

## STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF JESUS

### JESUS FIRENDS

Read John 15:9-25

#### **Obeying and Abiding in Jesus' Love (15:9-11)**

*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (vv9-11)*

How has the Father loved Jesus?

The key verb is "obey" (NIV), "keep" (NRSV, ESV, NKJV), tēreō, "keep watch over, guard," here with the extended sense, "to persist in obedience, keep, observe, fulfil, pay attention to." The key noun, translated "what I command" (NIV), "commandments" (NRSV, ESV, KJV) is entolē, "a mandate or ordinance, command." This theme tying love and obedience is found throughout the John books of the Bible:

*"If you love me, you will obey what I command." (14:15, also 14:21-25)*

Some Christians have confused obedience with a kind of legalism that moves away from God's grace, his unmerited favour, to a place of earning favour with God by strict obedience as the Pharisees tried to do. This isn't what Jesus is saying. Rather, he is explaining that obedience is the natural result of love. If you love someone, you try to do what pleases that person.

Think of a disobedient child. Perhaps he loves his parents, but he has a poor way of showing it. They love him, but instead of being able to relax with him, they always must maintain discipline. Only with children who are obedient can the parents relax in their joy with them. And this joy is what Jesus wants us to experience.

*"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." (15:11)*

Obedience from the heart, the cessation of rebellion, enables free-flowing fellowship. As John says in his First Epistle:

*"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)*

The joy of Jesus isn't the same as what is commonly understood as happiness or excitement. The joy of Jesus is not the pleasure of a life of ease; it is the exhilaration of being right with God, and consciously walking in His love and care. We can have that joy – we can have His joy – and have it as an abiding presence.

#### **Introduction to Love & Friendship (12)**

Jesus comes back to his themes of love (13:34-35) and laying down one's life for the sheep (10:11, 15b), and then introduces the idea of friendship.

"Friends" is philos, which in John 11:11 regarding Lazarus referred to as a friend of Jesus. It means, "pertaining to having a special interest in someone, beloved, dear, loving, kindly disposed, devoted," then as a substantive, "one who is on intimate terms or in close association with another, friend." In a general sense, Jesus is called "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34b). In another place he refers to his disciples as "my friends" (Luke 12:4a).

Jesus shows his ultimate love by laying down his life for those loves. Amazingly, Paul reminds us, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (**Romans 5:8**).

Now Jesus takes this concept of friendship a step further.

### **Friends with Jesus (15:13-15)**

*"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."* (**vv13-15**)

Don't take verse 14 like you can earn friendship by being good. That's not the point. Jesus is saying that you doing what He commands is an indication that you love Him. Servants obey because they must. Friends obey because they want to.

If you go to work at a shoe store, you are taught how to fit shoes to people's feet. But if you are the owner's son, then you are taught every aspect of the shoe business. And, dear friends, Jesus' family business is the Kingdom of God, and you are brought in as a son.

Jesus' friends have the privilege of sitting down with the Master and understanding his Kingdom. Yes, He is King, but He is inviting them to share in His Kingdom, to be part of His administration, to "rule and reign with Christ" (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:4). The eleven became the foundation for the Church that mushroomed in the first century and beyond.

In teaching His disciples all about his Kingdom over three years, Jesus is explaining the inner workings, the philosophy behind His Kingdom, how to heal, how to pray, how to trust, how to undergo and understand persecution. Jesus spoke in parables to the crowds, which included his enemies, *"but when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything"* (**Mark 4:34**).

You are Jesus' friend. You get to share in his joy and plans for the future. You get to be a participant in advancing his kingdom. What a wonderful privilege. Value it!

### **Chosen and Appointed to Bear Fruit (15:16-17)**

Now, as he concludes this part of the Farewell Discourses, Jesus reminds his disciples that they didn't become Friends by their own choice or hard work. He chose them!

*"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another."* (**vv16-17**)

Notice that Jesus adds the element of election in verse 16 -- God's choice and God's appointment. Popular evangelical terminology tends to cloud this point of election. We speak of "accepting Christ," of "receiving Christ," of "being born again," as if it were our choice. We come back here to the mystery of predestination that we discussed at previous lesson. Surely, we must "accept" Christ, we must "receive" Him, and we must be "born again." But we don't initiate this. He does. And we must respond to our destiny, unless we are fools who resist Christ and finally turn from him.

Certainly, Jesus chose, commissioned, and appointed the eleven. But the Great Commission extends not just to them, but to all whom they lead to the Master, to the third and fourth generation of Christ followers, on and on until Christ returns. Until then you and I are appointed to "go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last."

The word “go” probably merely expresses the activity of living and developing principle. Jesus chooses disciples not simply so they would have the thrill of knowing they are chosen, but so that they would bear fruit that remains, to the glory of God the Father.

Dear friend of Jesus, keep bearing fruit and be diligent to ensure your fruit remains. This is a fruit-bearing relationship (or friendship)

### **As Jesus' Friend, The World Will Hate You (15:18-25)**

*“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’” (vv15-25)*

Many people become Christians today who aren't aware that they'll be hated by some for their faith. Jesus was loved by some and hated by others. We'll be hated by some for the same reasons. Jesus hoped to comfort the disciples with the knowledge that the world's hatred was first directed toward Him. Jesus attracted attention from great multitudes and devotion from individuals of all kinds; yet as a whole, the world hated Jesus. Looking at these from 3 view-points:

**Difference.** Jesus chooses "out of the world," the kosmos. The Greek word here has the connotation, "the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, that is, lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything divine, ruined and depraved."

Remember, “because you are not of the world”: Jesus said this both as a fact and an explanation. This further explained why the world would hate the disciples of Jesus. It was also to be a factual description of the disciples – that in many ways they were different than the world.

**Contrast.** Closely related is the contrast in morals and values between disciples and people who have adopted the relative standards of society. If your values become honesty and putting in your full workday in a culture where people take sick days when they're not sick and come in late, you'll make others angry because your good behaviour highlights their bad behaviour. If Christians challenge society in issues such as abortion, it tends to focus on the evil of others. People often deride Christians as being "holier than thou," but the problem is often that believers are becoming through Christ's power, "blameless and pure ... without fault in a midst of a crooked and perverse generation," people who "shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). When we refuse to go along with others' sins, we make them look bad. Jesus' humility and purity stood in sharp relief to the Pharisees' legalism and self-serving attitude, and they hated him for it.

**Control.** People, particularly leaders, often hate what they can't control. Jesus represented a threat to the Jewish leaders' authority because he was attracting more and more followers, thus reducing their influence. When worldly people find that Christians can't be seduced and controlled by money, sex, and power, they sense a loss of power themselves. Christians are viewed as "loose cannons" and are hated for it.

Being a follower of Christ isn't "safe." Jesus reminds us that they will treat us the same way as they treated him. Yes, some will come to faith and have their lives transformed, but others will hate and persecute us, to one degree or another.

In most Western countries, the persecution usually takes the form of social ostracism. But in countries with majority Hindu or Muslim populations, persecution can include loss of jobs, burning of churches, and even "honour killing" of those who convert to Christ.

Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples then -- and now -- so we won't be surprised when we see persecution. Rather we will remember that he told us it would be this way, so we won't be tempted to fall away.

### ***Hate the Son, Hate the Father***

People sin whether they know the full truth or not. The Pentateuch talks about "unintentional sin," that is, transgressing laws that people don't know about. Western culture in our day, for example, thinks nothing of a couple living together without being married, though it is contrary to the Bible. Nevertheless, even people who don't know God's laws commonly go contrary to their consciences, and thus sin against what they believe to be right (Romans 2:12-16).

In verse 24, Jesus isn't saying that the Pharisees have no sin at all. Rather, if Jesus had not come, they wouldn't be guilty of the terrible sin of rejecting Jesus the Messiah. But since Jesus worked miracles in their midst, they are held responsible to conclude that Jesus is the Messiah. The truth is, since Jesus represents the Father's words and deeds with extreme accuracy, it is a fallacy to say that they love God but hate Jesus. If they hate Jesus, then they certainly don't know or love his Father!

How do people claim to love God the Father today and then, hate Jesus?

"They hated Me without a cause:" Jesus quoted this line from Psalm 69:4 (and possibly Psalm 35:19) to show the Scriptural precedent and prophetic fulfilment that there was no just cause for the world to hate Jesus and His Father as they did.

As the disciples of Jesus expect some measure of hatred and rejection from the world, they should live in such a way that it is also without a cause. Peter communicated some of this heart in his letter:

*"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."* (1 Peter 4:14-16)

Do we have examples of genuine suffering as a Christian for the name of Christ and those that are acts of foolishness?

