

### Three Phrases in John 14:21 Outline the Believer's Advance: Willing Subordination to Reciprocal Love to Capacity Righteousness

**John 14:21 -** (1) "The one [ article ὁ, ho ] having [ ἔξω, echō: to have as a possession, i.e., facilitated wheel-tracks in the *kardia* ] My commandments and keeping them [ καὶ τηρῶν αὐτάς, kai tērōn autas: to guard and obey them ], (2) that one [ ἐκεῖνος, ekeinos ] is the one who loves Me [ ἀγαπάω, agapaō: reciprocally ]; (3) and the one loving Me will be loved [ personally ] by My Father, and I will love him [ personally ] and make myself known to him."

- 1) This verse has three parts. For any believer to qualify as "the one" in the first phrase is contingent upon the validity of the second phrase. And the reality of the third phrase is contingent upon the validity of the second.
- 2) The first phrase presents two requirements in order for a believer to develop reciprocal love for Christ. Those two things are designated as (1) having the Lord's commandments facilitated in his *kardia* in long-term memory and (2) obeying them.
- 3) These two qualifications are united under the Granville Sharp rule, defined as follows by:

**Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 271:**

When the copulative [connective conjunction] *kai* ["and"] connects two nouns of the same case, if the article ὁ [*ho*] precedes the first of the nouns, and is not repeated before the second noun, the latter noun always relates to the same person that is expressed by the first noun.

- 4) This rule applies to the opening phrase, "The one [ article ὁ, ho ] having My commandments and [ καί, kai ] keeping them [ no definite article ] ..."
- 5) If the second element of the sentence had begun with "and the one" then two people would have been in view. However, since the definite article is not used following "and" then only one person is being discussed.
- 6) What this does is establish what is required of the believer before he can be said to have reciprocal love for Christ.
- 7) The Lord identifies such a person in the introduction of the second phrase with the demonstrative pronominal adjective *ekeinos*: "that one."
- 8) Thus the individual who has both the doctrines of the Word in his soul as facilitated wheel-tracks *and* obeys them when required by the events of life and circumstances *that one* is the one who *loves Christ reciprocally*.
- 9) The third phrase picks up on this point where the Lord states that the person loving Him reciprocally will be the recipient of three things: (1) the personal love of God the Father, (2) the personal love of Christ, and (3) experiential knowledge of Christ by means of blessings.
- 10) The importance of rebound is implied here since in order to accomplish the requirement of reciprocal love for Christ the believer must be able to utilize the two power options: (1) the filling of the Holy Spirit and (2) the grace system of perception.

- 11) Obedience to the Lord's commandments results in the development of the three spiritual skills that includes a third element, the ten problem-solving devices, which when learned and deployed result in personal love for God.
- 12) The last two elements of the verse describe the personal love of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Personal love must be directed toward a perfect object which, in this case, is the imputed righteousness possessed by every believer.
- 13) However, what is emphasized here is the spiritual growth of the believer who has acquired a level of capacity righteousness that is manifest by his personal love for both God and Christ.
- 14) The *unconditional* love of God is directed toward every believer through the provision of a Savior—Jesus Christ. The personal love of God is directed toward every believer's imputed righteousness regardless of his spiritual status.
- 15) So, what is meant by the Lord's comment that if believers learn and apply His commandments they will be loved by Him and the Father? Is their personal love not already directed toward believers' imputed righteousness?
- 16) The answer to the latter is a resounding "Yes!" The undiminished love of God for the believer is emphasized in:

**Thieme, R. B., Jr. "Appendix A: The Doctrine of Divine Essence." In *The Integrity of God*." 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 278-281:**

**Love.** Love is the absolute virtue and benevolence of God's thinking and actions. His love never diminishes or improves. God is love whether or not He has a creature to love. The only object ever worthy of God's love is God's own eternal, unchangeable righteousness. God's love was not less because there were no angelic or human objects, and God's love did not increase once there were creatures to love. God's love is infinite and immutable; divine love does not increase or decrease, expand or diminish. No form of creature sinfulness, failure, vacillation, or rejection can change, effect, or elicit a reaction from God's love. God's love depends on His integrity and is governed by His integrity. (pp. 278-79)

**Love toward mankind.** God's love for mankind is classified into two categories: divine personal love and divine impersonal love. God's infinite, eternal, immutable *personal love* is only directed toward perfect righteousness.

Divine personal love is therefore *conditional*: it emphasizes the attractiveness of the object. To be the recipient of divine personal love, the object must possess perfect righteousness. There is absolutely nothing we can do to earn the personal love of God or the right to live with him forever; we are qualified only by nonmeritorious faith in Christ.

God's infinite, eternal, immutable *impersonal love* does not depend on the merit of the object, but on the merit, the integrity, of the subject.

Divine impersonal love is therefore *unconditional*, based on God's own perfect character and His love for Himself. God loves spiritually dead, unbelieving mankind because of who and what He is, not who and what we are. (p. 280)

The love of God is expressed through grace. Grace is the policy of God for bestowing His unmerited favor on sinful humanity. (p. 281)

- 17) If God develops a perfect set of policies that are designed to fulfill His plan and this plan includes and involves humans then these policies must include stipulations that bless those who comply and discipline those that do not.

- 18) To regulate the management of these outcomes the plan of God created a grace pipeline through which all forms of blessing and discipline flow.
- 19) All blessings are directed to the believer's imputed righteousness. Some of these are guaranteed no matter the spiritual status of the individual, e.g., logistical support.
- 20) There are other blessings that are directed to the believer's imputed righteousness dependent upon his capacity to receive them. Qualification for receiving these blessings is contingent upon the acquisition of God's commandments and the wisdom to apply them to life and circumstances.
- 21) This is capacity righteousness, which is not a status quo but an ongoing advance in the plan of God that acquires as it goes increased blessings from God.
- 22) In John 14:21 we discover that the believer who learns and applies divine policies will be loved by God and Christ. To understand this expression of divine love we need to define capacity righteousness in more detail.