

Logan Smith
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John 14:1-15

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

If you went up to somebody random, maybe at the park or coffee shop in town, and asked them if they believed in some kind of afterlife, the odds are pretty good that people would say yes, there is, or probably is. A few more would probably say, “maybe,” “I think so,” “I hope so,” or something like that. Less of them, but still a majority of people, would even say they believe in Heaven. According to a Pew survey done in the last couple of years, about 3 quarters of Americans say they believe in some kind of afterlife, and a little less than 70% believe in some kind of version of “heaven.”¹ A majority of people even still believe in Hell. Now, not nearly that many people claim to be Christians. But it shows that in our post-Christian, more secular culture, where science and materialism dominate, people still yearn for life after death, and the idea of “heaven” isn’t that controversial. Even the people who say no, they don’t believe that’s possible at all, probably wouldn’t get mad at you for asking that question. The idea of an afterlife isn’t offensive to most people; it’s attractive, even to a lot of atheists.

But, if you asked, as a follow-up, how people can get to heaven or the after-life, there’s a good chance many people would say something along the lines of, “You have to be a good person, I guess,” or “As long as you have faith” without there being anything specific you have to have faith in. If you asked, “faith in what?” I think a majority of people in our culture would say it doesn’t really matter; it’s just the faith, the effort, trying to be a good and spiritual person, that counts. The prevailing idea of our culture is “All roads lead up the mountain.” There isn’t just one truth or one religion; there are many paths, many ways, up to God, up to Heaven. They don’t want to exclude anyone. They think it’s arrogant to say one religion is right, one worldview or belief system is right, and all the others are wrong. They want to be open, accepting, and tolerant. But if you then shared that you believe what the Bible says - that there is only *one way* up the mountain, only way to Heaven, through faith in Jesus Christ alone - than the odds are, they would not be so tolerant or friendly with *your* belief system. They would have no problem saying that *our* religious beliefs are wrong.

¹ Pew Research Center, “Life After Death Survey,” <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/05/06/believing-in-spirits-and-life-after-death-is-common-around-the-world/>. Accessed August 14th, 2025.

So what do we do with these common assumptions? Do all roads lead up the mountain to God? Isn't it arrogant to think our religion and worldview and beliefs are better and truer than those of others? Isn't truth relative and subjective, different for different people? What about those who've never heard of the true God or the gospel of Christ? Do they really have to believe in Jesus to be saved? Does it really matter how we live if we're saved by grace?

Our passage this morning gives us a clear answer to all these questions, cutting against the spirit of our age to deliver us objective, unchangeable truth and refreshing clarity. The answers given might not be comfortable to many in our culture. In fact, some of the answers given here might not even be comfortable to all of us; after all, we're often more influenced by the thoughts and beliefs of our culture than we realize, even as Christians. But the answers given to us here bring simple truth and satisfying clarity to one of the most important, emotional, and urgent questions we could ever ask: *How can I be sure that I can go to Heaven after I die instead of going to Hell?* In this passage, Jesus gives us a sure answer that we can cling to and set our hopes on without wavering. An answer that'll let you sleep at night John 14 makes incredibly clear that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: He really is the only way to God, and He prepares a room in Heaven - secures eternal life - for all who believe in Him, and *only* those who believe in Him; and it also shows us that all who truly believe in Him necessarily *walk towards heaven through the way of Jesus*, loving and obeying His commandments and striving to be more like Him.

First, we see that *Jesus prepares eternal life in Heaven for us...*

I. Jesus prepares eternal life with God for us (vv.1-4)

The passage begins, in v.1, with an exhortation to not be troubled, but to trust in God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." We left off last week, in chapter 13, with Jesus telling His disciples that He is about to leave them and go where they cannot follow - namely, He's going to the cross, to suffer and die. Peter boldly proclaimed, at the very end of the last chapter, that he would follow Jesus *wherever* He goes, even unto death! But Jesus corrected him quickly; Peter will not die for Jesus, Jesus will die for him; Peter is actually going to *deny* Jesus three times that very night. And so, it's only reasonable that the Twelve disciples are feeling pretty down and discouraged right about now. In fact, it's not Twelve anymore - Judas has already left them. They've found out that one of their own is about to betray Jesus, and Jesus is about to die, leaving them. Not only that, but things are

going to get so bad that *even Peter* is going to outright deny Christ 3 times! That had to have been discouraging and disturbing to hear. So Jesus exhorts them to *not* be troubled. It's not because things aren't going to be hard - they will be, even harder than they think. But instead of being troubled by it they should *have faith instead*. Jesus exhorts His followers to trust God, to trust Jesus. To trust that this is all part of God's glorious plan.

Jesus is leaving - going to the Cross to die, and then rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven - in order to go and secure *salvation and eternal life* in Heaven with Him for His followers, His disciples - those who believe in Him. We see this in vv.2-4: "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Jesus leaves the world to prepare a place in His Father's House - Heaven - for all His disciples, all who believe in Him, for there are *many rooms*.

This isn't meant to be a literal depiction of Heaven; the point is not that we're all going to be living in one literal giant house. The point is the overabundance of room! One time, I was gonna take my wife out on a date for a special occasion; we didn't think we were going to be able to go, so I hadn't made any reservation, but then, late that afternoon, it turned out we would be able to go after all. So I called our favorite restaurant to make a reservation, but sure enough, since it was Friday night, they were already booked out for the night. No more room. Maybe you've wondered: is Heaven going to be like that? Are there only a limited number of spots and if they get filled up before we get there? Like showing up at a hotel in the middle of the night only to find out there are no rooms available? Thankfully, no, we don't have to worry about Heaven filling up before we get there. We don't have to worry about God running out of space. Jesus does not have a limited amount of grace to hand out; He doesn't have to ration it. It's not like some Christians will make the cut but others won't. No, Christ makes clear: He has gone ahead of us, through the cross, resurrection, and ascension back into Heaven, to *guarantee* that there will be plenty of room for *every single one of His disciples*! He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place *for us*! Christian, you can rest assured, that Jesus has secured, guaranteed, and prepared a place in Heaven, a place in His Father's House, a place in His Kingdom, *just for you*. It will not vanish. It will not be given to another. It will not go vacant either. He has promised that He will come back for you; He will make sure He sees you safely home.

And this is also good news for you if you *aren't* a Christian today. There's plenty of room in Heaven - even for you. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter where you're from. Maybe you're wondering if Christ would ever love you enough to save you. Maybe you're wondering whether there's any chance that you'll make it to Heaven. Maybe you're wondering if God would ever let you in. Maybe you're wondering if there's room enough for you. You might compare yourself to others and think, "Sure, I can see how they might make it - but me? How could God love me? How could I be forgiven after what I've done? How could I make it to Heaven?"

Here's how; here's the good news: the way to Heaven is through trusting and believing in Christ! Jesus does everything necessary to accomplish our salvation, to secure a place in Heaven for us, and prepare the way. He prepared the way by dying on the cross in our place, as a substitutionary sacrifice in our place. We could never be good enough for Heaven; we are all sinners and deserve Hell. Yet Christ *is* good enough for Heaven; *more than good enough!* He is perfectly righteous, the spotless lamb of God, God Himself in the flesh! He lived a perfect life for us, went to the cross bearing our sins to make atonement for them, to wipe them out and lay our debt, then rose from the grave, defeating sin and death, and ascended at the right hand of the Father, to secure and guarantee our salvation and eternal life. He has gone before us into death in order to conquer over the grave and pave the way to eternal life! Our salvation and hope of eternal life is not based on us or our works, but on trusting and believing in the Christ and what he has done! Believing in Christ, trusting in His work saving you, by His grace alone and not because you are good enough, that is the way to Heaven!

Christ has paved the way for us to eternal life! The way is open, a place in Heaven secured and prepared, for *any and all* who repent and believe in Him! But this means faith in Christ is the *only way* to eternal life...

II. Believing in Jesus is the only true way to eternal life (vv.5-11)

After Jesus tells His disciples that He is going to prepare a place for them in heaven, in vv.1-3, He tells them that they "know the way to where I am going" in v.4. But they immediately object and say they don't know the way. Thomas (who's often known as "doubting Thomas") says, in v.5, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" In other words, if we don't even understand *where* you're going, how in the world could we know *how to get there?* They still don't get it; they still don't understand the significance of what Christ is

about to do or the salvation He is securing for them. So Jesus replies, in vv.6-7, “*I am* the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” This is a profound statement; it’s one of Jesus’s famous “I Am” statements of the book of John. Jesus is stating, plainly and clearly, that *He is the way* to the Father - to Heaven. *He is* the way to eternal life because *He is* the life: the source of all life; and the only hope of eternal life comes *through Him*. The only way to eternal life with God, in Heaven after death, is *through believing in Jesus Christ*. For *He is the truth*. To know Christ is to know the Truth - the Truth of God Himself.

To know Jesus, the Son, is to know God the Father because Jesus is *one* with the Father. We’ve seen this all throughout the book of John: we see that God is one - there is only one true God - yet the One God eternally exists as three distinct yet inseparable persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We call this the *Trinity*. Jesus Christ is God the Son, who took on flesh; He is fully God and fully man. He came to reveal the Father to us and reconcile us - sinners - to the Holy and righteous God we have sinned against. This is why Jesus, the God-Man, was able to go to the cross for us, to bring us back to God. And this is why He can say that He reveals the Father to us, so that if we know Jesus we know God. Jesus clarifies this in his further dialogue with the disciples. in vv.8-11. Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father (v.8), but Jesus answers that He already has: to look at the Son is to see the Father (v.9). Jesus has been making that clear all along, so that the very words Christ speaks are the works of the Father (v.10). And so we must believe in Jesus (v.11).

Jesus alone is the Way to the Father, to heaven. Everyone must go through *Him*. Jesus alone is and reveals the Truth of God and salvation. We must believe in the Truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for our salvation. We must *trust in Him*, which necessarily demands that we know at least the essential truths of the Gospel. It doesn’t mean people must know or understand the *entire* truth out Christ or the Bible to be saved (because *none of us* fully understand the entire Truth!). But it does mean we must understand and believe the *essential truth* of Christ: the gospel. Jesus alone is the *Life*. Mere existence is not life. Physical existence in this world, apart from Christ, is spiritual *death*. It’s living as a zombie; alive on the outside, dead on the inside. It’s why people can get all that they ask for in life - money, fame, success, pleasure, comfort, luxury, relationships - and still feel empty and miserable inside. True life, life that is truly worth living, that is eternally satisfying, life that never fades or ends and is not

tainted by the shadow of death - truth life is found in Christ alone! Christ *is* life, the source of true life, and the giver of life - both physically and spiritually. Eternal life is found in Christ *alone*. It is given freely, by grace, but only to those who *believe in Him*. Christ alone is the true way to eternal life.

But that often raises a question, and quite an emotional one for many: what about those who *don't* repent and believe in Christ? It means they will not be saved apart from personally repenting and believing in Jesus Christ for salvation. But what about the proverbial “good pagan”? We probably all know some non-believers out there who are genuinely nice people. They are kind; they are generous; they are responsible and generally trustworthy; they do lots of good things. We may be tempted to ask, “Surely *they* won't go to Hell, right? They try so hard to be good and are so sincere!” But that's a fool's errand. No one can ever be good enough or try hard enough to get to Heaven. That's like saying, “My 4 year old boy wants to fly to Mars *really really badly*. Surely he'll make it because he's so sincere, right?” That doesn't change the truth of reality. Good intentions and hard effort can't magically make the impossible attainable or change reality. Just this week, I heard a news clip where President Trump was discussing peace talks between Russia and Ukraine; he said he's hopeful that he can save 7,000 people from dying a day - and that he thinks doing so may help him get into heaven. Now, bringing peace and stopping the deaths of thousands is a wonderful, worthy goal, and I pray that indeed happens. But even saving thousands of lives everyday will not increase anyone's chances of getting into Heaven. If we base it off of what we do, we will not make it. No one can ever be *good enough* to make it to Heaven - Christ is the only way. Being a good person won't save you. Salvation comes by *grace alone*, not by our works. If anyone wants to go to Heaven, the only way is through Jesus.

But what about those of other religions, who think they *are trusting* in the real, true religion? Isn't it enough that they're trying to come up the mountain through faith, even if it's not the right road? No, it's not enough. There's only *one way*. There's only *one truth*. Faith in Buddha will not save. Faith in spiritual forces will not save. Faith in pagan gods and superstitious rituals and offerings will not save. Faith in Allah and the pillars of Islam will not save. Faith in a false view of God, like those offered by the heretical cults of Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, *will not save*. Only faith in the Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ will save *anyone*. Only the true

Jesus is the true way to eternal life. There's only one way up the mountain - only one, true religion.

But what, then, about those who have never heard the gospel? The answer is obvious: *it means they desperately need to hear the good news about Jesus!* If your heart is saddened and broken about the reality of so many lost people around the world dying in their sins without any hope of salvation because they've never heard the gospel - then good! Your heart *should* be broken and saddened about this reality! And it should push you *to pray and work towards them hearing the hope of the gospel!* This reality should push us to be all the more diligent in sharing the gospel with those around us, praying for God to save sinners, and supporting missions to lost and unreached peoples around the world. And we must never forget that there are non-believers in our own backyard, in our own town and communities who don't know Jesus and don't know the gospel. We live in a mission field. We live among those who don't know the gospel. And the gospel of Christ is the *only* true way to eternal life: salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone! So let us be moved by this reality to share the gospel with all that we can and call all people to repent and believe in Jesus, so that they might be saved!

And so we need to understand what truly *believing* looks like, leading to our final point...

III. If we truly believe in and love Jesus, we will be like Him and obey Him (vv.12-15)

We see this beginning in v.12: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." Those who believe in Jesus will do the works of Jesus. He then explains why this is the case in vv.13-14: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." In other words, doing these works doesn't come from us: it comes from God, doing them in and through us, to the glory of Christ.

But we could easily fall into misunderstandings of these verses, so let's unpack them more. First off, we should note that Jesus isn't promising that God will give us anything we ask for in His name. Specifically, this is a promise that when we pray in Jesus's name to be able to *do the works of Christ*, then the Father will honor such prayers and give us the power we need to do them, to the glory of Christ in our lives. So the next obvious question is: what are the "mighty works" of Jesus that those who believe will do? Even "*greater works*"?

We have an important context clue here to help us out: look back at v.10: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The *words* that I say to you I do not speak

on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me *does His works*.” In other words, Jesus has just referred the His own *words* - His teaching ministry - as Him doing the *works* of the Father; or rather, the Father doing His works through Jesus’s words. So it would make sense, given this immediate context, just a couple of verses later, that when Jesus speaks of us doing *His works* - and even greater works - it certainly must include the *words* of Jesus: speaking, believing, proclaiming, teaching, sharing, applying, obeying, displaying the truth of God and the gospel of Christ Jesus and all His commands.

And one of the surest ways to see if we’re on the right track is to look at the book of Acts, where we see Jesus’s words here being carried out in His disciples after Christ has died, risen, and ascended. So what do we see in Acts? What are the works of Christ the early church did - not just the Apostles, but all those who believed in Jesus? We may immediately think of the “miraculous” works of Jesus. And we do indeed see some of Christ’s followers doing miracles in His name in the book of Acts. But that’s not *all we see*. We see the Disciples preaching and teaching the truth of the gospel with authority and power, like Jesus did. We see the power of conversion on a mass scale at Pentecost, and thousands others continue to believe. Jesus’s earthly ministry had a much smaller scale and audience of followers than we see among His followers in the book of Acts! Jesus’s earthly word ministry was confined to Israel; but in Acts - and in our age today - we see the *works of the ministry of the word of Christ, the Word of the gospel* - going forth among the nations, in all the earth! We see the disciples serving and loving one another in Acts, even when it’s costly to themselves. In other words, we see them carrying out the very same work Christ did in the last chapter as an example for us: washing His disciples feet. We see the work transformation occurring in people’s lives, as they resist temptation and sin and do works of righteousness, becoming more like Jesus, all by the power of God the Father in the name of the Son.

I think it’s safe to conclude that doing the “works” of Christ refers, generally, to being Christlike. Those who believe in Christ will become *more like Jesus*, loving and thinking and living and believing and speaking like He did, more and more, by the power of God at work within them! We see this confirmed by the next verse, v.15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” vv.12 and 15 seem to be parallel thoughts, don’t they? Those who *believe in* Jesus do the works Jesus does. Those who *love* Jesus obey Jesus. And vv.16-17 parallel vv.13-14. We can do the works of Christ by praying to God, trusting He will give us what we need to be

more Christlike. In the same way, those who love Jesus will obey Him because, according to vv.16-17, Christ will give us the Holy Spirit as a Helper! We will look at this in greater detail next week, but for now, we need to see that our power to obey Jesus comes not from us, but from the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises to put His Spirit into every Christian's heart, promising to transform us to *want* to obey Him out of love and helping us to do so!

It is inevitable that if we believe in and love Jesus, we will increasingly obey Him and become more like Him. This is necessarily true of *every Christian* - of everyone who truly believe in and loves Jesus. The old saying is true: we are saved by faith in Christ alone, but saving faith never is alone. This is not saying that real Christians are perfect. None of us are perfect. We remain sinners until Heaven; all of us fall and fail. But it does mean that we will be different; we grow; we *want* to be more like Jesus and obey Him, and God promises to give us the power for us to do so more and more. Love is the greatest motivation there is for obedience. Nothing will drive your heart to obey Jesus more than loving him. Shame and guilt trips might light a fire under you for a time, but that fire will die out. A sense of duty and obligation might lead to some change, but not the real, lasting sense of drive on the inside that we need. Those are like jump starts, but if your battery is completely dead, the engine won't run. Love for Christ is the battery our hearts need! And a sense of legalism *definitely won't work*. If we obey because we think it'll earn our salvation, or keep trying harder to be a better person so that we can be good enough to go to Heaven, we will only crash and burn, because we're gonna keep failing and never measure up - and as we crash and burn, and feel defeated, we'll feel like trying to obey and be righteous is futile and hopeless and we might as well give up. But if we are motivated by *love*, our battery will keep going and going! We obey Jesus *because we love Him!* Love for Christ *compels us* obey Him! If we believe in Jesus we *want* to be like Him! If we love Jesus we *want to obey Him!* If you love your family, you want to do good things for them; you want to show it. In the same way, if we love Jesus, we will *desire* to obey Him.

If you find yourself struggling to obey God right now, if you feel like the struggle against sin has become more like surrendering the fight, if the commandments of Christ weigh heavy and feel burdensome to you, then these should be a big flashing light on your dashboard: these are warning signs that your faith is withering, that your love for Christ is growing cold. So what should you do? First off, *you should pray*. VV.12-14 invite us to pray to God, to ask the Father in the name of the Son to do greater works of sanctification in our heart, making us more like

Christ. Ask God for a change of heart, for help and grace to fight sin, obey Jesus, do works of righteousness, to think, feel, speak, act, and love like Jesus does. Secondly, you should *cultivate your love for Jesus!* Stoke the fires of love and affection for Christ in your heart. The way you do that is by focusing your attention on Christ. See, hear, read, pray, and sing of Jesus's glorious love and grace for you. Meditate on just how much love He shows you! Immerse yourself in the Word of God and prayer. Read the Bible daily. There is no better way to see Christ, to know Christ, to grow your faith in Christ, to feel loved by Christ, and to grow your love for Christ than by reading His Word - for the entire Bible shows us Jesus! If you're not sure where to start, then start reading through the gospels, praying that Christ would increase your love for him as you do. And you should also preach the gospel to yourself daily. Remind yourself of just how much love Christ has shown you, by dying to save your soul! Surround yourself with church community who will preach the gospel to you and remind you of Christ's love for you!

And one of the ways we do this is by celebrating the Lord's Supper together. This is a tangible, visible picture of how Jesus loved us by laying His life down for us. And it's a tangible way for us to love him in return in an act of faith and obedience. So if your faith is in Christ - if you are a baptized believer in good standing with a gospel believing church - we invite you to join us at the Table in just a few moments.

But what if that's not true of you? If your life is more characterized by *disobeying Jesus* and you don't actually *want* to obey Jesus, then it means you don't really love Jesus. It may very well be that you're not a Christian. If there's no evidence of faith and love for Jesus in your heart and life, that should absolutely terrify you, because Christ is the only way to Heaven and salvation. And so you must repent and believe. Cry out to God, confess that you are a sinner that can never be good enough for Heaven; and then turn to Christ, believe that He lived a perfect life and died on the cross to save sinners just like you; ask Him to forgive and save you, and then trust that He will! Trust in His glorious promises to save your soul and bring you to live with Him in eternal life, in glory. See His love for you, and surrender your heart to love Him in return! And if you truly repent and believe, if you truly love Jesus, then you will begin your new life of becoming more like Him. And one of the first ways you are to profess your faith and begin to obey Him from a heart of love is by being baptized. If you have any questions about this, we would love to speak with you after the service.

Until then, let's have a moment of silence as we prepare to come to the Table.