

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: God chooses us—chooses to love us so we can love! Chosen by love to love for love of Him! He, by love makes use of us, molding us, shaping us, and appointing us to be His orchards and fruit stands of nourishment that the Church must have to function and the world needs to see in action. The Christian and the Church collectively need the substance of Christ and His fruit flowing in us, interconnecting and ever over-supplying; this is what grows a faith, a family, and a fellowship. God wants us to bear a fruitful life that both glorifies Him and benefits others and us! For this to happen, we must be not only connected to Christ as Savior but also in a deep communion with Him that proclaims He is Lord. This is manifested by our abiding and obedience in response to His love and care that feeds our life and spirituality and creates joy and ministry that so that we trust and obey and remain in our relationship so to be effectual and fruitful. The call comes from a mutual love between the Godhead and us that first beckons then models for us. We can respond by our steadfast adherence to His love and precepts, His nurture and call, and then remaining in Him as we will for eternity. Our obedience is the proof of His love for us and our love for Him. Our lives will be filled with joy, proclaiming a testimony and empowerment that will flow to others around us. When we love one another, we show Christ and the joy He can give, the greatest measure of what Christ did for us. Our response is the indicator and beacon as we lay ourselves before Christ, surrendered to Him as servants—even slaves—and He lifts us up as His friends.

Contexts and Background: This passage continues the prime metaphor of God as the Vine and the Church as the Vineyard, each person a branch, abiding in His love, life, and salvation that give us sustenance. The theme is the relationship among the Trinity, how God loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit intertwines and dwells in us, His children. Keeping God's commandments is a mark of our response to His love for us; our response must be unshakable trust and unwavering obedience, which bring joy to us and others.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *As the Father.* Christ is our True Model for obedience and everything else! Our relationship with God is through Christ. Christ's redemption is that He took away our sin and preserved us in faith for God's glory. This is also an invitation to join Christ; He will welcome all those who thirst after Him. This is also the call that once we know Him, to be His example and to make Him known to others (Isa. 55:1; John 4:13-14; 14:15, 21-23, 31; 1 John 2:5; 5:2-3; Rev. 22:1).
- *Loved me.... loved you.* God's love authorizes Christianity; Christianity exhibits God's love. Love and obedience go together; neither can be separated from the other, as we can separate faith and knowledge from practice to be a real, mature Christian or a capable church.
- *Remain / abide / dwell in me.* This is stated eleven times in this passage, forty times in this Gospel, and means to preserve and commune with (our continual relationship in and with Christ—more in next study). This is an image of a secure and comforting dwelling, as God is our dwelling place. We are dependent on Him for both life and salvation, and to think otherwise is foolish. This is a prime fulfillment of a promise of God from the Old Testament and it refers to those who are already saved. This also means in synergy to stand for and abide, to be unwavering and sure of the supremacy of Christ that gives and builds our life and intimacy in Him. The purpose is that we have a binding and effectual relationship with Christ that transcends our comprehension; we have a relationship with God that we do not deserve by means we cannot fully understand. Theologically, this refers to our "Mystical Union in Christ," an illustration of the real and the metaphysical relationships we have in Christ; He gives Himself totally to us (Ex. 25:8; 29:45; Lev. 26:11-12; Ezek. 37:27-28; 43:9; Psalm 96:10; Isa. 42:9; 48:6; 51:15-16; 65:17-25; 66:22; John 2:21; 6:54-56; 8:31; 14:1-23; 15:1-8; Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Cor. 2:9; 4:5; 15:35-57; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 1:3-14; Col. 1:23; 3:18-4-1; Heb. 2:7; 3:6-19; 1 John 2:19-24; Rev. 7:9; 21:1-8; 22:3-5, 12).
- *Obey.* Discipleship is our response to His love—to be passionate, submissive, and obedient to our Lord. As a committed follower of Christ, I must attest that I belong completely and entirely to Christ. He

purchased, restored, and renewed me, and He now empowers me.

- *Commands.* Jesus was leaving them and wanted to make it clear that this was the most important of all His teachings (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 5:43-48; 25:40; Mark 12:28-33; John 15:13; Eph. 5:25).
- *I have told you.* What is the will of God? Jesus tells us here that it is to love and obey; there is no other way! The lesson for us is to understand the importance of reverence. We come before a holy God. He is not just a pal or friend or guide—He is our Savior and our Lord. He has our purpose and future in His hand; we have no need to fear our future when He is our Light, Guide, and Lord, so we can trust Him and let that trust fuel our love (2 Cor. 5:16)!
- *My joy.* In context, this reference is that obedience is not oppressive or unfair; rather, it is joy. As we surrender and serve, we gain a greater reality, purpose, and contentment that surpasses our desires and wants. Joy helps us understand God's perspective and gives us the confidence and patience to endure anything (Psalm 34:1-8; John 3:29; 16:20-22, 24; 17:13; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:18).
- *Your joy.* Meaning to proclaim our situation as happy and fulfilling, as the Christian life is never boring or lacking deep, eternal meaning. Joy is not happiness, because we may not be content or pleased with it; rather, joy is hope—it is our hope. It is not a meager wish, but rather the unshakable confidence in our future with Christ. Our pleasure comes from knowing He is in charge and cares for us! Christ will meet us in our deepest need and we are complete in Him. Our response is to put Jesus first and let Him work in our lives. Joy will allow us to enjoy our relationship with Christ, His creation, and others, regardless of our circumstances, with an expression of delight and real, authentic happiness that comes from and with harmony with God and others (Psalm 32:7-9; Proverbs 15:13; John 21:17; 17:13; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Peter 4:13-19; Heb 10:34; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; 3:9; 3 John).
- *Complete.* God accepts us by His sacrifice for our sins (Heb.13: 15-16)! Because of His work, we are complete in Him; we are deeply loved and accepted, and we do not need to have acceptance by any other person or means in order to be fulfilled (Col. 1:21-22; 2:13-15; James 1:4; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 1 John 4:9-11)!
- *Love each other / one another.* This means sacrificial, unselfish, determined love. Love confirms the realness of Jesus and the mark of the authentic follower! This is also a pattern for Christian relationships and church management, and the importance and value of friendships. This is the vital substance that flows from God to and through us as His servants and His Church to be His guiding lights of Hope (Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 3:22; 4:8; 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1: 5)!
- *Greater love.* Real Love is that Christ died in our place. The love that flows from us is not from us, but from God through His Spirit. We cannot prove love; we can only respond to and obey it. Once we fully realize that the love of Christ has been poured out in us, we can then identify ourselves in Him. We will be able to identify Christ's interests in others over against our own interests (John 15:3; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 9:22; 13:13).
- *Lay down his life.* Meaning self-sacrifice as Christ demonstrated His true love for we who are sinners, undeserving of His grace and love. In Greek culture, heroic sacrifice was one of the greatest virtues and pointed to a true hero, while Jews emphasized dying for God's law as supreme. Here, Jesus died in our place—heroic, as well as for God's law, satisfying both. We sacrifice by our surrender to die to ourselves so we can live for Christ with unmerited forgiveness and effectual love (Isa. 7:9; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Rom. 5:7-8; 6:4-8; 12:12; 1 Cor.11:1; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:21-23; Col. 1:3-12; 2:2-9; 3:2).
- *Friends.* In the first century, *friend* meant an alliance or companionship pursued by self-interests, client based, or a shared life with closeness, confidence, and mutual support. Here, it refers to our alliance in Christ by His sacrifice, modeling how we are to be friends to others too. The true mark of a mature Christian is obedience and submission, the ability to totally surrender it all upon Him as LORD, and to be as the Epistle writers demonstrated, His slaves. By so doing, He lifts us up to be His friends. Real friends listen, forgive, and love, and are there no matter what, as Christ does with us! Thus, it is

imperative to have the commitment to build effective relationships (Prov. 18:24; 27:17; Matt. 5-7; Luke 15:1-2; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; I Pet. 4:9).

- *Servants / bondservant.* Meaning a slave or an agent, doing what the master orders, demonstrating the mark of extreme, poured out, and surrendered devotion and submission. The Greek is *doulos*, meaning to "bind" a person to another as a slave as we are bound to Christ as our LORD (Psalm 101; Matt. 15:15; 16:18; John 6:68; 12:26; ; 13:13; 16:12; 21:15-19; Gal. 1:19; Eph. 6: 5-9; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:7; Heb. 2:10-11; James 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).
- *Made known.* Christ's purpose is not hidden, nor is His will veiled. They are open for us to know. He does not have a greater revelation for a select few; His Word is plain, knowable, and applicable to all who will receive it.
- *I chose you.* Christ takes the initiative in our relationship; He comes to us by first loving us, then we are free to exercise our will and be enabled to know and receive Him. If He did not choose us, we would not have the desire, will, or ability to receive Him; this is by His work on the cross. In Jesus' time, a committed learner would seek out a rabbi to teach him; here, Jesus picks us to teach. Did you know that as growing and mature Christians, we belong exclusively to Christ (Eph. 1:4-11; John 2:23; 14:13)?
- *Appointed you.* God is sovereign but does not violate our right of decision; He first enables us for salvation—something we can't do by ourselves. In context, *joy* and *servant* mean to change our mindset and focus from self to Christ, realizing the sovereignty of God and that He is in control, even when life may say otherwise! At some point in our spiritual development, we have to comprehend the magnitude of who Christ is and who we are in and to Him. We have to reach a point and say, *I, body and soul, completely and totally belong to Christ as His pupil and His property! He is my LORD and Master and there is no better place for me to be!*
- *Go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.* "Go" is an aspect of our "Great Commission" and "fruit" is what characterizes our Christian service and points others to Christ. When we identify ourselves in Christ, we will obey and we will be effective in loving and strengthening each other for His service—something so few of us actually do! A proper witness to Christ will be identified by the distinction between good and false teaching and/or good versus bad love, Fruit, and character and/or a good or a failing church (Psalm 66:18; Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 28:19; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:13; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 4:1-6; Rev. 1: 2; 2:20; 6:9; 22:9).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

All Jesus asks of us is to receive Him and His love so we can pay it forward to others, to show His love by our display of love so we succeed at His will. His love is the sap that flows and what causes us to know Him and have His love working in and out of us; it causes us to make Him known to others even more diligently. We were sinners; now, because of His love, we are His people—united to Him, reconciled to God, and filled with the Spirit. This love now becomes the process of continued blessings for us and others. All it takes is our dedication to Christ, so we can respond by faith, worship, and spiritual formation to carry on His love. Growing in Christ is what the Christian life is all about. It is the life-long process of discipleship and spiritual growth that builds our faith and knowledge in Him so we can take hold of His love and produce even more of it, giving it back to Him and onto others. This helps us with our assurance, maturity, character, and spiritual formation. We become changed because we have received Christ and we can keep on loving. If this is not so, there is something fundamentally wrong in our Christian operating system, because love helps us have more hope and reassurance of faith (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 5; Heb. 10: 26-39; 12:14; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?

4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What kind of commitment did you think the Christian life was about before becoming a Christian? What about now?
2. The love that Christ has for us is demonstrated by His ultimate sacrifice. What have you done with this truth?
3. Are you devoted to Christ or a slave to your misguided will and to the manipulation of others?
4. What does “surrendered devotion” mean to you? How would you describe your abiding in Christ?
5. How are you going to live and express being His slave or servant? What would that mean to your spiritual formation and relationships? How will this help you lead and manage yourself, family, and church?
6. What are some distinctions and differences of love that you can think of? How does love bind us to our Lord and to one another?
7. What does a deep communion with Christ look like? How is Christ the Lord manifested in your life? How do abiding and obedience result from your response to His love? How does this feed the way you care that, in turn, feed your life and spirituality?
8. How does joy impact your ministry and church? How does this help you trust and obey Christ and remain fruitful?
9. How and why would a Christian be identified by the distinction between good and bad fruit or good and bad love? How do fruit and love build or fail a church?
10. The love Jesus puts in us molds and shapes us and appoints us to be His orchards and fruit stands. How can you and your church be His fruit stand? Why can't a church function without fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness... and forgiveness...?
11. How does the practice of love build much heartier relationships with others? Can you think of a specific area in your life where one of the virtues of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13 needs to be manifested more? If so, how can you do that?
12. What have you learned from this passage to put love and encouragement into practice? How can you use this to inspire your church? How can your church be better at loving and strengthening one another for His service? Why do so few of us actually do it? What can you do about this?