

OpenTheo

Upper Room Discourse (Part 6)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In the sixth part of his Upper Room Discourse, Steve Gregg delves into the metaphor of the branch and vine, emphasizing the importance of abiding in Christ and producing fruit through faith. He highlights that the ability to maintain faith and remain attached to Christ requires effort and trust in Him. He also discusses the significance of keeping God's commandments as proof of love for Him and the expectation of persecution and hate from the world for believers who are not of the world. Overall, Gregg emphasizes the importance of living a righteous life that reflects God's love and producing fruit that exemplifies righteousness and justice.

Transcript

Romans 5.8 Paul says, But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So Christ dying for us showed that God loved us. But what did it show us about Jesus? It showed us that He loved God.

God wanted us to be saved. Jesus was willing to do the will of His Father even to submit Himself to the death of the cross. Now, that's what Jesus Himself indicates.

He says, I'm not going to talk much longer with you. Of course, He doesn't say it here, but He said it before because I'm going to be crucified. He says, The ruler of this world is coming, but He doesn't have anything of me.

In other words, I'm not going to be crucified because the devil found some chink in my righteousness and was able to condemn me to death on the basis of my guilt. But rather, it's a voluntary act of love on my part to the Father. I'm doing this so that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do.

So that's why He's going away. And then He says, Arise, let us go from here. We've noticed that line in previous lectures.

It may be that Jesus and the disciples left the room at that time, and the remaining part of the discourse took place en route to Gethsemane, where Jesus was only a short while after arrested. It's also possible that they only rose from the table, and it took a while to

leave the room for one reason or another. Now, chapter 15.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch, and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples. Now, those who are mostly familiar with the New Testament, not the Old, would understand this fruit in one of two ways. I know when I was growing up, the particular denomination I was in, I can't really blame them.

I don't know if they taught this, or if they just failed to teach me otherwise. I got the impression, and I read these passages all my life, because I read John many, many times in my childhood, and heard it preached and so forth. I always had the impression that the fruit he's talking about, that the disciples will bear, are converts, sort of multiplication, like a seed.

You bury it and it multiplies itself, it produces fruit. And that's not an impossibility, but it seems to me, in light of other scriptures about fruit, that's probably not how the word is to be understood in this case. When Jesus said elsewhere about, beware of false prophets, you'll know them by their fruits, he didn't mean by the numbers of people who are converted to their thinking, but something else.

Of course, we, as I say, who are more usually familiar with the New Testament than the Old, would be inclined to cross-reference to Galatians 5, in verse 22, where Paul says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, and joy, and peace, and gentleness, and meekness, and self-control, and goodness, and patience, and all that kind of stuff. Those are character traits, and I think one of the most common things for a teacher to do is to link those fruits mentioned in Galatians 5 with what Jesus said here. Now, I've said that in such a way that you probably expect me to disagree with that, and there's a sense in which I would say there's a better connection, though it doesn't eliminate the relevance of Galatians 5. I think, of course, that in the minds of the disciples, when Jesus was speaking, when he said, I'm the true vine, you're going to bear fruit, and so forth, that his disciples would mostly be thinking of the Old Testament imagery of the vineyard and the fruit that God was seeking.

The fruit in that case was justice and righteousness, and Jesus had said only a day or two earlier to the leaders of Israel, the kingdom of God is going to be taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it. And now, in the upper room, we find out who's going to bring forth the fruits of the kingdom. The disciples are, but the fruits of the kingdom are justice and righteousness.

Now, I said that doesn't eliminate Galatians 5.22 at all because, in a sense, all those things that are the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.22 could be considered to be part of being righteous, part of righteousness. Love, joy, peace, meekness, self-control, patience, goodness. Those may be just subcategories or subdivisions of the general term of righteousness.

It's righteous behavior. In any case, whether one prefers to link the idea of fruit here to the Old Testament teaching on the subject or to the later New Testament teaching, I think, in all likelihood, what he's talking about is a type of behavior, a type of goodness that reflects the righteous behavior of Christ. Now, he said to them, without me, you can do nothing.

So, he's not in any sense saying that they are going to get credit for being righteous as he is. He's going to do it just as a branch cannot produce any fruit except by its relationship with the vine. It is the vine, the plant itself, as a whole, that produces fruit, but the branches have the privilege of bearing the fruit.

But it's just part of being the vine, part of being attached to that plant. Now, I understand the word vine not to mean just the stalk of the plant. He says, I'm the vine and you're the branches.

We could understand that to mean that the stalk of the plant is Jesus and the branches are us. However, more properly, the word vine refers to the whole plant. The whole grape-bearing plant is called a vine.

The branches are just part of the vine. They're not an extension of something else that is called the vine, like the stalk. When he says, I am the vine, you are the branches, it'd be perhaps similar to saying, I am the body, you are the arms.

Well, what does the body mean? Does it mean just the trunk? Or does it mean the entire specimen? And I personally have understood it in the latter sense, that Jesus isn't just saying, the stalk is Jesus and the branches are us, we just have to stay attached at this place and something will happen. But rather, the branches are part of him. The branches are not something other than the vine, they're part of the whole organism that is called the vine.

The life of the vine is shared by all the branches and it is the vine as a whole that is bringing forth the fruit. The branches have the privilege of being the part of the vine

where the fruit is manifest. But it is the vine that's producing the fruit, not the branches themselves.

And if you remove the branch from the plant, you'll find that that branch never produces ever fruit again. Because it's not a branch that produces fruit, it's the vine that produces fruit. The branch bears it, in the sense that it carries it, holds it, but the vine produces it.

John, can you handle that? Good. Colossians 1.11. I think there's a parallel to that in Ephesians 5, if I'm not mistaken, too, where he said the fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness and justice or something like that. Good.

Excellent. Colossians 1.11 is a very good cross-reference. Thank you, John.

It says, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power... Oh, I'm in the wrong place. Colossians 1.11 or... Oh, Philippians... Did you say Colossians or did I hear you wrong? Okay. Philippians 1.11. There we go.

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ... He's the one who produces them. He's the vine. We're the branches.

We carry the fruit. It's manifest upon us. ...to the glory and praise of God.

Now, it's interesting. Paul almost sounds like he has this passage in mind. Because Jesus said at the close of the passage, we read in verse 8, By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.

Okay, so God receives glory by our bearing fruit. Paul says, we're filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. God is glorified because we bear fruit.

Same thing. Certainly the same idea, whether Paul was consciously alluding back to this passage or whether it's just such a normative Christian idea that Jesus and Paul independently made mention of it. I don't know, but that's a good... Thank you for that cross-reference.

That's very useful. Philippians 1.11. Now, Jesus said, initially, that He's the true vine, and the Father is the vine dresser. The Father is the one who makes sure the vine is tended.

Now, of course, the Father had been tending to Jesus, but He tends to us as well, the branches. And He says, every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. Now, some translators have said the verb takes away is a bad translation and that it means He lifts it up.

Does anyone have a translation that says that, either in the margin or anywhere else? He lifts it up? This is usually a point that's made by people who are trying to defend eternal security, because He says, every branch in me, that would be a Christian, who does not

bear fruit, He takes away. Presumably, that means He takes it away from the vine, and then it dies. It shrivels up.

And so, the statement as it stands appears to say that there's no eternal security. You can be a branch in the vine and yet be removed for your unfruitfulness. We are reminded of what Jesus said to the Ephesians in Revelation 2, where He said that they've left their first love.

Love is a fruit of the Spirit. They've left their first love, and if they don't repent and return to it, then He's going to remove their candlestick from its place. He's going to remove that church from its place where He dwells and where He tends the lamps, because they are fruitless.

And therefore, this would seem to say that even a church or an individual Christian, a branch, if fruitless, can be taken away by God. Now, those who hold the opposite view, the eternal security view, they're the ones who are most likely to point out that this verb actually means lifts up. It doesn't mean that the Father penalizes the branch for not bearing fruit by taking it away and letting it shrivel and die, but that He assists the branch.

Maybe it's hanging too low to the ground and the fruit is rotting before it matures or whatever, or the foxes are getting it or something, so He props it up. He takes a fork stick and He lifts that branch up higher where it'll be better equipped to catch the rays of the sun and so forth. In other words, He strengthens the weak ones.

If a Christian is not bearing this fruit, well, God will attend to it, not in a punitive way, but in the sense of assisting that person, coming to their aid, lifting that branch up so that it can bear fruit. Either reading makes good sense to me. As far as I'm concerned, both are agreeable with the teaching of Scripture elsewhere.

The question is, which point is Jesus trying to make? And it's probable that we can get some idea of which point He's making by reading verse 6 along with it, because it says, Now, He may not be repeating here the same thought as in verse 2, but in any case, verse 6 certainly argues against eternal security. A branch that is not abiding in Christ, remaining in Him. Remaining, continuing, abiding, staying.

These are all meanings of this word, *meno*, in the Greek. The idea is, it's not enough just to be a branch. You have to be a branch who stays attached.

You have to stay in the vine. You have to stay in the organism. And the only way a branch can do that is to stay attached to the stalk.

If you turn to Romans chapter 11, again, Christians are compared with branches. This time, it's not branches of a vine, but of an olive tree. And He says, in Romans 11, 17, If some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in

among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches.

But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. If you happen to be cut off, you won't live. The root supports the branches.

You will say, then, branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well said. Because of unbelief, they were broken off, and you stand by faith.

Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness, if you continue or abide in His goodness.

Otherwise, you also will be cut off. I don't know how anyone can read these verses and believe in eternal security, when it says, listen, be careful, you could be cut off too. Those Jewish branches were cut off because of unbelief.

And beware, lest the same thing happen to you. He said, if you continue in God's goodness, then you'll be fine. But if you don't, you will also be cut off.

He says it very plainly there at the end of verse 22. So, the idea would seem to be, whether it's a vine and branches or an olive tree and branches, whatever metaphor is being used, we are the branches, and the branches are dependent for survival on remaining attached to the plant itself. And if they are broken off, cut off, or drop off, whatever way they get off, if they're off, they die, unless they get grafted back in.

A lot of times when people believe in eternal security, they don't like the idea of... Well, they've asked the question almost like the Sadducees asked Jesus the question about the woman with seven husbands. It's a question that they think proves their opponent's doctrine to be ridiculous. They say, well, how could you be born again twice? Or they put it this way, how can you be born again and then be unborn again? Well, those questions, in my mind, are extending the metaphor of birth beyond what the Bible intends to do so.

Remember, metaphors have limited application. They're used to make a point, but they don't always have exact parallels to the phenomenon that they're describing. However, of course, a person who is born again can become dead if they commit suicide.

Being born doesn't guarantee you're going to remain alive. People who are born sometimes do die. Now, we don't have in that metaphor a picture of anyone who's died coming back and being born again and again.

But that may be asking too much of the metaphor. The idea of the branch is that branches can be broken off, but there's also reference to them being grafted in. We were grafted in in the first place.

We can be broken off, but if we were grafted on the first time, and Paul doesn't say this, but I'm just saying that the metaphor at least allows for it, a branch that's been broken off can be grafted in again. In fact, he does say it. He says about the Jewish branch, he says, he that broke them off, he can graft them in again.

So it is possible to be cut off and yet come back again. That, of course, is not the principal teaching of the passage, but those are questions that arise when people talk about this idea of can you lose your salvation? And if you do, can you get it back? Possibly in both cases, yes. Now, Jesus indicates that the whole task of the branch is to abide in the vine, to abide in Christ, to remain in Christ.

That's basically another way of paraphrasing, to remain in Jesus. It suggests that not everybody who's in him will necessarily remain. It is possible to not remain, to not continue.

And that's why he has to exhort them to continue in him and to remain in him. And he does talk about those who do not abide in me in verse 6. If anyone does not abide in me, he's cast forth. So it is possible to be in Christ and not to stay in Christ.

Stupid, but it's possible. And so he indicates that the only hope of producing the fruit that God's looking for is by just staying attached to Jesus. Now, that attachment is an attachment which is essentially by faith.

And if you keep your faith in Christ and if your faith is all compelling and you're totally putting your trust in Jesus Christ, the fruit that is impossible for you to produce yourself will be produced without effort. It'll just materialize. It's Jesus who produces the fruit if you remain in him, if you abide in him.

Remember what Paul said in the passage we just read in Romans 11. They were cut off because of unbelief. And you remain attached by faith.

So faith is the issue. How do you abide in Christ? You just keep trusting him. You never give up trusting Jesus.

You never give up the faith. And if you keep the faith and if it's a genuine saving faith, that fruit will be produced not by a separate effort on your part, but simply by just as a result of abiding in Christ. Christ will produce the fruit if you stay attached.

He says, without me you can do nothing at the end of verse 5. That's been lifted from the context and used many, many ways by Christians. And maybe some of those ways are okay. But the context of that statement is you can't produce fruit.

Without me, you just can't produce any fruit. Of course, without him, you can't even survive. Now, he says in verse 7, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

That you will ask what you will, what you desire, and it will be done for you, is the only part that some Christians latch on to, saying, you see, you don't have to pray if it be your will, God, because he said you can have what you will. You can have what you want. You don't have to be concerned about what God wants.

Just decide what you want and ask for it and he's promised to give it to you. Conditionally, though, it starts with if. Any statement that begins with if has conditions attached.

What are those conditions? You abide in Christ. That means your whole trust is in him. And his words abide in you.

They find a home in you. His words live in you. Now, not his words, some of them, but all of his words.

The reason I say that is because Word of Faith people who use this verse, I think mistakenly they use it, they would say, well, his words are his promises. Well, that's true, but his words are also his commands. He didn't only give promises, he gave commands as well.

And he made statements of fact. And basically, to be totally committed to everything Jesus said and to abide in that and for it to abide in you, that's going to change your whole way of thinking. It's going to change your priorities.

If you're praying for a pink Cadillac with steam heated door handles and you say, well, you know, a wet bar, well, Jesus said to ask what you will. I've always wanted one of those, so I'm going to get one. I'm going to confess that because Jesus said ask what you will.

But can it be said that a person who prays for such a thing is being guided by anything Jesus said? Can it be said that that person has even caught the beginning of a glimpse of the values that Jesus taught? I mean, how in the world can it be said that these people have even read the Sermon on the Mount with their eyes open if they're making such requests of God? When Jesus said it's harder for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go to the eye of a needle, he's not encouraging people to get rich when he says that. The opposite is the case. So, I mean, obviously, if his words abide in you as welcome truth in your heart, and of course in such a way that they're guiding you in your values and your thinking and your prayers, then, of course, you can pray what you will because your will will have been brought into conformity with his.

And he says God is glorified by you producing much fruit. In verse 80 he says, So you will be my disciples. You will be his disciples if you bear much fruit.

How do you do that? By abiding in him. This, in a sense, combines two statements he made about true discipleship previously in John. One was back in chapter 8, verse 31.

John 8, verse 31, Jesus said, If you continue, the same word abide in the Greek, If you continue in my words, then you are my disciples indeed. So it has to do with staying with my words, obeying them, living them, embracing them, and continuing to do so. That is never changing that.

Just you always embrace his words, you never let go of Jesus or of his authority and his lordship. So, John 8, verse 31. And the other one was John 13, verse 34.

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you, you also love one another. In verse 35, By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. That's a fruit.

Now, when he says, If you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples. Well, bear much fruit, as he just said, involves abiding in him and his words abiding in you. And love is one of those fruits.

So, it can be said that you will be a true disciple if you abide in Christ, and if, as a result of that abiding, there is fruit in you. Love and righteousness in general. Okay? And the Father, of course, is glorified by that.

Now, when we think of worship, we often sing, Lord, we want to glorify your name, you know, glory to God in the highest. And we think of worship, of course, as an act of giving glory and attributing glory and honor to God. And I think our tendency is to usually think of worship in terms of songs of praise and spoken praise.

And so it is, but it's not confined to that. One way that God is glorified, that has nothing to do with our singing, is just the way we live. If we're producing fruit, if we're living a righteous life, God is glorified by that.

And the flip side of that is that God is disgraced when we don't. Our lives are an advertisement for what God can do. If we're naming the name of Christ, then our lives are an advertisement to everyone who looks on of what Christ represents.

And, you know, if our lives are not righteous lives, then it's going to bring reproach upon God. If our lives are righteous and good and without fault, then that will bring glory to God. That's an act of worship.

Paul said, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. A living sacrifice, that's worship. Offering a sacrifice to God.

Holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And some translations say, which is your spiritual service of worship. I think the New American Standard puts it that way.

Romans 12.1. To yield your bodies as instruments of righteousness, to present your body

as a living sacrifice to God, that's your spiritual worship. Not just what you sing, but what you do every day with your body. If you produce this fruit in your life of righteousness, that brings God great glory.

Verse 9. As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. We already read that back in 13.34. Greater love is no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. And whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

There's a lot of repetition here, but let me just bring out some of the main thoughts. One of the things that's a little difficult is where in verse 10 he talks about abiding in my love and I abide in his love. Jude says, keep yourselves in the love of God.

Now what does it mean to keep yourself in the love of God? Does that mean keep loving God? Or keep yourself in such a position that he loves you? What does it mean to be in the love of God? Does that mean that all of your actions are in the environment of the love of God that is in you and therefore they're all acts of love on your part? Maybe. I'm not saying it isn't. Or does it mean the love of God toward you? When Jesus said, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

Does he mean I'll still love you? I'll keep loving you if you keep my commandments. Or does he mean that if you keep my commandments, you will keep loving me? Now we know that it does say in 1 John 5 that, well, let me read it to you. Chapter 5, I think it's around verse 2. 1 John 5, verse 2 says, By this we know we love the children of God because we love God and keep his commandments for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

That seems to say this is how we show that we love God. We keep his commandments and it doesn't strike us as a burdensome thing to do because we love him. It's awful to have to keep the commandments of someone you hate.

You chafe under that authority. But if you love him, it's not a burdensome thing to keep his commandments. And one way you know if you love God or not is if you do what he

says without a groaning and complaining spirit about it.

But you don't find it that difficult. You actually kind of enjoy making sacrifices for the one you love. So he says our keeping of his commandments, in a sense, if we do so without finding it burdensome or grievous, is a proof of our love for God.

And he calls that the love of God. So he may be saying that I'm keeping, abiding the love of my father by keeping his commandments and you'll abide in my commandments and you'll abide in my love that way. It could mean that if you want to keep loving people the way I do, you've got to keep doing the things I told you to do.

In other words, laying down your life for people and so forth. If you stop doing that, you'll find that you don't love people anymore because love and those actions are inseparable. You keep doing the things I say and you'll find that you still have my love in you for people.

In fact, you'll be manifesting the fact that you do by the actions. But it's also possible that he's using the word love here to mean what we were saying earlier where Jesus said earlier that it implies that the Father doesn't love everybody. It says in 1421, he who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him too.

And so, he implies that the one who loves Jesus is the one whom the Father and the Son both love. Now, I was asked the other day, doesn't God love all sinners? And my answer was yes in the sense that he desires them all to be saved. But as far as being in a relationship of love, he doesn't have such, he can't exhibit his love toward people who are in rebellion because that would, as it were, be, it's sort of like supporting a person who won't work.

You know, you're underwriting a lifestyle that you don't even agree with. And God can't shed his manifest tokens of his love on people who are in rebellion against him lest it only encourage them to stay where they are. Now, this is a hard thing, but I'm not sure what he means by abiding my love and I abide in my Father.

But what he's talking about, God's love for him is continuing because of his keeping the commandments. Or if it's his love for God that is continuing because he's keeping the commandments. I'm afraid that's a little difficult.

And much in what John records, both in the gospel and in the first epistle, can be taken more than one way. And a lot of times we don't have exact data to clarify which is the right way. Now, he said in verse 11, these things I have spoken to you that my joy may remain in you.

So, back in chapter 14, verse 27, he gave them his peace, or he promised them his peace. And now he promises them joy and he's been commanding them to love so that

love, joy, and peace are all things that he's bestowing upon them in this discourse. They're all the fruit of the Spirit.

They're the first things Paul mentions as the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace. And therefore, in the context of very much fruit, it's interesting that these things are said.

Now, some of this is repetition. He does say in verse 13, greater love is no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends, implying that Jesus is laying down his life for the disciples, his friends. Some have seen this, Calvinists, as a proof of a limited atonement because Jesus said he's laying down his life for his friends, not for his enemies.

That he laid down his life only for the church, for those who are his people. But the problem with making that assumption from this statement is that he doesn't say that his life isn't also being laid down for his enemies. He's talking about what he's doing for his friends.

What's the best way to show love for your friends? Lay down your life for them. Now, the fact that he's laying down his life for his friends might, at the same time, make possible salvation for people who are not yet his friends, you know, is a possibility. And therefore, it doesn't really say anything about the limits of the atonement.

He's talking to his friends about the degree of love he has for them. He says, I'm doing the most loving thing anyone can do for his friends, which is to lay down his life for them. And he says, you're my friend if you keep my commandments.

Now, when Jesus said after that, after this I don't call you servants, but I call you friends. Some people have thought that means we don't have to serve Christ anymore. And yet, Paul called himself the bondservant of Jesus Christ, and so did the other apostles.

I may have told you there was a time I was sharing at a... By YWAM's invitation, I was in South Korea speaking at a DTS on a weeknight. They were all going to a meeting for some group like Campus Crusade or something like that. And I was the speaker.

And I spoke about serving the Lord. And afterward, one of the YWAM guys who was riding back in the same car with me said, he said, I thought it was interesting what you said about how we need to serve the Lord. But he says, I prefer to think of my relationship with God in terms of friendship, not a service.

He said, you know, I prefer to think of Jesus as my friend. And I said, well, I certainly am... I certainly would encourage you to do so because, you know, Jesus said he calls us friends. But the fact that we're friends doesn't mean that we're not in any sense servants.

He said in that very previous verse, verse 14, you are my friends if you do whatever I command you. Now, my friends are not required to do what I command them to do. So,

this is a special kind of a friendship here.

The way to be his friend is to be obedient to him like a servant. And the way that he says you're no longer simply servants is that I have taken you into my confidence, which masters don't usually do with their servants. They talk openly with their friends about their plans, but they don't necessarily share everything with their slaves.

Slaves are not entitled. They don't have that kind of relationship. So, what he's basically saying is you are servants of another sort.

You are obliged to be obedient to me just like servants are. However, I'm a master who has befriended my servants and you're not just servants, you're friends as well. It could be a limited negative.

I don't call you anymore servants could imply not only servants. I don't only call you servants. I also call you friends.

Servants who are friends. Yes. Right.

Which, I mean, if they do what he commands them, suggests they are servants. They are obliged to obey. Right.

And that's the point I made to this guy about that. Now, in verse 16, there's a lot of Calvinist ideas in this we have to deal with. In verse 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you.

Calvinists quote this verse quite frequently to suggest, you see, we don't have any free choice. God does all the choosing. God chose you to be saved and your choice is irrelevant.

You didn't choose him. He chose you. Now, there's a sense in which this may be generically true of Christians.

I would have to say that although I did make a choice, I was first dependent on God choosing to let me have a chance, anyway. He's the first one who chose to send his son. He's the one who chose to send his spirit in the world to convict me of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And he's also the one who happened to work in my own circumstances to put me into contact with the gospel when there's many people in the world who have never had such contact. God has certainly chosen, for reasons unknown to any of us, to give us opportunities which have, in fact, led, in our own cases, to our becoming a Christian. So, even though we do make a choice in becoming a Christian, we can also say, he first chose me.

He first did all the footwork. He just kind of brought the gift to my lap, and I had to

decide whether to choose to take it or not. It certainly is so that my becoming a Christian has a lot more to do with what God chose to do for me than what I chose to do in responding to him.

His choice was first. However, again, this can be a limited negative. He could be saying, you didn't only choose me, but I also chose you.

But I don't even see it that way. I see this as being a reference to the apostles themselves, and a reference to his choosing them to be apostles. You didn't choose to be apostles.

I chose you to be my apostles. That's what I understand it to mean. I think that in the context it makes sense that way, because I've appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

Not all persons are called to go anywhere. A lot of people get saved and they don't go anywhere. They serve God where they are.

But the apostles were chosen and appointed to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That was their special calling. So when he says, you didn't choose me, but I chose you, he's not talking about for salvation.

He's talking about their vocation as apostles. He chose them to be apostles. That wasn't up to them to decide.

A high priest doesn't appoint himself, it says in Hebrews chapter 5. He's appointed. Likewise, apostles don't choose themselves to be apostles. Those are appointed.

I chose you. I appointed you. And this is talking about how their apostleship, I believe, was based on his choice, not theirs.

We've got to move quickly here. 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 are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

Now he's assuming they are servants. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. So he hasn't removed the servant status entirely from the believers.

He now says, you can't expect better treatment than I get because the servant isn't above his master. Obviously, in that metaphor, we're the servants. He's the master.

So by saying, I don't call you any servants, he's not really abolishing our need to serve him as our lord and master and replacing it with friendship. He's adding a dimension to

our servanthood. We're not just servants.

We have an added dimension. We're also his friends. A man who has slaves can choose to befriend any of them he wants and not others.

He doesn't owe it to them. But he may like some of his servants more than others. He may actually bring them into his confidence and make friends with them, but that doesn't change the fact they're servants.

And so he says, if I get treated this way, what do you think you're going to get treated like? Expect the world to hate you. They hated me first. And they wouldn't hate you if not for the fact that I've called you to be separate from them.

I've called you out of the world and I've claimed you for myself and they don't like what I represent. And now that you belong to me, they're not going to like what you represent because you represent me. And as I've said to you on other occasions, if the world hates Jesus but doesn't hate you, you better start asking questions of yourself.

What's wrong with me? I mean, if they hated Jesus, but I'm not enough like him for them to hate me too, then that's kind of insulting. Persecution from those who hate Christ, persecution of you is a flattery. You're counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake.

As the apostles felt in Acts 5, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame. It's an imputation of special favor to you and worthiness to you that the world sees you in the same light they see Jesus. It means you and Jesus have something in common.

And since that's your goal as a Christian, they flatter you by treating you the same way they would treat him. Verse 21, But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know him who sent me. They don't know God.

If I had not come and spoken to them, this means the Jews, because that's the only ones he had come and spoken to, they would have had no sin. Now, he had said something like that back at the end of John 9. They said, are you saying we're blind? He said, if you were blind, you'd have no sin. But since you say, we see, therefore your sin remains.

He says something like that here. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin.

So it's sort of like saying if you were really blind, you'd have no sin. Also in verse 24, he says something like it. 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, which means, of course,

their sin remains. He said, if I hadn't given them such opportunity to know, if I hadn't spoken to them, if I hadn't done these miracles before them, if I hadn't, if they were really blind and they hadn't seen these things that I've shown them, then they'd be without sin. Now, when he said they'd have no sin, I don't think he means they'd be sinless persons because there's many people who've never seen miracles but they're not sinless.

And the Jews were sinful even before Jesus came to them. It wasn't his coming to them that made them sinners. I think what he's saying is they have a new sin that has come about as a result of their sin and hearing these things.

Their sin of rejecting what they see, their sinning against the light which he's brought them, is a sin that they would not have if they never had such light. They would have had other sins. But there is a particular sin, the sin against light, the sin against God's revelation that they have incurred because they had the revelation given to them, they could never have rejected it had it never been given to them.

Therefore, they have incurred a special guilt, a special sinfulness that is the sin of rejecting God's clear handwriting on the wall in front of their face. Jesus speaking to them such wonderful things, Jesus showing them things that no one had ever shown anyone before. They have a particular degree of guilt that they would not otherwise have had because they are without excuse.

But he says in verse 25, but this has happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in the law, they hated me without a cause. But when the helper comes whom I send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify me and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. Obviously, a statement that applies to the apostles principally since he said you have been with me from the beginning.

Similar to his saying you will sit on twelve thrones. You who have been with me, who have suffered with me are going to sit on twelve thrones. Here, because they have been with him from the beginning, they have a special privilege of being his witnesses.

And we found in the book of Acts that although other people besides apostles eventually began to bear witness, initially it was the apostles who were the public witnesses. You don't find mostly, most of the Christians in the book of Acts bearing witness of Christ. Not early on anyway.

Eventually, more people did. But in the early chapters, it is principally the apostles that did. If you look at Acts chapter 4, for example, in verse 31, And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word with boldness.

And then, let's see, where is it? I think it's in the same chapter. It speaks of with great power the apostles gave witness. Yeah, verse 33.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. So it was principally the apostles that were giving witness publicly, initially. Because they knew more.

They knew more of what to say. They had been with Jesus from the beginning. The new converts had to sit daily under the apostles' teaching because they hadn't heard Jesus say those things.

And so, they had to learn from the apostles. And many of those who learned later bore witness also as evangelists and pastors and teachers and so forth. But initially, the apostles were the ones to bear witness because they had been with Jesus from the beginning.

Yes, Jaylene. Well, that's a good question. I would have to say that the Holy Spirit that He breathed on them came from the Father.

Although the wording does sound a lot more like Pentecost, of course, because it would appear from Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven on that occasion. I can see the problem. I don't know quite how to answer it.

I would say when they received the Holy Spirit, when Jesus breathed on them, that did not release them to bear witness. Because He said to them after that, tarry in Jerusalem until you be imbued with power from on high. And He said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the other most parts of the earth.

So they weren't released to go out and bear witness until the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven, the promise of the Father. However, I think they received the Holy Spirit when He breathed on them, but they didn't receive the baptism of the Spirit. And I've made that distinction before in my teaching.

I know not all Christians, not even all the teachers at this school hold exactly the same ideas on this. But my understanding is a person may possess the Holy Spirit because they've been converted and yet never have been filled with the Holy Spirit, never have received the baptism of the Spirit. Some do and some don't make a distinction between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I do make that distinction. And they would be witnesses after they received the Holy Spirit from the Father that was at Pentecost. And then they became witnesses after that and not before.