

(Through the Bible) John 15

by Chuck Smith

In John 15, Jesus teaches about the necessity of abiding in Him to bear fruit, the role of God's Word in our lives, and the importance of love and joy in the Christian experience.

Duration: 1:10:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 21:33-46, John 13:34-35, John 14:1, John 15:9-11, John 21:15-17

Topics: "Abiding In Christ", "Lasting Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a parable from the 21st chapter of Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus addresses the Pharisees. The parable involves a vineyard owner who sends his servants to collect fruit from his vineyard, but the caretaker of the vineyard beats the servants and sends them away empty-handed. The speaker then talks about how some people who respond emotionally to evangelistic sermons, like those given by Moody, may not have a deep and lasting faith. A study conducted after Moody's campaigns found that 85% of those who had made a profession of faith during his meetings were not continuing in their Christian walk five years later. The sermon then transitions to discussing Jesus' last hours before the cross, specifically focusing on his time in the upper room and his journey to the Garden of Gethsemane as described in John's Gospel chapter 15.

Transcript

Tonight, let's turn now to John's Gospel, chapter 15, as we follow Jesus in His last hours prior to the cross. Jesus had been at the last supper with His disciples there in the upper room somewhere in Jerusalem. The 14th chapter of John ends with the words, Arise, let us go hence.

So at that point, they left the upper room. And they began their journey, which would ultimately lead them to the Garden of Gethsemane. And whether or not they went through the temple courts or whatever, we don't know.

The Gospels do not trace the steps of Jesus. It is possible that they went on in through the temple gates because they were left open all night during the Passover season so that anyone who wanted to come and pray could pray at any time. And those gates had upon them the carved clusters of grapes by which God declared His purpose for the nation of Israel that it be a fruitful vine and bear fruit for God.

And it could be that as they were passing through the gates with these clustered grapes, the symbol of the nation, the vine, that this prompted Jesus to make this statement to His disciples found here in the 15th

chapter of John, where He said, I am the true vine. In the Greek it reads, I am the vine, the true. And though you say, well, what is the difference? It sounds the same to me.

There is, I feel, a subtle difference here. I am the vine, the true. Throughout the Old Testament, God had used the vine as a symbol of the nation of Israel.

And many of the prophets refer to Israel as the vine, as do the Psalms. It was the national symbol of Israel. But Isaiah the prophet in chapter 5 speaks of the nation as a vine and how God planted it, hedged it about, put in a winepress.

But when the time came to gather fruit, there was nothing but wild grapes. And so He allowed the vineyard to just go back to nature. Allowed the brambles to come in and just discarded actually the vineyard as far as ever endeavoring or hoping to receive the fruit from it.

Now, in the 21st chapter of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives a parable that the Pharisees understood correctly to be addressed against them. And in this parable, He speaks of the Lord who had a vineyard. And when the time came for fruit, He sent His servants that He might receive from His vineyard.

But the husbandman that He had left in charge of the vineyard beat the servants and sent them away empty. And so He sent other servants to them, which they also beat, and some they stoned. And finally, He said, I will send My only Son.

Surely they will honor Him. But when the husbandman saw the sun coming, they said, look, this is the sun in the air. Let's kill Him and then the vineyard can be ours.

So Jesus said, what will the Lord of the vineyard do when He comes? Surely He will take the husbandman and cast them out and give the vineyard unto others. Now, with that as a background, the vineyard, the nation Israel having failed, having the religious leaders at that time were the husbandmen who were overseeing the vineyard. And when Jesus came, they said, look, He is a threat to us and to our positions.

We better get rid of Him. And so they destroyed Him. And what will the Lord do? He will take the vineyard and He will give it unto others.

And so Jesus is saying, look, I am the true vine. And My Father is now the husbandman. And in that He is saying, you are the ones to whom this vineyard is given.

Or you are now the vineyard. You are the true vineyard of God. You are the ones who are to bear fruit now for God.

The nation Israel failed in God's purposes for it. It did not bring forth the fruit that God was desiring. And so now God is giving to you that privilege, the church, that it might become now God's vineyard and bring forth fruit unto Him.

I am the vine, the true. And My Father is now the husbandman. And so He is the one that is overseeing the vineyard directly.

He no longer has it under the authority of the priesthood of Israel or of the religious leaders. He has taken away their authority and He has taken upon Himself that position of the husbandman overseeing the vineyard. And every branch in Me that beareth fruit, or every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away.

And every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purges it that it may bring forth more fruit. So every branch that doesn't bear fruit, He takes away. There is that pruning process that goes on within the church as the Father cuts off the unfruitful branches.

But then there is also that cultivating of those branches that are bearing fruit. He washes them. Now, in Israel, many of the grapes that are grown are grown actually on the ground.

As you go through the Eshkol Valley and the areas around the Eshkol Valley where the finest grapes are grown, you will see these huge trunks of the grape vines. And they are maybe six feet long. And you'll see them lying on the ground, propped up on one end by a rock.

And so they're just lying across the ground, only propped up by a rock on the one end. And as they produce the fruit, the fruit actually is lying right there on the stony ground of the vineyard. And the vine dressers will go through the vineyard and they will pick up these great bunches of grapes and they will wash them and clean off the dirt and all.

And they'll cleanse them in order that the fruit might ripen to perfection. And I'll tell you, the grapes that are grown there are truly delicious. Grapes, table grapes that are grown through that valley.

Now, Jesus is taking a picture that is very familiar with the people as they had seen the people out there washing the branches and washing these bunches of grape that they might produce more fruit. If you're not bearing fruit, cut off. You are pruned.

If you're bearing fruit, you're purged that you might bring forth more fruit. And what is that which God uses to cleanse the church? His Word. Now, you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.

What tremendous cleansing power there is in the Word of God. Thy Word have I hid in my heart, O Lord, that I might not sin against Thee. Wherewithal shall a young man take heed of his ways? By giving heed to the Word of God.

The great cleansing power of the Word. My father-in-law, an old Swede, had in his Bible this book will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from this book. And it is true, there is that cleansing power of the Word.

It will keep you from sin. Now, you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me.

Now, I am the vine, the true. You're the branches. And the importance of the branch abiding in the vine and this relationship is going to be stressed here by Jesus Christ in the next few verses.

That important relationship and the necessity of abiding in Him. And He declares, Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

You cannot bring forth any worthwhile fruit unto God apart from that indwelling power of Jesus Christ. Anything that you endeavor to do for God apart from Jesus Christ is worthless. It is as wood, hay, and stubble that will burn when the day of judgment comes.

The only lasting fruit is that which is produced as the result of the relationship with Jesus Christ. And here again, the idea of fruit indicates to us the method of God. The fruit that comes forth from our lives is a very natural thing.

It's not forced. That apple hanging on the tree is not out there struggling and striving and pushing and doing its best to get ripe. All it has to do is just hang in there and it's going to ripen and it's going to come to maturity.

And I just need to hang in there just to abide in Christ and the natural result of abiding in Christ is my life is going to bring forth fruit. One of the problems in the church today is this endeavor of forced fruit. Now, you ought to be doing this for Lord and you're being pushed into all kinds of activities not really directed by the Spirit.

And this can become worthless expenditures of energy unless God is behind it and God is guiding it and God is directing it. Unless you're abiding in Him, you cannot bear fruit of yourself. You cannot sit down and say, now this is what I'm going to do for God this year and these are the projects that I'm going to endeavor and this is my plan by which I intend to fulfill this goal.

That bearing fruit that God desires is the most natural thing that can happen to you as you abide in Christ. It's just a natural function. And so, abide in me, you can't bear fruit of yourself.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. And he that abides in me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. Now this is really progression and this is growing.

I start out as I receive Jesus Christ. I am grafted into the vine. I become a part of it.

I begin to take nourishment from Him. And as my life begins to bring forth fruit, then His Word cleanses me that I might bring forth more fruit. And as I abide in Him, then I begin to bring forth much fruit.

And herein is my Father glorified. This is what my Father wants, that my life bear much fruit for Him. So, I am the vine, you are the branches.

He that abides in me and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing. I've got that underline with a bold underline in my Bible.

Because I have tried to do so many things on my own and failed. I wonder when will that truth really sink into my heart. That I might realize that apart from Jesus, I can do nothing.

It's futile for me to even try. Any service towards God not directed by the Spirit is worthless. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

Now, I have here a reference to another verse that Paul declared in Philippians 4.13. For I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. So, they go together. Apart from Him, I can do nothing.

Through Him, I can do anything. Nothing is too hard. I can do all things through Christ.

But apart from Him, I can do nothing. And so, if a man abides not in me. Now, this brings up an interesting consideration.

Is it possible for a man not to abide in Jesus Christ? If it were not possible, why would Jesus even bring up then the prospect? You see, if it weren't possible for a man not to abide in Jesus, he would not have even brought up the prospect. But the fact that he brings up the prospect means that there is that possibility. If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.

And men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned. Cut off from the vine. Withered.

And Isaiah tells us, no, it was Ezekiel that tells us the worthlessness of a grape branch. It's not strong enough to make a nail out of it. And you can't use it for any woodworking project because of its texture and makeup.

A grape branch is only good for one thing and that's to produce grapes. And if it doesn't do that, it really isn't good for anything else. It's not good firewood.

It's like a punk. It just, you know, smolders and and smokes, but it doesn't really burn well. And it's not good for any woodworking project.

It's just worthless. It's good for only one purpose and that's to produce fruit. I hate to tell you this, but you're good for only one purpose and that's to bear fruit to God.

And if you don't do that, you're just as worthless as a punk. I mean, you don't, there's no, there's no value to you. So, Jesus said, abide in me.

And if you don't, cut off your withered. Men, gather them together and throw them into the fire and they are burned. Now, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

Now, he brings up here the subject of prayer. And in the subject of prayer, he makes here a very broad promise. You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

But who is he addressing this broad promise to those who are abiding in him and those who are, have the word of God abiding in them. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, then under those conditions, you can ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. And herein is my father glorified that you bear much fruit.

So shall you be my disciples. And so, God called the nation of Israel to bring forth fruit. They failed.

Now, God is giving out the vineyard to others. The church becomes the instrument of God to bear God's fruit in the world today. And if God spared not the natural branches but cut them off, take heed lest he not spare us.

If we fail in the purposes of God to bring forth fruit, then God will raise up others to bring forth fruit unto him. I believe that I am eternally secure as long as I abide in Jesus Christ. No power can wrest me from his hand.

I have no doubts or qualms at all about my eternal security and my salvation. I don't worry about, oh, is God going to save me or not? Or will I make it in the last day? I know I will because I have no intention of ever doing anything but abiding in Jesus Christ. And as long as I abide in him, I am eternally secure.

You see, but what if you don't abide in him? That's your problem, not mine. You see, that doesn't even enter my mind. I'm like Peter, Lord, where can we go? You have the words of life.

These people get all hung up on eternal security and all. That's too bad because I am eternally secure as long as I abide in him and I have no intention of doing anything else. Now, Jesus said, as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.

Continue in my love. Now He's beginning to talk about the fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

This is what God is seeking from His church. Love. The expressions of love.

He wants verbal expressions, but He also desires deeds that express. Just like our wives want the verbal assurance, but then also they want the deeds. The verbal assurance doesn't mean much unless there are deeds, and the deeds don't mean much unless there are words.

Somehow, they want it verbalized. And she says to me sometimes, Honey, do you love me? And I said, of course I love you. Don't I bring the food home for dinner? Or don't I provide for the house? Sure, I love you.

Well, it just needs verbal assurance. And God wants that verbal expression of our love. And God wants us to love and to show our love by our deeds.

And this is the fruit God is seeking from His garden, from the church. Oh, that we might express our love to God more fully, more completely. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

And these things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. Now, this is the first time the Gospels mention anything about the joy of Jesus Christ. These things I've spoken unto you, that My joy.

There are many people who picture Jesus as a very sad and sorrowful person, and they make note that the Gospels record many times His crying, but they never record any place where He laughed. I do not believe that silence is evidence or proof of anything. I personally am convinced that Jesus laughed a lot.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, and the characteristic of love is joy. And for too many years, there was that kind of an unwritten code in the church that the more sorrowful you looked, the more holy you were. And so, the ministers used to try and look as mournful and sad and sober, never cracking a smile, because that would be a sign of getting in the flesh and carnality, you know.

And so it was always even a somber voice. Good morning, brethren. We're gathered here today.

And it took on this somber kind of a... You know, you felt like you're coming under a dark cloud. Coming in the presence of God. But in His presence, the Bible says, is fullness of joy.

And at His right hand, there are pleasures forevermore. And Jesus here speaks of His joy, but it is interesting that He speaks of His joy just before He's coming to the cross. And in Hebrews, we read, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.

But then He talks about the fullness of joy that His disciples should receive. That My joy might remain in you and that your joy may be full. There's a vast difference between joy and happiness.

The world today is in a mad pursuit for happiness. But happiness is an experience of the emotions where joy is an experience of the Spirit. Because happiness is in the realm of emotions, it's a variable.

And a person can go from great happiness to tears in just a hurry. Have you ever noticed how akin our emotions are? If our emotions really get to working, and I'm really getting emotional and laughing hard, it's just a little tilt and you can be crying. You know, I've watched this with the grandchildren.

They'll be laughing and all just screaming with gales of laughter. And then suddenly, they'll look real sober, the little lip will go out and they'll begin to puddle up and cry, you know. And you wonder, well, what happened? They seem to be so happy and giggling and having so much fun, and suddenly, they're crying.

But that's because it's in the realm of emotions. And our emotions are variable and, you know, they can change so quickly. That's why the Lord doesn't promise happiness.

It might not last. He promises joy. Because that is an experience of the Spirit deeper than the level of the emotions.

It's an abiding joy. It's not the variable. And though the outward circumstances of my life may change drastically because it's joy, it doesn't vary with my outward circumstances.

It's a constant. You see, you might come to me and say, oh, Chuck, I'm really desperate. I need \$10,000 right away to pay off these bills because, you know, they're going to foreclose on me.

And I might sit down and write you out a check for \$10,000 and hand it to you and say, here. And you go away just so happy. Saying, oh, great! Laughing all the way to the bank until you tried to cash the check.

And then you would become very sad when they would say, he doesn't have enough money in his account to cover that thing. And so, you see how your happiness can change to sorrow in such a hurry because of the change of the outward circumstances. But not the joy.

And the Lord wants your joy to be full. And twice here in this final discourse with His disciples, He speaks about this fullness of joy. And in this case, the fullness of joy is related to your prayer life.

Oh, the joy of being able to spend time in prayer with the Father. And to see God working in answer to prayer. What joy, what full joy it brings to us to see God's answers to prayer.

And so, related here to our prayer life that your joy may be full. This is My commandment. Now, Jesus had said, if you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.

What is His commandment? That you love one another as He said, I have loved you. Just one commandment, but it isn't simple. Just one commandment, that I love you as He loved Me.

Now, this love, as I said, is the fruit that God is looking for. And Jesus said, apart from Me, you can do nothing. And for you to try to manufacture this fruit, this love, is an impossibility.

And you just can't do it. It is the result of that relationship with Him. As I abide in Him, His Word abides in me.

As I am washed and cleansed by the Word, then my life begins to produce much fruit. And God's love begins to pour forth through my life to touch the lives of those around me. But it isn't something I can do in my own struggle or effort.

It is something that is the natural result of just abiding in Jesus. His love begins to flow forth from my life to others. And that really is the sign and the evidence that Christ is truly indwelling me.

That I am really one of His disciples. That we have this love. So, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

And then He declared, for greater love has no man than this, than a man will lay down his life for his friends. That's the kind of love I have for you. I'm going to lay down my life for you to prove my love.

And this is the way I want you to love one another with a self-sacrificing, giving love. Where you will lay down your life for each other. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

The commandment is that we love one another. Henceforth, I do not call you bond slaves. For the bond slave does not know what his Lord is doing.

But I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. It is interesting though, Jesus declared this new relationship, no longer bond slaves, but friends.

That each of the writers of the New Testament took the phrase bond slave to describe their relationship to Him. Paul, a bond slave of Jesus Christ. By the will of God.

Jude, a bond slave. Peter, a bond slave. James, a bond slave.

And though the Lord said I'm calling you friends, yet there was that awareness and consciousness that true life is only discovered when I submit it totally to Him to serve Him. Now Jesus declares you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. That to me is such a exciting thing.

That God chose me. When did God choose me? In Ephesians we read we were chosen in Him before the foundations of the world. Now it is interesting that in so much of our evangelism we are emphasizing that a person chose Jesus Christ.

When in reality Jesus said you haven't chosen me, I have chosen you. As Paul begins to list the spiritual blessings that he has in Ephesians chapter one. Thanks be unto God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places.

When he begins to make a list of the spiritual blessings for which he is thanking God, what does he put at the top of the list? The fact that God chose him. Actually that should be at the top of all of our list because if God didn't choose us then none of the rest of the benefits would be there. But because God has chosen us then all of the rest of the benefits follow having been chosen of God.

Does it upset you that God chooses people? Surely if you've been chosen it doesn't. I'm blessed that God chose me. Now my mind immediately begins to take this truth and race with it and say wait a minute if God has chosen some then that isn't fair to the others.

And shouldn't God be fair? How can God be fair when he has chosen those that are to be saved? In the book of Acts we read and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. God, Jesus said I've chosen you and ordained that you should be my disciples. And so in the book of Acts and as many as he ordained unto eternal life believed.

You know that sure takes the pressure off doesn't it? It's God's work. Salvation is of the Lord. Except the father draw a man he cannot come to Jesus Christ.

God has chosen us in Christ before the foundations of the world. That we should be holy and blameless before him in love. Bringing forth this fruit that he desires.

Now on what basis did God make his choice? You see don't find fault with God yet. Don't judge God too quickly. God made his choice on the basis of the fact that he knows everything.

On the basis of his omniscience and his foreknowledge. Now because God has all knowledge, omniscient, it is impossible for me to think how God thinks. How do you come to a problem when you know everything from the beginning? You know how it's all gonna work out.

You know what the end result is. I can't even think of how it would be to be able to think that way. Surely if I could think that way I would make different decisions than I often make.

I would never botch things up. If I knew everything then I could always make the right decision. And I would make my decisions predicated upon what I knew.

Be dumb not to. So God knowing those who would respond to his love and grace chose them on the basis of his foreknowledge. And I know that they should be in Christ.

So I'm thankful that God chose me. Spurgeon made an interesting statement on this. He said, it's a good thing that God chose me before I was born because he never would have chosen me afterwards.

That I'm sure he said in jest because when God chose him before he was born God knew him completely then. And God knew the end result of this man's life. He chose us and knowing everything about us he chose us anyhow, isn't that neat? The grace of God.

So Jesus said to his disciples, you've not chosen me, I've chosen you. Now, I was encouraged to choose Jesus and I did. And as soon as I did, he said to me, you didn't choose me, I chose you.

And I ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. This is something that concerns me greatly. Not that I just bring forth fruit, but that I bring forth lasting fruit.

A lot of people fault me because I do not make strong appeals for salvation. At the end of the sermons, I do not stand and cry and plead with people to receive Jesus Christ. That I just tell them if they want to be saved, they can go through that door and pray with the pastor.

And we don't make big emotional appeals. And some people fault us for this. If God's Spirit is working in a person's life, they will respond.

I can't do anything to enhance that. Salvation is God's work. I recognize that.

Rather than having a lot of people respond on an emotional appeal, so that I can put a bunch of notches in my belt and say, I had 20 people accept Jesus last night because I pled with them and begged them and continued. The problem is, I want to know one year from now, how many of those same people are going on with the Lord. Lasting fruit.

That your fruit should remain. There was a little fellow who used to be here in the Costa Mesa area who used to do a tremendous amount of witnessing. He spent his whole life witnessing.

But he was often very forceful and as a result, very obnoxious. And I watched him one morning when I was sitting in a restaurant. He came in and he started going from table to table loudly witnessing to everybody about the Lord.

And you could see the people getting embarrassed and all. And he said, would you like to go through the sinner's prayer? And just to get rid of him, they'd say yes, you know, and they'd go through it. And then he'd put his notches on his belt, you know.

Going from table to table, you know, I led so many people to Jesus today. Well, very little of the fruit was lasting fruit. It was a forced kind of a thing.

The guy was very forceful. It is an interesting study. There was an interesting study made after Moody's campaigns.

And in some of the cities where he had tremendous campaigns, five years after the campaign, the survey team went around and surveyed people that had gone forward in the Moody meetings and made a profession of Christ during the Moody meetings. And it was discovered that 85% of the people that had gone forward in the Moody meetings five years later were not going on in their Christian walk. They were back into the old practices living in the world and had not continued in the Christian faith.

Now, you who have read Moody's sermons or know anything about his ministry know how that he would generally conclude his evangelistic sermons with a real tearjerker type of a story where he would talk about this little boy dying in his daddy's arms and the last words, well, daddy, will I see you in heaven, you know? And the daddy, you know, there gulping and saying, yes, son, you'll see me in heaven. And the little boy dies, you know, with a smile on his face. And so every daddy's heart is touched, you know.

I want to be with my children in heaven. And so now come forward, you know, you want to see your child in heaven, you know, come forward. And they were touched with emotions.

But it wasn't very deep. It wasn't always a biting fruit. In contrast with that, Dr. Finney had a very powerful ministry through the Word of God.

He was a lawyer before he became a minister. And he was able to set forth the Scriptures in a very logical order and sequence. And those people and thousands of people came forward in the Finney services and in the Finney revivals.

And five years after his meetings in the various communities, they made the survey of those that had gone forward in the Finney meetings and it was discovered that 85% of them were still going on with the Lord. Their faith was not based upon an emotional appeal or an emotional moment, but was based upon facts of God's Word. And the faith was established in the fact of God's Word.

And it was lasting fruit. That your fruit should remain. Now, I believe that God ordained Moody and I believe that God ordained Finney.

And I believe that God had Moody reach people that Finney could not reach. And Finney reach people that Moody could not reach. And certainly, Dwight Moody was one of the greatest evangelists that God has brought along in the American history.

But God uses different methods to reach different people and different instruments to reach different people. But my desire is that I not only bring forth fruit, but that the fruit remains lasting fruit. And so, I'm not so much interested in the quantity of the fruit as I am the quality of the fruit that is developed through my ministry.

And that's why we spend so much time in the study of the Word of God. That we might be clean through the Word which He has spoken to us. That we might bring forth more fruit.

And that we might bring forth much fruit. And that the fruit should remain. And Jesus then said something quite interesting.

That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. Now again, He comes back to the subject of prayer. And prayer to the Father in His name.

I do believe that prayer should be addressed to the Father in the name of Jesus. I think that Jesus established this pattern for us. In the 14th chapter, He said, and if you shall ask the Father anything in My name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Again, He said, Now, I've ordained that whatsoever ye should ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. Not He shall. And therein is the big issue in this verse.

And the thing that you want to take note of. He doesn't say that the Father shall give it to you, but that the Father may give it to you, indicating that the Father is desiring to give it to you all the time. And prayer opens the door that the Father may do for you what He is wanting to do the whole while.

Too many people think that prayer is an information time where I'm going to inform God of all of my difficulties that He doesn't know about. And then I'm going to present to Him my solutions that I want Him to work out for me. Because I've dealt with these problems so long, I've got it all figured out how it could come to pass.

And so, I begin to pray that the Lord will start working here and working there and put this together and put this together. And I'm directing God on just how to work out my problems. Now, often times as I am praying, I am not offering to God direct prayers.

I'm not praying directly for the need. But because I've worked out the way by which God can answer this need, I'm praying direction prayers as I'm directing God in how to answer my problem because I've got it all figured out. This is the best way.

Now, many times I get frustrated with God because He doesn't follow my directions. He doesn't always do it my way. And I think, oh, God doesn't listen to me when I pray.

You know, because I've asked God to work it out like this. And I've shown Him the way it should, you know, it all come to pass real well. I've got to just do this and this.

Then I could work it all out. And so, I've given Him directions and He's not following my directions. And sometimes I get upset with God because He doesn't follow my directions.

And then one morning I wake up and found out that He's already done it. He did it by a much wiser way than I even thought of that. Pretty smart.

Wow, that's all right, Lord. And He really answered the real prayer. He just didn't follow my directions.

And so, I think that it's important that when we pray, we come to the heart of the issue. Rather than trying to direct God on just how to work things out, just lay the whole thing before Him and say, Lord, I know that You're much wiser than I am. You just work it out however you see fit, Lord.

And I'm opening the door that God may do for me the things that He is desiring to do. And prayer is consenting to God and to the will of God for Him to do those things that He is wanting to do. I am at total disagreement with those persons who say that you've got to give detailed instructions for God or He doesn't know how to answer your prayer.

One minister has written in a book that he was praying for God to give him a bicycle. And he prayed for a long time for this bicycle, and God didn't give him a bicycle. And finally, one day he said, Lord, I've been praying so long for a bicycle.

Why haven't You given me the bicycle? And the Lord said, You didn't tell me what kind you wanted. You know, there are 10-speed bikes. There are, you know, cruisers.

And there are all kinds of bikes. And you didn't... Poor God didn't know what kind of a bike the fellow needed. And so, he had to wait for the fellow to tell him, I want a 10-speed Schwinn, green with silver stripes.

I don't accept that. Jesus said, Your Father knows what you have need of before you ever ask Him. And every right thing I have ever prayed for, God had determined to give it to me before I ever asked.

My asking only opened the door that God might do what He was wanting to do the whole time. That Your Father may, not shall, Your Father may give it to you. Your Father wants to bless you.

Your Father wants to answer your prayers. Your Father is wanting to do some wonderful things for you. But He has given to you that capacity of choice, and He will not violate your choice, and He will not work against your will.

Prayer is consenting for God to do what He is wanting to do, that God may give to me those things that He desires. Now, again, Jesus emphasizes the importance of love. These things I command you, that you love one another.

We read so much about keeping His commandments. It gives us confidence in prayer, for we know that we receive whatsoever we ask of Him if we keep His commandments. What is His commandment? That we love one another.

That's the fruit that God is looking for from His vineyard. That love flowing in and through our lives from Him to each other. That God would just bind our hearts together tonight in the glorious love of Jesus Christ.

That we would have that kind of self-sacrificing, understanding, forgiving, love for each other. That God would erase all of the bitterness, or animosities, or hard feelings, or whatever we might feel towards our brethren in the Lord. And that we would be obedient tonight to the commandment of Jesus Christ and truly love one another even as He loved us.

God help us. Oh, may the fruit of God's Spirit just really spring forth in our lives as we abide in Jesus and as He abides in us. Now, Jesus tells them of the problems that they are going to experience in a world that is alien to Him.

He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. He was an alien on the planet Earth.

He never did settle down as a citizen of the world community, but was an alien. And Jesus said, If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. Don't be surprised at the reaction of the worldly person if they hate you because of your love for Jesus Christ, because of your relationship to Him.

Just know that they hated Him before they ever hated you. Now, if you were of the world, Jesus said the world would love you. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

We are told, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for he who has the love of the world in his heart has not the love of the Father. And so we are told not to love the world, but we are also being told here that the world isn't going to love us. If you were of the world, if you were a part of its system, then they would love you because they love their own.

But you're not of the world. That's pretty heavy, and it should cause each of us to sort of examine the attitude that the world has towards me. Do they hail me as a great fellow? Do they pat me on the back and say I'm doing a good job? If they do, I better go in my closet and repent and ask God to forgive me.

Because if you were of the world, then the world would love you. But because you're not of the world, it hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you.

The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also.

You're not greater than the Lord. If they hated Him, they're going to hate you. If they persecuted Him, they're going to persecute you.

But all these things will they do to you for my name's sake. Because they do not know Him that sent me. Jesus said, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. Now, if you are persecuted by the world or ridiculed by the world, make certain that that persecution is coming for Christ's sake, not because you're just an obnoxious person. One of the most obnoxious persons I ever knew was in college at the same time I was.

And she was a character and that's complimentary. She was a very loud mouthed woman. She had trained for opera and had a voice I'm sure that came close to Enrico Caruso's as far as volume.

And I used to ride the Jake streetcar home from work in the evening. And every once in a while, she would get on the same car that I was on. And if she would spy me in the back of the car with this loud operatic voice, she would say, Praise the Lord, brother.

And everybody would turn to see who she was talking to. Including myself. But somehow you know that everybody knows it's you.

And this woman was guilty of disrupting more classes when a joke was told and they would all be laughing. She would laugh louder than all the rest. I mean, she was just loud.

And so one day I was emboldened to take her the scripture, let the women keep silence in the church. And learn in silence and subjection. And she went walking away saying, Thank you, Lord, for the persecution.

And I knew then that there was no use. But I wasn't persecuting her for righteousness sake or for the Lord's sake, but because she was just a plain obnoxious person. And persecution that comes for being a bore or brash or whatever, there's no reward or special benefits for that.

But if it is truly for Christ's sake, then know that you are bearing His suffering. And if you suffer with Him, you will also reign with Him. So, Jesus said that if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

But all of these things will they do to you for my name's sake because they have not known the One who sent me. Now, if I had come and spoken unto them, if I had not come and spoken unto them, they would not have had sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin.

A man is held responsible for that which he knows. A man is not held responsible for that which he does not know. And when God judges, people will be judged according to the knowledge that they have received.

With knowledge comes responsibility to act upon that knowledge. The Bible says it would have been better for them to have never heard of it. Then to have heard and turned away.

You say, well, then it would be better if I had never heard. Well, it's too late for you. You are now responsible having heard.

And knowledge brings responsibility always. Jesus said, if I had not come and spoken unto them, they would have no sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin.

And he that hates me will hate my Father also. And if I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they would have had no sin. But now they have both seen and hated both me and the Father.

What an indictment He is making against those people who are now sinning against the light that God has given to them. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a reason, without a cause. And as you analyze the hatred that people have towards Jesus Christ, it is hatred without a reason, without a cause.

But it is interesting how many people are unreasonable in their hatred for Jesus. You know, there are people that can talk to you rationally on every subject in the world except Jesus. And they become irrational.

They become heated. They become violent. Normal, rational people.

But yet they have such a hatred and yet you ask them, why do you hate Jesus so much? And they can't tell you. They hate Him without a cause. They don't know why.

But it's just something that is there. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth. Again, notice that how often Jesus in these last words with His disciples is tying together the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

And is making reference to the three. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. And here, but when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth.

Which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of me. Look how it's just intertwined. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit being sent from the Father by the request of Jesus. Coming and bearing witness then of Jesus Christ. Testifying of me.

And ye also shall bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. So, talking to His disciples. He declares that they, along with the Spirit, will be bearing witness of Him because you've been with me from the beginning.

Now, of those, and how many there were that were disciples following Jesus, we do not know. Of those that were disciples, He named twelve of them apostles. But there were many others that were following Him.

And later on, when Peter stood up before the assembled disciples, he said it is important that we choose one of us who has been with Christ from the beginning. That we might choose him to take Judas' place. Who by his transgression fell and has gone to his own place.

But we need to replace him in the board of twelve here. And so we need someone who has been with us from the beginning. Who can testify of these things and also bear witness of the resurrection.

That he might be placed as an apostle in the place of Judas Iscariot. So it is interesting that one of the requirements was those that have been with Christ from the beginning. Now He is saying, you are my witnesses.

You're going to bear witness of me because you have been with me from the beginning. That is the beginning of His earthly ministry. Well, we've got one chapter tonight.

Next week, we'll take 16 and 17. Chapter 17, spend a lot of time in that chapter in meditation this week. We talk about the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. That is not the Lord's Prayer. That is a model prayer for the believers.

It has been called the Lord's Prayer. But the 17th chapter of John is truly the Lord's Prayer. This is His prayer that He is offering to the Father.

And I would suggest that you spend a lot of time this week meditating on the Lord's Prayer in the 17th chapter here in John's Gospel. It will do so much for you. May the Lord help us now to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, lest we deceive ourselves.

Speaking of His commandment to love one another, may God enable us this week to show that love one to another. And may we love each other even as He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us. May we truly abide in Jesus Christ.

May we spend more time in the Word, less time with television and other fleshly distractions, and more time with Him. Learning of Him. Receiving from Him.

Growing in Him. And may we allow the Word of God to do its work in our heart of cleansing us that we might bring forth much fruit that the Father might be glorified through our lives. Oh, may God bless you this

week.

And may God use you this week in a very special way to show forth His love to the needy world in which we live. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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