

Jesus' Relationship to Believers

(John 15:9-17)

Last week's scripture message of the **Vine and the Branches**, was the picture of authentic discipleship—we remain in Jesus by his words remaining in us, directing our prayers. Therefore we live life to God's glory. Remember, Jesus is about to leave the disciples, so prayer will become even more vital.

Today, Jesus turns the disciples' attention to the fact that they are loved (v. 9); and he remains in the Father's love by obedience, so we remain in his love by obediently loving one another (vv. 10-17). Jesus has a very special relationship with believers, a relationship that delivers them from an existence that is barren, empty, lonely, unmeaningful, and sad. Christ has loved believers. He has loved us with a very special love. **Two** profound points are being discussed here. The **first** point is the Father's love for his Son, Jesus Christ. There are **three** significant reasons why the Father loves Christ. The **first** reason the Father loves Christ is that Christ is his Son, his *only* Son. God loves Christ because of a *natural love*. God naturally loves his Son just as most fathers love their

children. Which is what we can read in **Ephesians 1:6-7**, “To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely give us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

The **second** reason God loves Christ is that God loves him with an obedient love. God is perfect, which means he is perfect love. Therefore, being perfect love, God is bound to love his Son. But this means much more than an ordinary love. Christ himself is perfect—the perfect Son of God. Therefore, God loves Christ with very special love. Imagine how a parent would love a perfect child, a child who was always obedient: never being disrespectful, rebellious, haughty, selfish; and never causing pain, hurt, or doubt. Most parents love their children, but it is a special love based on the perfect obedience of Christ. Which is what it says in **John 14:31**, “But the world must learn that I love the Father and I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. ‘Come now; let us leave’.”

The **third** reason God loves Christ is that God loves Christ with a supreme love. Christ paid the supreme price of obedience. He died and sacrificed himself in obedience to God's will. Therefore, God's love for his Son is very, very special in that it is a supreme love. Which is what we can read in **John 10:17-18**, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

The **second profound point** here is that Christ said that he loves believers with the same kind of love, the very same love that God has for him. Again, there are **three** reasons why Christ loves us. **First**, Christ loves us with a natural love. Christ loves us because we are God's children. Christ loves us because we are brothers of His. And Christ loves us because we are the household and family of God. **Second**, Christ loves us with an obedient love. He loves us because we believe God. He loves us because we earnestly seek God. And Christ loves us

because we obey his commands. **Third**, Christ loves us with a supreme love. He loves us because we pay the supreme price of obedience: we deny self, take up our cross, and die daily in order to follow him. We find this in scripture in **Luke 9:23**, "Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'."

Christ has **one** great charge for believers—to continue or to remain in his love. "Continuing" or "remaining" in his love is conditional. A believer can break fellowship with Christ, or cease to keep his thoughts upon Christ, or walk out of the love of Christ, or get away from the love of Christ, or turn their back to the world and to his old worldly friends, or give himself back to the lusts of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has or does. Jesus said that it is up to the believer to continue in his love. How? By doing what any person does when he wants someone to love him. The person draws near to the person he loves: he does good and tries to please the person. So it is with the believer. The believer continues in the love of Christ by drawing near

and doing good and seeking to please him—very simply by obeying His commandments. Now note a critical point. Christ always loves; his love is always there. But it is up to man to walk in that love. A man can never know and experience the Lord's love unless he walks in it.

Which is what we are told in **John 14:21**, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

In addition to one great charge, Christ has **one** great purpose for believers—the completion of their joy. I will make note of **three** points. **First**, is the joy of Christ. His joy and glory was doing the will of God and looking ahead to the joy and glory of eternity with his Father and his followers. **Second**, is the joy of believers being the joy of Christ himself reigning within their hearts. And **third**, is the joy of believers being fulfilled as believers study His Word, the promises, and commandments which he made. This is what we heard read to us earlier from John **15:11**, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

How believers relate to each other is of critical importance. Division will destroy a body of people quicker than any other single thing. Too many are known for their grumbling, griping, complaining, murmuring, and divisiveness than for anything else. Nothing cuts the heart of Jesus more than such self-centered and divisive behavior. The relationship of believers to each other is of critical importance.

The supreme command given to believers is to love one another. They are to love one another just as Jesus loved them. Note: Jesus is clear about what he means. He loved man so much that he paid the ultimate price. He died and sacrificed his life for man. We can find this in **John 13:34-35**, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The supreme standard for believers is the love of Jesus Christ himself. He paid the ultimate and supreme price of love. He died and sacrificed himself for his friends. Which is what we can read in **1 John 3:16**, "This is how

we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."

The supreme bond of believers is the bond of "friends." Believers form a bond of "friends," a spiritual bond founded by Christ himself. But note **two** things. **First**, being a "friend" of Jesus is conditional. A person has to know and do his commandments in order to be a friend of his. The implication is clear: there is no way to be his friend apart from knowing what He says. It is His Word that tells men about him. Therefore, a person has to diligently seek to learn his word and do what he says in order to know him and become his friend. The point is clear: friends relate and commune with each other, share and respond to the word of each other, rejoicing when the word or conversation is that of joy, and helping when the word or request is that of need. **Second**, the bond of "friends" is based upon revelation, that is, upon Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ revealed and made known exactly what God told him. It is the Word of God that gives birth and structure to the bond of "friends." The friends of Christ are built upon and centered around the

Word of God. We can find this in scripture in **Matthew 12:50**, "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

The supreme purpose of believers is to go and bear fruit. Believers are the chosen and appointed of Christ, and they have been given the very same purpose of Christ himself: to go into the world and bear fruit among men. This is one of the great verses of Scripture. Note **two** points. **First**, believers are chosen and appointed by Jesus. We do not choose him nor do we appoint or send ourselves out to serve him. It is God who approaches and draws us and appoints us to live for Him and to serve Him. We find this in **1 Timothy 1:12**, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service." The **second** point I want to make note of is that believers are chosen and appointed for **three** specific purposes. **First**, they are chosen and appointed to go forth as ambassadors for Christ, proclaiming the glorious message of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Believers are not called to be an exclusive club of retirees who have it made and who

can go about doing what they want, knowing they are eternally secure. Believers are the ambassadors of Christ in the world. Once they have been saved, their duty—their sole reason for being *appointed and left* in this world—is to deliver the message of their King.

The **second** reason for believers being chosen and appointed is to bear fruit. Which is what we are told in **Matthew 3:8**, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” The **third** reason believers are chosen and appointed is to receive the things of God. Which is what it tells us in **Matthew 21:22**, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

And the conclusion to Jesus' relationship to believers is powerful and forceful. The *supreme command* given to believers is repeated: love each other. Which we find in **1 John 3:23**, “And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.”

What **lessons** can we learn from this Scripture reading? We need look at God's grace to love us despite our actions. We must love God and we must love one

another. Jesus tells us that our joy can be full. We can be satisfied in Christ alone, and we can be satisfied by knowing that Jesus loves us like the Father loves Jesus. We need to obey his command to love other people whatever the circumstances they may be in. This kind of love will bring us joy, not just a simple joy, but a deep-seated sense of happiness of having Jesus Christ in our being. Please help us to know and understand that it is a complete fulfillment and pleasure to be in the presence of God.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father, I know that I am commanded to abide in You and I desire to live my life day-by-day, simply resting and abiding in You. Teach me, Lord, how to abide in You, so that all that is of myself will melt away as the Spirit of Christ pulses through my being. Give me strength to be a fruitful branch, for You alone are my sufficiency. Enable me to abide in your love so that I may produce much fruit, out of the abundance of Your grace. In Jesus's name I pray. **Amen.**