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John 15:9-17 -- Abiding in Jesus' Love

These verses continue the context of Jesus' discussion of the principles from the allegory of the vine and the branches. The theme of these verses centers around the relationship between Jesus and His disciples.

Notes:

Vs. 9 - *Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you* -- The Greek for "love" is agapaō here. Jesus' love for them had been proportional to, or was like, the love that the Father had for Him. The only other place to this point in John's Gospel where he speaks of the Father loving Jesus in this way was in 3:34,35, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words (rhēmata - spoken words, personal directives) of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves (agapaō) the Son, and has given all things into His hand." In 5:19,20, Jesus had used a different word for "love" to describe His relationship with the Father, "...the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves (phileō, meaning more of a friendship love, delight) the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel." It is interesting that in both of these instances, the presence of the attitude, or emotion/action, of love is related to the Father granting something, or entrusting something to the Son. In the first passage, God entrusts to Jesus His personal counsel, His Spirit, and authority over everything else. In the second passage, God makes known to the Son what He is doing, what His leading and direction are, in order to reveal His glory. This fits the immediate context of Jn. 15, where we saw that verses 7 and 8 involved hearing from God and receiving answers to prayer. This is the way Jesus had glorified the Father, and now it is the way that Jesus will be seen in the disciples. *abide in My love* -- Remain in this place of intimacy, openness, and benevolent agape with Christ. It is another way of saying, "Abide in Me", only this is a much more positive, supportive, relational word picture.

Vs. 10 - *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love* -- The Greek is more explicit, "If ever you might keep/observe/obey (at a point in time) My commandments/orders, you will abide/live in My love (agapē)". The concept is this: If ever they would do the first part, they will in fact be doing the second part. This could be interpreted in two ways: Either Jesus is saying, "Your obedience will earn My love", or He is saying "Obedience is the way to continue to experience the intimacy and love that are already directed toward you". The first is a "do-in-order-to-get" scenario, the second is a "do-in-order-to-enjoy-and-continue-in-what-is-already-yours" idea. The first explanation would imply that Jesus will withhold His love if we don't perform. The second implies that we might wander away from the experience of His love if we don't pay attention and walk responsively with Him. His love toward us is secure and unquestionable. It is our experience of it that is the concern. The entire context, and especially the use of the word "abide" strongly favors the second interpretation. Also, the fact that Jesus used a form of the verb for "keep, obey" that emphasizes a point-of-time decision would seem to argue that He is describing a choice to obey that either opens up, or confirms, the experience of being "in tune with" Him. *just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love* -- Jesus is calling them to live in relation to Him as He has lived in relation to the Father. This also clarifies the first clause. Jesus never had to earn the Father's love. His obedient choices enabled Him to experientially dwell in it, however.

Vs. 11 - *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might be in you, and that your joy may be made full* -- This statement makes clear that Jesus is describing "abiding in His love" as a joyful, positive experience, not as some "walking-on-eggshells" relationship where fear of rejection always hovers. No, it is not about the danger of falling out of God's favor. It is about maximizing joy. It is the joy that Jesus experienced and lived by that He is attempting to introduce to us. His desires nothing less than that we "be filled" with it. Cf. Neh. 8:10.

Vs. 12 - *This is My commandment, that you love one another* -- Do you want to live in and experience the love of Jesus? Then love one another. You will come to experience the love of Christ being expressed through you to others, and you will also be loved by Christ through others in return. *just as I have loved you* -- Again, this

passage is very plainly not about getting or earning Christ's love. The Greek here is a past, completed action. He points to the love He has already expressed to them as the example for their love for one another.

Vs. 13 - *Greater love -- Agapē. has no one than this, that one lay down his life for friends.* -- The Greek for "lay down" is to "place, put"; "life" is the word for "soul/life/self"; and "friends" are "the-ones-he-likes-or-enjoys" (phileōn, from the other word for love, phileō)." John writes in I Jn. 4:9, "By this the love (agapē) of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His unique Son into the world so that we might live through Him." Paul tell us that "one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:7,8,10). God's agapē love goes beyond even the love Jesus says is the "greater love". He was willing to lay down His life for His enemies, not just His friends. How much more is His willingness to give of Himself toward those who love Him in return?

Vs. 14 - *You are My friends, if you do what I command you.* -- This is not some childish, self-centered demand, "If you want to be my friend then you have to do what I say". Rather, because of the reality of spiritual war, and the nature of who Jesus is, a relationship with Him would have to be this way. Because Jesus is the King, the Christ, He must be obeyed. To function as a friend, to "be" a friend to Him, requires that we recognize His authority and follow His directives. To disobey Him is to function as one serving the enemy. This is not the nature of all relationships, but it is the nature of a relationship with Jesus. We are not two equals having a casual interaction. He is the King. To be His friend demands that we recognize and value His authority.

Vs. 15 - *No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.* -- Even though a relationship with Jesus as King demands respect and obedience, He does not see us as simply slaves, at His beck and call. Slaves are just told what to do. They are not privy to relationship or intimacy with their master. There is no expectation that they need to know what their master's thoughts, values, or plans are. There is no expectation that a close friendship might develop between slave and master. Jesus uses this well known social relationship to point out that His disciples are not simply performers for Him, pawns to do His will. He does value them and shares with them His intimate thoughts and counsel.

Vs. 16 - *You did not choose Me, but I chose you* -- Certainly, this was true about the disciples' relationship with Jesus. They were with Him, because He had selected them, picked them out of a larger group of followers for a specific task (Lk. 6:13; Jn. 6:70; 13:18; Acts 1:2). Jesus' point here is to again emphasize what this relationship is all about. They are not equals, just "hanging around" together. By His initiative, they were selected to accompany Him, and to be trained by Him. Obviously, they had come along voluntarily, and in that sense they chose to be there. (It wasn't some kind of "voodoo mind control".) Their desire to be one of His inner disciples was not sufficient in itself, however. That prerogative belonged to Jesus. *and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit* -- The word translated as "appointed" most commonly means "placed", or "put". In a context like this, however, the word means either "I put you (in a place)" or "I put you (to work, or be about a task)". Cf. Acts 20:28; I Tim. 1:12; 2:7. Again, the clear message is that Jesus is in control. He is the one who assigned them to their place or task. The word "put" or "place" is also a form of the same word He used in vs. 13, "he might lay down/place/put his life..." (cf. I Jn. 3:16). "That" means "in order that, a purpose clause in Greek. The purpose was that they might go away (or go about their business) and produce fruit apart from His presence, but supported by His life. *and that your fruit should remain* -- Jesus is looking for fruit that will endure, eternal fruit. The word "remain" is the same as "abide", hence, that their fruit might "live in, continue in, remain, or endure". *that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you* -- The word "that" designates another purpose clause in Greek. He chose and appointed them... "in order that what anything ever y'all might ask (at a point in time) of the Father in My name, He may give to y'all". This restates the theme, from 14:13; & 15:7, regarding effectual prayer. Asking in His name means to ask on His authority, in response to His instructions. Christ had given them His authority to accomplish the tasks He had appointed them to.

Vs. 17 - *This I command you, that you love one another* -- Literally, "these (things) I command y'all", referring to the entire previous context of abiding and obeying, not to the phrase that follows. He is not here commanding them to love, but to abide in His love. The purpose of this was "in order that y'all might love one another". Abiding in Jesus will produce the love, because it is the tenor of His heart.