “Well, I love Jesus—isn’t that enough!?”

No, because as I've said in the past—I love my sister, but I'm in love with my wife—and every person in this room know exactly what I'm talking about!

Let me say it again, your obedience to Jesus will be directly tied to how much you are in love with Him—and the devil knows that only too well! Which is why he seeks to distract a Christian with a new relationship or a new toy or hobby or something else in the world to take their heart away from Jesus as their first love.

Whether you realize it or not—this is spiritual warfare!

1 John 2:15-16 (NLT2)

¹⁵ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father [or Jesus] in you. ¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

Victory in spiritual warfare is very simple—if you’re going to be a victorious Christian—if you’re going to overcome and devil and the world—you must obey the Lord Jesus. If you’re going to consistently obey Jesus—you must love Him supremely above everything and everyone—

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first [the supreme] commandment.*

In other words, you must be in love with The Lord.

Listen, so much of our defeat in the Christian life is because—we’re trying to have victory in our own strength because it will benefit our lives in some way—but in reality, our love for Jesus really isn’t anywhere to be found in the equation. When that happens, when Jesus really isn’t our first love, all kinds of problems result—problems that many Christians don’t even realize are tied to their lack of love for and obedience to the Lord Jesus.

Let me approach this from a slightly different perspective...

So many Christians have marital problems and financial problems and they come to church wanting the pastor to basically fix their problems from the pulpit or in counseling—but a pastor can’t fix a problem that really isn’t the problem!

➤ “*What in the world are you talking about?!*”

Show me a husband who doesn’t cherish his wife, who doesn’t sacrifice himself for her according to God’s command to him in Ephesians 5:25-28, but instead is always demanding that she submit, submit, submit—and I’ll show you a man who doesn’t have a marriage problem he has a Lordship problem!

By the same token, show me a wife who doesn’t respect and submit to her husband according to God’s command to her in Ephesians 5:22-24, but is always challenging him, who seldom if ever submits to him when she disagrees with the decisions he makes—and I’ll show you a woman who doesn’t have a marriage problem she has a Lordship problem!

Likewise, show me a Christian couple who have spent themselves into financial debt to the point of bankruptcy by buying everything they see and ‘can’t live without’—in disobedience to Jesus’ command in Matthew 6:19-21—and I’ll show you a couple who don’t have a financial problem they have a Lordship problem!

We could apply this to many of the issues and problems we face in our Christian life.

Show me a Christian who harbors resentment and bitterness or even hatred in their heart for members of different races, political affiliations or towards those who have hurt or wronged them in some way—and I'll show you a Christian who doesn't have relational problems—they have a Lordship problem—because it was the Lord Jesus who commanded us to love our enemies. (Matthew 5:43-45)

If your love for the Lord Jesus Christ is not greater than any difference you have with others—be it marital, political, racial, economic, or any other issue or conflict you may have with another and refuse to die to self with regard to—make no mistake about it—you have a Lordship problem.

When we refuse to love our enemies or forgive those who have hurt or wronged us—the problem isn't with them, the problem is with us.

What is the problem? (let's just be brutally honest)—we are demonstrating self-love—we are loving ourselves more than we love Jesus—we are flat out demonstrating that we are not in love with Him but are more in love with ourselves.

But now imagine that Jesus was standing right in front of you holding your face with His nail scared hands, looking into your eyes, and saying to you, "*I am in love with you! Greater love has no one than to lay down their life for those they love. I showed My love for you by dying for you—will you show your love for Me by obeying what I have commanded you?*"

"So how can I fall in love with Jesus?"

1. Desire to be in love with Jesus as you once were—starting with your 'mind' (your 'heart, soul and strength' will follow)—starting with the way you think about your relationship with Him

Look, Satan has attacked your mind regarding your relationship with Jesus making you think something or someone else is more important (will fulfill you more) than your relationship with Him. That's why returning to Him and falling back in love with Him has to start in your mind as well—with your thinking—you need to have a change of mind!

What I'm talking about is *repentance*. As I said last time, the word repentance literally means '*to have a change of mind.*' Wasn't that exactly what Jesus said to the church of Ephesus?

Revelation 2:4-5 (AMP)

⁴ But I have this [one charge to make] against you: that you have left (abandoned) the love that you had at first [you have deserted Me, your first love]. ⁵ Remember then from what heights you have fallen. Repent (change the inner man to meet God's will) and do the works you did previously [when first you knew the Lord]...

2. Pray fervently day after day after day for God to give you the grace to fall in love with Jesus until it becomes a reality (starting with your devotions)

Understand that the love you're asking for isn't human love—it's **God's love**. God's love can only come from Him—therefore to be filled with God's agape love you must draw close to God everyday so that His love will flow into your heart and bear the fruit of falling in love with Jesus.

But listen, James has an important exhortation with regard to this—

James 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

The idea here is once again that of repentance.

James is saying you draw close to God by repenting of anything that is defiling your walk and destroying your love and commitment to Jesus (you fill in the blank).

- 3. Have faith that God will answer your prayer because it is absolutely in His will that you love Him supremely—only don't doubt.**

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

James 1:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom [or anything else that God wants to give], let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord...

Philippians 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Galatians 3:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

In his classic book, '*Abide in Christ*' Andrew Murray reminds us that everything in the Christian life that God commands us to do or be—is always His responsibility to make a reality.

Everything from abiding in Christ, to bearing spiritual fruit, to living a holy life, to experiencing victory over the flesh—

Everything that God commands us to do and be will only become a reality through His power—we simply need to pray and *believe* He will do for us all He desires for our lives.

Murry writes—

"Sanctification is a work of Christ alone, received from Him by faith. We have a choice in how we seek holiness (sanctification, love, victory etc.) because we have two natures at work in us (our fleshly, fallen nature; and our new spiritual nature in Christ). The way of the self (our fallen nature) is the carnal way. We may trust Christ to 'help' us—but we are focused on making our own sanctification happen. The spiritual way, in which we can do nothing (for we have died to self and sin), involves simply receiving Christ day-by-day, letting Him live and work in us at every step (of the way throughout the day) ..."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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