

**The Love of Christ  
John 15:9-11**

The agricultural metaphor has its limitations; it does not depict the unfathomable love that is present between the vine and the fruit-bearing branches. But fortunately for us Christ addressed this particular limitation in **John 15:9-11**. So how did He do this? Jesus addressed the limitation of His agricultural metaphor in **John 15:9-11**.

Let me read these verses for you. **“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. (10) 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. (11) These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”**

Jesus in John 15:9-11 sought to highlight His love for His disciples in *four* different ways. So, what were those four ways?

First of all, Christ declared His *love* for His disciples (John 15:9). Let me read for you **John 15:9. “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you...”** Clearly Jesus had no problem saying the “L” word. He wanted His disciples to know that He loved them. But He did not simply want them to know that He loved them, at that one particular point in time. He also wanted them to know that He had always loved them.

This is why I believe Jesus chose to use the past tense rather than the present tense when He declared His love for His disciples. He did not say, “I also love you.” He said, “I have also loved you.”

And how had He always loved His disciples? Jesus told His disciples that He had always loved them in the same way as His *Father* had loved Him. In other words, Christ's love for them had always been and continued to be as perfect and as constant as His Father's love for Him.

Can we count on this same kind of perfect and constant love? Absolutely! If we have come to Christ by faith and have embraced Him as our Lord and Savior then we can be assured of this fact. Not only does Christ love us, but He has always loved us and will continue to love us in the same way as His Father has always loved Him.

This means that if you are here today and you are a true disciple of Christ then you can know that at this very moment in time that Christ loves you as His Father has loved Him and will always love you in that way, not only today but tomorrow and throughout the

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rest of your life and into eternity.

Is this true even when we mess up? And the answer is absolutely! Jesus will continue to love us even we mess up in the same way as He continued to love His disciples in **John 15** in spite of their mess-ups.

When Christ used the agricultural metaphor of the vine and the branches to help us to see how our ability to produce fruit was directly related to whether or not we were abiding in Christ or whether or not the life of Christ was flowing through us, it did not tell us about how the vine or Christ felt about His true disciples or the fruitful branches. But here in **John 15:9** He is correcting that. We are not simply the vehicle through which Christ wants to manifest His life and therefore His fruit, but we are also the *object* of His affection.

It is therefore not a question of whether or not He loves us but whether or not we are mindful of His love at any given point in time. So how else did He seek to highlight His love for His disciples?

Secondly, Christ commanded His disciples to *abide* in His love (John 15:9). Let us once again go back to **John 15:9** but this time we will read the entire verse. **“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”**

What does Jesus mean when He commands His disciples to abide in His love? To abide in Christ's love means that we are to remain in the *sphere* of Christ's love (John 15:9). Just because Christ loves us does not necessarily mean that we will always place ourselves in a position to enjoy that love. But this is what Christ wants for us. He wants us to not only know about His constant and abiding love, but He wants us to put ourselves in a position to enjoy that love.

Let me illustrate it for you this way. Consider what it takes to get fresh air, if you happen to live in a basement. You are confronted with a choice. You can stay indoors and breathe the musty air of your dank and darkened basement, or you can go outside and fill your lungs with fresh air! Now, while you are in your basement, you can think about the fresh air and even, in a sense, love it. But unless and until you actually get into the fresh air, you consign yourself to the unhealthy odors of your closed in space.

Unfortunately many professing Christians live their lives as if they are cooped up in a very dark and dank basement. They may acknowledge that Christ loves them but they live their lives as if they are not loved. They don't sense His closeness. They don't see His hands working on their behalf in the midst of their circumstances. In other words, they are not living in sphere of His love.

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So let me ask you a question. Do you believe that Christ loves you and that He loves you in the same way as His Father loved Him? Hopefully your answer is yes! But even if your answer is yes, this may not mean that you are abiding in that love. The truth is that though you may intellectually be giving the right answer to the question (Does the Lord love you?) you may not be living in the sphere of that love and therefore enjoying its blessedness. In fact, I am quite sure that there are some people here this morning who are living in the closed-in space of a dark and dank basement when it is totally unnecessary.

But this now raises a question. How does a professing disciple of Christ get out of this dark and dank basement so that they are able to abide in the love of Christ, enjoying its blessedness if they in fact are in that basement? This leads us to a third way that Christ sought to highlight His love for His disciples.

Thirdly, Christ explained to His disciples what was *required* of them if they were going to abide in His love (John 15:10).

Let me read for you **John 15:10. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.”** If we are going to abide in Christ's love we must *keep* His commandments.

Keeping Christ's commands is an essential condition to actively abiding in Christ's love. There is no other way. If we want to come out of the basement in order to breathe the fresh air of Christ's love we will need to do this.

In other words, we need to strive to keep all of Christ's commandments. We cannot pick and choose which commandments we will obey and which commandments we will not obey.

So just as we should not expect to bear fruit if we are unwilling to keep all of Christ's commandments, neither should we expect to abide in His love unless we are willing to keep all of His commandments. This is what Christ was sharing with His disciples.

And what Christ was sharing with His disciples is what He Himself knew to be true from His own personal experience. Let us continue to read the verse. **“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.”**

Jesus did not pick and choose what He was going to do or not going to do based on what He wanted but rather, for Jesus, it was always about doing what His Father wanted Him to do. And this allowed Him to always live within the sphere of His Father's love and its blessedness.

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He always felt that His Father was close to Him. He always was able to see the hand of His Father working on His behalf in the midst of every circumstance. There was never a time when He questioned that love.

This is what Christ wanted His disciples to experience in respect to His love for them. But in order for them to experience what He Himself had experienced with His Father they would have to do the same thing that He had done. In other words, if Christ's disciples are going to abide in His love then they need to keep His commandments just as Christ had kept His *Father's* commandments.

So why is Jesus sharing all of these things with His disciples? Why did He declare His love for them? Why did He command them to abide in His love? And why did He explain to them that abiding in His love required their complete obedience?

These questions lead us to the fourth way that Christ sought to highlight His love for His disciples. Fourthly, Christ shared that those who practice obedience while abiding in His love will experience His *joy* (John 15:11).

Let me read for you **John 15:11**. “**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you...**” Jesus had shared all the things that He had shared with His disciples in **John 15:9-10** because He wanted them to experience something really special. He wanted them to experience His joy.

And what was His joy that He wanted His disciples to experience? The joy that Christ wanted His disciples to experience that He described as “My joy” in John 15:11 was the *joy of obedience*.

Christ obeyed His Father not because He had to obey but because He wanted to obey and because He truly wanted to obey, His obedience was joyful. This is what Christ's wants us to experience. He wants us to experience the joy of obedience just as we experienced the joy of obedience when we first came to Him and embraced Him as our Lord and Savior.

Let me ask this question. When we first came to Christ and embraced Him as our Lord and Savior, did we did we want to obey Him? Of course we wanted to obey Him, based on **John 14:15**, because we would have loved Him. And why would we have loved Him? We would have loved Him, based on **1 John 4:19**, because we would have recognized in light of the gospel presentation that He first loved us.

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When we first came to Christ and embraced Him as our Lord and Savior we were freed from our very dark and dank basement in which we had been confined and were able for the very first time to breathe in the love of Christ and experienced the joy of Christ which in comparison to what the world offers is totally and completely satisfying.

How do we know this? Let us continue to read **John 15:11**. **“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”**

Knowing that Christ loves us and living in the sphere of that love while joyfully obeying the commands of Christ will bring us the type of joy that the world may seek but will never find.

May God give us to the grace to abide in Christ's love so that His joy might be in us and that our joy might be made *full*.