

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PRIVATE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST (PART II)

#### John 15:1-16:33

THE most logical conclusion is that the discourse from the end of 14:31 to 18:1 takes place between the departure from the upper room till the crossing of the brook Kidron. While a degree of urgency seems to have been introduced, nevertheless there may have been an intermediate stopping place en route, such as the temple precincts. In other words, here we have both peripatetic teaching and prayer late on Friday evening. The less likely proposal is that after 14:31, nevertheless there was delay in the upper room and subsequent unmentioned departure.

#### A. Discipleship within the church, 15:1-17.

Two vital truths in necessary order are now repeated by Jesus with enhanced emphasis. Already He has taught the primary importance of vital union with Himself (13:8; 14:20-21, 23). Now He illustrates this point afresh using the familiar representation of viticulture.<sup>1</sup> He has also taught the resultant importance of vital union between one believer and another (13:14-15, 34-35). Now He illustrates this point afresh using the representations of sacrificial love even unto death, after the manner of Christ, and contrast between legal servitude and spontaneous friendship.

#### 1. The relationship of union with the true vine, vs. 1-11.

The prompting of Jesus at this juncture to employ, by way of illustration, the cultivation of the grape vine is a debated matter. Some have thought the Lord's supper of 13:2 is in mind. More common is the suggestion that, en route to Gethsemane, Jesus passed a variety of vines or a symbolic representation of Israel (Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 17:5-6; Hos. 10:1; Joel 1:7; cf. Matt. 21:33-43; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). Barrett comments that, "among the ornaments of Herod's Temple was a notable golden vine."<sup>2</sup>

#### a. The dynamics of fruit bearing illustrated, vs. 1-6.

The glory of the authentic grape vine is its fruit, so attractive in the appearance of its purple and green clusters. This produce is equally delightful to the taste because of sweetness, as well as a capacity in the form of wine to stimulate peace, prosperity and happiness (Eccles. 10:19; Isa. 65:8, 21; Joel 2:21-22; Zech. 8:12). On the other hand, a wild, uncultivated vine tends to produce useless sour fruit (Jer. 2:21; 31:29-30).

---

<sup>1</sup> For a most helpful study of this passage from the perspective of a person who has taught viticulture, refer to Gary W. Derickson, "Viticulture and John 15:1-6," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 153 (January-March) 1996): 34-52.

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Barrett, *John*, p. 394.

## (1) The definition of Jesus as the true vine, v. 1.

“I Myself am the true/genuine [ἀληθινός, alēthinos] vine and my Father is the vine keeper/cultivator/farmer [γεωργός, geōrgos<sup>3</sup>].” Whereas the Father tends the whole vineyard or farm, especially Israel, in its midst He has planted His Son, as “the true vine” (Heb. 5:7-8), amongst many others that are false (Luke 20:9-19). Especially relate this to v. 6. In 6:31-33 Jesus is “the true bread out of heaven, . . . the bread of God,” in comparison with “the manna in the wilderness” under Moses’ administration, a mere temporal, carnal emblem for the body that prefigures His provision of spiritual food for the soul. The problem with Israel as a designated vine, now fruitless, was that, by means of this earthly symbol, there had eventually developed an insular, external, legalistic, sterile form of Judaism, even as today people flaunt symbols of Christianity in jewelry. As a result Israel had lost sight of the significance of the vine, which always anticipated the sweet, soul-quenching substance of Jesus as the Messiah (Col. 2:17). This truth had already been indicated at Cana (2:1-11). Furthermore, the end purpose of this “true vine” as a whole is that the fruitfulness of Christ might glorify the Father as the skilful “vine dresser.” In other words, “that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (I Pet. 4:11).

## (2) The cultivation of Jesus as the true vine, vs. 2-3.

In the gardens of Hampton Court Palace just west of London, where the King James Bible was conceived in 1604, there is the world’s oldest and largest grapevine planted in 1768. It has branches reaching out over 120’, yet only one root with a trunk well over 1’ in diameter. By means of skilful pruning it produces, on average, 500-700 bunches of grapes each year, though the record was 2,245 bunches in 1807. For all of the complexity of the intertwining branches, it is union with the one life-giving trunk that results in this productivity.

## (a) Cleansing for productivity, v. 2.

“Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He lifts [αῖρω, airō] it, and every [branch] bearing fruit he cleans/prunes [καθαίρω, kathairō] it in order that it may bear more fruit.” Both categories of branches are securely “in Jesus,” and this we believe to be evidence of an authentic, saving relationship, even though for a time some are fruitless. Supposed severance that suggests a final falling from grace is not in mind. Here is the *opposite* relationship to that described in v. 6.

---

<sup>3</sup> Note that the more specific ἀμπελουργός, ampelourgos, vinedresser, Luke 13:7, is not used.

## 1) The unfruitful branches in Christ, v. 2a.

The primary meaning of *airō* is to “lift up” (cf. 5:8-12; 8:59; 10:18, 24)<sup>4</sup> rather than “take away” NASB, NKJV, ESV or “cut off” NIV. Note that “thrown away/cast out,” ἐβλήθη ἔξω, *eblēthē exō*, v. 6, or ἐκβάλλω, *ekballō*, 10:4, is not used here. True believers can never become disengaged or severed from Christ, notwithstanding periodic barrenness or fruitlessness that results from backsliding. According to standard viticulture practice, fruitless though genuine branches that droop downward are lifted up on a trellis for exposure to and stimulation by the sun. Hence when a child of God is “droopy,” the Spirit of God’s work is the lifting up of the believer so that he becomes exposed to the life of God in His Word. By no means were the disciples always fruitful, though they were lifted up (Luke 22:24, 31-32, 50-51; Matt. 14:30-31; 16:21-23).

## 2) The fruitful branches in Christ, v. 2b.

Here the productive branches are cleansed, that is “pruned,” καθαίρω, *kathairō* (cf. Isa. 18:5). In other words, there is room for improvement on fruitful branches and this is accomplished through the removal of useless foliage, unproductive wood whereby greater fruitfulness is stimulated. We could liken this excessive wood to zeal, activity and planning in Christian living that is really more show and performance, “wood, hay, straw” (I Cor. 3:11-15), than the “fruit” of Galatians 5:22-23. Ryle additionally adds that

this sentence throws light on many of the afflictions and trials of God’s people. They are all part of that mysterious process by which God the Father purifies and sanctifies God’s people. They are the “pruning” of the vine-branches, for good and not for harm, to increase their fruitfulness. All the most eminent saints in every age have been “men of sorrows,” and often pruned.<sup>5</sup>

## 3) Cleansing through the Word, v. 3.

“Already you are being clean [καθαρός, *katharos*] through the word which I have spoken to you [in the past up to the present].” Here the disciples are clearly identified as “branches” that are presently in process of being cleansed through the pruning accomplished by their close proximity to the teaching ministry of Jesus. In the light of the scribes and Pharisees, they are “comparatively clean.”<sup>6</sup> The pruning instrument is the word of

<sup>4</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 23. In John’s Gospel *airō* is used 24 times, of which at least 8 occurrences refer to “lift up.”

<sup>5</sup> Ryle, *John*, III, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113.

Christ, the Word of God, which to date has been substantial. However Jesus is also about to pray, concerning the future, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth” (17:17).

(3) The true vine nourished, vs. 4-5.

Here is not simply a picture of a believer’s union with Christ, but rather believers’ collective union with Christ, v. 5. Here is a complex of branches, some longer than others, some more fruitful than others. But *all* are vitally connected and related to one another, as they are united in one Vine/Body.

(a) Through an abiding relationship, v. 4.

“Abide in Me and I in you., Just as the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself except it abides in the vine, so neither are you [able to bear fruit] except you abide in Me.” Christ is describing fruit that originates from believers being “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). As a result they manifest “moral excellence, . . . [spiritual] knowledge, . . . self-control, . . . perseverance, . . . godliness, . . . brotherly kindness, . . . love” (II Pet. 1:5-7). So it is the fruit of 13:14, 34-35; 15:12, 16-17. Unlike phony religious performance, or deceitful, cheap plastic fruit that can be manufactured and quickly attached, it has the taste and sweetness and nourishment, born of genuine, cultivated growth, that the counterfeit lacks.

(b) Through a fruitful relationship, v. 5.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he consequently bears much fruit, because apart from Me you are not able to do anything [nothing].” Thus Jesus teaches His disciples the doctrine of “total inability” since apart from Christ a person cannot authentically embody and reflect the righteousness of God. For this reason it is said of the believer that:

- 1) He has been crucified together with Christ (Gal. 2:20).
- 2) He has died together with Christ (Col. 2:20).
- 3) He has been buried together with Christ (Rom. 6:4).
- 4) He has been quickened together with Christ (Eph. 2:5).
- 5) He has been raised together with Christ (Col. 3:1).
- 6) He suffers together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).
- 7) He will be glorified together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

(4) The false vine distinguished, v. 6.

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out [ἐβλήθη ἔξω, eblēthē exō] [of the vineyard] as a branch and becomes dried up [ξηραίνω, xērainō] and they

gather [συνάγω, sunagō] them, and they cast them into the fire and they are burned [καίω, kaiō].” The situation here sharply contrasts with that of v. 2 in that there the branches are all “in Christ” whereas here they are all “without Christ.” Here there is no union and no fruit. There is no suggestion here of branches being detached from the “true vine.” Recall that the original scene is of a vineyard in which there are many useless, fruitless vines and Christ is planted in their midst as “the true vine.” Hence, because this Vine Keeper intends to maintain a fruitful vineyard, He will eventually, radically clean up the plantation and do away with alien, fruitless vines and dead branches lying on the ground. They are rejected since they do not abide. They are withered since they do not abide, They are burned since they do not abide.

b. The dynamics of fruit bearing applied, vs. 7-11.

The imagery of the vineyard, the true vine, the attached branches, the Vine-dresser, the alien branches and their fiery destiny, has now been fully established. Consequently the application concerning this portrayal of Israel is now pressed home with greater force. Here the doctrine of union with Christ finds its most explicit representation. In other words true saving faith involves an intimacy of relationship with its saving object; the connection that faith establishes is more than raw cognition since this same faith is established through the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9-10; I Cor. 12:9; II Cor. 4:13; Gal. 5:22; I Pet. 1:1-2).

(1) The abiding relationship brings fulfillment, v. 7.

“If you abide in Me and My words/specific utterances ῥῆμα, rēma] abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be accomplished/done for you.” Union with Christ is not bare mysticism, but implantation of definite propositions of truth from Scripture that become foundational in the soul (17:8, 14). It further involves a personal relationship that results in prayerful interaction. Jesus is probably drawing upon His own intimate relationship with His Father, v. 9 (8:28; 14:24), so that He teaches from experience. Hence we respond to the words of Christ with agreement, intercession, confidence (Matt. 7:7) and fruitful obedience. In this manner the branches are in vital union with the trunk of the vine. So Ryle graphically describes this profound kinship as follows.

To abide in Christ means to keep up a habit of constant close communion with Him,—to be always leaning on Him, resting on Him, pouring out our hearts to Him, and using Him as our Fountain of life and strength, as our chief Companion and best Friend.—To have His words abiding in us, is to keep His sayings and precepts continually before our memories and minds, and to make them the guide of our actions, and the rule of our daily conduct and behavior.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-117.

- (2) The abiding relationship brings glorification, v. 8.

“In this is My Father glorified, in order that you bear much fruit and [evidently] become My disciples.” While a fruitful vine is to be admired, acclaim must ultimately be directed toward the Vine-dresser, the designing Father. His exaltation and pleasure comes through the fulfillment of His plan of redemption that His Son has so faithfully executed. Accomplishment of this redemption also involves the productivity of Jesus which redounds to the praise of His Father (17:1, 4, 10). The reason is that the vintage of the crop has the savor of Jesus! We prove that we are disciples of Jesus when we reflect the stock into which we are joined since the produce, in the sour market of this world, has a sweetness all of its own. Hence genuine union with Christ ought to be as obvious to a surrounding shriveled world as is a fragrant rose in a garden with the odor of stink weed and odorless plastic flowers, as “a lily among the thorns” (S. of S. 2:2).

- (3) The abiding relationship brings love, v. 9.

“Just as the Father [has] loved Me, so also I [have] loved you; abide/live in My Love.” It is vital here to enquire first as to the manner in which the Father has loved His Son. Obviously it is not as a sinner. Rather, “the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (3:35; cf. 5:20; 17:2; Ps. 2:8; 21:1-2; Matt. 4:17; 28:18; II Pet. 1:17). Nevertheless here we seem at a loss to comprehend love within the persons of the Godhead; despite our reading of the above references, this appears to be such an exalted matter that transcends almost any degree of human comprehension. Even so Jesus speaks of this divine affection for our edification, and so perhaps we must make an attempt to grasp it. On the other hand the thought here is more likely that such incomprehensible perception can and will be obtained through the demonstrable love of the Lord Jesus, as vs. 12-13 anticipate. In simple terms then, the love of the Father and the Son is identical. Consequently he who has seen the love of the Son has seen the love of the Father. So the hymn of Samuel Trevor Francis has well described:

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!  
 Spread His praise from shore to shore,  
 How He loveth, ever loveth,  
 Changeth never, nevermore;  
 How He watcheth o’er His loved ones,  
 Died to call them all His own;  
 Now for them He intercedeth,  
 Watcheth o’er them from the throne.

Thus we are to so study the love of the Lord Jesus for us that we embrace it, ingest it, digest it, breathe it, live by it. Yet is this simply a matter of Bible study on the doctrine of the love of Christ? Such a perspective is short-sighted indeed.

## (4) The abiding relationship brings obedience, v. 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.” To abide in the love of Christ is to become actively, spontaneously responsive. Again there is a parallel concerning the relationship between the Son and His Father and the Son and His disciples. Again the heavenly relationship will best be grasped when the earthly demonstration by Jesus is confronted. The Father’s commandments for His Son, certainly not chiefly the Mosaic code, were very distinctive in that they were concerned with accomplishment of the plan of redemption (John 4:34; Heb. 10:5-10), as well as the overall works of the Father (5:17). However, in all of this Jesus was “always doing the things that are pleasing to Him [the Father]” (8:29); further He was “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Now it is true that “we love, because He first loved us” (I John 4:19). Hence we obediently love because we were savingly loved to begin with (John 13:34). However here the point is that obedience to the commands of Christ will result in a sense of “abiding in His love,” that is resultant assurance that flows from obedience. As Ryle declares:

The doctrine here laid down is one of the great principles of experimental Christianity. Holy living and assurance of an interest in Christ are closely connected. Our own happiness and enjoyment of religion are inseparably bound up with our daily practical living. He that expects assurance, while he neglects Christ’s commandments, and gives way to daily inconsistencies of temper and conduct, is expecting what he will never get.<sup>8</sup>

Then what are these commandments of Christ which the Christian obeys? They have already been considered in the first mention of “commandments” in 14:15, also 14:21. Of course the new commandment of 13:34-35 is primary. However there are also the commandments of 14:1, 11; 15:10, 12; I John 2:8, as well as the “words” of 14:24 that are in mind. But then there has also been over three years of prior instruction (Matt. 28:19-20), and notably the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7).

## (5) The abiding relationship brings joy, v. 11.

“These things I have spoken to you in order that My joy may be in you and your joy may be fulfilled.” The promise of “My peace” (14:27) and “My love” (15:10) is complemented here with “My joy.” The joy of Jesus has surely been rooted in His obedience to His Father’s commandments, the sheer exquisite delight of obeying His every wish. The climax of this will be when Jesus returns to the Father via the cross, by means of which His joy will be fulfilled in true believers (17:13), especially through the stimulation of the promised Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17; 15:13; I Thess. 1:6). So Jesus desires that the same height of joy He experiences should be in His disciples. Consequently, there is joy in obeying the will of God (Rom. 15:32; Phil. 1:25), that is “there is joy in serving Jesus!” (I Pet. 1:8). This is not physical

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

or sensual or amusing joy, but joy and contentment of the soul that outward circumstances cannot diminish. So Paul's epistle of joy, Philippians (Phil. 1:4, 18, 25-26; 2:2, 16-18, 28; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4 10), was nevertheless composed while suffering in a Roman prison (Phil. 1:7, 13).

2. The relationship of union with one another, vs. 12-17.

Up to this point the illustration of Christ as the true vine, comprised of fruitful branches, has focused on the necessary intimate relationship between the trunk and the branches. Now we consider the related intimate relationship of branches with one another. They are not intended to choke or rob one another, but rather support and care for one another in the chief task of fruit-bearing; indeed there is healthy encouragement in the observation of the growth of other branches.

a. Love for one another Christianly, vs. 12-14.

Believers in Jesus were first called "Christians" at Antioch after Barnabas had been sent there by the church at Jerusalem. Upon his arrival, we are told that he then "witnessed the grace of God [there, and] he rejoiced" (Acts 11:23). In other words, he immediately noticed evidence of conversion, the fact of these members of the new church becoming "Christ's ones." Upon collecting Paul from Tarsus and bringing him to Antioch, then "the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). By their demeanor, they manifestly identified with Jesus Christ. So of newly confident Peter and John it was acknowledged by the rulers and elders of Jerusalem that, although "uneducated and untrained men," nevertheless they "were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). So here Jesus prepares the way for this new lifestyle that is recognizable by an unbelieving world.

(1) The exemplary love of the Lord Jesus, v. 12.

"This is My commandment, that you be loving one [present, ἀγαπάω, agapaō] another just as I loved [aorist, agapaō] you" (Deut. 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-31; John 13:34; 15:17; I John 3:16, 23; 4:11-21; II John 5). What is the love of Jesus for His disciples? In essence it is the gracious love of Christ for unworthy, sinners (Matt. 9:10-13; 11:19), the lost (Luke 15:1-32; 19:10). More specifically, how has the love of Jesus been shown toward the eleven in this upper room? To begin with it has been the love of His elective call (1:35-51; 15:16, in much the same way that God chose Israel (Deut. 7:7-8). Then subsequently it has been the love of His sovereign perseverance toward those characterized by their "little faith" (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 16:8). Then this love is invested with the promise of future glory (Matt. 19:28-29; John 14:2-3). Hence this love is to constrain/impel these disciples (II Cor. 5:14) to similarly love one another, for "he who is forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47), therefore he who is forgiven much loves much. Hence the degree to which we sense our personal sin, primarily against God, is of crucial importance. Am I a great or a moderate sinner? Have we truly sensed who God is?

## (2) The sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus, v. 13.

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life/soul [ψυχή, *psuchē*] for his friends [φίλος, *philos*].” The logical connection with v. 12 is heightened. The obligation that v. 12 presents is now accentuated to the ultimate degree. Hence there is the presupposition of a capital offense committed by a *multitude* that justly merits the death penalty for them all. At the point of their despair, being without excuse, they learn of a good, guiltless friend who rushes in and takes upon himself the judgment due to this whole multitude. The response of the guilty is amazement, astonishment, for there is no greater offering than this self-giving, that is within the family of God’s children. Love for enemies is another, separate matter (Matt. 5:44). However the thought here concerns love amongst *friends*, particularly the eleven disciples present. Guiltless Jesus has gathered together His guilty friends and He will preserve them unto death. Of course the deeper meaning here will not be comprehended until the coming of the Comforter (14:26).

## (3) The commanded love of the Lord Jesus, v. 14.

“You are My friends [φίλος, *philos*] if you [continue to] do what I command/enjoin you.” What an amazing pronouncement we have here in terms of Jesus’ audience. Of course He has been the disciples’ friend for over three years. Nevertheless, here we have an intensity of meaning that has not formerly been appreciated. In other words, Jesus is saying, “I am your friend not only in life, but unto death and consequent life.” Thus Jesus will lay down His life for His friends, and there is a particularity here that should not be missed. However, considering who Jesus is and who we are, “that we would be called children of God” (I John 3:1), that we should be called “My friends” by Jesus, as distinct from slaves, v. 15, is a wonder beyond full comprehension. As Ryle explains:

To know Christ, serve Christ, follow Christ, obey Christ, work in Christ's vineyard, fight Christ's battles, all of this is no small matter. But for sinful men and women like ourselves to be called "friends of Christ," is something that our weak minds can hardly grasp and take in. The King of kings and Lord of lords not only pities and saves all them that believe in Him, but actually calls them His "friends." We need not wonder, in the face of such language as this, that St. Paul should say, the "love of Christ passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

However, the quality of a true friend is not simply his lavish talk, but his loyal walk; how glibly men identify with the famous by means of “name dropping;” similarly men so loosely take the name of Christian, “one of Christ’s” (I Cor. 1:12). But Jesus says, you are a Christian by profession if there is resultant expression. Both Abraham and Moses were friends of God (Exod. 33:11; II Chron 20:7); however their lives evidenced consistent faithfulness. Of the Christians at Corinth, Paul describes them as “a letter of Christ written on his heart,” but furthermore they are “known and read by all men” (II Cor. 3:2-3; Jas. 2:23), that is they are evidently obedient to Christ their shepherding Friend. So John Newton has written:

---

<sup>9</sup> Ryle, *John*, III, pp. 124-125.

One there is above all others,  
Well deserves the name of Friend;  
His is love beyond a brothers,  
Costly, free, and knows no end:  
They who once His kindness prove,  
Find it everlasting love.

When He lived on earth abased,  
'Friend of sinners' was His name;  
Now above all glory raised,  
He rejoices in the same;  
Still He calls them brethren, friends,  
And to all their wants attends.

b. Love for one another spontaneously, v. 15.

“No longer do I call you servants/slaves, because the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends [φίλος, philos] because all things that I [have] heard from My Father I [have] made known to you.” During the public ministry of Jesus Christ there was varied regard for Him, ranging from aversion to hidden devotion to tolerant condescension to adoration as the Son of God. For this reason He was careful to distinguish a true disciple from a mere nominal follower (Luke 14:26-27, 33; John 8:31; 13:35; 15:8).

Even today there are differing responses to Jesus, though the main distinction is regard that is either ideal or redemptive. The former is exemplary, while the latter is saving. Up to this stage in Jesus' ministry the general esteem has been ideal, even amongst His disciples. But now things will change for Jesus will give His life for His disciples, the result being that they will then become redeemed friends, vs. 12-13, which concept is related to the privilege of sonship (John 1:12; Rom. 8:14, 19; I John 3:1-2) obtained through redemption (Gal. 4:1-7).

Who then is a true Christian? Not merely a person who regards Jesus as an ideal; that is a relationship of slavery being based upon legal obedience, though many testify to this fragile association that is solely reliant upon our performance. It is not an abiding relationship (8:35). Rather a Christian is one who has been redeemed through faith in Jesus' performance, through faith in His shed blood. So by God's doing through Christ (I Cor. 1:30), we are made eternal friends of God, and thus we become sons of God, “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

We would no longer lie  
Like slaves beneath Thy throne;  
Our faith shall 'Abba, Father' cry,  
And Thou the kindred own.

However Jesus further explains what the privileges of this heirship involve. As a ruler shares his intimate conversation and wealth with his children, but not his underlings, so Jesus, having received a wealth of wonderful revelation from His Father, has not and will not withhold it from His friends, that is with reference to “the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (I Pet. 1:11).

c. Love for one another fruitfully, vs. 16-17.

In the light of the privileges of the sovereign grace of Christ that are inherent in “friendship” with Him, there is now further elaboration concerning this relationship. However at the same time the responsibilities of those who are the objects of this same sovereign grace are now pressed home.

(1) You have been chosen to be fruitful, v. 16.

“You did not choose [ἐκλέγομαι, eklegomai] Me, but I chose you and placed/appointed [τίθημι, tithēmi] you in order that you would go and bring forth/bear fruit and that your fruit would remain, in order that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give to you.” From a more modern perspective we might translate: “You did not decide for Me, but I decided for you!” Human friendship is often based upon affluence, influence, lineage, etc., whereas friendship with Jesus Christ is based upon pure grace. Here then this grace of divine friendship and adoption is portrayed more vividly than ever in terms of Christ’s election of His own. Granted that this election is unto apostleship and fruitfulness, nevertheless it is first according to election unto salvation (6:70).<sup>10</sup>

(2) You have been commanded to be fruitful, v. 17.

“These things I command you in order that you may be loving one another.” Here is the disciple’s “Friend” making a strong, authoritative plea; it is the exhortation of He who is demonstrably “full of grace and truth” (1:14), which is so gloriously described here in vs. 15-16. This command is directed toward those who are the objects of this elective grace and truth.

So for Paul, having declared that “by the grace of God I am what I am,” he continues to explain the inevitable result of this grace. “[A]nd His grace toward me did not prove vain [empty/fruitless]; but I labored even more than all of them [the other apostles], yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (I Cor. 15:10). In other words, Paul, the object of elective grace (Gal. 1:11-16), was inevitably the incomparable exponent of working grace.

So this is the expectation of Peter for, in exhorting his addressees, “be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (I Pet. 1:10), he encourages stimulation of the fruit of this election and calling. This involves “applying all diligence , [so that] in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly-kindness, and in your brotherly-kindness, love” (II Pet. 1:5-7).

So this is also the expectation of Jesus. “We love because He first loved us” (I John 4:19). That is: “We are gracious because He first showered grace upon us.”

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-129.

B. Discipleship within the world, 15:18-16:15.

For Jesus Christ, “the world,” ὁ κόσμος, ho kosmos, is an arena of darkness over which there is a ruler who, by his very satanic nature, is characteristically antichrist in his earthly ministry, 14:30. So the citizens of this world are inherently antichrist in nature, that is they are naturally hostile toward Jesus Christ. For this reason, disciples of Jesus, who, in their newfound innocence have such a love for Him as the commanded love of vs. 12, 17 presupposes, need to be made aware of this surprising, irrational, unjust fact of life.

1. Hatred by the world towards disciples of Christ, 15:18-25.

While Jesus Christ has come into this world with His eyes wide open concerning its inherent animosity toward Him (7:7), it is this surprise factor, that is bound to arise from the naïve disciples, which He now addresses. Our love for Jesus leads us to expect others to love Him; it seems so right, so reasonable, so befitting. Yet we become astonished that this awesome Nazarene, according to His person, word, and works, is nevertheless scorned, demeaned, debased (3:19) as is no other acknowledged religious leader in human history!

a. Hatred because of rejection of Christ the Son, vs. 18-20.

Jesus’ intention is first to turn surprise at persecution for His sake into expectation (I John 3:13). Second there needs to an awareness of the logical consequences of genuine loyalty, whatever the object of one’s loyalty may be. Third there is to be appreciation of the particular consequences of association with Jesus. Hence true Christian discipleship results in a predictable, scorned lifestyle. Thus there is a price to pay, a cost to be counted for true discipleship with Jesus.

(1) The priority of the hatred of Jesus, v. 18.

“If the world hates you [as it certainly does], you know that it has hated Me [first, originally] before [it hated] you.” Hatred is malicious, vehement, intense dislike that takes on the symptoms of a controlling, seething disease. In some cases it is perfectly legitimate (Ps. 97:10; Amos 5:15; Rom. 12:9), though more often it concerns the self-righteous, unmerciful aversion of one human sinner toward another. However Jesus raises our appreciation of hatred a notch higher in terms of its source. Hatred amongst men on a horizontal level arises from man’s hatred of God at a vertical level. Human hatred originates with the soul’s love of sin (3:19) when exposed by the triune God, the Father, v. 23, the Son (5:18; 7:7), and the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10), which then plays out in hatred in human behavior. This is the thrust of Psalm 2:1-3 where the raging of the nations has its paramount focus upon “the Lord and . . . His Anointed [Messiah].” So “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God” (Rom. 6a). Here the theory of salvation by the moral influence of Jesus entirely breaks down; to begin with, in his heart, man is opposed to becoming like Jesus! Hence the cure of hatred comes by means of the gospel transformation of the heart that leads to the love of God. As a consequence, “the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6b).

## (2) The consequence of the hatred of the disciples, v. 19.

“If you were of the world [although you are not], the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose [ἐκλέγομαι, eklegomai] you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you.” There is something affirming here concerning this motley bunch of disciples, for Jesus obliquely declares that the eleven here are definitively sanctified, though He immediately explains that this is based purely upon His particular gracious choice. The reason is the election of Jesus, though it also ensures the hatred of the world. Now the world certainly hates the doctrine of election; but even more it hates the electing Jesus! So if Jesus puts His hand upon you, opposition from the world is guaranteed. In the same vein, the gospel of Christ is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (I Pet. 2:8; cf. I Cor. 1:23). So the world treats Jesus as a leper, along with His disciples: “He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hid their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him” (Isa. 53:3).

## (3) The identification of the disciples with Jesus illustrated, v. 20.

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecute Me [as they certainly do], they will also persecute you; if they kept My word [as it is hypothetically assumed to be true], they will also keep yours.” Now this teaching of Jesus is to be remembered, according to 13:16. When a servant thinks he is exceptional, a cut above what is normally expected by his master, for instance not needing to wash the feet of his brethren (13:14), then he ceases to be a good servant. There are no detours along the narrow way that safely avoid the Hill Difficulty, as Formalistst and Hypocrisy imagined; they only lead to “Danger” and “Destruction,” as Bunyan labels them.<sup>11</sup> Encounters with the Slough of Despond, the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, etc., are inevitable. There is no *Celestial Railroad* as Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays it whereby pilgrims avoid the rigorous demands of the narrow way. Rather there will be a visible consistency between the pathway of the Master and his followers/ servants. If the enemies of Jesus in fact yield to His teaching, then they will become friends of Christians; all genuine followers of Christ become friends; all opponents of Christ are to be expected to act toward us as enemies. To travel well, it is best to know our friends and enemies.

## b. Hatred because of ignorance of God the Father, vs. 21-25.

Whereas vs. 18-20 focus on the hatred of God the Son by the world, now there is added emphasis upon identical malevolence toward God the Father. Of course this surprising revelation of man’s aversion to God, do-good protestations notwithstanding, presupposes that Jesus is talking about the only true and living God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Peter and Paul, as

---

<sup>11</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, III, p. 104.

definitively revealed in Scripture. Totally excluded here is some vague, sentimental, deistic abstraction to which the world commonly confesses its nominal allegiance. Once the character of this Jehovah is understood, in all of His holy sovereignty, the reason for this hostility is not so difficult to understand.

- (1) Their hatred is rooted in ignorance of the Father, v. 21.

“But all these [persecutory] things they will do to you on account of My name because they do not know He who sent Me.” Thus while Christian’s are saved for Jesus’ sake, nevertheless the world hates them for Jesus’ sake. There are many devious “things” that the world contrives against Jesus, both physical, idealogical, and theological; however since the Christian becomes guilty by association, he also partakes of the same fiendish opposition. But further, Jesus declares that He is simply incomprehensible apart from acknowledgment of His relationship with His Father, having come from His bosom (1:18). Of course a liberal, humanistic regard for Jesus vainly attempts such a disjunction whereby Jesus’ essential deity is denied. However, to the fiercely monotheistic Jewish leaders, Jesus’ charge here that they do not know God is quite insulting, devastating. Nevertheless, the genuine Christian so loves his Master that he gladly regards “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he is looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:26). Instead of surprise and misplaced intervention, as was Peter’s response (18:10), being aware of this mystery of the hatred which Christ generates would enable the true disciple to loyally persevere; this is the Master’s intent here.

- (2) Their hatred is accountable because of the word of Christ, v. 22.

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have [chargeable] sin. But now they have no excuse\pretext [πρόφασις, prophasis] for their sin.” Of course the Jews are guilty as sinners in the sight of God. However, if Messiah had not come, then Israel could not be responsible for rejecting Messiah. But Messiah has come with the plainest declarations possible in terms of His character, words, and works, so that Jesus continues to proclaim Himself as the supreme issue for the watching Jews. They may appear blindly intractable in attitude, yet they remain fully responsible. So with privilege comes accountability, while with great privilege comes great accountability (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 11:31-32). With Jesus being the epitome of the revelation of the Father (John 1:10; Heb. 1:1-2), it might be expected that “they will respect my son” (Matt. 21:37); to scorn Him is to insult the Father who sent Him. So in a close knit family, if a person is insulted because of his breeding, his lineage, then his parents are automatically insulted as well; this is because “to love me” means “to love my parents.” Hence to love Jesus, is to love His Father. To spurn Jesus is to hate His Father; while there are degrees of sin, this is the greatest sin of all!

- (3) Their hatred of Christ is inseparable from the Father, v. 23.

“He who hates Me also hates My Father.” Here the common hatred of the Son and the Father is predicated upon the essential character of Jesus who

speaks of “My [not “the”] Father.” While in 14:6 Jesus is the Mediator between man and God, here there is bold parallel identity. We are reminded of Christ’s total submission to His Father, even as Romans 15:3 (cf. Ps. 69:9) declares that, “even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’” In other words, in the councils of eternity between the Son and the Father, the Son was very willing to venture earthward and take upon himself the world’s hatred of the holy sovereign Jehovah. However, now upon earth, those who hate this Son also hate His Father. Thus as Ryle plainly declares: “The idea that we can worship and serve God while we neglect Christ, is a baseless dream.”<sup>12</sup>

But perhaps you reply: “While I do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God, nevertheless I believe in God and do not hate Him. I may even be indifferent toward Him, but I do not hate Him!” To this God replies:

- (a) “You may say you believe in the word that spells ‘G-O-D,’ yet the only true God sent His beloved Son to save sinners. Reject this Son and in God’s terms you hate Him because you hate His family.”
  - (b) “If you say you believe in God, apart from Jesus Christ, then tell us of this God’s character, but especially the source of this knowledge. Nature is insufficient here and gives conflicting signals.”
  - (c) “If you say You believe in God while rejecting His Son, you spurn the One dearest to His heart to whom He has ‘given all things’ (John 3:35; cf. 5:20), to whom He has appointed the judgment of the world (Acts 17:31).”
  - (d) “If you say You believe in God while rejecting His Son, you demean the love of Jesus which was unto death, at the appointment of His Father. If you turn from this Son’s obedience, you also reject the Father who He obeyed.”
- (4) Their hatred is accountable because of the works of Christ, v. 24.

“If I had done no works before them that no other person did, they would not have [chargeable] sin. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father.”

- (5) Their hatred is in accord with Scripture, v. 25.

“But in order that the word which has been written in their law must be fulfilled, ‘they hated Me freely/without cause [δωρεάν, dōrean].’” Of course there is good cause *within man* as to why He hates Jesus Christ, that is His unholy, malicious regard for the Son of the Holy Sovereign of the universe; but there is absolutely no reason *within the Son of God* as to why He should be despised.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ryle, *John*, III, p. 142.

## 2. Comfort by the Advocate/Helper towards disciples of Christ, 15:26-27.

## a. He eternally proceeds from the Father, v. 26.

“When the Helper/Advocate [παράκλητος, paraklētos] has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of the truth, who proceeds [ἐκπορεύομαι, ekporeuomai] from the Father, that One will testify/bear witness [μαρτυρέω, martureō] about Me.”

## b. He gloriously bears witness to the Son, v. 27.

“And you [will] testify/bear witness also because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

## 3. Affliction by the world towards disciples of Christ, 16:1-4.

## a. Affliction in the name of God against the children of God, vs. 1-2.

## (1) The divine antidote for stumbling, v. 1.

“These things I have spoken to you in order that you may not be offended/kept from falling/stumbling [σκανδαλίζω, skandalizō].”

## (2) The worldly desire for extinction, v. 2.

“Outcasts/synagogue expellees [ἀποσυνάγωγος, aposunagōgos] they will make you; but an hour is coming for everyone who has killed you to think [δοκέω, dokeō] he is offering [προσφέρω, prospherō] service [λατρεία, latreia] to God.”

## b. Affliction in the name of God by those who know not God, vs. 3-4.

## (1) Ignorance of the Father through Christ results in ungodliness, v. 3.

“And these things they will do because they have not known the Father nor Me.”

## (2) Knowledge of the Father through Christ results in understanding, v. 4.

“But these things I have spoken to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you from the beginning because I was with you.”

## 4. Conviction by the Advocate/Helper, mediated by Christ’s departure, 16:5-11.

## a. His ministry will encourage the distressed disciples, vs. 5-7.

- (1) The ambiguity of Christ's departure, v. 5.

“But now I am going away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’”

- (2) The anguish of Christ's departure, v. 6.

“But because I have spoken these things to you, grief/sorrow [λύπη, lupē] has filled your heart.”

- (3) The advantage of Christ's departure, v. 7.

“But I speak the truth to you: it is expedient/to your advantage [συμφέρω, sumphero] that I go away; the Helper/Advocate [παράκλητος, paraklētos] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

- b. His ministry convict the world of unbelief, vs. 8-11.

- (1) Conviction of the world overall v. 8.

“And that One having come, He will convict/refute/expose [ἐλέγχω, elenchō] the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment.”

- (2) Conviction of the sin in particular, v. 9.

“On the one hand concerning sin because they do not believe in Me.”

- (3) Conviction of righteousness in particular, v. 10.

“On the other hand concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and no longer do you see [θεωρέω, theōreō] Me.”

- (4) Conviction of judgment in particular, v. 11.

“And concerning judgment because the ruler of the world has been judged.”

5. Edification by the Advocate/Helper for disciples of Christ, 16:12-15.

- a. He will magnify the truth, vs. 12-13.

- (1) This will be introductory truth, v. 12.

“Yet I have many [more] things to say to you, but you are not able to bear them now.”

- (2) This will be revealed truth, v. 13.

“But when that One has come, the Spirit of the truth, He will guide [ὁδηγέω, hodegeō] you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself/on His own behalf, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and the things coming He will announce/declare/disclose [ἀναγγέλλω, anangellō] to you.”

b. He will glorify Christ, vs. 14-15.

(1) Concerning truth about Christ’s departure, v. 14.

“That one will glorify Me because He will take that which is of Me and announce/declare/disclose [ἀναγγέλλω, anangellō, it] to you.”

(2) Concerning truth about Christ’s Father, v. 15.

“All things whatsoever the Father has are Mine; on account of this I said that that which is of Me He takes and announces to you.”

C. Discipleship grounded upon the cross, 16:16-33.

1. The cross leads from confusion and sorrow to joy, vs. 16-22.

a. Without the death of Christ, the life of Christ is meaningless, vs. 16-19.

(1) Oblique reference to the resurrection, v. 16.

“A little while and no longer do you see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me.”

(2) Obscure understanding by the disciples, vs. 17-18.

(a) Ignorance about the Father’s Son, v. 17.

“Therefore [some] of His disciples said to one another, ‘What is this which he says to you, ‘A little while and you will not see Me, and again a little while and you will see Me’, [and] ‘because I go to the Father?’”

(b) Ignorance about the Father’s timing, v. 18.

“Therefore they were saying, ‘What is this that He says, ‘a little while’? We do not know what He is saying.’”

(3) Observant understanding by Jesus, v. 19.

“Jesus knew that they wanted to ask/question Him, so He said to them, ‘Concerning this you are enquiring with one another because I said, ‘a little while and you will not see Me,’ and again, ‘a little while and you will not see Me.’?”

b. Without the death of Christ, there can be no joy, vs. 20-22.

(1) The prospect of weeping and joy, v. 20.

“Truly, truly, I say that you shall weep/cry [κλαίω, klaiō] and lament/mourn [θρηνέω, threneo], but the world will rejoice; you will grieve/be sad [λυπέω, lupeō], but your grief will be turned into joy.”

(2) The illustration of weeping yielding to joy, v. 21.

“When a woman labors in birth [τίκτω, tiktō], she has grief [λόπη, lupē], because her hour [of delivery] has come; but when the child is born, no longer does she remember the anguish/tribulation [θλιψις, thlipsis] on account of the joy that a man/child has been born into the world.”

(3) The prospect of invincible joy, v. 22.

“Therefore you also now have grief; but again I shall see you, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one takes from you.”

2. The cross is the ground of the disciples’ intercession with the Father, vs. 23-24.

a. New praying in the name of Jesus, v. 23.

“And in that day you will not ask Me anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.”

b. Bold praying in the name of Jesus, v. 24.

“Until now you have not asked anything in My name; ask and you will receive in order that your joy will have been fulfilled [πληρόω, plēroō].”

3. The cross is the ground of the disciples’ knowledge of the Father, vs. 25-33.

a. Jesus’ mediation of new revelation about the Father, vs. 25-28.

(1) New revelation that is plain concerning the Father, v. 25.

“These things in figures of speech/parables [παροιμία, paroimia] I have spoken to you; an hour is coming when no longer will I speak to you in figures of speech, but plainly/openly [παρρησία, parrēsia] I will tell you [ἀπαγγελλω, apangellō] concerning the Father.”

(2) New revelation of the Mediator with the Father, v. 26.

“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.”

- (3) New revelation of the love of the Father, v. 27.

“For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved [φιλέω, phileō] me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”

- (4) New revelation of Christ’s return to the Father, v. 28.

“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

- b. Jesus’ mediation of new revelation about victory, vs. 29-33.

- (1) The deceptive clarity of this revelation, v. 29.

“His disciples said, ‘Behold, now in figurative speech/parable you are speaking plainly/openly and are not using a figure of speech.’”

- (2) The shallow assurance of this revelation, v. 30.

“Now we know that You know all things and You do not need that anyone ask You; in this we believe that You came forth from God.”

- (3) The humiliating exposure of this revelation, vs. 31-33.

- (a) The faith that is feeble, v. 31.

“Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe?’”

- (b) The faith that is overcome with fear, v. 32.

“Behold, an hour is coming and has come in order that you will be scattered/dispersed [σκοπίζω, skopizō], each one to his own [home/retreat?], and you will leave Me alone; yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me.”

- (c) The faith that overcomes with peace, v. 33.

“These things I have spoken to you in order that in Me you will have peace. In the world you have anguish/tribulation [θλίψις, thlipsis]; but take courage [θαρσέω, tharseō]! I have overcome/ conquered [νικάω, nikaō] the world.”