

The disciples went out with Jesus on His way to the garden and His “appointment” with Judas. The next three chapters give His last words to them, and to us, before His death. They were spoken while they were standing or walking, fully awake, not lounging sleepily, tummies full at the supper table. They probably had to keep close to Him in order to hear.

Note that John’s gospel presents more of Christ’s words describing and distinguishing the three divine Persons of the Godhead, the Trinity, than the other three gospels, but they all speak of Them. Jesus words here are a marvel of interlocking, interacting statements of The Truth regarding The Trinity and our relationship with Them through one of Them, the Lord. The loving unity of the Godhead is model and incentive for our loving unity with Them and with each other.

The Lord presented Himself as the true Vine and us as branches. We receive our spiritual life and nourishment from Him and therefore bear fruit befitting that life. Fruit that is godly and good, glorifying God and a blessing to others. Paul describes nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians, 5:22,23. Our object is the Vine and to abide in Him. The fruit will follow. But a vine thrives only when dressed with tender loving care by the Husbandman. This portrays the chastening hand of the Father applied to His own sons (you and me) when needed to strengthen us or correct us, Hebrews 12:5-. He is tenderly watching our spiritual health and growth. He will act to keep us bearing and to increase our productivity. The fruit from the Vine through each branch (you and me) should taste like the Source. If a believer ceases bearing fruit He may be lovingly chastened or even removed from this earth to glory. On the other hand some unbelievers may attempt to associate themselves with believers for a while appearing to be branches. But if they are not abiding in the Vine they wither spiritually and are removed and ultimately cast into the fire. Jesus’ statement that He is the True Vine stands in contrast to the vineyard (Israel) described in the Old Testament which, though planted and cared for by Jehovah, bore wild grapes, Isa 5. Earlier Jesus had referred to a similar instance involving a fig tree in a vineyard, Luke 13:6-9. Its ultimate fate is described in Revelation 14:8,9.

He said directly to them “Ye are clean.” (Judas was gone out.) As clean, they could then abide in Him while still on earth. This, even though He had pointed their hearts to His Father’s house in heaven in which there are many abodes. The Lord is our abode while we are here as He had just said,

*14:23 If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.*

As He spoke He kept opening marvelous new truth for us and with it new privileges and responsibilities. We are to keep His commandments but they are commandments that involve love for Him and His own. He had kept His Father’s commandments and was abiding in His love. What joy that brought to His heart. He desires that we

have that joy. We gain it through obedience to the Father. If we do what He asks of us the Lord regards us as friends not just servants. As friends He now includes us in the loop, informing us what His Father is doing and about to do. We now know what most men don’t know. We know and are part of God’s grand Plan, we know of forecast events and by faith can see them coming. We know the outcomes of the various “times and seasons” and the answer to the great “Why!” that confounds every rational creature not belonging to Him,

*1Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.*

All this, yet He Himself reminds us “I have chosen you, ye have not chosen me.” Left to ourselves we would have never chosen Him nor could even be persuaded by the most persuasive evangelist to choose Christ. Moses pled with his beloved Israelites “Choose life,” Deuteronomy 3 They didn’t, though given many, many opportunities. They were about to crucify the One Who is the Life (14:6) within hours. He has chosen us to bear fruit. Fruit that will last because it is not of our proud attempts to please God, as Cain and millions that follow his philosophy, Jude 11. But it results from being a branch of the true vine, His friends. So close to Him that “ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

Our love for Him will be exhibited in our loving one another “as I have loved you”. But that love is not just affection for a great guy, or a gracious benefactor. The Lord defines it by His own supreme selfless love. He was about to lay His life down for His friends, us. Many of our fellow believers have dedicated their lives, some even unto death, since His supreme sacrifice for us.

While there is to be love amongst us, the world is another thing. The prince of this world hates Jesus and all that are His. As does the world he has painstakingly developed amongst mankind to allow us to “thrive” without God. It is insidious in its charm to all human beings in one way or another. The Lord by coming and growing up here among us has exposed the world for what it is. They had no cloak for their sin after that one sinless Man walked and spoke among them. So they crucified Him. And they hated His Father Who had sent Him and His disciples whom He now has sent. But they still seek to entice us to become one of them in at least some small way. But this is hatred without a cause. Any “reason” that might be given for this irrational hatred of the Creator and those who represent Him is not legitimate in God’s sight, though it might “explain” behavior to man’s twisted logic. Behavior generated by the sin nature is assumed to be a “normal” part of life. Love one another has no traction in the world because it is impossible to carry out by anyone in their sins. But the Lord would soon send the Comforter, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father. He did send Him on Pentecost after His ascension. He is still in us until the Rapture.

By Ronald Canner, August 31, 2011.