

## A Legacy from Christ

John 14:21

The words of Jesus in the Upper Room came from His heart and were intended for the hearts of the disciples. That Jesus was speaking last words was certainly felt and no doubt brought great gravity to the occasion. Repetition in this context gives special emphasis to what has been spoken before but also adds nuance to previous thoughts. Jesus had already said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (14:15) Here He says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me..." So, we want to give thought to what Jesus said and then said again so soon after he had already said it.

In Jeremiah 35 we have the account of the Lord speaking to Jeremiah, instructing him to bring the Rechabites into the temple and to sit down with them and to give them wine to drink. Jeremiah followed this instruction and gathered the Rechabites, sat them down in a room prepared for the occasion and at every place setting at the table wine was poured for the benefit of the Rechabites. Jeremiah started things out saying, "Let's drink!" and the Rechabites answered, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us saying, 'You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons forever.'" Jonadab had lived during the time of Ahab and Jehu and had aided Jehu when he rose up against Ahab and took the throne of Israel. So, for well over 200 years the descendants of Jonadab had carefully observed his words so that they became the legacy of the family. Jonadab's instructions had been even more far reaching than, "Don't drink wine." He had added, "You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall live in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners." The descendants of Jonadab explained all of this to Jeremiah right there in the temple where he had gathered them together. The Rechabites stood firmly upon their legacy. They had followed Jonadab's commands without amendment. Generations had passed down this legacy so that they were so firmly committed to it that even Jeremiah, God's prophet could not get them to change their minds.

The story became the inspiration for Jeremiah's next sermon. He presented the example of the Rechabites to the people of Jerusalem and pointed out the irony of a clan that held in such great esteem the legacy of their ancestor in a way that had worked for their survival and prosperity when the people of Israel had in contrast showed little or no regard for the commandments of the Lord and the great promises of blessing that He had attached to them. They were indifferent to Jeremiah's warnings of the disasters that were about to fall upon them and uninterested in making things right with God. The Rechabites honored the legacy of their ancestor while the nation of Israel despised the legacy left for them by their God.

Jesus was clearly giving a legacy talk to the disciples. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me..." What commandments was Jesus talking about? No teaching of Jesus should be excluded from the list of what we might call His commandments, but it is significant to note what Jesus has been specifically talking about in the upper room. He washed their feet and applied His act of humble service to an ethic of mutual service. As He has served them, they were to serve each other. Jesus continued His talk by giving them a New Commandment. They were to love each other as he had loved them. They would see too soon in their own view of things just how deeply Jesus loved them as he died for them on the cross. Love each other with this kind of love and then everyone will know that you are My disciples.

Jesus continued His last words by challenging the disciples to believe in Him, to continue His work and to pray with Him, asking the Father whatever they wanted in Jesus' name that the Father may be glorified in the Son. He said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

The Rechabites found an identity and security in the legacy left for them in the words of their ancestor. They were willing to be unlike their fellows and there is no doubt that they were sometimes despised for being so different. But they developed a pride in who they were. They had opportunity to observe the demise of many who made other choices and they grew confident that their way

of life was best for them. They carried a spiritual message to their nation. Fidelity to God is best.

There are lots of models of spirituality, of what the true Christian or church is supposed to look like. The world values success, however it may be defined. This has crept into the church. Successful churches (large and prosperous) are thought to have discovered the secrets of blessing. Sermons from such churches are reproduced and preached by many who reason that if it worked for them then it will surely work for me. What is the image of a model Christian, pastor or church? And in our world the image seems to be one of prosperity, wealth, and power. Personality cults are the order of our day. Great pastors now develop multiple campus ministries where the message of the day is a video or simulcast by the anointed one. The people flock to these campuses. Methodology supplemented by personality. The people and leaders so engaged are very sincere. The Bible is opened (metaphorically) and the word is preached. The gospel is declared. Many are saved. Attention is given to discipleship and to meeting the needs of the masses who come to these churches.

But is something lost in all of the glitz and glitter of the show? The methodologies do not prohibit or exclude a call to follow the Christ of the Bible. But are they possibly inadvertently hiding the character of simple obedience to Christ? The legacy Jesus gave to the disciples was a legacy of service - Serve each other as I have served you. It was a legacy of love - Love each other as I have loved you. It was a legacy of relationship, Believe in Me, pray with Me and be constantly connected to Me.

To these who follow Christ in the way He desires, to them He makes promises. "He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." The promise consists of 2 loves and a demonstration. The Father's love, Christ's love and a manifestation of Christ. The nature of the Father's love should be seen specifically rather than generally. It is the Father's response to the obedient and sincere disciple. The response is a love that is experienced, that is practical and real. The same is true of Jesus' love. And so He shows Himself to the obedient disciple. One way to look at Jesus' talk is to see His

promised comings. He is coming back in resurrection. He is coming in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is coming for His own at the end of the age. He is coming to reveal Himself in the here and now to His obedient disciples.