

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 15 B (15:12-21)

**This is My commandment, that you be loving one another, even as I loved you.**

Saint Gregory the Great: “Why does He speak of love as if it were a special commandment? It is because every commandment is about love, and they all add up to one commandment because whatever is commanded is founded on love alone. As the many branches of a tree come from one root, so do many virtues come forth from love alone. The branch which is our good works has no sap unless it remains attached to the root of love.”

St. Basil: “Do we fail to love according to the commandment of the Lord? Then we lose the distinctive mark imprinted on us.”

Fr. Behr: “Christ’s life-giving death on the Cross, although understood by others as an atoning death for sin (Rom 4:25), is not understood by John as a response to sin but rather as principally deriving from the love that God Himself is (1 John 4:8) and has for the world (John 3:14-16). It is precisely this love, shown in this way, that has liberated human beings from the condition of being slaves to that of being friends (John 15:15), members of the household of God, enthroned in the Temple (*Jesus, the true Temple is raised up and a new form of sacrifice, that of love, is brought about*) as sons alongside the Son, and the commandment that Jesus gives as his own is simply ‘that you love one another as I have loved you (15:2).’ Now, however, we know what is involved in such a love.” (The Paschal Gospel of John, pg. 190-191.)

**<sup>13</sup>“Greater love has no one than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends.**

Saint Gregory the Great: “But no one is persecuting us to the point of death. How then can we prove that we love our friends? There is something we should do during times of peace in the Church to make clear whether we are strong enough to die for the sake of loving during times of persecution. John says elsewhere, ‘Whosoever may have the world’s means of livelihood, and may observe his brother having need, and shuts up from him his compassion from the inward parts, how does the love of God abide in him [1 Jn. 3:17]?’ And John the Baptist says, ‘The one who has two tunics, let him share with him who has not [Lk. 3:11].’ Will a person then who will not give up his tunic give up his life? Cultivate the virtue of love in tranquil times by showing mercy, then, so it will be unconquerable in times of disorder. Learn first to give up your possessions to almighty God, and then yourself.” [Ib., 214.]

**<sup>14</sup>“You are My friends if you be doing whatsoever I command you. <sup>15</sup>“I no longer call you slaves, for the slave knows not what his lord is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things which I heard from My Father I made known to you.**

Bp. Gerasimos: “We too become friends of God, when we believe in Him, when we accept his friendship, and when we do His will, which has been revealed to us. Without a life of faith and love, we do not become friends of God.”

**16“You did not choose Me for yourselves, but I chose you for Myself, and I appointed you that you be going and bearing fruit, and *that* your fruit be abiding, in order that whatsoever you ask the Father in My name He might give you.**

Bp. Gerasimos: “All of us faithful are called, chosen, and sent, but particularly the twelve. The Father will hear the prayer of those sent by the Son. The fruit of the apostles will be the answer to their prayer. The Holy Spirit will assist in the founding of the Church and in the entire expression and expansion of the Christian life as faith and love.”

Saint Gregory the Great: “I have appointed you for grace. I have planted you to go willingly and bring forth fruit by your works. I have said that you should go willingly, since to will to do something is already to go in your heart.’ Then He adds that ‘your fruit is to endure.’...What we do for eternal life remains even after death. Let us work for the fruit that endures.” [Ib., 216.]

Saint Gregory the Great: “Why is it that Paul three times besought the Lord (regarding the thorn in his flesh) and did not merit to be heard [2 Cor. 12:8]? Did not the great preacher ask in the name of the Son? Why did he not receive that for which he asked? The Son’s name is Jesus, which means ‘savior’ or ‘saving.’ One who asks in the Savior’s name asks what pertains to actual salvation. If what he asks for is not for his good, he is not asking the Father in Jesus’ name. Hence the Lord says to His apostles while they were still weak, ‘Until now you asked nothing in My name [Jn. 16:24].’ That is the reason too why Paul was not heard. If he had been freed from temptation it would not have been of help to his salvation....Consider your requests. Are you asking for the joys of salvation? ‘Be seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you [Mt. 6:33].’” [Ib., 217.]

**17“These things I command you, that you be loving one another. 18“If the world hate you, you know that it has hated Me before *it has hated* you. 19“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world—but I chose you for Myself out of the world—therefore the world hates you. 20“Keep on remembering the word which I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his lord.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21“But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they know not the *One Who sent Me.***

Fr. Behr: “In John, who uses the term (world) far more extensively than any other (NT author), it is more subtle and fluid: though made by him, it did not know him (John 1:10); although it hates Christ and his disciples (John 15:18), the world is nevertheless the object of God’s love and the salvific activity of Christ...John is clearly sketching out here the rejection of Christ in the broadest possible scope, so as to draw out the universal scope of Christ’s work of salvation. (The Paschal Gosepl of John, pg. 268)”

Fr. Behr: “The Gospel of John already has the martyrdom of believers in sight...In his farewell discourse, Christ tells his disciples that they will be persecuted, just as he had been persecuted (John 15:20)...That the predicted persecution of the disciples in 15:20 likewise has the weight of ‘killing’ is made explicit in John 16:1-2 - *there come an hour that everyone who kills you should think that he offers God a service.* (The Paschal Gospel of John, pg. 216).”

Bp. Gerasimos: “The hatred of the world is a proof of the virtue of the faithful.”