

John 15:9-17

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

9 Do you recall back when we first began our study in John that I shared with you the Father's great love for the Son and the Son's great love for the Father? They have forever been satisfied with one another. Everything of value they find in one another. There is nothing to dislike. They are completely pleased with one another and need nothing else, yet they chose to create us and invite us into that holy fellowship they share (John 1:1).

When Jesus told the disciples that He loves them like the Father loves Him, I do not think they could take in the fullness of what He meant. From their perspective, Jesus must have been the most loved by God person to have ever lived, for the Father always answered His requests. People in that culture believed that miracles were a result of a special relationship with God. They believed God listened to those who were righteous and would not hear the prayer of sinners (John 9:31). Considering that the life of Jesus was filled with more miracles than any of the prophets before Him, they must have been convinced that God loved Jesus more than anyone in history. Now Jesus tells them that is how He loves them! Wow! They must have felt incredibly special, and they are. So are we!

His instruction for us followed. *Now remain in my love.* Now that you know you are loved, you should stay in that love. The word "remain" (*meno*) was used for soldiers who held their ground against an attack. That says to me that we can give up and desert that love, retreat, stop living in it, if we so choose. That is a frightening thought.

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

10 Over and over we have seen that Jesus is our perfect example. He asks us to live like He lived and do what He did (John 13:15). We have also seen in John's Gospel that Jesus only does what the Father tells Him (John 5:19). He only obeys His commands. He is not swayed by what people think (Matthew 22:16). He does not take a poll and then act. He is only concerned about what His Father thinks. He remained in His Father's love because He obeyed His commands. Now He asks us to do the same with Him. How do we remain in Jesus' love? We remain in His love by obeying His commands.

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

11 Jesus does not command us to do things because He likes to be bossy. He commands us to do things because He loves us, and He knows the results that obedience would bring to our lives. He commands us to obey because He wants us to share His joy. He knows the joy of obeying His Father (Psalm 19:8)! He wants to share that joy with us!

When we obey God, we are living how God intended us to live. There is a deep satisfaction of doing what we were created to do. The load of guilt is gone. Peace and comfort flood our lives. That all results in a joy that goes way beyond circumstantial

happiness. If the joy is gone, we have stopped obeying our Lord. We have refused to be pruned and quit living in Him (Colossians 3:15).

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

12 We saw this command earlier in John 13:34. Jesus again added "*as I have loved you*". The next day they would find out how much He loved them. The next verse tells them the greatest love lays down one's life for those he or she loves. How are we supposed to love like that? We can only love like He loved when we remain in the vine. If our life flows from Him, we will bear the same fruit in our lives that He bore in His. Our open ear to Him will be like His open ear to the Father (Isaiah 50:4). Loving obedience will result in much fruit, including the fruit of loving others like Jesus loves us. Jesus' very own life will flow through us, helping us to live as He lived (1 John 4:21).

13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

13 When we came into this world of sin, we were under fire from the enemy of our souls. The grenade of judgment came rolling into our room and there was no way out. Everyone in the room of this fallen world was going to die. Jesus volunteered to come into the room with us, reached out and took that grenade of judgment and wrapped Himself around it, dying that we might live.

Laying down your life in love does not only come at the end of life. That is a one-time momentary decision. The real difficulty is laying it down day after day after day in service to those who may not appreciate or understand what you are doing. Again, I ask you how that is possible? It is only the life of Christ flowing through us. There is no other way. We must remain in the vine, continually in a daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy (1 John 4:7).

14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

14 If we obey Jesus, we remain in His love and we are His friends. Once again, we need to hear this with Jewish ears. If you asked the Jews about who was a friend of God, they would immediately think of their forefather Abraham. Listen to this verse from James. ²³ *and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.* (ESV) James, the half-brother of Jesus, links this believing faith with righteousness and friendship with God.

Are you His friend? You see, it would not make a lot of sense to say you were His friend if you always ignored His loving and gracious commands and never spent time with Him. If you chose to hate your brother or sister, when Jesus commands you to love him or her, how could you call yourself His friend? Should He call you His friend? As much as He may love you, the friend relationship does not exist for those who choose not to obey Him (James 4:4). When we refuse to obey His commands, we are saying in affect, "I trust myself more than I trust my Maker." I would call that naïve, arrogant, or plain stupid. Whatever it is, good luck with the outcome.

15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

15 Disciples of the first century were their rabbi's servants. They waited on their master. Jesus is saying that His relationship with His disciples, and that includes all who learn from Him, is one of more than a servant but that of a friend.

Jesus is not saying we do not serve Him. In fact, most of the New Testament writers introduce themselves as "a servant of Jesus Christ" (James 1:1; Philippians 1:1). Jesus is getting at the intimacy of our relationship with Him. He does not treat us like the world treats their servants. He treats us like friends. He shares the things that are really on His heart, everything that He learned from the Father. He does not hold back but shares it all. There is no secret wisdom that He withholds from us as was the case with Gnostic masters and their disciples.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

16 It was common for a student to carefully choose which rabbi he would follow. He may have been rejected, but it was the disciple that did the choosing. Jesus turned that around. He chose the Twelve. He chose you and me. Those who struggle with God's sovereignty wonder how we could still have free will. He chooses those who are willing to be chosen (1 Peter 1:2). He even chooses some who would not choose Him, and yet He lets them have the final say, such as was the case with Judas. You are here this morning because God chose you, but He lets you have the final say (Revelation 22:17).

Walking in the Spirit, (staying in the vine) will bear the fruit of the Spirit and that will draw people to Jesus (John 12:32). We are commanded to make disciples (Matthew 28:19) and be a witness of His love, but it is Jesus who chooses who will be grafted into the vine.

Notice that He gives us fruit that lasts. This is the joy that does not come and go. If you are in the vine, the fruit of joy endures; the love and the peace is not just a passing experience. It is your new life. It lasts. As long as you are in the vine it will remain. That is so encouraging in our current world situation. As everything seems to be hanging by a thread and we wonder what tomorrow will bring, you can know that the fruit of the Spirit in you is meant to remain through whatever comes (John 14:27).

17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

17 Jesus repeats Himself. It is His way of stressing that this command is a priority. As the disciples would start to point fingers after the crucifixion, as the church age would begin and tares would be sown among the wheat (Matthew 13:25), one of our greatest needs is to love one another. Love that type A personality that always has to tell you how to do it. Love that person who always brings up their favorite doctrine. Love the ones who disagree with you even after you have shown from the Scriptures why something must be done. Love them because they are tolerating things in you and me as well. Love

them because Jesus loves us in spite of all the things He puts up with in us. If you expected heaven in church, I must tell you that you will be disappointed. Church is a place where we get ready for heaven by learning to love one another. If the church were perfect, we would not be allowed in! If we cannot love one another, how will we ever reach out to a lost world with God's love?

There is a story from the Church Fathers about John the Beloved in his old age being carried each week to church in a chair. The congregation in Ephesus would ask him each week if there was a word from the Lord. Week after week John would reply, "Love one another, for when this is done, all is done" (1 John 4:12).

Questions:

How would the disciples have heard verse 9a?

How do we remain in Jesus' love?

Why does Jesus give us commands?

How do we love as He has loved us?

What is required for fruit that remains?

Why should we love one another?