

THE BIBLE SPEAKS:
STUDIES FROM THE WORD OF GOD



HAROLD CAMPING

John 15:
The Relationship
Between
Christ and
the True
Believers

**John 15:
The Relationship Between
Christ and the True Believers**
By Harold Camping

All rights reserved, including the right of
reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

Published and printed by
Family Stations, Inc.
Oakland, California 94621
U.S.A.

On the Internet:
www.familyradio.com

06-05-2014

Foreword

Today we will begin to look very carefully at a well-known chapter in the Bible, John 15. We are again going back into the Bible, as we have done many times. Every chapter in the Bible is full of meaning, and is something God has led us to. We could pick any chapter in the Bible to study, and we would discover the richness of God's Word.

Every word in the Bible has been written by eternal God Himself, the Creator of the world. We can actually hold this document in our hands. No other pursuit of learning has that characteristic. This is what makes this study special. We will never waste our time perusing the verses of the Bible, as we always discover the richness of God's words. These words come from the mouth of God, as He gave them to chosen scribes to write down for mankind to read. The Bible itself shows this to be true. If we do not understand the meaning, we can pray to God for understanding. We must constantly thank God for His care over us.

The Bible is as rich and wonderful today as it was the moment it was first written by God Himself. Because it was written by Christ, we know it is correct and has eternal value. It is the kind of document that we ought to become more and more acquainted with. So as we go through John 15, we will keep in mind that this is written by God Himself, and no one else. Therefore it is absolutely dependable and authoritative.

We have embarked on the task of trying to get a better understanding of God as He has prophesied to us in the 15th chapter of John. We are going to begin looking more specifically at these words, and thereby learn something more about this wonderful chapter. Our goal is that we might learn more about God Himself; about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; about the Holy Spirit Himself. Indeed, we want to learn more about the marvelous wonder of God as He rules over the believers. We want to be very humble before God's Word and realize that when we read this, whether or not we understand it, we stand in the presence of God.

Let us begin with the first verse of John 15, this beautiful chapter that deals specifically with the relationship between Christ and the true believers, and we will see what we can learn. Here we find that Christ portrays Himself as the true vine. That already implies that there are also false vines, that look true and dependable, but they are not. The vine Christ is talking about is Himself. This identifies with the idea of the vineyard representing the Kingdom of God. Christ is the very essence of the vine. Christ is going to use this parabolic language to teach spiritual lessons. That is characteristic of the whole Bible. Christ uses something we know about and makes a spiritual application. So let us see what God is going to teach us here in John 15. We begin with the words Christ spoke in verse 1:

John 15:1: I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.

The true vine means that it is the one that Christ is dealing with. It is not a fake or a foolish vine. It is a true vine that was planted by Christ, and His Father is the husbandman. The husbandman is someone who is intimately related and concerned with the care of the vineyard.

Verse 2: “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away.”

That is the first principle of a vineyard. God wants us to have a clear understanding that if we do not bear good fruit, we are taken away. That is, if we do not live in the kingdom of God as true believers, and really want to further the cause of Christ, we will be taken away and have nothing more to do with the kingdom of God.

Verse 2 continues: **“and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”** To purge means to cleanse. If you have something that is important to you, and it becomes dirty and cannot function, you clean it. What is the cleansing that God uses to purge the vine? It is the Word of God. We read it more carefully and check it against the way we are looking at the Word of God, and make the correction. The correction is based on wanting to be like a vine that has been cleaned up. It is a good part of the vine, still very useful to God.

Christ is the true vine. We want to be fruitful to Him. He owns the vineyard, moreover. It is not our own vineyard. This is an important point: when we are serving as stewards in the vineyard of Christ, we are

not to live just any way we want. We must remember that this belongs to Christ; we are working for Christ. He is eternal God. He is the one that has come to build the vineyard. He is the one who is everything important as far as the vineyard is concerned. He rules and He is in charge of it.

He owns the vineyard and He is the only true vine. We are to respect Him and hold Him in the highest esteem. To be truly saved means to be broken before God. But if we are not truly saved we will be cut off by Christ. There can be no fruit.

We want to be so thankful to God for what He has given us, and walk humbly before Him. We leave all the rest to our Savior. He will care for us. We pray constantly that He will cleanse us from sin, and that He will help us to walk more faithfully. We pray that He will help us to walk more conscientiously. As we walk with Christ, we will experience the richness of His fellowship and care. We will have a greater desire to share that with others, so that they too will follow. We continue to be obedient to God's Word as it instructs us how we are to live.

Now let's go on to verse 3 of John 15, where we read:

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

It is the Word of God that provides purging, or cleansing. Sometimes as we read the Bible we see a reference to becoming clean, or to cleansing, and we have to know that it is a reference to the fact that we are studying the Word of God and learning what we can. Cleansing does not happen in some mysterious way. It comes through the words that Christ has spoken and that are recorded in the Word of God. That is one of the reasons that, as God is using the Bible as the foundation for studying, this is the way we get cleansing. We have to listen to the Word of God, recognizing that these words came from the very mouth of God Himself.

Here in verse 3, God is focusing on the method of cleansing. Cleansing is not provided haphazardly, or here or there somehow. God has a methodology, and it is through the Word of God. The words Jesus spoke in the Bible are extremely important. We must never speak of them lightly or casually. We always must have in our thinking that this is what Christ said: that I and others might be cleansed of our sin.

In verse 2 of this chapter, we saw that Christ purges, or cleanses, the branches that bear fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit. It means that we were dirty. We are all dirty because we were born into this world. But here is the answer: **“Ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.”** The focal point is on the Word; not on the atmosphere or some kind of energy out there. It is because of what Christ is saying. Notice Christ says **“that I have spoken.”** We are not clean because of what some preacher or church taught, or because we heard some nice sentences. It is the Word that Christ has spoken. Who is Christ? He is eternal God. So ultimately we know that we are clean through the action of God Himself.

Christ speaks about purging the branches in order to bring more fruit. They are not dead branches; they have some use already. Then Christ purges them with His Word. If there is a dead branch on the spiritual bush, Christ cuts it off. But He cleanses those that have hope; those that are alive. That is how He keeps His task going, insofar as the process of bringing the Word of God. That is, Christ cleanses the true believers of their sins, in order that they may walk more faithfully. They bring more fruit.

Christ says that He does the purging; He does the cleansing. That is what encourages us to keep studying the Word, as He emphasizes that He is the one that does the cleansing. He indicates exactly what He is cleansing: the branches that bear fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit.

God has designed that vine so that the branches bear fruit; yet some will not bear fruit as they should. But we see here that Christ will cleanse those branches through the Word of God. Each of us who is a child of God has some knowledge of the Word of God. And so God purges the sin out of our life that is keeping us from being more fruitful than we have been. We can be so thankful for that. Our life is still useful to God; it is still honorable.

God is so kind to keep using us. He works with us as individuals. He takes what He has designed originally to bear fruit, and He takes the time to clean it up. So the next time we share the Gospel, we find we are sharing it with new meaning and new enthusiasm. Perhaps our fruit has been very small; we have been weary or discouraged. Yet Christ can come into our heart and give us new enthusiasm, in order to accomplish

what Christ wants to accomplish. Christ is cleaning up the true believers. We need this because we live in a wicked world, and we by nature are sucked into the wickedness. But when Christ works in us, He cleanses us.

Remember, Christ is the vine, and the believers are the branches. So it is only Christ who makes sure that the branches will continue to bear fruit, and to bear more fruit. Christ is our source of life, not only at the beginning when He first began to use us to send the Gospel out, but also to be re-cleansed to provide us with enthusiasm and new ideas that are true to the Word. It all comes from Christ. It is not something we can manufacture. Because of our intense desire that God gives us to still be used of Him, we are able to be used of Him. We find there are sentences flowing from our mouth that we read some time in the Bible, and that fits right into the purpose of what we are trying to do, which is to faithfully share the Gospel.

In John 15:4 we read:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.

This all ties back into the Lord Jesus Christ. Any time we get separated from Him, we will be in trouble. This world is very enticing. It has all kinds of methods for living that are not God's methods. Unless we follow God's methods, we will be in trouble with God. So we must look at each phrase of each verse in the Bible very carefully.

This statement of John 15:4 is very profound. We have to abide in Christ. How do we abide in Christ? We have to continually consult His Word, and ask ourselves: am I living in strict accord with His Word? Am I living as humbly as Christ is? We must constantly ask questions of ourselves. Yes, ourselves. We are not to question others. It is easy to point the finger at someone else. We all have weaknesses, and we can always find more weaknesses in another person and criticize them. Criticizing others may make us feel better about ourselves because we may not have that weakness, but this is a wrong attitude to have.

That is a pattern for rebellion against God. That is not the way we are to live. We are to look at ourselves in the light of how Christ walked. He is our example; our only example. We do not want to do it our way; we want to do it Christ's way if we are really a child of God. That means we constantly search our lives and measure ourselves over against the way

the Bible tells us we ought to live, and the way Christ showed us how we are to live. That takes work. That means we must be serious about it.

That means that when we make a statement that is out of character with the Bible, we feel terrible about it. “How could I have said that?” “How could I have thought that?” “Oh Lord, have mercy on me. Help me to do it Your way.” Our life should have more prayer in it than ever before, because the only way we will live in a way that is pleasing to Christ is to ask for His help. We ask His help through prayer, and then we do a careful self-examination. We should never get tired of examining ourselves to be sure we are doing things God’s way.

We should never get to the point that we think we have nothing to worry about because we are such a wonderful child of God. If we think like that we should be frightened. The way to live is to keep our attention on Christ all the time. We have to walk so humbly. We must recognize that it is so easy to fall into sin and want to do things our way, and not God’s way.

We cannot live without keeping our eyes on Christ. The first thing we will find out, if we are honest, is that there are many things in our life that do not measure up to Christ’s way. We may realize that we do not really want to do things God’s way. So we pray, “Oh Lord, have mercy on me.” We have to look at ourselves honestly. This is not easy at all. What about when I look at myself with very great care? Do I really think about Christ? Am I really concerned with living my life the way He wants me to?

We are living in a sea of people, and some of them are very close to us. So I must begin with myself, and then I can pray that others too will become more Godly. Have mercy on me; and have mercy on that other person I am thinking about. If we think bad things about anyone, we must pray that we will stop. We want to think good things about others. We want that to become a pattern of our life; a pattern of positive prayer for others. When others lash out at me, am I bringing them to the throne of grace through prayer? They need help, just as I need help. Most of us do not want to admit we need help, but every one of us needs help to do things more faithfully God’s way. We had better admit that we need help to be more faithful to God. That is the only way we are to live. Then we are following the highest principles of the Bible.

We are in a study presently that is focused very heavily on each one of us. We may not even like some part of it because of that focus. We do not like the searchlight of evaluation and concern looking at me. We like to have it looking at the other person. He is the one who needs to be straightened out. He is the one who has a problem in this life. But me, no, not really.

That is usually our attitude about ourselves. We like to believe that all is well. But the fact is when we look at ourselves very accurately and very fairly, we will find that is not true.

We should have the focus on ourselves. That is exactly where God puts the focus. He says in John 15:5, **“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”**

The focus is right on each one of us. We all need self-examination continually. We all need help from Christ. And we all need to be more and more aware of the place where Christ would have us be.

We should not be standing there apart from everybody else and saying “Look at me. Look at how holy I am. Look at how I relate to Christ.” That is the way we would like it and frequently that is the way we think it is. But we need to recognize that the need for repentance, the need for change, and the need for doing a better job rests with each one of us.

The fact is, each one of us needs to look at how we relate to others. The path has to be not on me telling others how bad they are and what they need to do, but rather the focus must be on each one of us. Each one of us can stand improvement.

I would like to start putting down some principles, in order that we might become a more excellent child of God. This is the goal of the Gospel, because once we become right with God then we are right with everything. But as long as we are at odds with God in any way, we are not going to be happy with our situation.

But the fact is that we have to look at ourselves and say “I know that I have a lot of areas in my life where I can make improvement. I want to be more like the Master; I want to be more like the Lord Jesus. I do not want to be so ready to brag about myself.” That is not the life that we ought to be having.

The right way to act is not to be thinking of what the other person should have been doing or the way he should have said something, but, what was my reaction? It is not our business to stand in judgment. It is not our job. It is God's job to be a judge. We are to make sure that in our life we are doing it Christ's way, and Christ's way is that He is the judge. He will make the evaluation. We do not have to.

We are to be a branch that is growing and showing others how to grow. The fruits of the Spirit should be seen in our life, just as Christ Himself uses His lifestyle as an example for us. We are not in this world to prove to the world how noble we are, how great we are, or how bad the other person is. We are to live as an example to others, and to follow Christ's example.

That means that as I look over my life, very sadly I see places where I have been weak, where I have focused way too much on trying to tell people how loving I am or how holy I am. And it is not always true at all. So I think it would be better for me to start all over again and simply say, "I am trying to watch my life so that if I see anything that is not right, I will correct it immediately. I will try to be a fruitful part of the vine of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to bring forth fruit. And I know that if I am going to bring forth fruit I do not have to try to carve it off of the life of someone else; it has to come out of my life." And so this is the direction we should be going.

Each of us should be looking at our own lives and really working on that. We are not making judgment of other people; that is not our business. Our business is simply to look at my own life. How am I doing? And, oh Lord, forgive me for this and forgive me for that. And help me to be more patient with others. Help me so that if I am going to be critical at all, it is to be critical of one person, and that is me. That is who I have to be critical of.

So as time goes along, I can see improvement that I am doing it more and more the way Christ would have it. And then I am going to be carrying out what we read here in John 15:5, and then we will begin to bear fruit. The Bible says here in John 15:5: "**for without Me**" - and that is without Christ - "**ye can do nothing**".

Now that gives me a second point: we cannot do this of ourselves. If we make a resolution that "from now on I am not going to do this or do

that anymore,” it is guaranteed that we will fail because we cannot do it of ourselves.

Here God gives us the basis for His saying: **“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing.”**

This means that our life has to be a life of constant prayer. But I do not mean just rattling off something or occasionally thinking of some prayer words that we can utter to God. I am thinking about phrases that we have thought about. Yes, this is what I should ask the Lord; that He will strengthen me. Or that He will make me more fruitful. That He will take charge of my life far better than I have ever seen it in the past, and so forth.

In other words we have to be very submissive and very attentive to what Jesus has to say. We must make this our purpose in life. And it is an ongoing thing. It is not something that we do for the next three days and think, “Oh, I have made a big change in my life. The other day, I turned around a whole lot and my life is really starting to get fruitful right now.” I guarantee to you that you will fail, because it will not last. But we say, “I have begun, and I am going to be praying and praying. I mean it that I want my life to be fruitful; I want my life to tell for Jesus. And it can only happen as I quit thinking about how great I am and recognizing how much I need the Lord Jesus in my life. But it begins with me. It does not begin with the other person. It begins with me.”

Oh what a dream that would be if each of us would focus our attention on his own life. If each of us would do away with the pride that we all have and do not want to admit that we have, we would find that life is much happier. For we would want to bear much fruit, and we would want our fruit to abide. But it will only abide if we keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus. That means that I have to go to the Lord, “Oh Lord, You know how weak and frail I am. You know how I have a tendency to boast. Oh Lord, You know this about me and that about me. Oh Lord, strengthen me and help me. I need help. I cannot do it alone.” This is a prayer that should be going up again and again to the Lord because I am a human being. And I am very greatly in need of strength from the source of strength, namely the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the One who will help us, as we abide in Him and He gives us the capability to bring forth fruit.

The first five verses of John 15 talk about abiding in Christ. He is the vine, and we are the branches. But now we come to this rather difficult verse, verse 6, where we read:

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and *men* gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15 speaks about abiding or not abiding in Christ, and if you read these verses carelessly, it can sound conditional. If we abide in Christ we will bear fruit; if we do not abide, we will not bear fruit. It sounds like something we must do, but we know that cannot be right. We know from Scripture that our salvation is not dependent upon something we do. We are not saved by our works, but by grace alone.

In fact, we cannot decide that we will abide or not abide in Christ. Abiding in Christ is something that is done by Christ. To abide in Christ is a promise on Christ's part. If He saves us, He will abide in us and we will abide in Him. We can trust Him and rest in Him because He has saved us, and consequently He abides in us and we abide in Him.

Verse 6 talks about a man who does not abide in Christ and is cast forth as a branch. We learned in verse 2 that the dead branches are taken away by Christ. **"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away."** God is doing the action.

These dead branches, then, are gathered together and cast into the fire to be burned. To be burned identifies with being under God's wrath.

Verse 6 can be confusing until we discover that the word "men" is not in the original Greek manuscript. The word "men" was inserted by the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. But the original Greek reads "they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

God does not tell us in John 15:6 who "they" are. However, we can find similar language in the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13. In this parable, the wheat symbolizes the believers, and the tares, or weeds, symbolize the unbelievers. They are growing together in the field, and look identical from their appearance. We read this account in Matt. 13:38-42:

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This passage talks about the final harvest. It tells us that the reapers are the angels. They are sent by God to gather up the unbelievers and cast them into a furnace of fire. We know from other passages that fire in the Bible signifies God as He brings judgment. So to be cast into the fire means to come under God's wrath. They do not have eternal life with Christ because they were not given the gift of salvation. We know this conclusion is correct because they have come under God's eternal wrath.

We can apply this principle to John 15:6, where we read that someone who does not abide in Christ will be **"cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they will gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."**

In other words, an unbeliever, who does not and cannot abide in Christ, is cut off. He is gathered up with all those who are the unsaved, and they are cast into the fire of God's wrath. Hebrews 12:29 tells us: **"For our God is a consuming fire."**

At the end of the world, we read in Matthew 13, Christ will send forth His angels to gather up all that offend and do iniquity. God declares the final result in Romans 6:23, where we read:

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Isn't it marvelous that this quotation has attached to it the wonderful promise of the gift of God! This then is the final result of abiding in Christ. This is not because of our works or our decision, but because

Christ has decided who will abide in Him and will bear fruit. They have the gift of eternal life.

Those who do not abide in Christ because they are not saved will not bear any fruit, and are as a dead branch. They have no life within them, and therefore will be as the dead branches that are gathered to be burned.

Christ is making a clear statement in John 15:6 so that we understand that those who do not abide in Him are dead and withered. We cannot decide that we will do something in order to abide in Christ. We do not know who Christ has elected unto salvation. But every one of us has the possibility of being one of God's elect. Our heavenly Father is kind and compassionate and full of mercy, so it may be that He will show mercy to any one of us. What a blessed statement we can make about the mercy of God! It may be that Christ will show mercy to you, and if that is the case, you will be given the ability to abide in Christ, and He will abide in you.

In our study of John 15 we have come to verse 7 where we have very encouraging words. We will find that they are not only encouraging but they also are very carefully written, and we have to read them so carefully that we do not misunderstand them. We read there:

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

That is a very encouraging statement but at the same time it must be looked at very carefully. It is very easy to read something here that does not exist.

For God's Word to abide in someone who is abiding in Christ means that person has to be a child of God. It means there already has to be an ongoing, serious relationship between that person and the Lord. God does not abide in just anybody, and His Word just does not abide in just anybody. It is a very specific individual whom God has in view. Only a Child of God can ask what he wills and it shall be done unto him.

That again is very encouraging but it also means that these other conditions have to be present: that when you ask what you will it shall be done unto you, provided My words abide in you and you abide in Me.

So it is talking really about a child of God, and only about a child of God. It is someone who is truly saved; someone who really has a personal relationship with Christ, so that Christ's Word is a part of his life. There are no arguments going on. So he in turn is pleasing to Christ because of his life's actions. The fact is God is abiding in that person's life and that shows up in a very definite way.

And so that is the condition: we must abide in Him. To abide in Christ means that we are living a life that is pleasing to Christ. That is why it says **"and My words abide in you."** What we are thinking, what we are doing, and all our actions must be in accord with the will of God.

It is not a struggle that is going on all the time: "Oh Lord, can I do this? Oh Lord, would it be alright if I do that?" No, that is not what it means. It means these are settled things in our life. We have received the information from the Word of God that gives us permission to do this or to do that, and now we continue in that without any argument, without any further discussion. His Word abides in us. That is what God is looking for as He is talking about people in verse 7.

It is the evidence that this person has truly become saved. He is truly a child of God, and God is in favor of him living that way.

So this is what our first goal is as we read John chapter 15. We look at our lives and we ask the question "Am I right with God? Do I want to live the way that God wants me to live? Am I in agreement with everything or anything that God speaks about here in chapter 15?" If we say "no" to any of these questions, then we still have our own way about this. If we have our own way about that, we have to say "well then, God does not abide in me." Whatever promises are being given in this verse we cannot claim for ourselves.

But if we are going to claim them, we look at our life and we have to be able to say honestly and forthrightly: yes, I have an intense desire to be obedient to these principles, and it is God's Word that indeed abides in me. It is not words that I have designed based on what I heard God say, but it is God's words themselves so that I am very certain that I have understood them.

And we receive our spiritual life from Him. As God's words are listened to and find a place in our life, it means that they become a part of our lives. We have gotten some of the truth of the Bible into our personality. Any truths from the Bible that we follow put us way ahead. We are

doing it God's way altogether. That is what is so joyful about these verses.

But if we do not have Christ, if we do not have His words abiding in us, we are dead in our souls. We are like the dead branches that are cut off from the vine. They are burned, they are neutralized, and they are not valuable to anybody or anything. So this passage is emphasizing that it is so wonderful, it is so good to have the Word of God seared into our thinking and into our consciousness. We follow it because we know what it is. We know what it will do for us, or at least we have a good idea in what direction to look. We are really blessed by the Word of God. Because, finally, everything that is valuable in our lives comes from God. That why this verse declares, **"If ye abide in Me, and My words in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."**

That quotation is pointing to the fact that it all begins with contact with the Word of God Himself: the King of all creation, giver of eternal life. When it comes from that source and we follow it very strictly, very carefully and very prayerfully so that it really becomes a part of our life, then those words will abide in us. Then we have the full enjoyment, the full evidence, the full providence, the full everything from those words that can help us to live a life that is pleasing unto the Lord.

Apart from this we are dead in our souls. We are like the dead branch that has to be cut off from the vine and burned. And we do not want that happening in our life. But it will not happen if we are living branches on the vine, and therefore we keep focusing our first attention on the Word of God, and let each one of those mandates be the guidance for our life.

When Christ gives us spiritual life we are able to grow and flourish. He is the giver of life. He gives us the ability to bear fruit. That is the desire of every believer: to bear spiritual fruit.

Now, in verse 7 Christ speaks of His words abiding in us. It is one thing to hear the Word of God, and we have heard it very distinctly and we even have a little bit of understanding of it. But if it does not abide in our life, it will not bear any fruit. It has not done any spiritual work. We want to be sure that that Word, which God speaks to us, will abide in our life in all of its beauty, and in all of its truth, and that we have not changed the meaning of it in any way.

Not only does Christ abide in His true believers but also His words abide in them. In other words we can say “Christ abides in me” but if His words do not abide in us, it is not true that He is abiding in us. We cannot separate the Word of Christ away from the fact that He personally abides there.

However, if our life shows the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ it is probably because His Word abides in us. That is what we want, that is what we are looking for; that God Himself abides in us.

Christ says you shall ask what you will and it will be done unto you. A person can very readily read that and say, “Here is the whole story. If Christ comes into my life, He says you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. So if I see that I am following Christ on a reasonable basis, it must mean that Christ has come into my life.” Not so; if Christ has come into our life it means that there is an intense desire, a growing desire that Christ will be operating in my life.

I will not be satisfied with just a little bit of evidence. I will only be satisfied as I see an intense, on-going desire to do the will of God. And because I have that desire to do the will of God, I will proceed to do the will of God. That will follow, that I want to do His will. And that, in turn, will give me a greater and greater desire to have God’s Word within me. In other words, it is a nonstop situation in which there is constant growing, because the Word of God is life. The Word of God is that which brings life. The Word of God is what we want to grow with.

God does not mean that because we are under the hearing of the Word of God, automatically we are going to have life, automatically we are going to grow. No. It has to be listened to. It has to be noted in our minds that this is the Word of God. This is important. It is more important than any other words I have heard today. And as we listen to these words, we can know how we can continue to be in Christ. We will be waiting for Him to do His will.

If nothing happens that is identified with His will, we will know that we have not heard the Word of God or we have dropped the Word of God. We have taken an action that has ruined the whole relationship and we have to begin all over again to listen carefully to the Word of God; to go through His guidelines and make sure that that is my desire. I want to do that. I am happiest when I am doing that. And when I begin to see that flourishing a little bit more and then a little bit more in my life, we will

know that God is answering my desire to be under the Word of God. This is what He promises, that it will be done unto us if we are very serious about wanting to hear from God about this.

But we do not hear from God because there is a loudspeaker outside of our room. We hear from God right in our own minds. Right in our own thoughts. Right in our own desires. We just have an ongoing, intense desire. We think: I have been studying the Word of God and these words have been so important to me. I just want to read them again and again. I want to ask again and again, "Oh Lord, is it possible that these things might be done in my life?" Those are all the things that can happen when we are listening to this particular passage of John 15.

We have learned from this that the Word of God must be well listened to by us, and we must observe it strictly. We do not substitute our will. Everything is what God is doing. That is a very important principle that I am stressing once more. What gives us strength, and what gives our relationship with God strength, is that we are listening to what God is saying and what He wills. We do not come with a new idea that we have had. We want to be faithful to what God has said.

Now we read verse 8:

Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.

There are some wonderful truths contained in this verse. My Father is glorified. That alone is a wonderful piece of information, that Christ is telling us how we may glorify God Himself. As we pay attention to what God is saying, and as we agree with it and try to follow it with great care, we are glorifying God Himself. And we are also setting up a program to bear fruit. This is what follows right after: "**that ye bear much fruit.**" This is an action that builds upon itself. As we glorify God in following His commands, we are also bearing much fruit, so that there are results that are very healthy. We are glad to see that there is great value in being obedient to Christ, and being obedient to the laws God has laid down.

These are conditions that God is setting down. We are to abide in Christ. We are not free to go in any directions we want to go. If we are doing it God's way, we have to follow what God has declared. If you do that, "**ye shall ask what ye will.**" That means that God is going to give

us more authority to ask for what we believe is necessary. He gives us more help in carrying out what we are asking. It is pleasing to God that we ask Him. If we go to Almighty God because we see something that would help our situation, based on the law of God, that is what God wants us to do. It strengthens our position if we are abiding in Him, as we ask for these things we think are necessary.

It not only strengthens our position in relationship to Christ, but also it strengthens our position to God the Father in every sense of the word. There will be the fruit of this relationship as we are more faithful in bearing fruit. **“So shall ye be My disciples.”** We will know that we are doing the Lord’s will. We will see the effect in our lives that we are in His will, if we are doing it this way.

We should have the habit of going to the Lord constantly and praying for wisdom; for strength for this or that. As we ask the Lord for these things, keep in mind that this is what God wants us to do. If we abide, we are looking at Christ with a sense of community. We want to do His will. We are seeking what the Lord wants us to do. We are asking for strength and wisdom to do what is called for, and then we have the assurance that in so doing God is glorified.

Of course we can believe it that if He is being glorified, He will have his blessing upon it, and that will enhance the whole activity even more than we might have expected. It ends that we bear much fruit, and that we will be demonstrating beyond question that we are Christ’s disciples. There is nothing but good flowing out of this. It starts out with us abiding in Christ. We do not go to Him with our own ideas, but we go to Him with ideas that we have learned from our relationship with Christ. So the fulfillment is that we have grown in grace. We have grown to be more faithful to God. We have grown to want to do His will, His way, not our will, our way. This is something that we will be rejoicing in.

We read in verse 9:

As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love.

In other words, there is a binding, strengthening relationship between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and ourselves. We can see the result in verse 10, where we read:

If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

Verse 10 gives us the answer to some of the earlier questions. How do we abide in Him? We want to do it God's way and not come up with our own ideas. We want a relationship that is built by this kind of activity. Notice the focus is on the commandments of God. They finally are the key. They are an expression of God's will. They tell us that we are not to trust our minds; we are to trust the mind of God. That is something we must pay serious attention to, because we love to think about our own ideas. That will never work. We have to think in the direction of God always: what does God want? How does God express Himself? Are we asking that God's will be done and that will follow through in obedience to God's commands?

God has given us the formula in plain language. We just have to read it carefully, and not try to make it say something it is not saying. We want these words to stand out clearly and boldly in our minds. How God is glorified is already indicated in verse 7: **"If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you."** This is plain language, but we have to listen carefully and not change God's wording in these verses. We want to be able to come before God with the desire to be completely obedient. So we will ask God for strength to abide in Him. This is the only way God has set up the pattern here: abide in Him and obey and you will be His disciples. We have to follow this language carefully and pray for God's help. We only want to do God's will. We can follow the words of these verses and repeat them constantly to know we are doing the will of God. This is the formula of how we are to live, and to continue to be happy in Christ and to have a proper relationship with Him.

It is amazing to think that Christ loved us to the same degree that God the Father loved Christ. This is what these verses are essentially saying. So we know we are on target; we know that God the Father loves Christ beyond measure, so that would mean that God loves us beyond measure as well. That is what we read here.

What a marvelous statement of love for us! If we just consider that statement and think about it, we begin to think, how can it be? Here I am, a sinful individual who has rebelled against God, and Christ is saying in the plainest language, "I have loved you as the Father has loved Me."

We can think about that and our hearts are filled with amazement, and hopefully filled with love for Christ.

Do we really love Christ as He loves us? That is what we have to keep in mind so that we are not faithless before God; so that we are not without real love before God. God has really given us a high goal: we are to love Christ as He has loved us. **“Continue ye in My love.”** This amazing statement is attainable because God Himself is talking about it, and He wants us to have this goal. But to achieve this goal we have to keep His commandments. Verse 10 gives us this instruction. There is the solution: keep the commandments of God.

But keeping the commandments is a high goal that we are to aim for. First of all God has given us a sublime record of His commandments in the Bible, starting out with the Ten Commandments. He is not playing games in the Bible. We can fool ourselves and think God will overlook weaknesses in our lives, but we should not do that. We should want perfect obedience to all God’s commands.

The problem is that we hide the commandments. I do not mean that we hide them in our hearts. I mean that we hide them in our life and they become less and less noticeable, and then we are on a path away from God. We are not coming to love God, but are loving ourselves. It is so easy to fill our lives with self-love. “Look how well I am doing.” No, that is not the way to do it. We must look at ourselves in the light of what God is saying, and ask ourselves: Is this what God is saying and thinking about me? I hope so! Because then I have the wonderful assurance that I am loved by God, and nothing can be more wonderful for me to contemplate than to know that Christ loves me. This gives me spiritual reassurance. I know He loves me because I have such an earnest desire to do God’s will. I can never have too strong a desire.

That is why we read the Bible and look for these statements. We read them slowly and carefully and do not make excuses. Our constant prayer should be, “Help me to serve You: this is what I want. Help me to love You with all of my heart. Father, I love You with all my heart. I only want to be obedient to You. I know when I look at my life I see sin, and I want to go to You. Take those sins out of my life; I want only to serve You.”

That must be a consuming passion in my life, that all I think about is how to serve my Savior with greater faithfulness. We do not work at this just incidentally. It must be a consuming fire in our lives. We want to keep God's commandments so that indeed we will abide in His love. We cannot understand His love. When we look at our lives, we see places we have failed and wonder how it can be that He loves me. But we read these passages and see His love.

So we declare our love to God: "Father, I love You. As I read the Bible, help me to make the application to myself and not to other people. Make this a consuming fire in my life. Oh Father, I am so glad I can begin to sense that You have a great love for me. My love for You means that I want to do Your will in every possible way. When I have wrong thinking in my mind, I know I can go to You and ask forgiveness. I want only to love You with all of my heart. Father, You are my Savior. You have given so many wonderful promises to me. Please accept my love, even though I know it is imperfect. But Father, I want to love You as You have loved me. Thank you Father that I can address myself this way to You, even though I do not deserve even this opportunity. Thank You Heavenly Father."

This is the way we must live our lives as we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us.

As we get further into John 15, this chapter that is so encouraging and loving and insightful for each one of us, we are going to learn many principles that are very important to those of us who believe. Christ speaks of the true believer in the most encouraging fashion. We are going to find indeed that He is the vine that the Father loves. Christ is the King, but He emphasizes that the Father loves Him, and He loves the Father.

We saw that we abide in His love if we are part of the true vine; that is, if we are part of the Kingdom of God. When God speaks about the vine, He is speaking about the Kingdom of God. Every part of that vine is part of the Kingdom of God. We have now come to John 15:11, and we will find that God is further expanding this wonderful relationship that exists between Christ and His people. We read these encouraging words:

These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

What beautiful words Christ speaks to us here! Certainly there has to be an intimate relationship between our love and Christ's joy. As we continue in the love of Christ, we are given His joy. Jesus here explains that He has given us this information about His wonderful love because He wants us to be filled with joy. What a wonderful idea that is; that God Himself is concerned that we are filled with joy.

God speaks about the joy of the true believers in a number of places in the Bible. For example, we read in 1 Peter 1:8, speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Christ loves us! We should be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory! We abide in Christ's love, and we will continue to do so until we go to live with Him for eternity. These are ideas that Christ Himself gives us. These are not our ideas. We would never dare to say that we are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But when Christ makes these statements, it is true and trustworthy. His love will never leave us if we are abiding in Him. We can abide in Him only because of His action. It is not because we are so smart, or because we deserve it. It is not because we are trying to be obedient. It is because we belong to Christ. His love is with us forevermore.

The problem is that we sometimes live such a bad life, in spite of the fact that we believe we belong to Him. Our life is filled with things that turn us away from the wonder of His love. The key is: *if* we abide in Him. We will only abide in Him if Christ has taken possession of our life; if we are altogether surrendered to Him; if we are walking His way, in His paths; if we are definitely seeking His love; if we have a very positive relationship with Christ. There is nothing to compare to a proper relationship with Christ. And it is possible to be in that relationship. That is what this chapter is all about.

Christ loves us, and His love will never leave us. These are statements that God gives us. His love will abide in us. We must recognize that if our love has not reached that point where we live in that love, then it means we are not following what Christ has laid out for us; what God has expected from the true believers. God has a desire that is way greater than anything we ourselves would desire. If we find our love is not saying anything to us about joy, then we can know we have put

other things in the way. We are not following what Christ has given us. If we follow what Christ has given us, then these things will begin to take place in our lives.

But this matter of abiding in Him; that seems to be the key. We want to be sure we are living in a way that is pleasing unto Him. How can we live that way? First of all, we can know that He loves us if we are His children. One of the problems is that we look at Christ's statements of love in the same way we love Him, and we cannot trust ourselves to love Him properly. We have to look at His love, and then we ourselves should try to love Him in that same way. This is where we fall short. We have to love Christ with a passion, thinking, "He is my Savior, and I cannot think of going on in life without that love."

We must cry out to God to help us to love Him this way. It is the desire of Christ that we love Him, and if Christ has put us into His kingdom, then these wonderful words are for us. The action starts with Christ, and then He applies it to our lives. As we constantly look to Him for strength and help, we will find that increasingly our love for Christ will grow. We will be beseeching Him for more love. We want that love, and it is Christ who gives us our love. It does not come into our mind from just someplace; it is a love that comes from God. So we pray, "Oh Father, I just want to love You. Could it be that nothing gets in the way of my love for You. You are my Savior and my Lord, the King of my life." By nature I do not want to love Christ, I want to go my own way. That is why we have to ask God for help, and He will help us.

Christ has given us this beautiful chapter of John 15 to give us tremendous encouragement that He is with us. He is caring for us. We do not deserve His love at all. But He gives us these encouraging words, and they are possible because Christ declares that He loves us with a passion. We never want to miss that, so that we in turn will cry out to God that He will help us to live for Him with an intense desire. We want nothing to stand in the way of living close to Christ as our Savior and Lord.

When God wrote the Bible, He did not write it just as general information. He did not write it to be read by a few people now and then. He wrote it for the specific purpose of directing His people into truth. This is what we have been working on in John 15, that we might know truth. Now we want to go to John 15:12, where we read:

This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Already in this statement we find that Christ is making a very definite command to us. **“That ye love one another as I have loved you.”** That is a big order, because when we start thinking a little bit about the love of Christ for the true believers, we are fascinated. We stand amazed at His great love that He has had for us. We wonder how it is possible, when we think about our relationship with Christ. We wonder why Christ does what He does. But the fact is that Christ is not only our example, telling us what He has done and expects us to do, but He also lays it out so there is no question at all.

If we read these verses very carefully and prayerfully, we will know that Christ loves us with a passion. Yes, with a passion. We are to love one another with a passion. We often think that just to love Christ halfway will help us. But that is not good enough. We have to really pour our hearts into it. Do we really love Christ? When He talks about His love for us, it is with an intense desire that we should not miss. We are to love Christ, and why not? He is our Savior. One of the big stories of the Bible is the fact that Christ is our Savior. He is the one who has made payment for our sins. When we go through the Bible very carefully we can find many statements that show the fact that He indeed has made payment for our sins.

So now we read John 15:12: **“This is My commandment.”** Who is speaking? The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord. The Lord is the administrator; the governor; the one who makes the laws and carries out the keeping of the law. If we look at each word in this verse, and we think about what Jesus did for us as He made payment for our sins, we feel ashamed. If only we could say with complete assurance, “Yes, Lord Jesus, we know You did this, and we love You with a real love.” How many of us can say that realistically? Very few, because we are thinking about ourselves. We are not thinking that these words are for everyone Christ has come to save.

How great was His love for us? He laid His life down. He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. There are not flaws in His love for us. In fact He says in verse 13:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

He is talking about the reality of what He did in order to be our Savior. He laid His life down for our sins. We cannot even fathom that or see how it can be true. But this is Christ's statement, and He never exaggerates. This is the truth; that He laid down His life. This is what we are to do. We are to lay down our life and not think of ourselves, but think only about how we can do this to please our Lord even more.

Who are my friends? The next verse assures us: **"Ye are my friends."** and then it also describes how God defines a friend. He is not talking about the kinds of friendships that we think about; He is talking about His friendship in verse 14:

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

He is telling us how to be pleasing to God. That is why we read the Bible more and more carefully. We never want to have the attitude that we have read about all this so often - why do we have to look at it again? There is always something to learn when we read the Bible and read about the Lord Jesus and His relationship to us. There is always something new that we never realized before. Every sentence is addressed to us, and we should never get tired of reading it. This will help us to maintain and grow in grace as we follow through. We should want to be more like Jesus every day of our life, because He is our Savior.

We should never be content with our conduct because we did some good thing we think Jesus will be pleased about. We want to concentrate each day to become more like Jesus, and never tire of this goal. This is the goal of the true believer in our attitudes and our actions. Then we are on the right track to be pleasing to our wonderful Savior and Lord.

Christ is a wonderful Savior and He is a wonderful Lord. He is our Lord because He rules. Many of our friends want to be rulers over us in some degree, but when Christ wants to be Lord over our life, this is a wonderful blessing. No one can have lordship like the Lord Jesus. As we read the Bible, we can thank God that we read this. We should think about it over and over until it becomes an integral part of our lives. I want to be like Jesus, the one who rules over me; the one I want to follow with great precision and thanksgiving. He is the one that I really want to focus on, and I am so glad that I hear that He can dwell in us and walk with us. All of those phrases found in the Bible are rich with

meaning. They help us and keep us in a proper attitude and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. If we find that we are just on the edge, living just as near as we think we have to, then He is not our Lord. It means we are trying to do something we do not understand.

Jesus must be everything to us. He is my Lord; my Master; my Friend. He is everything to me. He is such a wonderful Redeemer who loves us so dearly.

The Lord in His magnificent graciousness has given us the opportunity to talk with each other about the Word of God. There is nothing more important that we should talk about to each other, or to report to the world, for that matter, that can be compared to thinking about the Word of God.

As we have been looking at the Gospel of John, we have found that God has made some very direct statements. For example, He says in John 15:12: **“This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.”** This statement is very profound, and we are so grateful that we have it in the Bible. God opens our eyes to the magnificence of this. He goes on in verse 13: **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”** No matter how much we think about it, this gives us a warm feeling. Yes, that is what we want for each other, and for our relationship with Christ. That verse is really saying enormously good things for all of us. The remarkable thing is that Christ Himself is the supreme example of someone who has laid down His life for His friends. None of us can do more seriously the will of God than what Christ did Himself for us as He laid His life down. Then we read verse 14: **“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.”**

That is a statement we could think about for a long time. We have to do what Christ would do if we are to be a friend of God. That should be our desire, because no one has a more faithful record than Christ Himself. Finally, the thing that determines the faithfulness of our actions has to do with Christ; if we want to be like Him or be pleasing to Him.

Now we go to verse 15:

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.

That sentence is very significant. **“I call you not servants.”** We do not stand alone at all. Christ is our Master, and we are His servants. We are to follow Him. He dictates to us. Everything points from us to the heart of Christ Himself. When we get all through, we find that Christ is our Master altogether; and yet He says He calls us not servants. Everything we think or do has to be considered in the light of our relationship with Christ. What does Christ want? He is our Lord; He is our Master. Here we have a verse that lays it right out. It begins with verse 14: **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”** But we do not stop there. We go on to verse 15. Christ is our Friend, as close as anyone can be close. It is beyond our understanding that Almighty God calls Himself our friend. We should rejoice every time we think about that: Christ is my friend, and He loves me as a friend. He is way more important to me than anyone. He is my friend, and that is what God is teaching us in this verse.

If we could be a servant in the house of a very important individual, we would consider ourselves very fortunate. But Christ is making a big point: we, as children of God, because of the positive actions of the Lord Jesus Christ, are far more than just His servants. We have learned from God that we are His friends. So our relationship goes way beyond just being a servant of God. We are His friends. This word “friend” carries heavy meaning, because Christ is a friend who has lain down His life for us. Where can we find a friend who is willing to do that? We would not expect that. But here Christ tells us that He is our friend who did this for us.

We sometimes sing the song, “What a friend we have in Jesus; All our sins and griefs to bear.” We sing it because we love it, but we do not realize how important that statement is. The song states it well, because Christ took all of our sins, and bore them, and paid the penalty for them, and we became free of them. The songs that have been written around that theme are numerous, and they state it so well. We should sing those songs, because they tell us what the Bible is telling us and what God has told us: that He is our friend.

We will not really get the whole blessing until we look upon Him as the friend who is God. He is our friend, and will be our friend eternally if He has saved us. So when we think about praying, we do not have to first think about what to speak to Jesus about. He is my Master and my King. What can I talk to Him about that would comfort me or someone else?

The fact is that He is my friend, and I can talk to him about anything. He understands because He is my friend and will never betray me. He will never do something bad toward me because He is my friend. He is always thinking about how we can be better related to each other. That is the glorious way that God has set us up over in relation to the Lord Jesus.

We often just think of the fact that Jesus is the King, and a king is very austere and hard to approach. But Jesus is our friend, and there is nothing we have to hold back. We can pour out hearts to Him. He understands everything we say and think. When we talk to Jesus, we know He not only is my friend; He is my Savior, my Lord, my King. He is everything to me. What a privilege God has given to us, that we can call Him our friend! When we pour out our hearts to Jesus because He is our friend, we are asking Him to bear for us some of our suffering, and we can know Christ is there to bear it all. So we find that we are just focused right on the Lord Jesus. He is our friend. Let us thank God again and again for such a wonderful statement.

We have begun to see how important love for one another is in this whole relationship of Christ's family. God has defined "friends." There are some other emphases that are established when we are a friend of Christ. Christ is making sure that we understand how important this is. It is important because it is God's desire, not our desire. Let us read those two verses again, verses 14 and 15;

Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.

That is a very wonderful statement "...**for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.**" That very important relationship of friends is emphasized at this particular time. We are the friend of Jesus because He has called us to be His friend.

Christ goes on to say in verse 16:

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...

We often tend to think we are quite smart, but we are not really that smart at all. A lot of times we think "I am what I am because I did this." We should not think that way. We should always realize I am what I am,

not because I did this, but because Christ did this in me. That is, if it is going to be something that is pleasing to God and pleasing to our fellow man in a real positive way, it is because Christ did it in me. Christ chose us.

There is some more that we can learn from that phrase in verse 16; **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...”** There is a vast difference between the two. If we choose Christ, it is going to be with the limits of our knowledge; the limits of what we can know. When Christ chooses us, it is within the limits of what He can know about us and it is an infinite knowledge. Christ’s knowledge is a supreme knowledge. There are no limits to His knowledge. It is a wonderful relationship that is established between Christ and those He chooses.

Now let us read the next part of verse 16; **“...but I have chosen you, and ordained you...”** What does the word “ordained” mean? Christ is telling us what has happened to us in our life as we came into a personal relationship with Christ. To be ordained is nothing that we can do; it is only something that Christ can do. Christ has “ordained” us and it is so much more wonderful than anything we could do. Let us read it again and add the next phrase; **“...but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit...”** Right there we see the task of every believer. **“...but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit...”** When Christ ordains us it means that He not only named us, but He qualified us. Christ gave us the ability to bring forth fruit. We should recognize that we are not ordinary people, but we are people who are especially designed by God, especially named by God, and especially assigned the task by God to bring forth fruit. And it has to be fruit that will last as we read in the next phrase, **“that ye should...bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.”**

In other words, it is eternal fruit - fruit that is truly significant. God is not talking here about growing nice tomatoes or growing nice apples or things of that nature. That is not the fruit that God has in view. It is fruit that will last forever. It is eternal fruit. It is the fruit of salvation and what follows from that. It has to do with eternal life. When we have become a child of God we are able to bring forth that fruit. Our life becomes fruitful. Our life becomes everything that God wants it to be. Our life will not be empty. Our life has become revitalized. We are now

involved in eternity. We are bringing forth fruit that lasts forever. It is fruit that brings all praise and honor to God.

We would never have suspected that bearing such fruit would ever happen in our lives. We can pray that God will save this one and that one, and we have the assurance that God will save all of His elect. God Himself assures us in James 5:16 that “**...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**”

We know that any fruit that God allows us to bear will be wonderful, spiritual, and eternal and that it comes from God. We shall ask of the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that He may give us that fruit.

We have focused greatly on Christ’s command “**that ye love one another.**” Christ wants that our love for each other will grow magnificently and it will grow positively. It will do these things because our love for each other is set in this marvelous program that Christ has established.

These are the truths that God is setting forth in these verses of John 15. Oh how remarkable the Bible is, how wonderful the Bible is! And to think that you and I have the opportunity to talk about these things together. Praise God!

We have come down to verses 18 and 19 of John 15, where we read:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

We learned in John 15:16 that Christ has chosen His followers, those whom He has saved. Once He has saved us, we belong to Him. If we belong to Christ, we are not our own any longer; we are His own. Once we belong to Christ, we no longer belong to the world, which is at enmity with God. The world in these verses refers to everyone who does not belong to Christ.

In fact, we also read in James 4:4:

....know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

That is a terrible conclusion, but it cannot be avoided. It is the way it is. We learned in John 15:15 that if we belong to Christ, He calls us His friends. Isn't that wonderful?

So we can see from these verses that you are on one side or the other. If you are saved, you belong to Christ; you are a friend of Christ throughout eternity. It could not be more wonderful. But at the same time you are the enemy of the world. The world does not want you as a friend. If you are not saved, you belong to the world; you are a friend of the world, and you are the enemy of God. Like it or not, that is the terrible situation that exists in the world.

John 15:18 tells us that we can expect the world to hate us, as it already hates Christ. Why does the world hate Christ? For that matter, why would they hate the true believers who are followers of Christ? The truth is, someone who takes a stand for Christ takes a stand for the Bible. The Bible teaches principles and standards that the world does not listen to at all. The world does not want to know about those standards. But the true believers are thankful to God that we have been given these standards. As we live out our life, the one place we can go to find real truth is the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, and we will find the information there that we can lay our whole life upon.

Generally speaking, the people in the world want to set their own standards. They do not like what the Bible sets as standards. As someone begins to read the Bible seriously, they quickly discover that it does not match up with what the world has told them. The world wants to do whatever they want, and it is normally going to be quite different from what God is insisting from the Bible. That is why invariably we get into trouble when we put our trust in anything other than the Word of God, the Bible. The next thing we will find is that we are not being accountable to God; we are being accountable to a series of notions or rules that others have manufactured, that we love far more. But they will direct us down a path that is away from God.

They do not want to talk about sin or being a sinner. They do not like to hear about God's standards. Sin is the one word we do not like because it gets right to the very essence of our heart. If we talk about sin we must talk about our need for salvation. We know we have to listen to God to find an answer. And as we listen to God, we have to also face ourselves with grim reality; namely, that by nature we are sinners. We

should be ready to face that and talk plainly about that, and let the Bible do its healing work of showing us that we are sinners in need of Christ.

God's Word makes us accountable to God. Salvation takes us out of the world and brings us under the care of God. This is the desperate need of mankind. We may not like to hear that we have this need, but it is the truth. When you are physically dirty, you need to take a bath to get clean. We all need to take a bath, as it were. Every one of us is in need of spiritual cleansing that comes only from the Gospel. Let God speak to our hearts. God is the one who cleanses us from sin. As the Gospel goes deeper and deeper into our hearts, the more we feel the cleansing power of it, if indeed we are listening to it and are open to the Gospel.

If we are living for Christ, our standards will set us apart from the standards of the world. As we follow God's standards, we will come under criticism from our friends. Yet we know deep in our hearts that we need spiritual cleansing, and we should thank the Lord for that cleansing.

We have been spending much time in this wonderful part of the Bible, John 15. When we talk about one passage of the Bible being wonderful and important, or giving it any other accolade that we wish, we must be reminded that that does not mean that the other parts of the Bible are less important or are less valuable. It just means that as we are focusing on this part of the Bible, we are finding deep and wonderful truths. At other times in our Bible study we may be focusing on other parts of the Bible and we really have to use the same accolades to describe them, because they also are right from the heart of God. The Bible always gives us truths that are beyond question and that we are to listen to most carefully.

The curious thing that I find, as we are looking at John 15, is that no matter how many times we go through a passage, reading it again and again, it always appears to have new ideas. It seems to have new important things. This is because the passage we are looking at is the Word of God. We can have studied a passage many times in the past and think we have learned all there is from that passage, but do not believe that. The Bible is a reflection of the infinite mind of God, and we can never learn all there is from the Word of God. The Bible always has new truths that are waiting to be revealed by God as He gives us understanding.

As we read the Bible, if the Holy Spirit is opening our spiritual eyes, we are going to be given more truth from the Bible. There is no end to the truths that come from the Bible. Of course if we are just reading the Bible superficially like a lot of people do, then we will not learn any new truths from the Bible. We will say that this passage says the same thing to me that it always has. There is not anything new. That may be your conclusion, but I will tell you the Bible is a refreshing book. Every time that we read the Bible slowly and carefully, thinking about the fact that this came from the mind of Almighty God our Savior, we should understand that this passage of truth is directed right at me. It is directed right at my needs. If we do that, suddenly the Bible is going to become more and more valuable to us. And that will mean that we will want to read more of the Bible to learn something new from God.

So this is what is happening now as we are going through this chapter in the Gospel of John. To me, it is always refreshing to look at another few verses, to examine them and to talk about them. It seems like God is continuing to reveal new truths as we look at these verses. And that is the way it ought to be, because the Bible is a message from God Himself. Who is God? That thought should always permeate our minds. That thought should always fill us with wonder and awe. The moment we ask that question, we are going to find an answer that says He is the Eternal King, He is the Eternal Ruler, He is Eternal, He is the Almighty. He is everything. We cannot find a limitation to God. God is way beyond our thinking.

We would like to bring God a little bit closer to our size so that we feel a bit more comfortable with Him. But we cannot do that because God is God. And God is infinite in His size, in His importance, in every aspect of His being. There is no end to God. We never want to try to bring God down to our level.

A lot of times as we study the Bible very carefully, we may get the idea that while this is important, God does have some limitations. Isn't there finally a time when we have said everything we want to say about God, at least from this vantage point, and we can go on to other things? We do not have to remember this or that from the Word of God every time we open the Bible.

We can think those thoughts, but we are only depriving ourselves of wonderful truths; truths to which we need to listen. And if we do not listen to those truths, God will make sure that we do listen to them. God

will slow us down. God will create situations that come along that we did not expect, so that we are forced to look at what God is saying more carefully than ever before. These things are extremely important to God and should be extremely important to us. If we are God's children, if we are beloved of Him, then God wants us to know these things.

As students of the Bible, we like to think that we are making progress as we go through the Bible, and as we spend time in this passage today and time in that passage tomorrow. But when we go through the Bible carefully and see the wonderful messages of what God is teaching, then we should not be concerned about our progress through the Bible. While reading the Bible it seems as if we cannot get enough of what the Bible has to say about God. That is because God is an infinite personality. God's message about Himself is infinite. There is no end. The more we read about God, the more we will think about God, the more we will live out our life as God requires, and the more we will see the infinite nature of God. He is there. He is the great "I AM." He is God.

Remember, when we are reading the Word of God, we are always reading words and phrases that came from the mouth of Almighty God. There is nothing in the world that can compare with reading the Bible, and therefore we should always be exceedingly respectful and exceedingly careful in what we are saying and in how we are saying it.

Now let us again read John 15:18:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

In other words, if we ever wondered about who was hated first in this world, God answers that question. It is God. God is speaking. God is the first subject of hatred of this world. We must always remember that so that we keep a proper relationship with God. The world hated Almighty God before the world hated you. So quit feeling sorry for yourself. God is the first one the world hated and God will take care of those that hate Him.

So let us go on to the next verse, verse 19:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

I know that you are beginning to ask the question: When are you going to get off the subject of the hatred of the world for the believers? And the answer is: when the Bible does. Time and time again the Bible reinforces these truths because God wants to reinforce them. God is doing that so that we have a proper relationship to the world. If we begin to get discouraged because of the hatred of the world, we will have a solid reason for beginning to get encouraged, because God is telling us all the reasons for this hatred. God predicted this hatred would happen; therefore we should not be surprised. Be thankful that you are not alone. Be thankful that God is with you all of the time.

It is so comforting to be able to read this again and again because it helps us to recognize that we are not alone. We are in the arms of our Lord and Savior. We are safe and secure. There is nothing that we have to worry about. But if we start worrying about some of the sinful things that go on in the world, that are going on every single day, we only need to lean back on some of these truths and we will have the support that we need. We need not to be focused on the hatred of this world, but to be focused on God Himself. If we do that it will be easier to handle the stresses of this world, because those stresses will continue to be with us right up to the end.

In the first part of the verse we read, **“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.”**

That first part states what an enormous number of people have learned. They have learned to be of the world. If you are of the world, things become more attractive in the world. These people find that the actions around them, of their friends or of those they are dealing with, do not seem to go against them nearly as badly. So everything seems to be alright. But then we look at these verses, we see that they are in deep trouble with God. This is why God gives us this information. This is the Word of God.

We want to look at a passage as if it is the first time we are reading it. Not that it is the first time, but we want to see if we can learn something new from the passage. If we read the passage carelessly we may miss some information that God has written. This is the Word of God and we should never cease from being excited about what we find in it. We should want to read it again and again. As we grow in grace, as we grow in truth, the Bible becomes more meaningful to us. The Bible becomes more important to us. We begin to see how powerful and how

wonderful the Bible is. There are not enough accolades that we could use to describe the Bible.

This is the nature of the Word of God. This is the nature of the child of God. We are an integral part of the Bible because we have been saved by the words of the Bible. Oh what a blessing the Word of God is!

We have gotten down to verses 20 and 21 in our examination of John 15. We have been learning more and more about the nature of the relationship between Christ and His apostles, which in turn is helping us to understand the relationship that exists between Christ and all true believers. So this is proving to be a very helpful study that enables us to understand what our relationship to Christ should be if we claim to be a child of God. Let us read John 15:20 and remember that Christ is speaking;

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.

Now when we look at verse 20, we see how powerful the Bible really is. The first thing we read in the verse is “**Remember the word that I said unto you...**” God is telling us to remember what He has to say because the Word was written by God, not by us. We may wonder why the Bible is written the way it is written but we can depend upon the Bible. If the words are in the Bible as the words of God, it is the Word of God.

Continuing on in the verse we read “**...The servant is not greater than his lord...**” That is a fundamental principle that is paramount in setting the relationship of a child of God with God Himself. It is a relationship that helps us understand these verses as we read them. The problem we have when we study the Bible, as we begin to look at an aspect of what is being declared by the Bible, is that we get distracted by the way the world would deal with the same subject. By letting ourselves be distracted we lose our perspective and cannot get to the real understanding of what God wrote.

Then we read; “**...If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...**” We do not like that sentence at all. But God has placed it here because it is super important. Who are “they” that persecute? They are the enemy, whoever the enemy may be. The enemy is whoever it may be that is in contradiction to the Law of God. They think that they are greater than the Word of God, and therefore are in danger of

persecuting those of us who are true believers. There are those people who think they know more than God all around us. They can be found everywhere we turn. We have to recognize this fact and not become frightened or scared.

Let us read again “...**The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me...**” Notice “they” is a plural word. You know that this is the way the world acts. Those that persecute do not normally act in a singular fashion. They normally act in a fashion where they have the help of others. So I get the idea that everybody is against me and start to feel sorry for myself. Do not feel sorry for yourself.

If they have persecuted Me...” Remember this is Christ saying these words. And who is Christ? Christ is the Lord of all the earth. Christ is God Himself. So Christ says “**If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.**” Christ is telling us in no uncertain terms that we are going to get persecuted by someone who does not like Almighty God. When that comes we had better stand firm and not be ready to retreat because we see danger. We may see danger but we are standing in the presence of the Lord God, who is in control of everything. God, in His mercy, has told us ahead of time what is going to happen so that we are not frightened.

If I have to enter into a battle, and I can either get on the side where there are a thousand men of the world with all of their wisdom and all of their knowledge, or I can get on the side where there is one man who is with me, I know beyond a question that I would rather be on the latter side with Christ. Because if Christ is on my side, who can be against me? Since God tells us this will happen, we can be assured that it will happen. Yet I am on the side of God.

What Christ said about persecution makes sense. If those that persecute Christ think they get victory over Christ, then of course they are going to try to persecute anyone else who claims to be a follower of Christ. Just because those that persecute me may increase in number does not make them stronger. They are still a persecutor of Christ and Christ is Eternal God. Let’s not get frightened. Let’s understand that we are dealing with the greatest help that anyone could ever find in the entire world. We are on the side of God.

We read on in verse 21:

But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.

That is, all the things that you read about or are being warned about will be done unto you, because that is the way they are going to threaten us; that is the way they are going to intimidate us; that is the way they are going to try to control us. Why do they do this? The last part of verse 21 tells us why. “...**because they know not Him that sent Me.**” If they really knew God they would not persecute Christ or the true believers.

To summarize what we have learned from studying John 15:20 and 21, we can say it this way. We don't have to walk in this world with fear; we have to walk in this world with an abiding trust in what God has said. We should be ready to listen again and again to what God has said in these verses. We should make any necessary modifications in our thinking so that, when we are through thinking about it, we have a true understanding. And that understanding should reinforce us and give us strength because we know that we are on Christ's side. This is the goal of Bible study: that I know what I believe because God has opened my eyes. I have read it in the Word and find that same idea repeated again and again in the Word. I am very comfortable with what I read or heard because it agrees with everything else I have learned from God's Word.

We know that the nature of man is to think that mankind is not really that bad and to think that God is overly strict. On the other hand, it is not our intention to unnecessarily degrade mankind by showing they are sinners. However, we must never forget about the presence of sin in the world and how easy it is to get involved with sin and to become enmeshed in it.

Sin is everywhere. Sin is deeply embedded into the lifestyle of all kinds of people. We want to get that truth out: sin is everywhere in the world.

Now let us look at our next verse, John 15:22:

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

There are many people today who are so convinced of their self-righteousness that the moment you mention sin to them, they are so offended that they will not continue talking with you. That is their pleasure. They can do that, but they are completely avoiding the question about sin. Sin is as common as grass, to use a familiar expression. Because grass is everywhere, so is sin everywhere.

Anytime any one of us does anything that is not perfect in the eyes of God - I don't care how holy we think we are or how righteous we think we are - then we have engaged in sin. And that is why it is so wonderful that at the end of the day we can go to the Lord and we can pray, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me. I know today I have done things that are not pleasing to You. And if the things I have done are not pleasing to You, they are encompassed in sin. But oh Lord, forgive." We should mean this with all of our hearts. "Oh Lord, how marvelous, how wonderful it is that I can make this admission to You without any hesitation. I know that I am not perfect. I did many sinful thoughts and actions today, but oh Lord have mercy and help me to turn away from these sinful thoughts and these sinful actions. Help me to do it Your way. I want to be on Your path."

We do not want to have fun with casually talking about sin and thinking that what we are doing is not bad. Speaking about sin in itself is not wrong, but we must never misunderstand the awful nature of sin. The prevalence of sin is a common product of the human race. It is everywhere we turn. We must never be afraid to confront sin and realize that I have too much sin in my life. We should want to become more sinless and pray to God that He will help me do everything in a way that is pleasing to Him.

We must never think that we can live a life that is absolutely free of sin. That is not possible. Anytime we do not think or do not do everything perfectly according to God, we sin. But we must not be afraid of that. We must honestly admit our sinfulness and make our confession to God. We should be thankful to God that we can pray to Him each day and ask for forgiveness for sins. We can pray that God will help us do it more His way and less my way. Because this is when we are being truthful with our self: when we are unafraid to admit that we have sin and to turn from that sin as we become aware of it. It should be our desire to live in a way that is pleasing to God and not pleasing to ourselves or to mankind. We want to be pleasing to God with every breath we take.

In actuality, the deeper we dig looking for the meaning of what Christ is saying, the less we like it. Because the Bible talks about sin, and sin is one word that this world does not like. None of us like it, we like to talk about everything else except sin. But the fact is that sin is the problem of this world. And Jesus emphasizes the greatness of it in verse 22 of John 15. This is Jesus speaking:

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

Jesus is telling them that because He has spoken to them the cloak for their sin has been removed. When did Christ speak to anyone? What cloak is this that has been removed?

When Jesus was on earth He told the Jews that He was the Messiah. That was the first big piece of information. They were talking to Christ Himself. Everything that has relevance that is worth listening to is what Jesus had to say. Their ignorance, as well as any ignorance today, was not an excuse to not believe on Him, because Christ spoke to all of mankind through His Word, the Bible. And when He spoke through His Word, the Bible, it was the Word of God. So nobody could use the excuse: I did not listen, or I did not want to listen, or I could not listen, or I did not understand it all because it was the Word of God. The Word of God comes to us the way God has prepared it. It is prepared so that we can listen to it and get some understanding and be corrected in our lives through the Word of God. We cannot make excuses.

Oh yes, we do make excuses because we do not want to be intimidated by the Word of God. The fact is we had better listen more carefully than ever when it is the Word of God. So when you read John 15, those are the words that came from Christ who is God. They are the Word of God and we should never set them aside.

Now Christ is telling them that He is the true Messiah. Christ speaks to all of mankind through His Word the Bible. And the pattern of God's teaching is that whenever He speaks to us through His Word He will open our spiritual ears so that we will have some understanding of what He is saying. Many times what we hear Him saying in His Word is so important that intuitively we do not want to hear it. Our ears shut down. Our minds shut down, and we have quit listening. We do not even recognize that we have stopped listening, but our constitution is such that we are in such rebellion against God that we cannot listen anymore to that kind of an assault on our wickedness.

You see, the problem is that each and every one of us by nature has wickedness. There is not one of us that can say, "Oh, no, not me Lord, I am innocent. Go ahead and tell me anything You want to tell me." That is fine until three sentences later Christ says something we never expected Him to say and our ears shut down very rapidly and we wonder what He is talking about.

The fact is that Christ is telling us what our need is and what our sin is. And because Christ is the Son of God, He is God. He speaks with great accuracy. He speaks with great focus. And we have a hard time listening because it is condemning us and we do not like it. But the fact is the moment that God speaks; the moment He opens His mouth to declare the truth to us; we had better listen because He is the Creator of man. He knows precisely what we need way better than any preacher knows or what we know or anyone knows. He knows exactly what we need because He is the Creator of the human race. He is the One who started it all. Therefore His wisdom is infinite, and we had better recognize this and thank God that He has given us this kind of understanding.

When God wrote the Bible, He did not write it as a piece of general information. God did not write the Bible as a book to be read by a few people now and then. God wrote the Bible for specific purposes, such as directing His people into truth. This is what we have been working on in chapter 15 of the Gospel of John, that we might know truth.

As we get into a chapter that is so insightful for each one of us, we are going to learn many principles that are very important to those of us who believe.

One of the reasons it is a good idea to pray before we read the Word of God is that we are pleading with God that He will open our understanding. We would like Him to help us to listen carefully so that we will get the message that God has for us, because it is a most important message since it comes from God Himself.

And so, we read here in chapter 15 of the Gospel of John that Christ is speaking to all of mankind through the words of the Bible. The unfortunate thing is that everyone has an opinion of what Christ should be saying, and they do not necessarily agree at all with what Christ is saying. But if we are going to really be helped, really come into truth, we better listen very carefully to all that Christ is saying. Christ is the Lord. Christ is Eternal God. Christ is the Giver of Truth. Christ is the one that we have to listen to so that we can begin to overcome our ignorance in the way we worship; our ignorance in the way we plead with God; our ignorance in the way we look at God, and become more and more humble before Him. We need to plead with God that He will listen and that He will give us some understanding, because we need that understanding.

We all need Christ. Christ is the giver of righteousness. Christ is our Savior. Christ is Eternal God. Christ is everything and we desperately need Him. We want our spiritual eyes to be as open as possible, and that means that we are going to be more sensitive about what we ask the Lord or what we talk about with Him. Christ's response to us may be that He opens our spiritual eyes and ears and makes this statement or that statement from the Bible more meaningful to us. It is so wonderful to just talk to the Lord with an open mind and let the words fall where they may. But we must listen to what God is saying and then, in His good timing, we finally begin to come to truth. That is what we want so that we will know better what our need is. And our need is very great.

Don't anyone say to himself or herself, "My need is not that great, because I love the Lord." You can say that in your pride, but look carefully at yourself. Keep reading carefully and keep listening carefully to the Bible. You will find out statements in the Bible that you did not realize were there.

We want God to teach us. We want to be more and more like the Master, and Christ is the Master, we are not. The moment we begin to show in our lives a certain amount of pride, a certain amount of attitude, where it is demonstrating that we have a high opinion of ourselves in our knowledge of the Word of God and our relationship with God, we are in trouble. We should be walking so humbly before God. There is not one of us that does not need more help from God. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We want to be praying, "Oh Lord teach me, oh Lord guide me, oh Lord be the one who has control of my life. Take complete control of my life because I only want Your will to be done." That should be our constant prayer in whatever we do.

We read in John 15:22-23:

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin:

That is a statement all by itself. If Christ had not come, they had not had sin. How can that be? But let's continue reading and finish the two verses:

but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth my Father also.

The moment we see the word “hate,” particularly when God ties the hate to hatred of the Lord Jesus Himself, we know that we are looking right down into the pit of sin. Christ is making a statement here that is fascinating because He is really saying: when I come with My holiness, with My righteousness, with My wonderful works of love, it breeds sin. It develops sin. How can that be?

Sin develops because mankind by nature is sinful and mankind does not want the holiness of God to be near him. When Christ comes with His holiness, it stimulates sin in the lives of the unsaved. It cannot do anything else but stimulate sin. And that is what we are facing as we look at these final verses of John 15. That is why the cloak of sin has been removed; it is no longer hidden. The purpose of a cloak is to be a covering. But there is no covering up of sin; there is no cloak for sin. It cannot be hidden. It has been uncovered by Christ’s perfection.

Verse 22 again says, **“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.”**

That is just an amazing statement. Christ is the sinless one. Christ comes and displays His sinlessness. He displays His goodness. By so doing, Christ reminds us that we are all sinners because we all violate the Law of God. We are seeing where sin originates. Sin originates in our hearts. We are by nature in rebellion against God.

We do not like to admit that. We like to think, “Oh God, we are not that bad. Basically, I love the Lord. I want to do His will. God, you really have to search me to find sin in my life.” We wish all of that were true, but it is not true. The Bible is telling us that Christ comes and displays His goodness and it stimulates sin in the lives of those who hear Him. And we all hear Christ because His Word is spread throughout the world.

But Christ says in verse 23: **“He that hateth me hateth my Father also.”**

This is a crucial statement. God is insisting that there are those that hate Him. Now if we go out in the world today and go from individual to individual and ask the question “Do you hate Christ?” the normal answer we will receive is “No, of course not. I do not hate Christ. Christ is the Son of God. Christ is the Savior. I do not hate Christ, in fact I love Him.” Just because this is the way that a person believes does not make it true. Because what is hatred of Christ? Hatred of Christ is anytime we do anything that is contrary to the Law of God. When we take the Law of God and do not obey it and do things the way that we want to do

them, we are effectively showing our hatred for Christ. We are saying “I want to have my own way to live.”

This is the problem. We want to have our own way to live and do not realize how deep we are getting into sin when we start going down that path. We get so deep into sin that we should be ashamed. We are full of shame but the problem is we hardly recognize it. We say things very glibly, very easily, and forget immediately that we even said them. But if these things we have said are carefully analyzed, we will find out that they are full of shameful things. We have made insinuations, we have made suggestions that show that we want to live our own way rather than Christ’s way.

If we live our own way we are going to be living against God’s way, because that is the sinful nature of man. If we want to live our own way, our life is going to be terrible. And we won’t even know that our life is terrible, because we are so conditioned to live in this world, the way the world is and the way that society is, that we do not see the sin. We do not feel the sin. We live with the sin and do not even recognize how sinful we really are.

But we know that that sin is terrible because Christ Himself says that. In verse 23 Christ alludes to it: **“He that hateth Me hateth My Father also.”**

That statement alone is a terrible condemnation because it means that our sin is not just focused on the Lord Jesus alone; it is focused on the Godhead. It is focused on everything that God is. There is no possibility of holiness with that kind of an attitude. And we do not even know that we have that kind of an attitude most of the time. We think that we are quite good. We think that we really live holy lives. And that is because we are not able to stand apart from ourselves and look at ourselves very analytically and see the sin that permeates out of our personality. We need to pray that God will let us see the sin in our lives and realize that without a love for Him, we are hopeless.

That statement Christ made is summarizing how deep our sin is. It is showing that our sin is not incidental. We see our sin as we go along in our life, but we don’t really look deeply at our sin. We don’t examine our sin. If we examine ourselves honestly we would find that we are uncomfortable to look too carefully at our sin. But if we did, we would see that the sin in our lives is very deep and very serious. And we are in

trouble with God. That is why we need a Savior. We need to be able to cry out to our Savior in our pains and sufferings because of our sin and say, “Oh Lord have mercy on me and on my family, because I know that I am not living the way that I should live. Oh God have mercy.” We should never get tired of crying out for mercy from God. Crying out to God should be on the front of our lips constantly. That is the way that we should live; we should live in the constant need of God’s mercy.

We may think that we are living holy lives, but we normally are living like the world, and the world lives sinfully, there is no doubt about that. We live in a very complex and very sinful world. Because we are part of the world and we normally live like the world, there is plenty of sin to be seen in our lives. We may not even be aware of that sin because we are so involved with the things of the world and the sin can be part of those things. The world is deep in sin and normally we are an integral part of the sinful world.

Do not ever think that you are different. You think you are a holy person, and that God will not see the sin in your life. We had better get that thought out of our heads very quickly. We can so easily fall into sin, because we are so entangled with just living our life that we don’t really notice the sin. We go along with our life but our life is normally covered with sin.

You may think it is terrible for me to say that you are covered with sin, but it is true. The potential for sin is always there as long as we have these sinful bodies. The sin in our lives is a consequence of not keeping our heart as focused on Christ as we should. So we need to focus on Christ through His Word the Bible, and focus on our hearts. When we do find sin in our life, we should praise the Lord for giving us the sensitivity to see the sin, ask the Lord for forgiveness for the sin, and ask the Lord for strength to sin no more. Thanks be to God that there are some who do start living a life that is more pleasing to God! That should be the desire of us all. We should all want to be more pleasing to God.

Remember that sin is a very serious subject, and even though ignoring sin would be the easy thing to do, we must confront sin in our life. We live in this sinful world that can draw us so easily into sin, but that is not the way that we want to live. We should want to live God’s way. We should want God’s mercy upon us. Our prayer should be that God will have mercy and make us a child of His.

In the book of John 15 we have a few more verses that we have not covered yet. So we want to spend a little time with them and see what we can learn that will help us in the times in which we are living. Remember this is Jesus who is speaking in the first person in these verses.

Let's go on to verse 24, where we read:

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and my Father.

My, this really gets us deep into the heart of sin, and this is what we are struggling with. We want to learn how sin comes into our lives and how we are to deal with sin. How does the Bible deal with sin, or maybe to be more specific, how does God deal with our sin? One thing that we know by now without any question at all is that nobody can look at the Bible and say honestly, "I have no sin in my life." Sin is to be in rebellion against God. The law of God is going to bring to bear our hatred against the law of God, and our love of the things of the world from which sin proceeds. Let's read on in verses 25 - 27 of John 15:

But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me:

And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.

There is a lot of hope in those verses. We are so thankful for this because we are sinners and we cannot get away from it. And yet God is saying now that there is a solution. How is all of this going to add together?

The first thing we have to bear in mind is that God is in charge, and when He is talking about our sin He is talking about something that He knows all about. Secondly, He has complete control of our lives, and He has never lost control of our lives. Furthermore, He is talking about the Holy Spirit who has the task of cleaning out our sin and of changing us by making us a new creature. We have God the Father, God the Son who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. We must keep in mind

that we have to listen to the whole Word of God and then we hear these comforting words (vs. 26-27):

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.

The first thing that God is teaching us is that there is goodness; there is that which is pleasing to God. But there is also that which is dreadfully sinful. So the first thing we want to do is to look at our lives and see the sin there. When we see sin, our prayer should be, "Oh God have mercy and take this sin away." The second thing we have to recognize is that it is God who has to remove sin. We cannot remove it; God has to remove it. We have to have a desire for that sin to be gone. And so we can start talking to God about it: "Oh God, that sin has got to go," and then we can begin to ask God how it can go.

Then we learn in the Bible that God has charge of our lives. He is the one who causes that sin to go. He is the one who will not allow that sin to besiege us. That fact is that I can talk to God and admit that I am a sinner. It is absolutely true that I am a sinner, but we can also go a step further immediately and pray, "Oh Lord, I don't want to sin anymore. Have mercy, have mercy, and help me to turn away from it. Please take the sin out of my life and give me a hatred for that sin, so that I will not be pleased anymore to carry it with me."

To be honest, when you look at sin in your life you will find that you often get lots of comfort from contemplating, from thinking about that sin, because by nature we are sinful. And we like to be near that sin because that is the obnoxious nature of sinful man. But now we know that the sin has got to go; that is not the way to live. And so we begin to pray "Oh Lord, have mercy on me and take that sin out of my life so that I have no longer have any joy or any happiness in thinking about it or in expressing it in any way. It is a bad thing in my life. Oh Father, I only want to do it Your way."

That is the beginning: we have to have an intense desire to turn away from that sin and we can ask God to strengthen us in this desire. We can ask God to do the work of taking the desire out of our life. It is the beginning point, but yet that sin has rooted itself within my personality so deeply. How can it ever get out? Of course as long as we are thinking about it only as humans we cannot get it out, because we like it too

much. But when we recognize that it is destroying our lives, we know that it has to go. So we begin to plead to God for mercy.

Have you ever pleaded with God for mercy; just broken yourself before Him so that your spirit is broken before God? Have you ever cried in the presence of God, saying, "Oh Lord, I'm overwhelmed by the awfulness of sin in my life. I want to do it Your way. Have mercy, oh Lord, please have mercy. I don't want to deal with that sin any longer because the final end of sin is death." The final end of sin is to be rejected of God altogether. It is to bring to pass all the ugly statements in the Bible that have to do with sin, and we do not want any of that to happen to us.

The point to begin is right now. We do not have to do a lot of preparation except to begin to see that we have to get to God. God is the only one who can make the difference. So we begin to admit to God that we need His mercy, and why we need mercy. "I am a sinner. I am beset by sin. I need help. I cannot do it! I thought that I was in charge of my life for a long time. I thought that all was going well, but now as God is apparently opening my eyes wide, I am beginning to see I am a dirty ugly sinner." Oh I don't like talking about myself that way using that bad language. That cannot be true. But this is the time of truth when we begin to use the bad language about ourselves. "I am a dirty rotten sinner - oh God have mercy on me."

The first thing we need is to have God ruling in our life. So we pray to God the Holy Spirit, "Oh, Holy Spirit, reign in my life, rule in my life; make me a different person. Do not let me have those awful thoughts anymore; do not let me go down that wrong path anymore; do not let me be interested in those wrong things anymore. Oh Lord I want to do it Your way. Is it possible?" And the Bible says, yes it is. That is why we are speaking about this: it is because there is hope. There is grand and wonderful hope. And so we keep nudging closer and closer to God as we continue to cry out for mercy.

I cannot help but feel great to know that I am talking about God who is a merciful God. God is a God of mercy - do not ever forget it. That is not just poetic language; that is a fact. But we have to break down and cry out to God for mercy. We have to make our desires known to God; not because God has to hear it from our lips but because it is healthy when we are able to say these things with meaning.

If we claim to be a child of God, we should never stop crying to God for mercy. Our crying out to God will not affect the outcome of whether or not God will save us, but it will affect our relationship with God as He helps us to purge the sin out of our lives. We must understand this principle. Our crying out to God for His mercy is not the cause of our salvation. He does not forgive us because of our actions. Christ chose us and forgave us according to His own perfect will. But we cry out for God's mercy in accordance with His Word. We stand in need of God's mercy in our lives.

So we ask God to take charge of our life, and then hopefully the next thing that will happen is that the conduct of my life will change. I will not have any interest anymore in these ugly things I have been interested in, and I will have a real intense desire to do things God's way. I want my life to tell for Jesus so that anywhere I go men may be able to see what a change has taken place in my life. I am no longer interested in these ugly things that people normally get very excited about, but I want only to talk about Christ My Savior. Christ came for sinners and I am one of them, and therefore if He came for sinners, He came for me just as certainly as for anyone else.

This is the witness that we bear to the world: we testify of Christ. What a privilege we have to testify of Christ! Ah, the great mercy of God -- what a glorious testimony!

