

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles and turning to John's Gospel, chapter 15 as we continue our verse by verse study and we're focusing primarily on our Lord's words here on the night before his crucifixion. I'd like to speak to you this morning about Christ's love and our assurance of it in verses 12 through 16. However, I want to get a running start because this really fits in with the previous 11 verses that we examined closely last week so let's begin by reading verse 1 and following in John 15. The words of our Lord,

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this is My Father glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 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 that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

When I was a little boy, I remember my mother taking grapefruits, cutting them in half, taking the paring knife and going through every little wedge and then cutting around the grapefruit. We'd sprinkle a little sugar on it and then take the grapefruit spoon that has the little edges on it and getting out all that good grapefruit meat. Ah, but that wasn't the end of it. I think my favorite part was to take my little hand and squeeze that grapefruit and

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

get all of that good juice into the spoon. That's what I want to do with the passage that we have before us. Last week we ate most of the grapefruit in the first 11 verses, I want to squeeze a little more out of it. My hand is a little bit bigger now, maybe I can get a little more juice from it. But there are some things that I wish I could have said last week that I couldn't so I want to assume that you are familiar with the basic exposition of those first 11 verses. If you're not, you can get online and read them or hear them but I want to elaborate upon them a bit and that will help us set the stage for understanding the final verses in 12 through 16.

So, let's go once again back to the 11 and with the Lord Jesus on the night before his crucifixion. It's the night of his betrayal. He is about to enter the garden where he will be in such anguish of soul as the devil assaults him that he will sweat drops of blood. Jesus knows that the next day he is going to give his life as a ransom for many, yet he also knows that his 11 disciples are distraught. They are broken-hearted as they contemplate his imminent departure. He knows that there is a battle that awaits them. They must learn to fight their flesh in the world and the devil and so in his great love, he comes to them and he endeavors to minister to them, to instruct them, to comfort them and to this end, he employs the use of this analogy, an extended metaphor of a vine and its branches. He does this not only to help every true disciple understand his vital union with Christ but also to help each of us understand the difference between true and false disciples.

Now, the last time we were together, we examined 6 characteristics of branches that abide in the vine. I'm going to expand upon that a bit today in order for us to more fully understand the abundant blessings that are ours because we abide in him. But this morning the emphasis isn't going to be so much on Jesus' command for us to abide in him and being able to discern those who don't but rather the focus will be upon the astounding riches that we can enjoy because we are branches that have been grafted into the vine which is Christ. All the riches that are Christ's by nature belong to us, all who have been, as Paul said, "joined to the Lord and are one spirit with him." So today I wish to focus on these truths because I fear that many times as believers, we fail to really contemplate upon the resources that are ours in Christ. This was Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3, beginning in verse 16. He wanted God "to grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." He goes on to say that he is the one "who is able to do exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." Oh, child of God, all of the riches of heaven belong to us because we are abiding in the presence of the living Savior. This is what Paul called "the

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

unfathomable riches of Christ," all the resources that we need to literally thrive in this life regardless of circumstances are ours. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul says that God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." And Peter said that his divine power "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

So we must understand that this is what Jesus wanted to impart to his despairing disciples as a way of encouraging them. Now, as you have learned, to abide in him as Jesus exhorts us to do in this analogy means that we are to pursue him. We are to remain in fellowship and sweet communion with God in Christ and only then will we be able to enjoy and literally experience the infinite resources that he supplies, not to mention bear fruit of holiness in life and character. We are to manifest a likeness to Christ in our daily living. Now, I would ask you this morning to ask yourself: do I live in sweet communion with God? Is it the passion of my heart to study his word and to meditate upon his word? To hear his voice speak to me? Is it the passion of my heart to spend time with him in private prayer? Do I really experience that soul-satisfying joy of a relationship with the living God deep within my soul? Can I say that as I look around at this world that there is really nothing that it has to offer me? Can I sing those simple lyrics, "You can have all of this world, just give me Jesus"? Beloved, the more these things are a reality in your soul, the more your joy will be made complete, come what may, and the more fruit you will bear which is the very purpose of the vine. So these are the great truths at the heart of Jesus' caring ministry in this marvelous section of John 15.

So with these things in mind, let's look again at some of the words that Jesus says here in this passage. Now, by way of reminder, in the Old Testament, the vine is a metaphor of Israel, God's covenant people through whom his blessings were to flow to the world. In Isaiah 5:7 we read, "The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant." You see, salvation was only available to those who were attached to the vine of God's chosen people by grace through faith in his infinite mercy and love and this vine was supposed to produce good fruit, the fruit of holiness, but it failed miserably. Verse 2 of Isaiah 5, we read that he expected it to produce good grapes but it only produced worthless ones. In verse 7, "He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed," he looked "For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress." So in that passage we read how God removes the hedge of protection around Israel and he allows them to be judged by the Babylonians. Ezekiel tells us in Ezekiel 19:12 that the vine "was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground; And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it."

So, as we come to John 15, we understand that through the image of the vine, unfruitful Israel is now being replaced by the great I Am, the Lord Jesus Christ who says of himself, "I am the true vine, the one to whom Israel pointed." No longer does salvation have

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

anything to do with being attached to the failed vine of Israel but rather by being united to the one that brings forth good fruit through the branches that are attached to that vine by grace through faith. And it's through the use of this allegory that Jesus brings great comfort to his despondent disciples and helps them understand how they can share in the richness of the life of Christ, a message that is for each of us as well.

Now, we have learned that first a person must be united to that vine through faith in Christ, only then can we enjoy the infinite resources that flow through the vine into the branches. Those who do not belong to Christ bear no spiritual fruit. You will not see a Christlike character in them. They cannot bear that spiritual fruit because they're not attached to the vine. Jesus says in verse 5, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Now, I wish to address this very pastorally, very practically to you this morning. Do you realize that if indeed you are united to Christ through saving, repentant faith, you are a branch that exists for the purpose of bearing fruit? Is this something that grabs a hold of your heart every day of your life? We are to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, John the Baptist said, a holy life, a godly character, one that looks different from the people of this world. You will recall in Isaiah 5, he looked for the fruit of justice. He looked for righteousness. Is this characteristic of your life? Fruit also is that of the Holy Spirit. Do people see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control? Of course, we all struggle with this as believers but if these things aren't somehow dominant in your life, it could be because you're not attached to the vine. But this is the reason why we exist and you must not miss this: beloved, life is all about God and his glory, not you and your needs.

There was a best-selling Christian book written several years ago called, "The Purpose Driven Life," in fact, it's the best Christian book of all time. Many churches have studied the complementary program called "40 Days of Purpose." "The Purpose Driven Life" states that it is "more than a book, it's a guide to a 40 day spiritual journey that will enable you to discover the answer of life's most important question: what on earth am I here for?" The author promises that when you complete this journey, "You will know God's purpose for your life and will understand the big picture, how all the pieces fit together in your life." Having this perspective, he says, "will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction and, most important, prepare you for eternity."

Well, are these things God's purpose for my life? Certainly I'm to be prepared for eternity but is God passionate about my stress level and my lack of simplicity in decisions and my own personal satisfaction? Is man's greatest problem a lack of purpose? Beloved, I would submit to you that man's greatest problem is not a lack of purpose, it's his sin. The wrath of God abides upon every person who has not placed their faith in Christ because by nature all that they are and all that they do are fundamentally offensive to a holy God.

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

They live in rebellion to God. They are alienated from the very life of God. They are in desperate need of saving grace. So, friends, don't be driven by a lack of purpose, be driven by a passion to follow Christ who saved you. Only then can man answer that question: what on earth am I here for? The Bible makes it real clear the answer to that question: you are here to bear fruit for the glory of God.

So I challenge you to examine your heart and your life. Are you driven by a passionate desire for personal holiness? For a character that manifests Christ to a dying world? The one to whom you have been united as a branch? "By this is my Father glorified," verse 8, "that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." Or are you driven by a passion to be successful? To be happy? To be wealthy? Perhaps to be the next American Idol? I fear that many times even with our own Christian young people, if we were to offer in our community 2 seminars on a Saturday night, one being, "How to bear fruit for the glory of God," the other one, "How to be the next American Idol," I fear that most would choose the latter not the former. Ah, there is much pruning that must be done in that kind of a life.

You say, "Well Pastor, what must I do to be driven by this kind of a passion to bear fruit for the glory of God?" Well, first you must believe into him by faith. You must be born again where by God's gracious and uninfluenced choice he places you permanently in Christ and at that point, the word of God tells us that the Holy Spirit immerses you or baptize his you into Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13. But then it is our responsibility as believers to abide in the vine, to abide in Christ, to abide in his love in which we have been united by grace through faith.

So at this point, Jesus is not speaking of union, that is already taken care of in our justification. He's speaking of communion. He's speaking of cultivating a sustained fellowship with the living Christ in your heart, in your mind, in your will. I mean, this is a decisive, determined commitment to live in the light of the presence of the living God. Is this the passion of your heart?

In verses 9 and 10, Jesus exhorts us to "abide in My love. 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." Now, this will be the desire of every branch, every true disciple of Christ that is attached to the vine and, I might add, that this desire will increase as a person matures in Christ. People with little maturity will find what I'm telling them boring. People who love Christ can't get enough of it. You understand that. Now, if you have no desire to abide in the love of Christ, if you look at your life and you say, "You know, his commandments really don't mean anything to me. I don't even really me know what they are." If you say to yourself, "Enjoying his intimate fellowship, that

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

doesn't appeal to me." If you have no desire to bear fruit for the glory of the Father, then I would submit to you humbly that you have no basis upon which to say you are a part of the vine. You may be attached to a church but you are not attached to Christ. The production of fruit is the only reliable test that validates one's claim of belonging to the vine and, of course, Jesus says in verse 2, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit," in other words, every branch that is somehow superficially attached to me, "He takes away. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

But all true believers, as we examined last week, because they are attached to the vine, will bear some fruit. Jesus says at the end of verse 1, "My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit," ah, look at this, "He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit." Now, I wish to elaborate upon this a bit because, again, Jesus wants his troubled disciples to find comfort in these words and for all of us who go through various trials in our life. That great English preacher, John Stott, describes the Father as "the indefatigable gardener." We don't use that word "indefatigable" very much. You probably will from now on but it means "untiring." He is the unrelenting vinedresser. When I meditated upon this passage, my mind went to my grandfather. When I was a little boy on the farm, I remember many times before the sun was up, he was out in his garden. He was cutting this and pruning that and plucking this and breaking this off and he knew exactly what needed to happen in each one of those plants in order for it to bear more fruit. So too, my friend, our heavenly Father. He knows exactly where we need to be pruned so that we can be more productive, so that we can enjoy more fully the abundant resources that are ours in Christ, so that we can experience him deep within our soul. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it that it may bear more fruit.

I know some of you are hurting today. I've talked with some of you this week. I know some of you are enduring physical pain. Some of you have relational trials in your life. There are those, perhaps, that are enduring some great burden, some great sorrow that is like a dense fog and it is hard for you to see through. Perhaps you're experiencing the consequences of your own sin, maybe the sin of someone else. Perhaps you're enduring persecution for your faith. Or perhaps, like all of us from time to time, you're just feeling the weight of this world just bearing down upon you. This was certainly the experience of the disciples and it was about to get much worse. Beloved, please know that your loving Father is in the midst of all of this because he is, indeed, the indefatigable gardener. He is the one that is using these trials to tenderly prune you so that you will bear even more fruit for his glory, so that you will experience more and more the soul-satisfying, exhilarating joy of the living God deep within your soul. Amy Carmichael, that faithful missionary who served and suffered in India for 55 years without furlough understood

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

this so very well and she longed for more of it. She once wrote this, "Rid me, good Lord, of every diverting thing. What prodigal waste it appears to be, to see scattered on the floor the bright green leaves and the bare stems bleeding in a hundred places, from the sharp steel, but with a trusted husbandman, there is not a random stroke, nothing cut away which it would not have been lost to keep and gain to lose."

Dear Christian, not only must we see the tender care of the vinedresser in all of our trials but we must pray for his pruning work. Oh, child of God, often the sweetest fruit comes from the most pruned vine, the one that is most storm-battered. Such was the case with the 19th century Scottish pastor and hymn writer, George Matheson. When young, he was deeply in love with a young woman that he intended to marry but as he was studying for the ministry, he discovered that it was the Father's will for him to gradually go blind. With his studies in seminary as he was gradually growing blind, his fiancée learned of his situation whereupon she broke off the engagement saying that, "There is just no way that I can live my life with a blind man." Well, naturally, this broke his heart. His dear sister cared for him for many years and when George turned 40, his sister married and, of course, that reopened that heartbreaking wound. Ah, but the Father was at work in his life. He was using all of that to prune this dear brother so that he could bear some magnificent clusters of spiritual grapes and it's interesting that on the evening of his sister's marriage, he was able to pen these words in 5 minutes.

"O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

"O light that foll'west all my way,  
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

"O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

"O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be."

Oh dear child of God, don't you see how carefully and purposefully the Father tends to each one of us? He yearns for an abundant harvest for his glory and for our joy.

Now, to be sure, our spiritual growth and fruit bearing requires this divine vine and it requires the divine vinedresser. We cannot do it on our own but we must remember that it will not happen apart from the tribulations of the Father's pruning. I heard a story of a man who noticed an infant butterfly on a leaf and this butterfly was struggling to extricate itself from the protective covering of its chrysalis and so the man thought, "Well, I'll help the struggling little creature set itself free." So he took out his pocket knife and he very carefully cut away the protective covering of the butterfly and freed the little creature only to discover that the little fellow was weak and deformed. Had he allowed it to struggle, he would have been able to have gained his strength and emerged at the proper time strong and healthy. Beloved, don't you see, it's because of our struggling in the midst of our trials that God strengthens our faith and builds our spiritual muscles that we might emerge glorious for his glory?

So indeed, spiritual growth requires tribulation but it also requires time. You know, there is no shortcut to spiritual growth and how beautifully this is pictured in our Lord's analogy of the vine and the branches. We do not plant and the next day reap the harvest. There is a process that must occur. Peter exhorts us to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ." And Jesus says in this passage before us that we do this by letting his words abide in us, verse 7, and verse 10, by keeping his commandments. And you will recall to abide and keep his commandments is our responsibility but it is the Father's pruning work that is his responsibility.

And he uses not only trials in our life but he also uses his word as you are hearing today. Often I see tears running down the cheeks of some of you. I have seen some of that this morning and I rejoice, not in your pain or sorrow, but I rejoice knowing that the Spirit is using his word as the pruning shears of the Father on your behalf. I want to focus on the concept of the importance of the word for a moment. Folks, you simply will not grow in Christ unless you learn to immerse yourself in the word of God. This is more than just listening to some preaching from time to time. It's more than going to Sunday school or adult Bible fellowship or student ministries or whatever. It requires a disciplined life that longs to hear more from the Lord your God. It requires a systematic, habitual, in-depth

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)



# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

study and application of the word of God. Spurgeon addressed this priority in such a wonderful way. He said this, quote, "How instructive to us is this great truth that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word!" In other words, isn't it amazing that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word himself, lived on the Inspired Word. He goes on to say, "It was food to him, as it is to us; and, brothers and sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon him without measure, yet he loved the Scripture, and he went to it, and studied it, and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves. As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord. Not crawl over its surface but eat right into it until we have taken it into our innermost parts." Oh my friends, if the Spirit of God is in you, he will give you a love for his word and he will cause your soul, therefore, to be so saturated by it that every thought and every deed will be influenced by it. You need to pray for a greater hunger for the word of God and what's amazing is this: the more you eat, the more you want.

Oh, how deeply the Savior loves. How passionately he wants to bless. How he loved those men. How he loves all of us. So again and again he says, "Men, abide in my love." Then he goes on to describe the privileges that are ours when we do, verse 7, we will be blessed by answered prayer. Verse 8, we will live lives that glorify the Father and thereby prove that we are Christ's disciples. Verses 9 through 11, we will experience the love and the joy and the intimacy and fellowship of the living God. And with such blessed promises isn't it sad to look at our lives and see how often we choose not to abide in his love? Instead, we secretly pursue other lovers that will only disappoint and destroy.

So these are some of the abundant resources that belong to those who by grace through faith have been engrafted into the vine of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the magnificent truths that he wanted to impart to those sorrowful disciples and to each of us because only then will we be able to grasp these things and have them in our heart and enjoy the love of Christ. Jesus summarizes all of this in verse 11, "These things I have spoken to you," why? "So that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Beloved, once again, he wants you, he wants me, to experience something far more than some external religiosity. He wants us to experience the soul-satisfying exhilaration of a felt Christ deep within our souls regardless of what comes into our life and we never know what the next phone call will bring. This is the kind of joy that animated the hearts of the Apostle Paul and Silas, causing them to sing praises to God while they sat in a Philippian dungeon with their backs laid open and bleeding because of the scourging they had received.

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

Dear friends, please understand: Satan is out to steal your happiness. He is out to offer you enticing counterfeits that seem irresistible to your flesh. "There is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is death." But Jesus' great burden is for you to experience his love and his joy, not just know it but experience it and live in the light of it. A. W. Pink says, "The reason why we are so often dull and despondent, the cause of our restlessness and discontent is because we walk so little in the light of the Lord's countenance. May we earnestly seek grace to heed the things which he has spoken unto us that our joy may be full."

So Jesus concludes this section. Notice what he does: he gives a commandment and he says 2 things about this, first, we are commanded to love one another, verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." I want you to notice what he doesn't say: he doesn't say, "This is my suggestion. This is my encouragement to you. This is an option that I hope you pursue." No, he says, "This is my commandment." You know, he has stated this earlier in chapter 13, verse 34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Folks, the fact that the Lord Jesus is repeating himself underscores the profound importance of what he's saying. It underscores the fact that we are dull of hearing this. What branch in a vine is going to be hostile to other branches? What branch in a vine is going to refuse to cooperate and, shall we say, support the fellow branches? Only a sick branch would do that.

Now, when the disciples heard this, perhaps some of them were saying to themselves, "Yes, but this is so hard to do because some of my brothers think they ought to be first in the kingdom and that rightly belongs to me. So how can I love such a selfish brother?" Don't you see how distorted we can get? We are so in love with ourselves that we often fail to see what it is to truly love one another and it's because of this kind of self-love that we need to be reminded, yea, we need to be commanded to do that which is not natural to our flesh. But we must understand that this kind of love is a love of choice, not of emotion. This is the kind of love that is self-sacrificing and self-giving. It seeks the highest good for our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is devoted to meeting one another's needs. Paul summed it up when he said in Romans 13:10, "Love does no wrong." Then, of course, he greatly expands upon that in 1 Corinthians 13. You see, this kind of love does not find its origin in the one being loved. In other words, I don't love you nor do you love me because either one of us deserve it, are worthy of it. Do you think Christ loved us because he looked and said, "Oh, now there's one. Now, that one merits my kind of love"? No, he died for us when we were yet sinners, right? No, we must understand that this kind of love finds its origin in the heart of the one who has chosen to love, not only because we have been commanded to do so but because we love our Lord so much it is the desire of our heart to be pleasing to him. Then with that kind of an attitude, the Spirit

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

of God causes us to bear that fruit deep within our souls so that it becomes natural for us to love.

But secondly, we see Jesus is our supreme example. Notice verse 13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." What an astounding thing to think that Jesus suffered and died on our behalf. "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him," Paul tells us. Given Christ's example, John wrote, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In other words, our love should know no limitations to the point of laying down our lives for each other.

My, my, my, what kind of church would we have if I could love that way? If you could love that way? But oh, dear friends, the Lord is not asking us to do that which is impossible. He's asking us to do that which we have the power to do if we abide in him and by his grace, as we do, we will love more and more in that way. To be sure, only those abiding in the vine have the capacity to do this and this kind of love is always one of the primary marks of genuine saving faith. John emphasize this over and over and over again in his first epistle. In 1 John 4:7, for example, he says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." So, if you're a part of this church family and you don't love your brothers and sisters, you need to examine your heart.

Jesus then concludes with 2 amazing blessings that belong to those who abide in his love. first of all, we have the assurance of his love. Notice verse 14, "You are My friends," in other words, you are the ones I love, "if you do what I command you." He's saying here that your obedience proves that you are the ones that I love. You are my friends. Our obedience doesn't make us the objects of his love, it characterizes it. We must be careful here not to misunderstand what Jesus is saying. There is nowhere in Scripture including in this very text, nowhere in Scripture do we see God or Jesus referred to as the friends of human beings in the manner of the Gospel song, "What a friend we have in Jesus." I always shudder when we sing that because that is so unbiblical. Although Abraham and Moses are called the friends of God, God is never called their friend. He is never called anybody's friend. My friends, he is not our friend, he is our Savior. He is our Lord. He is our God. We must be careful to avoid demeaning him with some of these modern notions of sentimentalism and so forth.

Jesus is merely saying that we prove that we are his friends, in other words, the objects of his love in verse 13, when we are obedient to him, verse 14. And as a result, he graciously grants us access into his presence. The imagery here is found in the way ancient kings

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

would function. They would have their advisors, they would have their slaves. Ah, but they had their friends and to be a friend of the king meant that there was something personal there, there was something special. This was a more exalted and honorable title than any other. In fact, in this situation that we're reading here, to be a friend as Jesus is putting it, is a more exalted title than disciple because these 11 men were more than mere disciples, they were his friends and therefore he goes on to say, "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 that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." You see, absolute monarchs would demand obedience from their subjects and they would give orders to their slaves. Ah, but their friends were different. They were objects of their love and they were in a different category, they were privileged. They could come in and fellowship with the king so they would enjoy private conversations. They would be informed of his thinking. They would be brought into the realm of his confidence. This is the idea that we have here. This is the kind of thing Jesus is referring to.

You see, the 11 were his subjects and to that extent they were required to obey his commands but they were also his friends and so he would bring them in closer to him and he would reveal his plans and purposes to them. We read some of this, for example, Romans 16:25, that he would reveal to them the "mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith." We know that the Lord revealed these truths to these 11 and to others as they were the inspired spokesman. In the New Testament he revealed to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the mystery of Israel's hardening, the mystery of the Gospel, the mystery of the rapture, the mystery of God's will, the mystery that Jews and Gentiles would be one body in Christ, the mystery of the union of Christ and the church, the mystery of Christ's indwelling of believers, the mystery that the Messiah would be God Incarnate, the mystery of lawlessness which will be fully revealed in the person of the antichrist, the mystery of faith and the mystery of godliness. You see, all of these things were obscured in the Old Testament but now the King has come and he has brought his friends and he is going to reveal these things to them and through them to us through the New Testament.

So because these disciples were his friends and because we are his friends, the objects of his love, he reveals these glorious truths to us through the word of God and the Spirit. Then finally, not only do we have the assurance of his love, we have the assurance of his election. Verse 16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." Ah, here we see the unconditional and sovereign nature of God's love. Normally, disciples would choose a Rabbi to follow but

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s\\_Love\\_and\\_Our\\_Assurance.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/1136/Christ-s_Love_and_Our_Assurance.html)

# Christ's Love and Our Assurance

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 15:12-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 3, 2015

in this case, the Rabbi chooses the disciples. He chose them not only for salvation but also for the privilege of revelation and understanding these great truths, not to mention for service, for ministry. He says, "I chose you and appointed you." Appointed means to be set apart or ordained for a specific ministry. And what was this ministry? He says, "that you would go and bear fruit," not just the fruit of personal holiness but the fruit of new converts. He says, "fruit that would remain." Ah, what an utterly astounding and humbling truth, dear friends, to know that by God's gracious and uninfluenced choice we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

May I challenge you to do 2 simple things this week in light of these amazing truths? 1. Make a list of the ways the Father has and is pruning you. 2. Pray that you will bear more fruit. Then you will understand more fully what Peter learned to understand, a man who learned well what the Master was telling him on that night. A man who was pruned severely. He said this, "though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." What an amazing statement for a man who was about to be crucified. I pray that these words will bear much fruit in your life.

Let's pray.

*Father, thank you for speaking to us so clearly from your word and I pray that by the power of your Spirit, these truths will indeed bring about a great harvest that will bring great glory to the Father and will bring that soul-satisfying joy to each one who abides in Christ for it is in his name that I pray. Amen.*

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).