

“Keep my Word” John 14:23-31 Whitsunday 2021

As we are instructed in the Word of God, we learn the kinds of things He desires of us. “Keep my word,” He says. Which words are the words of Christ? Only those words that He spoke. Of course, since He is Jehovah God from eternity, then all words of God in both testaments belong to Him, as well as the Father and the Spirit. Therefore, all words in Scripture should be kept by us.

How do we do this? First, by acknowledging that these words are His. We should not pretend, with the sinful world, that the Scriptures are merely the words of fallible men. No, they are divine words from the Spirit of God, given to men to write down. So they are without error, and more than that, we should never set aside His words as if they have become outdated and obsolete.

We also keep His words by keeping His commandments. We must set them before us as dear to our hearts, since they are the words of our dear Father to instruct us. We must work hard at trying to obey these commandments. If we ignore them, we ignore the teaching of our Lord Christ, and show that we do not love Him. So we must set our hands and hearts to the obedience commanded by God.

This is no small task. When we are taught the Ten Commandments, we learn how difficult they are. “Remember the Sabbath day,” sounds easy, until we learn that deep in our hearts, we are supposed to hold this Word and preaching sacred and gladly hear and learn it. “Honor father and mother,” sounds easy, until those days that father or mother or other authorities want us to do something that we do not like. “Do not murder sounds easy,” until we discover that even in thoughts or in the slip of an angry tongue we commit murder. And so on and so forth. We see the Commandments of God as a great and terrible standard, so holy and lofty that none of us can attain to them.

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Some may claim to be doing pretty well at the Commandments, or claim that they no longer hate their fellow man in their heart, or that their love for God is pure. Such claims are false for any human being except one, the Man who spoke in the Holy Gospel today to us.

How do we prove that we love Christ? Keep His word. As believers in Him, we all have the beginning of love for Christ in our hearts. But it is imperfect. Our love for Him is seriously, gravely flawed by our old Adam. The old Adam hates the new Adam, because our sinful nature wants no Savior to rescue him. Indeed, the old Adam does not want to admit that anything is really wrong. Perhaps a few flaws here and there, but surely not seriously, gravely wrong.

One of the most important ways that we keep the word of Christ is to confess that what He has told us is true: We are by nature sinful and unclean, and we have sinned against God by thought, word, and deed. If we cannot admit that we are sinners, then we have already fallen short of the confession that the Holy Spirit wishes to put upon our lips. There is no public confession of Christ without the Spirit. There is no truth in our mouths except the Comforter puts it there. He is the Counselor and Teacher of the Word. He writes upon our hearts what we need for salvation and faith.

For this is the second necessary thing that the Spirit brings to our remembrance: Faith in Christ. This follows after we keep the Commandments (not by perfect obedience, mind you, but by admitting that they are true, and that we have failed to obey them as we should). Then, when the Holy Spirit has stuck us way out on a limb with the realization that we are unclean sinners, He does not leave us hanging. After our deep need for a Savior has been revealed the Spirit says, “Here is the exact Person you need: Jesus Christ the Lord.”

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We keep the word of Christ by trusting that He is the Redeemer from sin, death, and the devil. We keep His word by acknowledging that Christ has indeed done all that was necessary to do for our salvation, and not only that, but He did it for you in particular. You know He did it for you because Christ died for all. He did not die for some, or for most, or only for the good people (whatever that means). No, Christ shed His Blood for all. Therefore He has atoned also for your sins.

You keep the word of Christ by believing that He has given you peace. Sometimes, it is harder to believe that Christ’s peace remains with you. There are certain days (I think you know the kind I’m talking about.) when peace seems like the least likely thing to be in your life. Stress, pain, sorrow, confusion, and so much more spring up in our lives so easily. We do not feel peace all the time. Yet peace is there. Peace is a fact. Peace is the word that Christ has declared to you, and the blessing He gives you on your way. Just because satan has thrown up a smokescreen of a hundred distractions to keep our eyes away from Christ does not mean that the peace has disappeared. No, the peace is with you, and will always be with you.

Believe it. For Christ has said so, and He does not lie. The peace is what He has purchased for you with His life. That is a price that cannot be denied. To reassure you further that there is peace that even death cannot take away, He rose from the dead, and has washed you with the water of life, and offers you the food of immortality.

All this because Christ did as His Father commanded Him to do. The Father said, “Go, lay down Your life for the world.” And Christ replied, “Arise! Let us go!” as He said to the disciples. Even when the devil was coming to meet Him, to do his worst to the Son of God, He replied, “Arise! Let us go!” Nothing would get in His way, nothing

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would stop Him, not even the prince of darkness. So Christ suffered the rage of the devil and the sinful world, and even submitted to God’s wrath against sin. He did all this for you.

Because of this overwhelming love for us, we love Him as well. Because of the Holy Comforter’s presence to save us, we keep the word that He brings to our remembrance. Therefore we also love the Father and are acceptable in His sight, as if we have perfectly obeyed every commandment the Father could ever give us. For that is what Christ did, and it counts for us. In this holy Name into which we are Baptized. Amen.