

# Abiding in Christ's Love

John 15:9-17

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**John 15:9-17** <sup>9</sup> "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> "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. <sup>11</sup> "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. <sup>12</sup> "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> "You are My friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. <sup>17</sup> "This I command you, that you love one another.

**Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you;** Christ love for us does not have a starting point and will not end. The words "has loved me" express a perfected or complete love. It is not ongoing or growing and it is certainly not conditioned on anything. It is full, total and eternal. How do we know this? Because...His love for you is the same as The Father's love for Him. And...that stretches backwards into eternity past. There was never a beginning to this love and there will never be an ending to it. He does not love you because of what you did or will do. In eternity past. Christ and the Father were aware of every sin you would commit. Not in some general sense. They knew about your personal sin because they knew you personally before the world began.

**Ephesians 1:3-6** <sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Most believers have a major misunderstanding of this because we have been taught that Christ's love for us begins when we become Christians. Or that we became His possession and children when WE decided to believe. It is easy to think this because many of us remember that decision to follow Christ, but that is not how it happened. The vast workings of God's Eternal mind cannot be known to us unless He reveals them to us. Jesus revealed this truth during a particular encounter with some Pharisees....

**Luke 15:1-7** Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. <sup>2</sup> Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So He told them this parable, saying, <sup>4</sup> "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me,

for I have found my sheep which was lost!"<sup>7</sup> "I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

- Who is the Shepherd? Jesus....clearly.....

**John 10:14-15**<sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,<sup>15</sup> even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Who are the sheep.....us....clearly.....

**John 10:27-30**<sup>27</sup> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;<sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Now here are some other questions; There are thousands of sheep in this county. What has to be true for one of them to be your lost sheep? Yes! It must belong to you. It must belong to your flock! Another question...Is it still a sheep when it is lost? YES!!! Does the sheep in Jesus story find its own way back? No...The Shepherd comes for it. Jesus came for you precisely because you belonged to Him since before creation began.

**Luke 19:10**<sup>10</sup> "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Father set His affection on you before the creation of the world. He knew you by name and action. He chose you by name and gave you to His Son as an Eternal possession. The Son then came to redeem or purchase all His sheep at the cross and the Holy Spirit has purposefully found everyone of them in every age and brought them to trust in Christ. Because we are the Father's gift to His Son we cannot be lost. You did not save yourself by being good and you cannot lose yourself by being bad.

**John 10:29-30**<sup>29</sup> "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand."<sup>30</sup> "I and the Father are one."

Jesus finishes this section with this statement:

**John 15:16**<sup>16</sup> "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain,

**Abide in My love:** Considering all this Jesus cannot possibly mean "keep loving me." The word abide is literally, in Greek, "remain" and in light of everything, it means to rest in it. To enjoy it. To be comforted by it...because it is eternal, unchanging and divine. Because it depends on God and what He has done for you and not on you and what you have done for God. Jesus goes on...

**"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]:** This life changing condition of being eternally and absolutely loved by God must be enjoyed by you. **First** of all you must know that it is true. You cannot live your Christian life joyfully until you know that

you are and have always been eternally loved by God. You were purchased purposefully and personally by Christ at the Cross and you have been sought out by The Holy Spirit in this life and brought to faith.

**Ephesians 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Until you know **this** you will live a love starved existence. Every sermon will show you your short comings and sin. Every failure will confirm you in this loveless faith. You are a sinner pretending to be a Christian and you know it. It comes out with your spouse and children and loved ones. You never feel fully and unconditionally loved. AND....Here is the biggest tragedy....you can never give full and unconditional love.

Now that you know it you must remain in, live in, rest in and enjoy it. But How? This is where willing obedience to Christ's commandments comes into the picture. This is not the ten commandments. They can do nothing to either save you or bring you to God. If you kept them perfectly you would still be as spiritually dead as a rock.

**Romans 3:20** <sup>20</sup> because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Likewise, Jesus does not say "if you keep all the commandments I'll let you abide in my love." This is what we think, because we only know conditional love. We usually only give conditional love. We assume that God's love is likewise....conditional....BUT as we have just seen.... it is not! The enjoyment of it, however... is! So what are Jesus commandments? They all have to do with the love of God that is the central subject in this text.

**Matthew 22:36-39** <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' <sup>38</sup> "This is the great and foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

Love does not take the place of the moral law of God...it fulfills it....according to Jesus.

**Matthew 22:40** <sup>40</sup> "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Jesus knows that men cannot be saved by keeping the law. The problem is that **men** do not know that. They have substituted religion and law keeping for the love of God.

**Isaiah 29:13** <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,

The Love of God is revealed to men though Jesus Christ. Men do not truly love God enough to trust Him or obey Him because they are convinced that He does not love them.

Why? Because they have broken every one of His commandments and are utterly guilty and condemned. Let me illustrate: Suppose you had a neighbor who had children. And...you hate those children and curse them often. You have stolen from them and lied to them and about them. Let's further suppose that your neighbor knows about everything you have done and said about him and his children....Would you expect this neighbor to love you? Ridiculous! Would you expect him to even tolerate you? Of course not! Would you expect him to give one of his sons organs to save your life if you were dying? Absurd! This is why men do not love God. He is that neighbor and they expect justice from Him and not mercy.

BUT....it is the love of God that rectified this hopeless truth.

**John 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Love is the compelling human need and desire. It trumps everything else in life. If you have it you are happy if you don't you are miserable. People seek it....are driven to find it. Some think it is sexual, but soon find that it is not. Some think it is in prestige or acclaim but end up like so many worldly heroes who find that they are nothing and have nothing without love!

**1 Corinthians 13:2-3** <sup>2</sup> If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Men had possessed the old commandments for a long time when Jesus said...

**John 13:34-35** <sup>34</sup> "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

So...Jesus says that His love for us is eternal and unconditional. It is given and not earned by us. You can only know about it, rest in it and enjoy it. His commandment is new....meaning fresh and not just restated or recycled. Jesus makes it perfectly clear what His purpose was in giving it in verse 11

**John 15:11** <sup>11</sup> "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

We are getting very near understanding now what it means to abide in Christ's Love. It does not mean that you can make God love you by keeping commandments. It does not mean that you can make yourself love God by keeping commandments. Love is not produced by keeping the commandments of Christ. Love is experienced by keeping them. In keeping them there is Joy! Do you want to be happy and joyful? Jesus just flat out says that is the reason He gave you the command to love. If you want something more than religion then you are going to have to keep my commandments to love one another in the way that I have loved you.

God uses the metaphor of a yoke to speak of obedience. The oxen are yoked and then controlled by their master. Jesus described obedience to Him this way...

**Matthew 11:29-30** <sup>29</sup> "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. <sup>30</sup> "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Obedience to Christ will not cause Him to love you. He **has** loved you and died for you while you were a sinner. But obedience to Christ will cause you to experience... in your inner man.... the love God has for you. This happens when you love another sinner.

Let me illustrate again: When someone is unlovely and difficult and disappoints you, you now know....perhaps for the first time....how hard it was for God to love you. The greatness of His love...the depth of it. He loved you before you had any repentance or any faith. **He** brought you to repentance and faith, but He loved you first. This is how we know how much Christ loved us and that knowledge makes our love for Him soar.

That experience is joy bringing. It is liberating to be loved this way. That knowledge makes it possible to love others without condition. Without this you always have to wonder if the person you love will disappoint you and make it impossible for you to love them. You should decide right now that you are going to experience the love of Christ and so give His unconditional and eternal love to one another.

**John 15:12** <sup>12</sup> "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

**John 15:13-15** <sup>13</sup> "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> "You are My friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

**"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends:** No one disputes that this is the greatest expression of love for someone. In another place Jesus has taught us that we should love our neighbor and our enemy. The point here is not "who is my friend?" Or..."who do I have to lay down my life for?" Jesus is among friends and speaking to friends, even though within a few hours one will deny Him and the rest will forsake Him. Jesus is certainly speaking of His death for their sin, but He is not telling us to die for one another. In the next verse he says...

**You are My friends:** Friends are people with whom we share common desires and, goals and even thoughts.

**You are My friends if you do what I command you:** Jesus has not commanded them to die for one another. He has commanded them to live for one another. This is the way believers are to lay down their lives for each other. To love is to live for and serve. This is a characteristic of a FOJ....Friend of Jesus.

**No longer do I call you slaves:** He does not say that they are no longer slaves, but that “He no longer calls them slaves.” A lot of modern believers miss this point entirely and treat Jesus as if He were a peer...a golf buddy or the like. But...Jesus also said.....

**John 13:13** <sup>13</sup> You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am.

**Luke 6:46** "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

So which is it....Lord or Friend? It is both! Our Lord and Master whom we serve now also calls us friend...this is a conditional friendship. It is initiated by Christ and not by us. It is not a reciprocal relationship either. Jesus calls us friends. He does not say “we are friends.” You do not need to do what your friends tell you. How many times do I remember my Mother saying....”If your friends told you to jump off a bridge would you do it?” Friends are peers and Jesus is not your peer.

“There is a sense in which Jesus gives his life for the world, but there is another in which he dies for his friends. Who then are his friends? You are my friends if you do what I command. This obedience is not what makes them friends, it is what characterizes his friends. Clearly, then this friendship is not strictly reciprocal: these friends of Jesus cannot turn around and say that Jesus will be their friend if he does what they say.” **D.A. Carson**

**The slave does not know what his master is doing:** So on what basis are we also friends of the Lord of Creation? Jesus is telling us what He is doing and why. And we are obeying Him. Slaves require no explanation and seldom receive one.

**I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. [15b]:** I am amazed by the sheer number of Christians who do not want to be called friends of Christ in this way. They have little or no interest in the mind of Christ. They don’t know and don’t want to know why they take communion or become baptized. They don’t want to know why they should give their money and their time to God. They don’t want to know what their responsibilities are to their wives and husbands and even the church. If you are like that you are not a friend but just a slave. This is a tragic personal loss to you.

**John 14:25-26** <sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. <sup>26</sup> "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

To be a friend of Christ is to hunger to know what He reveals to you. Our knowledge will never be perfect or exhaustive, but how can we be content to know so little about Him and to be so wrong about so many of His thoughts and revealed purposes? I am exhorting you **to want to know Christ’s teachings** and the things that the Father has revealed. Enter into this friendship with Christ that He has offered.

**You did not choose Me but I chose you [16a]:** Jesus stresses the one sided nature of this relationship. YES...He calls us friends...and YES....He lays down His life for us in love, but not because we chose to become believers and friends. It is because He chose us to be his faithful ones and to take us into His confidence as friends.

**I appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain [16b]:** The purpose of our choosing is not just to salvation and heaven. A lot of so called Calvinists falter at this point. They become the **frozen chosen**. Frozen in place waiting for the Kingdom. Not witnessing because God chooses who will be saved, not praying because God is Sovereign. Not loving because God only loves the chosen and who knows who they are. Not seeking transformation by the renewing of their minds because they are already chosen.

God has chosen you to bear fruit and that fruit is Christ's likeness in the world. That is your destiny and not just heaven. We have already seen today that God has always known you and loved you. Paul tells us that....

**Romans 8:29** <sup>29</sup> .....those He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

**John 13:35** <sup>35</sup> "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

That this fruit is the likeness of Christ in Eternity is further confirmed when Scripture says...

**Ephesians 2:10** <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

**CONCLUSION:** Don't you want to know what these good works are and how to do them? Don't you want to fulfill your destiny in this life and not just the one to come? Then decide to energize your Christian life by pursuing Christ. Pursuing the knowledge of who He is and what He thinks. Discover His purposes for you and for your church that He has made you a part of.

Wives...don't you want to know more about the present day good works that Christ has prepared for you in your home and marriage? Men, are you content to just be like everyone else toward their wives and children or would you like to know the mind of Christ on it...to be called a friend of Christ?

YES! YES! I know...we are inadequate for the task. We are going to need help. This is why God gave us the Scripture, preachers and the Holy Spirit. They create the perfect storm for Friends of Jesus to know Him and Love Him with all their heart. What remains is your will to pursue Christ through the means He has provided for you.

**Whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you:** If you want to go hard after Jesus this way, God will answer your prayers for help to do it. If you are having trouble loving Christ you can ask the Father and He will help you. Love comes from God. Why would He not give it to you to spend on Him?

**"This I command you, that you love one another. [17]:** This passage ends as it started... with a command. But now you know more about why you should love one another and how God has provided for you to succeed at it. Paul under inspiration had a way of summing up and expanding on Christ's simple command to love one another....

**Romans 12:9-21** <sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>  
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup>  
Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in  
hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with God's people who are in need.  
Practice hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice  
with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one  
another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not  
be conceited. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the  
eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with  
everyone..... <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.