

Eternity Daily Bible Study No. 293

THE PASSION SERIES – THE GOSPEL OF JOHN CHAPTERS 12-21

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John 15:9-16 MKJV As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you; continue in My love. (10) If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (11) I have spoken these things to you so that My joy might remain in you and your joy might be full. (12) This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. (15) No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (16) You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain; that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.

Jesus calls the eleven His friends, says that He loves them and wants their joy to be full, that He makes known “all things” to them, will lay down His life for them, and has chosen them and ordained them to be fruitful and will answer their prayers and give things to them.

This is sheer grace. This is not-law and they are no-longer-called-servants! It is the opposite of the Christian treadmill of “being good so that God will answer my prayers and make my ministry fruitful”. When did Jesus ask the disciples “to be good” ? Did He ever say “Peter and John you were very good today so I will let you do some miracles?” and when the epileptic was not cured did Jesus say “He was not cured because you were not holy enough and good enough, if you had not eaten that chocolate bar you could have done this”? Or did Jesus say “because of your lack of faith?”. You see the New Testament is a “faith to faith” exercise not a “being very good” exercise. The “being very good” bit is taken care of when we are imputed the righteousness of Christ when we are saved. From that moment on we are Ok (justified) before God and are acceptable citizens of heaven. From that moment on the love of God is poured out in our hearts, because from that moment on God sees us as fully lovable.

Jesus never told His disciples “you are simply not holy enough, get your act together”. Jesus never said “James you are my friend because you tithe, and wash your hands, and never say swear words.” His simple demand, repeated in all the gospels, is that they ‘believe’. When they fully believe Him, then they will fully obey Him. But the believing is what establishes the spiritual connection that enables the fruitfulness, enables the miracles, enables the answered prayers and enables them to obey His commands and in particular to love one another with self-sacrificing agape love in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are many very committed “good” Christians with desperately unfruitful ministries, and often with very little real sense of being fully loved by God for who they are. Trying to be good will not work a single miracle or cast out the tiniest of demons or fill your heart with love - but faith will. As Paul says: [Galatians 3:1-5 MKJV](#) O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you not to obey the truth, to whom before *your* eyes Jesus Christ was written among you crucified? (2) This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of *the* law, or by hearing of faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the* Spirit, do you now perfect *yourself* in the flesh? (4) Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed *it is* even in vain? (5) Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, *is it* by works of *the* law, or by hearing of faith?

Let’s go back to the long list of things that Jesus says He will do for His disciples - call them friends, die for them , love them, make their joy full, answer their prayers etc. YOU CANNOT EARN ANY OF THAT! I did not “earn” the love of my wife or my friends, and I do not earn the love of Jesus either. It is given, in abundance to “those who believe”. Lets look further at this list and ask “How would you feel if all these things came true for you?” and “What picture does it paint?” To me it paints a picture of joyful, happy, fruitful, loved disciples with great ministries and astounding answers to prayer! That is what Jesus wants for all His friends! Jesus wants us living a faith-filled, joyous, abounding Christian life not a legalistic, miserable, anxiety-filled treadmill existence of religious fear. Jesus wants us happy in Him and comfortable with His companionship and friendship and love.

In fact Jesus not only calls us friends, He also calls us brothers, because we are joined with Him in sanctification and share His goodness and holiness:

[Hebrews 2:11-12 MKJV](#) For both He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified *are* all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers, (12) saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

Now how on earth can we “be good enough” to earn the status of being a brother of the Son of God? The answer is we simply cannot do so. We gain that family status by the new birth, it is sheer grace!

Now Jesus does issue a command to them: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” This is the command to live by self-sacrificing agape love. As a command it is death to the flesh. The flesh may be religious and may even fast twice a week, but it cannot love with true agape love. The flesh will not go to the cross for another. The flesh will not pick up the cross daily or love enemies. This command to love as Jesus loved is ONLY possible in the Spirit, by faith in Jesus Christ, by living from His indwelling resurrection power. If we do this then all requirements of goodness and holiness etc. are taken care of in one fell swoop. We need to forget about the rules and instead just focus on having the kind of faith that makes us able to truly love others as Christ has loved us. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that all other religious exercises are as nothing compared to that of agape love. In fact agape love, the Jesus kind of love, not moving mountains or tongues or miracles, is the true sign that you have the life of God welling up within you. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Jesus is calling you out from under the law to life as a believer in God! It is as we believe in Him that His life flows within us, and this life of God within us works miracles, and loves others. I do not mean doctrinal faith, such as believing a concept or precept. But a personal trust faith that believes in a person and trusts what they say. It is establishing a personal connection with the Savior. From this

trusting personal connection, we obey His commands and abide in His love.

Lets ask again "What picture is Jesus painting for His disciples in these eight verses in John 15:9-16?" These are serious verses, uttered in a holy hour, they are the truth. The truth Jesus is telling us is about friendship not servitude, laying down His own life - not making heavy religious demands, the fullness of joy - not the heaviness of tradition, the direct spiritual knowledge of all things - not obscure texts and dogmas. Jesus is painting a picture of His light and easy yoke, of fruitfulness and joy and of answered prayer. And He keeps using the words "abide" and "remain" to indicate this is supposed to be a permanent gracious state of affairs and that we can simply remain in God's love all the time and remain in God's joy all the time - by living in agape love. And the joy is all the time - and "full"!

These verses should tell us that there is much wrong with joyless servitude to a demanding God. That is human religion not Jesus faith! It is powerless and miserable. Please reject that teaching and its power over you and discover the teaching of the gospels instead.

Blessings,

John Edmiston johned@aibi.ph

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