

John 15

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 06 May 2015 15:04

Jesus instructs His disciples with tough words, words that need to be preached today to a wayward and sinful Church. Jesus Christ cannot, and will not, tolerate what people have done to His Body of believers. He WILL remove them. Jesus' definitions in this chapter are tightly expressed, so there can be no doubt what a Christian is and how he should live. The commands here are universal (for all believers).

Verses 1-3

1.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Christ is the "true vine", looked after by His Father, the husbandman. The 'vine' is the symbol of Christ, Who is the vine of Heaven. His enemies are the 'vine of the earth' (Rev. 14:18,19), sinful and to be discarded. Jesus said He was the "true" vine, meaning that everything that the vine should be is found in Him. It means He is not a deception or falsity, but is the reality of all existence. It means He represents what is holy and real, perfect in every sense. Thus, Christ said He was the one and only God. If this were not the case, the Father would have nothing to do with Him. Therefore, He was to be trusted and obeyed.

Then come words that must be made known to everyone who claims to be a Christian – in modern parlance it could be put like this: "Put up or shut up!" Each and every one of us who says he is a believer MUST prove it, without doubt. If we do not, then Christ says we will be removed from the true vine. This can sometimes mean to die 'early' or to suffer at the hands of others. Even those who remain true to the vine will regularly be 'purged' so they will produce even more good fruit in the future. This purging consists of cleansing from filth or impurity, to cut away what is useless, and to remove guilt (by repentance). Only when we do this and allow God

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to purge us, will we show genuine marks of belonging to Christ, and will prove our relationship by bringing in real fruit.

Evidently, Jesus considered His disciples to already be clean, purified by His doctrine and believing it. Jesus is here reminding them of their Levitical purity, a purity that cannot be unclean. It also means they are free from sin: that is, no longer tied to, or controlled by, sin, but can choose what is good and holy. By listening to Christ, knowing His word, and acting purely, we are also considered, by Him, to be clean. And, our fruit will become obvious to all.

Verses 4-6

1.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

2.

I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

3.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

Jesus urges them not to depart from His word and their faith, and He will then remain with them. To bear fruit a branch must be attached to the vine. Just as Christ is attached to the Father, so we must be attached to Christ. In this way spiritual life runs directly from Heaven to believers. Without this life in Jesus, no Christian can know spiritual truth and reality. And for unbelievers all this is nonsense, because they have no idea what it means.

Jesus is the true vine and we are His branches. When we live for and in Him we produce good fruit. When we live sinfully, we produce nothing of note and cannot expect to produce abundant good fruit, only bad. Fruit, *karpos*, is everything Christ would do and say. Every work, act and word must correspond to what Jesus would say and do. Our thoughts must be His thoughts.

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Everything must profit our spiritual lives and others, and enable us to praise God for everything.

Ever noticed how 'dry' many Christians seem to be? They live out an external life but it is 'wooden' and contrived, not spontaneous and genuine, full of life and love for the brethren. They have a Bible... somewhere... but it is rarely opened. They know they must pray, but never pray. They should meditate on His word, but never do. They are mere husks, of no value. And Jesus says He will cut them down; they are "cast forth" because they are 'withered' – of no earthly use to himself or Christ or the Church. They are worthless, except as kindling to burn in the flames.

Does this mean that a Christian can lose his salvation? No, definitely not! It means one of two things – the Christian is so sinful God removes His active presence, so the person thereafter only knows misery on this earth, as does any unbeliever. Or, it means the one who claims to be part of Christ is a fake, and this is why the branch withers. It is spiritually dead. However, no man can attach himself to Christ. Therefore, the first explanation appears to be the case. God will even take the earthly life of a constantly sinful Christian, so that he will no longer commit further sins.

Verses 7-14

1.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

2.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

3.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

4.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

5.

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These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

6.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

7.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

8.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Christ says He will reward those who are faithful. If they need anything they only need to ask and it will be given. But, they must firstly be true doctrinally and lovingly. As far as I can ascertain the words in this chapter apply universally to all believers, not just to the disciples. This is because discipleship is itself universal and its requirements apply to all believers throughout time. God is glorified by this two-way involvement, this symbiosis of life, which results in much fruit, love for each other being but a portion of what this means. The Father loved Christ. In the same way we must love each other, as a proof of our love for Christ. It is proof we are real disciples.

The command is simple – if we love Christ we will obey whatever He says. When we obey He will love us. He CANNOT love us when we sin, because that would mean condoning our sin. Clearly, then, sin can disrupt our symbiotic relationship with Him. He kept the commandments of the Father, and we must keep the commandments of the Son.

None of this was meant to put His disciples off following Him. Rather, He wanted them to enjoy their life on earth, knowing that He was still with them if they obeyed His word. And when they did, they would know life in all its glory and abundance. This is the true basis of real joy, which is far greater than earthly happiness.

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Christ did not just encourage the disciples, He made it a command – to love each other just as He loved them. Indeed, it means that when we love each other we present a concrete example of our love for Christ. Jesus showed His love by giving His life for them; there being no greater love than this. Surely, then, we should be able to love those who are our brethren? Jesus said that if they did what He commanded, they were His friends. Are WE His friends? Can we prove it? We are Christ's friends IF we obey! There is no 'free ride' – God's love is conditional!

Verses 15-17

1.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

2.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

3.

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

From this time forward, says the Lord, He will not refer to His followers as 'servants'. Servants do not know what their master determines – they must only obey blindly. Now, Christ calls us 'friends' (as in friend of the groom), because we are privy to the Father's wishes and plan.

Charismatics today hold numerous 'prophecy' conferences, which claim to tell others what God is thinking for that year! Apart from the absurdity of this 'elitism', do you not find it strange that God sends His wishes to only a few, who can never prove God sent them, but who manage to convince others that they have this special relationship not available to anyone else? No, Christ makes known to us whatever the Father wishes us to know, in His word. Some things remain a mystery until we reach Heaven. In the main we know everything needed. Unbelievers know nothing, because they are not Christ's friends.

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Jesus then speaks of that doctrinal truth hated by Arminians and the godless, that “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you...” This is a direct reference to election and predestination, whether some like it or not! Each person who is saved, is saved NOT because they choose Christ, but because they were first elected in Heaven. They were picked out from others – the rest were rejected and can never, ever achieve salvation, no matter what they do or what preachers say. They can walk to the altar in a campaign and openly say they have chosen God, but it makes no difference; their words are empty if they have not been elected.

The proof that we are chosen is that we produce fruit from an holy root. This is not bad fruit, for it will remain fresh and longlasting. And when we live this way we can ask the Father anything we need in the Name of Christ, and He will give it. What we receive by request is, then, conditional. He does not simply pour out blessings or gifts on everybody, not even on all believers. We must first obey.

Interestingly, these conditions are a command, not a choice. And these rewards of obedience will not be given if we do not love the brethren. As I have often said, based on direct, personal observation and experience, very few who call themselves my ‘brethren’ love me, or any other Christian. What does that say about their claimed blessings from God, or their supposed gifts?

Verses 18-21

1.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.

2.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

3.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

4.

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But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

We now come to something that is right up to date. Just as in the days of Christ, we will be hated. We are hated not so much for ourselves, but because of the Saviour we follow and witness to. This hatred, *miseō*, is absolute in its anger; we are detested because we follow the Lord. This is why Muslims hate Christians – who follow the true God... and Muslims detest us for it. They KNOW their Allah is false, but they are led by Satan, so reject the truth. Even so, the sheer hatred of Islam is now acknowledged by many Muslims, who are turning to the true God as a result.

We cannot expect love from the world for being followers of Christ – we WILL be hated for it. Again I ask: what does this mean when we see the majority of Christians untouched by hatred? Are they speaking truth? I doubt it. Are they speaking against sin? I doubt it. Our divine Commander was hated, so we can expect the same treatment. The idea that if only we show outward love for our enemies, they will soften and love us back, is unbiblical. If we speak as believers, we WILL be hated, even if we only offer love in return. The notion of loving others into submission is another example of Arminianism.

We may well be called upon to love some who hate us, but we should not thereby assume that our love towards an enemy will result in them loving us back. They are the slaves of Satan and do his bidding! Some will be saved, but this is in spite of our love towards them, not because of it. I know this because salvation is based not on what we do or say, but on God's election in eternity.

We are only God's servants (albeit His friends), and we are not greater than our Master. So, if we truly follow Him we WILL be persecuted, because our link to Him is absolute and detested. And if some actually believe what the servants say about God, it is only because they have been chosen for salvation. Thus, if they follow the Christian teacher, it is because the teacher speaks truth from God, and so the Person they really follow is God, not the preacher.

Jesus is telling the disciples they will suffer because they belong to Him. The enemy will try to destroy them because enemies do not know God. That is how we know why Muslims persecute us. They claim to know God, but in reality their idea of God is 'Allah', a false minor moon-god.

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Because they do not know the true God, they hate everyone who is not aligned to them. This is why atheists hate us. Indeed, this is why ANY unbeliever hates us! They do not know God.

Verses 22-27

1.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

2.

He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

3.

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

4.

But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

5.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

6.

And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Jesus then said that these enemies would not be accused of sinning if He had not spoken to them. But, now He had come and told them God's word, they had no way to hide their sin. This can only apply to their decision to hate Him, for all men are guilty if they are unsaved. There is a peculiar (Arminian!) theory that if someone has never heard of Christ, he will be accepted by

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God. This is totally wrong and heretical. It does not matter what the reason for unbelief is – if one is not elect and saved, there is no ‘alternative’ route to God. (I say this in the strictest sense, based only on what we are told, for I cannot speak for what God does NOT say).

Once an unsaved person hears the Gospel he is culpable and cannot hide behind ignorance. His ‘cloak’ (reason for unbelief) or disguise hides nothing. Thus, his hatred for Christ arises from his hatred for the Father. Even though Christ on earth performed countless miracles, many refused to believe! This is incredible but a fact of human unsaved life. It proves that ‘something else’ prevents them from believing... Satan, who grasps the unbeliever by the mind and heart, so that he obeys evil and not what is good from God. Because of their unbelief they sin automatically, thereby expressing hatred for both Father and Son. They CANNOT do what is good.

It was all happening because of prophecy, which had to come about because (genuine) prophecy is God’s word to mankind. (I reject charismatic versions of ‘prophecy’). Ironically, this hatred was foretold in God’s word, “their law”, so they had no excuse for not recognising it. As the Torah said: “They hated me without a cause (reason)”.

The disciples must have been afraid for what was to come, but Jesus assures them; when the Holy Spirit came, because Christ would send Him, He would comfort them and show them what they needed to know about Him, and would underpin what was already told to them by Jesus.

Because they had been with Him from the start of His ministry on earth they would be able to witness to the truth of God’s word and Gospel. They had heard it with their own ears and seen it with their own eyes. And, what a mighty privilege – they had been taught by Jesus in person. This was to be the disciples’ authority: they were passing on to others only what they had seen and heard. They could witness powerfully BECAUSE they were witnesses to the absolute truth. Can YOU witness like this? Or, is your ‘witness’ third-hand, learned only from reading and not through a direct relationship with the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit?

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