

JOHN 15:12-17
LOVE THE BRETHREN!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 15 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

If you remember from our previous studies, Jesus and His men, except for Judas who left before the meal was over to betray Jesus, were celebrating Passover.

Now the meal is over, and they are heading out of the Temple area, through the East Gate or the Golden or Beautiful Gate and they will be going up to the Garden of Gethsemane.

As they pass through this gate, on the door of the gate was this beautiful olive branch and I think it is here that Jesus spoke of Him being the vine and God the Father the vinedresser and we are the branches.

And Jesus was speaking of being attached to Him, drawing our life, the nutrients we need for godly living from Him. As we will see this morning, Jesus is now going to speak of how that is manifested in our lives, and it is not an easy subject, I am sorry to say, in the days we are living in.

What is Jesus going to be speaking about?

He is going to be speaking about – ***LOVE THE BRETHREN!***

Now the reason it is not easy, the reason it is so difficult is because many Christians are so focused on themselves, their rights, that they negate what God wants them to do.

I know, great way to start off a message, offend a lot of people. Please, please understand that you can be mad at me, but when you listen to what Jesus is saying here, the reality is, you are not mad at me, but you are mad at what He has said.

In fact, when we get to John chapter 17 Jesus is praying to the Father before He is arrested and brought before the Jewish religious leaders, and then the Roman authorities before He is crucified, and you know what He is praying about?

He is praying for our unity, that we would be one as He and the Father are one. I guess He knew what we needed to hear!

As I look at what is going on in our country and the world, the love towards people is growing cold, just like the Bible tells us would happen. Let me show you what I mean.

First of all, we are told,

It's no longer just Republican vs. Democrat, or liberal vs. conservative. It's the 1 percent vs. the 99 percent, rural vs. urban, white men against the world. Climate doubters clash with believers.

Bathrooms have become battlefields, borders are battle lines. Sex and race, faith and ethnicity . . . the melting pot seems to be boiling over.

Divided America is a multimedia series that explores the divisions confronting Americans in their communities and their politics.

- <https://bit.ly/3UoP9zX>

And, just one more to show you that it is not just America, but it is worldwide that the love for people is growing cold. We are told,

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have worsened divisions in the U.S. and in other rich countries.

On average, in the 17 countries Pew surveyed, about 60% of people say their countries are more divided than before the virus hit. *In the U.S., 88% say so.*

Overall, the level of political division that Americans report - 90% say they see strong or very strong conflicts between supporters of different political parties - is strikingly high.

In the countries Pew surveyed, the average level of perceived strong political conflict was just 50%, with all but one at levels far below that of the U.S.; 90% of South Koreans also reported that their country had strong partisan conflict.

The international comparisons offer a clue about why those two countries, along with a few others, including France and Taiwan, report higher levels of political conflict: All have systems in which two major parties compete for power and have roughly equal levels of support.

- <https://lat.ms/3yhwm0n>

And I believe that governments love this because if they can get their people fighting amongst each other, then they can do things to promote their cause, to implement what they want and if it gets really bad, put forth martial law.

And I can understand why the world behaves like this, the only love that they can have is a brotherly love or a sexual love. And thus, when things don't go the way they want, they are done, they are out, they leave, they fight and quarrel and call people all kinds of names that are not good!

But what I see happening more and more, and because of what happened with COVID and everyone having their own opinions about it, that there is a division in the church and that division is growing.

Again, I think the government loves that because do you understand what the church is all about?

It is about bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world!

It is about making a positive influence on society, to put a halt or damper on evil growing and growing. It is about standing up for the things of God and to expose the evil that is out there.

But if we are fighting against each other then we are not walking in the love of Christ. We are hindering the work that the Holy Spirit wants to do. And thus, look at America today and the influence the church has upon it.

There is very little because it is all about us, what we want, and as we fight, we don't have time to do the work that God has called us to do.

Not an easy message but it is an important one or the Holy Spirit would not have placed it here in God's Word!

Let me show you what I mean about the love of God and how that is manifested in our lives. We are told,

That great blind preacher, George Matheson, adequately grasped the idea of Paul when he wrote:

“Christian love is the only kind of love in which there is no rivalry, no jealousy. There is jealousy among the lovers of art; there is jealousy among the lovers of song; there is jealousy among the lovers of beauty. The glory of natural love is its monopoly, its power to say, ‘It is mine.’

But the glory of Christian love is its refusal of monopoly. The spiritual artist - the man who paints Christ in his soul - wants no solitary niche in the temple of fame. He would not like to hear anyone say, ‘He is the first of his profession; there is not one that can hold a candle to him.’

He would be very sad to be thus distinguished in his profession of Christ, marked out as a solitary figure. The gladdest moment to him will always be the moment when the cry is heard, ‘Thy brother is coming up the ladder also; thy brother will share the inheritance with thee.’”

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

Like I have said, I have called this message – ***LOVE THE BRETHREN!***

Pretty simple and yet, very important.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into three main points and they are,

LOVE EACH OTHER – JOHN 15:12-13

FRIENDS NOT SERVANTS – JOHN 15:14-15

DIVINE ELECTION OR FREE WILL – JOHN 15:16-17

Remember what Jesus said last time as we closed our study in John 15:10-11, “**If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**”

What is this commandment that Jesus has given to us? That is what we will see this morning and you know where I am going with this – ***LOVE THE BRETHREN!***

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in John chapter 15 beginning in verse 12 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

JOHN 15**VERSES 12-13**

Again, this is not an easy one for many, but I want you to notice what Jesus says here. He does not say, *“Hey boys, if you could can you please love each other and love others? I mean, I know it is going to be hard, but if you could do that, I would appreciate it!”*

Okay, if any of you have that in your Bibles, throw that Bible out and get a new one that is accurate because this was not a suggestion by Jesus, not at all. He is commanding us to love each other just as He loves us.

What does that mean?

It is a one writer put it, *“His love was at once the source and the measure of theirs.”*

(Dods)

This is not a love that the world has, that is not the standard. The standard of this love is Jesus Himself!

Let me share with you how the dictionary defines love and keep in mind that it is speaking of human love. It goes like this, *“A profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person; a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection - as for a parent, child, or friend; sexual passion or desire.”*

How does the dictionary define love? It defines love, human love in terms of feelings. It is emotion based and emotions can change, especially over time!

God’s love isn’t just words and feelings - **AGAPE** love is action based not feelings based.

Let me show you what I mean. In John 3:16 we are told, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”**

As you can see, God's love is unconditional, universal and non-discriminating. That is what we read, "**God so loves the world.**"

Human love is limited and can diminish over time, like I have said, and we are seeing this in our own culture today

How does this play out, this conditional love?

It plays out like this.

Some may say, "***I can't love that person!***"

Now I don't mean to offend you, but no, that is not true!

It is not that you ***CAN'T*** love that person, the reality is that you ***WON'T*** love that person!

That truly is the reality. We make choices but what I want you to notice is that Jesus does not give you any wiggle room here. Listen again to what He tells us. He said, "**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**" John 15:12.

Again, this is not a feeling, it is an act of your will. It is not "***feel this way***" but "***live this way!***"

Is there a difference?

You bet there is!

Like I have said, feelings change but the way we live, it is not based upon feelings, it is an act of our will! You see, Jesus doesn't ever command us to feel something. He commands us to do something!

Now some of you may not think that this is a big deal, but what Jesus says in John 15:18-19 tells us that this is a big deal. This is not going to be easy. It is not just being nice, it is loving them when they don't deserve it or as Jesus said about the people of this world, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

You mean to tell me that we are to love those who hate us, those who spitefully use us?

No, I am not telling you that!

But Jesus is!

Let me ask you this question. How do people know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ?

Is it by how many Bible verses that we can quote?

No, it is not!

Is it going to church every week or maybe even twice a week?

No, it is not!

What about reading the Bible every day?

No, it is not!

Then how do people know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ?

Because Jesus tells us in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

And you may be thinking, *“I can't do that! I can love people who are nice to be, but if they do something that offends me, how can I love them? Jesus doesn't expect me to love them, does He?”*

He does and the example that Jesus gives to us shows us how much He loves us. He gave His life for us; He laid down His life for us.

Clarke put it like this, *“No man can carry his love for his friend farther than this: for, when he gives up his life, he gives up all that he has. This proof of my love for you I shall give in a few hours; and the doctrine which I recommend to you I am just going to exemplify myself.”*

And Jesus is telling them to love like He loves them and gave His life for them! Over and over on the night before His crucifixion Jesus is instilling in His men the love of God that we are to give to others.

And when you think about it, when you think of the society we live in, when you look at our culture, it has lost the meaning of what real love is.

Consequently, husbands and wives are saying, *“I don’t have feelings for him or her anymore, so I’m leaving.”*

Remember what I said. For us as Christians, feelings aren’t the issue.

Then what is the issue?

Love is the issue and love is not an emotion or a feeling. It’s a decision. It’s an action.

“My commandment,” Jesus said, *“is that you make the decision to love.”*

Remember what the fruit of the Spirit is all about?

It is about love, that **AGAPE** love that only comes from God. We can’t manufacture it on our own. This is the highest degree of love that there is, and it is not based on the fact that the person deserves it, but it is freely given as Christ has loved us and we did not deserve it!

It is out of that love that we see joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control!

If you are missing these things in your life, maybe you need to start back at the beginning and ask God to help you to love people with His love and these attributes of love will then come flowing from your life! (Galatians 5:22-23)

Paul put it this way in Philippians 2:1-4, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

Again, because our culture has lost the meaning of what real love is, many in the church have listened to this false love and fallen prey to it. It is a love that gives because of what it gets in return and when you don’t get it in return, you move on!

That is not the kind of love that Jesus is speaking of! This love is unconditional, and it only comes from God. We can’t manufacture it on our own, it just does not work!

Thus, make the decision to love, live a life that is not just filled with the love of God but that overflows and touches the lives of others!

And I have shared this with you in our previous study here in John but listen carefully to the definition of what *AGAPE* love is all about.

In I Corinthians 13:4-8a we are told, **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”**

In other words, God's loves never fails, and we need to be so thankful for that. And that love that He gives to us should flow from our lives and touch the lives of others. They should see that supernatural love of God, that **AGAPE** love in us and ministering to them!

But again, our love can be conditional. Maybe you heard this story of a man's love for a girl.

We are told that there was . . .

A young man [who] spent an entire evening telling a girl how much he loved her. He said that he could not live without her; that he would go to the ends of the earth for her; yes, go through fire for her, or die for her.

However, on leaving, he said, ***"I'll see you tomorrow night if it doesn't rain."***

How often we say we love God yet deny it by our actions. . . .

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

That is conditional love, and I am thankful that God does not love me that way, aren't you?

I am sure you are!

Don't let the world divide us!

Don't let situations divide us!

Don't let circumstances divide us!

Let the love of God fill us and overflow us and be seen by others!

And like I have said, human love is reciprocal. And what I mean by that is this, ***"I love you because you love me."***

And human love is conditional. And what I mean is this, ***“But I only love you when you treat me right.”***

We are to love with the unconditional, supernatural love of God and that will only happen as you surrender yourself to the will of God!

Remember, Jesus is telling us that if we want our joy to be full - ***LOVE EACH OTHER!***

As we read on, we see how God sees us as believers – ***FRIENDS NOT SERVANTS!***

Listen to what Jesus said.

VERSES 14-15

Sometimes we read through verses and we don't think much about them. But notice what Jesus is saying to us. Jesus is calling us friends, not servants. That is huge and it speaks of a close or intimate relationship with Him.

Keep in mind that at that time a relationship between a rabbi and his disciple was not one of friendship and yet, Jesus, the rabbi, the Master, calls His disciples, His servants – ***FRIENDS!***

Tenney said, ***“The friend is a confidant who shares the knowledge of his superior's purpose and voluntarily adopts it as his own.”***

Now, that is what Jesus said, that we are His friends and not slaves.

But what about what Paul calls us in many of his letters. He says that we as believers are bondslaves of Jesus Christ. If Jesus calls us friends how can Paul say that we are bondslaves? It just seems to contradict. So how can this be?

First of all, we need to understand what Paul did not call us. He did not call us slaves of Christ. If he did then we were forced into that role and there is no way out of it. We have no choice in the matter.

But Paul did not call us slaves for Christ but bondslaves of Jesus Christ. And a bondslave was far different than a slave.

You see, a bondslave is a person who freely gives up his rights and wants to serve his master. He is not forced into this position; he freely chooses this position because he loves his master, and his master loves him.

Now, in saying that, I think you can see that yes, Paul was right, we are bondslaves of Jesus Christ. We have freely given our life to Him, and we want to serve Him all the days of our life.

And what Jesus said is also true. We are the friends of Christ and because we are friends and not slaves, He lets us know the things we need to do and why. He guides us. He leads us. He gives us the freedom we need to serve Him. Something that a slave did not have but we have in Christ!

Now let's look at this relationship we have with Jesus.

First of all, in John 15:5 we are told, **“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”**

This first point in this relationship is that we *RECEIVE* from Jesus! We receive the nutrients we need to grow, to mature, to produce fruit. And apart from Him, apart from receiving from Him, we can do nothing!

Secondly, we are told in John 15:8, **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”**

The second point is that we are His disciples and thus, we *FOLLOW* Him. You see, as we follow Jesus, as we walk as He has called us to walk, as we follow Him, we will bear much fruit!

And the third and last point is found in John 15:15, where we are told, “**No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.**”

And as friends of Jesus, we *COMMUNE* with Him, we spend time with Him, it is that intimate relationship that God wants to have with us!

Now what is the key to being a friend of Jesus?

What is the key to having that deep relationship with Jesus?

We don't have to guess because Jesus tells us here in John 15:14, “**You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.**”

You see, they were friends of Jesus, and we are friends of Jesus because of obedience to Him.

Now when people hear that they freak out and think that there is no way that they can be a friend of Jesus because they blow it all the time.

Hey, join the club!

Do you think that the disciples of Jesus were perfect?

They were not but what is the desire of your heart? That truly is the key. Are you following the Lord or are you following the direction that the world is leading you?

Others freak out because they see this as a works salvation. That you have to be obedient to the Lord to be saved!

That is not what Jesus is saying. He is telling us that if we truly love Him then we will follow Him, we will be obedient to Him. The Law forces you to do something but love causes you to do something, to follow what He is saying! We obey not for our salvation but out of love!

Make no mistake about it, friendship with Jesus can't be disconnected from obedience to His commands.

Spurgeon put it like this, ***"It must be active obedience, notice that. 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Some think it is quite sufficient if they avoid what he forbids. Abstinence from evil is a great part of righteousness, but it is not enough for friendship."***

Let me share a few verses with you regarding obedience to the Lord.

In John 14:15 Jesus said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."**

True love is seen in obedience. If we love Jesus, if we believe that He is Almighty God and that all that He has for us is what is best for our lives, then we will follow Him, we will walk accordingly! We don't have to, but we desire to because of love!

James reminds us in James 1:22, **"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."**

James hits us hard here. And what he is saying is that if you know the Word of God, you have heard it many times, and yet, what you do goes contrary to what God's Word is saying, you are fooling yourself.

Now hear me out on this. I am not saying that to be a Christian you are never going to sin; we know we struggle in these bodies of flesh. But if your life is focused on doing what God has said not to do, if you are not listening to Him, then is there really a relationship with Him?

Even Paul struggled in these bodies of flesh. The things he wanted to do he didn't do and the things that he didn't want to do he was doing. It was a battle, and he knew he would never win in the flesh. Thus, he looked for the victory in Jesus and that is what we must do. Focus upon Him, listen to Him and then walk accordingly! (Romans 7:14-25)

And Peter tells us in I Peter 1:13-16, **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”**

That phrase, **“gird up the loins”** is not one we use today.

So to help us understand what Peter is saying, let me put it into our vernacular. If we were writing this today, we might say, ***“It’s time to roll up your sleeves.”***

You see, back then men wore long robes, which were fine for walking in but were a hindrance when you tried to run or do battle. It would be like wearing a long dress and trying to run a race. It would be very easy to fall, to stumble as you trip over it.

Peter’s point is this.

God wants us to live a life that is ready. You are not going to place yourself in a situation that will cause you to stumble, to fall.

Prepare your minds so the enemy doesn’t trip you up! This is a conscious act of our will to obey God, to follow His commands, to live a life that is holy, honoring Him, not because the Law makes us, but out of our deep love for Him!

Now, in these four verses there are five points that Peter is making, and we are going to take a closer look at them. We touched on the first one.

Peter is telling us that we need to - ***PREPARE YOUR MIND FOR ACTION!***

In other words, get rid of loose and sloppy thinking. It means to control what you think about, those things you decide to set your mind upon, what you are filling your mind with!

Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 tell us, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

You see, as you let your guard down you give Satan an opportunity to trip you up!

Don't let him, allow the Word of God to transform your life – be prepared!

Next, Peter speaks of the fact that we need to - ***BE SOBER OR SELF-CONTROLLED!***

The idea here is not to allow the outward circumstances to control your life but to allow the Spirit of God to control you!

Peter is speaking of mental and spiritual drunkenness or excess – don't let that control your life.

Paul, in Ephesians 5:15-21 tells us, **“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Thus, continually be filled by the Spirit of God and you won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh!

Next, Peter tells us that we need to - ***SET OUR HOPE FULLY ON THE LORD!***

People place their hope in all kinds of things because without hope we lose the will to live. But if what you place your hope in is untrue, then your hope is meaningless!

Make no mistake about it; hope is a very powerful in our lives for without it we would just give up!

And I think we all understand that without hope there is no point in going on. But with hope, we are encouraged, and we can continue on!

The only problem is, if you place your hope in something that is hopeless, you are going to be discouraged, disappointed, you will lose hope eventually.

Thus, we need to place our hope in the Lord because He alone has given to us eternal life and that eternal life is only found in Him and it is a guarantee.

We have a place reserved for us in heaven by God that no one can take away!

And one day we will see Him face to face!

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:5, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

Thus, holy living demands determination – set your hope fully upon Jesus!

Next, Peter warns us by saying - ***DON'T CONFORM YOURSELVES TO THE FORMER LUSTS!***

In other words, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1-3, **“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh,**

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

You see, we are a new creation in Christ and no longer are we controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit.

Thus, what God is doing on the inside of our lives is then manifested outwardly, how we conduct ourselves.

We no longer meander through life without direction, but God is guiding us, and we live accordingly.

Which really leads us to our next point.

Peter just lays it all out and he tells us - ***BE HOLY BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY!***

The word “**holy**” speaks of being set apart, and we are to be set apart for God.

Again, the idea is that we are God’s children, born again by the power of God and thus, we need to live accordingly.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:3-4 tells us, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”**

You see, that is the standard that God has set, and He is calling us to live that way, to be holy.

“But I can’t do that?”

Yes, that is partially true. We can’t do this on our own, we can’t do this apart from God. We need God to help us to live holy lives because the world is trying to pull us away from God and holy living!

But what I want you to see here is that Peter is not saying we are to be as holy as God is, we are to be holy like God is! We will never be holy as God is, but far too often we set the bar so low anyone can attain it. Now, we are to be holy or set apart for God and allow Him to give us the ability to live accordingly!

Listen to what Paul says to the Thessalonians regarding this issue of sanctification or that process that God is using to purge the garbage from our lives and to make us more like Him.

We are told in I Thessalonians 4:1-12, **“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”**

God’s will for our lives is sanctification, that we would be holy as He is holy.

But how can we do that?

Yes, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!

And, as I have said, you have to surrender to God, ask for His help and you can live a life that is pleasing to God, in obedience to Him. And God desires that for us because we are friends of God in Christ!

So we have seen that we are – ***FRIENDS NOT SERVANTS!***

And as we read on, we will see – ***DIVINE ELECTION OR FREE WILL!***

VERSES 16-17

Now what about what Jesus said here about Him choosing them and not the other way around, they did not choose Him?

Doesn't that speak of Divine Election and that they had no choice in the matter? Doesn't it speak of them being chosen and others not?

First of all, this doesn't have anything to do with Divine Election. Jesus is speaking about His disciples, the twelve that He has chosen.

Morris put it like this. He wrote, ***“It was not they who chose Him, as was normally the case when disciples attached themselves to a particular Rabbi. Students the world over delight to seek out the teacher of their choice and attach themselves to him. But Jesus’ disciples did not hold the initiative. On the contrary it was He who chose them.”***

The other issue that we see here is that as you look at all that Jesus spoke about, that we are no longer being slaves but being His friend, that He would answer our prayers, that we would bear much fruit, that we would know things from the Father, it is awesome!

So what is the problem with this?

It could cause us to be proud, even looking down upon others. They did not receive these things because they earned them, not at all!

In fact, the basis for this is that Jesus chose them! ***“We are in Christ, not because we hold Him, but because He holds us.”*** (Meyer)

Now here comes the difficult question. Are we saved by Divine Election or man’s free will?

Not an easy one to answer and it has been debated for many years.

My answer is simple, ***YES!***

I can’t explain it but God has called us and yet we can open the door and come or keep it closed.

It is 100% divine election and 100% man’s free will!

I will give you two pictures to show you what I mean.

First of all, railroad tracks lay side by side. Think of one track being divine election and the other one being man’s free will.

The train is placed on those tracks and those tracks run parallel to each other. And it is those tracks that will lead the train to its destination.

The same is true with our salvation.

God knows who will be saved but we have a free will to choose as well. And as we move along those tracks they lead us home, to heaven!

Now some may argue that is not fair!

But it is.

You see, all you have to do is ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, repent of your sins, and you will find out that God choose you!

Also, think of it like this.

As you die you come before these doors and one says “*Come, enter in!*” and so you do.

In this room is a large banquet table with all these plates and cups on.

And in front of them is a name card and to your surprise, there is yours. It is like they were waiting for you.

Now as you turn you see the door close and on the inside of the door you see a sign that says, “*Chosen before the foundations of the world.*”

You see, free choice and Divine Election! It is one of those truths of God that short circuit our brain, but that is what the Scriptures teach!

And we can look at verses in the Bible that speak about God’s Divine Election, and they are clear.

But we can also see many Bible passages that speak of man’s free will to choose, and they also are very clear.

And the problem for many is that they focus on either one, Divine Election and ignore man’s free will to choose, or they focus on man’s free will to choose and they ignore Divine Election!

You can’t do that. You can’t ignore something in the Bible that is so clear to prove your point.

Thus, we must accept both points – *DIVINE ELECTION* and *MAN’S FREE WILL TO CHOOSE!*

Let me just give you a few Scriptures to show you that both are in the Bible, and we can’t ignore them.

First, for Divine Election, in Ephesians 1:4 we are told, “**just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.**”

And then in II Thessalonians 2:13, we are told, “**But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.**”

It is hard to argue against Divine Election and we should not. God knew who would be saved and who would not.

The key for me is that God did not choose some for heaven and the others were chosen for hell. But if you just believe in Divine Election and not man’s free will to choose, that is what you have to believe.

And I have asked people who believe in Reformed theology or Calvinism, and they really can’t answer that. God doesn’t send anyone to hell, man goes there by choice. If that is true, that God sends some people to hell, and it is not, then every person that goes to hell can blame God because they did not have a choice!

And that is where man’s free will comes in. Man has a choice to make. To either accept Christ or reject Him and thus, every person that goes to hell can’t blame God, it was their decision that they made!

In fact, listen to what Paul wrote in I Timothy 2:4, that God “**. . . desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**”

Now if man did not have a choice, if God already made it for him, then this would make no sense. He really doesn’t desire all to be saved because some were not created for heaven but for hell. Again, that is not true.

In Revelation 3:20 we are told, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”**

You see, the call is for a person who hears the call of God to open the door and let Jesus into their life.

And yes, this letter that Jesus wrote to the church in Laodicea is speaking of the apostate church of the last days where Jesus is not even let inside the church, and He is knocking to get in.

But think about that. He is calling for someone in the church to let Him in and that is a choice that man has to make!

And in John 3:16 we are told, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

Who did God love?

The people of this world! Not just the elect, His love was for all people and thus, He sent His Son to save the people of this world!

Does that mean everyone will get saved?

Absolutely not!

How can I be so sure?

Because man has a choice to make. Jesus said, **“... that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** That word, **“whoever”** speaks of all people having a choice to make and not just a select few. Yes, Jesus chose the twelve disciples but that was for a purpose. He chose me to be the pastor, but again, this does not have anything to do with salvation. God has equipped us with gifts to be used and just like in a marriage, a husband is the spiritual leader in the family!

I think you can see that Divine Election and man's free will to choose work together. God knows who will be saved just as He knew that Judas would betray Him. But God did not make Judas betray Him, he had a free will just as man does today. A free will to come to saving faith or to reject the One who came to save them!

And Jesus then speaks of love once again and He once again commands us to love one another!

Why did He repeat Himself?

Because He knew that self, the flesh would get in the way and that love could quickly deteriorate into hatred, anger, bitterness.

Thus, Jesus says, "**These things I command you, that you love one another.**" John 15:17.

And, as we will see next time, we need the love of God in us and flowing through us because the world is going to hate us!

Listen to what Jesus said after He said that we are to "**love one another.**"

In John 15:18-19 we are told, "**If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**"

In other words, Jesus is telling them, "*Men, love is important and not a worldly love that loves in response to what others do to you. If they are kind to you then you are kind to them. That is a reciprocal type of love. You need to love people with an unconditional love and that is a supernatural love that can only come from Me! The world is going to hate you, come against you, do things to make you mad, irritate you and the like. They hated Me, they will*

hate you. But, instead of hating them I want you to love them, pray for them, just as I love you!"

Yes, this kind of love is not easy because it is not a human love. It is a supernatural love that comes from God as I have said.

Let me show you how this love plays out, this love of God because I think many times we find ourselves in situations and we refuse to love because of what this other person has done. If you have experienced that in your life, then your love is conditional and it is not the love of God, that is just a human love.

Listen to this and you will see how the love that this person showed her enemies was far more than human love because we would never love like that. Regarding Corrie Ten Boom,

Corrie herself was put to the test in 1947 while speaking in a Munich church. At the close of the service, a balding man in a gray overcoat stepped forward to greet her. Corrie froze. She knew this man well; he'd been one of the most vicious guards at Ravensbrück, one who had mocked the women prisoners as they showered. ***"It came back with a rush,"*** she wrote, ***"the huge room with its harsh overhead lights; the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor; the shame of walking naked past this man."***

And now he was pushing his hand out to shake hers, and saying: ***"A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!"***

And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course - how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women? But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face to face with one of my captors, and my blood seemed to freeze.

“You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he was saying. *“I was a guard there . . . But since that time,”* he went on, *“I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein”* - again the hand came out - *“will you forgive me?”* And I stood there - I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven - and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place - could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking?

The soldier stood there expectantly, waiting for Corrie to shake his hand. She *“wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it - I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us.”*

Standing there before the former S.S. man, Corrie remembered that forgiveness is an act of the will - not an emotion. *“Jesus, help me!”* she prayed. *“I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.”* Corrie thrust out her hand.

And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. *“I forgive you, brother!”* I cried. *“With all my heart.”*

For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then. But even so, I realized it was not my love. I had tried, and did not have the power. It was the power of the Holy Spirit.

- <https://bit.ly/3FI8DAh>

May we love others, brothers and sisters in the Lord and the lost with that kind of love that God loves us with!