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John 15:9 - 15:27



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Steve Gregg delves into John 15 and Jesus' metaphor of the "true vine." He emphasizes the importance of abiding in God's love and bearing fruit, which includes not only joy and peace, but also laying down one's life for others. Gregg also addresses the misconception that all non-Christians hate Jesus and emphasizes the need for witnessing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the passage, Gregg emphasizes the importance of choosing to follow Christ and abiding in his love.

Transcript

We're in John 15 and still, of course, Jesus is continuing the discourse that began in the upper room the night when he had had the Last Supper with the disciples. John didn't mention the Last Supper. He mentioned the discourse afterward, though, and that's been going on since chapter 13.

There's a possibility that they have now left the room and are moving toward Gethsemane because at the end of chapter 14, Jesus said, Arise, let us go from here. And as I said, it's not clear whether they actually left the room at that time and the rest of this discourse was given in root or whether they simply arose from the table, started cleaning up and getting their coats on and shoes and things, and Jesus continued the discourse while they were preparing to leave. It doesn't much matter, of course.

The content is more important than the location. It's just a little confusing because of that statement at the end of 14. In the first eight verses of chapter 15, we saw that Jesus likened himself to a vine, but not a vine.

This is an important point. Jesus didn't say, I'm like a vine, in order to convey some kind of similarities between himself and a vine, but rather, he said, I'm the true vine. And the vine in Israel's Old Testament tradition is an emblem for Israel.

Israel was the vine. And a vine is, of course, intended to produce fruit. And so in the Old Testament, God said he had planted Israel as a vine in order to seek good fruit, but he did not receive good fruit from them.

So he had said in Isaiah chapter 5 that he came looking for good fruit, but instead he found wild grapes, grapes that were no better than if they had not been cultivated at all. In other words, wild, uncultivated. And so God had cultivated Israel.

He had given them the law. He had led them as a shepherd leads his sheep. He had delivered them from Egypt.

He had built a hedge about them and protected them. He had given them every advantage that they should produce good grapes. Instead they produced grapes that were no better than if they had never been cultivated at all.

Now he said in Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 7 that the fruit, the grapes he had been looking for were justice and righteousness. But what he found in Israel was oppression instead. Oppression and injustice.

So Israel, the vine, had failed to produce the fruit. Now in one of the parables of Jesus in Matthew 21, he said to Israel, the kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that will produce the fruits of it. And that was actually a parable about a vineyard and a vine and fruit.

That was Matthew 21, 43, where he said that. The kingdom is taken from you and given to a nation that will produce the fruits thereof. And that nation is a reference, of course, to the spiritual community of followers of Christ.

And this is what Jesus makes clear here. He says, I am the true vine. You're the branches.

And so we are part of that new Israel. He is the new Israel. He is a corporate body, of course.

Paul uses the expression, the body of Christ. Here, the same concept, although a plant instead of a human body is looked at. The branches are limbs of the plant's body.

And the whole plant, including its limbs, are the vine. He is the whole thing. We are part of him.

He is the vine. We're some of the limbs of the vine, the branches. And we bear fruit.

And he says that everyone who abides in him will bear much fruit. That means carry. The branches hold the fruit.

They don't produce the fruit. The vine, the whole organism produces the fruit. Christ produces the fruit.

But we bear it. It arrives and shows up upon us. And so the fruit, of course, is what God has always been looking for.

I pointed out last time that three of the fruits of the Spirit are mentioned specifically in this passage. In chapter 14, verse 27, Jesus mentioned, My peace I give to you. In chapter 15, verse 9, Abide in my love.

And chapter 15, verse 11, that my joy may remain in you. So it's not just peace, love, and joy. It's my peace, my love, my joy.

In other words, it's his character that's produced in us. It's the vine that produces the fruit. That's the fruit of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, and others. So this is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, which is that which gives life to and enables the entire organism to produce fruit. And this is the subject matter of his Upper Room Discourse principally, is that he's going to send the Holy Spirit, and that will be as a result of a change of circumstances for them from what they had before.

They always had him with them before. Now he's going to be in them, in the person of his Spirit. And that will make them part of him.

And that will make them branches in him. And he says, if you abide in me, then you'll bear that fruit that the Spirit will produce in you. So we're there in verse 9, As the Father loved me, I also have loved you.

Abide in my love. Now this is sort of the corollary to what he had said in chapter 13, verse 34. And he says again in verse 12 of this chapter, This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

He had actually given that exact commandment that we find in chapter 15, verse 12. Back in chapter 13, where he says, A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. And as I mentioned, loving as Christ loved is not exactly the same thing as loving your neighbor as you love yourself.

And that was the old commandment. The old commandment in the Old Testament was love your neighbor as you love yourself. But Jesus said, I'm giving you a new commandment, you should love each other as I have loved you.

You love yourself a certain way, you want certain things for yourself. And if you love your neighbor the same way, then you'll wish for things to be equitable, about even, for you and your neighbor. You've got two coats, John the Baptist said, give one away to someone who doesn't have one.

Then you've loved him as you love yourself. But Jesus teaches a love for someone else that goes beyond that. That you love someone not as you love yourself, but you love someone as Jesus loved.

Which is not just to make that person have about an equal circumstance to yours, but Jesus came and put himself below us. He washed the feet, he made himself the servant of all, he laid down his life. And that's going to be brought up in his discourse here, just a few verses hence.

Greater love has no man than this, but he lays down his life for his friends. That's the kind of love, that is the new covenant kind of love, as opposed to the old covenant kind of love. That's what he calls my love.

Abide in my love. Stay in the environment, live in the realm of my love. Everything that you do in all your relationships should be characterized by the love that is mine.

Jesus' love. If you look at verse 9 and verse 12 together, he says, as the Father loved me, I have loved you. And in verse 12, as I have loved you, you love one another.

It's like the Father loved me in the back door, I've loved you out the front door. And therefore I'm loving you in your back door, and you love others out your front door. You're receiving my love, and therefore you, as it were, you channel that love.

You extend that love that you receive from me. You're not really being called upon to produce love in yourself. He's going to say that, well he's already said that actually in verse 5. He says, without me you can do nothing, with reference to bearing fruit.

With reference to loving, you can't do that. That's not human. The strongest human instinct is self-preservation.

The strongest love is to lay down your life for someone else. That goes against the strongest human instinct. And therefore it is superhuman.

It is not normal. It's not natural. It may be natural in some circumstances.

For instance, mothers, no doubt, would naturally lay down their lives for their children. But for your friend, for your neighbor, to lay down your life for somebody that's not even related to you, maybe even for your enemies, as Jesus did. Because when we were still enemies, Christ died for us, the Bible says in Romans chapter 5. To love somebody that doesn't love you back, or somebody that you have no biological connection to, and to love them enough to lay down your life, that goes against all nature.

But it's what he commands. You do that because I have loved you that way, now you've received that. You give out what I have put in you, feeding it into you from within.

So the Father has done it with me. He says, as the Father loved me, I have loved you. As I have loved you, you love one another.

It's all God's love, coming through Christ to us and through us to other people. Now verse 10 says, 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.

How do you live in love? In God's love? Well, he says, I've defined it for you through my commandments. You know the commandments about give to him that asks you, turn the other cheek if someone strikes you, go a second mile if someone forces you to go one mile, if someone wants to sue you and take your coat, give them your coat also. These are the commandments, this is what love looks like.

If you keep these commandments, you'll be abiding in my love. Of course, not if you're mechanically keeping them. Not if you're legalistically keeping them.

Jesus didn't come to bring a new legalism. There's already plenty of that in Jewish society, based on the law of Moses and the traditions of the rabbis. They didn't need more rules.

They needed a revelation of God and of his love. And the teachings of Jesus are not new rules. They are descriptions of what it means to love as he loves.

Turning the other cheek is not a legalistic requirement. It is simply a description of what it means to love somebody the way Jesus loved. If you keep my commandments, you will be abiding in my love.

My commandments are a description of what it means to be loving. When I tell you to forgive, when you stand praying, forgive if you have ought against anyone, so that your heavenly father may forgive you. Forgiving other people is part of loving.

There's all kinds of things that Jesus taught. They're all about one thing, love. Loving God and loving others.

And that is abiding or remaining in his love, when we live and walk in those things. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. The things he's saying are not meant to burden us, but to increase our joy.

In the 13th chapter he had said, if you know these things, happier you if you do them. That's in chapter 13, verse 17. That's when he washed the disciples feet and told them they should wash each other's feet.

And he said, if you know that and you do it, then you'll be happy. This is the way to be happy. This is the way to be loving.

This is the way to be Christ-like. This is bearing the fruit of Jesus in your life. You'll be full of joy, full of love, full of peace.

This is supposed to be a supernatural phenomenon. Anyone can explain normal peace and peaceful circumstances and normal joy. That can be expressed and is understood.

Because it's the result of having joyful circumstances. But the fruit of the spirit is supernatural peace and joy. At times when those emotions would not normally be called forth.

And love toward people that you would not normally love. Christianity is a supernatural life. At least it's supposed to be.

Many people become Christians by simply joining the church. And then they learn the rules and they learn how to fit in. And they figure out, okay, now that I'm a Christian I have to stop doing these things.

I have to start doing these things. This is what Christians do. And they fit in.

And there's nothing supernatural about their life. It's just like joining any club that has rules. They just learn the rules and they conform.

And they probably don't even realize that they have never really become Christian. They've never really received the spirit of Christ. There's really nothing supernatural about their behavior.

And that becomes clear when trials do come. The things that do challenge natural peace and natural joy. Those trials prove to them that they don't have a supernatural peace or supernatural joy.

And even when there aren't the trials, the joy and the peace and the love we're having is not supposed to be generated from our nature. But it's supposed to be His nature, His joy, His peace, His love that are the fruits of His spirit. And we're walking in the spirit.

And the fruits of the spirit are born as we walk in the spirit. So He says, I'm telling you these things that my joy may remain in you and your joy may be full. You'll be happy people.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. Now, you see, this is a repeat of that commandment He gave by which He said all men will know that you're my disciples.

In chapter 13 verses 34 and 35. That you love as He did and He describes what that kind of love is. It's the kind of love that He has which is the greatest of all loves.

Which allows one, in fact inspires one to lay down one's life for his friends. Now, laying down your life for other people sounds very heroic. And we maybe are thinking of something like in the tale of two cities.

You know, it is a far, far better thing that I do today than I've ever done before. Taking a man's place to the guillotine so that the other man can escape. And you know, it's very

heroic, very inspiring when somebody literally dies for somebody else.

But not all of us will have that opportunity. That's kind of a rare thing. Probably not one Christian in a hundred.

Probably not one Christian in a thousand. Really will ever be put into a position where it's me or him, take me. You know, people talk about the communists breaking into the churches with their machine guns.

And saying, okay, you know, who's a real Christian here? And the heroic ones standing up for Christ. Or that young woman in Colorado who, when she was asked by the gunman, you know, do you believe in God? She said, I do. People talk about that as how heroic that was.

To stand and confess Christ in the face of a barrel of a gun. That's not exactly especially heroic. That's just Christian.

That's just being a Christian. You know, we have so many sub-Christians. That when someone actually does the normal thing that any Christian in the New Testament would have done without thinking twice.

We think, whoa, that's a magic Christian. That's a heroic Christian. That's like a super Christian.

Someone laying down their life for Christ or for somebody else. That kind of love that we don't ever see that. And yet that's the love by which people know we're disciples.

If we don't see that, how can anyone even know? How can we know if we're Christians if we don't love that way? That's normal Christian love. And it's really quite easy for someone who's a real Christian to lay down their life for someone else or for Christ. Because they love them.

It'd be hard not to. It is like loving someone as much as you love your own kids. And anyone who's a parent must know, certainly, that they would gladly lay down their life for their child.

If it was his life or mine. You know, he needs a kidney and I've only got one. But mine's the only one that'll be compatible.

I'll give him my kidney and I'll die so my kid can live. Of course, who wouldn't do that? Anyone would do that. Well, maybe not anyone.

Maybe it's a hyperbole. There are people who don't love their children. But people who love their children would do that in a heartbeat.

And so, it's loving God's children like you love your children. That's what love is. Loving

God's children because they are his children.

If you love me, you love my kids. That's what it says in 1 John 5. Verse 1. 1 John 5.1. It says, whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. One of God's kids.

And everyone who loves him who begot, meaning the begetter, the father, is God. Loves also him who is begotten of him. His kids.

Anyone who loves God will love his kids. Whoever loves him that begat will love them that are begotten of him. Why? Because they are his.

And you love him. Love me, love my dog. You know? If you really love me, then everyone I love will be precious to you too.

Because you've become joined in heart with me. And what I love, you'll love. You become joined in heart with God.

You'll love all the people he loves. And he loves his children just like you love your children. So, you should love his children as you love your children.

You would lay down your lives for them. That's not something that you'll always have the opportunity to do. Only rare cases do people really have the opportunity to say, shoot me, not them.

Or as Jesus put it, if it's me you want, take me, let these ones go. In the Garden of Gethsemane he said that. He laid down his life for them.

And for us all. It says in 1 John, 1 John 3, verse 16, just like John 3.16, 1 John 3.16 says, By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. So, that's what love is.

It's just laying down your life for your brethren. Or as Jesus put it, no man has greater love for his friends than to lay down his life for them. But how do you lay down your life for people if no one has a gun to your head? If there's no martyrdom taking place.

If no one you know has their life endangered for their faith, and you're not in a position to do anything to substitute yourself for them in a deadly situation. Well, there are less dramatic ways to lay down your life. You just lay down your prerogatives.

Just lay down your rights for somebody else. You just let them have their way instead of you having your way. That's laying down your life in a small way.

Now, if you can't do it in a small way, you're probably not going to be able to do it in a big way. You know. And we should be convincingly sure of ourselves that we would, of course, die for a brother, die for a sister, die for a friend, die for another person.

Because that's what Christians do. But do we live for them? It's easier to die for someone than to live for them. Because it only takes a moment to die.

It takes a lifetime to live. Living for someone means making hundreds of choices in the course of a lifetime to die to yourself so that somebody else can have their way and their life can be enhanced or blessed because you take a hit in your privileges or in your wishes. That's laying down your life.

And so, loving really consists of laying down your life for other people. If you have to lay down your life in a physical sense, ultimately, to save somebody, then that's what you'll do. But if you never have that privilege, then you'll do it in the smaller ways that present themselves in all relationships day by day.

Dying to yourself. And allowing somebody else to be blessed. And you'll find that you're blessed too because if you know these things and do them, your joy will be full.

It's a fullness of joy that comes when you lay down your prerogatives happily for someone else. You see, it's not fun to lay down your prerogatives for someone else if you don't love them. It's not a happy thing at all.

It's just a grumpy thing to do. You do it because you have to and it just makes you bitter. But when you lay down your life for someone because you love them, you feel like your life is enriched.

You feel like you've had a great privilege. I've been able to make a sacrifice for somebody I love. I love to do that.

What could be more enjoyable than that in life? Does anyone know anything more enjoyable than making a sacrifice for someone you love because you know that they'll be blessed? I can't even imagine something more fulfilling than that. And so once you love people, then you make sacrifices. That's how your joy is enhanced.

And of course it's because what prevents us from having fullness of joy is when we're still holding on to our wishes and our prerogatives. We haven't denied ourselves and taken up our cross yet. We're kind of joining the Christian club and conforming to the Christian behavior but we have never denied ourselves and taken up our cross and said, okay, whether I get what I want is not even important.

I'm only the one who's carrying the cross here. What's it matter what I want? And when you cease to care about your own wants as much as you care about other people's needs, then there's very little that can perturb you because what perturbs us is the violation of our own will. But when we've already laid our own will down, say, well, then how can it be perturbed? How can it be disturbed? So the fullness of joy comes when we, out of love like Jesus, just lay down our lives and our prerogatives and our will in order to bless the people around us and thereby to bless God because inasmuch as you do it to

the least of these, my brethren, he said, you do it to me.

So in blessing other people, you're blessing Christ. If you lay down your life for other people, you're laying down your life for Jesus. And there's no greater love than that, but there's no less love than that that is Christlike.

I should point out in verse 13, he said, greater love has no one than this, that he laid down his life for his friends. This is one of the proof texts of Calvinism on the limited atonement. Jesus is talking about laying down his life and he says he's laying down his life for his friends.

Similarly, in John chapter 10, he said the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. And so Calvinism teaches that Jesus really only died for the elect, the ones who are his sheep. The shepherd gives his life for his sheep.

He doesn't lay down his life for the wolves. He lays them down for his sheep. And Jesus says here, a man, his great love caused him to lay down his life for his friends.

Not for his enemies, but for his friends. So the idea here is that Jesus died not for everybody, but just died for his friends, his sheep, the elect. This is among the proof texts that are brought up by the Calvinists for this.

There's other scriptures that seem to support this. Also in Acts chapter 20, Paul was addressing the elders in the church of Ephesus. He says you need to take heed to the flock of God.

It says which he has purchased with his blood. That is that Jesus by his death purchased the church. It specifically says it was the church that he purchased in Acts chapter 20, verse 28.

Therefore take heed to yourselves, to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. So they say, what did Jesus purchase with his blood? The church. The elect, in other words.

And so these become doctrines supporting what's called the limited atonement, one of the points of Calvinism. That Jesus didn't die for everybody, he only died for the elect. However, these verses of course cannot prove such a doctrine when there are many other verses that say he gave his life for ransom for all.

And that he's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And Jesus said I am the true bread, I give my body for the life of the world. We've got not only the friends and the sheep and the church they die for, but the world as well.

And in the parable of the hidden treasure, the man sees the treasure in the field and he

goes out and buys the whole field so he can own the treasure. He purchased the field, but what he saw in it of value to him was the treasure. And the kingdom, the people of God, they are the treasure.

The field is the world. And Jesus gave all that he had to purchase the field, the world, so that he could obtain the church from it. Did he buy the church? Yes.

Did he lay down his life for his sheep? Yes. For his friends? Yes. And everyone else too.

It's only the sheep and the friends who benefit from this, but he paid the price for all. And so when he says that a man lay down his life for his friends, he's not saying that it would not be greater still to lay down his life for his enemies. It would be.

As a matter of fact, in Romans chapter 5, we're told that Jesus did just that. He didn't just lay down his life for his friends. He laid down his life for his enemies.

In Romans 5, verse 6 and following, it says, For when we were still without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. Not the godly. The ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if when we were enemies, that's sinners in verse 8, it's enemies in verse 10. If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Much more.

Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Jesus did more than die for his friends. He died for sinners.

While we were yet sinners, while we were yet enemies, he died for us. He made us into friends. But it was while we were enemies he died.

He didn't just die for people who were his friends. So, when Jesus said that a man has no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends, he's not limiting it to his friends. He's saying, with reference to one's friends, you can do nothing more loving toward them than to lay down your life for them.

In your relationships with your friends, certainly you can't love them greater than to die for them, to lay down your life for them. That's what he's saying. He's not really trying to limit the range of persons that he's died for.

And then he says in verse 14 and 15, 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 have heard from my Father I have made known to you. He says, I don't call you servants anymore, but friends. Now, many times in the scripture we do find the term servants used of us with relationship to our walk with God.

We are his servants. I was teaching a campus crusade group in Seoul, Korea back in 1984 or 85. I forget which it was, one of those two years.

And I taught about discipleship. I taught about the kingdom of God. I taught about the lordship of Christ and how the gospel involves a declaration of Christ's lordship and that we are to come and be surrendered to him as servants to a Lord.

I gave the example that Jesus gave in Luke chapter 17 where he said that, you know, which of you plowing in a field or working in a field or having a servant, which of you having a servant plowing the field or whatever, when he comes in will say, here, sit down and let me serve you. No, he says, a master of a servant doesn't do that. He says, you serve me and when I'm done, then you will eat.

And then Jesus said, so you also be like that servant. He said, you also, when you've done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants. We've done only what is our duty to do.

And so Jesus is teaching that the Christian should see himself as in the servant role and doing only what he's told to do is, I mean, if he does everything he's commanded, he has still done only what he's required to do and doesn't expect any special congratulations. Anyway, I taught about this and one of the Y members was talking to me afterwards and he said, you know, he says, I actually have found it more beneficial not to think of myself in terms of being a servant of Christ but a friend of Christ. And I, of course, he was obviously referring to verse 15 of chapter 15 here.

I don't call you servants but friends. And I said, well, I realize you're talking about John 15 where Jesus said that, but you might notice in verse 14, he says, you are my friends if you do everything I command you. So it's true.

We are his friends, but not like ordinary friends. My ordinary friends don't have to do everything I command them. We have more of an egalitarian relationship.

If someone has to do everything I command them, then they may be my friend, but they're my servant too. And when Jesus said, I don't call you servants but friends, this is one of those cases of what I've referred to as a limited negative. I don't call you only servants but also friends.

Sure, you're still going to be my servants, but you are servants that your master has brought you into a friendship with him. He's treating you like friends now. Most servants don't expect that, but my servants, I treat them as my friends.

It's interesting that after Jesus made this statement, he said, I don't call you servants, yet every one of the writers of the epistles referred to themselves as servants of Jesus Christ. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. Peter, a servant of Jesus Christ.

They are servants. James, a servant of Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus said, I don't call you servants, I call you friends.

Well, they said, well, we call ourselves servants. And you can befriend us if you want to, Jesus, but we're still serving you, because that's our real role. You're the Lord.

You're the Lord. We're the servants. Now, if the Lord wants to be friendly with his servants, if he wants to take his servants into his confidence as a man takes his friends into his confidence, that's the master's prerogative, and it's a great privilege to be his servant, because he calls us not only servants, but also friends, but not less servants.

And so he says, I don't call you servants, for a servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but I've called you friends for all things I've heard from my Father I've made known to you. In other words, I'm not keeping any secrets from you. A man doesn't confide in his slaves of his household all of his plans.

He tells his friends those things. He doesn't tell his servants. They're not included in that privileged circle of confidence.

But he says, I've brought you into my confidence. Now, he does say here, everything I've heard from my Father I've made known to you, but that's not quite correct, because he tells them in the next chapter, there are things yet I want to tell you, but you're not able to bear them. This is not really a contradiction.

Basically, what he's saying is, my attitude toward you is to disclose to you everything that the Father has shown me. I've got no secrets from you. However, I haven't told you everything yet, because you can't receive it yet.

That's what he says in chapter 16, verses 12 and 13. You can't yet receive it. The limitation is not on the side of my willingness to share with you.

It's on the side of your ability to receive it. So I'll have to share that with you through the Spirit, after I'm gone. The Spirit will lead you into all the truth that I have not been able to tell you, because you can't yet receive it.

Nonetheless, I've held back nothing that I could teach you that you could receive it, up to this point, is how we have to understand that last line in verse 15. Verse 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit. He's still on this subject of fruit.

And that your fruit should remain, that whatever you may ask the Father in my name, he

may give you. Now, of course, we're coming back to repeat information, but here's something new. You have not chosen me, but I chose you.

Again, a very popular proof text for the Calvinist view that election, that is God's choosing, is unilateral from God's side. That God does the choosing and we don't. In fact, if one is a true Calvinist, they believe that we couldn't, because we can't make any choices in the direction of believing or repenting or anything like that toward God, because we're dead in sins before we're regenerated.

And so God has to do all the choosing. And so he says, you didn't choose me, I chose you. And yet they did, too, choose him.

They did make choices. Again, this is no doubt another limited negative. You did not only choose me, but I also chose you.

Or even maybe primarily and more importantly, I chose you. He's not saying they didn't choose him because they clearly did. Even in the Old Testament, people made choices.

Joshua said, choose you this day, whom you'll serve. You choose. Choices are the prerogative of persons who have will.

Animals don't really make choices at the same level humans do, but humans do make choices about their moral direction. And their destiny. This is the dignity of being made in God's image.

This is the dignity of being human rather than animal. We do make choices. And the disciples did make a choice.

But they didn't make it in a vacuum. He chose them, too. I mean, he walked up and said, follow me.

They didn't come running to him and say, let us follow you. He said, follow me. Then they made their choice.

Will they do it? Will they not? He's not saying that I did all the choosing and you did none of it. He's simply saying that you may remember choosing to follow me. Well, that's not all that was going on.

More significantly, I chose you. You didn't just choose me. I chose you as well.

And that's the more significant aspect. Now, chose them for what? This is not a reference to election for salvation. He chose them to be in the role they were in.

He selected them from among a larger group of people. Some of the people, as far as we know, had come to Christ without him specifically calling them. When Jesus was doing his ministry publicly, he had a general invitation out to whoever is burdened and heavy

laden, let him come to me and take my yoke upon you.

There was a general invitation to everybody to be a disciple if they would. And many even just came to him without him personally asking them, and said, Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go. There were a lot of people in Christ's entourage, disciples, that followed him around.

At least 70 we know of. Because on one occasion he sent 70 of them out on an outreach. He had a large number of disciples.

But the scripture says that on a certain night, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer. And then when he was done praying, he called his disciples to him, and from them he chose 12. And he called them apostles.

So there was a larger group of people who had been following Jesus, who were disciples, and among them, and from among them, he selected 12 to be apostles. These are them. So when he says, I chose you, in all likelihood he's not just even referring to the question of the secret decree of God as to who would be saved and who would not be saved, but rather, I have selected you from among a larger group of disciples to have a special role as my apostles.

In all likelihood this choosing he's referring to is a vocational choosing, a choosing to the vocation of apostleship, rather than a reference to a choosing them to have faith, or choosing them to be born again, or choosing them to become Christians. Now of course, if Calvinism is true, then this verse can be understood in that way. But if Calvinism is not generally supported from the rest of scripture, then there's no reason to import a Calvinist, specifically Calvinistic interpretation into this passage.

Many believe, and I think it's likely, that he's talking about choosing them as apostles, not choosing them for salvation. There were many people who were saved who were not apostles. Only a small number from those who were saved were chosen to the role of apostleship, and these were among them.

And Jesus made that choice of them. But they also had made a choice to follow him at a certain point. But in that case he says, at the end of verse 16, so that whatever you ask, the Father in my name he may give you.

Remember when he said that same thing in verse 7. I mentioned that that somehow is connected to fruit bearing. Because it's in the context of verses 1 through 8 that he's talking about fruit bearing. And verse 7 is in the midst of that.

He's still talking about fruit bearing in verse 8. When he says, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, so you'll be my disciples. But prior to that he said, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, which by the way, a couple of verses earlier, is the condition for bearing fruit, abiding in him. He says, you will ask what you desire

and it shall be done to you.

So it sounds like in the context of bearing fruit, there's this *carte blanche*, as it were, to sign Christ's name to any check, to make any request in his name, which of course has got to be understood in the context. He's not commissioning these disciples to go out and get themselves Cadillacs and Mercedes and mansions and yachts by just signing checks with Jesus' name on it. To act in his name means you're acting as his agent.

You're acting in his name the things that he would do. Certainly one of the things that he must be thinking of praying for is for fruitfulness. I pray that I would have more of the love of Christ, more of the peace of God, more of the joy, that is this fruit that he says I'm supposed to be having.

I'm asking that in Jesus' name and that certainly is something he approves of. And so it would appear that asking for anything, the assumption is what you're asking for, is for spiritual fruit in your life, for the fullness of the spirit in your life, primarily. That seems to be the main thing.

In Luke chapter 11, as I recall, let's see if I'm right about this. It may not be chapter 11. Let me think here.

Chapter 11 is on the subject, but it may not be the passage I'm thinking of. Jesus is talking about prayer, of course, at the beginning of Luke 11, and that's what I'm thinking of. But there's another place where he's actually speaking parallel.

Let me just take a moment and see if I can find a parallel here over in Matthew. Matthew 7. Okay, Luke 11, 11, I guess it is. I was right about Luke 11 there.

Yes, here we go. I was just looking too early in the chapter. Luke 11, 11.

Jesus said, If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? And if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give earthly riches to those who ask Him? No, that's not what it says. That's not what it says. Good gifts, isn't that what good gifts are? Chances are his Bible actually says that.

That's what you'll hear in the black Pentecostal churches and the white Pentecostal churches too. That's right. All the Pentecostal churches.

They'll talk about how the good things that God wants to give you through prayer are the good life, you know, the Cadillacs, or maybe it's not Cadillacs anymore. It used to be Cadillacs a generation ago. Now it's probably Mercedes or something else.

But the point is that Jesus says earthly fathers give good gifts to their children who ask

Him, so certainly God will give good gifts to those who ask Him. Well, yeah, true, but what are those good gifts? Notice what Jesus said. He didn't say the Father will give earthly riches.

He says if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? This carte blanche that the Father gives to His children to pray and ask whatever they will obviously are related to the spiritual gifts, the fullness of the Spirit, the spiritual manifestations in one's life. So this praying in Jesus' name and asking whatever you will, He's assuming that you are my disciples and what you will is to be Christlike. What you will is to have more love, more power, more of you in my life.

That's the prayer that He assumes we're asking. And He also brings it up in this point in John 15, 16. He says 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. So I'm not saying that the prayer can only be for spiritual things. Certainly we can pray for our daily bread as well.

Jesus authorized us to pray for that, even told us to pray for that. You can pray for material things that you need, but this idea you can ask anything you want to is in the context of wanting to bear fruit, to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Now verse 18, 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're 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'll 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.

So, he's telling the disciples that you're going to have God on your side, but you're going to have the world against you. Because if you're like Jesus, the world's going to treat you the way that they treated Jesus. He says, if they hated me, they're going to hate you.

If they listened to me, they'll listen to you. You are going to be just like me. And as such, the world will have the same reaction to you that they have to me.

Now, this is as it should be, because the things that cause people to hate Jesus, the things in him that they don't like, should be things they see in us too. And if they don't like those things, they shouldn't like it in us any more than in him. And yet, many times, we are very careful to try to make sure that people who hate Jesus will like us.

And it's hard to know whether that's possible if we're like him. If we are living as he lived,

speaking as he spoke, representing, bringing the light to people who hate light and who love darkness, this, we should expect to have a result of them reacting to us as to Jesus. Now, not everyone who's not a disciple hates Jesus.

The world that he speaks about is that part of humanity that is following Satan, specifically. They are what Paul referred to in Ephesians 2 as the children of disobedience. There are people who are committed to rebellion against God, who have the devilish spirit animating them.

True, many Christians believe that anyone who's not following Jesus is actively following the devil. I'm not positive that that is taught in Scripture. The Bible certainly does say there are children of the devil and there are children of God.

And the children of the devil are murderers. The children of the devil want to do what the devil wants to do. He wants to murder and kill and destroy.

And not every non-Christian I've met seems to have any interest in killing and murdering and destroying. I mean, I don't know that every non-Christian is quite so devilish. Now, every non-Christian is blinded by the devil.

Every non-Christian is failing to see the truth because they're listening to the devil's lies. There's no question that the devil has his impact on everyone who is not a Christian. But not everyone is an avid follower of their father, the devil.

When Jesus was on earth, there were people who were his disciples and there were people who tried to kill him. And there were others who were neither disciples nor interested in killing him. Not all the people in Galilee rose up together to try to kill Jesus.

There were some who did and some of them had to be stirred up to do so. They had to be stirred up by the Pharisees and others to do so. But there were a lot of people who were not disciples of Jesus who weren't just plotting to kill him either.

There were ordinary peasant people who were just trying to mind their own business and they were interested in what Jesus had to say and maybe they got disinterested when they couldn't understand what he was saying and they went their way and forgot about him. But not everybody hates Jesus and therefore not everybody is supposed to hate you. You don't have to make people hate you.

You don't have to feel badly if someone who's a non-Christian finds you to be a pleasant person and is drawn to you. They may not be part of that world that hates Jesus. They may be people that are being drawn to Jesus.

They may be people that the Holy Spirit is working upon. After all, before a person becomes a Christian they do have to be a non-Christian. From being a non-Christian to being a Christian there's usually a process.

It's not very often the case although it may be the case in many that a person is totally a non-Christian they hear the gospel and they become totally a Christian. In many cases people are being drawn through a series of dealings of God in their lives and exposure at different levels to the light and responding at different stages of light until they finally understand and receive the gospel and become full disciples of Jesus. It's very popular in Christian theology just to polarize everyone into two polar opposite groups.

You've got the people who love God with all their heart they're the elect. You've got the people who hate God with all their heart they're the non-elect. But is that really what you find in the real world? I don't.

And nor does the Bible insist that we must look for that in the real world as though that's necessarily the case. There are people who love God with all their heart there's people who hate God with all their heart and there's a whole bunch of other people who are kind of in the middle kind of not sure what they think. Still confused, still looking, still searching just wrapped up in their own problems and their own pains and their own crises and so forth.

They don't hate God and they don't love God they're just not even thinking about God. He's not in their thoughts. And so in that sense we could say they're enemies of God because Jesus said whoever's not for me is against me.

But they're not enemies consciously in their own mind they're not thinking I'm just, I'm hating God. I sure hate that God up there. They may be people who are at odds with God because they haven't surrendered to Him but they don't necessarily hate Him and when Jesus was on earth such people didn't necessarily hate Him and they won't necessarily hate you.

I say all of that because you might start to feel bad if some of your non-Christian friends actually like you. I don't know if they should like me maybe I should be a little more offensive so they won't like me because they don't love Jesus they shouldn't love me. Well, there are people who may be in the process of being drawn to Jesus.

They may not even know that's the case but God does. He's drawing them to Him through you adorning the gospel in your life that you are an attractive person to them because you're a loving person and because you're a good person. Some people like those things.

That's just it. I can't go along with the doctrine of total depravity that says that everyone who's not born again everyone who's not regenerated just hates goodness. Does the world hate Mother Teresa? Most of the world admires Mother Teresa not because she's a babe but because she's godly.

Of course she's gone now but the point is if she was Princess Diana you wouldn't know

for sure. Do they love her because of her good deeds or because she looks like a model? But Mother Teresa people love Mother Teresa for what? Just because she's good. Even non-Christians admire Mother Teresa because she was good.

This idea that all people who aren't Christians are just lovers of evil and haters of good that fits nicely into doctrinal pigeon holes in certain systematic theology. It doesn't fit into the real world. That's not the way it is.

And so the world that hates Jesus those who hate Jesus will and should hate you. And if you find people who hate Jesus and everything they speak about him is venomous and hostile and yet they think you're okay then you should be concerned because they don't see much of Jesus in you apparently. Not enough of him to hate you like they hate him.

And frankly, you know to be hated by those who hate Christ because they see too much of Christ in you that kind of insult is flattery. When the disciples were beaten for their testimony in the book of Acts it says they left the presence of the council the men who had beaten them it says they left rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. It was a compliment to them.

The people who had killed Christ were also wanting to kill them. The people who had had Christ flogged had flogged them. And so they considered that that was a privilege.

You'll see this in Acts 5.41 after the apostles were flogged for being Christians by the same people who had had Jesus flogged. So they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Counted worthy by whom? Well, maybe by God.

It may be that it's saying that God trusted them with this trial. He counted them worthy to bear this cross and to be like Jesus in this respect. But in one respect the council that flogged them counted them worthy to suffer shame.

They gave them the compliment of saying we hate you because you're like Jesus. We hate him. Well, that comes from you.

That's a compliment. Because hatred from people who hate Jesus means that I must be being how I want to be like Jesus. The things about him they hate hopefully they see in me too and hate me.

But I'm not looking for hatred from people in general. Neither was Jesus. Jesus was not there looking to make people hate him.

He was just being the light of the world. And some people hate the light and love darkness. So for that reason many hated him.

And if we are light in the world then they should hate us, those who hate him. In verse

22, 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.

Now, in other words, if they had no light, if I hadn't spoken to them, if I hadn't done these miracles for them, if they had not had such an exhibition of what is true, then their remaining in darkness would not be their fault. They could hardly be held responsible for not knowing the truth if the truth had not come and knocked on the door and faced them in my words and in my works. But it has.

Therefore they are responsible. It is very similar to what Jesus said to the Pharisees back in chapter 9 after he healed the blind man. At the very end of chapter 9, verse 41, Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no sin.

But now you say, we see. Therefore your sin remains. If you were really blind and really had no light, well, you wouldn't be responsible.

God wouldn't count you to having sin. Again, the Bible teaches and John teaches this very clearly mostly that the condemnation comes not because people are in the dark but because they were given light. This is the condemnation.

He said in John 3 that light has come into the world. That's the condemnation. That light came to them and they loved the darkness rather than light.

The condemnation isn't that they never heard the gospel. The condemnation is that they heard it and hated it. That's what he's pointing out.

They would have no sin if they'd really never heard it. Now that doesn't mean that they would have been perfect sinless individuals. It just means that God would not have counted sin against them.

He would not have counted them as worthy of condemnation if they had been in total ignorance, if he had never spoken to them or shown them anything. But it has happened, he says in verse 25, that this word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, they hated me without a cause. This statement, they hated me without a cause, is found twice in the Psalms.

It's in Psalm 35, 19 and it's also in Psalm 69, 4. But Psalm 69 is a psalm that is used frequently in the New Testament as a source of messianic prophecy so he may have that particular psalm in mind. Psalm 69, 4. They hated me without a cause. But when the helper comes, or the paraclete, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me and you also will bear witness

because you have been with me from the beginning.

Now the apostles would be special witnesses because they had been with him from the beginning. He selected them to be his spokespersons because they had seen it all from the beginning. They'd been with him from the time of John the Baptist.

And he says, therefore you will be my witnesses. And the Holy Spirit who is coming will bear witness also. So you won't be witnessing alone.

You'll have the power of the Holy Spirit and the conviction of the Spirit backing up what you're saying so people will hear in your witness. They'll also hear the witness of the Spirit in their own hearts. So we find the apostles were primarily the witnesses, public witnesses.

We sometimes get the impression maybe that every Christian in the New Testament was running around as an evangelist. That's not necessarily true. The Bible seems to indicate that almost all the witnessing was being done by the apostles.

There were some others who did so, but it was primarily something done by the apostles. You can see this in Acts 4, 33. It says, and with great power, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Now this is after it's talking about the whole church life. See, in verse 32 it says, Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart, one soul. Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common, and with great power the apostles gave witness.

We've got thousands of believers in the community, and they're all living like Christians among themselves, being an example corporately of an alternative society, sharing their goods with each other, and doing things that show that they love one another. That's the witness of the community, and then the apostles would go out and give public verbal witness. It would appear that the primary evangelists were the apostles, and that many of the other disciples were not doing evangelism because they weren't called to be that.

Not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are evangelists. But in Acts chapter 5, when they're on trial, the apostles, Peter answering for them, says in verse 32, Acts 5, 32, We are his witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. So, he says, We are the witnesses, and so is the Holy Spirit.

That's what Jesus said at the end of John chapter 15. He says, The Holy Spirit will come, he'll bear witness, and so will you. So, the apostles and the Holy Spirit together bearing witness, it agrees with what Jesus told them in Matthew chapter 10, when he told them that they'd be delivered up and to stand before synagogues and councils, they'd be having to give witness to Jesus in hostile situations.

You know, in John 15, this situation of bearing witness is there in the world hating you. In Matthew 10, the same kind of context. Matthew 10, beginning at verse 17, it says, Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues, and you'll be brought before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, verse 19, do not worry about how or what you should speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. So as they are called upon to bear testimony in a hostile situation, they don't have to worry about whether they'll be articulate or whether they'll think of the right things to say or they'll provide a good defense for themselves.

He says it won't be you. It'll be the Spirit of your Father in you, bearing testimony through you. So, again, the Gospel is to be preached through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles were particularly commissioned with that task, and he promised them that when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he'll bear witness and you'll bear witness because you've been with me from the beginning. And so ends chapter 15, but the discourse continues on into the next chapter.